

Clarion

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IS THE REFORMATION EXCLUSIVE?



Eric Kampen
Minister of the
Canadian Reformed Church
at Orangeville, Ontario
eric.kampen@canrc.org

Rethinking Reformation Day

*The terms Reformation and Reformed
have overlap, but are not identical*

During the month of October, local church bulletins are bound to have an invitation to attend Reformation Day Rallies. The rallies are organized to commemorate the Reformation of the church that took place in the sixteenth century. They are promoted as being special because they are an opportunity to show the underlying unity among members of various Reformed denominations.

It seems so self-evident, Reformation Day is for Reformed churches, but why are these Reformation Day rallies held as close to the last day of October as possible? The answer probably can be given by any of the children. It was on October 31, 1517, that Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses on the church door in Wittenberg. This proved to be the critical event that led to the reformation of the church.

I highlight that Reformation day commemorates the actions of Martin Luther. This serves as a reminder that the Reformation is broader than the Reformed churches. The picture is cluttered because the terms *Reformation* and *Reformed* have overlap, but are not identical. To honour the work of the Lord in the Reformation as Reformed people, we do well to rethink Reformation Day, to see its broad scope. This rethink will sharpen our understanding of the confession of the catholicity of the church.

Three streams

It is one of the realities of history that later generations put labels on historical developments. A simple example is the way we refer to the First World War. This term only came into use after the Second World War. Initially, the First World War was known as The Great War. The term Reformation, to refer to the events set in motion by Martin Luther's actions, appears not to have come into common use for another three centuries. The term that Luther and his followers used for themselves was *evangelical*, because they had rediscovered the evangel, that is, the gospel of justification by faith. A term that came into use around 1529

was the term "Protestant." That term was not so much a reference to protesting the deformation in the church, but a reference to an alliance of princes who protested against the Emperor as they sought religious freedom. Over time, however, the term Reformation has become the accepted term to refer to the religious developments of the sixteenth century. To acknowledge the fact there have been other reformations in the history of the church, what happened in the sixteenth century is often called the Great Reformation.

Martin Luther's story is a familiar one. His ninety-five theses were prompted by the selling of indulgences. These indulgences were certificates you could purchase to be pardoned for your sins. This trivialized sin and denied the gospel truth of receiving forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ's sacrifice. The heart of the gospel, as rediscovered by Luther, is expressed clearly in the fourth article of the Augsburg Confession (1530),

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. . . .

Luther's teachings spread rapidly through German speaking lands and into Denmark and Scandinavian countries. Historically, it can be seen as the first stream of the Reformation. From our present vantage point in history, it can be called the Lutheran stream. Its spread was intertwined with political developments.

Luther's influence also extended into England. His teachings, however, were not able to make significant inroads until King Henry VIII separated the church in England from the authority of the pope in 1534. King Henry

was not acting out of a desire to reform the doctrine of the church. He wanted a divorce, which the pope refused to grant. This development, however, provided the setting for the teachings of Luther to become established. The Church in England would experience much turmoil in the following decades, especially during the reign of Queen Mary who sought to re-establish the authority of the pope, but the result was that the Church in England followed the key teachings of Luther and other Reformers. A review of the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer testifies to this. Again, one can note the influence of the political situation on the developments of the church.

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On the occasion of Reformation Day, Rev. Eric Kampen writes: "To honour the work of the Lord in the Reformation as Reformed people, we do well to rethink Reformation Day, to see its broad scope. . . Reformation Day is a time to reflect on how, by God's grace, we stand where we do."

Further on the topic of Reformation Day, we bring readers an article by Cornelis P. Venema, "Herman Bavinck his life and theology." There is also a Treasures New and Old meditation by Rev. Jan DeGelder.

In this issue we come to the final instalment of Prof. Albert H. Oosterhoff's four-part series on end-of-life decisions. There is also a Clippings on Politics and Religion from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on Sharia law.

Issue 21 includes a report on the CRMA's 2014 Mission Conference. There is also the Ray of Sunshine and You Asked columns, as well as several press releases.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal
Coeditors: P.H. Holtvliwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER

Clarion
8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5
Email: veenendaal@telus.net

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

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The developments in England can be seen as the second stream of the Reformation. For convenience, this can be called the Anglican stream.

While the Lutheran and Anglican streams were gaining strength in their respective parts of the world, the third stream appeared in the mid-1530s. John Calvin is the key figure associated with this stream. He initially exerted influence in Switzerland and France, as he ministered in the city of Geneva. His teachings influenced developments in Scotland and The Netherlands, as well as various areas in Eastern Europe and Germany.

There were different emphases and nuances when compared to the other two streams. One of the key differences between Calvin and Luther pertained to the understanding of Christ's presence in the Lord Supper. Calvin also busied himself with the reformation of the government of the church. At the same time, the fundamental unity with Luther comes out in the way he wrote to Cardinal Sadoletto that the doctrine of justification by faith is "the first and keenest subject of controversy between us." The fundamental unity between the Lutheran stream and the stream influenced by Calvin is also evident in the Heidelberg Catechism. While not written by Calvin, this Catechism definitely shows his influence. Frederick III, a prince in a territory where rulers had to subscribe to the Augsburg Confession, commissioned it. Frederick had to defend this catechism, but his fellow princes could not say he went against the Augsburg Confession. The Catechism displays a winsome tone, avoiding, for example, too much covenantal terminology, as this would have been divisive. This third stream, while influenced by Calvin, has become known as the Reformed stream.

While controversies developed between the three streams of the Reformation, especially between the Lutheran and the Reformed, there is a unity in the key doctrines. This sense of spiritual unity is evident in the publication of a book entitled *An Harmony of the Confessions of Faith of the Christian and Reformed Churches, which purely profess the holy doctrine of the Gospel, in all the chief kingdoms, nations and provinces of Europe*. It includes Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed confessions. This was published first in Geneva, in 1581, with the first English edition appearing in 1586. The sense of underlying unity was evident also in the way the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands invited delegates from the Church in England to deal with the Arminian controversy.

Pollution of the streams

It is interesting to follow developments in each of the three streams of the Reformation. If one does this, it will become apparent that each of these three streams experienced spiritual pollution. The appearance of spiritual pollution

inevitably has led to struggles within each stream. One of the features of the Reformed stream is that spiritual pollution tends to result in divisions. Divisions are not absent in the Lutheran and Anglican streams, but it is far more prevalent in the Reformed stream. Within each stream, there have remained those who desire to be true to the Reformation that began with Luther.

Interaction between the streams

There is also evidence of ongoing interaction between the three streams, with each dipping their feet into the other streams and benefiting from them. As members of Reformed churches, we wholeheartedly sing Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is our God." We joyfully sing songs that comes from the history of Lutheran pietism, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation," and "I'll thank thee, O my God and Saviour." We enthusiastically sing the song composed by Charles Wesley, "Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim," and we sing his words about "infinite love," although we probably understand that differently than he did. Further, we benefit greatly from godly books written by faithful men from the different streams. We even show particular influences of Luther in the way our version of the Apostles' Creed includes the word "Christian" as we speak of the "holy catholic Christian church."

The providence of God

When we take the time to reflect on who we are as Reformed believers, we will come to the realization that, essentially, we stand in the Reformed stream by God's providence. To be sure, at some point in our life we had consciously to confess our faith. For some, this will have involved more soul searching, coming from different backgrounds, even non-church backgrounds. Some even switched from one stream to another. In the big picture, however, we are in the particular Reformation stream because in God's providence we were born into that stream. Even those who later have ended up with their feet in the Reformed stream will realize that this is all by the grace of God.

Reformation Day is a time to reflect on how, by God's grace, we stand where we do. This is no time for self-congratulatory backslapping for our brave and bold decisions, but for thankfulness. It is also a time to reflect deeply about how we dare have these rallies to commemorate the Reformation and return to our ecclesiastical segregation. Finally, it is a time to reflect on whether we do justice to Reformation Day by inviting only Reformed believers. The Reformation is not the exclusive domain of the Reformed, but it consists of three main streams. We in principle acknowledge this when each October 31, we commemorate the actions of our brother Martin Luther.



Cherish the Word

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

(Colossians 3:16)



Jan DeGelder

Minister emeritus of the
Flamborough Canadian
Reformed Church in Ontario
jdegelder@cogeco.ca

We all have Bibles. We have the Word of God at home, in church, in our schools. It's a privilege we shouldn't take for granted. It gives almost endless opportunities to grow in knowledge and understanding of the Word of Christ. Why is that important? Here is what happens: in his Word, Jesus Christ himself comes to us. Does that not sound great? The living Christ dwelling with Christian believers, in the church, in the congregation!

In the beginning of his letter to the Colossians, Paul talks about the marvellous fullness of God's love and grace in Christ. He speaks about the glorious riches of the mystery, which is Christ in you – the hope of glory (1:27).

A wonderful picture, indeed! But how does that work? How is Christ present among us? And how do we know that he is in our midst as congregation, and that he works in and among the believers by his Holy Spirit? The apostle says that he was sent to disclose this mystery, and to proclaim Christ to them by presenting the Word of God in its fullness (1:25). This is the same Word that in 3:16 he calls the Word of Christ.

The "Word of Christ" is the Word that comes from Christ. This isn't restricted to the words Jesus spoke when he was on earth, but also includes the teaching of the apostles, their co-workers and successors, about the Saviour. So look around in your congregation. Do you see this amazing miracle? Jesus lives here, Christ dwells here – in his Word! Not in mysterious rituals or in magic formulas. Not in mystical experiences, but in the Word!

This breathtaking reality was re-discovered in the time of the Reformation. On October 31, the church remembers that by God's grace men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many others reformed the church into a place where, by the Word, Christ dwells in the presence of his people. *Sola Scriptura* was one of the reformers' mottos: "Scripture Alone."

This Word has been given to the church to call people to repent and believe. The message is clear: "Salvation is only in Jesus Christ. And he is here!" The world ridicules this and scoffs. Often it gets annoyed by this claim: "The Word of Christ, God's truth, is only in the Christian congregation." Don't be so arrogant. What makes you think that you are so special and that you know everything? You're just ordinary folks, like the rest of us."

That's true. In 1 Corinthians 1:26 the apostle reminds us of what we are: "Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth." Yet in his grace God chose to entrust the church of Christ with his Word. This gift in the congregation then becomes the responsibility of the congregation. We are held accountable for what we do with the Word of Christ. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly!

When Paul says this, he's not just uttering a wish, but he's instructing and commanding. Christians must make sure that the Word of Christ has a permanent and dominant place in the congregation. Cherish the Word as a precious treasure. Carry it with

you and be excited about it, as the Word received from someone you love dearly.

The expression "dwelling richly" makes clear that the Word isn't something you notice just once in a while in the church – the Word as occasional visitor. No, God wants his Word in the centre of your attention. This of course applies to the faithful preaching of the Word, sermons that explain the Bible with respect for what it is as the living Word of Christ, God's truth. There's no better way to commemorate the great Reformation and the heritage of the Reformers than by faithful preaching. But it doesn't stop there. Let the Word also dwell richly among us through teaching, Bible study, youth work, small groups, personal devotions, and more. Whatever form it takes, continue to cherish the Word of Christ.

After all, this is how Christ himself is present in the church. And this is how the church becomes more and more recognizable as his dwelling place in this world. A church in which the Word of Christ doesn't have this permanent and dominant place is a place where Christ himself isn't at home! He's become a stranger in his own house. This leaves people without hope and without perspective. Do you see how important it is that we let the Word of Christ dwell among us richly?

If an unbeliever is looking for Jesus Christ, would he be able to find him in your congregation?



Herman Bavinck: His Life and Theology

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Bavinck's early life and education

Herman Bavinck was born in Hoogeveen, The Netherlands, on December 13, 1854. His father, Rev. Jan Bavinck, was a respected pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. This denomination was originally formed in 1834 as the result of a "Secession" (Dutch: *Afscheiding*) from the Hervormde Kerk, the state Reformed church of The Netherlands, which had become increasingly liberal and estranged from the Reformed confessions.

Already in the early years of his formal education, Bavinck consistently excelled as a student. At the age of sixteen, he was enrolled at the "gymnasium" in Zwolle, a boarding school that was in many respects comparable to a North American college, and completed the normal four-year program in three years. While at Zwolle, Bavinck expressed his desire to attend the University of Leyden for his seminary training. The University of Leyden was perhaps the most liberal, and certainly the most academically prestigious, of the Dutch universities at the time. The faculty at Leyden was known for its repudiation of confessional Reformed theology and its advocacy of an "ethical" and "critical" reinterpretation of the Christian faith. Bavinck's parents and others prevailed upon him to commence his studies at the seminary of the Christian Reformed Church in Kampen. However, Bavinck's desire for a full university training at an institution widely renowned for its outstanding scholarship compelled him to transfer to Leyden, much to the chagrin of his parents and many others who feared that he would be unable to retain his convictions under the pressure of a Leyden education.

Bavinck completed his studies at Leyden in 1880 with the degree of doctor of theology, having written a dissertation on *The Ethics of Zwingli*. He distinguished himself at Leyden as an exceptional student, and was granted the doctor's degree "with honors." During his study at Leyden, Bavinck learned much from his teachers, but also faced many challenges to his personal confession and convictions. To one of his close university friends, he confided that "I have learned much at Leyden, but also unlearned much."¹

Professor of dogmatics

After completing his studies at Leyden, Bavinck entered the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church of Franeker. While in Franeker, Bavinck twice declined an appointment to teach theology at the Free University in Amsterdam. However, in 1882, when the General Synod of the Christian Reformed Church invited him to fill the vacant chair in dogmatics at its seminary in Kampen, Bavinck accepted and began his labour on January 10, 1883, with an inaugural address on "The Science of Sacred Theology." This address was well received throughout the churches, and it caught the attention of Abraham Kuyper, who reviewed it in *De Heraut* (January 21, 1883), observing that "I have hardly ever read a treatise with such undivided attention, from start to finish, as this inaugural." With this inaugural address, Bavinck embarked upon a twenty-year period of productive labour at Kampen. Much loved by his students for his modesty, unusual eloquence, and extraordinary breadth of knowledge, Bavinck produced during his Kampen years his *Reformed Dogmatics* in a first edition of four volumes (1883-1901).

In 1892, Bavinck made the first of two trips to America. He gave an address to the Alliance of Reformed Churches

holding the Presbyterian System in Toronto, Canada. He took the occasion to visit his close friend, Geerhardus Vos, who was then teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary. He also visited Princeton Theological Seminary, where he met and befriended professor B.B. Warfield.

During the struggle that took place in the 1880s to unite the churches of the Secession (1834) with the churches of the Doleantie (1886),² a dispute arose over the question of church control of the teaching of theology and the preparation of students for the ministry. Most of those who stood in the line of the Secession of 1834 wished to maintain the principle of church control, whereas those who stood in the line of the Doleantie under Kuyper favoured the principle of “free study,” or the location of the discipline of theology in a university setting. Bavinck, who participated significantly in the process that led to the union of these churches in 1892, was something of an anomaly in his own tradition, for he was sympathetic to the idea that theology should be pursued in a university context so as to encourage the most rigorous academic and “scientific” approach. This helps to explain Bavinck’s decision, upon the fourth occasion of an appointment in dogmatics to the Free University, to accept the appointment in 1902.

In 1908, Bavinck visited America for a second time, principally to deliver the Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary. On this visit, Bavinck was also privileged to visit President Theodore Roosevelt. There is evidence of some shift in Bavinck’s scholarly interests during this later period of his teaching. As he confided to a close friend, “As I grow older my mind turns more and more away from dogmatic to philosophical studies and from these to their application to the practical needs of life about me.”³ In many of his later writings, Bavinck attempted to offer a broad philosophical and pedagogical basis for the pursuit of excellence in Christian schools at every level, including the university.

In the providence of God, Bavinck’s life ended unexpectedly, at a time when he was still engaged in a variety of academic, political, cultural, and church activities. After offering an eloquent address on the floor of the synodical meeting of the Reformed churches in Leeuwarden, Bavinck suffered a heart attack, from which he first rallied but never fully recovered. After a prolonged period of illness, Bavinck “fell asleep” in the Lord on July 29, 1921. Among the poignant memories recorded of visits with Bavinck at the time was his reply to the question of whether he was afraid to die: “My dogmatics avail me nothing, nor my knowledge, but I have my faith, and in this I have all.”⁴

Characteristic features of Bavinck’s theology

Although it is difficult to capture the person of a figure like Bavinck, the profile that emerges from his writings and biographies is that of an exceptionally gifted, yet modest and unassuming, scholar. When he engaged the views of others, even those with whom he strongly disagreed, Bavinck was uncommonly courteous and respectful. Wherever possible, he would acknowledge the partial truth expressed by other theologians, even though he could not finally concur with their viewpoint. Consequently, although he was ultimately uncompromising in his convictions as a Reformed theologian, Bavinck was often respected by contemporaries who were not sympathetic to his confessional position.

*“My dogmatics avail me nothing,
nor my knowledge, but I have my faith,
and in this I have all.”*

There are several outstanding qualities that characterise Bavinck’s work as a theologian. One of these qualities reflects what we have noted about his person, namely, his sympathetic treatment of the views of others. Throughout his writings, Bavinck exhibits a meticulous care in representing alternative positions. Before he critically engages a position with which he disagrees, he is at great pains to represent it in the best possible light. He also resists the temptation to arrive prematurely at a conclusion. In his *Dogmatics*, for example, Bavinck evidences an extraordinary familiarity with the discussion of theological topics throughout the history of the church. When he addresses a theological topic, he takes account of the spectrum of opinion throughout history and among the most diverse confessional communions (whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox). Only after a thorough canvassing of the biblical, historical, and confessional discussion of any particular topic does he arrive at a conclusion of his own. However, these qualities of meticulous and catholic scholarship, painstaking research, and consideration of the possible answers to a question, are among the reasons why Bavinck’s *Dogmatics* continue to be a model for contemporary Reformed theologians.

Three broad themes

Three broad themes recur throughout Bavinck's writings as a Reformed theologian. The first of these, the subject of his Stone Lectures, is the philosophy of revelation. In the face of the withering philosophical and critical attacks upon the historic doctrine of divine revelation, Bavinck worked consistently throughout his life from the settled conviction of the reality of the triune God who reveals himself through all of his works in creation and redemption, and who has provided for an inscripturation of that revelation in the Old and New Testaments. Reformed theology must build, even as the church is built, upon the sure foundation of God's own testimony to himself and the manifestation of his grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second of these themes is Bavinck's emphasis upon the "catholicity" of the church and the Christian faith. All truth, in whatever sphere or academic discipline, derives from a knowledge of God's works in creation and redemption. Reformed theology may never, therefore, fall prey to a parochial or narrow spirit that eschews the pursuit of scholarship or abandons the academy to unbelief.

A third and final theme that pervades Bavinck's theological writings is one that he shared fully with his contemporary, Abraham Kuyper, namely, that "grace perfects nature" – or, better, that redemption involves the renewal and consummation of all creation. The purposes of the triune God in redemption culminate not only in the re-creation of a new humanity through the work of Jesus Christ, but also in the realisation of God's purposes for the whole of creation itself. Like Kuyper, Bavinck could not be satisfied with scholarship that does not seek to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Nor could he be content with the idea that any dimension of truth is separable from the truth that is in Christ, to whom all things in heaven and on earth are subject.

These themes, and the general outline of his *Dogmatics*, were to exercise a profound influence on such well-known North American theologians as Cornelius Van Til and Louis Berkhof.

It has been suggested, not implausibly, that Bavinck's theology reflects a kind of "duality" that corresponds to his personal biography. Bavinck was both the faithful son of the Secession of 1834 and the scholar who deliberately chose to study at the most liberal university in The Netherlands. On the one hand, Bavinck endeavoured to adhere faithfully to the authority of the Scriptures and the subordinate standards, or confessions, of the Reformed churches. On the other hand, he read widely and

engaged sympathetically the best of modern theological scholarship and culture. One could characterise Bavinck as, in these respects, a "man between two worlds."⁵ This duality in Bavinck's life should not be overstated, however, since it expresses in the arena of theological scholarship an inescapable feature of the life of every Christian who is "in but not of the world."

It can only be hoped that, with the publication of Bavinck's *Dogmatics* in English, more readers will have access to the contributions of this remarkable theologian. Although readers will not always agree with Bavinck's conclusions, they will find him to be an outstanding model of Reformed theological scholarship – deeply rooted in the riches of scriptural revelation, sympathetically informed by the great confessions of the Reformed churches, instructed by the history of the church's reflection upon the Word of God, and carefully engaged with the broad range of contemporary challenges to the Christian faith. If readers learn anything from Bavinck, they should learn much about how the work of theology is to be conducted. In a beautiful passage from his *Dogmatics*, Bavinck offers a glimpse of his understanding of his calling as a Christian theologian:

Dogmatics shows us how God, who is all-sufficient in himself, nevertheless glorifies himself in his creation, which, even when it is torn apart by sin, is gathered up again in Christ (Eph. 1:10). It describes for us God, always God, from beginning to end – God in his being, God in his creation, God against sin, God in Christ, God breaking down all resistance through the Holy Spirit and guiding the whole of creation back to the objective he decreed for it: the glory of his name. Dogmatics, therefore, is not a dull and arid science. It is a theodicy, a doxology to all God's virtues and perfections, a hymn of adoration and thanksgiving, a "glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14).⁶

¹ Valentin Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, p. 87.

² The churches of the "Doleantie" ("Grieving") were a second secession of churches from the Reformed Church in The Netherlands. These churches, under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper, would soon join with the churches of the Secession of 1834 to form the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, or GKN).

³ Henry Elias Dosker, "Herman Bavinck," *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922): 457–58.

⁴ Dosker, "Herman Bavinck," p. 459.

⁵ John Bolt, "Editor's Introduction," in Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:12.

⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:112.



End-of-Life Decisions

(Part 4)



Albert H. Oosterhoff
Professor emeritus,
Western University
(Faculty of Law)
albert.oosterhoff@gmail.com

In the previous three articles I described the nature and kinds of end-of-life decisions, and the medical and legal aspects governing such decisions. I also reviewed a number of recent cases to show how the courts wrestle with these decisions. In this last article I shall discuss how we can and may use advance directives and powers of attorney for personal care to make our wishes about end-of-life decisions known.

Use of a power of attorney for personal care

Earlier in these articles I described the power of attorney for personal care and mentioned equivalent documents in other provinces. I shall now discuss the use of such documents.

The first question is whether we may take advantage of a power of attorney for personal care (PAPC). I believe that we may and, indeed, that we are prudent and act responsibly when we do so.

In the discussion of the statutory provisions above, I pointed out that when a person has not appointed a substitute decision maker (SDM) by a PAPC, the legislation gives a prioritized list of persons who will be the SDMs. Thus, if your spouse has predeceased you or is incapable, all of your children together will become your SDMs. That is no problem if they all agree. But there are cases in which they do disagree. There are also cases in which a child, who has long been estranged from the family, comes back when Dad is in the hospital and is incapable. Such a child may then insist (for reasons of guilt or remorse) that everything possible be done to keep Dad alive. As noted in the second article in this series, in cases of disagreement, the Public Guardian and Trustee must make personal care decisions.

Before a person completes a PAPC it is of utmost importance that he seek advice from his family physician about end-of-life care and that he discuss his values and beliefs with his spouse and with other members of his

family. Seek advice too from your pastor and elder and other persons whose advice you value. Having done that, you can seek legal advice to complete and execute the PAPC. Following these steps can prevent a lot of misunderstandings and feelings of guilt and anxiety on the part of the family. Further, it is especially important that you explain your wishes to the SDM(s) you intend to appoint to “get them onside,” that is, to ensure that they will carry out your wishes.

Finally, just as you should periodically review your will and continuing power of attorney for property, you should also review your PAPC from time to time. Your circumstances may change and your family’s circumstances may change, in which case you may need to update your PAPC. For example, the person you have appointed as your attorney may have moved to another part of the country and may thus no longer be readily available to make decisions for you.

There are two aspects to using a PAPC, the appointment of an attorney for personal care and the inclusion of advance care directives. I shall discuss these separately.

(a) Appointment of the attorney

The legislation permits the appointment of one or more attorneys. It is my view that in most cases one should appoint only one, but make provision for one or more substitutes for the event that the first named attorney is absent or is unable or unwilling to act. If two or more attorneys are named, they must act jointly unless the power of attorney provides otherwise. However, difficulties can arise if they are unable to agree on a particular course of action. In that case, as we saw in the second article, the *Health Care Consent Act* (HCCA) directs the Public Guardian and Trustee to make the decision.

It is obviously possible and, indeed, often right that you appoint your spouse as your attorney. But it is important to remember that your spouse may predecease

you or become incapable. So, if you appoint your spouse as your attorney, you should also make provision for a substitute SDM.

(b) Using advance directives

I also mentioned using advance health care directives in the second article in this series. And again, I believe this to be a desirable and prudent thing to do. Written directions avoid family disputes and disagreements and allow the family to make decisions on the basis of what “Mom herself wanted.” In Ontario at least, advance directives are normally included in the PAPC, although they can also be self-standing documents.

What can and may you include in such directives? I suggest that you first state your church affiliation. Case law has shown that this is not determinative, since the legislation does not mention it. However, a statement of religious affiliation can form the basis or background to the statement of your values and beliefs, which should follow next.

In the statement of your values and beliefs you can, for example, state that you believe the sanctity of life, that life is given by God and that God will end life in his time. You can also say that you understand and accept that suffering is part of life and that God allows it and, indeed, uses it to purify and strengthen our faith, but that you believe it to be legitimate and in accordance with your values and beliefs that pain and suffering be minimized or meliorated by the administration of pain-killers and sedatives.

This can then be followed by specific directives to your SDM. This part of your advance directives can be quite complex and extensive. For example, I have seen advance directives executed by conservative Jews that go on for a couple of pages. In it they not only describe their values and beliefs, but also make provision for obtaining the opinion of a named Rabbi, or if that Rabbi is not available, then of another Rabbi. I do not think such lengthy provisions are necessary.¹ The statement of values and beliefs discussed above should suffice.

The following list of specific instructions focuses particularly on the circumstances of an elderly patient, who has lived a long and productive life and who longs to be with the Lord. If the PAPC is for a healthy younger person, the directions may be rather different. And this underscores the point made earlier that you should regularly review your PAPC as circumstances change.

The specific directions for an elderly person may include some or all of the following:

1. *If I am on life support and two independent physicians declare that I am brain dead, I direct that I be taken off life support.* This direction may cause anxiety for family members, since life support maintains the patient’s breathing and the heart will continue to beat. This means that the patient’s body remains warm to the touch. However, the patient is in fact dead.
2. *If I am elderly, near death, and my heart stops beating, I do not wish to be resuscitated.* This is commonly called a DNR (“Do Not Resuscitate”) order.
3. *I do not want to be placed on life support, or if I am on life support, I want it to be discontinued if two independent physicians declare that there is no realistic hope of recovery to a sentient existence. For this purpose I define life support as including mechanical ventilation and mechanical means of providing hydration and nutrition (i.e., liquids and food), as well as manual means of administering hydration and nutrition. Instead, I want to be allowed to die a “normal” death and not be kept “artificially alive” with a ventilator and feeding tubes. However, I do request that I be kept comfortable and that palliative drugs and sedatives be administered to minimize any pain and discomfort, even if such drugs may incidentally (as distinct from deliberately) shorten life.* Some may find this directive extreme or wrong. I suggest, however, that it is not unlike the case of a cancer patient who has undergone lengthy radiation or chemotherapy treatment, or both. At some point the patient reaches the conclusion that enough is enough and so he rejects the oncologist’s suggestion that he try yet another new drug. The patient knows that he is dying and now wants the process to unfold naturally.
4. *If, for whatever reason, I am in a persistent vegetative state, or in a coma and either or both of those conditions have continued for some time, and if two independent physicians declare that there is no realistic hope of recovery to a sentient existence, I want life support be discontinued.* I defined the terms “persistent vegetative state” and “coma” in the first article of the series. I believe persons should rightly hesitate about withdrawing life support in these cases.

However, I also believe that it is irresponsible to let such conditions continue indefinitely. The 2005 *Terry Schiavo* case in Florida is instructive in that regard. (The patient sustained full cardiac arrest, suffered massive brain injury, was in a persistent vegetative state and on life support for fifteen years and her husband and family battled in the courts for years about whether life support should be withdrawn). There have been a number of similar cases that have been widely reported in the press.

Some readers may believe that the reference to a coma in the fourth directive is improper, since there are cases in which a person in a coma does recover. However, I believe that Scripture does not teach us to idolize physical life that must be maintained at all costs. Real life is life in communion with God and God holds us accountable for what we know, not for unfounded expectations. Should it be God's will that a person live on after life support is removed, then that person will indeed live on, even in a coma.

5. *For all other purposes and circumstances, I direct my attorney to make decisions about my care that are in my best interest and that accord with my values and beliefs, outlined above.* It should be noted that a person's best interests may change over time. For example, the best interests of a person in his seventies, who is otherwise healthy, will differ from those of a person in his nineties, who suffers from a variety of health problems and is close to death. Substitute decision makers may therefore, have to adjust their decisions accordingly over time.

Various other directions can be made too, also concerning the patient's wishes regarding nursing and hospice care.

One direction you should *not* make is that you wish, or do not wish, "heroic measures" to be taken during the final stages of life. This infelicitous phrase is found in many early PAPCs and also in some nursing home advance directives. The adjective "heroic" derives from the Greek *hērōikos*, which means "pertaining to heroes." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "heroic" means "of an action, a quality, *etc.*: of, or pertaining to, or characteristic of a hero; bold, daring, attempting great things; fit for a hero." Considering that heroes were men of renown, this definition does not describe medical treatment administered at the end of life. More important, having regard to advances in medical technology,

CALL ACCEPTED

Accepted the call to the Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura, WA:

Rev. R. Bredenhof
of London, Ontario

Accepted the call to the Emmanuel CanRC of Guelph, Ontario:

Rev. P. Feenstra
of Grand Valley, Ontario

ORDINATION EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Ontario West of October 1, 2014 and granted permission to be ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments:

Candidate Jeff Poort

CHURCH NEWS

what might have been regarded as "heroic" ten years ago is no longer heroic today. Thus, the phrase is meaningless and is best avoided.

Conclusion

There are a great many variables in end-of-life situations. A patient's circumstances may vary depending on age, general state of health, the severity of the trauma that resulted in patient's current state, and many other factors. Further, medical diagnoses and prognoses remain imprecise, despite huge advances in medical care. Thus, it is impossible to design a list of wishes and directions in the abstract. Rather, such a list must be tailored to each person individually.

What persons can do and, in my opinion, ought to do is to seek advice from physicians, their pastor, elder, lawyer, and others and then include their own wishes for the end of their lives in their PAPC.

¹ It should be noted, however, that the views of conservative Jews, Roman Catholics, and observant Muslims about end-of-life decisions are close to our own and some have done important research on the ethical aspects of such decisions. Ethicists employed by hospitals can also offer support and guidance for patients with such decisions and can advocate for them. For example, the ethicist at Sunnybrook hospital told me that he developed a close and supportive relationship with, and was able to provide caring support to the family in the *Rasouli* case, discussed in #7 of the third article in this series.



Cornelis Van Dam
Professor emeritus of Old Testament
at the Canadian Reformed Theological
Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario
cvandam@canrc.org

Sharia Law

From time to time one hears of Sharia law. What exactly is it? Sharia law is the law of Islam and is based on Muhammad's words and actions (the Sunnah) and the Quran of which he is the author. This law cannot be altered and covers a wide range of topics. It covers both public and private behaviour and beliefs. It is the most intrusive and strict legal system in the world. The website billionbibles.org gives a helpful list of examples.

Some examples

According to Sharia law:

- Theft is punishable by amputation of the right hand.
- Criticizing or denying any part of the Quran is punishable by death.
- Criticizing or denying Muhammad is a prophet is punishable by death.
- Criticizing or denying Allah is punishable by death.
- A Muslim who becomes a non-Muslim is punishable by death.
- A non-Muslim who leads a Muslim away from Islam is punishable by death.
- A non-Muslim man who marries a Muslim woman is punishable by death.
- A man can marry an infant girl and consummate the marriage when she is nine years old.
- A woman can have one husband, but a man can have up to four wives.
- A man can unilaterally divorce his wife but a woman needs her husband's consent to divorce.
- A man can beat his wife for insubordination.
- Testimonies of four male witnesses are required to prove rape against a woman.
- A woman who has been raped cannot testify in court against her rapist(s).
- A woman cannot speak alone to a man who is not her husband or relative.
- Meat to be eaten must come from animals that have been sacrificed to Allah – i.e., be Halal.
- Muslims should engage in lying to non-Muslims to advance Islam (Taqiyya).

A Muslim religious leader or imam has some leeway in interpreting this law, but it is obvious what the overall direction is.

Sharia law in Canada

Slowly but surely, Canadians are accommodating Muslims and so tacitly recognizing Sharia law. The same website (billionbibles.org) gives some examples which can also be found on news websites. Polygamous Muslim men who raise multiple families receive multiple welfare cheques from provincial governments although polygamy is illegal. Apparently politically correct governments do not want to be seen as intolerant to Muslims. On the municipal level, Muslims have been successful, for example, in 2008 in having a Toronto public school cafeteria turned into a mosque on Friday afternoons. They listen to an imam and pray towards Mecca. The boys pray in front of the girls who pray in front of the menstruating girls who are forbidden to pray. However, public schools do not provide facilities for Christian students to gather and worship. In 2011, the municipal government of Edmonton had been forbidding men to swim at certain hours so that Muslim women can swim without men around and so be in compliance with Sharia law. The example that tops them all is what happened in Quebec in 2011. In an attempt to attract Muslims, the Quebec town of Huntingdon built a mosque, a Halal slaughter house, and even offered a one year tax moratorium on the property tax.

Besides these overt examples, there is also much application of sharia that is hidden. For example, the Ontario Human Rights Commission recognizes on their website that little is being done to stop the illegal activity of subjecting girls to genital mutilation either in Canada or abroad, although the need to stop this practice is recognized. According to a *Toronto Star* article by Debra Black (September 20, 2013) an Ontario study found that hundreds of girls, mostly Muslim, had been wed against their will, but many cases go unreported. There is currently no legislation against the practice.

Where will this creeping Sharia law lead to? Over the next twenty years, Canada's Muslim population is expected to triple. What is happening in western Europe could be an indicator. More about that next time.



Mission Conference 2014

On the second-last weekend in August, the Canadian Reformed Missions Association (CRMA) hosted an annual conference in Langley. Though previous CRMA conferences had been hosted in Hamilton, at member request the 2014 conference was moved westward. We know of thirteen significant mission projects in our church federation; eleven are members of the CRMA and eight were in attendance in Langley. The conference speaker was Mark Bube, who has twenty-three years of experience serving as General Secretary of the Foreign Missions Committee in the OPC. He brought not only a wealth of experience to the podium, but also a contagious enthusiasm for spreading the gospel throughout the world.

Character of mission

On Friday evening, the speaker began by reminding the audience of the character of Reformed mission. While referring to biblical truths, historical insights, written policies from the OPC, practical anecdotes, and personal experiences, our energetic speaker taught his audience what missions is and why it is done. First of all, mission is the work of the Triune God; through the Church, Christ sends his ambassadors to all nations to proclaim the Word. The purposes of such activity are the salvation of lost souls, the establishment of indigenous churches, the coming of God's kingdom, and the glory of his Name. Evidently, though mission might appear to be a human activity, in actual fact it begins with God's work and its ultimate purpose is God's glory. As the church and its missionaries engage in mission, participants need to be motivated by a deep love for God and a profound compassion for the lost. It is such love that inspires missionaries to overcome the difficulties associated with their positions.

The speaker repeatedly emphasized that in the first place, mission is meant to establish worship. Worship – the ultimate goal of the church – will be an eternal activity of the saints! In contrast, mission is merely a “temporary necessity” that belongs to this fallen world, and we engage enthusiastically and deliberately in it be-

cause the worship of our Creator and Redeemer is not yet universal. As people learn to worship rightly, they sing for joy and bring praise to God – what a privilege to be allowed to engage in this awesome task!

Since worship is the focus of the church, the goal of mission is the establishment of a church federation. Indigenous Reformed churches must provide fellowship, instruction, and seek to make the gospel more broadly known in their own culture. The OPC is very clear in what its goal is for each mission field: the “establishment of a healthy indigenous national church that is fully committed to the Reformed standards, is self supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, with whom the OPC may have fraternal relations, that is itself sending out foreign missionaries to other nations, and which no longer needs the services of OP foreign missionaries.” Evidently, then, most mission activities are multi-generational in nature; there is nothing easy or quick about mission work!

The goal of mission is the establishment of a faithful indigenous federation

As the speaker taught the above truths, he regaled the audience with stories from various mission fields. Ninety minutes flew by as we absorbed the lessons, interspersed with accounts of experiences from around the world, including Eritrea, Korea, Ethiopia, Uganda, and China. These stories not only intrigued us, they also inspired us to marvel at the miracles that God is working. The gospel of forgiveness of sins is tremendously powerful and it is an exciting privilege to see it embraced by new believers. In response, the devil tries to discourage and disable the church from fulfilling its missionary task; in numerous parts of the world, mission encounters hostile persecution, challenging Christians involved to demonstrate a profound sense of reliance on our faithful Father.

Mission challenges

The next morning, after the annual membership meeting where the association's business was discussed, Mark Bube spoke about challenges facing Reformed missions. During this more practical presentation, the speaker again drew on not only his own substantial personal experiences in mission fields, but also the insights of others who have studied and experienced similar activities.

The first challenge related to demonstrating biblical decision-making among missionaries and in their oversight. The insights and activities of the missionaries on the field are of paramount importance; they have their boots on the ground, they are immersed in the culture, they understand the world of mission. The OPC aims to send teams of missionaries to a field, so that one-man domination does not emerge. Clear decision making protocols need to be respected so that the work can proceed as effectively as possible. Mission teams (which also normally include non-missionaries – doctors, teachers, and other support personnel) will formulate many of their own decisions on the field. There needs to be a clear understanding by everyone that it is the missionaries who ultimately have to articulate the plan and have the freedom to execute it. At the same time, meaningful oversight by and accountability to the home front is critical, as it is the home front that sends and supervises the missionaries. The work can easily be derailed if these essentials are not properly in place. Since in the history of missions the biggest reason for missionary attrition is intermissionary discord, matters related to this topic are critically important.

The second challenge concerned the recruitment of missionary personnel who are able to lead and who know when to get out of the way. Pray for our missionaries: they need such energy and commitment as they learn a foreign language and culture, and they need such wisdom as they discern when to courageously lead and when to deliberately leave the leadership to the emerging indigenous believers. It is not always evident that those people who have been blessed with strong leadership abilities also have the inclination to leave the decision-making to others. Finding and enabling missionary personnel to function with a good level of awareness of such a balanced approach is difficult and essential. If federation-building is at the core of mission activity, teaching and enabling the indigenous members to assume and demonstrate deliberate leadership is essential.

The third challenge the speaker addressed relates to money and missions. Hosts of issues around the world

have been created by well-intentioned boards and missionaries. It is so easy to enable our “poorer” brothers and sisters to slip into unbiblical dependency. Though the ministry of mercy is critical, also in a foreign setting, such mercy needs to always be subservient to the ministry of the Word. At times, it can be hard to maintain these priorities, since on the home front it is generally much easier to raise money for ministry of mercy activities rather than the regular (and less glamorous) ministry of the Word.

The fourth challenge flows naturally out of the third: planning for the transition to fully indigenous government in the church. Inappropriate protocols with regards to money are very likely to impede such development. For example, ministries of mercy need to be placed under the oversight of the indigenous church as soon as is practical; it is profoundly unhealthy when a foreign mission worker is responsible for doling out financial assistance. The OPC has learned that making cash grants or a donation directly to an indigenous church is likely to inhibit the maturation of an indigenous church. Furthermore, purchasing a building or employing indigenous pastors in the mission are activities likely to become impediments on the road to indigenous maturation. Referencing the helpful distinctions between relief, rehabilitation, and development, as articulated by Corbett and Fikkert in *When Helping Hurts*, the speaker reminded us that the anticipated outcome of missionary activity needs to be the establishment of a faithful self-governing indigenous church; short-term strategies may never undermine the achievement of the overall objective.

From time to time, churches and committees are faced with needing to make decisions about opening new mission fields. That challenge too was briefly addressed. Bube specifically identified how, on the mission field, the OPC will search for “an indigenous Reformed church with whom we can work in good conscience.” Not cooperating with such Reformed churches will inevitably lead to difficulties down the road.

A difficult dilemma that many people involved in mission work will quickly be confronted with relates to honesty with the magistrates. We confess that governments have been put in place by God, and we are commanded to obey them. This is a real concern in lands where the government is persecuting Christians. The OPC Foreign Missions manual encourages all missionaries “to demonstrate their respect for the magistrate’s authority by making the appropriate governmental officials – especially at the local level – aware of who they are and what they are there to

do.” As for receiving permission to enter a country, many times missionary travel plans had to be adjusted; in his good timing God miraculously opened closed doors, and then visitors could legitimately enter.

Lastly, Bube briefly addressed the popular topic of short-term mission activities. Too often, people have engaged in short-term mission trips primarily for their own growth rather than for the genuine benefit of the target group. The speaker stressed the primacy of the proclamation of the Word; all mission activities are to revolve around the Word.

Summary

Because Bube’s passion for mission was so clearly and passionately communicated to the audience, attendees considered the presentations helpful, and consequently this CRMA conference to have been a blessing. It was a privilege to be given many excellent reminders about what mission is and why it is done. It was helpful to receive instruction on pitfalls to avoid as we engage in mission activity around the world. At various times during the conference, representa-

tives from different Canadian Reformed mission (aid) boards shared news from their respective fields; we heard about encouraging activities in Brazil, China, Indonesia, PNG, Prince George, and West Timor. We prayed for the well-being of our missionaries and for the continued development of the indigenous church federations. We praised God for the miracles that are evident in missions. We commended our persecuted brothers and sisters to the Lord’s continued care; many of them have experienced the Lord’s love and faithfulness in prison cells.

Most mission activities are multi-generational

After an intense set of meetings, we bid each other farewell. Next year’s CRMA conference is scheduled for Hamilton, the day after the convocation ceremonies from our theological seminary. In the meantime, may the desire to proclaim the gospel to all nations be evident in the lives of our churches and in the hearts of many young men. **C**

*To learn more about the CRMA and the mission activities of the respective members, go to
www.reformedmissions.net.*

The purpose of the website is to enable members to share valuable resources with each other for each other’s benefit.



The Lord has blessed many with another year to celebrate in the months of October and November. Some of the special days have already passed by while others are yet to come. Congratulations! I hope you have had (or will still have) a fantastic day celebrating with family and friends. Birthdays are a special time to reflect on God's grace and goodness to us.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

We are God's children and we belong to him. This is who we are. What a beautiful truth we can celebrate on our birthdays. God knows us and loves us so deeply, in fact, he chose us to be his children even before he created the world we live in. Isn't that amazing and quite overwhelming!

October

- 3 JANELL DEBOER will be 25**
6311 Silver Street, RR 2, St. Ann's, ON LOR 1Y0
- 6 HENRY VANDER VLIET will be 48**
c/o Anchor Home, 361 Thirty Road
RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
- 12 LEONA BARENDREGT will be 32**
Box 2184, Smithers, BC VOJ 2N0
- 13 NANCY SCHIPPER will be 59**
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 17 ALAN BREUKELMAN will be 49**
225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 21 CAMERON DANTUMA will be 24**
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

22 NELENA HOF SINK will be 55

Bethesda Clearbrook Home
32553 Willingdon Crescent
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2

28 MARY ANN DE WIT will be 59

31126 Kingfisher Drive, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

November

3 WILMA VAN DRONGELEN will be 58

32025 Balfour Drive, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5C1

Psalm 100:1, 2, 3, 4

*You lands and peoples of the earth,
before the LORD your joy shout forth.
Serve him with gladness all your days
and come to him with songs of praise.*

*Know that the LORD is God alone;
he made us, and we are his own,
the sheep that he to pasture leads
and as their shepherd guards and feeds.*

*Come, enter then his gates with praise
and in his courts your voices raise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name;
within his house your joy proclaim.*

*The LORD is good, and evermore
his love and mercy will endure.
All generations he will bless
in his unchanging faithfulness.*



A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

*Please consider sharing with us the readers and card senders,
a little about our card recipients. We love getting to know
these precious members of our family of faith.*

I can be contacted either by email or by regular mail:

email: henri.trish@sympatico.ca

*5080 Airport Road East, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0
or please call me 905-692-0084*



William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
Church of Toronto, Ontario
denhollanderw@gmail.com

Q

More and more I hear our federation of churches referred to as “our denomination.” What’s right or what is wrong with that description?

A

The Canadian Reformed Churches are indeed a “federation” of churches. In the 1950s, several local churches came together to organize themselves in a federation. They desired to be a faithful federation of Reformed churches for the country in which they organized themselves: i.e. Canada. The root word of “federation” being the Latin word *foedus*, i.e. *covenant*, these churches established such a covenant with each other. Churches that were instituted later on entered upon this federation voluntarily. Thus they wished to express the unity of the church in the unity of the true faith, uniting themselves under the one headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Together they adopted the Three Forms of Unity and the ecumenical creeds as faithfully articulating this unity. They composed and adopted a Church Order for this organization. Thus, in an organized way they wished to help each other, to watch over each other, and to stand together in the spiritual warfare, with covenantal obligations for each others’ well-being.

There are, however, more federations of churches like ours. When immigrants, who used to belong to the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) came to Canada or the USA, they initially desired to join the existing federation of the Christian Reformed Church, as well as the one called the Protestant Reformed Church. The Free Reformed Churches organized themselves in a way that was much similar to the Canadian Reformed Churches, on the same basis, for the same purposes, and by the same principles. Today we are aware of more Reformed federations of churches, much like ours, such as the United Reformed Churches in North America, the Netherlands Reformed Churches, or the Heritage Reformed Churches. Then these are just the ones whose

name is much like ours, while there are other Reformed churches that we have recognized as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, such as the OPC, FCS, which have churches in our country as well; these are all Reformed churches with different *names*. Hence, in the midst of such a variety of Reformed churches with different names we use the word “denominations;” that’s just what they are: a Reformed federation with a different *name* (de-*nom*-ination). In distinction from the others, we may sometimes speak of “our denomination.” So, it’s not a matter of either or, right or wrong, but of what we are speaking about in the midst of this reality of a variety of Reformed churches.

The reason why we have a problem speaking about denominations has everything to do with the danger of *denominationalism*. In the brokenness of this world we are inclined to resign to this reality, accept these divisions, and allow for certain *distinctives* to justify such separate existence of truly Reformed churches. Then *denominationalism* undermines the scriptural calling to pursue “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:1-3), the imperative also to join our Saviour in his High Priestly prayer “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” In order to avoid such *denominationalism*, our churches have always pursued ecclesiastical unity, on the basis of this premise: “If it were possible, then we should help each other throughout the entire world” (*Bound Yet Free*, ed. J. De Jong, p. 218). This is our incentive for cooperation in the ICRC, NAPARC, and for the intensive engagement in pursuing ecclesiastical unity with the URCNA, for instance. If the Lord wills, therefore, we hope and pray that these two denominations may in the Lord’s time become one federation!

Q

Article 61 Church Order: “The consistory shall admit to the Lord’s supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.” My question is: Could you provide a brief history of travel attestations and why we need them?

A

Attestations are certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life. The scriptural background for the practice of issuing attestations have been found in texts like Romans 16:1, 2, Acts 18:27, 1 Corinthians 16:3 (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:1, apparently such letters of recommendation were used frequently in those days!). In the early years of the Reformed churches members from elsewhere would be accepted upon their own testimony. But a number of unworthy persons who were looking for money and support would move from place to place and with pious talk gain the confidence of the believers. General and regional synods from 1571-1618/19 often spoke about these practices. To check this abuse, the National Synod of Dort (1618-1619) adopted an article in the Church Order of Dort about attestations (cf. our Art 61). Since that time attestations were given along with travellers like business men, boatmen, sailors, as well as itinerant preachers. It is the mutual understanding between our churches in the federation (and sister-churches) that we honour one another’s attestations (letters of testimony).

The Lord’s Supper celebration is a celebration *for* and *by* the *local* congregation as body of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:17-34). Every church and every body of office-bearers has a solemn duty to guard the holiness of the Supper of the Lord, and to restrain unworthy persons from increasing their guilt of sin by partaking of this holy institution (1 Cor 11:27f.; HC, Q&A 82). Hence, the consistory (or “body of elders,” 1 Tim 4:14) supervise

the members’ walk of life and examine those who wish to make public profession of the Reformed faith, before admitting them to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. They, also, supervise communicant members regarding their confession and life and, if found delinquent in doctrine or conduct, withhold them from the Lord’s Supper celebration. Thus they care for the spiritual well-being of the members of the congregation and they supervise the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Occasionally guests attend the service in which the celebration is taking place. The official participation policy in the Canadian Reformed churches is that only those guests are admitted who are members of a church that is affiliated with our churches and who have a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct (Art 61 CO). The same standards are to be applied to guests as the ones set for their own members!

In the course of time, the application of this rule has differed from church to church. In the event a guest doesn’t have an attestation (didn’t know there was a celebration), reliable members of the congregation (acquaintances, family members, etc.) could give a testimony for the guest; just a personal testimony of the guest is not enough. At other times a phone call with the guest’s home church would suffice. At the present time emails have been used as an attestation or as corroborating a testimony. When the guest arrived during the week prior to the celebration an interview with the brother or sister served to examine the motivation and knowledge of the doctrine of God’s Word. Guests belonging to sister churches which do not have the practice

of attestations (URCNA, OPC) have been interviewed as well regarding their status and membership and their “confession of the Reformed faith” (Art 61 CO). Complying with *their* practices, our elders will notify the guest’s home church of their participation in the Lord’s Supper. Although the practice of accompanying a request for participation with an attestation may be preferred (namely as a proactive way of supervising the table and its holiness beforehand, which is the responsibility of the local elders), our general synods have agreed that other ways can be approved as well.

In the bulletin of the Bethel congregation of Toronto, of which I am the pastor-emeritus, a statement is published on the Sundays with a Lord’s Supper celebration in which this policy is explained. It also states, “Please accept that by this policy we do not express any judgment on your personal faith or relationship with Christ.

Although we can understand that this policy is somewhat unusual for Christians in general in our time and age, we may be assured that by attending the service and *watching* the proceedings in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper you will still be edified through the working of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus gave the sacraments as *visible* signs and seals for the strengthening of our faith as we *focus* our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground for our salvation!”

*Is there something you've been wanting to know?
An answer you've been looking for?*

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. den Hollander
denhollanderw@gmail.com
23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0



Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on September 3, 2014

The Board of Governors met at CRTS in Hamilton, Ontario on September 3, 2014. All the governors were present at the meeting except Dr. A. Pol who had given prior notification that he would not be able to attend. Rev. R. Aasman opened with the reading of Philippians 2: 1-13 and prayer.

Memorabilia

In prayer before the throne of our heavenly Father we remembered the health and circumstances of Dr. N. Gootjes, Dr. J deJong, Prof. J. Geertsema, Sr. Faber, and Sr. Deddens.

Minutes, agenda

The minutes of the Board meeting held on January 15, 2014 were adopted. The agenda for the meeting was established.

Correspondence of note

- a. Press Release of the January 15, 2014 Board meeting;
- b. Letter to Casey Langbroek, an external facilitator, hired to lead a Strategic Planning Exercise for CRTS on September 4, 2014;
- c. Letter to Rev. D. Agema re-hiring him as an adjunct lecturer to teach a Catechics Course in the fall of 2014.
- d. Letter from the Senate informing the Board about credit adjustments for the B. Th. Degree.

Receipt of reports-material agenda items

- a. Report on visits to the lectures in February 2014 by Rev. A. Souman and Dr. A. Pol. These reports gave reason for thankfulness since the students are being taught in faithfulness to the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.

- b. An "Alumni Survey" along with the procedure for administering it was approved.
- c. The final version of the manual for the Pastoral Training Program prepared by Dr. A. DeVisser was received.
- d. Reports by the following professors were received for information: Dr. J. Van Vliet on his attendance of the Congress of Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies; Dr. G. Visscher on his visit to the Australian churches; Dr. J. Smith on his teaching at the seminary in Brazil; Dr. A. DeVisser on his visit to South Africa and Malawi.
- e. The principal gave an update on the CRTS Conference that will be held in January 2015. The topic will be eschatology (the doctrine of the last things).
- f. Dr. G. Visscher reported on his sabbatical (January – June of 2014).
- g. A proposal from the Senate regarding the January Interim was approved. The subject matter for the two weeks between semesters will follow a four-year rotation: Year 1: preaching; Year 2: Catechism Teaching; Year 3: Pastoral Care; Year 4: Missions and Evangelism.
- h. The Minutes of Assessment Day, May 28, 2014, were reviewed.
- i. Sr. M. Alkema led us through her Annual Report of the Assessment Coordinator.
- j. Next meeting of the Board was scheduled, D.V., for January 15, 2015 at 1:00pm.

Press release and closing

The completion of the Press Release was delegated to the Vice Chairman in consultation with the Executive and the Principal, and the meeting was closed with prayer and thanksgiving.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary,

*Rev. J. Ludwig,
Vice Chairman/Corresponding Clerk*



Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, September 12, 2014

Classis is convened at 9:00 a.m. with a word of welcome by the acting chairman, brother J. Torenvliet of the convening church (Rehoboth) who welcomes all present and followed with scripture reading from 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, further followed by prayer and singing from Hymn 53:1 and 2. The credentials of those attending are examined and found in good order by the delegates from Fellowship church.

Classis is constituted and the officers are appointed as follows: Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, chairman, Elder J. Torenvliet, vice chairman, and Elder R. Ludwig, clerk.

The chairman briefly reviews various items of memorabilia pertaining to the churches in this classical region.

The agenda is adopted with minor changes after which the peremptory examination of Candidate G. Brintjes commences, initiated by an examination of the required paperwork and documents. Candidate Brintjes presents his sermon based on Luke 21:1-4 after which the formal area examination proceeds. On the completion of the examination it is with joy to the Lord that Classis can affirm with the concurring advice of the Regional Synod deputies that Candidate Brintjes has sustained

the examination and the call from Bethel is approbated by Classis.

Various reports are received and reviewed.

Dr. G.H. Visscher is appointed as counsellor for Rehoboth church and Rev. J. L. van Popta is appointed as interim counsellor for Flamborough church during Rev. J DeGelder's absence due to travel.

Churches are questioned according to Article 44 C.O.

A proposal from Bethel church to overture Regional Synod to consider taking up contact with the Iglesia Presbyteriana Nacional of Chile is not accepted by Classis.

Correspondence Received: None.

Appointment of delegates to Regional Synod East to be convened November 12, 2014: Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, Rev. J.L. van Popta, and elders R. Ludwig and G. Boot. (Elders P. deBruin and K. Veldkamp alternates for all delegates in that order.)

Flamborough church is convening church for next classis.

Question period was held and made use of.

Acts of Classis and Press Release are adopted.

Closing at 6:00 p.m. with singing and prayer.

J. Torenvliet, vice-chairman at that time

Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario September 25, 2014 held at Brampton, Ontario

On behalf of the convening church of Brampton, Rev. M.H. VanLuik welcomed the brothers. The meeting was opened in a Christian manner. Rev. VanLuik mentioned some matters of memorabilia.

The convening church of the previous classis – Owen Sound – found the credentials to be in good order. The moderamen suggested by the previous classis took their places: chairman – Rev. T.A. Wierenga, vice-chairman – Rev. C.J. VanderVelde, clerk – Rev. M.H. VanLuik. The agenda was adopted.

The Subscription Form was read by the chairman and then signed by Rev. M. Jagt.

Question Period according to Art. 44 CO was held. All the churches answered “yes” to the first two questions. One church requested input in a matter other than discipline.

The convening church for the next classis is Elora. Date: Friday, December 12, at 9:00 AM. The suggested officers: chairman – Rev. D.G.J. Agema, vice-chairman – Rev. M.H. VanLuik, clerk – Rev. T.A. Wierenga.

Some appointments were made. Henry Bosscher is the treasurer of Classis Northern Ontario. His address is 143701 Sideroad 15, RR #8, Owen Sound, Ontario, N4K 5W4.

The following brothers were delegated to Regional Synod East 2014. Elders: Jerry Hutten, Calvin Lodder (alternates in this order: Herman Timmerman, Bernie Kottelenberg). Ministers: Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde (alternates in this order: Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Rev. M. Jagt).

Opportunity for questions was given. The chairman judged that censure according to Art. 34 CO was not necessary. He thanked the brothers for their good cooperation.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication. Rev. T.A. Wierenga led in prayer and then declared Classis closed.

*Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde
Vice-chairman at that time* **C**