

Remember the Enmity

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Clarion

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**DO WE SEE OURSELVES AS
SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD?**



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Remember the Enmity

*God's words in Paradise set the stage
 for an ages-long conflict between
 two groups of people*

It sounds like a strange word: “enmity.” Whenever I ask Catechism students what it means, mostly I get blank looks. It seems that we don’t talk about enmity so much nowadays. When I tell them it means “hostility” and shares the same root word as “enemy,” they start to get the picture. If a person feels enmity toward someone else, then they regard him as an enemy. There is hatred between them. Enemies are on opposite sides of a battle.

But what battle? And why talk about enmity? Shouldn’t Christians have open arms for everyone? Doesn’t God command us to love our neighbour and to do good even to our enemies? Yes, he does, but he also talks about waging a spiritual battle (Eph 6:10) which involves opposition from people (2 Tim 4:14). And the call of the gospel must go out to everyone but there comes a time when we must hold at arm’s length those who clearly reject it, at least as long as they do (Acts 8:9-24; Matt 18:15-20). The Lord Jesus personally urges us to understand and be aware of just how close our human enemies can be (Matt 10:34-39) and to always remember the enmity between them and us. In fact, it is God who put that enmity in place!

Enmity’s start

When did God do this? Back in the Garden of Eden, on the very same day our first parents fell into sin. As part of the curse placed over the devil (who had used the serpent), the Lord said to him, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). These are vitally important words, often described as the *mother promise* of the gospel. They speak of a most perilous conflict but one which ends with good news for God’s people.

The victor promised here refers ultimately to Jesus Christ. Eve (the “woman”) had many children through the generations, but eventually the LORD brought forth one special child to fulfill this prophecy. Think of the enmity he faced. The devil certainly hated Christ and tried from the beginning to kill him by the hands of Herod. When that failed, Satan later tempted him in the desert for forty days and nights. Later, he sent an arsenal of demons to plague God’s people. Together with the priests and the Pharisees, they hounded Christ in his ministry, but God’s promise held good. As the promised offspring of the woman, the Lord Jesus willingly suffered a bruising at the hands of the devil but in the end, through his death and resurrection, he dealt a crushing blow to the head of the evil one (cf. Heb 2:14)!

Enmity between whom?

But this enmity was not limited to Jesus and Satan. God’s words in Paradise set the stage for an ages-long conflict between two groups of people: the “offspring” or “children” of the devil over against the children of the woman. And who exactly are these two groups? How do we identify them? The following chapters in Genesis and the rest of the Bible show that a portion of the human race, in generation after generation, consistently hates God and takes it out on God’s people. These are Satan’s children – people like Cain, Lamech, Ham, Esau and later whole nations such as the Canaanites, Philistines, Egyptians, Edomites, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Romans. On the whole, these peoples lived in rebellion against the LORD and expressed hatred, disdain, and a desire to destroy those who love the LORD (e.g. see the summary in Ps 83).

The other group, then, are those who follow the example of mother Eve (and Adam) and place their faith in the LORD God, believing in that special promised “offspring.” They strive to love God and their neighbour and do good even to their enemies (e.g. Ps 109:1-5). It’s people like Abel, Noah, Seth, Abram, and later the nation of Israel. To be clear, the existence of such individuals and whole generations of believers is entirely due to the grace of God. Every human by nature is inclined to follow in Cain’s footsteps, but God in his love for his people would not allow that. He saved some and brought them back into his family.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

What is enmity? From Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer comes an editorial on the relationship between God’s children and those who do not believe. Not only what got us here, but what it means for our daily lives.

In a continuing series from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, there is an article from Rev. Anthon Souman on our sister churches in Scotland. We also have an article from Burlington covering the opening of a new school.

Issue 23 brings readers columns such as Education Matters, Clippings on Politics and Religion, Ray of Sunshine, and You Asked. There is also a Treasures New and Old meditation and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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Why enmity?

This helps explain why God would put enmity between two people groups, for at first it sounds strange. You might expect the LORD to want peace among all humans. Doesn't the Bible say that God is love? So how could he initiate hatred of any kind between people?

The problem was and is that ever since we humans committed that first sin, we showed our hatred for God and became friends with the devil, who himself was the arch-enemy of God. We believed Satan's lie that to disobey God would make us as wise as God, and in that moment we crossed from God's side over to the devil's side and became his *allies*. Our nature was now so corrupt we had no desire or ability to cross back over to the LORD, and so we were stuck in a rut, bonded to Satan as natural sinners and God-haters!

***You might expect the LORD to want
peace among all humans***

It was us (Satan and mankind) against God – and of course, that meant we were all in for eternal destruction. The holy God could never tolerate sin, so judgement would have to come. Right then, the only way for any human being to be saved from condemnation was to be snatched away from that satanic alliance and brought back into friendship with God!

Enmity's blessing

And this is the blessing of that divinely-imposed enmity! God desired to save some of the human race but first he had to break up that unholy alliance. The LORD used that enmity to place a wedge between Satan's followers and God's followers, to keep them apart. Where there used to be a partnership among all humans in league with the devil, now some humans were taken out of that relationship, placed into a covenant with God, and protected there in part by the enmity! The enmity, the hatred of Satan and his people, was a tool used by the LORD to keep his people from falling back into demonic partnership!

In fact, it's when God's people *forgot* the enmity and tried to erase it that we see them going back over to the devil's side and paying a terrible price. In the days of Noah, when the "sons of God" intermarried with the "daughters of man" then the line of faithful believers

was nearly wiped out. The whole human race, except Noah and his family, had rejoined Satan's camp – and so the LORD punished them with the devastating flood (Gen 6). Or think of Lot who moved into worldly Sodom and lost everything (Gen 18-19). Or take the Israelites who turned away from God's commands by bowing down to the golden calf (Gen 32) or intermarrying with the Moabites (Num 25). Because they aligned themselves with the rebellious children of Satan, God very nearly destroyed his own people. Only his unfathomable mercy prevented that – and their full punishment was suffered later by the Lord Jesus.

Enmity in the NT

This enmity did not stop at the coming of Christ. Not only did Christ face it head-on but he warned his followers to expect it in their lives too. He described his people as being distinct from the "world" – a way of referring to the children of the devil. Followers of Christ are "in" the world but are not "of" the world (John 17:14-16). Christians have every reason to expect that the world will do to them what they did to Christ: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

Maintain the enmity

We Christians need to remember this enmity and why it's there: to keep us from falling back under Satan's sway. That hostility is an aid to preserve us as faithful children of God who love him and show that by obeying his commandments. The dividing line between God's children and Satan's children is the same as it was since the Garden of Eden: obedience to God's will: "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10).

In love with the world?

As we become more affluent in our western society and more comfortable with western culture, we need to ask ourselves: are we slowly falling in love with the world? Do we as Christians still see ourselves as separate from the world, with a call from God to keep from being joined with people who are allied with Satan? This is the clear call of Scripture: "Do not love the world or the

things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Are we slowly falling in love with the world?

Or take what James writes to Christians who were blurring the line: “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Do we give thought to this warning? Do we speak with our children about being “in” the world but not “of” the world? And do we know how to restrain ourselves from taking on a friendship with the world so that we don’t slip back into enmity with God?

Culture and evangelism

It seems to me that we need to carefully think through and discuss the Lord’s call to keep separate from the world particularly in the areas of engaging our culture and practicing evangelism. We know that we are not to abandon the world and cluster together in colonies. We are to be a salt and a light within our society – yet our salt must not lose its saltiness! The cultural mandate to exercise dominion over the world still stands and with Christ on the throne we may have confidence in our labours. But then our labours must not ape the world but show the world that Christ is King! Do our co-workers

and neighbours see this difference in us? Or do we blend in and become unnoticeable?

We also know that Christ commands us to take the gospel to all nations, near and far. We live and work among unbelievers. We socialize and converse with such people in the hopes that the Holy Spirit will open their hearts to believe in Jesus Christ. Yet, how close do we get to them? And where do we draw the line in what we will do to “go along with” our unbelieving neighbour? Do we take seriously the risk that believers can be drawn away from the faith by a growing friendship with the world (see also the parable of the sower, Luke 8:4-15)? Do we keep in mind that not all who hear the gospel will convert? Some will remain permanent enemies of God – are we prepared to deal with that eventuality too?

Keep salty

So the goal must be for us to influence the world for the good, that is, for the glory of the Lord and the salvation of his chosen ones. But then we must take the warnings of the Bible seriously too, that we not get caught up in the desires and ways of Satan’s children and become like them. To do that, we need to be keenly aware of the dividing line. If we never discuss amongst ourselves the opposition between the devil’s people and Christ’s people, if we never speak with our children about the God-given enmity and its protective blessing, are we not setting ourselves up for disaster?

It’s natural for our sinful hearts to want to merge with the ways of our worldly neighbours. We don’t need to teach our kids to enjoy the sinful pleasures of the world – that’s everyone’s default. Can we, then, take precautions to avoid this? Let’s remember the enmity which God himself placed between the world and us and let’s keep ourselves salty. C





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The Fear of the LORD is the Beginning of Knowledge

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7)

Another year of instruction has begun at schools, colleges, universities, as well as at our Theological Seminary. It is all part of the pursuit of knowledge, yet we go about this differently than the world does.

Knowledge

Our century emphasizes gaining knowledge. This knowledge is derived largely from a process of observation and deduction. You study things and draw conclusions. Then you have a platform for action. But an accumulation of knowledge without biblical values to guide its use can be very dangerous. Think of the ongoing research in the realm of genetic engineering, or experiments that are being done with human embryos. Even unbelievers realize that if there are no ethical boundaries, bad things can happen.

When you develop knowledge without the fear of the LORD, it can become destructive. We need the “knowledge” as meant in the book of Proverbs to give positive direction in developing our talents and in working in the realms of nature and culture.

Wisdom

The concepts of “knowledge” and “wisdom” are closely related in the book of Proverbs. That’s why the

terms can even be used interchangeably. An example of this would be Proverbs 9:10, where the first part of the verse mirrors the first part of our text, substituting the word “wisdom” for knowledge: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of *wisdom*.” Without this starting point, what man regards as “knowledge” can become a tool for “unwise,” or “foolish” behaviour that is not born of love for our God or for our neighbour.

The fear of the LORD

Our text points to “the fear of the LORD” as “the *beginning* of knowledge.” If you want to have true knowledge, you must begin somewhere. The fear of the LORD can be called the point of departure for growing in knowledge. But you don’t just begin with “the fear of the LORD” and then move beyond it. It continues to be foundational. Just think of a house. First a foundation must be laid. That’s what you begin with. Having done that, you don’t leave the foundation and continue somewhere else. You continue to build on it. That gives solidity to the entire house.

What does “the fear of the LORD” refer to? After all, fear can be a crippling thing. Anyone who has a pho-

bia can assure you of that. Fear can, however, also be a positive force. A healthy fear of lightning can prevent you from taking a sailboat into the middle of a lake during a storm. What you know about lightning will influence your behaviour in a positive way. This will keep you out of danger.

When the Bible talks about “the fear of the LORD” it is referring to a healthy fear. The Bible teaches us things we need to “know” about our covenant God in order to have the proper fear of him, characterized by awe, reverence, and respect. Fearing the LORD will motivate us to pay attention to what God teaches. This is basic to the introduction of the book of Proverbs.

Knowing that our God is the LORD, Yahweh, the faithful covenant God, also opens up the way to loving and serving him with heartfelt devotion. Think of what Moses said in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to *fear* the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to *love* him, to *serve* the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?” **C**

For Further Study

1. How is the pursuit of “knowledge” referred to in Proverbs different than that of the world? Is it only about knowing different things or also about knowing things in a different way? Explain.
2. What is the difference between a healthy and unhealthy kind of “fear”? What does fearing the LORD involve?
3. If the fear of the LORD is the *beginning* of knowledge, do we ever leave this behind? Explain.
4. How is the fear of the LORD foundational for what you know and do in life?

Your Sisters in Scotland



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The Canadian Reformed Churches have a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (sister church relationship) with two church federations in the UK. These are the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (continuing). As their names already indicate, most of the congregations of both federations are in Scotland, although there are some in other areas of the UK and also in North America. The Free Church (continuing) considers itself to be a continuation of the Free Church of Scotland after a split occurred in 2000. Therefore the history of both federations is the same up until 2000.

History

On the website of the Free Church of Scotland (<http://freechurch.org/about/history>), we can read about the history of the church: “The Free Church of Scotland was formed in 1843, in a time when most of the evangelical ministers in the Church of Scotland resigned because of state interference in its internal affairs.” It is interesting to note that this happened around the same time that in

The Netherlands the Secession took place (1834), in a time in which the king of The Netherlands introduced a new church order (Algemeen Reglement, 1816) in the Dutch State Church (Hervormde Kerk). In Scotland, a system was established, known as Patronage, under which land-owners “could nominate and present ministers to congregations, irrespective of whether those ministers were evangelical or even whether the congregation wanted them. This was regarded by many as totally unacceptable. They understood the historic position of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland to be that the Church and State were independent in their own spheres and that they ought not to interfere in each other’s business, but rather help one another for the Christian good of Scotland.”

In 1900 the Free Church united with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church. After the abolition of Patronage in 1929, this church reunited with the Church of Scotland. A minority of the members of the Free Church, however, did not agree with the union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church and continued as the Free Church of Scotland.



Free Church Offices, The Mound, Edinburgh

In 1996 one of the professors of the Free Church College in Edinburgh was acquitted of charges brought against him. However, a group of members disagreed with how the General Assembly of the Free Church dealt with the complaints regarding misconduct that were brought to the assembly. When this group did not agree with the final decisions of the General Assembly, twenty-two ministers were suspended and on January 20, 2000 the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) was formed.

It was impossible for the synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches to determine who was right and who was wrong and as a result, the Canadian Reformed Churches continued relationships with both federations.

Free Church of Scotland

The Free Church of Scotland currently has over 100 congregations, with a total membership of over 13,000. Most of them are in Scotland, two in London (UK), and five in North America. Through the mission work of the Free Church, churches were established in India, Peru, and South Africa, which are now sister churches of the Free Church.

The Free Church of Scotland has the Westminster Confession as its doctrinal statement. The Church has a full time seminary in Edinburgh for the training of its ministers and other Christian workers.

Each year in May the General Assembly of the Free Church convenes. The Church has a Presbyterian system. This is explained on the church website as follows. “As a church we believe that every congregation is responsible for the spread of the good news in its own location, and yet we believe that every local congregation is connected to every other, comprising one church, belonging together. The Free Church expresses that connection in a Presbyterian system. That means that each local congregation is led by a group of elders (the New Testament Greek word for elder is presbyter, hence “Presbyterian”),



History

at least one of whom has been trained and given specific responsibilities for teaching and preaching. Together the local elders are known as the Kirk Session. Each local Kirk Session is represented at a regional level at a meeting called the Presbytery, and each Presbytery is represented at a national level at the annual General Assembly. In this way the Free Church seeks to ensure that we share a common vision, are able to offer support, and remain accountable to one another as members together of the Body of Christ, the church.

“In the past few months the Free Church has welcomed a number of new ministers and congregations from the Church of Scotland. The Church of Scotland has continued to walk away from the Bible in decisions by its General Assembly – most noticeably one of its Edinburgh ministers denied, from the pulpit, that Christ died for sinners” (quoted from their *Ecumenical Digest* October 2015).

Free Church Continuing

After the split in 2000 the Free Church (Continuing) sought for many years through the courts to get ownership of the central funds and properties of the Church, without result. In 2009 it was reported to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) that the Free Church (Continuing) had withdrawn its appeal of the civil matter pending. The Free Church (Continuing) note on their website (<http://www.freechurchcontinuing.org/about/history>) about the word “continuing” in their name: “We use this title to distinguish, solely for purposes of administration, the reconstituted Free Church of Scotland from any residual body claiming that title. We remain the Free Church of Scotland.”

The Free Church of Scotland and the Free Church (Continuing) have the same history, the same confessional documents, the same tradition, but now each go their own ways. The Free Church Continuing has just under forty congregations in the UK (mainly Scotland) and in North America.



Assembly 2014

Although the original reason for the split was a disagreement about how to deal with complaints against a professor, nowadays there are also other differences which make it humanly speaking unlikely that both federations will unite again. The Free Church Continuing differs from the Free Church for instance in that it emphasizes a worship in which they sing only the Psalms, and without the accompaniment of musical instruments. The General Assembly of the Free Church decided in 2011 to permit the use of hymns and the use of instruments to accompany the singing.

North America

General Synod Carman 2013 decided about both the Free Church and the Free Church (Continuing) to encourage the churches to seek out and strengthen ties with local North American congregations of these federations.

The Free Church has five congregations in North America. They are mainly situated in PEI and one in Livonia, Michigan. There is a church in Toronto which has the name “Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Toronto,” which was part of the Free Church of Scotland but decided to join the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) and was received into the RPCNA on October 14, 2015. The main reason as stated on their website (<http://www.epctoronto.org>) is that the Free Church of Scotland decided in 2011 to permit the use of hymns and musical instruments in the worship services.

The Free Church (Continuing) has six congregations in the US: in Metropolitan Washington, in South Carolina, in North Carolina, two in Missouri and one in Georgia. There is also a small church in Canada, in Smith Falls, Ontario.

Conclusion

With thankfulness we may see how Christ gathers his church all over the earth. The churches in Scotland



FCS Seminary

are two of the sister churches of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The Reformed churches in Scotland have a long history and Scotland was one of the areas which were greatly affected by the Reformation. Different from some other countries in Europe which played a central role in the Reformation and where the Reformed churches have almost disappeared, there are still vibrant and growing faithful and Reformed (Presbyterian) churches in Scot-



Worship

land. If you have an opportunity, either in North America or in the UK to visit a congregation of our sister churches, please do not hesitate to do so. As sister churches and also as individual members we can encourage each other and be encouraged by each other to remain faithful to the Head of the Church in a world which more and more turns away from its Christian heritage.



Free Church Continuing, Assembly





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Syria – The Christians who Remain

Syria, torn by years of civil war and the creation of the radical Islamic State, is in shambles. Especially Christians have had to endure enormous hardship. Since they enjoyed peace and religious freedom under President Assad, Islamic rebels perceive them as supporters of the Damascus regime. And the Islamic State shows no mercy to Christians. Consequently many Christians have fled from Syria. The total number of Christians in Syria, including refugees from Iraq, has been estimated to about 1.5 million or about six percent of Syria's population. It is thought that about half have fled. There seems to be very little future for Christians in the Muslim Middle East.

The situation is dire. The website christianfreedom.org reports that in a typical Syrian town "the streets are most dangerous after 3:00 p.m. – that is, unless it's a Friday, when few Syrian Christians dare to step outside their homes at all. In many Syrian towns, lawlessness has become the norm. When government forces aren't present, Muslims have been known to rob churches and kidnap, rape, or even kill Christian women. Innocent bystanders simply making trips to the store have been gunned down. Curfews have done little to make anyone feel safer or less fearful, so the Christian community simply bands together and prays."

Yet, some have stayed. Open Doors, an organization dedicated to helping persecuted Christians, described the plight of Christians on their website (August 31, 2015). It noted that although many had fled, some pastors and church workers made a conscious decision to stay "in the country torn apart by a civil war and the savage murders and kidnappings carried out by Islamic State (IS) extremists. Life is dangerous for Christians with daily shootings, regular bomb explosions and snipers in the streets. What makes Pastor Samuel and relief worker Fathi from Aleppo and Pastor Edward from Damascus stay?" (The names are fictitious to protect the identity of these Christians.) Many remain for two main reasons.

They have no money to leave or they feel called to stay to help the remaining people or their congregations.

One from the second group is Pastor Samuel who shepherds a Protestant church with 250 members. "Despite everything that has happened, we are all trying to do our best to serve the people who remain and provide God's hope in a hopeless situation. . . . In many situations the only thing we can do is pray. Psalm 91 comforts me and gives me strength."

Another one who stays is Fathi, a Christian who helps refugees through local churches supported by Open Doors. He said: "God protected me. That keeps me going. I see how we can make a difference through the work we are doing. When bullets hit left and right of you, when buildings crash, and when you fear for your life, the bigger picture helps us to continue. We need to go on. I am happy to see it is a joint effort of different churches and denominations. It is not about me."

A pastor in Damascus acknowledges that "it depresses us to see people depart. Though many have left, the church is still full. Many new people are coming to church. That is very encouraging. We see the hand of God at work." As the Christian Freedom website reported: "Despite rampant fear and uncertainty, many Syrian Christians are ministering to Muslims in need." These are especially young people who have become disillusioned and frustrated. And so even in these circumstances, there are opportunities for the gospel.

We in the free West have very little real idea of the suffering that is endured. But hearing these Christian voices from inside war-torn Syria gives us a little glimpse of what God is doing in that country. Amidst all the violence and the persecution of Christians, the Lord upholds and encourages his own, who in turn reach out to Muslims. We need to remember these believers in the Islamic world of the Middle East and pray for them. **C**

Opening of Grace Christian School – September 8, 2015



*This is a picture of the sign for our school.
It is a temporary sign, since we are in our current
building only temporarily.*

When the doors opened on Tuesday, September 8 at Grace Christian School in Burlington, it was a momentous and long-awaited event! We would like to share with you some of the excitement from this first day, and a bit of the story leading up to it.

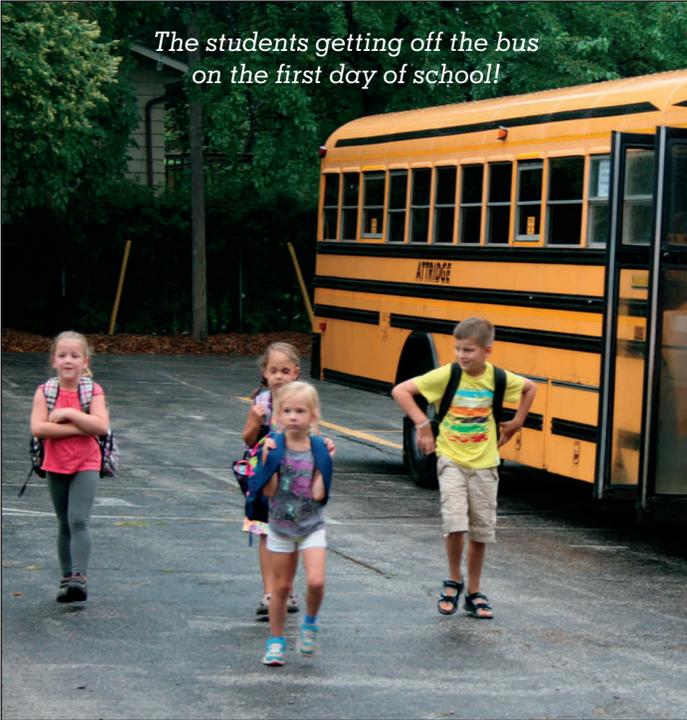
When John Calvin School was opened in 1962 in Burlington, Ontario, it operated with the goal of assisting Reformed parents in educating God's covenant children for a life of service to God's glory. As time passed, the student population grew, and it became necessary to open Covenant Christian School (CCS) in Flamborough in 1987. CCS in Flamborough and JCCS in Burlington (the school was renamed "John Calvin Christian School") both operated successfully, but after about fifteen years, it was becoming apparent that demographics were changing in the Burlington/Flamborough area. The idea of combining the two school societies again was considered more and more seriously, as a feasible solution to the challenges of operating two smaller schools and the deterioration of the CCS building.

It wasn't until June 17, 2014 that many years of efforts to combine the two schools finally came to fruition with a vote in favour of amalgamation. Soon after, an interim board was formed, and under its direction the process of planning to open our amalgamated school began, while the two schools operated separately for one final year. In addition to the existing boards and committees required to operate CCS and JCCS during the 2014-2015 school year, many joint committees were formed to fulfill widely varying mandates (e.g. IT, library, hiring, transportation), all with the common goal of operating as one school starting in September 2015. Staff from both schools met each month to begin sharing ideas and resources and to become acquainted. Along with the Education Committee, the staff members also had the important job of ensuring that the adjustment from double-graded to single-graded classrooms would not result in any significant repetition of curriculum. At the same time, progress was being made on planning and fundraising for our new building, which we hope to build on the same property in Flamborough (specifically, Millgrove) where CCS stood.

The members of the school society also had the opportunity to provide input in connection with choosing the school's name, logo, and theme text. Our school name, Grace Christian School, is a constant reminder of God's mercies and blessings that we experience each and every day. In our theme text (I Peter 4:10) we are called to use our gifts to serve one another as good stewards of this grace that God has freely given us.

We won't soon forget the sweltering heat on September 8, when Grace Christian School first opened its doors at our temporary location in Burlington, in the building formerly known as John Calvin Christian School. Hundreds of excited students, teachers, parents, and other family members swarmed into the school building and filled the gym for our opening assembly. Even the ex-

The students getting off the bus on the first day of school!



treme heat did not dampen the energy in the building, or prevent our voices from resounding with songs of praise to God, by whose grace we have been saved. Our principal, Mike Vandervelde, began by thanking God

for bringing us to this memorable day. He spoke briefly about God's grace, and how we are called to use the gifts God has given us to serve each other constantly. He concluded with a scientific demonstration to reinforce the message that we can only ward off sin if we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

With these opening words in mind, the students and teachers proceeded to their classrooms (with as many portable fans as they could muster), and the first year of teaching God's covenant children at Grace Christian School was underway. Since then, the whole school has been buzzing as new friendships are formed and new routines are established. Most importantly, the students – whether they are in Junior Kindergarten or Grade 8, or anywhere in between – are being educated in a way that constantly directs their hearts and minds to see the power and love of their almighty God, and calls them to share the gifts of his grace. This is in keeping with our aim: to foster an environment of educational excellence where all students may achieve their learning potential, grow in spiritual discernment, and glorify God in their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that Grace Christian School may continue to flourish under God's blessing, and that he alone will be glorified as we seek to educate the children he has given us. Thanks be to God for his blessings and his grace!

C

The whole student body, along with some parents, at our opening assembly





Antithetical?! Really?! (Part 2 of 2)

Keith Sikkema
Full-time lecturer at Covenant
Canadian Reformed Teachers
College, and secretary for the CCMC
when its report was prepared.
sikkemak@gmail.com

In Part I, I explained that characterizing Reformed education as “antithetical” was problematic. I ended with a brief reference to the “ongoing reformation” concept of the antithesis. In this part, I illustrate that further, relate how the CCMC report connected to Holwerda and Schilder, and clarify how recognizing the antithesis still makes a difference.

Liberated pillar

After World War II, while Dutch worldview pillars crumbled, our people built their very own, with K-12 schools, a trade union, a political party, a newspaper, a travel club. . . over 200 organizations in all. They narrowly defined “antithesis” around the true church and binding to the Scriptures and Three Forms of Unity, mistrusted common grace, and stressed the covenant. They resisted intimate cooperation with sincere other Christians, appeared self-sufficient and smug, and, for instance in politics, effectively stalled progress towards good goals. Some wanted more interpretive space, the churches split, and the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) were organized around 1970. In Young People’s, we studied Scripture and topics like Ecumenical Theology (1971), Eschatology (1972), Emancipation (1975), and the Cultural Mandate (1977). One sermon linked Revelation 13 with the developing EU, and, feeling like a pilgrim in a waning world, I read future-gazers like Orwell, Huxley, van Riessen, the *Club of Rome*, and Toffler – and emigrated. By 1990, as society became increasingly secular, the validity of the pillar was questioned, and an unsettling process began of reassessing bearings and redefining boundaries. Soon, membership limitations and other restrictions were relaxed. Many now scorn narrowness, the seminary is open to new hermeneutics, churches pursue reunification with the NGK, and, to some at least, the antithesis seems alien. This bolsters some, alienates others, and concerns churches abroad.

For years, despite an outward-looking name, the CanRC also had an isolationist reputation. Today, we still value restricted school membership, but acknowledge the Lord’s work in ICRC and NAPARC, eagerly seek unity with the URCNA, and take on outreach projects like Streetlight, VBS, Steppingstones, and Campfire! Forty years after Rev. VanDooren’s call, the balance has shifted from approaching others with misgiving to considering them with godly kindness; we accept that unity is different from uniformity, as in Article 50 of our Church Order. Without undermining Belgic Confession Article 29, we also support organizations like MERF, ARPA, Word & Deed, Edu-Deo, Wycliffe, and MAF.

Schools with the Bible

Liberated leaders did not advocate narrowness. After 1944, the people first kept supporting *Schools with the Bible*, which (as the Reformed response to public schools *without* the Bible) had served people of different Reformed churches well for decades. In 1941, for instance, Prof. B. Holwerda had stressed that parents should not enroll their children out of custom or tradition, but because of their baptismal promises before the triune God. About the antithesis, he exclaimed,

I wish that the theme of the great *antithesis* (i.e., enmity) would seize us again; that we would once again see that all of life on this earth, in all relationships, ought to hallow God’s Name. Then we would remember what Christian schooling is, and go for it! Then we would be stubbornly confident again like our fathers: Here we stand, and we can never do otherwise, for the sake of the Lord’s Name here on earth! And we will never give our children for anything else.

Holwerda drew from Psalm 8 that God brings glory due his Name and silences Satan through the children of the covenant. This may sound absurd, but this God is the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth himself, the



caring Father of those bought by Christ's blood, through whom he promises ultimate victory and sanctification by his Spirit. The antithesis God set (Gen 3), acknowledges Satan's power, but also his total demise, and *therefore*, parents could trust God, confidently make baptismal vows, and send their children to a *School with the Bible* with a clear conscience.

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In 1944, synodical decisions regarding the covenant raised questions about the grounds for Holwerda's call to cooperate in Christian schooling. Many liberated themselves from the "synodical church," and not a few observed an *ethical conflict* in educational cooperation: How can the *School with the Bible* be trusted if it does not build on God's covenantal promises? Calling for ongoing reformation, as noted, they ended up drawing a tighter antithetical line, and, among others, built their own schools. In education it seemed inevitable, but Holwerda did not generally favour the inward-focused mindset: The antithesis calls for discernment, witness, *and* action.

Dr. K. Schilder repeatedly rejected calls to abolish notions of antithesis, as in the battle-song of Psalm 8. He reiterated Kuyper's plea not to become insular: Christ claims every square inch. He expected opposition, or antithesis: Some do, others do not accept Christ's claim; some have

the mind of Christ, others don't. God's covenant people, who do, are assured by the Word and the Sacraments of God the Father's providence, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sanctification. That spells victory over Satan, and should drive us "into the street, into the army, into the school, under or above ground, but always toward labour for the kingdom of heaven." In faith, covenant people can face the antithesis, and honour God, acting on their cultural mandate and in their three-fold office.

Four markers

Around 2003, as part of defining a curriculum vision, Canadian Reformed schools sought to recapture their identity, and identified four markers of Reformed education: It is covenantal, confessional, *antithetical*, and pursues unity of purpose between home, church and school. The report was concise about all of them, and explained the schools' *antithetical* character as follows:

By means of the covenant God binds His people to Himself; at the same time He separates them from all who submit to the rule of Satan. In recognition of the antithesis which God Himself put down (Genesis 3:15), the school, together with the home and the church, instructs and equips covenant children in and for the service of the LORD in all areas of life as prophets, priests, and kings (LD 12). In the education of covenant children, therefore, the Lord ordains praise for Himself and silences the foe and avenger (Psalm 8). Within this context, the school, like the home, seeks to recognize God's claim on His children by remaining faithful in its task to educate.

There is a close link between the first three markers: In the covenant of grace, God sets his people *apart* as his own, calling them to *confess* his Name, *live* for him in gratitude, *fighting* against the world, the devil, and our own flesh as godly prophets, priests, and kings (LD 12). Without the covenant, they would not be set apart, there would be nothing to confess, there would be no antithesis, and there would be no hope. Until Christ returns, these words of the covenant must be taught to the next generation, so they may know that God continues to care for them and for his creation and "they may serve their God" (BC, 12). *Recognizing the antithesis* in education calls for equipping students to actively and publicly live in grateful, confident, discerning, and faith-

ful submission to the Lord, as prophet, priest and king; to fight against Satan, the world, and their own flesh; and, while perhaps enjoying some fruit of their labours now, to expect the ultimate victory in and through Christ when he returns, to God's glory. For Reformed education, recognizing the antithesis goes beyond mere shielding students from an ungodly world, and yet stops short of having them expect to transform secular culture and restore God's creation themselves.

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The difference

Recognizing the antithesis makes a difference. While far bigger than personal battles, it is to recognize that children of believers, by nature children of condemnation, are *set apart* for salvation by God, in Christ, to be on his side, and to live for him. Believing parents seek a school that helps them equip their children for such life, knowing and embracing their call to serve God in their three-fold office. In such schools, recognition of the antithesis begins plain and simple with Genesis 1-3, and, as students mature, it presents increasingly complex calls for battle-line discernment, mindful that they belong to God, must love him and their neighbour, and hate evil. Confessing that this really is the work of the Spirit, such schools also seek to foster the death of the old nature and the coming-to-life of the new, the desire to seek the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ, and the renewal after God's image (BC 14; HC LD 33, 44; CoD III-IV:11-12, V:2).

Training prophets, priests, and kings to join the battle, and to embrace their task to honour God in and for this world, is an immense task. Recognition of the antithesis underlines this, and we need each other's prayer

EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Alberta on October 27, 2015 and declared eligible for call:

Brother Gerard Veurink

AVAILABLE FOR PREACHING AND TEACHING

Called to serve a church in Australia (waiting for immigration papers) **David Winkel** has fairly recently moved back to Ontario and is available to serve the churches there with pulpit supply and/or catechism teaching in the short and long term.

Please contact 289-456-7652, 905-388-7652 or davidgwinkel@gmail.com

CHURCH NEWS

and support, from parents, colleagues, principals, the school's governing bodies, and everyone in the covenant community. Pray, then, for good understanding between parents and teachers, for caring relationships among staff, for good leadership skills, for the Lord's blessings on curriculum work and R&D endeavours, and for generous contributions from all. Pray that handbooks may be developed with the school's ultimate task front and centre, so that those who rely on them will remember the battle lines. In governance, elect board members who seek the Lord's guidance, so that policies may direct everyone to be antithesis-aware in discipline, bus-routes, maintenance, safety, hiring, and communications. May the singing of Psalm 1 remain as an antithetical guidepost and encouragement for action for the next generation and the glory of God.

***May the singing of Psalm 1
remain as an antithetical guidepost
and encouragement for action
for the next generation and the
glory of God***

Conclusion

To "recognize the antithesis" is a fitting marker of Reformed education. The antithesis is God's work, in which he claims covenant children for himself and gives them a bold and public office as prophets, priests, and kings. Our schools are set apart from others by helping parents to prepare their children for that office in community, in which all stakeholders know that our prayers and support aim to help the schools to stick to their task, even as they seek the Lord's guidance. Knowing the battle-lines, may we sing Hymn 53 with gusto and conviction. **C**



Leona Hofsink

Leona is very grateful for all the birthday cards she has received from all over Canada in her mailbox.

She would like to take this opportunity to also let everyone know she has a new box number and it is Box 2601, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0.

Leona has been living semi-independently for four years now in her own apartment called Sparrows apartment in Smithers BC.

She is receiving ten hours of support a week from two different agencies and loves having dinners with five of her friends that live in same building, five days a week.

Thanks to the great education she received from birth (at Smithers Child Development Center, elementary years at Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed School, and her high school years at Bulkley Valley Christian School, all in Smithers, BC) she is able to live a such a great quality of life!

Leona currently works at three different jobs and loves it. She also thoroughly enjoys Special Olympics bowling, swimming and boccee ball in her community. Leona also visits a drop-in program in the community when she is not busy. All in all she is a busy lady, and is always happy.



December

- 1 Sandy Spyksma will be 34**
c/o Peace Haven Homes
6 Oneida Drive, Brantford, ON N3S 7X8
- 10 James Kamminga will be 31**
c/o Cornerstone Christian Care
Box 367, Carman, MB R0G 0J0
- 15 Frank Zegers will be 57**
c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 16 Julie Kamminga will be 27**
c/o River Road Place
440 River Road, Winnipeg, MB R2M 3Z9

Congratulations to all of you celebrating a birthday. May the Lord bless you in this coming year, and may you have an enjoyable day with family and friends.

December is also the month of the birth of our Lord Jesus. Let us all remember this in the coming month of December and the sacrifice the Lord Jesus has made for us. Amongst all the celebrating of birthdays and family get-togethers, let us remember his true and unimaginable love for us.

**“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”**

Isaiah 9:6-7

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.

Rachel Vis

731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476





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

Q

When Jesus Christ died, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two” (Luke 23:45b). This “symbolizes Christ’s opening the way directly to God” (NIV notes, Heb 3:8). Matthew 27 and Mark 15 state that the curtain “was torn in two from top to bottom” (Dutch: *middendoor*, halfway) while the earth shook and holy people were raised to life.

In a sermon, a minister demonstrated this by moving one hand from far above his head downward. Visualizing such a vertical rip, however, only results in having another portal in addition to those at either end of a curtain. One would need to move the curtain aside to see what it was hiding. A horizontal tear, however, would make everything totally visible, because the bottom half dropped to the floor. (The mercy seat with the cherubim was less than half the height of the curtain.)

Therefore, the question is, can a clearer translation be possible? For example: “torn in two, top from bottom;” “torn in half from one side to the other;” or “the curtain was ripped from the bottom.” For this earth-moving event made it clear to God’s people that the promised Messiah had indeed completed his task and that the priest after the order of Melchizedek had now been disclosed by “opening the way directly to God” (Heb 6:10).

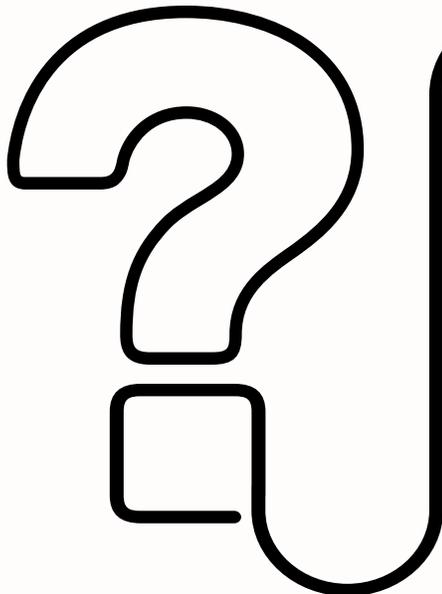
A

The question posed here and the suggested translations given, show that the questioner became confused somewhat by his problem with the *visualizing* of this event as well as by his misunderstanding of the translation of the Dutch *middendoor*. Starting with the latter, it’s true that a tearing *middendoor* could be horizontal as well as vertical. Before considering “clearer” translations, therefore, we should first look closely at what the text says (which is what the minister did!): “And, behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from

top to bottom.” That’s the clear and correct translation, which allows for no other alternatives, whether someone has difficulty visualizing this or not. The questioner’s difficulty appears to be that when the curtain was torn, “one would need to move the curtain *aside* to see what it was hiding.” That, however, was *not* the main point here; the fact that *the way to the holy of holiest* was opened, that’s the issue! Actually, if the curtain had been opened a bit further aside, nothing could have been seen either, because the ark (and the mercy seat, which the questioner mentions) were not there any longer. The place itself was empty, yet its holiness maintained!

Thus, the main point in the text and the earth-moving significance of this event was therefore indeed that we see here the hand of God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He tears the curtain of the temple from top to bottom. Indeed, we read here about a curtain of special significance. It closed off the access to the holy of holiest; that is, to the actual dwelling place of God. This curtain, or veil, had the greatest liturgical significance. Even though the ark had been gone since the exile and the place was empty in the Lord's time, it still was the place where God wanted to dwell among his people and where once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter with the blood of the goat. It was the foreshadowing of the heavenly sanctuary of God. Now, all at once, this mighty curtain was torn in two; and that from above to below, as if an unseen hand severed it by starting at the top.

Christ had come to open up the way to God and restore the communion with God, a new and living way (Heb 10). The curtain had to be removed between God and us, and the cherubim (embroidered on the curtain reminding the people of the cherubim in Paradise) had to be moved aside in order that God and man would dwell together again. Our Saviour made himself, his body, into the curtain, i.e. the symbol, of man's sin and sinfulness that separated man from God. His body was torn as he gave himself over to the sword of the cherubim in order to fulfil the Scriptures and satisfy the justice and holiness of God. As we read in Hebrews 10:19f, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart." 



**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. denHollander
denhollanderw@gmail.com**

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Press Release of Classis Manitoba convened in the Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg on October 9, 2015

1. On behalf of the Emmanuel Reformed Church of Denver, Elder G. Hagg called the meeting to order. He requested that the brothers sing Hymn 3:1, 5, read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, and led in prayer. He welcomed all present, in particular Candidate H.J. Vanderhorst, and the deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. A. Souman, as well as Rev. W. Slomp who was willing to be present to help with the examination of Candidate Vanderhorst, and Elder H. Nagtegaal who was present as fraternal delegate from the Providence Reformed Church.
2. The credentials of the delegates were examined by the brothers from the convening church and reported to be in order.
3. Classis was declared constituted.
4. The following officers were appointed:
 - a. President: Rev. S. Vandavelde
 - b. Vice President: Rev. J. Poppe
 - c. Clerk: Dr. A.J. Pol.
5. For memorabilia it was mentioned that the Lord took home Rev. van Beveren, emeritus minister of the Providence CanRC in Edmonton, on October 8 at age 94. The church at Denver remains vacant, and Winnipeg Grace has extended a call to Candidate Rick Vanderhorst, which has been accepted.
6. The agenda was adopted after a few adjustments.
7. The deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. W. Slomp and a fraternal delegate, Br. Henry Nagtegaal from the Providence Reformed Church (URCNA) in Winnipeg were seated.
8. At this Classis Candidate H.J. Vanderhorst, who has accepted the call extended to him by the Grace Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, presented himself for a peremptory examination. Classis examined the documentation, and found all to be in order. Since Dr. A.J. Pol is Candidate Rick Vanderhorst's father-in-law, he with the advice of others recused himself from participating in the examination. This left only two ministers in Classis to conduct the examination. The examiners, in consultation with the deputies of Regional Synod, decided to ask Rev. W. Slomp to help with part of the examination, and Rev. R. Aasman volunteered to administer one exam.
9. Candidate Vanderhorst proceeded to read Luke 7:36-50, and to deliver his sermon proposal on this text. Classis deemed this sermon proposal sufficient to continue with the rest of the examination, and the deputies of regional synod gave their concurring advice.
10. Candidate Vanderhorst was examined in exegesis Old Testament, exegesis New Testament, knowledge of contents of Holy Scripture, doctrine and creeds, church history, church polity, ethics, church polity, and diaconiology. Classis went into closed session to evaluate the exam. It deemed the exam sufficient, and the deputies of Regional Synod concurred, opening the way for Candidate Vanderhorst to be ordained as Minister of the Word. The support for the Vanderhorst family was examined, and deemed to be sufficient.
11. The president read the Form of Subscription, and Candidate Vanderhorst was asked to sign it, indicating his willingness to preach and teach the Word of God as summarised in the Three Forms of Unity. The president read from 1 Peter 5:6-11, led in a prayer of thanksgiving, and invited all present to sing from Psalm 147:1, 4. He thanked the deputies of Regional Synod for their presence at Classis and giving concurring advice in the examination of brother Vanderhorst, and Rev. Slomp for participating in the examination. Classis adjourned and an opportunity was given to congratulate Candidate Vanderhorst. A certificate of admission to the ministry of the Canadian Reformed Churches was issued. Classis appointed Dr. A.J. Pol to be present at the ordination of Candidate Vanderhorst and pass on its greetings.
12. In closed session, the church visitors reported on a visit to the Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver. The visitors' report was received with thankfulness, and prayer was offered for this church.
13. Brother J. Kuik gave a verbal report from Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes / Presbyteries. The deputies have met with a previous deputy to be informed of recent developments in this work. The deputies recognize a need to be active in visiting the neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries, and are planning to do so this coming spring.

14. Letters of greeting were received from the stated clerks of Classis Central US (of the URCNA) and of the Presbytery of the Dakotas (of the OPC).
15. A proposal was received from Winnipeg Redeemer that a letter be drafted by Classis to introduce our new Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classis and Presbyteries to the RCUS. This was done with the OPC and the URCNA by the last Classis. Classis approved this proposal and the clerk will draft a letter.
16. Brother H. Nagtegaal brought greetings from the Providence Reformed Church. He spoke of God's mighty deeds, of the waywardness of our society, and the need for the light of the gospel to continue to be proclaimed. He expressed thankfulness at the outcome of Candidate Vanderhorst's examination, and expressed appreciation for the preaching of our ministers and the close bond between our churches. Brother Nagtegaal was thanked for coming, and prayer was offered for our sister churches.
17. The Committee for Aid to Needy Churches presented a report. Due to an unexpected decrease in the exchange value of the Canadian dollar the committee does not have sufficient funds to meet Denver's needs this year. The committee requests an additional assessment of \$6 per communicant member for this year, and Classis approves of this request. The Committee also outlines Denver's needs in the coming years, especially if they call a minister. In connection with this the committee raised part of their mandate, which is that from time to time Classis needs to review the financial viability of the church of Denver. It noted that although there has not been as much growth as hoped for, the congregation has shown resilience in the face of difficulties. In order to facilitate the calling of a minister in 2016, Classis approves an assessment increase from \$50 per communicant member in 2015 to \$60 per communicant member in 2016. The delegates from the church of Denver expressed their sincere thanksgiving for the on-going support of the churches in Classis Manitoba. The president led in prayer, remembering the church of Denver and praying that in due time the Lord bless this congregation with their own pastor and teacher again.
18. The Church for Auditing the books for Aid to Needy Churches (Winnipeg Redeemer) reported that the books were found to be in good order.
19. The Committee for Students of Theology presented its report. The churches continue to encourage our men to consider studying for the ministry. Various young men who have expressed interest in pursuing studies at our Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary are being mentored.
20. A proposal was received from Carman West to change the rules of Classis, requiring candidates presenting themselves to Classis for either a preparatory or peremptory examination to present three sermons instead of the current one. Then if the sermon presented at Classis is deemed insufficient, Classis can still make a decision to proceed with the examination if the other sermons are deemed sufficient. Classis decided not to adopt this proposal.
21. Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held.
22. Appointments.
 - a. The convening church for the next classis is the Grace Canadian Reformed Church. The classis is scheduled to be held, the Lord willing on December 11, 2015, at 3:00 pm. Alternate date: March 11, 2016 at 3:00 pm.
 - b. The suggested officers for the next classis are:
 - i. President: Dr. A.J. Pol.
 - c. Various standing committees, examiners for ecclesiastical exams, classical deputies, and church visitors are appointed.
 - d. The following delegates were appointed to Regional Synod West, November 2, 2015: As ministers, Dr. A.J. Pol and Rev. J. Poppe, with Rev. S. Vandevelde and Rev. H.J. Vanderhorst as first and second alternates; as elders Les Vanderveen and Wayne Versteeg, with John Toet and W. (Bill) van Beek as first and second alternates.
23. Personal question period was held.
24. No censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was necessary.
25. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.
26. The president requested that the brothers sing from Ps. 147:6 and led in closing prayer.

For Classis Manitoba,
October 9, 2015

J. Poppe, Vice-president at that time 