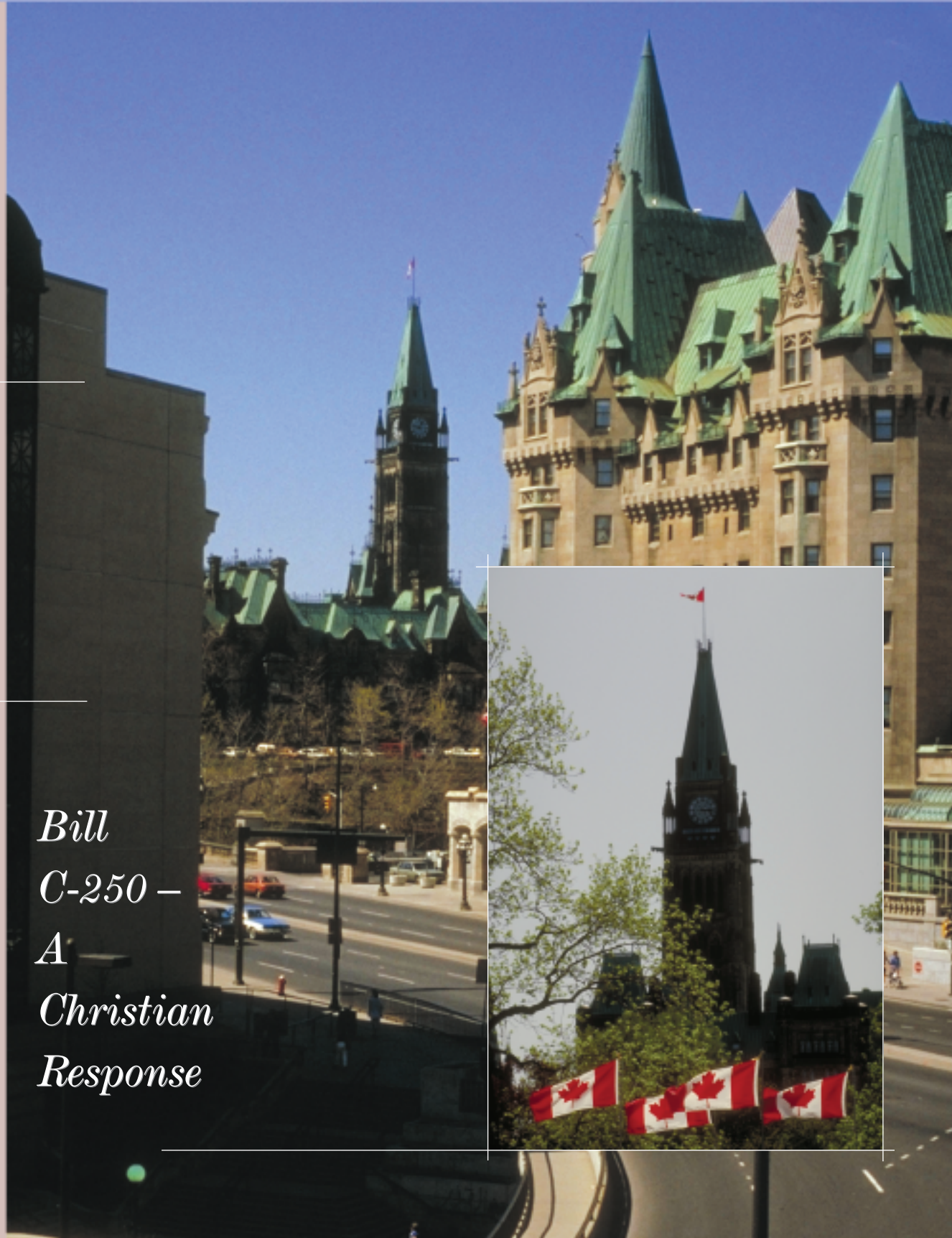


*The
Supremacy
of
Jesus Christ*

*A Work of
Urban Mission
among the
Portuguese-
speaking
people in the
Greater Toronto
area*

*Bill
C-250 –
A
Christian
Response*





W.B. Slomp

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Bill C-250: A Christian Response to Homosexuality

The judges of today are the ones who will determine the ethical standards for society.

On April 28, 2004 Bill C-250 became law. This bill, introduced by Svend Robinson, member of Parliament for Burnaby-Douglas, now makes it a crime to express “hatred” towards a person’s sexual orientation. This bill was pushed through Parliament and the Senate in spite of the fact that a lot of opposition was expressed against this law. Individual Christians, and many organizations and groups have sent thousands of e-mails and letters, and made numerous phone calls to the various members of Parliament and senators to prevent this law from passing. However, these protests fell on deaf ears.

The problem is that with this law hatred is not clearly defined.

Why is the liberal government so interested in having a bill such as this passed? One senator to whom I wrote responded to me as follows, “Homosexual Canadians are still subject to hateful speech and acts, including violence. Canada prides itself on protecting its vulnerable minorities. Extending the hate propaganda law to protect homosexuals fits squarely in that proud tradition. It harms no one, and offers help to those who need it.”

Harm done?

Is it true that this bill harms no one and that homosexuals are subject to hateful speech? Well, that depends on how you define “hateful speech.” For the problem is that with this law hatred is not clearly defined. Since the Charter of Rights and

Freedoms became law judges are no longer called upon to interpret the law, but to define it.

The National Post of May 4, 2004 quotes one of Canada’s top judges, Quebec Chief Justice Michel Robert, “We are becoming the new priests of civil society, in a way, because we are making decisions about same-sex marriage... about euthanasia and abortion. We are making decisions about many other very controversial issues which have a very large moral content and moral connotation.” He says further, “The courts defined what is permitted and what is not permitted in terms of abortion in this country, and the same thing might happen with the same-sex marriage question.”

The Role of the Courts

And so, it is a matter of definition by the courts. The judges of today are the ones who will determine the ethical standards for society. Judge Roberts muses that lawyers are not trained to do that. He sees the need for further training of law students, stating, “Because when I was trained as a law student, the Charter did not exist, and I was told how to interpret a contract. You don’t prepare a law student to play this role (under the Charter) the same way you prepare a law student to interpret a contract, and decide if this word means ‘this’ or ‘that.’” He recommends that students should be required “to study the social sciences and humanities, such as sociology, psychology, political science and philosophy.” To him then the key to setting proper ethical standards in society is the right education.

Is the right education the key? Does education give you the insight into the proper behaviour? If that were the case then the most moral people in society would be the best

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educated ones. We know that that is not true. That is not true even of students of theology. It is not the case that the better you know the Bible, the more ethical your conduct. O sure, knowledge is needed, but it has to be the right kind of knowledge. It has to be a knowledge that includes knowledge about yourself and about God. A university degree or a college degree will not give you that kind of knowledge.

Inside . . .

On April 28, 2004 Bill C-250 became law. This bill now makes it a crime to express “hatred” toward a person’s sexual orientation. Rev. W. B. Slomp writes in his editorial about the implications of this bill.

From Rev. W. den Hollander we receive an article about a venture of Urban Mission that has developed over the past two years in the Toronto area, one in which the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church is involved. One of the very interesting aspects of this mission work is that it was a cooperative effort between Canadian Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian churches. This is in keeping with the basic goals of sister churches.

The Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton has undergone some major renovations. In recent years, more congregations have been doing this. Buildings which have served us well are starting to show their age. In some cases, perhaps all, they were built in times of financial restraint. We also built schools and other important institutions. Thankfully the Lord has blessed our churches both spiritually and physically. Have a look at what Hamilton was able to do under the blessing of God.

Rev. J. Moesker reviews the well-known Alpha course. This is relevant for the readers of *Clarion* also because Rev. D. Moes is currently introducing us to the Emmaus course.

We have several of our regular columns, *Treasures New and Old*, *Children’s Catechism* and *Education Matters*. We also have two letters to the editor.

RA

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Humility

Such knowledge you can only gain from the Bible. The Bible teaches us that we are all corrupt human beings. We are programmed to sin all the time. That knowledge we must have about ourselves in the first place. It is easy to point the fingers at others, including homosexuals. We can quote the Bible to show others what horrible creatures they are. This is what some have done recently by putting advertisements in the various newspapers, quoting Scriptures passages that do nothing more than condemn homosexuals, without putting these words within the context of the Scriptures themselves. This comes across as self-righteous, and shows lack of humility, leaving those condemned without hope. We should remember that the Lord condemns all sin. For who is able to judge others? Only he who has a deep consciousness of sin.

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:3-5, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Who can say that he is pure in that regard? On the basis of the above passage and numerous others we all stand condemned. If we are to be accused of promoting hatred, then it should be clear first of all that it is our own sin that we hate. That must be evident to all with whom we come into contact, including our secular neighbour.

We may not provoke others to anger by self-righteous indignation.

However, we must also have knowledge of God. God is a merciful God. He is patient with us. He is slow to anger. He wants us to realize our own sin and misery. And He also wants to use us as instruments in his hands to bring others into that insight. Why? So that we will turn to Him and ask for forgiveness. He wants us to plead on the basis of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants all sinners to do that. We must ask ourselves how to lead others, including homosexuals, to Christ. Judgmental and hateful language will certainly not accomplish that.

The Church as a Haven of Compassion

In our churches those who struggle with the sin of homosexuality should find a haven of compassion and understanding. For we all have our struggles with our own sins. God calls each of us to daily repentance. But that begins with each of us personally. It is only when we are able to see our own sins that we may point out the sins of others. We may not provoke others to anger by self-righteous indignation.

It is easy to point the fingers at others, including homosexuals.

There is much wrong in today's society. God's laws are transgressed with reckless abandon. Who knows where that will lead? Will it become impossible for us to function as Christians in this country? The future of the church in this country is uncertain. God, however, promises that He will continue to gather his church until the end of this age.

In the mean time, however, how do we respond to sin all around us? By promoting the right kind of knowledge.



Supreme Court of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario



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The Supremacy of Jesus Christ



MATTHEW 13:52

He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God.

Colossians 1:15

He (Christ) is the head of the body; the church.

Colossians 1:18

There is a parallel between the above verses: the first speaks about Christ's relationship to God and the second about his relationship to the church. With regard to Christ's relationship to God Paul writes, "He is the image of the invisible God." Man has struggled with the fact that God is invisible. Moses had to warn Israel not to make images of God, for the Lord is invisible to the eyes of man. Moses reminded Israel, "You did not see God; you only heard his voice."

If we cannot see God, then how can we know God? When one follows the progressive thought of the Modern Protestant European Philosophers from 1700 to the present, it is striking that in their quest for a knowledge of God, they struggle with the invisibility of God. The early philosophers began with the premise that there must be a divine power so that they looked for points of contact in which it might be possible to recognize God's power breaking through into the world.

The early philosophers were optimistic that they could see God's power breaking through here and there but by late 1800 and early 1900, they became more and more skeptical that there really was any point of contact with the divine power. Many even said that there is no divine power and that God is simply the figment of man's own imagination.

While many continue this futile search for the invisible God in their own wisdom, the Lord has revealed Himself in the most marvellous ways. While Moses reminds Israel that the Lord remained invisible to them, yet God did reveal Himself on many occasions through his great power. God became visible to Israel through the mighty deeds He did for them. But Paul's point to the Colossians is that the Lord God has now made Himself visible through his Son. Christ is the image of the invisible God. God is no longer in a different (spiritual) realm that we cannot enter, but He has come to us in a visible form in his Son Jesus Christ. He is our Immanuel, that is, God with us.

In the Old Testament God tabernacled among his people in the temple in Jerusalem. The temple became a visible sign that God was really living in their midst. But when the Lord Jesus came and lived among us in our human flesh, God now tabernacles among us in an even greater way. The relationship between God and his people suddenly became richer, for Israel was able to see the very Son of God with their own eyes.

When Paul writes that Christ is the "image" of God, he means much more than that Christ simply represents God. Jesus Christ does not just represent God; He is God. Paul returns to this thought in verse 19 when he writes, "For God was

pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him." The powers of God and all the attributes of God reside in Jesus Christ. In accordance with God's good pleasure, the fullness of God's essence and glory resides in the Son of his love, and in Him alone. Therefore the Lord Jesus is not just a good man, but He is himself Almighty God. It is in Jesus Christ that the invisible God has become visible, so that Israel is able to see Him who is invisible.

The philosophers asked, "What can we know about the invisible God?" They are still looking for those points of contact between this world and the invisible God. Their eyes are closed to the wonderful point of contact that God has made with mankind in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the invisible God has been made visible to our eyes. Therefore, Christ must have supremacy in our lives.

Paul's argument progresses in verse 18, when he writes, "He is the head of the body, the church." As there is a relationship between Jesus Christ and the invisible God, there is also a relationship between Jesus Christ and the church. This relationship between Christ and the church is like that of the head to the body. As the body is connected to the head, so Paul says, the church is connected to Jesus Christ. This means that the church is one with Christ Jesus. While Jesus Christ is in heaven

today, yet we are united to Him by faith, so that we are one in Christ Jesus. This is the source of our greatest hope and joy. The connection between the invisible God and us is God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord God became visible in Jesus Christ so that through Him we might be restored to a living relationship with Him.

Over against the false teachers who teach that salvation is only possible by living a good moral life to make one pleasing to God, Paul reveals that salvation is only possible through a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Only in

Jesus Christ can you become one with God. Therefore Jesus Christ must have the supreme place in the life of God's people, for He is the one through whom the Father in heaven enters into a living relationship with us. Paul warns us against the deceptive thinking that if a person lives a good moral life, God will be pleased with them. A good moral life must flow out of our relationship with Jesus Christ who must have the supremacy in our lives.

For who can stand before the wrath and anger and power of the invisible

God on his own? Who is good enough to earn a place in heaven? No one! Therefore we need to confess the supremacy of Christ Jesus, for it is in Him alone that it is possible to be united with the Lord God. It is your relationship by faith to Jesus Christ that will determine your life with the invisible God. Therefore our commitment is not to a moral religion, but our commitment is to Jesus Christ. In thanksgiving we submit our whole life to his excellent rule and loving care. To Christ belongs all the honour, glory and praise.



W. den Hollander

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A Work of Urban Mission among the Portuguese- speaking people in the Greater Toronto area

In the summer of 2001, a Brazilian family moved from the city of Ipatinga in the province of Minas Gerais, Brazil, to the Toronto area in Ontario, Canada. They were the Rev. Jorge Barros de Souza, his wife Carmem, and their three children, Ana, Rafael, and Elisabeth. Their immigration to an English-speaking country was a dream come true! For many years already they had aspired to an extended stay in a country like Canada. It was facilitated especially by the fact that Carmem is a professional nutritionist, who had worked in that capacity for the government of Minas Gerais. As it turned out, she had no

problem obtaining a similar position with the government of Toronto, to work among the Portuguese-speaking people in Toronto. It was the Reverend Barros' intention to become part of one of the two churches in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) with which his Presbyterian Church of Brazil was affiliated, and as an assistant pastor to become involved in the work among the Portuguese-speaking people.

Upon their arrival in Toronto they went ahead to work out the plans they had made. Carmem got off to a good and enjoyable start in her profession as a nutritionist, while Jorge found work in

the construction industry. Meanwhile they investigated the two affiliated churches, the one Reformed and the other Presbyterian. What they found, however, was much liberalism in the one and some strong Pentecostalist practices in the other. Rev. Barros, on the other hand, is a man who loves the Word of God, and who's always been attracted to a faithful preservation of its preaching. The faithful proclamation of the Scriptures and the development of a reformed way of worship are dearest to his heart! In fact, for the degree of Master of Theology he wrote his thesis on "the means of grace" and defended a

Reformed view of liturgy. Hence, they started to explore whether there would be another congregation in which they could worship in a way that was consistent with their understanding of the Word of God and the Reformed confessions.

Contact with Bethel

Through the providence of God they came in contact with the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto. During his training at the Seminary of Recife, Brazil, Jorge had become acquainted with the Rev. Ralph Boersema, a missionary of the CanRC in Recife, who also taught some courses at the seminary. Rev. Boersema has a sister in the Bethel Church of Toronto, and so a connection was made, leading to the introduction of the Barros family to the congregation in Thornhill. They've been worshipping there ever since. They expressed themselves in a very positive and appreciative manner about the Reformed order of worship, about the faithfulness to the confessions, and the functioning of the communion of saints. In November 2001, therefore, they requested membership of the Bethel congregation for sister Barros and their children. Since the Rev. Barros received a leave of absence of the Presbytery of which he was a member in Minas Gerais, Brazil, he would have lost his ministerial status if he had joined the Bethel church. In regard to the participation in the Lord's Supper, however, Jorge remained a standing guest until June 2003, when his ministerial status expired.

Meanwhile much transpired in the way of his calling here in Canada. Initially he started out working in the building construction, followed by a time of employment in an egg-processing plant, after which he became associated with a dry walling company. His calling in life, however, lies in a different field: the



The Barros family left to right: Rafael, Ana, Jorge, Carmem, Elisabeth

ministry of the gospel. Instrumental in his search for the way of the Lord in regard to a new calling as a minister of the Word were the many visits that an elder of the Bethel Church, br. Cris Diomedi (a Spanish-speaking member) and I had with Jorge and his family. We explored the possibility to have Jorge make a transition to the Canadian Reformed Churches, but it appeared that it would not be feasible to make this transition in the time still available before his ministerial status would expire. Contacts were made with a minister of the newly established Reformed Churches of Brazil to see whether a transfer could be facilitated through them. Jorge had contact with a local church plant of the PCA as well. The ways were opened, however, when contacts were made with the Home Missions Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In May of 2001 the Canadian Reformed Churches had formally established a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC, which provided the parameters for the Rev. Barros to transfer his ministerial status and pursue a calling as minister of that federation of churches. So that's the route we decided to follow.

Contacts with OPC

The latter contacts led us to the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario and its Committee for Candidates and

Credentials. On April 1, 2003, the Rev. Barros, br. Diomedi, and I met with this committee; also present at this meeting were members of the Home Missions Committee and the Church Extension Committee. There the possibilities were discussed to engage in a cooperation and partnership for a work of Urban Mission among the Portuguese-speaking people in the GTA. This meeting was very fruitful and encouraging. The Committee for Candidates and Credentials unanimously agreed to pursue the procedure toward receiving the Rev. Barros as a minister in the OPC. Due to the time-constraints a time-schedule was adopted to facilitate this process. Hence, on May 6 this committee examined Jorge for some five to six hours, followed by another examination before the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario on May 16. He sustained both exams very well and he received a ministerial "status under suspense," pending the finalization of some more exams with a view to the work of a missionary evangelist in the midst of the OPC. Meanwhile contacts and discussions were under way with the Church Extension Committee to explore the possibility and development of a work of Urban Mission in the GTA.

During the time in which all these developments took place, the Rev. Barros had started the work among the Portuguese-speaking people already. The

Barros pursued an intense orientation and investigation of the Portuguese community – “Little Portugal” as it is called in Toronto – reaching out to it and sharing their newfound riches with new acquaintances. In October 2002 the Tom and Naedja Truffi family, who came from a Baptist background, started to attend the worship services in the Bethel Church faithfully. This was the beginning of the Urban Mission project! Rev. Barros pursued a great number of contacts, initiated Bible Study with some of them, and organized a study group for the Sunday-afternoon in which the Scriptures were explained and expounded with the use of the Heidelberg Catechism (and the sermons as delivered in the afternoon-services at Bethel!). The Truffis embraced the Reformed faith in its entirety, including the doctrine of infant baptism, and on May 25, 2003, publicly professed their faith! They also presented their son Andre for baptism. Also, through contacts between Council and the “Barros Group,” Council appointed a Board to coordinate and organize this work of Urban Mission formally. Attempts were made to find a suitable location in “Little Portugal,” to set up an ESL program, and develop a Bible Study class.

Over the summer of 2003 the Rev. James L. Bosgraf, a Regional Home Missionary of the OPC (stationed in Wheaton, IL), and the Church Extension Committee of the Presbytery worked among the “agencies” in the OPC that support and promote missions of one kind or another, to see whether they could get funds together to support this work of Urban Mission. At the same time, we worked out an “Agreement for Partnership and Cooperation” in the development of this project of Urban Mission, so as to facilitate a good model

and set-up in which to work together as Canadian Reformed Church in Toronto with the OPC Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario. In November Council adopted such a proposed Agreement and approved a Budget, in which to take responsibility for fifty percent of the cost of the project. In Toronto, therefore, the Board also worked hard to obtain the required funds for this Urban Mission. In the time span of only six weeks the Board received the required funds and pledges to meet the budget for the first year of operation! All these efforts were made to facilitate a call to the Rev. Jorge Barros for this work of Urban Mission. As the project was gaining momentum and more and more people became enthusiastic about this unique venture of cooperation, the Lord blessed the efforts richly!

Call to Rev. Barros

On Saturday, January 17, 2004, the Covenant OPC of Kilworth, ON, as calling church and supervising body, brought a call to the Rev. Jorge Barros before the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario in its meeting in Komoka, for the approbation of this call. After the Presbytery discussed the call and examined the stipulations and arrangements, including those through the partnership and cooperation with the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto, the Presbytery gave the desired approval! Then the call was “placed in the hands of the Rev. Barros,” who subsequently accepted the call to be an evangelist among the Portuguese-speaking people in the GTA. Then on Friday, February 6, 2004, at the Credo Christian School in Woodbridge, Ontario,



Left to right: Rev. den Hollander (CanRC), Rev. Barros (OPC), Rev. Bosgraf (OPC)



Left to right: Reverends Zekveld (URC), Pennings (URC), Berends (CanRC), Rebandt (OPC), Wallace (OPC), den Hollander (CanRC), Barros (OPC), Bosgraf (OPC), Ferguson (OPC), Ludt (OPC)

under the auspices of the Covenant OPC of Kilworth and the Presbytery, the Installation Service took place, in which he was installed in that position. At that occasion I had the privilege of proclaiming the Word of God from 2 Timothy 4:1-5, speaking about the urgent apostolic charge to preach the Word. The Rev. Jim Bosgraf gave the charge to the Rev. Jorge Barros, using Titus 2:1-10 for his address.

It was the end of an important chapter in the life of the Barros family. It was also the end of the first chapter in the history of the work of Urban Mission among the Portuguese-speaking people in the GTA. This is a unique venture in many ways, most remarkably however in the sense that it provides an opportunity for a Canadian Reformed Church to

engage in a work of Mission in cooperation and partnership with an OPC congregation, so to give hands and feet to the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Evidently, there is much reason for thankfulness for these developments and progress! The Lord has been guiding the Barros family in their desire and pursuit of maintaining the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, as they and we are called to gather in the unity of the true faith. (Eph. 4:4-6) The Lord has also directed us together in seeking the way in which the Rev. Barros could pursue a calling in the ministry of the Word in Canada.

In all these plans and pursuits we desired to work in obedience to God's Word and in accordance with his will, as

confessed in our Reformed confessions. In the course of the development of our partnership we encountered some situations and occasions in which we needed to align the differences in church polity, and the Lord blessed the sincere efforts to remain faithful to our respective systems of government. Yes, the unity of the Spirit, the oneness in faith, and the united resolve to do God's will in this unique situation were evident in our cooperation to this point. May the Lord also bless this Urban Mission as it starts a new chapter of active outreach and cooperation in the work among the Portuguese-speaking people in the GTA! Please, remember this ministry in your prayers that it may continue to grow and may serve to the praise of God's glory.



J. Wiskerke van Dooren

Lord's Day 12

Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.



Our queen is Queen Elizabeth. She has been queen for a long time, for more than fifty years. When she became queen, she was crowned. You may have seen a picture of the moment when a gold crown was placed on her head. On the occasion that she was crowned, many other ceremonies happened as well. One was that she was anointed with oil.

That is a very old ceremony. That happened already with David, when he would become king. He was anointed with oil poured out of a horn and onto his head. And the priests in Israel were anointed before they began their work as priests.



And after that they could work in temple, bringing sacrifices to God and praying to God on behalf of the people.

Why were they anointed with oil? It had a nice smell, but it was not for that reason that kings and priests were anointed. The anointing with oil meant that they would receive strength from God for the hard work they did. God would help and guide them in their work.

But what does this have to do with Jesus Christ? Remember that last time we spoke about the first name, Jesus? Now we want to know more about his second name, Christ. That name has to do with anointing. When oil is poured on someone, he is called anointed. And that is the meaning of the name Christ: someone who is anointed, the Anointed.

But wait a second, when was he actually anointed? It may sound strange, but he was not anointed with oil. And yet, he is the Anointed. How is that possible?

God in heaven did not need oil to show that he had given strength to Jesus. It happened when Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist. Then the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove came on him. For the people it looked as if a dove came down from heaven, but in fact it was the Holy Spirit who from heaven came down on Jesus. That means that the Holy Spirit would give him strength for the hard work he was going to do.

Actually, that work has three parts, for he was also a prophet.

As a prophet he told the people many things about God and his will.

As a priest he sacrificed himself for our sins.

As a king he rules the world so that God's plans are fulfilled. And we are named after him. He is called Christ, and we are called Christians. That is a good name to have! It means that we belong to Jesus Christ, and more and more want to follow him in all we do.



Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church Renovations

The Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church building in Hamilton, Ontario has undergone extensive renovations. The building that had served us well since its dedication in 1973 was expanded and completely renovated from top to bottom. From concept to completion took a mere nine months and the expectant congregation was fully involved each step of the way.

From the street you see an attractive two-story entrance lobby with lots of glass to let in the light. Drive around to the parking area and an overhanging carport projects over the rear lobby where through wide stairways and hallways you can go up to the main auditorium or down to the nursery and fellowship hall. Each lobby is a welcoming space enhanced by attractive murals.

The auditorium is completely renewed and expanded to increase the seating capacity by about twenty percent. Good use of colours, wood, and glass make it a very pleasant auditorium. A beautifully renovated and expanded organ highlights the front wall above the pulpit and a grand piano sits majestically to one side.

Downstairs, the fellowship hall has doubled in size and has become a very attractive and open space. It is well served by a beautiful, well-equipped kitchen. Further down the hall is the

nursery – one of the best improvements of all! It's colourful, bright and cheery, and best of all, full!

Meeting rooms, a church office and library, sound, video, and security surveillance all were part of a very comprehensive package. The original building was virtually gutted, and the entire building has a fresh, new, improved

look about it. We're delighted with the outcome!

In January 2004 we were able to officially dedicate our refurbished facilities. An organ and piano concert featuring Andre Knevel and his son Andrew beautifully demonstrated the lovely new organ and piano. An official Open House on the 24th allowed us to mark the occasion in a formal manner.





Reverend Clarence Stam began the festive ceremony with the biblical reminder from 1 Peter 2 that the church is not a building, but a people, a congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Henry Nienhuis, church Treasurer and Building Committee member, took us on a brief historical, and sometimes hysterical, tour of the Cornerstone congregation: our early days in the Labour Temple as recent immigrants in the early 1950s, years of rented facilities, our first purchased building downtown on West Avenue, to our present location in 1973. In our fifty-three year history we have been served by the ministry of Rev. W. Loopstra, Rev. W. Huizinga, and Rev. C. Stam. We also have two retired ministers, Dr. K. Deddens and Dr. J. Faber, and our current missionary, Rev. A. DeGraaf in Maceió, Brazil.

The Vice Chairman of the Cornerstone Council, Br. Art Witten, made formal presentations to the members of the building committee and thanked them for their fine work. Br. Shaun DeJonge, the project coordinator, responded on behalf of the committee and cited the excellent cooperation that he and the committee experienced, both from our local authorities at City Hall and from the construction manager, Br. Mike VanDasselaar. Many trades people were involved in the project, at least seventy-three different members of Cornerstone and her sister churches. Their expert workmanship and their generous contributions of time and talent made for a most pleasant cooperative enterprise. Hundreds of volunteer hours paid dividends not only



in controlling costs but in adding the value that only kind hearts and willing hands can bring. The place looks lovely because it was done lovingly.

Br. Tim Nijenhuis was given opportunity to explain the concepts that he incorporated into the attractive murals at each entrance, and then he, at the piano, and Br. Brian Vanderhout at the organ, entertained us with a musical interlude.

We were also graced with the presence of the major of the City of Hamilton, Mr. Larry Di Ianni, who offered

his sincere congratulations, and reiterated the comments of Rev. Stam, that our church is much more than a building. He thanked us for our regular prayers for his government and wished us well in our new facilities.

We've had a few weeks now to enjoy our new facilities: a bright, refreshed auditorium, a vastly improved fellowship hall, kitchen and nursery, etc., etc. We praise the Lord for many positive improvements.

Renovated from top to bottom. But the cornerstone remains the same.



J. Moesker

Alpha Course

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A few years ago I bought a book entitled *Telling Others*, written by Nicky Gumbel who is a minister in the Anglican Church. He came to the Christian faith later in life and developed an existing evangelism course to what it is now: the Alpha course. It has become wildly popular, and various churches in Canada are now involved with giving an Alpha course.

What is the Alpha course? According to the Alpha Canada website it is: ... a ten-week opportunity to explore the validity and relevance of the Christian faith for our lives today. It is a practical introduction to the basics of Christianity with loads of opportunity for debate and discussion. The style of Alpha is informal, friendly and non-pressured – a style which seems to be appreciated in Canadian culture.

This course is for the churched as well as unchurched. Each week the participants meet together for a meal and for a talk on topics such as “Who is Jesus?” “Why Did Jesus Die?” “How Can I be Sure of My Faith?” and “Does God Still Heal Today?” This is followed by small group interaction. There is a day or weekend retreat midway through the course, which focuses on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Thousands of Alpha courses are now running in many countries and it has been translated into many different languages. Alpha originated at Holy Trinity Brompton – an Anglican church in London, England over twenty years ago. The basic outline of the course is contained in the book *Questions of Life* by Reverend Nicky Gumbel.

It sounds good! In The Netherlands this course is in discussion as some of our sister churches have embraced it, others have adapted it somewhat for outreach and for church members who want to “brush up” on the Christian faith, and still others have rejected it as not useable for Reformed churches.

In the February 7 and 14 issues of the Reformed Dutch periodical *De Reformatie* (Year 79, Numbers 18,19) Rev. B. Luiten wrote critically about the Alpha course. We can learn from his comments. He is positive about the intent and method of the course, and he acknowledges that there is a definite demand for it. However, he is critical of Alpha’s content, as it has a distinct charismatic and evangelical flavour. Some of the main characteristics of the evangelical movement which he lists are (all translations from the Dutch are mine, jm):

- Accepting Jesus is central, but also a one-time event. It becomes a kind of station that has been passed. Reconciliation doesn’t come back again, isn’t central in worship.
- In practice the Holy Spirit is central, with his gifts by means of which the believer can be recognized. The Holy Spirit makes one able to do much! In practice man has to prove himself again. . . The gifts of tongues and healing are maintained in a relatively timeless way.

Over against this, Rev. Luiten places the main characteristics of the Reformed church:

- When we accept Jesus, we are and remain sinners who live out of God’s grace. The daily confession of sin and guilt along with the petition for forgiveness just as necessary as the prayer for our daily bread.
- The Spirit does not stand central, but He makes Jesus central (John 16:14). He brings you to Jesus, every day. Jesus is our life. He fills us with who He is. The Spirit connects us with Jesus, makes us share in his attitude. In this way we are renewed in our actions, our thinking, our love, etc. Christ renews us after His image (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 32).

Rev. Luiten notes that in the course lessons 7, 8 and 9 are devoted to the Holy Spirit, but it is never emphasized that He makes Jesus Christ the central point of one’s life. In Lesson 7 there is no attention for the fact that the Spirit continually opens the eyes to sin and misery, and that in this way He constantly brings us to kneel before the cross of Golgotha. Instead, we find a lot about the power and the special gifts of the Spirit. Rev. Luiten points out that (John 14:15-20) the Spirit is always closely connected to the Son, and doesn’t act independently



Church News

Accepted the call to the church at Rockway, Ontario:

Rev. C.J. VanderVelde

of Yarrow, British Columbia.

Called (a second time) by the church of Carman-East, Manitoba:

Rev. R.E. Pot

of Orangeville, Ontario.

from Jesus. He always places Jesus at the centre of attention. Rev. Luiten concludes:

The conclusion of this lesson should be that we live in the age in which Jesus lives with us and in us through his Spirit. This is the way He lets us share in his life in which death has been overcome. This is how He fills us with new powers and possibilities, and the boldness to use them.

Lesson 8 of the Alpha course is about the work of the Holy Spirit. Rev. Luiten has the following to say about this chapter:

The main word in this lesson is “rebirth,” which is, of course, right on the mark. Only, this is worked out in a one-sided way, in the direction of helping, experience, intimacy, unity in God’s family and gifts which we receive. This doesn’t require criticism as such. On the contrary, we could learn some things from this. But why doesn’t the introduction begin with the *depth* of rebirth? Read Ezekiel 36:24-28, and discover what it says there. We are dead in ourselves. Our hearts are like stone, lifeless and hard, because we have forsaken God. But God sprinkles us with water to purify us. And the Spirit creates life where there was death. He changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh which beat for God. This is a matter of life from death, being *born anew* out of water and the Spirit. Jesus refers to those words of Ezekiel in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1-13), in order to make clear to him who He is. Being reborn out of water and the Spirit is receiving life from God, out of grace in *Jesus the Saviour* while you were still dead. . . How can it be seen that someone is born again? In the sincere confession of Jesus’ death as the

source of our whole life. This is summarized in 1 John 5:11-15. This is very important!

Rev. Luiten then deals with lesson 9 of the Alpha course, which is about becoming filled with the Holy Spirit. He writes:

The sad thing about lesson 9 is that Jesus isn’t even mentioned. What do people who are filled with the Holy Spirit do – for example, the apostles at Pentecost? *They testify about Jesus!* In all kinds of languages. But in this lesson the tongues and signs themselves are apparently more important than Jesus.

The Alpha course, with all its good points, suffers more often from a basic neglect of Jesus Christ, according to Rev. Luiten. He discovers a similar problem when it comes to Alpha’s approach to Bible study and to prayer.

He appreciates that the Alpha course accepts the Bible as God’s inspired Word. However, he states:

What I would like to add to that is that Jesus says concerning the Bible: it’s all about me (John 5:39). Even if his name isn’t mentioned (yet), it’s about who He is, what He does, what He earned, etc. The Bible is not a collection of stories, but it is revelation. God makes Himself known, in Jesus, to all creation which is lost in sin. . . Bible reading is therefore always: meeting Jesus, accepting Him in faith.

As far as prayer is concerned, Luiten finds a good discussion about prayer as worship, confession, thanking, and asking. However, Luiten remarks that more discussion is needed in connection with prayer:

For in the Alpha course the emphasis in the discussion about prayer is on asking, with the result that the participants easily get hung up on the

suggested problem of why your prayer isn’t always “heard.” All kinds of solutions and suggestions are given which are worth discussing. A sinful life or a wrong desire can block the answer to our prayer. That’s true, as James clearly shows. However, you can’t let seekers leave with uncertainty about whether their prayers will be heard. That conflicts with the “amen” with which we conclude: God has much more certainly heard my prayer than I feel in my heart (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 52).

You can overcome this uncertainty by not waiting for an answer as such, but by remembering that your prayer is an answer. . . In this vein it’s important to distinguish between what God has and has not promised us. He promises to be our Father in Christ. He promises to wash us with the blood of his Son, and to fill us with his Spirit. He also promises us his love, his faithfulness, his nearness. He promises to hold on to us, to carry us, to keep us. He promises us eternal life. He doesn’t promise us material prosperity, health, healing, work, marriage, children, etc. He also doesn’t promise that we will never have to deal with war, violence, crime, abuse, accidents, disasters, etc. On the contrary, as long as we are sinful people, we share in the effects of sin, in the complete disruption of creation, in the suffering

of this age (Rom 8:18-23). Therefore we need to concentrate in prayer on the first category, to “receive what He has promised” (Heb 10:35-39). Those are all things which God surely and certainly wants to give us, to that we say amen, convinced that He will answer. Besides that we may ask for all sorts of things which are not promised us, but which do seem good to us. And we pray then, trusting that God can give what we ask, but also acknowledging that He can go a different way with us. Then we pray for his nearness, also if He goes that other way. God’s grace will always be sufficient to live out of (2 Cor 12:8,9).

This distinction between what is and what is not promised doesn’t come to the fore in the Alpha course. . . This becomes problematic when, in lesson 13, prayer for healing is discussed with examples from Scripture about the miracles of healing God can give. Here the fact that healing from sickness here and now isn’t promised to us is completely lost from view. . . Ultimately we will receive everything with Christ, on his day, also the renewal of our bodies (Rom 8:32). It’s only a question of time and the right order: first a new heart, then a new body.

With this in mind, Rev. Luiten notes that the Alpha course confuses prayer “for Jesus’ sake” and “in Jesus’ name.” Prayer “for Jesus’ sake” is speaking to the Father as children in Christ and asking for things we believe we need, if it is the Father’s will. Prayer “in Jesus’ name” means asking for what Jesus has taught us to pray, asking for what is promised us in Him. This distinction is confused in the Alpha course, and again Jesus, who is the way to God and who has earned what is promised to us, is not kept central.

Luiten gives a final example in which Jesus is apparently neglected, namely in the area of resisting evil. He appreciates the reality of the spiritual fight against the devil in the course. However, he adds: At the same time I wonder as I contemplate this lesson: why weren’t the victory of Christ and our sharing in that victory not taken as the starting point? As it is, I as believer stand alone in the battle. Undoubtedly we can stimulate each other to fight. That’s what the Alpha course is about. But the discussion evening passes by and that can leave a big hole. According to me, what is important in this battle is that we have a powerful Lord who goes before us, and our resistance is never a lonely business. No enemy can take away what Christ has put in our hearts, since He Himself watches over it (John 10:28). We have little strength, but He holds the door open for us (Rev 3:8). It’s a matter of keeping Jesus’ Word.

And there is something else. Fighting against Satan is not enough. Neither is fighting against your sins. Imagine that you would win that fight every once in a while. You’d still end up with a kind of emptiness, because you may not do what you by nature would like to. How can you keep that up? Jesus warned about this danger. If He frees the house (the heart) of the evil one, we may not leave it standing empty. An empty heart cannot be defended! Without fail a multitude of evil spirits will return, and your latter state will be worse than your former (Luke 11:24-26). In other words, the best defence against the evil one begins with the contemplation of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ – his love, his faithfulness, his help, His surprising guidance over the years. As He fills your heart, there is

increasingly less room for the evil one there. And in particular, your desire for sin decreases.

Rev. Luiten comes to some conclusions about the Alpha course. He remarks:

Actually the Alpha course gives us a clear picture of the contents of the charismatic persuasion. Accepting Jesus is just as important as it is with us. But subsequently Jesus doesn’t play a central role. That place is for the Holy Spirit. And maybe, I should say, it is for the believing person who, filled with the Spirit, begins a new life with amazing powers and possibilities. We identify with some of that, but this doesn’t satisfy. That’s why I find it difficult to work with the Alpha course. I myself would not have chosen this method. If you uncritically go along with this, it’s only a short step to the evangelical church.

However, Rev. Luiten asks what the appeal of the Alpha course is. The booklet used isn’t much. It can’t be the key to its success. It’s the organization. He writes:

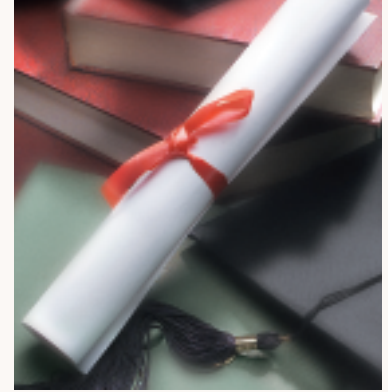
It’s the design: the attention for each other, the meal, the discussion, the sharing of faith and issues of faith in a safe environment and in such a way that non-church people can participate. That’s what’s needed! Most of the participants are Christians and church members, so evidently there is something in the Alpha course which is not found in the church. That gives reason for reflection. In this it becomes clear that in the church we could mean much more for each other as well as for others outside. We can also organize meals, and paying attention to each other in the life of faith can warm the hearts! That warmth is what is being sought!

That’s maybe something to think about. . . !

Judy Kingma

Miss Judy Kingma is a part-time instructor at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College and a part-time curriculum writer for the League of Canadian Reformed Schools in Ontario.

Goals of Reformed Education and the Curriculum¹



There has been considerable discussion about the unique identity of our schools not only here in North America, but also among Reformed educators in Europe and Australia. There are of course always reasons why a certain topic keeps resurfacing. Are we finding it more difficult to justify the separate existence of our own schools when there are so many alternatives? Or, as John Hull suggests, are we disturbed by what appears to be a gap between our theory and our practice? Why can't we, after so many years, get it right? These and many other questions form the background to taking up Hull's challenge to describe education that is faithful. What I propose to do is to outline four characteristics that could serve as organizers for thinking about Reformed education that may be described as faithful:

1. Reformed education is *confessional in character*

To confess is "to say the same as," to say, "Yes, it is good and true," to repeat God's Words after Him. To confess is to acknowledge that God's Word is normative for all of life – in school as well as outside of it. Faithful education, therefore, is, in the first place, faithful to the Word of God.

God's Word is normative for *what* we teach. Not only in Bible History, but

also in science and social studies and mathematics, there is a constant learning to say, "I do" to what God reveals about Himself. To confess is to speak God's words after Him. In this sense, also math is a confessional activity. Math helps us describe and understand and unfold the hidden treasures of a world God has made and which speaks of his majesty and sovereignty.

God's Word is also normative for *how* we work in school. It is normative for the teacher's integrity, care, compassion, work ethic, and attitude. God's Word is also normative for students' work habits, peer relationships, and attitudes.

The confessional task of the school is to bring before the child the norms of God's Word. God's Word, as we summarize and confess it with the church of all ages in the ecumenical creeds and the three Forms of Unity, is the foundation – the bedrock – of Reformed education and the standard for all the activities of the school. The confessional task of the school is a combination of knowing and doing God's will within the context of what schools do. We are not educating mindless producers for a global economy. We are educating Oholiab's who know and do God's will by using their talents and skills in harmony with God's Word.

2. Reformed education is *covenantal in character*

There is considerable divergence in the broader Christian educational community about the relevancy of the covenant for the education that takes place in schools. Although there is reference to the covenant in CSI and OACS philosophies of education, those theories are not built on the idea that the learner is a covenant child. With different degrees of emphasis and direction, the general consensus is that a theory of Christian education should flow out of the view of the child as an image-bearer of God with unique talents and gifts.

This general consensus sometimes makes you wonder if our insistence on the view of the learner as a covenant child as a starting point for our educational theory is too narrow and, perhaps, a Canadian Reformed peculiarity imported over the ocean after WWII with a generation who had just gone through a painful church struggle called the Liberation of 1944. In our own circles, some fear that a strong emphasis on the covenant is to blame for the evidence of a "covenant automatism" among our young people, the attitude that being a covenant child is a guarantee of salvation. We do well to remind ourselves that covenantal smugness is an

unscriptural application of the biblical teaching of the covenant. We don't throw something out just because it is misused.

There is also a divergence of understanding among Christians about what the covenant really is. The understanding that the covenant functions like a contract between God and people in which each party does his part leads to an Arminian perception of our role in obtaining salvation. An emphasis on the horizontal dimension of the covenant (people to people) neglects the claim that God places on his people to live and walk before his face according to the ways of the covenant.

Are we finding it more difficult to justify the separate existence of our own schools when there are so many alternatives?

The covenant is not a contract – it is a relationship initiated by God himself: I will be your God; you will be my people. Further, it is a binding relationship characterized by love – love is the obligation of the covenant. Before we can know or do anything, God says to us: I love you, love Me in return.

If the Word of God may be described as the foundation on which education rests, then the covenant is the framework within which we do our work as teachers and students. In the covenant the student and the teacher have their unique identity. The learners we teach are called children of the living God. They have God as their Father because our Lord Jesus Christ was sent to bring many sons to God and He is not ashamed to call us his brothers. They have God as their Father because the Holy Spirit is teaching them to cry “Abba, Father!” He is teaching them, sometimes through painful means, to live and work like children of the Father.

The school, then, becomes an extension of the training ground provided within the family setting where children of one Father learn to walk as his children. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Who are my mother, my brothers, my sisters? Those who do the will of my heavenly Father.” Doing the Father's will is a walking in love before the face of the Lord. The home in the first place and the school by extension are training grounds for living in the household of God where the cardinal rule is love: Love Me, love your neighbour. And love is expressed in obedience; otherwise, it's not really love. Obedience is motivated by love; otherwise, it's not really obedience. The school assists the parents in teaching the children to live and work before the Lord in a relationship of loving obedience to their Father in Jesus Christ.

We have long claimed that the distinctiveness of Reformed education is closely tied to our recognition of the covenant which binds us to our God. This is the recognition that our children are covenant children who *are being* shaped after the image of Christ, the true and eternal Son of God. And why are they being shaped after the image of Christ? So that they, and we, may be restored to what God intended from the beginning – that we should be called sons of God who reflect his image in perfection and who will not only walk before his face, but see Him as He is, face to face. Do we want to surrender this glorious perspective?

3. Reformed education is antithetical in character

Some forty five years ago, the Dutch theologian, B. Holwerda, exclaimed: “I wish that the theme of the great enmity would seize us again! Then we would remember what Christian education is! Then we would be immovable again like our fathers: Here we stand, 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.”

This is antithetical language: the theme of the great enmity. We also hear antithetical language in theories of Christian education: The kingdom of God stands antithetically opposed to the kingdom of darkness. Some take a cautious antithetical stance: We believe that the Christian life is a struggle against the spiritual forces of evil. Others adopt a bold, optimistic, antithetical stance: The task of the school is to usher in the new creation which belongs to Christ. We believe Christians must transform culture and reform all of society.

Holwerda, however, was not thinking about cautious or bold antithetical stances; he was thinking about Psalm 8, about how the Lord ordains praise for Himself from the mouths of babes and infants. With babes and infants He is going to still the enemy and the avenger. Babes and infants are not very powerful people.

. . . are we disturbed by what appears to be a gap between our theory and our practice?

Holwerda was thinking of the covenant in which God as Father gives our students their identity. He was thinking of who they are – God's children. He was also thinking of who they are not – Satan's children. The antithesis which God Himself declared spells Satan's defeat: *I will put enmity* (Gen 3:15). In these words we hear God's great war cry against Satan who had, with man's cooperation, made himself lord and master of the kingdoms of this earth. In Christ, slaves to sin and Satan are transformed and renewed by the Spirit to be sons and daughters of the living God. When those same children acknowledge in word and deed that their Father is God who created them, we see Christ's victory over the father of lies.

Parents have to recognize God's claim. They become kidnappers in the worst sense of the word if they steal children away from God's service by failing to teach them to walk in his ways. Teachers, like parents, also have to recognize God's claim on the children they teach. These children are to make God's Name glorious in the earth, *not* because of what they do, but because of what God does *in* and *through* them.

Faithfulness, therefore, is connected to God's victory in Christ over Satan. It is the fruit of Christ's work. So sure is that work that the God of heaven and earth stakes his reputation on it. He connects his Name to our name: He is Father, we are children. It defies the imagination. God is able to ordain praise for Himself through weak and sinful children who are being renewed after the image of his Son!

4. Reformed education is characterized by unity of purpose shared by home, school, church

We serve one God who reveals himself in one Word, who establishes one covenant and works through one Spirit. Our unity of purpose is to tell the next generation so that they, too, will set their hope and trust in God (Ps 78). The school may share in that common task. The education of the young, therefore, is a task that we do together as a household of faith. Parents have first responsibility, but the members of the body of Christ, the household of faith, have a duty stemming from the communion they have with Christ to use their gifts and talents for the well-being of the others who also share in Christ's benefits (LD 21).

Parents are not left alone in their task. The Head of the church sees to it that the individual members, including the children, receive what is needed to remain firmly connected to the Head, to live in the joy of having been set free

from sin and Satan. An awareness of the communal dimension of God's work helps us to see the role of the school as an assisting task, a hand-and-foot task, a life-giving task that has consequences for the well-being of the household of faith to which teachers, parents, and children belong.

This is the recognition that our children are covenant children who are being shaped after the image of Christ, the true and eternal Son of God.

Summary

What ought we to consider when we try to describe faithful education?

1. Consider the biblical standard for faithfulness: Confessing (knowing and doing) God's Word as the norm for all of life, also life at school.
2. Consider the covenantal framework for faithfulness: God's love in Jesus Christ is transforming slaves to sin into loving and obedient children.
3. Consider the antithetical context for faithfulness: God's declares his victory over Satan in the loving obedience of his children (think of Job).
4. Consider the communal dimension of God's work: He is assembling a household of faith in which He calls the individual members to use the gifts He gives for the benefit of the other members.

Conclusion

Why do we seem to find it so difficult to write down what Reformed education is? If we could find all the characteristics, would they add up to Reformed education? Reformed education is truly something greater than

the sum of its parts. The essential "ingredient" that cannot be prescribed or written down, that makes education Reformed in the full sense of the Word is the work of the Holy Spirit. Parents cannot give their children faith; teachers cannot either. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through instruments such as parents and teachers – sinful, imperfect instruments. He shapes and moulds both the ones who are being taught and the ones who teach. The Holy Spirit works through the Word and thus we begin where we started, with the Word. Reformed education is rooted in and normed by the Word of God – a living Word with visible effects on those who are taught by it.

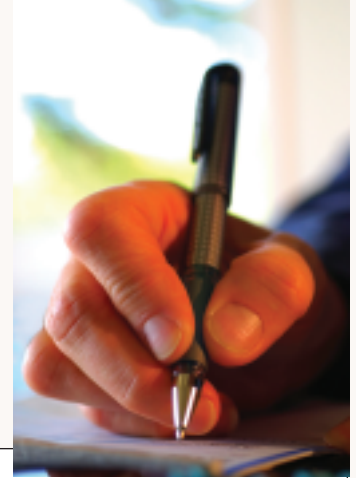
The implication is clear: Reformed education is more than we can ever write down. It is dynamic – always a work-in-progress. Does that mean that we shouldn't try to formulate a theory of Reformed education, theory that would provide guidance for schools as they try to formulate statements of purpose and rationales for the programs and policies of the school? I believe we should, but with the recognition that it is always work in progress, and not a definitive product that settles everything for all time. Reformed education ought to be constantly under discussion, actively reviewed by parents, teachers, boards, etc., so that it is and remains a point of departure for ongoing work in curriculum and teaching practice in Reformed schools.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone willing to respond or interact to an article or anyone willing to write an article for us is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to abkingma@kwic.com.

¹ *The following article is Miss Judy Kingma's prepared statement as she presented it to teachers in Ontario at their CRTA-East Convention, October 2003.*



Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor:

We would like to comment on the article written by Rev. H. Versteeg, "Living in the Joy of Faith – Reflecting the Image of God in Christ" in *Clarion* of February 27 and March 12, 2004. It was good to read and be reminded that joy in Christ is an essential part in our life as God's children. But we believe that some of the things mentioned about depression could lead to misunderstanding.

The word "depression" is understood or misunderstood in a number of ways. It can range from a "down day" to a sickness lasting years. It is very important to us to address this difference because we have experienced several years of depression in our family and often we did not feel understood.

When someone has a down day then the cause of that feeling may be hidden from the person himself. He may just feel low. To some people this happens on a regular basis. At such a time it would not necessarily be appreciated to recommend singing or whistling a tune. It would perhaps be more helpful to ask ourselves why we would feel that way, along the lines of what we read in Psalm 42:5: "Why are you downcast, o my soul?" There can be different things that bother us: we may have fear or anger; we may feel bad about the loss of opportunity; we may just feel inadequate for what is expected of us. Whatever it is, it would be helpful to put a name to it; this may be the beginning of healing.

Depression can be a serious physical sickness. It can arise for many reasons and show itself in many ways. It is not always true that all the parts of our body work together in perfect harmony. From the book, *The Freedom from Depression* by L. Carter and R. Minirth, we quote: "Stress can deplete the neurotransmitter in the brain... which in turn produces depression" (p15). Practically this means that the tool for thinking and feeling is not functioning properly. The way to healing is not to will your way out of depression, nor is it a faith problem as is often assumed, but when through medication the brain is functioning again, you can look at whatever was stressful in the first place.

When you are depressed, you don't understand what is happening to you, but you know that you cannot function as

before. It can be that you just feel exhausted, that you easily get confused, or you are sensitive to sound or light. It can take a while before even the doctor recognizes depression. For those interested, we recommend an article by Jan Bredenhof, "The Deep Dark Place: Living with Postpartum Depression" (*Reformed Perspective*, February 2004). Although she writes about a specific kind of depression, much of what she writes would count for other kinds of depression as well.

J. VanBodegom
Orangeville, Ontario

Letter to the Editor

In his letter of April 23, 2004, Hank Metzler is amazed that I still think it is possible to work in the main political parties. Well, for instance, in the New Conservative party, pretty well anyone can become a member. And it is not that hard to become a board member of your local constituency.

Once there you can become a member of a committee such as Principles and Policies Committees in which you can have your say and input. You can also become a delegate to a National Convention, where you can have your voice and vote. And if you have what it takes, you can become a candidate and possibly an M.P.

As I mentioned in a previous letter to the editor, if we do not use it, we will lose it. At one time we could do the same things in the Liberal Party, but by now it is like Trudeau once said: "MPs are nobodies; we'll tell them what to do."

I will always respect the founders of the CHP for what they have tried to do, but I am sure if all the members of the CHP had put the same time and effort into an existing party, we would have accomplished more. The question is: Do we want to contribute to the well being of our country, or do we want something to make ourselves feel better? In regards to Mr. Spencer, it is one thing to express your convictions, but another thing to supply your opponents with ammunition they can use against you. The latter is what he did.

Arend Harke
St. Albert, Alberta