

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

V 67 N 8 APRIL 20 2018



TULIPS, ROSES or BACON?

**2018 CRTS CONFERENCE
COMMITMENTS AND COURTSHIP**

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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

ADDRESS FOR MAGAZINE CONTENT



Clarion
8 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J5
Email: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

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

Subscriptions subscriptions@clarionmagazine.ca
Advertisements ads@clarionmagazine.ca
Website www.clarionmagazine.ca

2018 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

			Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada			\$49.00*	\$ 82.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds			\$69.00	\$102.00
International			\$98.00	\$171.00

*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra.
GST/HST no. 890967359RT

Cancellation Agreement

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

2018 ADVERTISING RATES

Advertisements: \$20.00 per column inch
Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch.
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.

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

We acknowledge the financial support
of the Government of Canada.



Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Earlier this year the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary hosted their 8th annual conference; the theme: "Sovereign Grace: Real Gospel for Church and World." In this issue, we bring you a report of the event from Sarah Vandergugten, a shortened version of a speech by Dr. Donald Sinnema, as well as a guest editorial from Dr. Van Raalte.

Continuing from our last issue, we have the second half of Dr. Andrew Pol's article, "Commitments and Courtship." In addition, there is a Treasures New and Old meditation, *Clarion* Kids, Clippings on Politics & Religion, Ray of Sunshine, a letter to the editor, and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

CONTENTS

- 207 **GUEST EDITORIAL**
Tulips, Roses, or Bacon?
- 209 **TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
The Goodness of God
- 210 **Commitments and Courtship (2)**
- 212 **Sovereign Grace: Real Gospel for Church and World**
- 216 **A Virtual Tour of the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619**
- 219 **CLARION KIDS**
- 220 **CLIPPINGS ON POLITICS & RELIGION**
- 221 **RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 222 **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**
- 223 **PRESS RELEASE**



Tulips, Roses, or Bacon?

It's all about grace

The “doctrines of grace:” what are they? I remember first hearing this phrase on the lips of ministers and elders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church back in the early 2000s. I was a fraternal delegate to one of their presbyteries and they seemed to glow when they talked about the “doctrines of grace.” I really felt left out. What were they talking about? How come I hadn’t heard of these doctrines? I mean, I knew what grace was, and I knew what doctrine was, but I had never heard men use this phrase “the doctrines of grace” as if they all understood some particular package of teachings. Whatever it was, their reactions showed me that it had to be something good.

I slowly put two and two together: they were talking about the very teachings that I too loved – the teachings that we confess in the Canons of Dort (abbreviation: CD). To me these were about election and predestination, but to them these teachings were about grace. What a positive perspective! And, how absolutely correct!

Tulips

Sometime in the late 1800s, some English-speaking teacher hit upon the idea of associating the Canons of Dort with The Netherlands by summarizing the five points with the acronym “TULIP.” The Synod of Dort itself, meeting from November 1618 to May 1619, never thought of this idea, nor did they hear of it, for they conducted their synod in Latin, not English. They probably did enjoy the tulips coming up in March and April 1619 around Dort, but never realized how people all over the world would later think of their synod with every tulip they saw. “TULIP” was a much later invention. In case you’ve forgotten, “T” is for “total depravity,” “U” is for “unconditional election,” “L” is for “limited atonement,” “I” is for “irresistible grace,” and “P” is for “perseverance of the saints.”

There are two problems with TULIP: first, the order of the Canons of Dort is actually ULTIP. Unfortunately, there aren’t any such flowers. All I can find is that “ultip” is an anagram for “tulip.” So much for that.

As for the second problem: Your minister may have informed you that the “L” for limited atonement isn’t the most helpful way of characterizing this doctrinal point. After all, the message about Christ’s work on the cross is that it was totally effective, then and there, in saving those whom the Father had elected. To say “limited” atonement might make someone think it was limited in power or sufficiency. Thus, one minister speaks of “particular” atonement to highlight the truth of CD 2.8 that Christ died for “particular” persons. This gives us “TUPIP” instead of “TULIP.” According to something I found online, “tupip” is an acronym referring to an “orthogonal blend of pentagonal prisms, vertex figure of sad-sadox.” Huh? Give me tulips any day.

Roses

Others, perhaps to overcome this “limited” problem, or maybe to cut the association with The Netherlands, proposed summarizing these doctrines of grace under a different acronym: ROSES. Not “roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet, and God loves you.” No, Timothy George, an eminent Baptist historian, proposed that the “R” stand for “Radical depravity,” “O” is for “Overcoming Grace,” “S” for “Sovereign Election,” “E” for “Eternal Life,” and the second “S” for “Singular Redemption.” If you would relate this back to our tulip, the order in this case would be “TIUPL,” even further from the actual order of the CD than TULIP. Try pronouncing that! His intentions, however, appear to be to soften the force of the Reformed doctrines. Indeed, “eternal life” is too vague as a replacement for “perseverance/ preservation of the saints,” and “radical depravity,” actually loses something essential that’s represented by the word “total” in “total depravity,” namely that the whole soul (total), that is, all its *parts* are deeply affected by sin. So, as nice as roses are, I’m afraid at this point we’ll have to stick to tulips.

Bacon

But then there’s the real Canadian lumberjack version of the tulip: bring on the bacon! Someone came up with the

“five-strip Baconist” instead of the “five-point Calvinist.” Definitely not kosher! The acronym BACON is worked out like this, “Bad people, Already elected, Completely atoned for, Overwhelmingly called, Never falling away.” Not bad at all! Same order as TULIP. This provides us with another memorable option, simpler words, and what you might regard to be a greasier, saltier, tastier, and more Canadian approach. I found some indication online that perhaps the first person who came up with this one was actually unfriendly to the doctrines in question, but I think he may have done us a service if we need to explain the doctrines of grace without using big words. The fact that I found out that the “Tulip Food Company,” makes specialty bacon products for Denmark made this version all the more interesting.

Other attempts

Another author tried “GOSPEL” in place of “TULIP,” and nicely highlighted the fact that all the points really have to do with grace. GOSPEL = Grace, Obligatory grace, Sovereign grace, Provision-making grace, Effectual grace, and Lasting grace. This follows the order TULIP, but “provision-making” is far too weak a description of Christ’s work on the cross. Once again, the problem is with the “L.”

In a book that I would highly recommend, Greg Forster, *The Joy of Calvinism* (Crossway, 2012), we find another attempt, “WUPSI.” Unfortunately, this sounds too much like a mistake. But there is something valuable that Forster highlights, namely, the work of each of the Persons of the Trinity in the great and gracious work of our salvation. WUPSI = Wholly defiled: state of man before salvation; Unconditional choice: work of the Father in salvation; Personal salvation: work of the Son in salvation; Supernatural transformation: work of the Holy Spirit in salvation; and In faith, perseverance: state of man after salvation.

The doctrines of grace

Tying together the idea that all of the Canons of Dort really is about grace, and that the three main points highlight the three Persons of the Trinity gives us a very pleasing account. We see that the point about unconditional election is really about the Father’s gracious choice, the point about effective (limited) atonement is really about the Son’s gracious gift of his life for our salvation, and the point about irresistible or insuperable grace is really about the Holy Spirit’s transforming grace in our hearts. It’s all about grace.

Our God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God. He is united in himself. He is united in his works of creation and salvation. The Father chooses. The basis of his choice is his own love. Thus: Loving Grace. The Son redeems. He does the work of paying our debt and turning away God righteous anger from the ones whom the Father choice. Thus: Effective Grace. The Spirit regenerates sinners’ hearts. Thus: Trans-

forming Grace. This Triune work is the only way we can be saved. Only by grace. This is the only way because of total depravity. Thus: it’s a Necessary Grace.

The Father’s loving choice cannot be overpowered or overruled. The Son’s precious blood must have its purchase. Not one drop will be spilled. The Spirit’s renewing work is as great in power as creation (Father) and resurrection (the Son). It is the resurrection of our souls, and those who have died once with Christ cannot die again. Eternal life has begun in them, in the very core of their being, in their souls.

All this work of the One Triune God must persevere and come to its completion. He who began this particular good work of faith and salvation in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Thus: Persevering Grace.

Acronym anyone?

So, as you see, I haven’t figured out my own acronym. But I summarize the doctrines of grace as follows. The overall title is Sovereign Grace. Then follow the points in the order of TULIP.

Necessary Grace: Fallen man.

Loving Grace: Father.

Effective Grace: Son.


Transforming Grace: Holy Spirit.

Persevering Grace: Saved man. The Triune God at work, bringing a new creation, starting with the resurrection of Christ and unfaithfully being completed in his return.

Sovereign grace

This God is truly sovereign. This theology truly ascribes all sovereignty to him. Because God in his grace is sovereign there too, as in all other things, we have every confidence in the work he has begun in us. We have every confidence in proclaiming such a great and glorious Jesus Christ. We have every confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to convert hearts. God will have his people. He will. No one can stop him. We are so delighted to have been drawn in among his people, adopted as his children, and now also enlisted in his army of salvation. Let us with confidence, grace, and love, share this message with the world.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. And those whom he predestined, these very ones, he also called, those whom he called, these very ones, he also justified, and those whom he justified, these very ones he also glorified (Rom 8:30). The outcome is so sure that Paul speaks in the past tense even of our glory, because this glorification is all completely certain and is completely the case in Jesus Christ, who is in glory and who is our glory.

All glory for our creation, and especially our salvation be to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now and forever. Amen. 



The Goodness of God

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.” (Titus 3:3-5a)

We use the word “good” in so many ways these days that it is almost meaningless. When Paul writes that the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour has appeared, he isn’t just thinking of “goodness” in this generic sense. The word means primarily a generous mindset. This kind of goodness is friendly and goes out of its way for others.

Such goodness should not be confused with weakness. In the culture of those days it was considered a good thing if a ruler or a government official showed some goodness towards others, but not too much. There was a man who lived around the same time as the Lord Jesus Christ. His name was Philo of Alexandria. In one of his writings he warned governors to make sure that their goodness towards others was not misunderstood as weakness.

Our Lord knows that when he shows his goodness to sinners, we are inclined to misunderstand it. We misunderstand it to mean that he doesn’t take sin all that seriously. That is why in Romans 2:4 Paul writes, “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness [this is the same word translated as “goodness” in Titus 3:4] and forbear-

ance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” God knows that his goodness, his kindness towards us can be misunderstood. Yet he was willing to reveal himself through Jesus Christ.

Not only has God shown goodness, says verse 4, but he has also shown lovingkindness. That word translated as “lovingkindness” actually means “man-loving.” We get our word “philanthropy” from that. God is the original philanthropist. He is the original man-lover. That kind of lovingkindness is affection and concern for other people. Paul says that is the kind of affection and concern that God showed when Christ appeared.

This passage is a real study in contrasts, isn’t it? Where did the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Saviour appear? It appeared in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It appeared in human history. And this is a history of people who were foolish and disobedient. There is an enormous contrast between the attitudes of those people and the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Saviour.

As human beings we rarely act. Much of what we do is a reaction to

what others do. Verse 3 refers to such reaction when it says that before Christ came, we passed our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. That’s reaction. But God our Saviour acted. He didn’t react to what we did. He acted independently of us. He acts this way because of who he is, not because of who we are.

Maybe you have been a church member your whole life. You cannot remember a time when you didn’t know God. If so, you should be even more thankful than the Cretans were. Because you have experienced the goodness and the lovingkindness of God for even longer than they had.

If God had not guided your birth and your life so that you knew him from childhood onwards, you would not have known the difference. Just like the Cretans. They were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, and so on. They weren’t waiting for God to save them. But he did. The goodness and lovingkindness of God appeared to them. And it has appeared to you. So be thankful for the time you have experienced his goodness. And look forward to experiencing it for all of eternity.

For further study

1. Was there ever a time in your life that you, or someone close to you, did not know God? What was that like?
2. Do you ever take the goodness of God for granted? If so, how?
3. “As human beings we rarely act. Much of what we do is a reaction to what others do.” How has this been true in your own life? How can reflecting on the goodness of God help you to change that?





Commitments and Courtship (Part 2)

Marry only “in the Lord”

Unity in the faith forms a strong foundation for living for the Lord in a fruitful way in a marriage relationship. When this unity is absent, a marriage will not function as well as it should. Parents should therefore instruct their children to keep the right spiritual priorities in mind when contemplating a relationship with someone. Congregation members can also play a role in encouraging those seeking a spouse to look for someone with whom they can serve the Lord fruitfully.

Office bearers also need to counsel members when it comes to “romantic relationships.” Our Church Order emphasizes: “The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only *in the Lord*, and that the ministers – as authorized by the consistory – solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God” (Art. 63).

Biblical foundation

Article 63 of the Church Order is rooted in Scripture. Aside from what has been mentioned so far, think, for example, of 1 Corinthians 7:39, where Paul stresses that if a woman’s husband dies, “she is free to be married to whom she wishes, *only in the Lord*.” Of course, this instruction concerning widows applies to any believer who contemplates marriage. The future spouse should have a clear bond with the Lord and therefore also with the church, which is the body of Christ.

Harmony

Along the same lines, Paul asks in 2 Corinthians 6:15, “What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?” (2 Cor 6:15). The word for “accord” is similar to the English word for “symphony.” Instruments sound beautiful when they are in tune with each other and play the same music together properly. If this is not the case, the sounds will not make for pleasant listening.

To make good “music” together as a married couple, it is essential to be “in tune” and “in sync” with each other. Believers and unbelievers don’t read off the same page in life. The Bible is not their common standard. Consequently,

their way of life differs in many ways and there will not be God-centred, biblical harmony in their marriage.

Pray and keep your eyes open

If you are looking for a future spouse, do this prayerfully! The LORD gave Eve to Adam. She was truly a “helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18). To this day, the LORD continues to bless many of his children with the gift of marriage. Proverbs 18:22 reminds us of this: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.”

Of course, that refers to a special kind of wife! Proverbs 19:14 informs us: “House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a *prudent* wife is from the LORD.” The word translated as “prudent” points to someone who has understanding, insight. This includes spiritual understanding: knowing the LORD and loving him. It’s connected to seeking the LORD and doing his will.

If you are a man hoping to get married, look for a woman who loves and serves the LORD! If you are a woman who hopes to have a husband some day, prayerfully work on being the kind of woman God wants you to be! Then look for someone with whom you can serve the LORD fruitfully together as committed members of the church of Jesus Christ!

Unity in one church

What about dating someone who is a Christian but not a member of a Canadian Reformed Church or one of the churches with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship? Is it not enough if the other person is a Christian?

The apostle Paul calls us to be “eager to maintain the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is *one body* and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:3-6). The church is a body of believers. We are called to keep the unity of the Spirit together. We do that by meeting together on a regular basis. If you cannot meet the person you are interested in within the context of such a shared commitment, there is a problem.

Are the doctrines of the church to which we belong true to Scripture? Then make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit by upholding those doctrines in a consistent way together with fellow believers.

“Later?”

Sometimes people first form a couple and decide to work on the issue of church membership “later.” This implies that church membership is a negotiable item. Faithfulness to the Lord and to the church that he is gathering, however, is not “negotiable.” Beginning a relationship with someone from a member of a church that is not Reformed and faithful to Scripture is therefore not an option.

A shared commitment to the Lord as members of the same church is a vital ingredient in a solid Christian marriage. Wholehearted obedience to the Lord also in regard to faithful church membership should therefore also be a priority in preparation for a marriage “in the Lord.” It’s a matter of “first things first.” Worshipping the Lord together on Sunday is a fundamental part of a life that should be totally devoted to serving God.

It’s therefore essential to resolve the matter of church membership before embarking on a relationship with a view to marriage. If someone is not committed to serving the Lord as a fellow church member, there is a lack of unity in a very significant way. Failing to work things out before you begin sets the stage for heartache later for either or both parties. That is not a loving thing to do.

The conclusion to this is that we cannot say it’s OK to have a relationship with someone who is not a member of

a Reformed church “as long as he/she is a Christian.” True unity in the Lord should be expressed in love for him and for the church, which is his body. Don’t separate love for the Lord from membership in his church!

Food for thought

Marriage is a bond that can enhance or undermine a person’s effectiveness in serving the Lord. A husband and wife should be capable of “helping each other faithfully in all things that belong to this life and to the life to come” (Form for the Solemnization of Marriage). Those hoping to be married as well as those who are already married need to take consistent steps toward the fulfilment of that goal. Pray about it and work on it!

Priority

God’s relationship with us should shape whatever other relationships we get into. Live in the light of that truth and, if you are seeking a spouse, look for someone who is committed to him in the same way! Then you will have a solid basis for tackling any problems and challenges that come your way as a couple. You have the light of God’s Word and the help of his Spirit to deal with the issues effectively.

So here is a word of advice for Christians looking for a partner and for those who are already married: Do you want a solid Christian marriage that honours God and will be a source of joy to yourself? Ensure that whatever you do is a fitting response to God’s loving commitment to you. Don’t let anything get in the way of that!



Further food for thought and discussion

1. We are to commit our whole life to Christ.
2. How does this have an impact on relationships we establish with others?
3. What kind of reasons / justification might someone have for beginning a romantic relationship with an unbeliever? Evaluate that in the light of Scripture.
4. How many people do you know who broke up a romantic relationship because the other person did not become a believer? How many people do you know who continued a romantic relationship although the other person did not become a believer? What does this tell you about the potential consequences of beginning a relationship with an unbeliever?
5. Read Ephesians 5:21-33 and the Form for Marriage. What is the purpose of marriage? Reflect on how unbelievers will not be able to fulfill the purpose of marriage as described there?
6. Describe and assess the consequences of marrying an unbeliever: What impact would this have on your relationship with God? How would marrying an unbeliever potentially diminish your ability to serve God fruitfully? After all, the person closest to you would not be able to help you in the things belonging to this life as well as the life to come. How would you react if your unbelieving spouse continues to be indifferent or even becomes hostile to the Christian faith? What impact could a “mixed relationship” have on your children, if you have children?

Sovereign Grace: Real Gospel for Church and World

For a British Columbian, a trip to Ontario in mid-January needs to have a good reason. For me, aside from visiting family, the main impetus was the 8th Annual CRTS Conference, held January 11 to 13, 2018 in the Burlington-Ebenezer Canadian Reformed church building. As an ordinary church member, this was only the second time attending such a conference. It's not for lack of interest, but until I retired from teaching, there was little opportunity. Again, the Conference proved worthwhile, though some might wonder how the Synod of Dort and the resultant Canons of Dort might still be relevant after 400 years. By the end of the conference, attendees would have been satisfied. A rich blend of academic speeches, lively discussions, moving testimonials, a varied panel discussion, and vibrant social interaction were convincing.

Speakers

Each year, CRTS Conference organizers invite speakers, often leading scholars in the field relating to the conference theme. Dr. Don Sinnema certainly fit the bill with regard to the Synod of Dort, which formed the backdrop for the theme of *Sovereign Grace: Real Gospel for Church and World*. Sinnema is co-editor at the helm of an international team of forty-five scholars whose goal it is to transcribe all documents of the Synod of Dort in their original languages (Latin, Dutch, German, French, and English) in a series of nine volumes. 2019 will mark the 400th anniversary of the close of the great synod, but this monumental task will take some time to complete. All material will become readily accessible, hopefully sparking renewed interest in this aspect of Reformed tradition.

The second invited speaker, Dr. Mark Jones, is pastor of Faith Vancouver (PCA). In 2009, he defended his doctoral dissertation on the Christology of the Puritan Thomas Goodwin at the University of Leiden where, perhaps somewhat ironically, Jacobus Arminius had been professor of



theology 400 years earlier. Jones is the author of several books that distil academic theology into writing accessible to folk in the pew – among others, *Knowing Christ; Faith, Hope, Love: The Christ-Centered Way to Grow in Grace; and God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God*. Jones is a regular speaker at theological conferences in far flung parts of the world – South Africa to Korea – and is a frequent, lively, and sometimes controversial blogger. He is not unfamiliar with the Canadian Reformed community, since the four Jones children attend William of Orange Christian School in Cloverdale.

As is customary, CRTS professors present papers at these conferences. This year the task was ably filled by Dr. Jason Van Vliet (Dogmatology) and Dr. Ted Van Raalte (Ecclesiology). Dr. Karlo Janssen filled the final spot, relaying his expertise on the Church Order of Dort.

Speeches

The bulk of conference time was devoted to eight speeches over a period of forty hours, a feast for the mind and the heart. (*See side bar for topics and speakers.*) The goal

was three-fold: explore the doctrines of the triune God's sovereign grace and human responsibility, provide historical context, and give real-life context via believers' testimonials. Attempting to summarize the speeches would require thousands of words, so a highlight from each must suffice. All the speeches are available on the CRTS website at <http://www.canadianreformedseminary.ca/resources/Browse%20Resources.html> and well worth viewing, perhaps by forgoing Netflix fare for an evening or two.

The first public lecture was by Dr. Jason Van Vliet: *God the Father and the Real Gospel of Grace for You*. He described a loving, sovereign Father who adopts those he chooses and enables them to persevere. In fleshing out these truths, Van Vliet developed a helpful parable about the Kingdom of Mundus, where a gracious king decreed that a certain number of his recalcitrant, rebellious citizens would receive an undeserved inheritance, gained for them at great cost by his natural son.

On Friday morning, a unique visitor took the lectern. A certain Dr. Johannes Bogerman, apparently fresh from his duties as chair of the Synod of Dort, regaled the audience with a first-person description of all that had transpired: the Synod's international character, the wrangling with and expulsion of the Arminian delegates, and the careful



Don Sinnema as Dr. Johannes Bogerman

drafting of the Canons in response to the Remonstrant objections concerning predestination and related points.

Dr. Mark Jones provided an historical overview of Arminian teaching. He noted they did not deny grace, predestination, and election, but gave their own meaning to these words. Arminians are Christians, believing salvation is in Christ alone, but changes in doctrine are not static, and continue to have a cascading effect to this day.

Dr. Karlo Janssen, in fine detail, described the practicality and importance of Dort church polity, noting this is where the rubber of faith and confession hits the road of church life and practice. He traced the historical developments from Dort to the Doleantie, noting that in the end proper church polity assists in maintaining the Real Gospel of Grace.

In the fourth speech of the day, Dr. Don Sinnema provided an overview of the Synod of Dort's interaction with the Heidelberg Catechism. In effect, it confirmed and strengthened the authority of the Catechism in the Dutch Reformed churches, both as the primary pedagogical tool for Christian instruction and as a confessional standard to ensure orthodox Reformed teaching in the churches.

In the evening's public lecture, Dr. Ted Van Raalte addressed the topic, *God the Son and the Real Gospel of Sovereign Grace for You*. He argued that Jesus did much more than make possible our salvation (Arminian thought), but that he has fully redeemed, saved, reconciled, justified, and adopted those for whom he lovingly laid down his life.

Saturday morning, Dr. Ted Van Raalte explored the mystery of God's sovereignty and human choice. He traced the theme from Augustine via Luther and Calvin to our Reformed confessions, high-lighting the beautiful words

2018 CRTS Conference, January 11-13, 2018 **Real Gospel: Sovereign Grace for Church and World**

Speakers and Speech Titles

1. Dr. Jason Van Vliet, "God the Father and the Real Gospel of Sovereign Grace for You"
2. Dr. Don Sinnema, "A Virtual Tour of the Synod of Dort"
3. Dr. Mark Jones, "What's the Problem with Arminianism, and Who Are the Arminians Anyway?"
4. Dr. Karlo Janssen, "What Is the Church Order of Dort, and how Does It Maintain Real Gospel?"
5. Dr. Don Sinnema, "The Heidelberg Catechism at the Synod of Dort"
6. Dr. Ted Van Raalte, "God the Son and the Real Gospel of Sovereign Grace for You"
7. Dr. Ted Van Raalte, "Freely-Chosen Faith? Real Gospel and Human Choice"
8. Dr. Mark Jones, "God the Holy Spirit and the Real Gospel of Sovereign Grace for You"



*Jason Heemskerk, Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer,
Sarah Vandergugten, Kevin Watter,
Dr. Van Vliet*

in the Canons of Dort, III/IV.12: “And then the will, so renewed, is not only acted upon and moved by God, but acted upon by God, the will itself also acts. Therefore man himself is rightly said to believe and repent through the grace he has received.”

This speech was followed by a lively panel discussion moderated by Jason Heemskerk. The panel was comprised of a professor: Dr. Van Vliet; a preacher: Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer; a student: Kevin Watter; and a teacher (retired): Sarah Vandergugten. Some of the topics addressed: How should we regard our children in the church, family, or classroom – as saved, or should we be calling them to faith? As a teacher/preacher how do you explain that so many discoveries and advances in science, math, and the arts are made by non-Christians? How do you explain, biblically speaking, the positive contributions they have made?

In the eighth and final speech, Dr. Mark Jones addressed the role of the Holy Spirit. He works “immediately” on us with the Word. Christ-focussed preaching is essential. The Holy Spirit functions as a flood light on the work of Christ, so that our longing is to become more Christ-like. He noted that many Christians have to learn that not only they are saved by grace, but that others are as well. We need patience, love, and gentleness in our interaction with others who are not at the same place we are.

Testimonials

I suspect that for many participants the most moving aspect of the conference was the testimonials of three individuals who related their stories of becoming Christians

or of returning to the faith. Their first-person accounts, professionally recorded, gave life to the doctrines of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.

The first man spoke of his despair as an addict suffering from schizophrenia, unemployed, and reacting to his life in anger and frustration. Thankfully he came into contact with Bible teacher Richard Bultje. He became convinced of his sin and need for the Saviour, Jesus Christ. When asked where he would be if God had not intervened, he answered bluntly, “I would be dead!” God pulled him from the depth of despair. He quipped that his life had not followed the typical Canadian Reformed pattern since he became sober in his thirties, began work in his forties, and married in his fifties. He works as a counsellor, ever thankful for GRACE: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.

The second, a woman, grew up Christian, but experienced a disconnect between Scripture and life. As a teen, she attempted to fill her emptiness with sexual immorality, beginning with porn. She noted that sin is like cancer; it spreads to fill our emptiness. She ran from home, determined to control her own life, with little success. Years later, God brought her to the bottom of herself. She felt compelled to return to church. On a subsequent Sunday, she cried as she drove, “God, don’t let me down, don’t let me down.” She took a seat in a back pew, and in God’s good providence, witnessed a baptism. She realized the covenant promises were for her too! She could be forgiven. The road back was not easy, but God was faithful. She urged us to walk alongside those who struggle, open about our own vulnerabilities. Do the loving; the Holy Spirit will do the work!

The third testimonial was equally sincere. This man joined the church in large part because he loved a woman and wanted to marry her. It was a good decision, but he noted that it was not until he suffered a brain tumor that he became a different person. He experienced an ever deepening grace in his life, and realized that God will carry him and his family through all of life's circumstances. He loves his church family.

These testimonials clarified not only the sovereignty of God and human responsibility as it pertained to these particular individuals. It sounded an urgent message that God chooses to use believers in vital ways to bring his elect into the fold. We may not ignore that responsibility.

Reflections

The schedule gave ample time for refreshments and social interaction, a vital part of such a conference, where participants travel significant distances. One pastor noted, "I appreciate the speeches, but I love the opportunity to connect with my colleagues." In addition, there was an interesting gallery of artifacts related to the Synod of Dort, provided by Dr. Sinnema. Another highlight was the opportunity to view a rare first edition (1637) of the Dort Bible, provided by Rev. George van Popta. (This was the first translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into the Dutch language.)

I came away from this conference with renewed gratitude for the work of the CRTS among churches it serves. Over the years, the Conference Organizing Committee has effectively worked to broach a broad range of topics from

church planting to Reformed hermeneutics to eschatology to commemorating important milestones in church history – the Heidelberg Catechism, the Reformation, and the Synod of Dort. (The CRTS website has links to speeches back to 2012). The goal – one that requires long term vision and planning – is to offer conferences that are both stimulating and relevant to 21st century church members. This year's event affirmed my appreciation for our Reformed heritage. Our history is important. Ideas have legs; changes in doctrine have consequences.

I did wonder whether attendance could not have been greater. One can suggest many reasons for not attending. Distance, cost, time – all relevant and real. But wouldn't it be wonderful if each congregation and its consistory would tell their pastor, "We want, in fact, we expect you to go. Take the time. We will fund the cost." And what if each congregation would also sponsor one other person, perhaps a young man in whom they see the possibility of him heading to the seminary? We freely use Airmiles for our vacations. Why not donate them and make travel possible for others? In Ontario, it might only involve paying for mileage and lodging. One excuse is not valid: lack of interest. As a church community we need to promote a culture of interest, enthusiasm, and support for our seminary, its professors, and students. The future of our churches in large part depends on the seminary's ability to provide pastors. One way to demonstrate support is to attend events the CRTS sponsors, such as *Sovereign Grace: Real Gospel for Church and World*. Next year?





A Virtual Tour of the Synod of Dort, 1618–1619

We present here a shortened version of a speech given by Dr. Sinnema at the 2018 CRTS Conference. He presented the speech in first-person, dressed – and bearded – as the illustrious chairman of the Synod of Dordt.

Vale! Goede morgen! I am Johannes Bogerman, the esteemed, but most humble, president of the great *Synode van Dordrecht*. I am also a dominie of the church of Leeuwarden, in the most wonderful province of Friesland.

I have come today to lead you on a tour of this most venerable synod. It was the most significant synod of the whole Dutch Reformed tradition. And I was there at the helm!

This venerable synod has just concluded – a mere 400 years ago – so my memory of events is still very fresh.

The occasion for the Synod

The Synod of Dordt was convened in the Dutch city of Dordrecht, primarily to settle the Arminian controversy that had agitated The Netherlands for about twenty years. The controversy centred on the teachings of Jacobus Arminius, mainly about predestination and related points. The controversy arose in the 1590s, when Arminius was a pastor of the church of Amsterdam, and it became more heated after he became a professor of theology at Leiden University in 1603. At Leiden, Arminius clashed with his colleague Franciscus Gomarus. Arminius taught that predestination was based on God's foreknowledge of a believer's faith; Gomarus taught that predestination was simply a sovereign decision of God's will, with no consideration of the fall into sin.

After Arminius died, his followers drew up a document summarizing his views in Five Articles. It was called the Remonstrance of 1610. Because of this document, the Arminians became known as Remonstrants. Their Five Articles were at the heart of the controversy, as it escalated all the way to the Synod of Dordt. The controversy spread from the university to the churches, to broader Dutch society, so much so that even the fish mongers in the Leiden market were arguing over predestination. The controversy became entangled with political issues, so that the country

was even under threat of a civil war, with Johan van Oldenbarnevelt supporting the Remonstrant cause, and Prince Maurits of Orange supporting the Contra-Remonstrant or orthodox Reformed cause.

Convening of the Synod

After almost a decade of strife at various ecclesiastical and political levels, the States General (the Dutch federal government) decided that a national synod would be held to settle the matter. The States General paid for most of the six and one-half month expenses, including travel expenses, room and board, and a daily stipend for the foreign delegates. It cost the States General well over 100,000 guilders. The Dutch provincial synods had to pay the expenses of their own delegates.

The Synod itself met in the Kloveniersdoelen, a grand building that was part of an armory of the local civic guard (or musketeers guild). Special benches were installed on the second floor for over 100 delegates. And each delegate was given the real luxury of a foot warmer with coals to ward off the bone-chilling cold of our dank Dordrecht winter. You might say it was a health hazard to attend our synod, as four of our delegates died in those months!

Participants at the Synod

Eleven Dutch delegations came to our synod from the provincial synods and five Dutch academies. So, there were over fifty Dutch delegates. Some twenty-eight foreign delegates from the Reformed churches in eight foreign territories in the areas of present-day Switzerland, Germany, and Great Britain also attended. We even had a British bishop in attendance, the honourable George Carleton! The French king refused to let his Reformed theologians attend the synod, so we left their benches empty to show deference to them. The States General also sent eighteen delegates, to give directions about procedure and to ensure that the Synod did not impinge upon political affairs. The Dutch ministers, elders and theologians, as well as the foreign theologians, all had voting rights.

Thirteen leading Remonstrants (later fifteen) were also present, but not as delegates; rather, we summoned them before the Synod to have their views examined and judged. We had to judge whether or not their views were in accord with the Word of God. Each delegate swore the following oath:

I promise before God, whom I believe and whom I worship, as being the now present searcher of minds and hearts, that during the whole course of the proceedings of this synod, which will examine, judge and decide not only the Five Articles and all the differences resulting from them but also any other doctrine, I will use no human writings, but the Word of God alone as the sure and undoubted rule of faith. And during all these discussions, I will only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the Church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine. So help me, my Saviour, Jesus Christ! I beseech him to assist me always in this by his Spirit!

Language of the synod

We conducted this venerable synod in the Latin language, since that was the only language everyone knew. It was most unfortunate that the foreign theologians could not speak our Dutch language! Latin was the language of the universities where our ministers were trained, whether at Leiden University, the Geneva Academy, Heidelberg University, Cambridge, and even at our most renowned Frisian University at Franeker.

Actually, my preference was that we speak Fries at the synod; Fries, ah, the language of the Garden of Eden! But, since all sinners were cast out of the Garden, now only the good Frisian people know the language.

Phases of the Synod's proceedings

Our venerable Synod met for six and a half months from November 13, 1618 to May 29, 1619 – twenty-nine weeks, in a total of 180 half-day sessions. The general proceedings of the synod consisted of four phases:

- (1) In the *Pro-Acta sessions*, which lasted for just over three weeks before the cited Remonstrants arrived, we focussed on several non-doctrinal ecclesiastical matters such as a new Dutch Bible translation, the baptism of slave children, theological education, and catechizing.
- (2) After the arrival of the cited Remonstrants on December 6, the Synod was largely entangled in *procedural debates* with them for five weeks, until I expelled them from the synod on January 14.
- (3) After their expulsion, for almost four months we focussed on examining Remonstrant *writings* and pre-

CALL ACCEPTED

Accepted the call extended to him by the Dunnville CanRC for work with the Reformational Study Centre, based in South Africa:

Rev. R.J. Kampen

Accepted the call extended to him by Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church at London, Ontario:

Rev. A. Witten

of the Canadian Reformed Church at Vernon, B.C.

CHURCH NEWS

paring the Synod's *response* to the Remonstrant case. Based on advice from each of the nineteen delegations, the Synod issued its judgment, the Canons of Dordt. Ah! A document dear to my heart! We also addressed other discipline cases, and there was a review of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism.

- (4) In the *Post-Acta sessions*, after the foreign theologians returned home, the Dutch delegates focussed on various ecclesiastical matters of relevance to the Dutch churches, especially a revision of the church order.

Debates with the Remonstrants

The procedural debates that took place between December 6 and January 14 were very contentious. And I had to manage it all!

On December 7, Episcopius delivered a long and tedious speech to explain the motives and background of the Remonstrant position. After the speech, I asked him for a copy, but he said he had no other copy. Then we found out he had another rough copy, so I naturally accused him of lying, which he strongly denied. He contended that he had said he had no other copy "neatly enough written out." But, if you ask me, I never heard him say that, and he was right there in front of me!

Episcopius said the Remonstrants wanted to have a *conference* on the points in dispute. I firmly reminded him that the intention of the Synod was not to hold a conference between equal parties; rather, the Remonstrants were cited before the Synod to have their views judged. A few days later, they demanded that twelve *conditions* be met before they could recognize the Synod.

The next day, the Remonstrants came with a formal *protest* that categorically rejected the authority of the Synod as a legitimate judge of the controversy. We considered their protest and declared it groundless. For the Synod, the crux of the issue was whether the church has the right, in a case of ecclesiastical discipline such as this, to judge doctrinal views that deviate from our confessional standards. Of course, we had the right, and solemn obligation, to guard the church against false teaching!

Still, for all of December, the Remonstrants kept raising procedural objections. They would not explain their views. Then the States General, on January 1, 1619, approved the actions of the Synod and ordered the Remonstrants to submit; if they would not do so, the States General resolved that their opinions should be examined from their writings.

We delayed implementing this decision by still trying to get the Remonstrants to answer questions about their views on the floor of synod. After two more weeks of procedural wrangling, I finally lost my patience. I angrily expelled the Remonstrants from the Synod in a most passionate speech. I rehearsed the Synod's dealings with the Remonstrants, and accused them of great obstinacy, deceit, and lies. Finally, I expelled them with the words, "In the name of the state delegates and the Synod, you are dismissed. Get out! Get out!" As they were leaving, I overheard one of the Remonstrants mutter, "Out from this assembly of the wicked." They were not a bit happy; but I believe we gave them a fair chance to explain themselves, and they simply did not want to cooperate.

Formulating the Canons of Dort

After the Remonstrants were expelled, our venerable Synod spent more than three months carefully examining their views from their writings and preparing our *judgment* on the Remonstrant case – popularly known as the Canons of Dort.

I would love to tell you about the elaborate process that was followed by the Synod in drafting the Canons. At first, I took it upon myself to draw up an initial draft, but the Synod saw fit to appoint a drafting committee. Each part of the Canons then went through three drafts, and all nineteen delegations, including the foreign delegates, had the opportunity to suggest changes to each draft.

This whole process took our committee three weeks. Then in mid-April the venerable Synod again met in full session. Together we made some final changes to chapter II – some sticky points there. At long last, on April 23, every delegate approved and signed each chapter of the Canons. We, again with the foreign delegates, also reviewed and fully affirmed that the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism fully agree with the Word of God.

With thanks to God, on May 6, we ended this phase of the Synod with a solemn procession to the Grote Kerk of Dordrecht. After I offered a half-hour long Latin prayer, the secretaries of the Synod took turns reading aloud, until they were hoarse, the whole text of the Canons, plus the names of all who had signed. Each man doffed his hat as his name was mentioned. It was such a relief to be done. *Soli Deo gloria!*

After the Canons were adopted, our venerable Synod drew up a sentence deposing the cited Remonstrants from their offices in the ministry. After the Synod, the provincial synods deposed 200 more Remonstrant ministers. But, alas, they soon formed their own separate church, the Remonstrant Brotherhood.

A few days later, we dismissed the foreign theologians with generous words of thanks for their willingness to come and help us deal with our crisis here in The Netherlands. Then followed a magnificent banquet. The whole Synod was plentifully treated with meat and drink, and their ears were entertained with agreeable stringed music, and women singing from behind the curtains. The state delegates presented each of the foreign theologians with a costly gold medallion displaying a picture of our venerable Synod.

Post-Acta sessions

After our main work was done and the foreign delegates had departed, we revised and added some articles to the previous church order of 1586. The result is our wonderful Church Order of Dort, which would govern church life for many generations.

We also approved a form for calling ministers, and a form for the baptism of adults. We made rules for Sabbath-keeping which we asked the States General to implement. We drew up new forms of subscription, which stated that our Canons of Dort, along with the Catechism and Confession, fully agree with the Word of God. Finally, we requested that the States General approve the convening of the next national synod. Sadly, that did not happen for about 200 years!

The Acts of the Synod

After the Synod, the official documents of the Synod were gathered together and bound in seventeen folio volumes. These were kept in a large *kist* (trunk) that was secured with eight locks. Each of the seven provinces and the States General were given keys. Once every three years, representatives from these eight bodies would come with their keys to The Hague to open the kist and check the condition of the archives for mold or vermin. [Now these official documents of Dort are kept in the *Utrechts Archief*, and all of the original documents are at last being edited and published under the oversight of a certain Dr. Don Sinnema and two other scholars, who manage a large team of transcribers.]

We hope you enjoyed getting a feel for the illustrious Synod of Dordt that met 400 years ago. If you are interested in the full version of this speech, please visit the CRTS website and you will find the video under our "Resources" section.



Clarion Kids

Do Not Worry

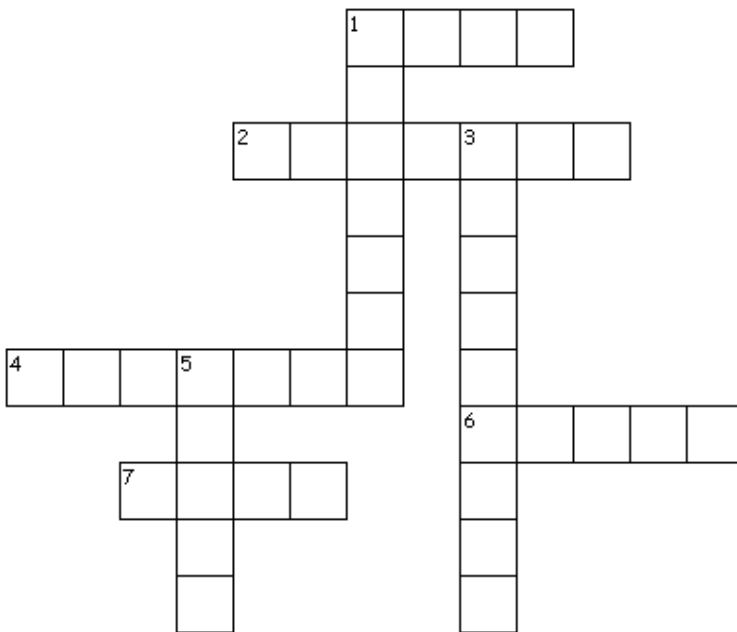
Matthew 6:25-34

It can be very easy to worry about a lot of things. We can worry about what our clothes look like, or about what we are going to eat. But God tells us that we don't have to worry about anything. When we look at the birds and flowers he created, we can see that they don't worry about anything and he takes care of them. And we are so much more important to God than the birds and flowers! He will provide everything we need so we never have to worry. If we are worried we can pray to God about it, and thank him for the many wonderful things he gives to us.

Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print and colour this picture!



Crossword Puzzle: Solve the clues to fill in the puzzle!



Across

1. God takes ____ of us.
2. God will _____ everything we need.
4. God created birds and _____.
6. We should _____ God for everything he gives us.
7. If we are worried we can _____ to God.

Down

1. One thing we might worry about
3. You are more _____ to God than birds and flowers.
5. Do not _____.

by Emily Nijenhuis



The Pope's Capitulation to the Chinese Government

In an astonishing development late last year, Pope Francis betrayed the underground Roman Catholic Church in China which faithful Roman Catholics regard as the only true representative of Rome. The Pope formally recognized as legitimate heads of their dioceses seven bishops whom the Communist government had appointed and whom Rome up to now never acknowledged as legitimate. Since the communists came to power in 1949, the Vatican had only recognized as legitimate the bishops associated with the underground Roman Catholic Church.

The Pope's recent decision had some consequences which do not sit well with the Roman Catholic faithful. The Pope demanded that eighty-eight-year-old Bishop Peter Zhuang Jianjian give up his office. He had been secretly ordained in 2006 with Vatican consent. Bishop Zhuang burst into tears when he heard this demand. He initially refused, saying that he would rather suffer the consequences for disobedience. But eventually he gave in and resigned under heavy pressure from Rome and Beijing. In his place came Bishop Joseph Huang Bingzhang, who had been excommunicated by the Holy See in 2011 for accepting an illicit episcopal ordination without the consent of the pope. Bishop Huang is approved by the Communists. He is a long-time member of the National People's Congress, China's rubberstamp parliament.

In return, the Communist regime agreed to recognize about twenty bishop candidates appointed by the Holy See. However, this concession is largely meaningless. China is in the process of trying to get complete control over Christian religion. China's president, Xi Jinping, the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, has a five-year plan to "sinicize" the Roman Catholic Church, and for that matter all churches. The long and short of this program is that churches must follow the leadership of the Communist Party. Churches which capitulate to this leadership will basically operate as a wing of the totalitarian government.

And yet this is the government that the Vatican, in another unexpected move, has praised. Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, the chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, compared China and America and concluded: "Right now, those who are best implementing the social doctrine of the Church are the Chinese." This is an incredible statement and betrays the Vatican's eagerness to get into the good books of China. As Ben Johnson detailed on the Acton Institute blog, China violates the most basic pillars of Roman Catholic social teachings. Five things immediately come to mind. China denies freedom of religion as Rome is finding out. This country forces abortion on those who are not obeying Beijing's decrees on the number of children allowed. China denies the rule of law since the average citizen has no access to real justice. "Individuals and groups who attempt to help citizens advocate for their rights do so at significant professional and personal risk." The Communist regime also denies private property rights in many ways. And of course, China denies political freedom.

Yet Rome under Pope Francis is obsequiously bowing and pandering to Beijing. This does not sit well with many in China. Cardinal Joseph Zen, China's most senior cleric, had even made an eleventh-hour appeal to the Vatican to call off its agreement with China.

Rome's capitulation puts pressure on Presbyterian and Reformed churches to also give in. May the Lord prevent that and encourage the faithful with his promises. He is sovereign and also the Chinese nation is under his ultimate rule. May the true gospel prosper there as Christ continues to gather the elect.

Sources used: John Baptist Lin, "The Vatican Asks Legitimate Bishops to Step Aside in favour of illegitimate ones" *Asia News* (Jan 22, 2018), *Asia News* is run by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Mission; Cardinal Joseph Zen, "Pope Francis ditches underground Catholic Church, Makes Deal with Communist Government" (January 24, 2018) @ stream.org; Ben Johnson, "5 Reasons China is not 'best implementing' Catholic social teaching" (Feb 8, 2018) at Acton Institute website.





Debbie Veenstra

Hi! My name is Debbie Veenstra and it is so nice to be featured in *Clarion*. I have a birthday coming up which I share with my twin sister Shelley. I am thankful to receive many greeting cards from all over the country sent to me for my birthday.

Anchor Camp is my favourite place to go and is the highlight of the year. I have met a lot of nice friends there, even though they tease me a lot, but I tease right back.

I am one of nine siblings and now have twenty-nine nephews and nieces. I like to send each one a birthday card and sign my name with my special stamp.

On Sunday I enjoy attending Zion FRC in Fenwick with my parents. There are always some of my family and several friends who come to say hello to me. Last year I received a tablet for my birthday so now I get to see photos and updates on Facebook and can send and receive emails. I also keep a notebook with me so I can share with people what I am doing on a regular basis.

My schedule is very busy. I plan meals for the whole week and do the grocery shopping with the support staff at my home. Attending cooking class is the highlight of the week, and I especially like it because we get to eat what we make. Sometimes other friends join in. I also participate in music sessions with other support staff. Art class on Fridays is always fun as we get to be creative and paint different things. My mom has my art work hanging around her house. In the summer I am in a bocce league

and participate in a local drama club where we put on a special performance once a year.

Going shopping at the mall is something we usually do on Friday evenings. Sometimes I meet people that I know and have not seen for awhile. I always make sure to have them write that in my book!

Thank you for reading a little bit about my daily routine.

May Birthdays

1 CLARENCE ZWIEP will be 64

c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

4 DEBBIE VEENSTRA will be 44

4238 2nd Concession Road
Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0

10 ROB DE HAAN will be 53

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

21 EDDIE VAN ROOTSELAAR will be 25

c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

30 BERNIE DE VOS will be 43

c/o Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

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



Respectable clothing

Dear editor,

Reading an article in *Clarion*, “Do They Know You By Your Suit?” (February 23, page 89), I was amazed that a minister could come to such a conclusion.

Adam and Eve, after having sinned, made clothes from fig leaves. God made them garments of skin, much superior to what they were wearing.

Throughout the Bible we read that God requires the best of everything.

The animals brought for offerings were to be without blemish because God is the Almighty Creator and thus has to be respected by man and woman (his creation).

When a lawyer goes to court and stands before the judge to plead his case, he is sure to be dressed in a suit and tie. He knows that he has to impress the judge and show him respect. Will he dare come to church and stand before our heavenly judge and plead for forgiveness of sin dressed in shorts and a T shirt? Will you or I dare? Yet we do stand before our heavenly judge when we pray in the congregational prayer and ask for help and guidance as well as for forgiveness of our sins.

It suggests in this article that if we come to God in prayer we can do that naked. Do you or I dare stand naked before our Almighty judge and plead for his favour when the first thing God did after the fall into sin is make garments to cover our nakedness? Even the seraphim (which

have not sinned) covered their face and feet (Isa 6:2) when they praise God singing “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

Our God is a good and gracious and forgiving God. Because of this many of us tend to translate this into friend or buddy and therefore we can come to him dressed in our most comfortable clothes.

Yes, God is gracious and he is long suffering, but he is not our friend and buddy. God is our sovereign king. He deserves and demands our respect.

When we don’t show the respect God deserves, we may very well be like the people God speaks of in the following text (Luke 13:25-27): “Then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from.’”

This respect should not only show in our attendance but also in our language and our clothing.

In this age, when God provides us so richly that we can afford all kinds of toys and far away holidays, we can surely afford to buy decent and respectable clothing. Is it too big a sacrifice to dress respectably for a worship service, or when we sit at the Lord’s table? Does God demand too much from us?

*Respectably submitted,
Martin Onderwater, Houston B.C.*

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*



Classis Central Ontario, March 9, 2018

Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. John Van Popta welcomed all the delegates present; the delegates from Jubilee (Ottawa) participated via teleconference. Rev. Van Popta read from Matthew 27: 11 – 26 and lead in prayer. The delegates were asked to sing Hymn 28: 1 and 5.

Credentials, Constitution of Classis and Officers

The credentials were examined by the delegates of Ebenezer and were found to be in good order, with all churches represented by their primary delegates. Classis was constituted. The officers proposed by Classis September 17, 2017 were seated: Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes as chairman, Elder John Jager of Fellowship as vice-chairman, and Rev. Anthony Roukema as clerk.

Memorabilia

The following matters of memorabilia were noted: the church at Flamborough has adopted a new name, “Redemption,” and is worshipping at a new location; and Rev. John van Popta has been granted early retirement, which will take effect later this year.

Agenda

The proposed agenda was adopted.

Correspondence

A letter was received from the church at Smithville convening an early Regional Synod East on May 16, 2018.

Question Period, Article 44 C.O.

The chairman asked the questions according to Article 44 of the Church Order. Each of the churches answered in the positive when asked if the ministry of the office-bearers was being continued and if the decisions of the major as-

semblies were being honoured. To the question whether any church required the judgement and help of Classis for the proper government of their church, all churches responded in the negative.

Appointments

Regional Synod East: The church of Smithville has advised the churches that an early Regional Synod East will be convened on May 16, 2018. The following were appointed as delegates to this Regional Synod: Ministers: as primary delegates, Revs. Winston Bosch and Gerrit Bruintjes, and as alternates, Revs. John van Popta and Clarence Vandervelde, in that order. Elders: as primary delegates, Brs. André Schutten and Aron Witten, and as alternates Brs. Ken VanderBoom and John Jager, in that order.

Next Classis Central Ontario: Convening church: Rehoboth – Waterdown. Suggested Officers: Chairman: Rev. Anthony Roukema, Vice-chairman: Elder delegate from Rehoboth, Clerk: Rev. Jake Torenvliet. Date: June 8, 2018 with the alternative date of September 14, 2018.

Question Period

Personal question period was made use.

Censure, Article 34 C.O.

The chairman deemed that meeting was held in good order and Christian censure was not necessary.

Acts and Press Release

The Acts of Classis were adopted, and the Press Release was read and approved.

Closing

Rev. Bruintjes asked the delegates to sing Hymn 28:6 and 7, and led in closing prayer.

For Classis Central Ontario,
J. Jager (Vice-chairman at that time)

