

Origins

Historical Magazine of the Heritage Hall Archives

Christian Reformed Church in North America

Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin University

Volume XXXIX • Number 1 • 2021



Origins

Origins

Volume XXXIX • Number 1 • 2021

Historical Magazine
of the Heritage Hall Archives

Heritage Hall Archives is located
in the Hekman Library at
Calvin University.

It is the archives of the Christian
Reformed Church in North America,
Calvin Theological Seminary, and
Calvin University.

Heritage Hall, Calvin University
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546
(616) 526-6313

Origins is designed to publicize
and advance the objectives of the
archives. These goals include the
gathering, organization, and study of
historical materials produced by the
day-to-day activities of the Christian
Reformed Church, its institutions,
communities, and people.

William Katerberg
Editor

Hendrina Van Spronsen
Circulation Manager

Tracey L. Gebbia
Designer

James C. Schaap
Robert P. Swierenga
Contributing Editors

InnerWorkings
Printer

Cover photo:

Christian School News of the Edmonton
Society for Christian Education, ca. 1967.
Courtesy of Heritage Hall.



page 4



page 18

- 2 From the Editor
- 4 Audacious Immigrants: Bringing Dutch Reformed Reforms to Canada
Adrian Guldemon
- 11 Learning and Belonging as a Dutch Reformed Kid
William Katerberg
- 18 The 1903 Debate over the Founding of Orange City's "Un-American" Christian School
Earl William Kennedy
- 25 Can We Build a Foundation? Dutch and Reformed Experience in Ontario Christian Schools
Phil Teeuwssen



page 32



page 39

- 32 Our People: *The Banner* and the Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s
Justin R. Vos
- 40 Reflections on Janet Sjaarda Sheeres
Rhonda Pennings
- 44 Working with Janet Sheeres
Mary Risseuw
- 45 Book Review
- 46 For the Future
upcoming *Origins* articles
- 47 Contributors

from the editor . . .



From the editor . . .

This issue of *Origins* focuses on how Dutch Reformed immigrants and their children learned to be Reformed and Dutch, whether in Christian schools, through church and ethnic magazines, or via the tastes, sounds, and routines of daily life. It also explores the relationship between religious, ethnic, and new national identities among the Dutch Reformed immigrants. Immigrants were learning how to be Dutch Reformed as new Canadians or Americans. Finally, this issue celebrates the work of Janet Sjaarda Sheeres, who edited *Origins* for several years.

One inspiration for this issue is my upbringing. I grew up in several Dutch Reformed immigrant communities in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. I wrote about this upbringing in a series of stories on *Origins Online* (<https://origins.calvin.edu/>), the blog of Heritage Hall. That material became my essay in this issue.

A second inspiration was the 2019 conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS), held at Calvin University. The Van Raalte Press in Holland, Michigan, published a volume of papers based on that conference in 2020—Donald A. Luidens, Donald J. Bruggink, and Herman J. De Vries Jr., eds., *Dutch Reformed Education:*

Immigrant Legacies in North America. For this issue, I asked several of the authors to take their topics and write new essays with *Origins* readers in mind.

Three of the articles are on immigrants in Canada. My essay describes how I learned to be Dutch Reformed, not so much in school or catechism classes (although them too), but through the tastes, sounds, and smells of being Dutch Reformed and in the networks that Dutch immigrants created in Canada. Adrian Guldemon's article excerpts material from a book he is writing. He shows how Dutch Reformed immigrants took the ideas of Abraham Kuyper, and institutions that Reformed Christians had built in the Netherlands, and tried to transplant those things in Canada—schools, a labor association, and more. Phil Teeuwsen reports on the experiences of Christian high school principals who ran schools that were meant to be Christian but not Dutch. In his research he interviewed principals, and in his essay you hear their voices as they reflect on being Dutch and Reformed.

The two essays on Dutch Reformed folk in the United States complement the Canadian stories. Bill Kennedy recounts a debate in Orange City, Iowa, in 1903, between Christian Reformed and Reformed church leaders over Christian versus public schools. You'll hear some echoes of that debate in Teeuwsen's essay. Justin Vos looks at the efforts of *The Banner* to help Dutch Reformed folk stay committed to their church community and their

faith in a time of prosperity. As they became more well-off and mainstream after World War II, would the ties that long had bound them together hold? Robert Schoone-Jongen's review of a new book by Robert Swierenga, on Timothy Christian School in Chicago, also complements this issue's education theme.

The transitions from immigrant community to assimilated ethnic group that took place in the US in the first half of the twentieth century happened in Canada in the second half of the century. If you enjoy this material, I highly recommend getting a copy of the Van Raalte Institute volume mentioned above; you can find it at the Van Raalte Institute website and at Amazon.com.

Janet Sheeres is the third inspiration for this issue. She was an immigrant herself, moving from the Netherlands to Canada with her family as a girl, and she has lived in both Canada and the US. She told part of her emigrant story in *Origins* in the Fall issue of 2000. Sheeres has been a member of and chaired the Historical Committee of the Christian Reformed Church and president of AADAS. She has been a volunteer in Heritage Hall and served as editor of *Origins*. She is a genealogist, and compiled a Sjaarda family genealogy in the 1990s, and has taught the craft to others. Finally, she is a historian with several published books and dozens of articles. In this issue, Mary Risseuew remembers working with and getting to know Janet; and Rhonda Pennings writes about how Janet and her writings have inspired her.

When I asked Dick Harms, the longtime curator of Heritage Hall and editor of *Origins*, about Janet, he emphasized her good spirit and the importance of her careful research collecting data about immigrants.

Janet joined the volunteer staff of Heritage Hall to work on material to document the post-World War II Dutch migration to North America, particularly Canada. The subject was of professional interest to her, but also personal, since she and her family and her husband were part of that experience. She began by entering data held in the archives of the Christian Reformed Church's Immigration Committee, which assisted some of these immigrants from 1946 through 1963. She found additional information by contacting sources in the Netherlands and then every Monday methodically worked through the records and entered data for what ultimately totaled 9,700 families and individuals. The data included names, spouses, family sizes, sponsors, origins, destination, arrival years, and more.

Having completed this task she asked to take on a much larger task and spent her Mondays of the next seven years entering birth, marriage, anniversary, and obituary data (over 35,000 entries) from the *Calvinist Contact/Christian Courier*, the magazine of Dutch immigrants in Canada. These data also are presented in a series of PDF files available for researchers. Janet's dedication was as indefatigable as were her good spirits. Given her facility in both English and Dutch, she was always ready to help other staff with a difficult Dutch word or phrase, help patrons doing genealogical research, encourage the research being conducted by others, and contribute to the conviviality of Heritage Hall staff.

Janet was a great help to me, as she helped in the transition from her time editing *Origins* to me taking over. She explained the production process, talked about possible topics and writers for future issues, and went over the annual timeline with me. In

the past few years, as I've taken on the work of curator in Heritage Hall, she's been ready to help patrons with research questions.

So, this issue also is our thanks at Heritage Hall to Janet. It is important to celebrate her scholarship because, as Mary and Rhonda emphasize, Dutch Reformed women's voices were so long neglected. More, Janet's career as a genealogist and a historian is a reminder of the significance of work by people who don't make their living doing it. They do it—and do it well—because they love it and care about it. And Janet is still at it, publishing *Present But Not Counted: Dutch Immigrant Women working as Midwives in Dutch Colonies in the United States* with Van Raalte Press.

News from the Archives

Heritage Hall remains open for business, despite the persistence of COVID-19. We have strict COVID-19 policies, but welcome patrons by appointment—no more than three at a time due to social distancing requirements. We have received less new material in the archives this year because of COVID-19. But we are working on important projects.

The most noteworthy project is in partnership with the Van Raalte Institute at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. In August 2020, our two organizations applied for and received a grant from the Dutch government through the Consulate in New York. The \$15,500 grant will support digitizing material related to Albertus Van Raalte, his son Dirk, and the first Dutch colony in Michigan in the mid-1800s. Heritage Hall's Van Raalte materials have been scanned, and now a student is processing the files, making sure that the scans match the documents and preparing the material to go online. Eventually both Heritage Hall and the Van Raalte Institute will have their materials online for schol-

ars, local history buffs, and people interested in their Dutch American heritage. We hope that this will be the first of many shared projects between Heritage Hall, the Van Raalte Institute, and other archives and historical societies with Dutch North American collections.

The persistence of COVID-19 continues to affect how we staff Heritage Hall. I am in most days for the whole day. The other staff—Hendrina VanSpronsen, Laurie Haan, and Emily Koelzer—are staggering their shifts to accomplish social distancing. Please be persistent if you call and no one answers. Leave a message. Email. You can use the general archives phone number and email address or reach out to me using mine. You'll find all of those options on the Heritage Hall website: (<https://library.calvin.edu/guide/collections/hh/staff>).

In addition to Heritage Hall staff, I am thankful for our volunteers and student workers. Currently there is only one volunteer because of social distancing. Phil Erffmeyer collects and processes congregation and classis minutes. Hopefully, we'll be able to welcome back more volunteers this summer, once people have been vaccinated and when new COVID-19 case numbers are lower. This spring we have four student workers. They are working on the online catalogs of our collections, helping with the Van Raalte project, cataloging photographs, writing for the *Origins Online* blog, and helping me research the multicultural history of the Christian Reformed Church.

In between issues of *Origins* the magazine, remember to check out the blog of Heritage Hall, *Origins Online* (at <https://origins.calvin.edu/>).

William Katerberg, Curator

Audacious Immigrants: Bringing Dutch Reformed Reforms to Canada

Adrian Guldemon

The ideas of Abraham Kuyper have been in the news in 2021. In January a *New York Times* article described Senator Josh Hawley of Missouri as a Christian Nationalist and a follower of Kuyper, after he quoted the Dutch preacher, journalist, and prime minister in a speech at The King's College in New York. People unfamiliar with Kuyper might wonder who this dangerous man was. People who know Kuyper's ideas well might wonder how a right-wing Christian nationalist found inspiration in them. This essay does not answer such questions. Instead it examines how Dutch immigrants tried to implement Kuyper's vision in Canada in the decades after World War II.

Dutch Reformed Canadians inspired by Kuyper have made radical statements about North American culture. In 1970, faculty members in the new Institute for Christian Studies said things like, "I believe the Christian Community is desperately ill . . . and that the Christian Community in North America is on the

verge of collapse and will die unless we begin to nurse it back to health again." Similarly, the magazine *Vanguard* published a series of articles on "The Struggle by Radical Christians to Dismantle the Humanist Educational Monopoly in Ontario." While this radical view was a minority opinion among Reformed folk in Canada, it underscores the need to take the Reformed social reform ideas seriously. One thing moderates and radicals in Canada agreed on was that Kuyper's public theology was central to their view of political solutions.

Let us consider what a group of Kuyper's followers actually did. The ordinary folks who believed his pluralistic social vision did what their Reformed faith and tradition led them to do, namely, set up Christian organizations everywhere, in all areas of life, all across Canada. Reform, not revolution, was the slogan they inherited from Abraham Kuyper. What follows here are some vignettes detailing how social reforms were achieved in several areas as the audacious immigrants

challenged the imperial British status quo on the basis of their Dutch and Reformed worldview.

Granum Christian Reformed Church in Alberta during the 1930s. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.



Adrian Guldemon has taught in high schools and colleges and served as director of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. This essay is part of a book project on Dutch immigrants to Canada and their efforts to transplant the Kuyperian vision in their new home.

Hidden Roots

Since Kuyper had an organic view of social institutions, I like to compare the development of a subculture to the growth of a tree. The Dutch Reformed subculture in Canada began as a small sapling in Alberta and was initially fed by the settlers in Montana. Growing a tree is more Reformed than chopping it down, my father, a nurseryman, would say. In the 1940s in the Netherlands, he was an activist in the Anti-Revolutionary Party, founded by Kuyper in 1876. I spent my own youth planting a lot of real trees, and I was privileged to spend my adult life nurturing symbolic trees in God's kingdom.

The Dutch Reformed subculture started in Canada in 1905. Families living near Lethbridge, Alberta, had

forty-five persons in the house of Jan Postman, conducted the service, and administered the sacrament to Jana Postman and Jan Ter Telgte.

During his two-week stay, Rev. Holwerda helped this small group of settlers petition Classis Orange City for a home missionary. On 26 November 1905, Rev. Botbijn formally organized the Nijverdal CRC. In 1909 this congregation divided into the Monarch (now Nobleford) and Granum churches. Both rural congregations are still there, and both support The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta. Today, some of their CRC congregational members agree with Hawley's Trumpian views!

That same year, the first Reformed congregation tied to the older and bigger Reformed Church in America

a RCA pastor from Chicago associated with the Presbyterian Church's Holland Mission, organized a congregation in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It had a minister only briefly, and in 1908 it joined the CRC and became the first CRC in Winnipeg. Then Dutch folks trekked to Edmonton on the new transcontinental railroad and petitioned the recently created Classis Pacific of the CRC to start a congregation. It was organized in 1910. A year later, a significant number of Dutch families moved to the Edmonton area from Whitinsville, Massachusetts, and increased the size of the congregation considerably. Then a group decided to leave and take up homesteading in northern Alberta in 1912, taking advantage of provincial land grants for farmers willing to break their backs in the bush. In keeping with their intent to stay Dutch, they called their settlement Neerlandia. Settlements in Cramersburg and Edam, Saskatchewan, failed, as these settlers were unable to cope with the harsh Canadian climate.

In 1914 the start of World War I ended the wave of immigration begun in the 1890s. This left six struggling congregations in the West dependent on assistance from their neighbors to the south. There is no record of any of the men enlisting in the Canadian Army for WWI. Rumor had it that most were still anti-British because of the recent Boer War Britain had fought against Dutch settled in South Africa. Besides, Holland had remained neutral in "The War to End All Wars."

The second tree root began in Ontario, imported directly from Holland. After 1920, the Canadian Pacific Railway sponsored programs to entice European immigrants to come to the Prairies. They succeeded in bringing in many nationalities, but most Dutch immigrants went no further than Ontario. Home Missionary J. R.



Members of Granum Christian Reformed Church, Alberta, 1930s. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

a problem. They needed an ordained pastor to baptize two young children in their fledgling church community, so they sent a request to the consistory of the Manhattan Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Montana. The consistory obliged and sent Rev. J. Holwerda on a 400-mile trek north. He got to Old Man River, gathered the

(RCA), also started up in Monarch, half a mile down the road. Their refusal to join the CRC was not a good sign of things to come. It would be the only RCA church in Canada until 1946.

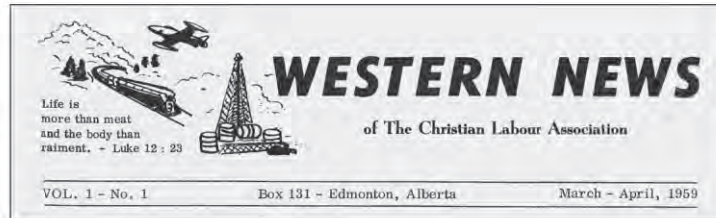
A few more CRC churches were established in the Prairies in that period. In 1907, Rev. Van Woerden,

Brink was dispatched from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to organize them. In 1925, Chatham became the first CRC congregation as part of Classis Grand Rapids East.

That same year, John Snor, the fieldman for the Netherlands Immigration Foundation, was appointed to assist Dutch immigrants in the Hamilton, Ontario, area. Soon a congregation was organized under the auspices of Classis Holland and served by home missionary Rev. J. S. Balt. That was in 1929, only months before the Great Depression hit Canada. Snor began organizing a group of families to move to the Holland Marsh north of Toronto. Land and modest grants were available, but they had to drain the marshy lands. The clever Dutchmen succeeded in putting in a canal and draining the swamp. The Holland CRC was formally organized in 1935, and cash crop blessings soon followed.

The third tree root began across the continent, in Vancouver, British Columbia. A group of Dutchmen of various backgrounds was organized as a CRC as part of Classis Pacific in 1926. An enterprising farmer, Jacob Prins, began working with the Colonization Department of the Canadian National Railway to attract settlers to the northcentral part of British Columbia. In 1939, twelve families got together to set up a “good reformed church” in Houston, British Columbia.

By the beginning of World War II, there were 14 congregations, 8 ministers, and 2,274 souls comprising the CRC in Canada. The Canadian total was about the size of the biggest single congregation, Grandville Avenue, in Grand Rapids. At this point, the “kingdom” was still hidden under a bushel. No one in those churches was thinking about reforming anything



Western News publication of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, 1959. Image Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

in Canada. Survival was the order of the day. But the key settlements were alive, and in Hamilton, Ontario, the first Christian School Society had been set up in 1937. The roots “were taking,” as we nurserymen say.

Growth

The big wave of post World War II immigration changed the dynamics of the CRC in Canada. The precarious “reformed” sapling with three main roots quickly became a tree. Between 1947 and 1957, 150,000 Dutch emigrants left their ruined country, looking for better opportunities in Canada. Not all of them were Reformed, as about half were Roman Catholic. The main Reformed group was *Gereformerd* and joined the existing 14 CRC congregations. That “joining” action was not a foregone conclusion, as in 1944 there had been another acrimonious church split in Holland. Those animosities came to Canada with the newcomers on converted troop-carrier ships such as the *Waterman* and the *Groote Beer*.

The growth of the CRC tree was critical for development of the kingdom vision imported from Holland. Both Pope Leo XIII and Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper had written about important social questions in the 1890s. The key idea was that economic and class problems—exploitation and poverty—must be addressed directly through political action. Being charitable or sympathetic on the sidelines was not enough to alleviate obvious human suffering. As a

result, both the Reformed and the Catholic communities in Holland had organized labor unions and political parties. Reformed Christians referred to such efforts as contributing to God’s “kingdom.”

The new immigrants all were familiar with witnessing through social action, but in Canada this “kingdom vision” was developed only in the CRC. The other Reformed denominations stuck with a narrow version of Calvinism as their view on social issues. Consequently, although there were periodic overtures to work together on a common cause, the Canadian Reformed Church, the Netherlands Reformed Church, and the Reformed Church in America in Canada did not join the CRC-designed initiatives. These smaller denominations provided lots of criticism but little support for the growing Christian organizations. By 1960, the Dutch immigration wave had subsided, and there were now seven new classes across the country with 100 congregations from Nova Scotia to Vancouver Island. (There would be over 200 eventually.) Canada was covered from coast to coast.

However, a young tree does not a reform make. Before 1960, the arrival of another denomination did not cause a stir with the Anglo-Canadian establishment. After all, many immigrant groups had started their own ethnic churches for decades. If only the Dutch Reformed people had remained normal; but no, they became audacious and started Christian organizations!

Christian school societies began cropping up and becoming visible by 1960. Societies, the legal entities owning the schools, were a necessary part of the Kuyperian emphasis on family and community. The schools were not church-owned (parochial)

schools. The school board ran the school, while the consistory ran the church. This was in line with Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty. Each sector of society is a sovereign sphere. The immigrants were at pains to point out that the schools were not Dutch or Reformed but Christian and Protestant. The mostly Anglican (English), Scottish Presbyterian, and Irish Catholic population in Canada was not keen on this strange social philosophy. It reminded them of the Puritans, those ill-humored dissidents. But the Dutch Reformed folks soldiered on, lustily singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" on Sunday mornings and praying "Abide with Me" in the evenings. They meant it, wholeheartedly.

By 1960 these enterprising folks had mastered English, the CRC Church Order, and the details of commercial contracts. They were on their way to implement the other parts of their Dutch Reformed tradition—the other pillars of civil society that needed Reformed Christian influence—notably education, business, labor, health, the arts, and politics.

The obvious first branch needed was a communications network. Christian newspapers are essential for promoting the correct worldview. Kuyper had started several in his day. Many of the folks had been readers of the Dutch daily, *Trouw*. An Edmonton group started *The Canadian Calvinist* in 1945. The first editor, Rev. DeKoekoek, echoing Kuyper, explained its purpose: "to become Canadian citizens so that you can take an active part in the public life of the nation."

The Dutch community in Chatham, Ontario, started *The Contact* in 1949 to connect the widely dispersed communities and provide useful information. No one had really expected Canada to be that large. Ordinary news about life in this world, such

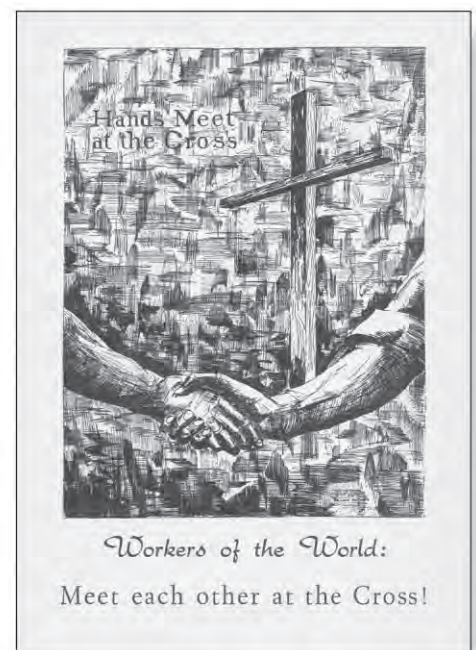
as birth and death announcements, was important. Being efficient Dutchmen, they quickly realized the benefit of cooperation and merged the two papers to become the *Calvinist Contact* in 1951. With this national paper in hand, the movement for "kingdom causes" was ready for the next level. Guardian Press in Hamilton was to print the newspaper. Volunteers produced the content. Faith drove the supporters to pay subscriptions and contribute everything from travel ads to inspiring speeches. While the print method succeeded, the attempt to set up a Christian radio station in Niagara Falls failed in 1959. Apparently, the initial programming, called "the Kingdom Hour"—a mix of devotions and news from Holland—did not attract much of an audience or advertisers.

The Tree Grows

Churches were built everywhere to house the pulpit and the "sacred Word," and the Christian schools were not far behind them in instilling knowledge. The Dutch immigrants were accustomed to fully funded Protestant schools back in Holland. Since the Roman Catholics in Ontario also had a publicly funded "separate schools" system, the idea of setting up a (Protestant) Christian school system seemed common sense. Already in 1952 there were seven school societies in Ontario; two operating schools; and a new organization, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS). By 1960 there were twenty-three schools in industrialized Ontario, four on the open Prairies and nine in verdant British Columbia.

The 1950s saw the beginning of several other Christian organizations. The Christian Labor Association of Canada (CLAC) was begun in February of 1952 in London, Ontario. It received assistance and advice from European Christian unions and the Christian Labor Association (CLA)

in the United States. Compared to the other Dutch Reformed organizations in Canada, it faced the toughest consequences for its principal claims around freedom of association in the workplace. The fight for legal certification as a union was the clearest example, in the eyes of many Dutch Reformed folk, of fighting the "kingdom of darkness." The big Canadian unions (e.g., the Seafarers) defended their turf fiercely. Some were corrupt. Some were under communist influ-



Cover page of a Christian Labour Association of Canada pamphlet. Its title is a response to the rallying cry in *The Communist Manifesto* for "workers of the world to unite."

ence, though communists were being purged. The CLAC seemed a foreign and religious upstart in an era when labor unions in Canada and the US were consolidating. The key to the future, however, was less the unions themselves than the Ontario Labor Relations Board (OLRB). This authority decided whether a union was legal and approved certification as the sole bargaining agent for employees. That process involved a public assessment of the criteria for union membership.

The first big issue that shook CRC

churches in Canada was whether a member of the CRC could join the “neutral” (secular) union at his or her workplace. Was such a person a sinner who should be barred from the Lord’s Supper? That reminded everyone of the older debates about lodge membership. Further, if Reformed folks were to set up a new Christian union, then what about the non-Christians in the workplace? Could they be members of a (Reformed) Christian union? Can one serve two masters? This kind of debate would be replayed in the other organizations for the next two decades. Soon one group was arguing for providing special “creeds,” while another was arguing for a statement of principles, and a third faction threatened to leave if the CRC confessions were not included.

This debate obscured the critical issue for the CLAC, namely, fair representation in an open workplace. Could a “Christian” union be fair to everyone it represented—atheists included? If it gave some members special status based on faith, that would be discrimination. The OLRB thought so, too, and turned down the first applications in 1956. That negative decision heated up the debate even more.

The major showdown between the two factions in the CLAC occurred in 1957. After many efforts at compromises, a new union, the Christian Trade Unions of Canada (CTUC), was begun in 1958. The CTUC removed the exclusive faith clause from its constitution and was certified by the OLRB in 1959. The CLAC soldiered on with its radical position and tried to find ways to meet the reality of Canadian unionism. Both unions survived and finally merged in 1979. They contributed a major reform for the working class by making competition among unions possible in several economic fields. Freedom improved in the workplace.

The Committee for Justice and

Liberty (CJL) was formed in 1961 by some CLAC supporters who wanted a more political organization to reform the closed shop Ontario Labor legislation. One of their early projects was to give legal advice to employees who refused to join the “neutral” union at their place of employment for religious reasons. It expanded its social justice scope greatly in 1972, when full-time staff was appointed. Later, it was renamed Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) and moved on to deal with bigger national problems like aboriginal issues, dirty pipelines, and urban poverty.

The Christian Farmer’s Federation of Ontario (CFFO) began in 1954, organized by twelve farmers in London, Ontario. As the number of prosperous farms increased, so did the membership. Due to the nature of the agricultural sector, much of the work of the CFFO was in relation to government policies for this “supply-managed” sector. The CFFO became effective for its members and stayed out of the news after full-time staff took over in 1968.

As part of the pressure to finance many new organizations, the Dutch immigrants, both the Reformed and the Catholic sections, soon organized credit unions. The Dutch Canadian Credit Union was begun in Toronto in 1954 as a financial cooperative. The St. Willibrord Credit Union in London, Ontario, was begun in 1955. Both are still alive and well. No reform was possible here. Canadian banking regulations are tight and identical for all religions.

Reformed folks knew that mental health issues were closely related to spiritual well-being. In 1958, a group started the Salem Christian Sanatorium Inc. In 1965 the organization received government permission to operate a 30-bed psychiatric hospital. Unfortunately, the board could not find the right qualified staff required



Christian School News of the Edmonton Society for Christian Education, ca. 1968. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

for this kind of project. In 1972 a new organization formed with a more limited scope; it was called the Salem Christian Mental Health Association. It began operating many counselling clinics across Ontario. Most of them shut down in the 1980s, during the era of the abortion battles. The board realized that there was also something wrong with the name. While the biblical word “salem” means peace, the North American connotation was the place for witchcraft and Puritans. Neither was a term of endearment. In 2006 the organization reemerged as the Shalom Mental Health Network.

Before the failure at Salem became obvious, others began working on a related health care program, the needs of the elderly. In March 1966, the Classis Hamilton Home for the Aged was incorporated. It now exists as Shalom Manor in Grimsby. In 1969, Holland Christian Homes was incorporated to set up several types of senior and long-term care facilities in Brampton. These operations grew into a model concept for the other ten thriving retirement and care facilities

serving the Dutch Reformed retirees around Ontario. All of them receive government funding and have retained a Reformed and Dutch identity, despite having to comply with “neutral” legislation. Their reform was to provide exemplary care for the elderly, which has been a major contribution to the province. Similar fine facilities exist in Canada’s West.

A Big Branch

By 1960, the tree was sprouting Christian education branches but was facing some headwinds. When immigrants come to a new country, they are faced with the challenge of how much to assimilate in their new environment. Anglo-Canadians were in an imperial mood right after World War II, and Ontario had a long history of church versus state battles over schools. The Dutch had stepped into a hornets’ nest when they announced that they were starting “real” Christian schools. Didn’t the Canadian Army just liberate Holland in 1945? Did they think Canadians were fake Christians? The locals wondered.

Many of the immigrants had been members of the underground resistance in the Netherlands during World War II and had little respect for political leaders who pursued unjust policies. The idea of fighting an unjust situation was not only a biblical mandate but an exciting challenge for these idealistic and enterprising folks. Thus, the Hamilton Christian School Society Board took the Hamilton Public School Board to court in 1962. Ontario funded both a historically Protestant, but now secular public school system and a Roman Catholic “separate school” system. The lawsuit petitioned the courts to interpret the “separate school” legislation so that HCSSB could become a separate Protestant board and qualify for government funding. Unfortunately, the judge cited a number of technical

obstacles in the legislation and concluded that HCSSB was not a school in the legal sense required. That skirting of the justice norm was hard to appeal. The OACS membership agreed to pay HCSSB’s legal costs and began working on lobbying the politicians.

Next out of the gate was the Christian Action Foundation (CAF) in Alberta. One of its early mottos was “serve God, advance justice, transform society.” Beginning a lobbying campaign in 1964, CAF succeeded in 1967 in getting the Alberta government to approve a 35 percent tuition grant to private schools. In 1970 there were ten schools with 1,931 students and

73 teachers. They constituted about one-third of the private schools in Alberta. In the 1980s, the group would be formally organized as the Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS), with offices in Calgary. This was the core group of the Association of Independent and Alternative Schools in Alberta (AISCA). This broader organization continued to lobby for improved status for the independent schools, and by 1998 it was instrumental in achieving an innovative funding arrangement with the province. It now was possible for an independent school to remain separate and yet receive funding on par with the public boards. By 2015, this unique arrangement was adopted by most of the schools. Unfortunately, this model seems to have worked only in Alberta.

Then came the British Columbia effort, organized as the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia. In 1970 there were fifteen schools, 2,100 students, and eighty teachers in this group. It was part of a larger group, the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA). This much larger group also included Catholic and elite private schools, so the Dutch immigrants were a minority in FISA. This Federation hired a lobbyist in 1967 and succeeded in obtaining government funding for 35 percent of the main grant by 1977. The best part of their solution was that the British Columbia government passed the Independent School Act, thus creating a clear model for other provinces. This arrangement was more visible and standardized than the Alberta solution, which depended a lot on local agreements. The money was a big relief for the financially stressed parents. Inflation had become a big problem for school boards in the late 1970s.

In Ontario in 1984, the progressive conservative government extended funding all the way to Grade



Cartoon from the *Man in Society* curriculum used in Christian high schools in Canada in the 1980s. It depicts the ideas of Abraham Kuyper that all knowledge comes with a point of view. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

13 for the Catholic separate schools boards. After a 100-year battle, this legislation established legal equality with the “neutral” public school boards. Equalization was appealed in a number of court cases, then finalized by the Liberal government in 1989. At this time the Ontario courts also eliminated (Protestant) Christianity from the public schools. All religions were now equal and equally irrelevant for educational purposes in the public system.

During the 1980s there were several attempts to organize Christian political parties at the provincial (Family Coalition) and federal (Christian Heritage Party) levels. All the efforts failed to elect a single member of parliament. Some of these party members were in fact Christian nationalists with a right-wing moral agenda. The political experiment failed quickly, as Canada refused to implement proportional representation. The Christian Businessmen’s Federation flourished in the 1980s but faded by 2000. There was no clear societal benefit to be achieved by these economic organizations. There were similar service organizations already in existence.

In 1982 Canada adopted the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with a clear Equal Treatment provision (Section 15). Would this new law finally lead to justice for Christian schools? Surely, if one religion gets money for schools, why not the others? The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) worked closely with the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) to set up the court cases beginning in 1992. After three levels of appeals, the Supreme Court of Canada denied the request to order the province of Ontario to provide

funding. As a consolation prize, the Supreme Court ruled that there were no constitutional barriers to any such funding but that this would have to be a provincial act. Several judges did note that the provision of health services should be mandated. In 1999, The Human Rights Committee of the United Nations ruled that Ontario was violating several of its Human Rights Covenants. In 1999, the Progressive Conservative government did indeed provide funding for health services in private schools in Ontario. At last, a small victory!

Given that limited success, the OACS and the CJC redoubled their efforts in 1999 in the Ontario provincial election to elect Progressive Conservative members of parliament as the party had indicated it would be willing to consider a voucher system. In 2000, both organizations expanded their lobbying staff and did all the things that lobbyists do—newspaper ads, radio interviews, TV talk shows, and lots of visits and meetings with officials.

On 9 May 2001, the Progressive Conservative government introduced the 2001 provincial budget. In it was a provision for the Equity in Education Tax Credit (EETC) for parents with children in private schools. The public school teachers’ unions went ballistic, and the newspaper editorials were savage. Some were supportive of school choice, but most lamented that the sky was falling. However, the government held firm, and by fall the budget had passed; the EETC would be in effect for the 2002 tax year. The schools celebrated in November 2002 with a fiftieth-anniversary gala for the OACS. The political events of the next decade were not positive, but that is another topic for later essays.

Conclusions—A Modest Lesson

By 2020, the Dutch Reformed subculture tree had several strong branches with leaves. One of the principles in the Kuyperian tradition is that reforming society means increasing the structural (i.e., religious or worldview) diversity of its institutions. This is a public good because ordinary folks then can freely exercise their personal responsibilities, like choosing schools or jobs, in ways that reflect their deepest commitments. Monopolies in any area restrict freedom and distort development. Did the “Reformed reforms” improve diversity and freedom for the average citizen? Yes—in education, the basics for a Reformed Christian education system are in place, from kindergarten to university. The CLAC is active across Canada, but in business and banking the prospect is dim. In elder care, reform worked, but in health, it clearly did not. The Catholic and Jewish hospitals offer similar solutions.

The Reformed institutional witness has been around in Canada for seventy-five years. Time will tell just what cultural impact the Reformed subculture will have in this country, especially as its ethnic character fades. A detailed celebration and current assessment of the Christian education story in Canada is found in my new book, *Creating the Third Way*. This detailed story provides clearer answers to the value question that should now be asked of the whole reform effort. These audacious Dutch immigrants brought a new Reformed “kingdom” vision to Canada, and they did so not through marching for revolution but through new kinds of organizations that pushed for social reform. *Reformata Reformandum Est!* To be Reformed is to be reforming. ☸

Learning and Belonging as a Dutch Reformed Kid

William Katerberg

I grew up among Dutch Reformed immigrants in Ontario, Canada, in the 1970s and 1980s. My father was the *dominee* in a series of rural, small-town, and urban congregations from the Ottawa region to the Niagara Peninsula. My siblings and I went to Christian schools built by immigrants, and our social life was almost entirely with Dutch Reformed folk like us.

As kids, we knew who was inside the community and who was an outsider, and we knew that adults were concerned with protecting our Dutch and Reformed boundaries. I remember adults saying things like, “She married a Canadian boy.” In other words, not one of us. “We” were Dutch Reformed.

“They” were Canadian. Sometimes, of course, we were Canadians. During the Olympics or international hockey tournaments, for example, we were Canadians, and they were Americans, Soviets, or Swedes. But mostly we were Dutch Reformed. (If there was no Canadian athlete or team—usually the case in World Cup soccer—we cheered for the Dutch.)

What marked us Dutch Reformed? When did we know we were home,

where we belonged? People learn such things in formal ways in school and church education programs. But we learn as much from our day-to-day habits, interactions, and relationships in our communities.

Historical Context

My Dutch Reformed generation in Canada was mostly children of



Dutch immigrants arrive in Quebec, 1947. Courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada. Photothèque/Library and Archives Canada/PA-129828.

immigrants, born from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. We experienced the transition from immigrant community to post-immigrant ethnic community. We also are “Generation X” North Americans, falling between the prosperous, postwar Baby Boomers and the Millennials, who came to adulthood amid early twenty-first century economic upheavals. My generation’s children mostly do not remember the immigrant experience.

From the late 1940s to the 1970s,

William Katerberg is curator of Heritage Hall and a professor of history at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His research has focused on religion, immigration, and politics in North America and on the American West.

half a million Dutch nationals emigrated, about 185,000 settling in Canada. The Netherlands was the fifth largest source of immigrants to Canada from 1946 to 1968. Between 1947 and 1954 alone, 94,000 came to Canada. Eighty percent of that group settled on farms, in Ontario and Alberta especially. In the late 1950s and 1960s more of the immigrants were blue collar or professional, and Dutch Reformed immigrants could be found across Canada. Many families brought their household goods in massive wooden crates because the Dutch government allowed them to take very little money out of the Netherlands when they left. One of my grandfathers shipped a car from the Netherlands to Canada.¹

This large wave of immigrants after World War II built on a small prewar Dutch Canadian community. Some 25,000 Dutch and Dutch American immigrants came to Canada between 1890 and 1930, mostly to Ontario and Alberta. The CRC had helped recruit and settle some of them and founded the first CRC churches in Canada. It did the same after World War II on a much larger scale. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) also helped settle Dutch immigrants.

In 1960, the Canadian census revealed that 25 percent of Dutch folk in Canada were members of the United Church (mostly immigrants who had been part of the Dutch national church in the old country); 23 percent were Roman Catholic; 22 percent were Christian Reformed; and rest belonged to other churches (e.g., small Reformed/Calvinist denominations) or had no church affiliation.² My parents' families came to find farms in the late 1940s and mid-1950s, but they would not have come if there had not been the promise of a Christian Reformed Church community.³

Churches and other religious



King Extra Strong peppermints. The brand is from the Netherlands and dates to 1902.

organizations played a major role in recruiting and settling these immigrants. With the Christian Reformed Church's help, the new immigrants soon founded dozens of new congregations, and eventually over 200. Within a decade, most of those churches were self-sustaining, and the immigrant communities were sending students to Calvin College and Seminary to become clergy. There were smaller numbers of new RCA, Free Reformed, Netherlands Reformed, Canadian Reformed, and Protestant Reformed congregations.⁴

Dutch Reformed immigrants also built Christian schools, started religious presses, and published magazines such as *Calvinist Contact* and *Christian Renewal*. They founded Christian universities and a graduate school (King's University, Redeemer University, Institute for Christian Studies). They opened countless small businesses, from delis and garages to greenhouses, tree nurseries, legal practices, and more. They started a Christian labor association, a Christian farmers federation, etc. If all of this sounds exhausting, note that they also built retirement communities. We called them "old age homes" when I was a kid, or, perhaps more appropriately, "rest homes."

These institutions did not just support face-to-face local communities like those in which I grew up.

They also made possible an "imagined" community of Dutch Reformed people across Canada.⁵ By "imagined" I do not mean "not real." I refer to the way modern institutions and communication technology (magazines, books, radio, TV, school curriculum, etc.) allow people to share cultural experiences, a sense of common identity and belonging, and life habits and practice among people who do not know each other personally. If you grew up in Hamilton, Ontario, and moved to Edmonton, Alberta, even if you had no family there and knew no Dutch Reformed person there, you would find familiar institutions, habits, tastes, sounds, and smells. You'd know you were home.

Tastes, Sounds, and Smells

What did it mean to be Dutch Reformed, to belong to that community? The carefully schooled Reformed boy in me thinks about doctrine and Heidelberg Catechism classes. Profession of faith. The texts of Scripture. The content of what we believed. The Sunday worship—two services, in morning and afternoon or evening.

The social historian in me—and my own memories—point me beyond liturgies, hymns, psalms, and doctrines. In the congregation of my youth, the afternoon church service was at 2:30, for the convenience of dairy farmers who had late afternoon milking to do, as had been common in rural areas in the Netherlands. Our experience of church was shaped by the social context in which we lived. We had church before afternoon milking; other rural congregations had church in the early evening, after milking. But all had to figure out how to make milking and worship work "op zondag" (on Sunday).

I have in mind what anthropologists call "thick description"—detailed reflections on the layers of habits, assumptions, and relationships

of my immigrant community. I do not mean to imply that the Heidelberg Catechism and Reformed doctrine are “thin.” They’re anything but thin, intellectually. But when I look back, my most powerful memories of what it was like to grow up Dutch Reformed are not about what we believed. They are about physical sensations of our ethnic life, which was inseparable from our religious life. And they are about tight networks of people and the institutions that extended those networks across Canada.

To understand my community’s religious experience, you need to imagine the sound of rolls of candy being passed around when the sermon started.⁶ Whispers. Paper being torn. And then the taste. Faam or King peppermints for most people. Wilhelmina peppermints for the well-heeled. Lifesavers or Mentos in a few families. For a long sermon, maybe you’d get a second or third piece. Reformed orthodoxy required a strong peppermint. Sometimes you still had a bit in your mouth when the hymn or prayer began after the sermon.

Christian faith had a Dutch brogue. I can still hear the accents when Scripture was read, hymns sung, prayers prayed, and sermons preached. We had a Dutch service once a month. I remember the sense of some older folk that moving from Dutch services to English was a sign of spiritual decline. They stood up straighter when we sang “*Ere Zij God*” (“Glory to God”), a Dutch Christmas hymn. If Dutch was good enough for the Almighty to speak, surely it ought to be good enough for us, I remember people joking. (Frisians sometimes joked that the original language of Scripture was Frisian, not Greek or Hebrew.) If a person’s first language is their language of faith, the one that shapes her or his ear early in life, then mine was English with a Dutch accent.

We had communion—the Lord’s

Supper—four times a year when I was a kid, and in my teen years we celebrated it once a month. The taste and smell of our weekly “communion” was coffee after church, with many of the men and some of the women stopping for a cigarette first. I can still see the church caretaker looking on, waiting to sweep up the cigarette butts.

Authority smelled like old cigars. Smoke clung to the walls, chairs, and table in the church council room. I could imagine smoke breathed in and out over decades of conversations among ministers, elders, and deacons about theology; unorthodox ideas; fund-raising; Christian school politics; and wayward sinners, hopefully on their way back to the fold.

We ate soup and buns for lunch on many Sundays, so mum did not have to cook anything new on the Sabbath. We also had them after funerals, in the church’s community hall, along with a lot of raucous talking. To be Dutch was to eat *stamppot*, peasant food made from a combination of potatoes, kale (*boerenkool* in Dutch), and sausage. I never had *stamppot* at a church event. It was not formal enough. And yet it was a sign of the community of the faithful as I knew it.

I could go on for a long time about food. Food at home, with prayer before the meal and the reading of Bible passages or short devotions and another prayer after it. Food from the local Dutch deli. Smoked horse meat. Dried sausages. *Dropjes* (salted black licorice). Gouda cheese. *Komijnekaas*

(cheese with cumin or caraway seeds in it). Salted herring. Smoked eels. Food eaten at Christian school fund-raising bazaars.

I remember loving *oliebollen*—little homemade deep-fried Dutch donuts, with raisins, currants, or apples, made around New Year’s Day and eaten with icing sugar. My cousins and I called them “cholesterol balls.” We ate them on New Year’s Day morning, then went to church. Then we ate more for lunch or supper, with leftovers for the next week.

We believed the doctrine of election, of course. God had chosen us, given us faith, and inclined us to follow Him. But how did we know we were part of the faithful? Sociologist Max Weber got it wrong, or at best



Oliebollen (“oil balls”) waiting for icing sugar before being eaten. The ones in the picture were made with raisins and apples. Image courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

half right, when he pointed to worldly success as the sign the elect used to recognize they had God’s favor. I knew who the faithful were by their accents and what they ate. I write this tongue in cheek, but only a bit. We made ourselves a people of faith not just with the doctrines we confessed, but with the unthought habits and sensations of ordinary life, including church life. The tastes, smells, sounds, and sights I’ve described sanctified life in their own way.

The Heidelberg Catechism asks, “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” The answer is our faithful savior Jesus Christ.⁷ I remember memorizing Q&A 1 of this sixteenth-century Reformed catechism in my teens. I remember affirming that Q&A to my church council in my late teens, professing my faith and becoming a full member of the CRC. I signed on to the Heidelberg Catechism and the other Reformed doctrinal standards as an elder in First Christian Reformed Church in Kingston, Ontario, in my late twenties.⁸

But I also know about comfort food. And I know about how powerfully faith and religious life involve all the senses and the layers of experience that make ethnic culture, religious tradition, and ordinary life impossible to disentangle. Spiritual comfort and comfort food are different things. But in our experience, and emotionally, we can’t really separate them. They come as a package.

Networks

My “education” as a Dutch Reformed boy, teenager, and young adult involved more than tastes, smells, and sounds. Also central to our ethno-religious lives were networks of people and institutions.

Networks are not as delightful as ethnic food. But there’s a connection. The Dutch deli that sells the food is an institution. The suppliers and customers are networks of people. The customers at the deli also run into each other at church; the “hairstylist,” farm supply store, garage, Christian school, and local insurance broker are all run by people from their immigrant religious community. This was my social world growing up. The ease with which Dutch Reformed folk made connections with each other, figuring out people they knew in common, was striking. My father is a master at it. Think of it as “Dutch bingo.”

One of the best historical sources with which to catch a glimpse of the networks of the Dutch Reformed community is back issues of *Calvinist Contact* (CC). This was an institution in my youth. Its roots go back to the late 1940s, when Dutch immigration to Canada was taking off. When I was an adolescent in the late 70s and early 80s, CC was the place for the Dutch Reformed immigrant community in



The Heidelberg Catechism study guide by Gordon Spykman, (1969), commonly used in the communities where I grew up during the 1970s and 1980s. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Canada to go to know what was going on in the world. CC wrote about the larger outside world in which we lived. And it shaped our small ethnic and religious world.

Take the 5 March 1982 edition of CC.⁹ I don’t remember it, specifically, of course. But I can recall many of the things reported in it. The front page has stories about a “larger role for Canada in human rights,” the “Polish Church survives martial law,” and “Christian schools prepare themselves for the computer.”

Pierre Trudeau was Canada’s prime minister, and the new federal constitution (1982) and human rights were part of his political platform. The Cold War was heating up in the early 1980s, with the Soviet suppression of

the Solidarity movement in Poland and the American president Ronald Reagan calling the USSR an evil empire. We got computers in my Christian school. They had green monitors and used cassette tapes not floppy disks for data and programs. To me they were a curiosity. But some of my classmates ended up in the computer industry. My English teacher is still working there today, as is a friend from my undergraduate days at Redeemer College. (“Bingo!”)

Inside the 5 March 1982 edition are stories and columns—some in English, some in Dutch. They are about mass media, theological controversies, pastor-church relations, missions, the social gospel, Hare Krishnas, Redeemer College (it opened later that year), Christian Reformed congregations and local Dutch immigrant communities, books, and more. Stories like these shaped how we understood our worlds, small and big—what it was to be Canadian and Dutch Reformed both. We knew the people writing the stories, or knew their families or churches, or at least knew them by reputation.

In the ads and “classified” section you can see the networks and institutions that knit together our everyday lives. News about births, marriages, anniversaries, and deaths. Ads from across Canada from Christian schools looking for teachers. Dutch Reformed folk looking for work or employees looking for workers for their farms and businesses. Personal ads. In one a 40-ish dairy farmer is looking for a “serious lady” 30–40 years old.¹⁰ (I hope he found someone.) Calendars of arts, church, and political events. An example is a Christian Labour Association convention, with Bernie Zylstra from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto speaking. Our people, our institutions.

Three advertisements in that issue of CC perhaps represent the larger

Calvin Library
MAR 03 1982

90567
Grand Rapids, Mich.
CALVIN LIBRARY
37th year of publication, no. 1827
March 5, 1982

Second Class Mail
Printed in Canada
Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont.
and Lenoir, N.Y. — see page 2.

Calvini

MacDonald seeks larger role for Canada in human rights

by Wally van de Kleut
C.C. staff

David MacDonald spoke recently in Edmonton on "Human rights and Canada's international economic relations." Mr. MacDonald, former federal Secretary of State, is president of the Future Secretariat, an organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of the need for social change.

Introducing his topic, MacDonald said that "the basic pattern of fundamental human rights began with their application by the United Nations in 1945."

Despite the practical response by the world's nations over the years "to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights," MacDonald feels that "these resolutions stand as beacons for future (international) actions."

The passage of more declarations at treaties, according to MacDonald, is not enough to meet the expectations already implicit in those we have passed. Instead, Canada and other nations must tie the issue of economic assistance to fundamental human rights, he said.

"It is not sufficient for us as a country to vote with regularity against apartheid, and simultaneously give economic incentives to the same country which favours apartheid."

MacDonald pointed to the recently published encyclical written by Pope John Paul II as an ecclesiastical document of major importance giving people of God a new and strong direction.

Entitled *On Human Work*, the encyclical, said MacDonald, states that "both the realities of rigid capitalism and the socialist system may very likely not be the guidelines we should follow for the future."

"The encyclical," said MacDonald, "convincingly argues that both systems tend to deny the sanctity and dignity of the individual human being."

Crediting the solid direction the encyclical gives to leaders around the world, MacDonald concluded his speech by saying that "we in Canada have reached a kind of watershed where we cannot really change human rights injustices without also raising serious questions about our own economic system."



David MacDonald (right)

Polish Church survives martial law

FRANKFURT, Germany (EP) — Polish churches are spared the effects of martial law. They are not subject to any prohibition of assembly and are able to perform their counselling activities and social and charitable work without restriction. Andrej Wojtowicz of Warsaw, a member of the Polish Ecumenical Council, gave this report on the situation of churches in Poland during a visit to the Frankfurt-based Office for Foreign Affairs of the Protestant Church in Germany on January 26.

In the Polish Ecumenical Council, non-Catholic churches with a total membership of over 700,000 are united, including the Orthodox Church with 600,000 members, and the Lutheran Church with 90,000. According to Wojtowicz, the Catholic Church, to which 95 per cent of the Polish population belong, has gained prestige and privileges as a result of the events within the country.

Mr. Wojtowicz characterized relations between the Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Council as "not without tension." Since reconciliation in the country could only be achieved by all working together, it was unfortunate, he said, that the trade union "Solidarity" had regarded itself as a Catholic movement right from the start and expressed its "religious devotion in the Cross, Mary and the Pope."

This fact alone meant that non-Catholic Christians had high goals at home within the movement. Now, they forget that the Catholic Church had not supported the non-Catholics in their campaign to obtain transmission time on radio. Nevertheless, he said it was a positive sign that the Catholic Church was now pursuing a policy of dialogue with all parties, including the non-Catholics.

Aid from the West is not only getting through to Poland in general, but is being channelled to those who are really in need, said Mr. Wojtowicz. He described reports that the army was benefiting from the aid as "evil propaganda." Quite independent of goods sent by charitable organizations and churches in the West, aid was also being received from socialist states, but this had only become evident since the declaration of martial law.

Don't leave us in the lurch!

STUTTGART/HANOVER, West Germany (EP) — "Don't leave us in the lurch! We need help now more than ever before." That was the message of Zdzislaw Pawlik of Warsaw, general secretary of the Polish Council of Churches, when he was in West Germany recently on a visit to the humanitarian arm of the Protestant Church in Germany in Stuttgart and the headquarters of the German Baptist Union in Bad Homburg near Frankfurt. Pawlik also said that the supply situation in Poland is extremely critical. In many Polish churches people are praying "around the clock" that civil war will not break out.

Pawlik expressed his gratitude for the aid given by the Germans as far as he could see the result of this solidarity on the part of Christians in Germany was a new relationship between the Poles and their "former enemies."

About 700,000 Protestant and Orthodox Christians among the population of 38 million belong to the Polish Council of Churches, in which all churches except the Roman Catholic Church are represented.

Pastor Manfred Otto of Bad Homburg, chairman of the German Evangelical Alliance, called for solidarity with the Poles in their difficult situation. "Solidarity should be expressed in intercession and donations."

Christian schools prepare themselves for the computer

by John Stronks

Christian Schools in Ontario are preparing for the tidal wave of computer education that will flood the educational scene in the eighties. Several Christian Schools have already purchased their first computers, and are looking for classroom use at this time, to develop "computer literacy" at the teacher level. A number of hands-on seminars are being organized by special teacher groups and at least one computer education workshop is being planned for the summer.

As part of its educational coordination function, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools has initiated a Computer Education Committee. The leaders, not yet completely finalized, are now helping individual schools with an implementation strategy and to function as a clearing house for information that already exists. Moreover, the introduction of computer assisted learning materials must be evaluated and adapted in the context of the goals of Christian education. The Christian schools face a very real challenge.

The Ontario Ministry of Education, just as in other provinces, is hurrying to complete its major policies and guidelines. Among the most recent major activities are the following:

First, a major pilot study is on the way in Northern Ontario which includes making use of electronic media in correspondence courses in schools where small enrolments create difficulties in delivering education.

Secondly, the Ministry has prepared specifications for the design of the Canadian Educational Microcomputer (CEM), nicknamed "Bionic Beaver". The significance of this activity relates to forcing the computer industry to build a family of microcomputers and complete-assisted learning materials that are compatible; that is, standard equipment and courseware that can be used on all microcomputers. This may constitute a major breakthrough in the current "total confusion and overlap." (Think of the parts for the car industry).

Thirdly, the Ministry has initiated the establishment of the Educational Computing Network of Ontario (ECNO) as a data base or clearing house that would link schools with larger computers.

Mr. Stronks is education coordinator for Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

Camping issue coming March 12

the government of Ontario, in Dutch, celebrating Canada's new federal constitution of 1982. We were citizens of Canada and proud of that, too.¹¹

Today, reflecting the ongoing Dutch Canadian story, the paper is called *Christian Courier*. Its deep roots remain

Reformed. It still has a bit of a Dutch flavor. And it's as lively as ever. But *Christian Courier* now speaks to Christian and Canadian audiences beyond Dutch Reformed folk, its original audience. That change, in the 1990s, reflected the shift from an immigrant

ten summers, including one that grew chrysanthemums. In his story, Rang wrote about how the father thought that his rebellious daughter perhaps was coming back to the church. Rang compared the way the father loved his daughter to the care and patience a grower practices when nurturing plants. The content of the story speaks to my church and work experience. I remember "Mr. Rang," a lay preacher, occasionally leading worship services in my church. His son Lloyd, one of my best friends from high school and university days, writes for *Christian Courier* today. ("Bingo!")¹²

As a child and teenager, I took this all for granted. As a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana, in the late 1980s, I experienced how "ethnic bingo" is not unique to Dutch Reformed folk but is common among immigrants. This was the first time I had lived outside of a Dutch North American community. Irish and Italian Catholics, I discovered, had similar kinds of insider stuff going on. The details varied, but the grammar or logic of Irish and Italian Catholic "Bingo" struck me as being like my own experience. I experienced my own childhood recollections in a strange mirror. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Looking Back

"In our isolation lies our strength," observed Groen van Prinsterer, an intellectual leader among conservative Reformed Christians in the Netherlands in the mid-nineteenth century. Van Prinsterer meant that independent institutions and distinctive communities are necessary to preserve firmness of religious principle. This idea was influential among Dutch Reformed immigrants in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Isolation

Cover page of the 5 March 1982 issue of *Calvinist Contact*. Used with permission of *Calvinist Contact/Christian Courier*.

immigrant experience. One was from KLM, the Dutch national airline, selling trips to the Netherlands. Many immigrants still had family "back home" in the "old country" and visited them. Siblings, cousins, parents, aunts, and uncles. But the experience of immigration was becoming distant enough to be memorialized. A second ad reflected this. It announced the sale of Delft Blue tiles (very Dutch!) depicting the immigrant ships that brought immigrants to Canada after World War II. Among them was the *Groote Beer*, which my father's family came on. The third ad was from

community to a second- and third-generation ethnic community. It also reflected an ecumenical opening to a wider range of Christians. I have friends who write for it. And occasionally I see a notice about a birthday, death, etc., of someone I know.

A small story from the 5 March 1982 issue of *CC* pulls all of this together for me. In a piece titled "Skylights," William R. Rang wrote about a father, a "mum grower," that he knew. Greenhouses were a big part of the Dutch Reformed economy where I grew up. I worked in tree nurseries and greenhouses for about



Riverside Christian Reformed Church in Wellandport, Ontario (1960s), with the small Christian school building in the top right corner. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

guaranteed orthodoxy.¹³ But as I have described, firmness of principle and independent religious institutions get entangled with ethno-cultural separation. Insiders and outsiders both know this, but it's usually more obvious to outsiders.

My experience as a kid was mostly of inward-looking communities with their own institutions. I mean not just Dutch Reformed churches but everything from schools and newspapers to hockey and soccer leagues. In day-to-day life, I was almost always an insider in my ethno-religious community and church.

As a child and teen, I did not know about van Prinsterer's saying, but I would have understood what he meant. And I would have been unable to separate strength in principle from my immigrant identity. I knew who belonged and who didn't. "She married a Canadian" was a way of saying that the borders between us and them were troubled by a marriage involving someone from outside the fold. It was unsettling, even a danger.

Dutch borders and Reformed borders. Was there a difference? In theory, yes, but not so much in life and practice. Ethnicity and faith baptized each other. The overlapping sense of

belonging provided solidarity and security. It also sometimes pinched, constrained, smothered, and excluded. Dutch Reformed Bingo was my "world." And sometimes I didn't like it.

One of my sisters and I talked about the material in this article. The sto-

ries I am telling here resonated with her. Like me, she experienced some nostalgia and warm memories. My article put her upbringing into historical context. We both also remembered things that put us off. And she talked about what "outsiders" have said about our communities.

A colleague of hers from a closely related Dutch Reformed denomination in Canada told my sister about her husband's experience. He is

"Mum, you grew up in a cult." My sister made some distinctions. The Christian Reformed communities we grew up in were less isolationist than congregations that left the CRC for more conservative denominations. Those were more cultlike in her experience, especially ones with strong, charismatic leaders. The scholar in me knows that sect is a more appropriate category. But I know what people mean by cult.

Some of the "Canadians" who joined our immigrant CRC communities did so through marriage. Others were attracted to Reformed thought. When they joined, how long did it take before they felt at home? Did they ever come to feel like insiders, fully, passing peppermints and eating soup and buns? How did their experience compare to mine, as someone born into the community?

As noted above, I experienced being an ethnic and religious outsider when I studied at Notre Dame. But Notre Dame was not my first outsider experience.

After a couple of years studying at Redeemer College, in Hamilton,

Thanking all our customers for their patronage this past year
and wishing you the best for the new year.

Dutch Toko

168 Wyndham St. N.
Guelph 822-4690

Mountain Plaza Mall
Hamilton 383-2981

Season's Greetings from

Your "Dutch" Store
in Burlington, Ontario

ED'S DELICATESSEN
Ed and Joanne Holland
Dutch lunch meats, groceries, cheese

Catering, for 20-200 or more

- Our products carry a money-back guarantee!
- Friendly, personal service!
- If we don't have it - we'll get it!

Mountain Grove Plaza
Mountain Grove & Guelph Line, Burlington, Ontario
335-0287

HOURS: Mon.-Wed. 10-6 Thurs. & Fri. 10-9 Saturday 9-6

Ads for "Dutch stores" in Southern Ontario in *Calvinist Contact* (24 December 1982). Used with permission of *Calvinist Contact/Christian Courier*.

a "Canadian"—i.e., someone not Dutch Reformed who married into the "tribe." He went to her Dutch Reformed church with her. And he told her that it was like a "cult." One of my nieces said the same thing to my sister, as a generational outsider:

Ontario, I finished my BA at Calvin College. Redeemer in those years was a Dutch Reformed school, most of its students the children and grandchildren of immigrants. It was perhaps a bit like Calvin College in the 1920s, but with cable TV. I did not

find Calvin “weird and Dutch,” as my non-Dutch Reformed classmates did. It struck me as weird and American. Calvin and the CRC in Grand Rapids were not “immigrant” but an assimilated historic ethnic community. It did not feel like home. Living in Grand Rapids made me see just how Canadian I was. It also helped me to see how different “Dutch” was for me as a child of immigrants compared to the experiences of Dutch Americans whose great-grandparents (or earlier generations still) had been the immigrants.

Conclusion

I’m still shaped by the immigrant experience, of course, even if at increasing distance. I grew up hearing stories about immigration and about life in the Netherlands during World War II. I understand some Dutch, but I am fluent in speaking English with a fake Dutch brogue. Sometimes I entertain my students with a Dutch accent, regaling them with stories of the sort

that I heard from immigrant parents and grandparents. The stories often ended with something like, “You kids think you have it so bad. I don’t wish it on you, but you should live through a war!” My students get the humor, but also recognize the real life lessons behind the stories. Some pick up a Canadian accent in my normal voice. A few of my students themselves are from immigrant communities. It’s fascinating to compare stories, for example, with the children of Korean immigrants in the CRC.

Cultural context and religious faith continue to come as a package, even as immigration experiences have faded to memory. I can see this when I read the history of Americanization of Dutch immigrants in the US and observe Canadianization in the communities of my childhood. The religious reference points for most Dutch Reformed folk in the US and Canada today are North American—the books and magazines or blogs they read, the worship styles, the issues being

debated. Christian schools once predominantly immigrant have become more ethnically diverse and broadly Protestant. National differences in the cultural, social, and political sensibilities of Dutch Reformed people in Canada and the US also increasingly stand out.

Assimilation to North American contexts does not mean that all ethnic and religious distinctiveness is gone among the Dutch Reformed. It is the case, however, that the descendants of Dutch Reformed immigrants now speak with Canadian and American accents, literally and figuratively, rather than Dutch ones. And their Reformed Christianity often is leavened with evangelical, anabaptist, and Catholic “accents,” whether conservative or progressive. The security and solidarity of ethnic and religious isolation have been replaced by the challenges and opportunities that come with integration with their larger nations and the wider world. ☸

Endnotes

1. Herman Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land: The Dutch Experience in Canada, 1890-1980* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988). For some of the statistics here, see Jan Raska, “Postwar Dutch Immigration through Pier 21,” Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, <https://pier21.ca/blog/jan-raska-phd/postwar-dutch-immigration-through-pier-21> (accessed 18 January 2021).
2. Joanne Van Dijk, *Ethnicity, Aging, and Support among Dutch Canadians: A Study of Community in Two Generations of Catholics and Calvinists* (PhD Dissertation: McMaster University, 1996), 30-38.
3. Van Dijk, *Ethnicity, Aging, and Support*, 30-38.
4. Tymen E. Hofman, *The Canadian Story of the CRC: Its First Century* (Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2004).
5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined*

Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, New Edition (London: Verso, 2006).

6. Bert Witvoet, “Peppermint Christianity,” *Reformed Worship*, Issue 33, September 1994, <https://www.reformed-worship.org/article/september-1994/peppermint-christianity-firsthand-experience-dutch-tradition> (accessed 18 January 2021).

7. See the CRC website: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism> (accessed 18 January 2021).

8. It was a “Form of Subscription” until 2012, when it became a “Covenant for Officebearers.” See Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church (2012) at the website of the CRCNA, <https://www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms/>

ordination-installation/covenant-office-bearers (accessed 18 January 2021).

9. *Calvinist Contact*, no. 1827, 5 March 1982.
10. Ibid, 18.
11. Ibid, 10, 11, 14.
12. Ibid, 6.
13. This is the central theme in John Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949). See also Reverend G. D. De Jong, “The History of the Development of the Theological School,” in *Semi-Centennial Volume: Theological School and Calvin College, 1876-1926* (Grand Rapids: Semi-Centennial Committee, 1926). He quotes van Prinsterer, “in ons isolement ligt onze kragt,” on page 28.

The 1903 Debate over the Founding of Orange City's "Un-American" Christian School

Earl William Kennedy

On Monday, 5 September 1904, Orange City, Iowa's two elementary schools opened their doors—the already established public school with 364 pupils and the brand new Christian one with 125 started by recent Dutch Reformed immigrants. The latter became the first (Reformed)

Reformed Church in America (RCA) were uninclined to embrace public schools. Their old country roots fairly commonly were in the Dutch Reformed national church, and they tended to feel at ease with native-born Americans from mainline Protestant churches. On the other hand, Dutch



Class of students with teacher at the Orange City Christian school, ca. 1915. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Christian school west of the Mississippi to survive infancy and endure to the present. Its birth was not greeted with universal joy, however, since it was viewed by many as unpatriotic and un-American. The critics of the new school were largely other recent Dutch Reformed immigrants.

Context

Nineteenth-century Dutch American immigrants in the long-Americanized

Americans in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) typically came from churches in the Netherlands that had split from the national church, charging it with lack of true piety and orthodoxy. Several congregations that became the CRC had separated from the RCA in the Midwest in 1857 in part because, centered largely in New York and New Jersey, the RCA related too easily with mainstream American denominations. The CRC supported

Earl Wm. Kennedy is a senior research fellow at the Van Raalte Institute in Holland, Michigan. His research focuses on Dutch-American history, including multi-volume projects on the minutes of Classis Holland in Michigan.

becoming good Americans but was skeptical of other Protestant churches in the US and was not comfortable with America's generically Protestant public schools that would not and could not promote orthodox Reformed doctrine and piety.

The Orange City school conflict was part of a national debate about immigrants and their impact on and assimilation into the country. Patriotism, if not chauvinism, was approaching its peak in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The public school was widely regarded as the best means to promote true Americanism in the land's children, many of them the offspring of immigrants. The public school had come into being and begun to flourish over the nineteenth century. It was officially "non-sectarian." But in many places, such as Orange City, where the population was relatively homogeneous religiously, it was for all intents and purposes a tuition-free Protestant school. It had almost exclusively Protestant teachers and pupils, supported by local taxes.

Roman Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and elsewhere during the middle and later 1800s presented a challenge to public schools. Roman Catholic leaders wanted their own tax-supported schools because the public schools were too "Protestant." States rejected their requests, and Catholics started their own, privately funded school system. In the long run Catholic demands inadvertently helped to "secularize" the public schools. Waves of immigrants later in the century from southern and eastern Europe—Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish—only raised the pressure for the public schools to accommodate religious diversity. If they were to be places where all children learned the virtues of democracy and how to be good, patriotic American citizens,

public schools had to promote a truly non-sectarian "civic religion."

This unifying effort was not just about immigrants but occurred in the wake of the recently concluded Civil War, which had left North and South bitterly divided. Francis Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance in 1892 in this context. He and the children's magazine *Youth's Companion* promoted it to public school leaders. They also encouraged placing flags at public schools. Recent Dutch Reformed immigrants and their children experienced this American nationalism and periods of suspicion about immigrants in common, but they responded in different ways about schools, largely depending on whether they were Christian Reformed or Reformed.

Dutch settlements like Orange City had common ground, despite being divided between Reformed and Christian Reformed. Notably, the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Boer War in South Africa of 1899–1902 served as unifying factors. This was because the Dutch still recalled their own struggle for independence from Roman Catholic Spain in the sixteenth century. They also remembered the Anglo-Dutch sea wars of the seventeenth century (lost by the Dutch to the English). The Orange City immigrant community largely ignored their denominational divisions when the Boer War started, supporting the underdog Boers financially and morally in their losing struggle against England. They viewed England as an imperialistic bully. Moreover, the Orange City Dutch had annual, elaborate 4th of July celebrations (Reformed and Christian Reformed separately, however) to remind them of 1776 and their adopted land's fight for independence from the oppressive British crown.

The relationship between ethnicity, religion, and national identity among

the Dutch in Orange City thus was complex. They shared ethnic pride in their Dutch roots and a disdain for England. They agreed that as immigrants they should become good Americans. But they were divided religiously and disagreed about what being Reformed and American meant when it came to their children's education. The Orange City conflict thus was part of a national debate, one that typically pitted church-run Roman Catholic schools against culturally Protestant public schools. It also was a local debate between two visions of Reformed Christianity.

The new Christian school was born in 1904, largely supported by the CRC. It succeeded where an earlier one, existing from 1889 to 1893, had failed. The earlier one was unable to gain traction mainly due to insufficient community support, as well as the economic downturn of 1893. The second attempt in 1904 succeeded because the CRC community had grown large enough to support it, but not without considerable opposition because of its supposed divisiveness and un-Americanism. The debate over the necessity for a "Christian" school can be seen in *De Volksvriend*, the local Dutch-language weekly, in 1903, the year before the school opened.

The editor of *De Volksvriend*, Henry Peter Oggel, MD, was a loyal member of the RCA who deplored the CRC-RCA divisions. He opened the pages of the paper for contributions from both supporters and opponents of Christian schools. The chief "champions" of the opposing sides were both pastors: the *American-born* Rev. Jurrien "Jerry" P. Winter of the town's *American Reformed Church* (English-speaking), and the *Dutch-born* Rev. Idzerd van Dellen of the local *Christian Reformed congregation* (Dutch-speaking). Winter was Oggel's pastor and a member of Orange City's public school board. Van Dellen was new in

town. The “dominions” wrote alternating articles, each responding to the other, during the fall of 1903. Oggel would fail to keep the peace, and the debate would not lead to agreement.

The Debate

Oggel launched the open forum by recommending that his readers “ponder” a piece from Winter that he was publishing. Having Winter write first may well have been a ploy by the irenic, mild-mannered, ecumenical Oggel to advance his own outlook surreptitiously.

In “A Parochial School for Orange City?” Jerry Winter told how he had made a few remarks about setting up a “parochial” elementary school in a recent Sunday morning sermon. He held that the American public school was “the nursery of Democracy and Patriotism” and argued that “our church-school people” would take away one of the chief God-given means of assimilating immigrants. “Our friends want a positive Christian influence,” he said. “Good. We have it in our Orange City schools.” The local school did not teach evolution. The principal was Reformed (from the RCA). Most of the teachers had grown up in Orange City’s Christian homes. And all were active in local churches. Finally, the Bible was read in school, biblical history was taught, and daily prayer occurred. “What more do you want?” he wondered.¹

The following week, Van Dellen responded in a letter: “The Ideal is neither Parochial nor Public.” Van Dellen was the president of the local Christian school society and already had defended the school in two articles in *De Wachter* (the CRC weekly). His title echoed the well-known views of Abraham Kuyper, the leading thinker of the “Christian Reformed” in the Netherlands. Van Dellen argued that Winter erred in thinking that the Christian school was a parochial

school. It was not run by the church. The school society met in the city hall. Its constitution stated that it was not ecclesiastical (*kerkelijk*). And it was not narrowly CRC. Its first speaker was the RCA’s own Rev. Marinus Broekstra.² At its last general meeting, five of the nine board members chosen on the first ballot were RCA, despite the fact that a huge majority of the voters were CRC. If the society did not get RCA support, they could “not be forced to join it.”

Van Dellen did not just defend the Christian school but went on the attack. The public school was a “failure,” he claimed. And it would only get worse, as in the Netherlands, where the state school had been “the nursery of unbelief and socialism.” Evolution was being taught to public school teachers at American colleges and universities. Moreover, a state



Editor of *De Volksvriend*, Dr. Henry Peter Oggel. Image courtesy of www.findagrave.com.

school was required to be neutral (especially in the US, with its diverse citizenry), Van Dellen explained, and “neutrality and Christianity [were] incompatible.” Schools and people formed each other. As one became less Christian, so too would the other. Finally, he warned, immigrants and native-born Americans might even prevent public schools from teaching democracy and patriotism.³

Winter’s second article focused



Reverend Idzerd Van Dellen and his wife. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

on exclusivism. He noted that public schools maintained the equality of citizens, rich and poor, promoted democracy, and did not separate social classes. One of the dangers of parochial schools was a lack of sympathy for others, a Pharisaism, a message that “I’m a little better than you.” These dangers grew when parochial schools were in the hands of those who opposed free institutions. Winter pointed to Roman Catholics, with their “Old World doctrine of papal authority, which is against the spirit of our national life.” It was much harder for pupils to become intelligent American citizens if they went to parochial schools. In a third article, he added a practical note. He observed that the American public school had contributed to the nation’s material progress, for instance, by educated people developing the factory system.⁴

In his second article, Van Dellen answered the closing question of Winter’s first article: “What more do you want?” He explained that his people did not want a vague Americanism in their schools, pointing to big cities and their mix of diverse elements (Jews, Russians, Italians, and others). They wanted a common mind that began with the fear of the Lord that brings wisdom, gives liberty, and makes good citizens. Van Dellen

Winter failed to see that the issue was not primarily about the teachers but the character of the school. By law, the public school had to be neutral. This was unacceptable to Christian school supporters, even if the school day began with Bible reading and prayer led by truly Christian teachers. Students needed positive, Christian instruction—education steeped in Reformed principles. This school education was not a sort of Reformed catechism class, Van Dellen emphasized. Children need to be educated for a full, rich life not just in church, but for state and society, so that they could operate as Christian citizens in every terrain of life. All subjects thus had to be taught in relationship to God. When a child learned history, he should not only learn that America is great but that God's hand is in history. All nations and peoples (including America and Americans) are as a drop in the bucket compared to God.

In a hurried postscript, Van Dellen also answered Winter's second article on exclusivism, addressing a variety of criticisms of the Christian school. Van Dellen held that Christian schools promoted a true equality in Christ. Public schools offer the false equality of the godless French Revolution. He explained that Christian schools could not be equated with Catholic parochial schools. And he emphasized that Christian school supporters did not want a caste system, where some students received a better education than others. Such a caste system did exist in public schools, which varied widely in their quality.

Van Dellen also took on the immigration "problem." God made of one blood all peoples, he argued. Christian schools were for both rich and poor. The solution for assimilating diverse immigrant groups was not to send Dutch Reformed children to schools with "Italians, Poles, unbelievers, and the half-civilized," who were a danger

FRONT PAGE

XXIXste Jaargang.

Het Nieuws.

Groot Britannië.
 (Londen.) Mr. Chamberlain heeft alhier een meesterschap overleefd. Hij is overleden op 11 oktober 1903, op 74-jarige leeftijd. Hij was een van de grootste staatsmannen van zijn tijd. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde.

De Nederlandse Garde.
 (Londen.) De Nederlandse Garde heeft alhier een meesterschap overleefd. Hij is overleden op 11 oktober 1903, op 74-jarige leeftijd. Hij was een van de grootste staatsmannen van zijn tijd. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde.

De Nederlandse Garde.
 (Londen.) De Nederlandse Garde heeft alhier een meesterschap overleefd. Hij is overleden op 11 oktober 1903, op 74-jarige leeftijd. Hij was een van de grootste staatsmannen van zijn tijd. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde.

FRONT PAGE

XXIXste Jaargang.

Het Nieuws.

Groot Britannië.
 (Londen.) Mr. Chamberlain heeft alhier een meesterschap overleefd. Hij is overleden op 11 oktober 1903, op 74-jarige leeftijd. Hij was een van de grootste staatsmannen van zijn tijd. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde.

De Nederlandse Garde.
 (Londen.) De Nederlandse Garde heeft alhier een meesterschap overleefd. Hij is overleden op 11 oktober 1903, op 74-jarige leeftijd. Hij was een van de grootste staatsmannen van zijn tijd. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde.

De Nederlandse Garde.
 (Londen.) De Nederlandse Garde heeft alhier een meesterschap overleefd. Hij is overleden op 11 oktober 1903, op 74-jarige leeftijd. Hij was een van de grootste staatsmannen van zijn tijd. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde. Hij was de eerste die de Britse koloniën in een eenheidsoverheid verenigde.

Front page of *De Volksvriend* from 15 October 1903, when the debate started. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

noted that Christian school supporters had not claimed that evolution was taught in Orange City public schools' textbooks. So, he wondered, why was Winter so defensive? Even if evolution was not taught there, he ob-

served, children should avoid neutral schools and be educated according to God's Word.

The problem with public schools was that they needed to serve a general public, Van Dellen explained.

to “our children” (consecrated to the Lord). Fear of the Lord came before American citizenship. As patriotic citizens, Christian school supporters sought the good of the nation, but not at a cost to their children. The state had a stake in education, Van Dellen agreed. But the neutral education offered by public schools was insufficient for covenant offspring. The rights of the family (parents) preempted the secondary rights of the state. In all this Van Dellen reflected the views of Abraham Kuyper.⁵ He also revealed that Dutch Reformed immigrants held some of the same prejudices as native-born Protestant Americans toward immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

In his fourth article, “The Public School and Christianity,” Winter asked Van Dellen why he chose to live in the United States, paying taxes to support public schools, under a government that was “neutral” and thus un-Christian and against Reformed principles. The Constitution was given by many with Christian character, Winter asserted, and the Christian religion had been recognized as part of American common law. Why was Van Dellen so pessimistic? Winter wondered. Is God dead? Was Van Dellen a prophet? Instead of letting secular influences affect the schools, should not Christians use the schools to shape American society?

Winter also questioned the very ideal of Christian approaches to education in schools. He suggested that Christian instruction of the sort that Van Dellen advocated would cause schoolwork to suffer. Teachers would have to add little sermons (*preekje*) to every lesson. Teachers were busy enough, and formulating mini-sermons would not be easy. Furthermore, “Christian” schools based on “Reformed principles” would exclude many American Christians. They would be parochial, narrow. Finally,

Winter argued, the proper places for Christian education were the home and the church. That honor of the family did not belong to the school.⁶

The debate between Winter and



Reverend Jerry P. Winter in later years. Image courtesy of Fairfield Reformed Church, Illinois.

Van Dellen was becoming scatter-shot, with questions, answers, and accusations flying in every direction, and not always with internal consistency. But it revealed how the school question indeed connected to all aspects of life—social, political, and religious. Van Dellen titled his third response to Winter “On the Family and the School.” But it took on a wide variety of issues.

Van Dellen started with Winter’s question about how he could remain in the United States and pay taxes if this were so un-Reformed. Van Dellen pointed to Romans 13 and Matthew 22 and a Christian’s duties to the state, even pagan Rome. Winter claimed that the US was not hostile to Christianity and that Christianity was part of our common law. Van Dellen responded that little genuine Christianity was left in US government, since the Constitution could only support a least-common-denominator religion. Where the state was effectively un-Christian, what did freedom to read the Bible mean?

When it came to the family, the state, and the school, Van Dellen once again echoed the ideas of Kuyper. He insisted that the state and the school were in separate spheres.⁷ Indeed, the school was no separate sphere but belonged to that of the family. Children did not belong first to the state (a socialist idea) but to the family. The state had to be neutral among the various Christian denominations, but families could never be neutral in baptizing their children and educating them in the Reformed faith. Reformed Christians nonetheless had to support the public school because children had to be taught. Where families did not live up to their calling and assert their rights, the state had to step in as a guardian and educate their children. Since he was a member of society and a citizen, Van Dellen explained, he shared the responsibility to see that the state exercised its duty effectively when necessary. As a citizen he could not desert the public school. But even more, as a Christian he could not let the family be a ward of the state. His aim was that families be mature (*mondig*) and set up their own schools. Winter missed the point, Van Dellen concluded, in suggesting that it was wrong to give the honor of the family to a Christian school. It was the state and its public schools that robbed the family of its honor.⁸

A week later, in “The School Question,” Van Dellen concluded his part of the debate. He had said earlier, against Winter’s optimism, that the public school would become increasingly un-Christian. The influence of unbelieving immigrants and native-born Americans and the signs of the times in the US and in Europe foretold a falling away.⁹ In this article he took on this matter again. Winter wrongly assumed that Christian school supporters cared only about their own and were willing to leave the masses to grow up in ignorance.

Van Dellen observed. In fact, they wanted all children to get an education. The ideal was a school, under the oversight (*toezicht*) of the state but as an extension of the family. He and other Christian school supporters were not for parochial schools. NO! Parochial schools (such as the Catholic system) needed to exist if people wanted them, but they were under the church. Orange City's Christian school supporters wanted a school based on the Three Forms of Unity (Reformed principles), operated by school societies responsible to families.

Van Dellen also addressed Winter's complaint that the precious (*kostelijke*) equality of American citizens would be undermined by separated schools. He responded that the nation already had great diversity, which would not be diminished even if all children were put in public schools. It was better, he argued, that the United States be like a forest with different varieties of trees. Christian freedom, not neutral public schools, would make and keep Americans one people. Christians should make Christian soil in the United States. Finally, Van Dellen countered what he considered Winter's tired argument about Christian teachers adding mini-sermons to the lessons. Such arguments long had been used against Christian schools in the Netherlands. Van Dellen appealed to the analogy of a cook blending ingredients. Christianity should be integrated with, not tacked onto, the subject matter in school.¹⁰

"The School Question" ended the main debate—between Winter and

Van Dellen—about the Christian school in *De Volksvriend*. The discussion droned on for another half year with input from other writers on both sides. But it changed few minds.¹¹ Oggel terminated the exchanges and declared his own position openly for the first time. He said that he would never speak against Christian education but that the public school did a fine job of giving good morals to children from diverse backgrounds and all classes. It taught them to be good citizens in a new land, to honor the flag, to obey American laws, and to love their new fatherland. Sioux County could expect even more from the public school. Was the public school important for America and worth the support of Orange City's citizens? "I, for one, say that it is of incalculable worth for our land," Oggel declared.¹²

Outcomes

The arguments in *De Volksvriend* in 1903 about public versus Christian schools will sound familiar to people acquainted with similar discussions today. This is true not only in Orange City but in other Dutch enclaves like Pella, Iowa; Lynden, Washington; and Holland, Michigan—and, for that matter, in more recent immigrant communities in Canada.

The earlier effort around 1890 to set up a Christian day school in Orange City had come to naught. So, why did a countercultural, divisive, supposedly un-American "School for Christian Instruction" succeed less than a decade and a half later?¹³ The key elements in this shift appear to have been (1) the critical mass of

recent CRC immigrants imbued with Kuyper's views and the Dutch experience of Christian education; (2) the leadership of the energetic new CRC pastor, Van Dellen; (3) the examples of Christian schools elsewhere in the United States obeying the CRC synodical mandates; (4) the secularization of ethnically and religiously diverse urban public schools; and (5) the end of the economic downturn that began in 1893.¹⁴

Today, over a century later, it appears that the optimism of Oggel and Winter about the staying power of Christianity in the American public school system, even in Orange City, was ill-founded. Like the proverbial frog in the kettle as the water gradually heats up, the "non-sectarian" Protestant public school has, willy-nilly, been gradually "secularized." New waves of immigrants only increased the ethnic and religious diversity of the country in the twentieth century, especially since the 1960s. The mid-twentieth-century United States Supreme Court limited or prohibited Bible reading and prayer in the public schools—based on the doctrine of "the separation of church and state." They largely ended Winter's and Oggel's fond hope of something approximating free "Christian" education at taxpayers' expense. Curiously, the RCA General Synod of 1957 strongly endorsed public schools (as it had in 1892), while it largely deprecated Christian schools.¹⁵ As the Unitarian church historian Sidney Mead has famously observed, the public school is the established church of the United States.¹⁶ 

Endnotes

1. J. P. Winter, "Eene Parochiale School voor Orange City?" in *De Volksvriend* (hereafter VV), 15 October 1903.

2. Coincidentally, Broekstra and Van Dellen had been fellow students at the Theological School of Kampen in the Netherlands. Russell L. Gasero, *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 49; Van Dellen, *In God's Crucible: An Autobiography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1950), 43.

3. I. Van Dellen, "Geen parochiale en geen publieke school het ideal," VV, 22 October 1903.

4. J. P. Winter, "De Publieke School en de Landverhuizing," VV, 22 October 1903. Unfortunately, this second Winter article appears on the same page as Van Dellen's first one, so it has no response to the latter. Winter's third article also ignores Van Dellen's piece; J. P. Winter, "De Publieke School en Productie," VV, 29 October 1903.

5. I. Van Dellen, "Wat we willen op schoolgebied," VV, 29 October 1903. Kuyper was the influential founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Dutch Parliament, theologian, and writer whose system of thought became dominant in the CRC around 1900.

6. J. P. Winter, "De Publieke School en het Christendom," VV, 12 November 1903.

7. Kuyper's doctrine of "sphere sovereignty" is clearly in evidence at this point in Van Dellen's argument.

8. I. Van Dellen, "Het Huisgezin en de School," VV, 26 November 1903.

9. This sounds like premillennial "pessimism."

10. I. Van Dellen, "De School—Questie," VV, 3 December 1903. Nearly a half century later, the relatively moderate Van Dellen, in his autobiography, acknowledged – regarding the Orange

City Christian school discussions—that "there was an element of truth in the arguments of the opposition," such as, that "most of the teachers, especially in the country school, were members of the Church," and some began instruction with prayer and Bible reading; also, love for Christian education was indeed an import from the Netherlands, "but that does not make the school unpatriotic." Van Dellen, *In God's Crucible*, 86.

11. The school debate was also carried on in the pages of Martin D. van Oosterhout's rival Orange City Dutch weekly, *De Vrije Hollander*; although he was a member of the RCA, Van Oosterhout was more sympathetic than Oggel to the Christian school; Van Dellen, *In God's Crucible*, 85–86. Unfortunately, no copies of *De Vrije Hollander* are known to exist; a bit of its content is available mainly from references to it in *De Volksvriend*.

12. VV, 30 June 1904.

13. The opponents of the Christian school repeatedly implied that it was unpatriotic and un-American; Van Dellen, *In God's Crucible*, 85; Van Dellen denied the charges, but his Americanism was nevertheless relatively muted.

14. For a relatively impartial, general, contemporary overview of the Christian and public school situation in Orange City, and Iowa in general, around the turn of the twentieth century, see Jacob Van der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City, IA: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912), 266–75, 413–15; he overlooks, however, the fact that some RCA children attended the Christian schools (he was himself RCA). For a more recent historical sketch, from a CRC perspective, of the Sioux County Christian schools, see C. Aué, "Schools for Christian Instruction in Sioux County," in Charles L. Dyke, *The Story of Sioux County* (Orange City, IA: n.p., 1942), 555–58.

15. "The Relationship of Public and Parochial School Education: A Statement of the Board of Education, Reformed Church in America," (New York: Board of Education, Reformed Church in America, 1957), 38–40; the General Synod directed that this paper, adopted by the RCA Board of Education, be sent to every RCA pastor "for reading, reference and study." The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA adopted a similar statement in this same year. For a negative assessment of the RCA paper by a CRC pastor, see Edwin H. Palmer, "Christian Education and the Reformed Church in America," *Torch and Trumpet*, vol. 8, no. 4 (September 1958), 3–4. It took some time before the implementation of the Supreme Court decisions trickled down to the grass roots in Orange City and Sioux County public schools. When the author came to live in Orange City in 1963, prayer and Bible reading were still common practices in the area public schools, but by the time he left in 1998 they had largely been discontinued, although most teachers probably attended local churches (RCA, CRC, and other).

16. "Of necessity the state in its public-education system is and always has been teaching religion [The religion of many Americans is democracy.] It does so because the well-being of the nation and the state demands this foundation of shared beliefs. In other words, the public schools in the United States took over one of the basic responsibilities that traditionally was always assumed by an established church. In this sense the public-school system of the United States is its established church"; Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 6.

Can We Build a Foundation? Dutch and Reformed Experience in Ontario Christian Schools

Phil Teeuwsen

The song “53” describes the experience of Dutch immigration to Canada after World War II. The members of the band The Immigrants did not themselves immigrate but were second-generation immigrant kids, Canadians, like me—singing about the Dutch Canadian experience to the melodies and rhythms of Maritime Celtic folk rock. One of the members,

Rob, was my neighbor and friend. We grew up together in a little valley on 13th Street South, Jordan Station, Ontario. Not only did we live beside each other, we

also went to school together. The bus picked us up and then just down the road picked up the Zylstras and the Heidas, other kids from Dutch Christian Reformed families. I spent all my time with these kids, at home in the creeks and orchards, in church, and in the Christian school. David Foster Wallace talks about the water we swim in, the taken-for-granted realities of our everyday lives. For me and my friends, this reality was framed by the Christian school.

The song “53” discusses roots and being uprooted. The question it asks is one of nervous ambition: Can we build a foundation? That was an important question for the thousands of Dutch immigrants who left their homes for Canada in the years following World War II, my maternal and paternal grandparents among them. They came to Canada and, with faith and a Reformed vision, rebuilt their lives. Many joined or built Christian Reformed churches and started Christian schools with remarkable speed. These institutions were part of what we might call the sacred canopy of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada.¹ This canopy was religious and ethnic, and it provided meaning and cohesiveness to these newly arrived immigrants. They set up this canopy following patterns and habits established in the Old World. As immigrants, they could not go back; so, they had to go forward. Forward towards what, however? They were, as my musician friend might say, “in-between before and after.”

As a student, I had been interested in the way ideas push history along and emerge from historical events. When I studied education, I focussed this interest on the Christian schools. It seemed to me that, while the Christian schools in which I had experience spoke of their mission in terms of Christian faith, the experience in school was a mix of Reformed Christian faith and a Dutch immigrant culture.² I explored this idea by

*Can we build a foundation
on this foreign soil and land?*

*Can all we’ve uprooted be planted
again?*

*We stand in a vacuum between the old
and the new.*

*With faith and with vision, we’ll see our
way through.*

The Immigrants, “53,” from
In-Between Before and After (1995)

Phil Teeuwsen is an associate professor of education at Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. His research includes the social-cultural context of education and pedagogy.

interviewing eight retired Christian school principals. All had been principals in schools affiliated with the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, now Edvance Christian Schools Association. Their careers spanned the decades from the 1960s to the early 2000s. Through their stories of Christian schools in the province of Ontario, I began to understand how religion and ethnicity came together as immigrants and their children reckoned with what it meant to become Canadian.

Dutch But Not Too Much

The first Christian schools in Ontario immediately stood out as Dutch. Most obvious was the fact that they were started by Dutch immigrants, based on patterns set in the Netherlands, where faith-based schools were the norm. Specifically, Dutch Reformed immigrants often cited the religious and philosophical vision of the Dutch pastor, journalist, university-founder, and prime minister Abraham Kuyper, who had been a strong voice in promoting Christian schools. What did this *Dutchness* look like? "I think a lot of it has to do with the close connection to the Christian Reformed Church in the early years and the fact that they see all the Dutch names," a principal named Jim recalled. "I have a friend of mine now who mentioned to me too that when they think of Christian schools, they see all the Dutch names. . . . There's still a huge amount of Dutch kids, faculty, board members involved that without them, the places would have difficulty."

The principals discussed other cultural markers that created a Dutch feel in their schools. Language stood out. The immigrants were new to Canada and fairly new to English. This made for interesting and at times humorous experiences in the classroom. "I remember a story doing phonics in Grade 1," Sue recalled. "I

had above the board the letters of the alphabet with a picture matching the letter. So I needed a word that started with an 'I' and this little boy jumps up and he said *strijkizer*, which is the Dutch word for iron. . . . There was this picture of an iron on the board. He didn't know the English word. So *strijkizer*."

School was the place where Dutch and English met and, at times, became confused. There was an intentional effort to make English the language of the new schools. But when Lisa arrived in Canada, she nonetheless was "blown away" by how Dutch the community was. "I think it was 100 percent Dutch Reformed," she remembered. "Very Dutch. Run by the flower industry, the greenhouse industry. Lots of farmers. . . . Agriculturally driven with lots of farm kids from outlying areas and within town there were probably educators and a variety of people. But a very Dutch Reformed culture."

Ron noticed the Dutch character of the school when he arrived in Ontario. People in the school he worked in still spoke about immigration and the Netherlands, some thirty years after the actual event. Some of the teachers still spoke with strong Dutch accents. "The school was basically all still Dutch immigrant. The minute you listen to the people talk, the moment they started talking you could tell that they were immigrants. You couldn't hold that against them, but they were immigrants and they had never themselves gone to college or university."

THE SENTINEL-REVIEW, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1955 3

Dutch Group Is Raising Funds For Building Own School Here

Christian Reformed Church Members Collecting Funds For School Project

New Canadians of Dutch descent, who are members of the Christian Reformed Church of this city, hope to have their own school some time in the future for the education of their children, Rev. Jacob Hoogland, pastor of the church, stated this morning.

At the present time, he stated, funds are being collected but the goal is not in sight yet. When sufficient money is on hand, and a suitable site is available, the plans for a new school will proceed.

Mr. Hoogland, in a letter to the Sentinel-Review, explains the proper name of the Dutch group which operates its own schools. There is no such church as the Dutch Reformed Church, he states, which name is frequently used in news articles. The proper name, he states, is the Christian Reformed Church.

It is this group, which is the object of a motion passed last Saturday at Chatham by the annual conference of the Five County Education Association, in which it was resolved that steps be taken to eliminate the present system whereby certain groups of New Canadians are allowed to build and maintain their own schools.

News story about John Knox Christian School in Woodstock, Ontario, in 1955. Courtesy of Redeemer University.

The early effort to use English in the schools reflected the goal of becoming less Dutch. The principals expressed caution when talking about being seen as Dutch. Dutch identity interfered with the primary reason for the institution, namely, a Christian education in a school that was governed by parents. It was not just the teachers, but the immigrants themselves. "They were not of a mind to start a Dutch school, you know. As a matter of fact, they forever kept saying we're not a Dutch school," Rick observed. "And the media kept saying you are a Dutch Reformed school. And I'm not sure who delights in maintaining the notion that Christian schools are Dutch schools. We are, there is a time block, there is a heritage that has to be respected and honoured I think, but we're now dealing with the third and fourth generation."

These principals understood the marginalizing effect the Dutch label could have on both the schools as communities and school members who were not Dutch. Language, customs, and other ethnic markers such as *Sinterklass* (Saint Nicholas), music, and food were simply part of life for early school communities. Liz tried to

limit this. “I would go into a school and in the staff room I hear Dutch spoken. And I thought, whoa, are we back in the 50s or what? And having a Dutch plaque in the staff room with a Dutch saying? And I said, get that off of the wall. You don’t want to be ashamed of your roots but don’t flaunt it in that way because every teacher there who is not Dutch comes in there and is immediately set apart.”

The intersection of Dutch ethnic culture and Reformed faith was often a balancing act, the two blurring together oftentimes. “How does this Dutch identity come across?” Ken wondered. “When they first of all see the names of the people going to the school? Dutch names. When they see the little ad about a school bazaar you are going to have, you know—try these *ho-blokjes*. We are going to have some *stamppot*. All these little Dutchisms, they were all over the place.” There was a sense that not all in the school communities understood the distinction between Dutch and Reformed. In my conversation with Lisa, I asked what being Reformed meant for many in her school: “Well, it meant that we were Dutch,” she replied. “And I think that had a huge impact. ‘Well they’re not Dutch.’ Well now they say, ‘They’re not Reformed.’ If we say they are not Reformed, we say, well, they’re not Dutch.”

Dutch Reformed: The term itself represents the joining of faith and culture. The principals believed that if Dutch Reformed were to mean anything at all, it was a particular perspective on the integration of faith into all areas of life, including education. This was something they worked hard to get across as they guided their school communities. But it was hard to separate the religious vision from the ethnic culture that it came with.

The Struggle

The struggle for schools in Ontario

was linked to the struggles of the past in the Netherlands over Reformed doctrine, faith, church, and schools. “I think we fought more for the schools than we did for the church,” Sue stated. “Because the church, people from the Reformed Christian background who immigrated to Canada, they go to the Christian church. The school you had to fight for, pay a lot of money for, so it’s kind of like the fighting spirit, the Abraham Kuyper spirit came out.”

The desire to build Christian schools in Ontario was in a sense a continuation of the struggle in the Netherlands for the existence of and funding for parent-owned Christian schools. For the recently arrived immigrants, it was just what one did.

For many immigrants, the lack of independent parent-run Christian schools in Ontario was a shock. “The Christian school is part and parcel of our life and of our being,” Ron stated. “If you go to church, you send your kids to the Christian school. There was no other way. That was just the way it was done. And then we come here to Canada: What do you mean you don’t have Christian schools?” The immigrants could leave behind much of what they knew and move



Cover page image in *Calvinist Contact* with caption about Dutch Reformed immigrants adjusting to life in Canada (1 January 1952). Used with permission of *Calvinist Contact/Christian Courier*.

to a new country, but many could not imagine life without a Christian school. It was basic to their Reformed worldview. “The meaning of Dutch Calvinist schools has to be seen in the sphere sovereignty of Calvinism,” Rich stated. “It has to be seen in the Kuyperian notion of how that developed, the struggle for the recognition of the schools in the Netherlands. And then coming here and to notice that there’s only one state school. So they simply brought with them the notion that parents have the right to choose, that parents can establish a school, a school recognized by the state. All of those assumptions. Then they hit a wall.”

That wall was that public funding

was not available for parent-owned, faith-based schools in Ontario. This was, and is, unthinkable to many public policy makers in Ontario. In Canada, education falls under provincial authority. Each province decides if and how to fund private schools. Five provinces offer some funding, while five, including Ontario, do not. In Ontario, public funds are reserved for the secular public school system (which once was Protestant) and the Roman Catholic “separate” school system.

When Sue and her family first arrived in Canada, they went to the local public school, but only for a brief time. “The first two years that we were here we went to the public elementary school,” she said. “But then after that my parents sent their kids to the Christian school because my dad just couldn’t stand the idea of his children going to a public school. And they really couldn’t afford it. But that was very important, so they did.” Many Dutch immigrants had very little money; therefore, starting a school may have seemed impossible. It was interesting listening to the principals describe these early struggles. “We’re in this together, we’re poor, we’re working hard, it’s for the good cause and let’s just do it,” Sue recalled. “We were all learning. But you know what? For the parents and for

the school board that wasn’t important. . . . We had a Christian school. And we could have stood up to our ankles in mud. Doesn’t matter. You’re in the Christian school.”

There was a sense in the interviews that second- and third-generation Dutch Reformed Canadians were not as eager to take on the struggle as the first generation had been. The principals compared past commitment to the present and expressed concern about what they were seeing. “When you see how much of their income people committed to Christian education,” Lisa said, “and today how little of our income we dedicate to Christian education. It’s phenomenal what they gave up, what they, quote, ‘sacrificed,’ and yet they didn’t look at it as a sacrifice. And here we have much bigger incomes and we’re paying much less proportionately, and yet it’s become a big sacrifice.” Lisa, and the others, did not see Christian education as a sacrifice. It was simply something that one did.

School as the Tie That Binds:

For the Dutch Reformed immigrants,

community was crucial for flourishing in Canada. They had come out of six years of war and several years of postwar fatigue and stress. They had left behind friends and family, presumably forever, and found themselves strangers in Canada. Their cultural instincts were to group together with like-minded individuals. The schools filled an immigrant need, keeping the group together, as well as promoted their religious vision.

Rich had some interesting observations about the process of becoming a school community. “I think we were all learning and trying to refine what Christian schooling was all about. We know it in some theoretical way. We did not really know how to do that in practice. So we went into different directions. . . . It was a completely new experience. . . . You don’t just make a school community. That takes time to grow. And of course these immigrants came from different regions in the Netherlands as well, so they had different practices.”

Several of the participants spoke of the physical conditions those first schools operated in: damp church basements; old, drafty buildings; and small houses. The first Christian schools in Ontario existed in whatever space could be obtained and were staffed, in some cases, by people who had taught in the Netherlands, but often by people who had achieved some sort of higher education, not necessarily related to teaching.

The principals spoke about the comprehensive community that CRC immigrants had developed. “We didn’t integrate as fast,” Jim said. “Having our own schools caused us to stay somewhat separate. . . . Because for many of the Dutch, it was a comfort thing. I don’t blame them in that way at all. It was very comfortable. They had left home behind and never expected to go back. . . . So to be together in the church, in the school,



The Holland Marsh Christian School opened in 1943 in the consistory room at the back of the Holland Marsh Christian Reformed Church. Courtesy of Redeemer University.

in all things. It was really nice. I didn't honestly converse or interact with many Canadians until probably in high school. I had no need to. I was extremely busy in the community."

The very ties that bound the ethnic community together in the school also served to separate school members from the rest of their larger Canadian community to some degree. For Jim it was a matter of familiarity with his classmates, many of whom were the same people he went to church with, and the time that was devoted to school and church activities. Lisa spoke about the busyness of school and church involvement as well. "We live here and it is just a small town. When my kids were just tiny ones, I was involved in town. We started at the Christian school, we lost those contacts except through the sports programs and stuff like that, but you know there's people down the street that I don't know because I was too busy to make connections with them."

The sheer cost of tuition often made it necessary for parents to find additional sources of income. This meant, in some cases, starting their own businesses apart from their regular jobs. Being a member of the school meant possible service on the school board, including monthly meetings and committee work. In addition, community events helped raise money for the school. The school's demand on time and money limited members' involvement in other areas of society.

It may not have been simple busyness that kept Christian school community members separate from their communities. It might also have been a sense of inferiority or self-doubt connected to their immigrant experience. "Dutch people—as generous as they are—I think there was a sense of inferiority, that we're not quite good enough to make it with the others,"

Joy suggested. "There was something about a fear . . . that feeling that we're not quite in the in-crowd. So that feeling of inferiority, [the school] was almost a matter of survival."

Christian schools set the Dutch Reformed community apart from their neighbours to some degree. Whether that separation was a religious education necessity or immigrant hesitancy, its impact was real. Some of the principals had experienced the reaction of people from their communities to their schools. "There's a woman once said to me," Sue remembered, "'our country is good enough for you, but our schools weren't.' I didn't know what to say to her." The establishment of the schools was not meant to be a reaction against society, yet some people in the broader community experienced the building of schools this way. It is not surprising that the decision to start independent schools was seen by some as a rejection of them as neighbors and friends—religious and ethnic standoffishness. Many in the public schools and local neighborhoods not fully versed in the history and philosophy behind the Christian schools understandably saw them as Dutch schools, while the school members saw them as Christian schools. It is fair to say that, for a time, they were both.

Expanding the Cloud of Witnesses

The principals pointed to people in their lives whose examples were crucial to their work in Christian schools. The philosophical influence of Abraham Kuyper, as well as the religious foundation set by the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Reformed Church), their home church in the Netherlands, were crucial in their understanding of their work. These influences shaped and sustained in teachers and parents a deeply rooted belief about the comprehensive nature of Christ's redemptive work in this world, the

importance of an institutional pluralism that included Christian institutions, and a firmly held belief that parents had the God-given authority to educate their children. Jim spoke about how his dad, who had finished only grade six, talked often about Kuyper and his ideas. Joy spoke about how her husband's grandfather knew all about Kuyper and Christian schools and how young adult groups discussed these important ideas in church. This cloud of witnesses, these Dutch and Reformed forbearers, stood as models to follow. Even as the principles worried about whether second- and third-generation Dutch Reformed Canadian parents would continue to support Christian schools, they also welcomed how the cloud of witnesses was becoming more diverse.

The principals pointed to exciting examples of how school communities were growing beyond their original founding population, as parents and teachers from beyond the Dutch ethnic community became attracted to the vision of Kuyper and the immigrants who transplanted it in Canada. "We're getting a mix," Ken said enthusiastically. "And the school participates in the Fall Fair. I see it often at field day or something happens at school and the paper is notified and they take pictures. And here are three kids or even if it's six kids [*showing me a recent local newspaper*], I'm looking for the Dutch background names and I find one or two, right? Those other names are in there." The growing diversity in the schools was acknowledged by the other principals as well. Lisa and Liz pointed to their schools' Grandparents Day as a clear example of this. This is a special day when the grandparents come to the school to visit their grandchildren, see old friends, and enjoy a program. Both noticed that, where once all the grandparents had been the original Dutch founders,



Children lining up for the bus at the Holland Marsh District Christian School (no date). Today it is King Christian School. Courtesy of Redeemer University.

The Christian schools perhaps had delayed societal integration by a generation or two. Would drifting from the

current special days for grandparents had become much more multicultural events. Having grandparents from outside the founding Dutch Christian Reformed tradition is important for broadening of the school community. "The new people have to appreciate and understand why all these grandparents are getting so excited about Grandparents Day," Liz said. "It's the school we began and how the Lord has blessed it. You've been through this for generations. Oh yes. I'm here to see my grandchild. And you know? Generations have been here. And the new people have to experience some of that and get in on that story."

The story of Christian schools is ongoing and evolving. New members from outside the founding immigrant community are expanding many school communities. For some schools, this has been going on for a long time. For the principals I spoke with, this was a reason to celebrate. More than that, it could also mark a significant shift in how a Dutch Reformed group sees itself, through the Christian schools, in Ontario, Canada. Ken put it this way: "Maybe these schools eventually, unintentionally become part of the Canadianization of the Dutch immigrant community

[laughter]. I think it's beginning to happen a bit that the Canadians aren't 'the other' anymore."

Conclusion

The principals were reflecting on this history at a time when many Christian schools in Ontario were struggling, enrollments declining, and schools closing or in danger of it. The schools once had held the Dutch Reformed community together and maybe even defined it. Was the younger generation's slow drift into public schools a sign of apathy about the faith? An unwillingness to participate in the ethnic group? It is not surprising that, over time, second- and third-generation Dutch Canadians might stray from their ethno-religious traditions.

Reformed Christian canopy accompany leaving the ethnic canopy? The principals found, however, that integration went in two directions, not one. While many second- and third-generation Reformed Dutch Canadians have sent their children to public schools, Canadians from other ethnic and Christian backgrounds were joining Christian schools. The schools were becoming more Canadian and trans-denominational. There has been some give and take in the process, which perhaps is just typical of life in Canada's multicultural reality.

As school demographics changed, so too have school programs and curriculum. Many Christian schools in Ontario have begun to move forward with a renewed educational vision.



John Calvin Christian School, York Street Property, in Strathroy, Ontario (no date). Courtesy of Redeemer University.

Schools are exploring educational frameworks rooted in experiential learning approaches that can be traced back to the American philosopher and educator John Dewey. Problem, project, and inquiry-based learning have become more commonplace. This development perhaps marks a shift in how we think about Kuyper's assertion of Christ's claim over every square inch of creation. The school founders interpreted this to mean they needed to start from scratch and actively claim the educational square inch by building a school and developing curriculum. They perhaps did not realize that they too were following patterns from the sociocultural context of the Netherlands. Building upon that foundation, much current curriculum development reaches out into the broader educational world, searching for the educational good that is there. This approach is marked by Christian commitments that are finding expression in terms that are more ecumenical than denominational. Where once strict acknowledgment of the primary Reformed creeds was a starting point, curriculum development now tends to be guided more by themes found in a theological narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration expression. It is an attempt to find language that allows the good in the broader field of education to speak to the good

of Christian schools and back again. Kuyper, with his theology of common grace, would have recognized such a "conversation." It is part of the process of moving forward in the new land that began in the 1940s.

Ken and I were discussing the canopy of the Christian Reformed community in Ontario and how Christian schools were an essential stake in the canopy. Enjoying the analogy and extending it, Ken said it was important to expand the canopy so that more could shelter under it. However, as all campers know, the broader the canopy the deeper the stakes need to be driven. The stakes that will hold a broader canopy, one that is ethnically diverse and inclusive, will need to be driven more deeply into a religious foundation, especially if there no longer is an ethnic foundation accompanying it. The schools built by immigrants had to become more consciously religious about their mission as their immigrant identity evolved into a Canadian one. This religious consciousness will require continued articulation and rearticulation as school communities continue to move forward. As with the immigrant schools created in the postwar decades, the current Christian school system will be at once rooted in its culture while seeking to shape and transform that culture. 

Endnotes

1. Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1967).
2. Phil Teeuwssen, *Understanding the Intersection of Reformed Faith and Dutch Immigrant Culture in Ontario Independent Christian Schools: Principals' Experiences and Perspectives* (Doctoral Dissertation, Brock University, 2016); note also "School as the Vessel of Hope: The Experience of Faith and Dutch Immigrant Culture in Ontario Christian Schools," in *Dutch Reformed Education in North America: Immigrant Legacies in North America*, ed Donald A. Luidens, Donald J. Bruggink, and Herman J. DeVries Jr. (Holland, MI: VanRaalte Press, 2020), 165-183.

Our People: *The Banner* and the Christian Reformed Church in the 1950s

Justin R. Vos

In June 1951, the newly created Christian Reformed Conference Grounds on Lake Michigan advertised their Fourth of July Rally in *The Banner*. “Plan to attend our own Fourth of July rally on our new conference grounds,” it proclaimed. “A cordial welcome to all. Meet our own folk on our own premises!”¹ The words are striking. Our rally. Our new conference grounds. Our own folk. The ad highlights the culture of the CRC in the 1950s: proudly American yet inward looking, promoting a covenanted community that was distinct and unified.

Founded by five well-off families, the conference grounds were a place for Christian Reformed Church (CRC) families to play, with a campground, cottages, beaches, the lake, and a golf course. More importantly, they were a place to learn, with Bible school for children and Bible studies for adults. Learning was the heart of the matter for the CRC. Learning could be fun, especially at the conference grounds, but the essential point was that fun should serve the larger goal of Christian education.

If the conference grounds were a place a family might go to learn and play once or twice a year, the *Banner* was a place to go year-round to learn. The CRC took over publishing *The Banner* in 1914. Today, it is published monthly. During the 1950s, a new issue arrived every week.² The *Banner* immersed its readers in a shared communal life—imagine it on tables across the United States and in

Canada. It did so in articles on theology and the Bible and in devotional material, of course, as well as commentary on social trends and political issues, all from a Reformed Christian perspective. But it did much more.

The Banner urged, even admonished, readers to participate in programs and institutions designed to keep the covenant community together in an era when prosperity might lead them to stray. Christian education—or, better, formation—did not end with graduation from Christian school and completion of catechism classes at church. It was lifelong. And it was not just about right ideas, but right habits of thought and practice in daily life, the things that shape the way people see and live, often without their noticing. “The deepest root of the Christian Reformed conception of education is the covenant relationship of God and His people,” wrote CRC pastor and historian John Kromminga in 1949, arguing that the church needed an “integrated system of religious education.”³ *The Banner* and its editor, H. J. Kuiper, promoted that integrated system in *The Banner* in the 1950s and were an integral part of it.

Context

For two decades after World War II, the United States experienced remarkable economic prosperity. The war had brought America out of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Prosperity led to what became known as the “Baby Boom.” Aided by government programs that supported veterans

Justin R. Vos is a graduate student in history at Florida State University in Tallahassee. His research focuses on immigration, Dutch ethnicity, and religion.

young couples started families and left city apartments for suburban single-family homes.

This general prosperity sat alongside growing worries, however. One was the Cold War with the Soviet Union. At home, the darker side of America became visible to the world. Southerners resisted desegregation, often violently, and across the nation government programs that boosted white Americans into the middle class left out people of color. By the late 1960s, the “good times” of the 1950s seemed a world away as America fought over the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, and a counterculture that questioned middle-class mores.

Dutch Reformed folk in the CRC experienced these events with other Americans, but they also underwent their own transformations. Following WWII, the arrival of a new wave of immigrants from the Netherlands, primarily settling north of the border in Canada, expanded the geographical reach of the denomination. CRC institutions also grew after the war. One example was Calvin College (now Calvin University). In 1945, enrollment stood at 503 students. It more than doubled to 1,245 in 1946, as GIs returned home from the war and used GI Bill money to go to college.⁴ By the end of the decade, Calvin had about 3,000 students, and the CRC had founded two new CRC colleges for its covenant children, Dordt and Trinity Christian. And more CRC students still were going to public universities. This growth brought both new enthusiasm and new worries. Could CRC unity survive prosperity?

Our Issues

The Banner promoted spiritual and theological uniformity through daily devotionals and by recommending Reformed books. But uniformity went beyond shared beliefs. It required

knowing the right responses to issues. The magazine was noteworthy in the 1950s not so much for ingenuity or innovation but for continuity and persistence. There were large conflicts, of course, some of them echoing the conflicts of the past. The most famous was the purging of Calvin Seminary faculty in 1952. But more telling in the 1950s were small matters.

One of the small matters was doctrinal: the proper English translation of the Belgic Confession, one of the Reformed standards of the CRC. A minister wrote to the editor, H. J. Kuiper, in 1959 complaining that Kuiper had slighted the Reformed Church in America (RCA) in the way he disagreed with the wording of a question in the RCA's baptismal form.

Kuiper responded by arguing that his quibble with a translated sentence was not meant as a wholesale rejection of the RCA. Disagreements over minor issues with a sibling denomination and internal Dutch Reformed squabbles characterized how *The Banner* of the 1950s oversaw a period of consensus.⁵ A

particular issue might seem tiny, but CRC readers needed to know what to think about them all, lest they stray from the CRC's distinctive Reformed ways and unity.

This consensus-minded impulse likewise was evident in a discussion of sport coats and suit jackets. In the 18 June 1954 installment of “The Reader Asks” column, Nicholas J. Monsma answered the apparently controversial

question, “Should Members of the Consistory Wear Coats?” Describing the reader's question, Monsma wrote, “Some feel that to appear ‘coat-less’ might ‘lower the dignity of the office’ and show ‘irreverence.’ Others feel that since most men in the church do not wear coats during warm weather, there is no reason why the members of the consistory should wear them.” Monsma applauded the questioner's respect for the duties of consistory members. Regarding coats, he argued that consistory members should not appear exceptional. Therefore, “with present day customs” in mind, “the wearing of a white shirt and a decently colored tie should provoke no offense.” The coat-wearing controversy provides a glimpse into



Plan to Attend

our
OWN FOURTH OF JULY RALLY
on
OUR NEW CONFERENCE GROUNDS
on Lake Michigan
(Take M 50 beyond US 31 to the Pumping Station, turn north, drive 1¼ miles to Grounds)

PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

2:30 P. M. — CHRISTIAN PATRIOTIC RALLY

Group Singing led by Professor Seymour Swets
Quartet Numbers by the Ministers' Quartet
Challenging Address by Rev. Arnold Brink

4:00 to 7:00 P. M. — Time for Fellowship and Picnicking

Canteen open to serve the public. Take your supper and eat at the new picnic tables.

Bathing permitted — Life guard on duty

7:00 P. M. — Band Concert by the Holland Christian High Band
Mr. H. Vande Linde, director

A Cordial Welcome to all. Meet our own folk on our own premises!

Advertisement in *The Banner*, 15 June 1951 (no. 2815, p. 759). Reprinted with permission of *The Banner*.

the types of discussion that *Banner* readers encountered and sometimes started. In retrospect, the most striking element is the fuss about what seems like an insubstantial matter. The reader with the question did not doubt major church practices or question the authority of consistories. Monsma and the reader agreed about everything substantial. At issue in cases like this were matters of custom

and tradition—“liturgies,” in an informal sense—such as the translation of Dutch words and proper church attire.⁶ If church leaders across the continent did not practice the same customs in trivial matters, might issues of substance not follow?

It may be easy to disregard these small arguments, chalking them up to the conformity of the 1950s or the old-fashioned sensibility of an earlier generation. But it is important to step back and see what this sort of controversy tells us about *The Banner* and the CRC as a covenanted community. Stability generally characterized the denomination, at least in the United States. The Canadian wing of the CRC was marked by waves of immigrants and a flurry of new institutions. The denomination had overcome doctrinal controversy in the 1920s. In the 1930s and 1940s, it had successfully transitioned from Dutch to English while maintaining its uniqueness in doctrinal and ecclesiastical life. By the centennial celebration of 1957, confident denominational leaders saw the CRC on the verge of a new breakthrough within the American cultural scene.⁷

An example of this confidence was the denomination's radio program, *The Back to God Hour*. The program was meant to reach out to those outside the Dutch Reformed community and was a pride and joy of the denomination. In 1951, a synodical committee described *The Back to God Hour* as the CRC's entrance into “a wide-scale appeal with gospel to the American world.”⁸ That summer, the Fifteenth Annual Christian Reformed Cedar Lake Conference Program included a “Back to God Hour Rally Day,” featuring an address by the radio minister Peter Eldersveld.⁹ *The Banner* proudly published positive correspondence from Catholic, Methodist, and other listeners to the program.¹⁰ Confidence and the energy to pursue new hori-



Portrait of Peter Eldersveld, the voice of the *Back to God Hour*, 1946-1965. The portrait was done for a student residence hall at Calvin University named after him by Chris Overvoorde (ca. 1991). Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

zons defined the CRC of the 1950s, as well as an instinct to maintain uniformity. It is not clear whether promoters of *The Back to God Hour* considered the impact new members from outside the fold would have on the covenanted community. Perhaps the program's impact was as much about CRC unity as about evangelism, as CRC folk across the country could listen to their program.

Our People

The desire for consistency of opinion evident in *The Banner* coincided with how the magazine referred to its audience. Writers commonly used phrases like “our people” and “our churches.” An editorial from 1952 highlights this tendency. In the lead up to the annual meeting of synod that summer, H. J. Kuiper listed the important issues to be addressed. One was a conflict among seminary faculty at Calvin. “The situation at our School is such as to cause great concern to all who love our Church.” The situation ended in

the removal and replacement of most of the seminary faculty. Kuiper also wrote about the CRC's understanding of divorce. Over three pages, he highlighted the context and arguments at stake. He saw the upcoming synod as critical for the fate of the CRC, assuming that “all who are aware of what is going on in our Church will agree.” He described the status quo on the divorce question as “Our Official Stand.” Then he detailed the conclusions of the majority and minority reports, judging that any change in the official position would be a grave error.

Kuiper concluded with an anecdote and a warning: “The very fact that this divorce issue is being agitated constantly encourages some to seek a separation from their lawful husbands or wives. When the matter was being discussed in 1947 one young woman called us by telephone and said she was intending to marry a divorced man. Asked whether she knew the rule of our Church, she replied that she had heard it would be rescinded.”

What's most fascinating about Kuiper's editorial is not the committee reports or his own stance but the language he used. He assumed that his readers had insider knowledge of the CRC, referring to the synodical meeting place as “the Broadway Avenue Church of this city”—readers, of course, knowing that the Broadway Avenue congregation was Christian Reformed and that the city was Grand Rapids. His pattern of referring to the denomination as “our Church,” with a capitalized C, further highlighted the unity that he assumed in the denomination and *The Banner's* readership. For Kuiper, the denomination maintained a clear position of authority, setting rules that could be simply announced to members.¹¹

The CRC today still has a synod, of course, one that makes decisions and outlines positions for its

congregations and members. Yet there was something different in the 1950s. *The Banner* then assumed a great deal about the ideas, values, and knowledge—the “world”—of its readers. And it worked to bolster this assumption through its weekly content. Writers saw the CRC as a tight-knit community of like-minded believers who gave deference to both current leadership and established ideas. *The Banner* served to maintain this unity. Leaders and parishioners alike today recognize that the CRC is ethnically, socially, politically, and even theologically diverse in a way it was not 60–70 years ago. And they recognize that CRC folk today participate in many nondenominational and even non-Christian organizations. Grand Rapids and the CRC are not the “world” of CRC folk in the way *The Banner* assumed and promoted in the 1950s.

Life in Our Institutions

Churches, through denominational standards and local implementation of them, develop a communal life, creating traditions. Sundays meant church and catechism classes for me, growing up in a CRC congregation in the early 2000s. Wednesday nights meant Cadets and Gems (the CRC’s version of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts) during my middle school years and youth groups in high school. Special events included vacation Bible schools, pinewood derby car races, fundraising suppers, and seasonal holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Weekly and annual church events create a pattern of living that is part of a church’s life for decades.

The weekly routine of congregational life is the dominant experience of church members. But during the 1950s, the CRC also promoted regional and national events to unite people across the denomination. *The Banner* served as a bulletin board, as

advertisements and announcements informed members about opportunities for learning, fun, and fellowship. Members of the CRC doubtless had many options. *The Banner*’s goal was to promote options that appealed to families and individuals and kept them in the fold.

For example, in the early 1950s *The Banner* regularly announced events at the CRC Conference Grounds. I began this article by pointing out the inward-looking nature of the Conference Grounds in its origins, described as “our new conference ground” in 1951.¹² The following year, the facilities hosted a full week of events for the July Fourth holiday, including: “inspirational speakers”; hymns sings; a Reformed Bible Institute course; and “sports for the children.” Each Wednesday during the summer of 1952, the Conference Grounds hosted a midweek Bible study led by CRC minister Leonard Greenway. The Conference Grounds also hosted a Mission Rally in 1952, featuring the choir from the CRC mission school for Navajo children in Rehoboth, New Mexico. And in August, they featured a “Neighborhood Evangelism Rally,” which promised “inspiration, recreation, and Christian fellowship.”¹³ The Conference Grounds served the purpose of community formation.

Beyond the Conference Grounds,



H. J. Kuiper, retiring as editor of *The Banner*. Cover image, 14 June 1956 (no. 3078, p. 1121). Reprinted with permission of *The Banner*.

West Michigan served as a key place for other CRC-focused events. In 1952, at Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, a “Double Header” featured a lecture by radio minister Eldersveld alongside a choir performance. A West Michigan Youth Bible Conference near Saugatuck, Michigan, included the prominent CRC minister Richard R. De Ridder. The 41st Annual Mission Fest invited youth to attend its event at John Ball Park in Grand Rapids, featuring the minister from the Rehoboth Mission.¹⁴

Not everyone could get to Grand Rapids. So, the CRC hosted similar events for Dutch Reformed around the Midwest. In February of 1952, *The Banner* advertised a “Back to God Hour Rally” in Des Moines, Iowa. The rally featured an address by Peter Eldersveld, host of *The Back to God Hour*, and choir music. Sponsored by the CRC Pella League of Men’s

Societies, organizers hoped the event would appeal to the Dutch Reformed faithful, with the advertisement's map including arrows pointing to the prominent Dutch American settlements of Pella and Newton.¹⁵ The Green Lake Youth Bible Conference in Wisconsin featured three CRC ministers, while also carving out time for swimming, golfing, and boating. While the Green Lake conference targeted youth, the Christian School Convention aimed at their parents. Held at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago, the Convention of 1952 explored "Christian Education in a World of Chaos." Conference organizers intended the convention to be useful for both educators and parents. Several Christian Reformed ministers served as speakers, along with Calvin College President Dr. William Spoelhof and Grand Rapids publisher Herman Baker.¹⁶

Programs like these were not just about learning but about fellowship—connecting with people like themselves in their denomination. Families could relax at the Conference Grounds while learning from CRC ministers. Parents could be assured that their children interacted with other CRC youth while under the guidance of CRC leaders, and they themselves could learn more about Christian schooling alongside others with the same convictions. Life in the postwar CRC entailed creating opportunities for community among denominational members. The *Banner* served as a bulletin board for informing readers of these opportunities.

Our Giving

Beyond community events, *The Banner* maintained denominational unity through a variety of other means. One of these was a culture giving and investing within the community. Throughout the 1950s, *The Banner* published requests for financial

support from Christian Reformed churches and day schools connected with the National Union of Christian Schools (the precursor to the current Christian Schools International). These announcements educated readers about developments in other regions of the denomination, giving them opportunities to financially support these movements while potentially improving their own financial standing.

A common reason provided for giving was to support expansion of church buildings. In February of 1951, Bethany CRC of Holland, Michigan, offered investors four percent interest, asking readers, "Are you wondering what to do with funds now available or which will become available during the coming months?" For those with money to spend, Bethany presented itself as both a sound investment and a worthy cause. The congregation described how it recently had outgrown its basement church and planned to build the rest of the structure. To show that the investment would be sound, it noted that there were "no liens or encumbrances on any of [their] property" and that the church resided "in a very rapidly developing residential area at the south limit of Holland." The Bethany congregation hoped for a mutually beneficial opportunity for both their congregation and potential investors.¹⁷

The Bethany congregation is just one example of how churches sought CRC members, hoping to both help congregations and to make a return on their investment. As the CRC expanded with new Dutch immigrants



Postcard of the Christian Reformed Publishing House, ca. 1960. Courtesy of Heritage Hall.

moving to Canada, the need for funds there only grew. The Trenton, Ontario, CRC congregation described how it was "now 60 families strong and growing rapidly." Due to this growth, it had to "build a suitable place of worship" and needed \$15,000 to do so. To attract investors, it promised five percent interest.¹⁸ A few miles down the road, First CRC of Bowmanville described how "rapid growth . . . [had forced] it to build this year." Like Trenton, it offered five percent interest to investors.¹⁹

In an article on new churches popping up all over Canada, Joseph



Trenton Christian Reformed Church, Ontario, Canada, 1952. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Gritter described how many CRC congregations temporarily used the buildings of other churches or community halls. Many of these arrangements were ending, however. One congregation had lost its rented space and had “no place to go!” Gritter warned. “What an opportunity for some of our wealthy church members to do something for the Kingdom,” he enthused, “by letting these immigrant churches borrow from them at a fair rate of interest! A ten or fifteen thousand dollar loan would help most of them.” Gritter lamented the discrepancy between the circumstances of well-heeled American churches compared to those recently started by Canadian immigrants. “I felt ashamed . . . about the way we are spending money unnecessarily in the States,” he said, “while in Canada our brothers and sisters in Christ, with their multitude of covenant children, haven’t the means to put up a frame building of twenty-five thousand dollars.” Gritter concluded that all unnecessary building in the US needed to cease until the Canadians became established. Canada served as a place for the spiritual and financial investment of the American CRC.²⁰

Besides churches, CRC-connected Christian day schools also offered investment opportunities. Vancouver Christian School, emphasizing its growing immigrant population, advertised its need for a loan at four percent interest.²¹ American schools also requested loans as they expanded their buildings and programs. In the summer of 1951, Classis Chicago North loaned money to Chicago Christian High School. The school used the loan to hire a Bible teacher and a counselor for the upcoming school year.²²

One thing that all these requests had in common was the connection between giving and investment. Prosperity and covenanted com-

munity could go together. *Banner* advertisements created a culture of giving linked to financial return. Advertisements did not simply ask for donations. Instead, they highlighted return on investment and promised financial gain for the “giver.” *The Banner* helped create a new form of financial involvement in church life. Giving extended beyond local tithing in both geographic range and method. Giving could mean a new kind of literal receiving. And investors could support communities not just close to home but across the denomination. Giving through investment blurred the lines between generosity and financial gain, but it also promoted connections within a growing denomination. Capitalism tends to weaken community solidarity, especially as people, products, and money became increasingly mobile, nationally and globally, in the twentieth century. *Banner* advertisements and this new strategy of religious investment promised to harness this economic energy and strengthen the CRC community.

Our Vacations

For Rev. Dr. George Goris, January of 1951 presumably was a pleasant month. Fleeing the cold of Grand Rapids, Michigan, he spent January in Florida. The minister of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Goris took a break from his Michigan congregation and instead conducted services in Bradenton and St. Petersburg. Although surrounded by palm trees and beaches, he did not leave the fold. Indeed, he preached to fellow Dutch Michiganders in the Sunshine state. His experience exemplified changes occurring in the Dutch American world, and *The Banner* played an important role in guiding people through this transformation.²³

Vacationing was another way CRC folk might drift from the covenanted community or choose to

come together. As with the culture of giving and investment, the growth of vacationing in America and the CRC developed out of the general prosperity that grew after World War II. With extra income and time off from work, Dutch Americans traveled further and vacationed longer. Advertisements for CRC churches in Florida, Arizona, Southern California, and Hawaii demonstrate this expanding Dutch Reformed geography.

Minister Peter Y. De Jong recognized this growing trend in an article in 1952. He wrote, “In these days of lush prosperity the practice of going on vacations for at least a week or two during the summer months has become very prevalent among us.” De Jong admitted that a change of pace could have many benefits. He also warned the Reformed community, however, that “there are perils connected with our vacations.” He worried about spiritual issues such as neglect of Sabbath observance when holidaying. De Jong admitted that the Bible never explicitly commanded the particular traditions of the CRC, such as attending two worship services. Nevertheless, he concluded about Dutch Reformed sabbaths, “those who are spiritually mature and sensitive will be persuaded in their hearts that all these matters are proper and indisputable inferences from the plain teachings of the Bible.” De Jong worried that the new materialistic habits encouraged by prosperity would lead to a negative impact upon the spiritual practices of the covenanted community.²⁴

Congregations in vacation areas picked up De Jong’s challenge. They realized that they needed to attract Reformed vacationers who might otherwise venture outside Reformed preaching during their time away from home. In the early 1950s, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, urged



St. Petersburg Chapel of the Reformed Church and Christian Reformed Church, Florida (n.d.). Image courtesy of Heritage Hall.

Florida was not the only destination.

CRC congrega-

Banner readers to not “lay aside Calvinism with [their] overcoat” and emphasized that “The Reformed Faith is Truth.” It emphasized its common ground with CRC members by advertising its use of the CRC Psalter Hymnal and CRC Sunday school materials.²⁵ With the presence of Reformed churches in Florida—close cousins even if not affiliated with the CRC itself—a vacation became no excuse to take a break from proper worship.

While the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was a pretty close fit, many Dutch Americans desired their own church. Two chapels, one in St. Petersburg and one in Bradenton, developed to fill this need. In January of 1951, both chapels courted *Banner* readers. St. Petersburg advertised, “Come to St. Petersburg, one of Florida’s finest cities, on beautiful Tampa Bay. Worship with us and meet your friends from the North. Preaching by men of Reformed persuasion.” The Bradenton chapel promised, “You will enjoy fellowshiping with us.” Both groups emphasized fellowship. *Banner* readers could vacation in Florida, confident that they would be among like-minded Dutch Reformed people.²⁶

tions in Arizona advertised not just proper Dutch Reformed piety but the benefits of their climate, reminding readers that a “dry climate [is] helpful for respiratory diseases, arthritis, rheumatic fever, etc.” The Christian Reformed Church of Hawaii assured readers that a “warm aloha awaits you.” Even more modest locations, closer to the Midwestern heartland, such as Cadillac, Michigan, or St. Louis, Missouri, sought to attract CRC vacationers.²⁷

For its part, *The Banner* served two purposes when it came to vacationing. First, it called readers to maintain faithfulness even when away from home. Second, it provided them with the information they needed about these congregations and options to be faithful. In short, *The Banner* educated people on the proper Reformed way to vacation and promoted new Reformed vacation communities in order to maintain the community and lifestyle of the denomination.

Conclusion

Vacations perhaps best illustrate the opportunities and challenges the CRC and *The Banner* wrestled with during the 1950s. Would CRC folk, who increasingly could afford to go on

vacations, attend church when away from home? If so, where would they go? What impact would this choice have on their faith and CRC unity? The CRC (at least in the United States) worked through how to maintain their community amidst increasing prosperity. *The Banner* played an important role in promoting the opportunities that the CRC created, such as for vacations. It also provided a way for CRC members to discuss issues, discover events, and learn with others.

If the challenge of prosperity characterized the 1950s, then the CRC faced new issues in later decades. New divisions developed over issues such as civil rights and race and the Vietnam War. By the 1970s, the CRC began to divide over the question of women’s roles in ministry. The development of the religious right and the Right to Life movement created new questions. Was the CRC evangelical or not? How should the denomination engage these broader developments within the church and society? These new issues would fracture the unity that the CRC and *The Banner* of the 1950s had worked to maintain.

Yet the legacy of the 1950s lives on. *The Banner* continues to educate CRC folk. And institutions like the Conference Grounds and Florida chapels have continued into the present. The look and feel of the magazine have changed. And it is now available in print and online. If the issues of recent decades have created sharper conflict than in the 1950s, and led to divisions in the denomination, *The Banner* has remained a shared forum to learn about and debate them. ☸

Endnotes

1. "Plan to Attend . . ." *Banner* (29 June 1951), 819. Unless otherwise noted, all further citations are taken from the *Banner*.
2. Visit <https://www.thebanner.org/about-us/history> for a history of the *Banner*, along with a 1960s WOOD TV television broadcast concerning the magazine.
3. John Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1949), 125.
4. For a history of Calvin and the CRC, see Harry Boonstra, *Our School: Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church*, The Historical Series of the Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001). For his discussion of enrollment, see page 43.
5. Leonard Verduin, "Does Not Believe Translation of Belgic Confession in Schaff to be 'Regrettable,'" and H. J. Kuiper, "Replies to Rev. Leonard Verduin" (20 March 1959), 21.
6. Nicholas J. Monsma, "Should Members of the Consistory Wear Coats?" (18 June 1954), 773.
7. John. H. Kromminga discusses the importance of neighborhood evangelism in his centennial survey of the CRC. See J. H. Kromminga, *In the Mirror: An Appraisal of the Christian Reformed Church* (Hamilton, ON: Guardian Publishing Company, 1957).
8. "Digest of the Majority Study on the Scope of Home Missions" (20 April 1951), 493.
9. "Conference Program" (22 June 1951), 795.
10. Arthur W. Hoostrate, "Mail from Roman Catholics" (28 September 1956), 1201.
11. Henry J. Kuiper, "At the Crossroads in the Divorce Issue" (6 June 1952), 708-09, 723, 726-27.
12. "Plan to Attend . . ." (29 June 1951), 819 (emphasis added).
13. "Bible Conference Program for the Week" (27 June 1952), 821 and 823; "A Rare Treat" (27 June 1952), 826; "Mission Rally" (11 July 1952), 891; "Neighborhood Evangelism Rally" (1 August 1952), 987.
14. "Young People, Get Your Tickets . . ." (20 January 1950), 95; "Young People!" (11 July 1952), 891; "41st Annual Mission Fest" (11 July 1952), 891.
15. "Midwest Back to God Hour Rally" (15 February 1952), 215.
16. "Midwest Back to God Hour Rally" (15 February 1952), 215; "Have You Registered?" (1 August 1952), 961; "Christian School Convention" (25 July 1952), 951.
17. "Investors" (February 16, 1951), 218.
18. "Money Needed" (25 May 1951), 668.
19. "Money Needed" (22 June 1951), 796.
20. Joseph Gritter, "The Challenge in Canada" (29 June 1951), 807.
21. "Requested A Loan of \$12,000" (6 April 1951), 438.
22. H. J. Triezenberg, "Classis Chicago North" (29 June 1951), 821.
23. Henry Dekker, "Grand Rapids East Items" (9 March 1951), 315.
24. Peter Y. De Jong, "Worship and Vacations" (6 June 1952), 716.
25. "When in Florida" (13 January 1950), 61.
26. "Going to Florida?" And "Bradenton Chapel" (26 January 1951), 124.
27. "Arizona," (13 January 1950), 56; "Hawaii Calls!" (21 January 1966), 30; "Cadillac Christian Reformed Church" (27 June, 1952), 815; "St. Louis Invites You!" (21 January 1966), 30.

Reflections on Janet Sjaarda Sheeres

Rhonda Pennings

It is my pleasure to reflect on Janet Sjaarda Sheeres and her work. She should be celebrated as a genealogist, translator, historian, and editor. When invited to write this article on her books and her work on Dutch Reformed women, I was honored to accept. I have always been intrigued by how Sheeres is able to make her stories from the past come to life. She is an exceptional researcher and encourager of fellow researchers.

I was attending an Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies (AADAS) Conference when I encountered Janet Sheeres, a vivacious woman who obviously was passionate about telling stories about the Dutch immigrant experience. Her enthusiasm was inspiring. She piqued my interest in learning more about that historical time. She also talked with me about capturing the experiences, hopes, and dreams of Dutch-American women, as she believed their stories had not been adequately told in history.

Another memory is when a group of us took a chartered bus to attend the AADAS Conference in Albany, New York. During that bus ride we had an opportunity to talk about theology, Dutch history, and the book Janet was writing, *For Better For Worse: Stories of the Wives of Early Pastors of the Christian Reformed Church* (2017). In 2019, I heard her speak about the book at a small gathering in Michigan and later at Calvin University for the AADAS Conference. I was moved by the hardship these women faced, the sacrifices they made, and their ability to nonetheless profess their faith in God and His goodness in their lives.

The beauty of Sheeres's writing is that she creates scenes in the Netherlands and America that inspire vivid images in my mind. I can see the cityscapes and experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the places. I can get into the minds of the individuals and hear what they are thinking. I can understand what motivates them in the backdrop of the societal and historical contexts in which they lived. And I truly feel that I am back in history, standing right beside the characters in her books and experiencing their dilemmas and difficult decisions. There is great power in her words.

I am always moved by Sheeres's storytelling, and I sympathize with her characters as they are all too human, struggle with daily life, and confront foibles and disputes in the church. Her books give me insights into the history and squabbles of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church, but they also help me to understand my ethnic heritage and the struggles of American Dutch immigrants. She writes in a way that leads readers not just to understand her subjects but to make connections between them and our own experiences.

As someone who is familiar with the immigrant experience, Janet Sheeres has the unique ability to chronicle the experiences that these people had. Common themes in her writing include the often tumultuous journey to North America across the ocean, knowing they may never see family in the Netherlands again, arriving in the United States feeling like strangers because of language and cultural differences, struggling finan-

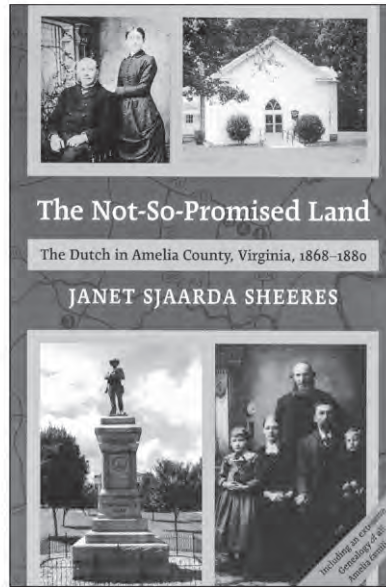
Rhonda Pennings is the dean of arts and sciences/business and health at Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon, Iowa. Her research interests include women's leadership in higher education.

cially to pay for food and lodging, and adjusting to a new world of independence and freedom. In this article I will reflect on three of her books: *Son of Succession: Douwe J. Vander Werp* (2006); *The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868–1880* (2013); and *For Better For Worse*.

In *Son of Succession*, Sheeres tells the story of Douwe Vander Werp. She has a personal connection to Vander Werp. In the preface, she explains that she lived in Burum, Friesland, and was baptized in the same church where Vander Werp was a minister (xv). Like him, she crossed the Atlantic Ocean as a Dutch emigrant. In researching the book, she traveled to the Netherlands to trace the journey that Vander Werp took in life and ministry.¹

Sheeres captures the turmoil of Vander Werp's world. A flood occurred when he was thirteen years old (8). She describes it as "one of the most damaging in human loss and property loss" (9). She also notes the potato famine that caused mass starvation. Vander Werp grew up believing that these events were signs of God's wrath. He sought a pure church that taught true doctrines that were grounded in the Three Forms of Unity and that adhered to the Synod of Dort (14).

My interest was also piqued as my great grandfather emigrated from Friesland and was a member of the Christian Reformed Church for his entire life. Some of my ancestors were counted among the 350 people who died in the flood (9). My great-grandfather remembered how people were starving due to the potato famine. In fact, he often said that he emigrated to America to escape economic hardships as well as religious persecution. Like Vander Werp, he read Scripture every day to live a virtuous life. I cannot help but see my family's stories as I read *Son of Succession*.



Sheeres effectively describes Vander Werp's time as a student and career as a pastor, but her writing is especially powerful in depicting his family life. She highlights his marriages to four wives, three of them from the working class. She explains that the Netherlands had a firmly established social hierarchy, with working women on the lowest rung.² Working women in the Netherlands thus often saw marriage as an opportunity for career advancement. Although Vander Werp's first wife was from a wealthy Seceder family, his second, third, and fourth wives came from the lower classes. Sheeres spends more time writing about his first and fourth wives, perhaps due to their noteworthy spiritual virtues.

Sheeres's experience as a wife to a minister was instrumental in telling the stories of these women. Vander Werp's wives moved with him from church to church as the Seceder movement expanded. Most of them died young, which was not uncommon then. The average lifespan for women was thirty-eight during this time span (88), and most of Vander Werp's wives did not reach this age.

It is clear from Sheeres's analysis that Vander Werp was a minister

convicted by God for the true preaching and adherence to the true doctrine in the church. In Sheeres's words, his "singleness of purpose, his unshakable faith in what he believed, his formidable debating skills, his lucid writing, his organizational skills, his willingness to handle his obstreperous colleagues—all of these were truly godsent for the young Christian Reformed Church at the time of its greatest struggle to survive" (171). His legacy of dedication to the Christian Reformed Church is still alive today. Sheeres's words are at once a historical description and a living heritage for Christian readers today.

In *Not-So-Promised Land*, Sheeres tells the little-known story of Albertus Van Raalte's attempt to establish a Dutch colony in Amelia, Virginia, in the 1860s. It lasted only to the 1880s. At the height of the settlement, there were nearly 65 families and 15 single men. There were approximately 120 children between the ages of one and ten, 65 between the ages of eleven and twenty, and 25 adult children, making the total about 210 children (xii). Nearly 20 children died. Sheeres reports that several women also died due to lack of proper nutrition, poor hygienic conditions during childbirth, and malaria (xiv). Numbers like these can be sterile and abstract, so Sheeres meticulously presents the names and dates of husbands and wives, along with their children, and a summary or story about each family. She is a genealogist and knows that these people are connected to ancestors and descendants.

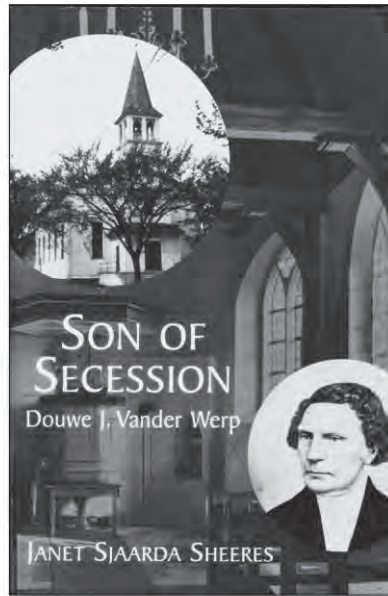
Like Vander Werp, Sheeres has a personal connection to this story. She has a Friesian ancestry, like one of the settlers, Johannes Huizenga, who had lived in Kollumerland before leaving for Virginia. In fact, half of the Amelia County settlement were from Friesland (xi). She not only wants to preserve the colony's history, but she

is also curious about how it relates to her personally. Her stories are vivid and reflect the poverty and despair of those who came to America in pursuit of the promised land.

The immigrant experiences of the Amelia colonists often were desperate. Storms and seasickness marked the journey at sea. Things did not get much better on arrival. One Friesian group was dumped off at night in the woods near Chula, Virginia, leaving women, men, and children huddled together to take care of children and babies (28). Vivid scenes characterize the book and help the reader to identify with the colonists. They lived in dilapidated cabins recently vacated by emancipated slaves due to the destruction wrought by the Union Army in the Civil War (14). In such circumstances, the colony's failure is a tragedy that was not the fault of the immigrants.

The colonists managed to start a school named the Amelia Institute. Fifty to sixty students attended. In 1870, Reverend William Gilmore; his wife, Christina Van Raalte Gilmore; and Mary Van Raalte were in charge. The Gilmores and Mary Van Raalte returned to Michigan only two years later (45). Sheeres speculates that they left because of the harsh conditions and isolation from other Dutch colonies in America. Reverend Seine Bolk organized the congregations: Amelia Courthouse, Mattoax, and Chula. The Reformed Church abandoned the colony's congregations in 1877 due to financial constraints (61).

The local Southerners never accepted the Amelia immigrants. They viewed the Dutch as carpetbaggers due to their northern connections in Michigan. They also disliked the colonists' acceptance of African Americans in the Amelia Institute and their Reformed churches. Finally, they believed that the Dutch settlers were of lower social standing. "The immi-



grants themselves are said to consist in greater part of utterly helpless, ignorant and shiftless men and women—mere dregs of the population of their country,” reported in the *Petersburg Daily Index* in April 1870. “[They are] a burden on us and a reproach to our community” (32). The Dutch hung on for a decade more, ever persistent, before moving on. Many never fully found a home, continuing instead to look for an elusive “promised land” in the United States. “Many of those [who] traveled through Amelia County,” Sheeres writes, “moved from state to state in an endless quest for a better life” (108).

Some pilgrims never find their home. As readers, we can sympathize with the Amelia settlers, who likely felt abandoned. As a Dutch immigrant herself, Sheeres can relate to the hardship and discrimination immigrants often faced in the United States. Such stories are part of the memories I inherited too. My Netherlands-born grandmother often talked about not being fully accepted in America. She was teased in school and bullied by American students. It took her years to feel comfortable in her American hometown.

For Better For Worse recounts

the lives of ten Christian Reformed women who served their communities as ministers' wives—women typically forgotten in Dutch immigrant history collections. Sheeres feels an obligation to women. “From the Reformation on, Protestant church dogma and confessions were written by men and for men and authorized as binding by men,” she writes. “Women were sidelined, their concerns seldom taken into consideration. . . . Women at that time were used to being ‘kept in their place.’ Nevertheless, I felt a keen need to rectify this oversight and hence the book” (xiii).

Sheeres can relate to the struggles as an immigrant and a minister's wife. Unlike ministers' wives and other women today, women then did not participate in the leadership of the church in any formal way. Instead they ran their households and took care of their children. Some of the women lived in poverty because the congregation could not pay their husband's salary due to economic hardships. Some married in the Netherlands with the understanding they would move up the social ladder. Most found dismal living conditions and poverty, especially in isolated immigrant settlements (4). Dutch marriage laws gave husbands sole authority over where the family lived and expected them to support their wives (71). These women found themselves emigrating and moving from parsonage to parsonage under their husbands' authority. They sacrificed their needs and wants to fulfill those of their husbands.

Sheeres chronicles these women's lives and their resilience and hard work. They often were essential not just to their families—some sewing and taking in boarders—but to their husbands' careers (72). One wife suffered nervous breakdowns, and another experienced disgrace related to her husband's affairs and broken

engagements. One spoke out to the congregation regarding its lack of financial support for her husband. For some it was all too much. One wife split with her husband, bought land in Iowa, and received income by renting land.

For Better For Worse thus gives us a picture of women facing different obstacles, with different personalities and different motivations. Sheeres helps us today identify with these women, where they share experiences, and to remind us what has changed. All ten women believed that their husbands were the head of the household and followed them from church to church. “[Women] were encouraged to fit into the world of their husband and children,” Sheeres observes, “and admonished if they sought a life apart from the family” (13).

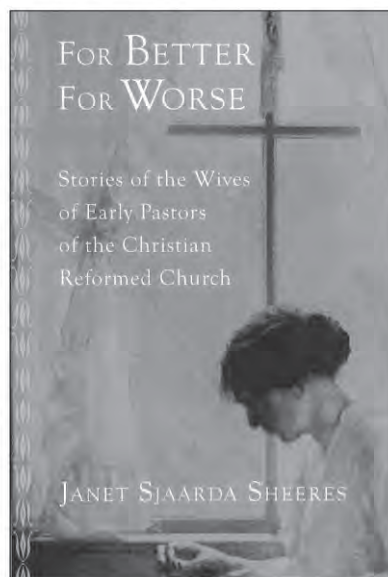
Sheeres’s book suggests both how women have progressed in pursuing careers in recent decades but also how they continue to struggle with charting their own paths. My grandmother and mother described the difficulties they faced in finding work that was not perceived to be fitting for a woman. However, their struggles and those of other women opened doors for women today to find nontraditional careers and achieve career advancement.

Janet Sheeres has been an inspiration to me. Her work matters to me as a reader, a woman, a historian, and an educator. She exemplifies the fact that laypeople can make outstanding contributions to history. She puts herself into the past and imagines what it was like bringing light to the struggles these women faced. She does both the work of a historian, depicting and contextualizing the past, and that of a perpetrator of heritage and memory. Lives like these should not be neglected and forgotten.

Like Janet Sheeres, I have been interested in Dutch-American women

and women in higher education. These are women who came before me and charted the path for women to choose careers of their choice. I can be an educator, a historian, and an administrator in higher education because of their legacy. I understand more fully what both my grandmothers faced when they lived in the Netherlands and the struggles and obstacles they found in America. Some of their stories parallel those told by Sheeres. Their dedication to their husbands and children took center stage in their lives.

The stories Janet Sheeres tells thus remind us that historians can help individuals and communities to preserve their histories and collective memories and help them to understand their ethnic and religious traditions in the present. Her analysis of how the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches defined the role of women in church and in society resonates today as church communities



continue to wrestle with issues such as gender and family life. Since I have an interest in studying and reading the history of women and religion, I find Sheeres’s work to be of great significance, and I value her contributions to women and religion.

Janet Sheeres’s books reveal a compassionate storyteller, a meticulous historian, and a sharp observer of details. Her focus on little-known people and stories helps us understand the societal pressures of the time and our own histories, whether Dutch-American and Reformed or otherwise. They perhaps give us a mirror to better understand little-known and often neglected people today. ☁

Endnotes

1. Earl William Kennedy, Review of *Son of Succession*: Douwe J. Vander Werp in the *Calvin Theological Journal* 42:2 (November 2007), 414.
2. Lynn Rosendale, “In Praise of Dutch Women,” *News & Stories*, Calvin University, <https://calvin.edu/news/archive/in-praise-of-dutch-women> (accessed 1 March 2021).

Working with Janet Sheeres

Mary Risseuw

It took a number of years after Janet Sheeres and I met at an AADAS conference for our paths to cross more frequently—both in-person and online. Many of our organizations and the conferences they hold occur annually or biannually. For those of us who don't live near the other members of those organizations, our in-person interactions are infrequent, but no less important. But the time it took me to get to know Janet has been well worth it. Janet and I are both combinations of long-time professional genealogists as well as historians and writers. Over the years we have shared source material and answered each other's research and genealogy questions. While the number of women attending AADAS conferences has certainly increased over time, the number of women submitting lecture proposals and being chosen to present has not. For the last twenty-plus years Janet has been a consistent voice at that podium.

Janet and I got to know each other better when she became interim editor of *Origins*. Janet encouraged me as I tackled new subject matter in my research and writing, and

she was gracious and kind as an editor. She has been one of very few women writing about women's place in Dutch-American history. She has been a champion in encouraging other women—especially young women—to uncover the stories of those forgotten women.

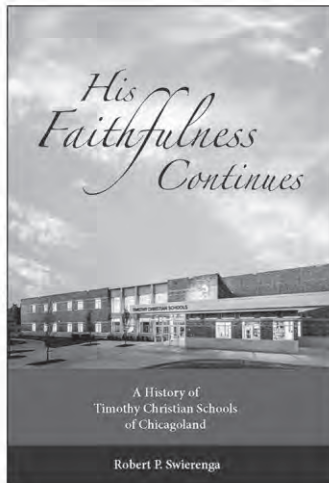
Janet has great enthusiasm for her research subjects. A few years ago, I was able to observe her present at the National Genealogical Society, and I saw how infectious that enthusiasm was for the audience. The smiles and laughs became more frequent as her passion for her subject became evident. Most lecturers I've encountered don't challenge their audiences with statements like "Can you believe they were treated this way?" It became a very personal moment for many people in that audience to be asked to engage themselves in the story in a different way. I heard many comments about how much more they enjoyed the subject because of the excitement and humor with which it was presented. Anyone who

was present for the genealogy class that Janet and I presented before the start of the 2019 AADAS conference is well aware of her passion for genealogy and the sources available for Dutch researchers. I tend to bring my own enthusiasm to teaching genealogy, but it was great fun to follow her and be challenged to keep that momentum going.

There are many historians, researchers, and writers in our midst who are well versed in their subject matter. It takes something different to be able to relay that information with passion and enthusiasm. This is Janet Sjaarda Sheeres. These are just a few of the things that make Janet a woman who inspires me and whom I admire. 🌹

Mary Risseuw is a genealogist, historian, and past president of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies. Her research focuses on Dutch immigration to Wisconsin.

book review



His Faithfulness Continues: A History of Timothy Christian Schools of Chicagoland.

Robert P. Swierenga

Holland, MI: Van Raalte Press, 2020.
777 pages, plus indices.

Typically, institutional histories for schools consist of fifty pages of pictures, about five pages of chronology, and wise words from the administrator—all contained in a stapled glossy booklet. Well, the bar has been raised by the latest book from Robert P. Swierenga. Having extensively detailed the history of Hollanders in Chicago, and then their namesake town of Holland, Michigan, he now leads us through the one-hundred-year history of the Timothy Christian Schools of Chicagoland. Clearly this is a labor of love. The author is a graduate of Timothy, and both his father and grandfather were among the school's longtime leaders. Here the modest anniversary booklet has given

way to a 777-page hardback published by the Van Raalte Press and dedicated to Timothy's longtime benefactor, the late Peter H. Huizenga.

Dutch Calvinists on Chicago's West Side organized the school in 1907. During the 1920s it moved west to Cicero, before moving even farther west, beginning in the 1950s, to Elmhurst. From its beginnings in a rented space above a Chicago store, Timothy gradually expanded until it finally became a K–12 school after the Second World War. The book draws heavily on the records of board and society meetings that determined the school's locations, vision, finances, and personnel. We see Timothy emerge from the shadow of its Chicago antecedents into an independent school with its own identity.

Finances were a perennial problem during the first decades. The Great Depression was a great crisis the school endured through sacrificial giving, salary cuts, staff reductions, and deferred maintenance. These struggles had the effect of inspiring a fierce loyalty among the largely Christian Reformed constituency that filled the student body, controlled the board, and raised the revenue that ensured the school's survival.

The book's longest chapter details Timothy's long struggle with racial integration questions during the 1960s. Located as it was in Cicero, a self-consciously whites-only municipality, the school board confronted requests from predominantly African American Christian Reformed congregations located in the city of Chicago to accept their children as students. Faced with threats of violence from the Cicero community, the board denied those requests but allowed black children to

attend the newer campus in Elmhurst. Timothy's board was publicly castigated by both local church leaders and the broader Dutch Reformed community for a perceived lack of moral courage in the face of the local racist threats. In the end, the questions faded when the board sold the Cicero property to build the school's future in Elmhurst.

The final phase of the story involves the gradual waning of the school's reliance on its founding Dutch Calvinist constituency and its evolution into a more broadly Christian private school. Declining birthrates and waning denominational allegiances drove Timothy's leaders to seek students from a wider variety of churches in the western suburbs. This also led to recruiting board members and faculty from more sources than the ones that had largely sustained the school from its earliest days.

For those familiar with Timothy's story, most every teacher and most every classroom is meticulously described. There are extensive addenda listing everything from homecoming kings and queens to enrollment statistics and rosters of board members and custodial staff. And there are pictures galore, plus very helpful maps to help us understand the details.

As with any long-lasting school, Timothy Christian owes its endurance to both the constituents who loyally enrolled their children and key individuals who generously donated their time, talents, and finances to build, maintain, and expand the school's mission. They are all here in this book that is well worth reading. ☸

Robert Schoone-Jongen

for the future

The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of *Origins*.

The LeCocq family and Dutch immigrant settlements in the American West.

Dutch Reformed commemorations of the immigrant era and the creation of church communities.

Dutch emigration to Canada and the Christian Reformed Church in Canada after World War II.

The Christian Reformed Church and the city of Detroit.

The "Dutch Mob" in New Jersey.

Advertisement regarding the public sale of Frank LeCocq, Jr.'s farm equipment, cattle, machinery, etc., on November 18, 1910. The family was moving to Washington. Printed in the *Corsica Globe*. Image courtesy of the Northwestern College Archives.

PLEASE NOTE

The Calvin University Financial Department requests that from now on all checks be made out to "Calvin University" rather than to "Origins," and that the word "Origins" be written on the memo line. Thank you so much!

☐ Yes, I wish to join the "Friends of the Archives."

Name

Address

Subscriber \$10.00 ☐

Contributing Member \$50.00 ☐

Contributing Sponsor \$100.00 ☐

Contributing Founder \$500.00 ☐

Send to: *Origins*, Heritage Hall, Calvin University,
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

☐ Yes, I would also like a gift subscription for:

Name

Address

My Name

Address

Send to: *Origins*, Heritage Hall, Calvin University,
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

PUBLIC SALE!

The undersigned will sell at Public Sale, absolutely without reserve, on his farm the North East quarter of Sec. 34-100-65, adjoining the town of Harrison on the east, the following described property. Sale to commence at 10 o'clock a. m., sharp, on

FRIDAY, NOV. 18, '10

16 HORSES 16

Team, mare and gelding, 5 and 6 years, wgt 3400.
Team, mare and gelding, 8 and 10 years, wgt 3000.
Team, mare and gelding, 7 years, wgt 3400.
Team, mare and gelding, 3 and 4 years, wgt 2800.
Black gelding, 10 years, wgt 1200.
Grey mare, with foal, 12 years, wgt 1400.
Bay mare, 3 years, wgt 1000.
2 black colts, coming 2 years.
Grey colt, coming 2 years.
2 mare colts, coming 1 year.

30 CATTLE 30

5 good milch cows.
5 two year old steers.
2 two year old bulls, Hereford and Shorthorn
5 two year old heifers.
13 yearling heifers and steers.

10 HOGS 10

3 Duroc Jersey male pigs.
7 brood sows.

HARNESS

Set Nickle mounted breeching work harness.
Set plain breeching work harness.
Set common heavy work harness.
2 sets double buggy harness.
2 sets heavy fly nets.
Set light fly nets. Saddle.
Single buggy harness.

2 Stacks of Hay 2

500 Bu. New Corn

MACHINERY, Etc: Truck wagon, 3 1/2 inch South Bend farm wagon, 3 1/2 inch Mandt farm wagon, 2 single top buggies, 2 hay racks, 4 section steel harrow with cart, winder, 6-ft Deering binder, 2 riding cultivators, 2 discs, corn planter with 160 rods of wire, 16-inch sulky plow, 2 walking plows, Deering mower, Deering hay rake, two 500 bushel corn cribs, Sharples cream separator, 50 lbs binding twine and numerous other articles generally found on a farm.

FREE LUNCH AND HOT COFFEE AT NOON

TERMS: Sums of less than \$10 cash; \$10 and over, time will be allowed to October 1st, 1911, on secured bankable notes at 10% interest. 2% discount on sums of over \$10 if paid in cash.

F. Le Cocq, Jr., Owner.

CORSICA STATE BANK, Clerk.

C. BEUKELMAN, Auctioneer

When they followed me to Washington
CORSICA STATE BANK

contributors

Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of the Calvin University and Seminary Archives. These goals include the gathering, organization and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian Reformed Church, its institutions, communities and people. We invite you to support the continued publication of *Origins* by becoming "Friends of the Archives."

Enabling Contributor

Mr. and Mrs. John Meyer, Palos Park, IL

Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund Builders

AEGON Insurance Group, Cedar Rapids, IA

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J. Baas, Grand Rapids, MI

Robert and Jane Baker Foundation, Kalamazoo, MI

Mr. Duane D. Binns, Oak Park, IL

Mr. and Mrs. Roger W. Boer, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. and Mrs. James A. De Jong, Grand Rapids, MI

Lester Hoogland, Zeeland, MI

Holland American Wafer Company,
Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Huizinga, Oak Brook, IL

Dr. William Huizingh, Scottsdale, AZ

Estate of Dick and Dena Kortenhoeven,
Highland, IN

Meijer, Inc., Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. Gerald W. Meyering, Denver, CO

Drs. Kornelis J. Storm, Aerdenhout, the Netherlands

Jay and Betty Van Andel Foundation,
Grand Rapids, MI

David and Sheryl Vander Ploeg, St. Joseph, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Claude J. Venema, Jackson, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Gary J. Vermeer, Pella, IA

Contributing Founders

Mr. and Mrs. Richard T. Dykema, New York, NY

Mr. and Mrs. Bastian A. Knoppers, Oak Brook, IL

Peters Import Marketplace, Grandville, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Peters, Grand Rapids, MI

Clara and Leonard Sweetman, Kentwood, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Max B. Van Wyk, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. John Zonneveld Sr., Laton, CA

Contributing Sponsors

David and Rene Baatenburg, Jenison, MI

Dr. Kenneth J. Betten, Kalamazoo, MI

James H. and Diane Bloem, Louisville, KY

David and Mary Bosscher, Zeeland, MI

John and Sharon Bouma, Holland, MI

John and Beth Bouws, Holland, MI

Connie and Roger Brummel, Holland, MI

Jan and Jeannie de Vries, Berkeley, CA

Mark and Ginny Dykstra, South Holland, IL

Mr. Kenneth D. Engelsman, Centennial, CO

Phil and Trudy Erffmeyer, Grand Rapids, MI

John H. and Marcia R. Evenhouse, Westmont, IL

David and Connie Fennema, Durham, NC

Ginny Geldof, Grand Rapids, MI

Carl and Sandy Gronsman, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. James and Barbara Hoogetboom,
Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth A. Hoving, Oak Brook, IL

Harold and Esther Huizenga, Grand Rapids, MI

Rich and Carla Huizenga, Seattle, WA

Hessel and Alice Kielstra, Calgary, AB

Mr. John E. King, Wyckoff, NJ

Rev. John M. V. Koole, Strathroy, ON

Herb and Bernace Korthuis, Lynden WA

Ms. Annette LaMaire, Bradenton, FL

Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Mast, Jenison, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Graydon M. Meints, Kalamazoo, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Hendrik Porte, Byron Center, MI

Ed and Noreen Reitsma, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Scheeres, Grand Rapids, MI

Lugene and Carla Schemper, Chicago, IL

Dr. and Mrs. Richard D. Sjoerdsma, Racine, WI

LeRoy and Anjean Stegink, Grand Rapids, MI

Steven and Barbara Timmermans, Grand Rapids, MI

Benjamin and Debrah Vander Kooi, Luverne, MN

Jan and Gary Vander Meer, DeKalb, IL

Mr. and Mrs. George J. Vande Werken,
Pflugerville, TX

Dr. John E. Van Domelen, College Station, TX

Mr. and Mrs. Allan J. Van Popering, Grand Rapids, MI

Max and Carol Van Wyk, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. and Mrs. Daniel R. Vellenga, Waco, TX

Bill and Pat Waanders, Grand Rapids, MI

Wilbert Wichers, Bradenton, FL

Dave and Brenda Wiersma, Tucson, AZ

Mr. and Mrs. Henry I. Witte, Ada, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Teunis Witte, Byron Center, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard H. Zandstra, Holt, MI

Mr. and Mrs. David L. Zandstra, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. John Zomer, Peterborough, ON

Contributing Members

John and Maria Bajema, Rockford, MI

Ms. Jennifer Baker, Grandville, MI

Richard and Cynthia Bandstra, Grand Rapids, MI

Audrey and Frank Berkenpas, Grandville, MI

Ron Bielema, Fremont, MI

Ed and Betty Boersma, Nampa, ID

Richard and Trena Boonstra, Grand Rapids, MI

Carl A. Botting, Ada, MI

Larry and Jeanne Borst, Grand Rapids, MI

Linda L. Bouterse, Moline, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Bratt, Lynden, WA

Ms. Carol Bredeweg, Hudsonville, MI

Peter Burma, Grand Rapids, MI

Wayne and Greta Clousing, Shoreline, WA

Stuart E. Cok, Sparta, MI

Ron and Cathie Corstange, Hudsonville, MI

Ms. Mary Cremer, Grand Rapids, MI

Ronald DeValois, Lynden, WA

Rev. and Mrs. Sidney Draayer, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. David Eisen, Mishawaka, IN

Mr. Les Faber, Mount Vernon, WA

Dave and Trudy Boerema Feters, Holland, MI

Harold and Nancy Gazan, Holland, MI

Carl and Sandy Gronsman, Grand Rapids, MI

Henrietta Hamersma, Grand Rapids, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hekstra, Byron Center, MI

Ralph and Jane Hoekstra, Huntington Beach, CA

Mr. and Mrs. James Holkeboer, Grand Rapids, MI

Mrs. Richard Houskamp, Grand Rapids, MI

Mrs. Marjorie K. Huiner, Lynchburg, VA

Cornie and Marcia Huizinga, Jenison, MI

Mr. and Mrs. Rolland Hyma, Zeeland, MI

- Miss Rita Jager, Edmonton, AB
 Mr. Glenn R. Jasperse, Sheboygan, WI
 Mary E. Jellema, Holland, MI
 Mr. and Mrs. Gerard Koster, Grand Rapids, MI
 Mr. Lawrence R. Koster, Hudsonville, MI
 Mrs. Arden Lambers, Grand Rapids, MI
 Mr. and Mrs. Peter Land, Lowell, MI
 Mr. and Mrs. Loren J. Lemmen, Ada, MI
 Roland and Polly S. Lindh, Grand Rapids, MI
 Rev. Gene and Shirley Los, Zeeland, MI
 Mr. Charles Mackus, Grand Rapids, MI
 Rev. and Mrs. Peter Mans, Blaine, WA
 William and Shirley Van Baak Martinus,
 West Olive, MI
 Dave and Barb Meeuwse, Hopkins, MI
 Joshua Meeuwse, Thornton, CO
 Mr. Gerald Meyer, Holland, MI
 Drs. George and Ellen Monsma, Grand Rapids, MI
 Marilyn Myers, Byron Center, MI
- Mr. Andrew Ooms, Redondo Beach, CA
 Miss Janice Overzet, Fremont, MI
 Angie and Joel Ploegstra, Zeeland, MI
 David and Pamela Reitsem, Castle Rock, CO
 Dr. Joan Ringerwale, Hudsonville, MI
 Al and Rika Scheenstra, Visalia, CA
 Ben and Henny Senneker, Lethbridge, AB
 Mrs. P. John Shooks, Grand Rapids, MI
 Mrs. Freda Snippe, Owen Sound, ON
 Richard and Joyce Stienstra, Oro Valley, AZ
 Dr. and Mrs. Ryan Tolsma, Redlands, CA
 Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Van Dellen,
 Grosse Pointe Park, MI
 Elizabeth Vanden Berg, Edgerton, MN
 Nolan and Joey Vander Ark, Denver, CO
 Mrs. Agatha Vander Kooij, Portage, MI
 John and Donna Vander Meer, Grand Rapids, MI
 Ron and Phyllis Vander Molen, Modesto, CA
 Mr. Douglas B. Vander Wall, Grand Rapids, MI
- Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Van Dokkenburg,
 West Lafayette, IN
 Dr. and Mrs. James Y. Van Dyk, Grand Rapids, MI
 Ruth and Martin Van Dyke, Denver, CO
 Catherine Van Eck, Crete, IL
 Dr. Larry Van Genderen, Jackson, WY
 Mr. Daniel Van Meurs, Grand Rapids, MI
 Lambert and Kathryn Van Poolen, Grand Rapids, MI
 Mr. Donald Van Vuren, Orland Park, IL
 Mr. Maurice Veenstra, Lynden, WA
 Mr. Evert Volkertsz, Stony Brook, NY
 Alvin and Joyce Vos, Endwell, NY
 Ms. Jane E. Warners, Grand Rapids, MI
 Rev. Homer and Betty Wigboldy, Lynden, WA
 Rev. and Mrs. Donald Wisse, North Haledon, NJ
 Nicholas and Claire Kingma Wolterstorff,
 Grand Rapids, MI
 Kenneth and Elaine Zimmerman, Woodstock, MD

Origins

Heritage Hall Archives
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Heritage Hall Archives contains the historical records of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and other institutions related to the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands and North America. The Archives also contains a wide range of personal and family manuscripts.