

## **CONFSSIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

### *Maintain or Sacrifice?*

We began the current volume of Reformed Polemics with exploring and affirming what it means to be Reformed (a). Using J. Munneke's writings (b) as our guideline we busied ourselves with the theme "the confession of the Church." The fact that we are discussing confessional membership and admission to the Lord's Table is not just a happy coincidence. These are the very issues on which we as church members and as a church federation have shown ourselves to be openly divided.

### **THE CHURCH AND THE CONFESSION**

J. Munneke's personal reflection on "the Church and the Confession" are a good prerequisite to a discussion about confessional binding; or as it is commonly called confessional membership. Munneke notes that "the Church has received the Word of God, and she must be a 'pillar and a bulwark' of the truth... To be and to remain a pillar and bulwark the Church must keep (or guard) the Word of God. She must protect it against falsification by the lie. The church has to keep the Word pure by guarding it against heresy, and confessing the Word of truth, and the truth of the Word." (c)

The congregation of believers (the Church) has in a common belief confessed God's truth. To confess means to say the same thing as the Word. Confessing and believing are inseparably bound. If we believe we must confess and if we confess we must believe. And being Reformed, we gladly and thankfully affirm that what the Church in her confession has summarized as the truth of the Word of God is also our confession: we willingly and "wholeheartedly" bind ourselves to the confession in order to be bound to Scripture.

Another writer reflects, "The church by its very nature is a confessing church. It is the assembly of those who believe with the heart and confess with the mouth. Officebearers have a responsibility to make sure the congregation lives its confession since they are to take heed to the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers (Acts 20:28). An elder must "...hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also confute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9) because every member must "...leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity..." (Hebrews 6:1).

Confessing is a duty required of every member in the covenant and church of our Lord Jesus Christ (Lord's Day 12 Q. 7 A. 32). Hebrews 10:23 states, "let us hold fast to the confession of our hope...". The congregation must "...contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). When we stand up in front of the congregation and promise to live like the Lord's children, we make a public statement of our faith and conviction that everything in the Old and New Testament as summarized in our written confessions is the true and complete doctrine of salvation. Thus, in order to be living members of the church of Christ we must thoroughly know our written confessions." (d)

### *ANOTHER PERSONAL REFLECTION*

At times we are faced with the reality that some of the personal reflections on the matter of “confessional membership” do not always help to clarify the issues. Rather, some of the questions posed and the statements made have only served to create further doubt and confusion, and they show evidence of a departure from the historic Reformed position.

In one of the “personal reflections” about the latest Synod decisions we read the following: “...We have also said to the OPC that they need to practice ‘confessional membership’ but what precisely is that? Where do we define such membership? I cannot find it in the Scriptures, not even in the Church Order. I know of communicant and non-communicant members. I do not know of confessional and non-confessional members.

Now, of course, I have some idea as to what is meant and I have always believed that those who seek to be communicant members in the Canadian Reformed Churches should know what it is that they confess and believe in the Three Forms of Unity; if that is what makes them ‘confessional members’ - fine. However, from reading the opinion of others I hear that it means that members, as it were, sign the Form of Subscription. Since when? Do we not make a distinction between being a member and being an office bearer?

So what exactly is a ‘confessional member’? Where do we find this term defined in our basic documents? When did a Synod ever define it and make a rule in the churches? If we have not done so, how can we go to another church federation and insist that they officially adopt such a position?” (e) (End of quote)

#### *A PROBLEMATIC TERM*

As we peruse this personal reflection we notice that it consists of a lot of questions; eight of them to be precise. We also observe that some of the questions posed are in effect statements, and that some of these statements leave us with even more questions. We can nevertheless agree that the terms “confessional member” and “confessional membership” are potentially problematic. Our church order speaks of “communicant” and “non-communicant” members (Art. 62 and 68, C.O.), not “confessional” or “non-confessional” members. The term “confessional membership” is rather unfortunate in that it can easily lead us to conclude that we are or become church members by virtue of the fact that we have publicly professed (confessed) our faith. If that is indeed true, then all those who have not yet publicly professed their faith are not really church members. The term “confessional membership” is therefore not without problems and it can lead to a certain misunderstanding.

However, to suggest that we don’t exactly know what “confessional membership” is, or that we aren’t quite sure what is meant by this term is rather peculiar, to say the least. Is it probable or possible that in the course of almost two decades of discussions with the OPC on this particular point we still do not have a clear understanding of what it is that we are asking them to do when we suggest that they, like the Can. Ref. Churches, ought to practice “confessional membership?” That would certainly be a rather remarkable situation. Yet, odd as it may seem, we should not entirely discount that possibility.

Take, for example, the somewhat puzzling proposition that “certain practices in the OPC, with respect to the admission of guests at the Lord’s table and confessional membership have not been

proven to undermine the OPC's confessional integrity as a true church." (f) When we carefully consider this statement then we must admit that these type of observations or considerations do leave open the possibility that we have been less than clear, concise, and consistent in articulating the Reformed position on confessional membership. For is the matter of confessional membership, of binding ourselves to the confession(s), not always a matter of the confessions themselves? Of what value are confessions if we as communicant members are not bound by them? What is the worth of the OPC's "confessional integrity" when their "greater variety of practice concerning confessional membership" precludes binding all communicant members to what they, according to their own "confessional documents" declare to profess and believe? And finally, where is the unity of the believers and of the church if not in the confession?

### *SOME PERPLEXING SENTIMENTS*

However, in spite of the fact that the term confessional membership is open to misunderstanding, and aside from the fact that we have at times been less than consistent in explaining the Reformed position on this point, there are, also in the OPC, those who know full well what is meant by this term. They have a good understanding of what is required of church members in churches where confessional binding (or confessional membership) is practiced. They therefore regard the Reformed practice of confessional membership as too restrictive, unnecessary, undesirable, and even exclusivistic and sectarian.

Those who entertain the aforementioned sentiments are not just people from "other" churches or church federations. These sentiments have also been voiced by a number of (former) CanRC members, and their dissatisfaction with the decision of Synod 1998 with respect to the OPC and confessional membership indicates that they clearly understood the meaning of this term and the purpose or intent of Synod's decision in this matter. They objected to being bound and to binding others to the confession (confessional membership), and this decision of Synod 1998 is the very reason why some deemed it necessary to withdraw themselves from the church. Moreover, there are currently members who, in spite of sharing similar sentiments, continue to remain members in the CanRC. They apparently do not consider their contrary views on confessional binding (confessional membership) to be incompatible with their status as communicant members.

And that unquestionably leaves us with a lot of questions: How is it possible that people who lay claim to being Reformed now no longer deem it necessary or important to bind themselves to the Reformed confession of Scripture? What is it that presently prompts people of Reformed persuasion to start minimizing and trivializing the confession of the church, which is also their confession? Why is it that the meaning of the term confessional membership, has subsequent to the decisions of Synod 1998, suddenly become so unclear or uncertain for some people? What precisely is it that causes certain people to now criticize and openly question the long established Reformed practice of confessional membership? Did Synod 1983 and 1986 not make it abundantly clear that our profession of faith definitely includes allegiance to the Three Forms of Unity? (g)

### *THE ULTIMATE QUESTION*

This accumulation of questions leads us to the real and ultimate question. Quoting the words of a writer to Letters to the Editors: "It only helps to be straight-forward about this whole matter: the question is whether the churches are willing to maintain this practice of confessional binding (or

call it confessional membership), or are willing to sacrifice it for the sake of ecclesiastical unity with those who will not be bound to the true confession of God's Word." (h) Maintain or sacrifice? That, in short, is the question.

### *A FEW OBSERVATIONS*

When in the context of our discussions about ecclesiastical unity or "inter-church relations" there surface all kinds of questions about the definition, meaning, necessity, validity and status of some of our long established Reformed practices, then we also need to ask ourselves a question: Are these questions asked to truly bring us to a better understanding and greater appreciation of what it means to be Reformed, or are they simply statements made to challenge and bring into question our long established Reformed practices? What we really need is more appreciation rather than criticism of that which is Reformed.

Our dividedness as church federation and church members is not because there is no biblical basis for confessions, (i), or because it is unscriptural to bind each other to what we have agreed are faithful and trustworthy summaries of the Scriptures. We are divided, in part, because for some church members ecclesiastical unity is more important than the true confession of God's Word.

It is good to remind ourselves of the words of Klaas Schilder that "church reformers are not people who fight for unity but people who fight for truth. The unity that follows is the fruit of their struggle." (j) When we strive for unity instead of truth we will soon find that we have neither truth nor unity. Then we become and remain divided, because influenced by the ecumenical spirit of our age, the "urge to merge," will be accompanied by our readiness to compromise, and thus the truth is lost.

When dealing with and discussing these matters it is obvious that there continues to be the need to engage in polemics; in "the art or practice of disputation or controversy; specifically polemic theology, which has for its object refutation of errors." We will therefore, the Lord willing, continue our further discussions on these and other matters in Volume 6 of Reformed Polemics.

Ron Dykstra

- (a) To Be Or Not To Be - On Being Reformed Today, Reformed Polemics, Sept. 12/98.
- (b) (c) The Church and the Confession, J. Munneke, Diakonia, June 1989.
- (d) Unspeakable Comfort, P.G. Feenstra.
- (e) Access to the Table, Clarion, Year end issue 1998.
- (f) Acts Gen. Synod 1995, article 106, considerations B3 (p.71).
- (g) see: Only the Apostle's Creed?, Reformed Polemics, April 3/99.
- (h) Letter to the Editors, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, Reformed Polemics, April 16/99.
- (i) see: The Biblical Basis for Confessions, David deBoer, Reformed Polemics, Jan. 9/99.
- (j) Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church, Rudolf Van Reest (p.404).

### **Book Review: For As Long As You Both Shall Live**

It is unusual for a book reviewer to let the author himself do most of the talking. Yet, in the case of the book in question, it seems redundant to say what the author has so eloquently expressed himself. The subject of remarriage after divorce has been a controversial one for Christians

throughout the history of the Church. The fact that Rev. Van Delden deals with it in such a “scripture searching manner” only leads us to pay close attention to what he has to say.

The fact that the author has had to change his opinion means that this book was not written from a pre-conceived position but is the result of determined Biblical research. Listen to his own words as he explains how he came to write this little booklet that be in every Reformed Christians library.

“When reading my Greek New Testament I came across the passage of Matthew 19:6. Comparing my translation with the various English translations I found that mine did not agree. I took out my grammars and examined the construction that gave rise to the different interpretation. The more I studied, the more I felt that the accepted translation of the text was incorrect. This difference was not a trivial one. It gave a completely different perspective to that verse.

This made me re-read one of the books on the subject of divorce that I was required to read during my theological training, namely, John Murray’s “Divorce”. As I read the pertinent pages, something Murray wrote caught my attention. He wrote that this verse was one of the most crucial texts in the discussion of remarriage after divorce. This induced me to study the matter further. At this stage, I limited myself to books that agreed with my earlier point of view, namely, that remarriage was permitted after a legitimate divorce. I read them in the hope that they might clear up the questions that had arisen in my mind. Yet the more I studied and compared them with Scripture, the more convinced I became that the view they presented, which I had formerly accepted, was incorrect. It was not until I established my own view on the matter that I began to read books that argued against remarriage after divorce, which confirmed what I believe Scripture teaches on this subject.

I undertook this study for myself, so that in a systematic way I might come to grips with the question of remarriage after divorce. As I began to speak to others about my altered view, they encouraged me to put my thoughts in writing so that they might understand why I came to the conclusions that I have. This book is the result.

I must concede that this book reads more like a commentary than a novel. This means that the reader will have to read a small section and contemplate on what is written.

I publish this book with some measure of reservation. I am presenting a view that differs from that of the Reformers for whom I have the highest respect. This is also true of more recent men of Reformed persuasion whose writing I esteem highly. My one encouragement is that I am presenting a view that agrees with virtually all the early church fathers.

It is my hope and prayer that those who read this book may do so with both an open Bible and an open mind. May it lead to a greater perception of the inviolable character of the vows of holy marriage, and of the need for reconciliation rather than remarriage after divorce.”

Elsewhere in this issue you can find ordering information!

## **STAR WARS: A REAL OR A PHANTOM MENACE?**

One of the most popular and media-hyped recent events has been the showing of the move “The

Phantom Menace". Not only did it draw many people to the theatres, it also opened the debate about Christians attending such events. During a debate on this subject on the Ref Net (Internet Reformed Christian discussion group) we found several separate contributions by br. J. J. Kuntz. At our request he permitted us to edit his original (and in his opinion too casual and disjointed) 'posts' into the following, more continuous and formal article.

We have take the liberty to add several comments by ministers of our Churches on the same subject which were found by br. R. Heemskerck in back issues of Clarion and posted by him and his SpindleWorks co-editor J. J. Kuntz on their Internet website which is located at [www.SpindleWorks.com](http://www.SpindleWorks.com). We hope this material will be edifying and helpful in dealing with a very current and, in some cases, difficult matter.

The Editors

In the latest installment of the Star Wars series "Phantom Menace" it is now at last revealed that the heavy-breathing Darth Vader, is of Christ-like antecedents and significance. In this long awaited movie Darth Vader's mother discloses that her son was received as the child of an immaculate conception (The Force, it seems, was not only with, but 'overshadowed' her). George Lucas, the New-Age inspired author of this deeply mystical, techno-cultic "Goodness and Deliverance vs. Sin and Evil" saga presents Darth Vader as the Saviour of the Universe, the "chosen one" so long awaited by the wise men of the Jedi Council.

The revelation that Jesus Christ AND Darth Vader are of virgin birth adds a whole new 'religious' dimension to Star Wars theology. A well-known, widely read Evangelical /

Christian movie reviewer warily and acquiescently suggests to parents that they should accompany their children to this movie and use this opportunity to "explain" more fully the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. (It should be noted here that the Roman Catholic allegation of the Immaculate Conception [of Mary] and the Scriptural doctrine of the Virgin Birth [of her Son] are not to be confused.)

Should movies that blasphemously imitate Christian doctrine in order to lend them mystical grandeur be an instructional platform to study "the holy conception and birth of Christ"? Isn't Catechism class a better place for that, among others? Perhaps a revision of the text of the HC may soon have to include, for Q&A 3: "From where do you know your sins and misery? A. From 'The Phantom Menace.'

Phil Boatwright, the author of many film and video reviews 'from a Christian perspective', wrote on his website:

"What should be discussed by concerned parents is the conception of young Anakin Skywalker, the future Darth Vader character. At one point, his mother confesses that the boy was the result of an immaculate conception. This, of course, causes members of the Jedi counsel to wonder if the child is the "chosen one," the future saviour of the galaxy. In the past, I (Phil Boatwright) have defended the Star Wars mystical proponents. Many had problems with the continuous reference to the Force, but after reading interviews with George Lucas and examining the series, I didn't believe there was an attempt to lead young people into occultism or Eastern philosophies. I believed, and still

maintain, that these movies are parables concerning good versus evil. The Star Wars trilogy was full of well-developed characters who worked together to defeat a malevolent empire. The stories were entertaining and devoid of profanity and exploitive sex. However, this latest development of proclaiming a movie warrior to be of virgin birth may cause some to think the film's creator is trifling with the significance of Jesus Christ and his entrance into human form. My suggestion: Parents, if you are allowing the kids to attend, you should view this film with them. Make sure they understand the difference between the film's "Force" and the real Force, Jesus Christ."

Popular broadcaster and author Bill Moyers was also interviewed about Star Wars and quoted in an article by R.A. Mohler. "When Bill Moyers asked his youngest son why he had seen Star Wars at least a dozen times, he responded: "For the same reason you have been reading the Old Testament all your life."

...The mythological elements in these movies are hard to deny, and Mr. Lucas has more recently claimed a higher purpose than entertainment in his movie making. "I see Star Wars as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distil them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct-that there is a greater mystery out there," he (Lucas) told a fascinated Bill Moyers, who interviewed him in TIME.

The Moyers interview reveals so much about both Mr. Moyers and Mr. Lucas. They both seem absolutely agog over the power of myth and convinced that modern secular Americans need new myths to replace the tired old "myths" of religion, including biblical Christianity. "Religion is basically a container for faith. And faith in our culture ... what one might describe as a supernatural, or the things we can't explain-is a very important part of what allows us to remain stable, remain balanced."

Mr. Lucas says he believes that "all religions are true," though we cannot know who or what God is. In writing Star Wars, Mr. Lucas "had to come up with a whole cosmology," and chose to imitate an existing belief system rather than to invent a new religion. In the process he borrowed freely from ancient Gnosticism, Buddhism, and certain elements of Christianity. "I wanted to express it all," he explained.

The mythological structure of Star Wars is primarily indebted to the Eastern religions, though Americans are more likely to recognize that now than they were in 1977. Zen Buddhism and other Eastern philosophies are now staples of America's polytheistic popular culture. Bookstore sections on "Spirituality" feature hundreds of books in the "Buddhism for the Masses" genre, and the even less serious "New Age" materials....

Conspicuously absent from Mr. Lucas's cosmology is anything connected to biblical Christianity. Although oblique references to faith abound in the film, the central religious motif is "the Force," explained by Star Wars: The Magic of Myth (Bantam Doubleday Dell) as a combination of "the

basic principles of several different major religions.” Further, “it most embodies what all of them have in common: an unerring faith in a spiritual power.”

”The Force” is not analogous to Christian faith, but is a form of personal enlightenment and empowerment. Faith in “the Force” is simply faith in mystery and some higher power—mostly within. As Mr. Lucas instructs: “Ultimately the Force is the larger mystery of the universe. And to trust your feelings is your way into that.” The last thing Americans need to be told is to trust their own feelings.

The mythology of Star Wars is perfectly adapted to the spiritual confusion of postmodern America. “Go with the Force” is about all many citizens can muster as spirituality. When Christianity ceases to be the dominant worldview of a culture, paganism is quick to fill the void.”

Can we expect those so enthralled over the gospel according to Lucas to go into our city streets to raise the two-edged sword of the Evangel of Luke and do battle with paganism?

It seems like only yesterday that erring young Christians were admonished for going to the movies. Now, after all this time, it turns out that discerning young Christians SHOULD go to (some of the more ‘spiritually instructive’) movies, perhaps accompanied by Mom or Dad.

Once, cinema attendance was extra-curricular and a trip to the movies required filial stealth, strategy, skull drudgery and subterfuge (I speak from experience). Now movie going is ‘intra-curricular’ and ‘intra-mural’ as, on Monday mornings, the walls of Reformed Christian schools echo to weekend cinematic reportage. (How the ‘murals’ have fallen!) Yesterday, movie attendance was seen as a point of departure FROM a Gospel life-style. Today it is recommended as a point of departure for discussions ABOUT the Gospel.

Once I would not have dared to argue that I (under cover of lies) snuck off to a movie for the purpose of finding a suitable occasion to urge a fellow worker to believe on Jesus as Saviour. This would have (back then) been received with well deserved hilarity and ridicule. Today we ponderously reflect on whether a jury of one group of “Twelve Angry Men” can lead us into a deeper appreciation of the eternal justice taught by another group of “Twelve Anointed Men”.

Once the late Rev. Van Dooren ‘thundered’ to the teens at a YPS meeting in the 50’s that movies were like dumpsters: “If you reach down far and deep enough you’ll come up with something edible but meanwhile you’re covered in ....”(and shocked us with a Dutch barnyard expression). Today some Reformed ministers (must?) arm themselves into the pulpit with annotative references to Pocahontas, The Lion King, Private Ryan, Titanic, Shakespeare in Love and The Phantom Menace.

I have tried and failed to adjust to the contortionist logic that puts a seal of Good Christian Housekeeping on going to the movies. For I think I understand the underlying, compulsive reasons why we as Christians go to movies and surrender to the fantasy and technology of these breath taking, awe inspiring, delicious diverting productions. But when this is presented as coming from a desire to be better equipped in our task of bringing the Gospel of light into the dark streets of the

city, I still hear the accusing voice of Rev. Van Dooren ask: Will my audience hear me better if I smell just as bad as they?

Perhaps we have lived, as Reformed immigrants, through an industrious Age of Acquisition (building houses, - of worship, - of education, - of residence, - of retirement, - of care) and now have entered a much predicted, more indulgent Age of Acquiescence. And therefore I don't believe we should buy any apologetic for accommodation.

By the way, Mr. Lucas is a disciple of the late media and communications prophet Joseph Campbell. The WORLD website introduces Mr. Campbell (and thus his epigenist Lucas) with these words:

“In an interview with Omni magazine shortly before his death in 1987, Mr. Campbell called for the dissolution of the three major religions of the West, namely Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The future (he said) if there's going to be one, has to be a dissolution of those three systems and an opening up of the horizons to the planet. The clergy, (he said), must begin talking about humanity instead of their own little sect and, instead of saying, 'We have it,' say, 'It is through us, through our religion, that we realize that all people have it.'” Thus, when Hollywood tries to promote spiritual values,” they are often in the Joseph Campbell pantheistic vein. Disney studios, a hotbed of Campbellism, followed his lead in Pocahontas and The Lion King. Christians today must consider not only Star Wars, but spiritual wars.”

The gospel according to Lucas follows an agenda which is very much in opposition to the agenda of Jesus Christ. I admit my own powerful fascination with movies, as Paul may well have been impressed with that fine pantheon of marble statuary on Mars Hill. In his sermon there Paul said: In the past God overlooked your pantheistic pandering, but enough is enough. Now you must repent. A single Man, whom God raised from the dead, having won all rights to the Jury Room, will come to bring true justice. Hearing this some scathed and sneered.

A press release from a Baptist publication of an interview with Baylor University religion professor Dr. John Wood (who in spite of his criticism has some appreciation for selected Star Wars themes) says: “Ever since George Lucas began telling his story from “long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away” 22 years ago, theologians have explored parallels between the vibrant “Star Wars” mythology and the Bible's account of the battle between God and Satan. That discussion has been renewed with the May 19 release of “The Phantom Menace,” the latest in the Star Wars movie series.

“One reason folks identify with Star Wars is we know there's a struggle in our hearts between good and evil,” explained Wood, who teaches a class that explores Christian themes in movies. “But we like to see it in cosmic terms—a gigantic transcendence far beyond the individual level. When you see it in cosmic terms, the good guys always win.”

The Star Wars saga shares the Bible's assurance that God will triumph over Satan in the end. “For a long time, it looks like evil will triumph, but ultimately good will win out,” Wood noted. The

fundamental spiritual flaw in the Star Wars series lies in the method by which good prevails. "Where the problems start for Star Wars is that evil is always overcome by violence," Wood said. "Non-violent confrontation won't work, because the evil forces are so intransigent. The way you defeat evil is to annihilate it. Violence is the only way." That's not what the Bible teaches, said Wood. "The way God overcomes evil is by redeeming it." The New Testament teaches that a loving God overcame evil by sacrificing his only Son, Jesus, to save the souls of "whosoever" believes. The sense that salvation is available to everyone is another point of contrast between the gospel and Star Wars, Wood said. "In Star Wars, the Force (a supra-human power) is only for a few elite, the Jedi Knights," he said. "Some people try to make parallels between the Force and the Holy Spirit or the power of God. In Star Wars, only the Jedi warriors have that Force. But the Christian faith says God's Spirit is available to everyone. There's elitism in Star Wars."

In a private e-mail a Reformed Christian high school teacher, somewhere in Canada, wrote me, "...Yes, my students often spend Mondays comparing movies rather than sermons..."

"Often ...comparing movies rather than sermons". Rather ... than. Movie attendance and video rental is pandemic among our young and old(er), so it seems. Reminiscent of the days of Jude, we are trying to keep up church attendance with attendance at (fill in the blank). It's deflating to our ministers but come Monday morning it's the Friday night's movie script and not the Sunday's Scriptures that we're probably buzzing about. (If the pulpit doesn't move us, the moving pictures will.) And it's my impression that we are trying to put a sad, pathetic 'spiritual spin' on this by suggesting that these movie scripts are actually useful in leading us to the Scriptures.

The intellectual dilemma for the spinners is: If Dr. Wood, above, is correct and Star Wars (and Private R and Lion K and Shakespeare in Lust and so on) teach a theology and doctrine inimical to the Bible, then how do you present such antithetical- to- Christ- teaching as Pedagogically Christian (PC). The spinners are going to have to do a much better job explaining that. That's where much has changed in some Reformed churches. We always were and always will be attracted to movies and other flavour-of-the-week culture cookies. But now these cookies, which used to give parents heartburn and made kids, feel guilty) are of a tasty PC brand which, as Canadian grocery shoppers know, has an advertising slogan which goes: "Sooo good, it's ALMOST sinful!" But not quite...?

In closing this discussion from my side, and after studying Star Wars and The Phantom Menace, I can only say: When the WORD leaves, WEIRD<sup>1</sup> enters.

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In Clarion Vol. 43, No. 4 February 25, 1994 Rev. G. VanPopta wrote, in an article called "Our Children and Entertainment."

“The Force” was made famous by the movie Star Wars. “May the Force be with you” was pronounced as a benediction. “The Force” is an impersonal, all-pervading divine power. George Lucas, the producer, has embraced eastern mysticism and pantheism. Movies such as Star Wars promote these religious philosophies. It advances the idea that God is all and all is God. Eastern mysticism runs through such movies as Star Wars, Return of the Jedi, ET, Close Encounters, etc.

By letting the children watch these movies and cartoons, and play with toys which have everything to do with magic, the supernatural, the Force, etc., we run the risk of the children getting so used to the ideas of pantheism that they end up susceptible to the New Age philosophies when they are older.

Prof. Prof. J. Geertsema writes in Clarion (1978) Vol.37, No 19, “Is Clarion going to review movies?”

“The purely secular (in antithesis with godly, God-fearing), worldly character of the theatre has not changed. Neither has the mostly immoral, strongly lawless, character of the movies. A simple look at the advertisements with which the movie sellers try to draw their consuming customers and the reading of reviews make this clear.

Therefore, we have no valid ground for changing our judgement and attitude. These should remain the same: a Christian must not participate in this secular, worldly, form of entertainment that thrives on what is lawless and lacks any true fear of God. A member of the church of Christ who does make use of this product of our modern secular culture brings a form of this lawless world, not only into his own life, but, being a member of the body of Christ, also into the church. Therewith he secularizes not only his own life, but also the body of Christ. It is obvious that such action is in conflict with the constant exhortation of the apostles that we are called to keep the Bride of Christ, that is, ourselves and our families, holy and pure for the heavenly Bridegroom and Lord.

<sup>1</sup>For the underlying meaning of ‘weird’ read this dictionary quotation. “WEIRD” : of strange or extraordinary character : odd, fantastic. Syn - weird, eerie, uncanny means: mysteriously strange or fantastic. weird may imply an unearthly or supernatural strangeness or it may stress queerness or oddness < weird creatures from another world>. eerie suggests an uneasy or fearful consciousness that mysterious and malign powers are at work