

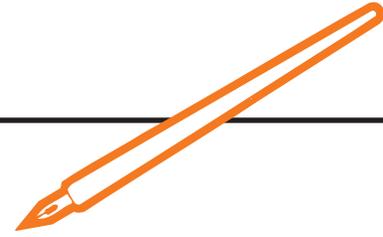


# Clarion

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*Church leaders as shepherds*



## Angels at Church

When we gather together as believers on the First Day, we often say things like, “We are meeting with God.” Indeed, worship is commonly defined as a meeting with God. In worship, God and His people meet in the bond of the covenant. Between God and His people, there is a flow of mutual love. God speaks to His people. He addresses them, challenges them, comforts them, warns them and blesses them. His people respond by listening and with adoration and thanksgiving. They confess the worth and glory of their Heavenly Lord – Creator and Redeemer.

Worship, then, brings us into the presence of God. When we say this, however, some questions arise. Is God not everywhere present? Is our God not the Creator of heaven and earth? Is His glorious presence therefore not equally accessible in my living room as in the church building? And can I not enjoy the presence of my God in the forest or on the mountain top just as well if not better than in a hot and stuffy church auditorium?

Of course, our omnipresent God is accessible from any place in creation. He is our everywhere present Lord! That is part of His glory as our God. Yet, we don’t go wrong if we say that God is indeed present in a special way in the gathering together of His people.

Perhaps we can say that while God is always present in our world and in our lives, **His presence is intensified** in worship. The glory of worship is that we then experience God’s nearness in a magnified, concentrated form. To show the nature of worship, one writer uses the analogy of a servant working in the palace of a king.<sup>1</sup> Let us suppose that this servant is a floor-scrubber in this palace. He lives in the king’s palace. He is loyal to the king. He works for the king each and every day. We could say that the whole palace is saturated with the presence of the king. Yet, there are those moments of special contact with the king. Then the servant draws near. He draws near for a face-to-face meeting with the king. He is in the king’s presence and glory.

Similarly, we can say about believers that they always live in their Father’s world. God is everywhere present. His presence stamps our whole existence. All of life is service to God. Yet, there are those moments! Yes, there are those special moments laden with the glory of God. God says, “Seek ye my face,” and we say, “Thy face, LORD, do I seek” (Ps. 27:8). Worship is face-to-face contact with the living God.

In Old Testament times, the people were called to seek the face of God in the places where “He made His Name to dwell.” These were the places in which His glory was found. In those holy places of worship – tabernacle and temple – God showed Himself in His redemptive love. To enjoy the

presence of God in this special way, a person would have to go to the holy place. In the holy place, God localized Himself for communion with His people. Therefore, the biblical poets express their desire for God in terms of a longing to be in God’s holy place, His house where he dwelt among His people (see, e.g. Ps. 84).

In the New Testament era, we have no holy places anymore. There is no sacred real estate where Christians can find God in a special way. No longer does the Lord of the covenant tie His holy presence to Jerusalem or to a physical temple or to a single people. There is no physical “house of God” anymore, despite the fact that many people pray for a blessing when “they go up to God’s house.” In fact, for roughly the first 350 years of the New Testament church, the believers had no special church buildings in which to worship God.

However, the lack of a special holy place or holy house does not mean that God no longer dwells among His people in a special way when they worship Him. On the contrary, God now dwells among His people as in a temple. His glory is not revealed in Jerusalem, but among His people. The congregation is the temple. When the congregation gathers on the Lord’s Day, then the temple goes up, stone by living stone (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5). There, in the gathering of the believers, God is localized. There Jesus Christ is present in His Word, His sacrament, His Spirit and power and authority (cf. Matt. 18:20).

Thus, worship is truly a special moment in the life of a church. It is true, of course, that we live each day before the face of a loving Father in heaven. Each day and moment, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Always, at every second, Jesus is our High Priest who indeed intercedes for us and who sustains us as our sympathetic Saviour (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). Yet, the meeting of the congregation with God is a supernatural event in which we enjoy God in a unique manner. To needlessly stay away from worship is to despise the special presence of God. It is to disdain His glory and to make light of His grace.

The supernatural character of the worship event is also seen in the fact that angels are present in worship. Yes, when we worship God, angels are present! The presence of angels is the norm for Biblical worship. There were angels at Sinai (Deut. 33:2) and a multitude of angels filled the holy place of the temple (Ps. 68:17). Today, angels in their heavenly hosts are present when we enter the presence of God in public worship. Actually, it is not the case that the angels join us in worship. Rather, it is the case that we join them! The angels worship God around His localized presence on His throne. In worship, we draw near to that same throne.



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We enter the sanctuary of heaven “by the new and living way which He [Jesus] opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh” (Heb. 10:20). So we come to *Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven* (Heb. 12:22-23).

Worship, then, is the assembly of God’s people together with God’s holy angels around His throne. As another writer states: “There is more happening in the worship service than meets the eye. Worship is a supernatural event. As you assemble to lift up praise to God, you are joined by the invisible angelic hosts. Worship is a truly supernatural event. It is a heavenly event.”<sup>2</sup>

This Scriptural understanding of worship ought to heighten our appreciation for the privilege and joy of worship. Who would want to miss out on the glorious presence of God? What sane Christian would stay away when there is opportunity to “sit under the same roof with the angels?”<sup>3</sup> Should believers not be filled with longing to gather together with their God and with the “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14)? If that longing is missing, it is time to examine oneself to see if he really is in the faith.

Sometimes it is said today that “all of life is worship.” People say this, for example, to oppose unbiblical dualism which separates the service of God from daily life in all spheres. We know what people mean when they say that life is worship and the thought is a good, Biblical thought. They mean to say that in all of life we are busy for the Lord and His glory. Yet, would it not be better to say that “all of life is service,” or, “all of life is religion,” while in that total life of service and religion there are also times of explicit “worship?” It would seem that a distinction along these lines would better represent the Biblical view of life and worship.

Finally, the supernatural character of the worship event should also put a stamp on our dress and demeanour. Both should demonstrate that we are in the presence of a holy God. Let us “thus offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29).

<sup>1</sup>John Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1996), pages 32-34.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Engle, *Discovering the Fullness of Worship* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publications, 1978), pg. 57.

<sup>3</sup>G. VanDooren, *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1980), pg. 13.

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By J. Van Popta

## The death of Christ: timely, unique, atoning

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

(Romans 5:6-8)

### A timely death

Paul writes that Christ died at the right time. But what can it possibly mean that Christ died at the right time? As it says in Galatians 4:4, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son. . . ." God is not slow in His dealings as some count slowness. In his Pentecost sermon, Peter preached that Jesus ". . . was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge."

The birth of Christ in Bethlehem was not a simple twist of fate or chance occurrence. It was not accidental how Jesus died on Calvary's Cross that Passover weekend. That first Lord's day when Jesus rose from the dead was not some quirk of history which caught our almighty and gracious God by surprise. No, Christ died at the right time.

In the Old Testament we can see how the history of salvation led up to a climax. It was at the right moment in this history that Jesus Christ went about

Galilee and Judea proclaiming the gospel. His entry into Jerusalem on that Sunday morning, when they hailed him as King, the Son of David, was fore-ordained by God.

And it was necessary that He should die less than a week later. He died then, for this was the time appointed by God. His Father was in control of things.

But there is something else about the *timeliness* of Christ's death. He died while we were still powerless. We are powerless – so powerless that we cannot lift ourselves up to attain the glory of which we fall short. Our relationship with God was broken because of sin. We had separated ourselves from Him. Because of our sin we were unable to please Him. Because of our sin we were unable to reconcile ourselves to Him.

We had trapped ourselves in our ungodliness. Paul says, however, that Christ died for the ungodly. In this way God shows His love for us.

There is something very striking in verse 8. Note how it does not say "God has demonstrated His own love for us." This is not simply something of the past. He *demonstrates* His own love – now! In the present! Today!

In this we have hope. In this we have confidence. We know our hope will not disappoint us. Our heavenly Father will never have to say to us, "I'm sorry my children, but things did not quite work out like I had planned." No, we have a sure knowledge and a firm confidence that we will share the glory of God. For even *now* He shows His love to us. For Christ has died for sinners. Sinners like you and me. Jesus Christ's death for us while we were powerless and ungodly confirms that God loves us. He seals His love – seals it with the blood of His Son.

### A unique death

The death of Christ was one of a kind. Verse 7 reads: *Very rarely will*

## What's inside?

Thursday, May 8, is Ascension Day. Forty days after He arose from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven. Christ, our flesh in heaven, is a sure pledge that we too will rise from the dead and be taken up to where He is. There he works as Advocate on our behalf. This is our hope, and we glory in it. The Medieval Church, by exalting Mary, blotted out the church's hope and glory. The Roman Church continues to do so. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), the Roman Church confesses:

*The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body (§ 974).*

*We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ (§ 975).*

As Rev. P. Aasman writes, the doctrine that Mary ascended into heaven and serves as our advocate has eclipsed the ascended Lord.

The Rev. P. Feenstra concludes his two-part article on the leadership the officebearers of the congregation are called to give. He ends with a challenge. May it prove stimulating for the church councils.

Dr. J. Faber questions the propriety of placing a Canadian flag in the church building.

You will also find an editorial, a meditation, a ray of sunshine, a book review and a CRWRF report for your edification. May you be edified.

GvP

anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

What is Paul saying? Who is this righteous man? Who is the good man? What do they have to do with our hope? Here Paul is showing us the unique character of Christ's death.

For you see, there are few people who will stand in the breach for others. Paul is proposing, for the sake of discussion, that there is a righteous man. Paul refers here not to someone who is righteous before God. He means, instead, a person righteous in the eyes of man and of the law. He uses the word *righteous* in its ordinary sense. He speaks of a righteous man as a citizen of the community. This is a man who obeys the laws of the land. He does what is right and goes about his business with integrity and honour. He does what society asks from him and offends no one. For such a person, even though he is honourable and commendable, few men will offer to die.

Paul suggests, however, that for a good man perhaps someone even dares to die. The good man is different from a righteous man. In the eyes of men there are many righteous people. You meet these people in all walks of life. They need not be believers. This type of man does what he ought and gives to every one his due. The good man is more, however, because he does more than society requires of him. This good man is one who does not just give everyone his due. Rather he actively promotes the well-being of his neighbours.

A *righteous* man is innocent of wrong-doing, but the *good* man is worthy of praise for his piety. The good man – his actions are excellent, honourable, even praise-worthy. For such a man some one might even be willing to die. Such a person could become the object of a love so strong that a friend might even lay down his own life to save him.

However, we were none of these things. We were not *good*. We alienated ourselves from God. We were strangers to doing good. We could not keep the law. We fell short of the glory of God. We, by nature, hate God and our neighbour. We have plunged ourselves into the deepest misery of sin and we are incapable of doing any good. We are not the good man Paul speaks of. We are not even remotely righteous. Yet, while we were powerless, while we were ungodly, Christ died for us. In this we see the amazing grace of God. Christ's death is for you as a sinner. God did not come seeking a righteous person. He did not come seeking the good person. He came seeking the lost.

#### An atoning death

The foundation of our hope is in God's own love, for God shows His own love for us in Christ's atoning death. Our hope will not disappoint us for Christ died in our place.

We have not founded our hope in our own goodness. We have not founded it on our ability to be righteous in ourselves. Nor have we founded it on our ability to choose for God. Our hope is not based on our love for God. We base our hope on God's own love for us. Je-

sus Christ died in our place because God demands that His justice be satisfied. And in His death full payment was made. We are unable to make full payment for we daily increase our debt. Further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's wrath against sin. Jesus Christ's death is the atonement for our sins. He came to pay a ransom for many. He came to lay His life down for His friends. He died for those who were alienated from the Father. In Him we will once again have a share of the glory of God. This is our hope which will not disappoint.

Our hope is sure. It cannot fail. It will not bring shame. Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice which restores us to the Father. No one can take that from us for none can snatch us out of His hand. Christ ransomed us from the bondage of sin and set us free in the newness of life.

We rejoice in our hope. We can even rejoice in the sufferings of the present age, for we know that suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character. And character produces hope. This hope does not disappoint. We must base our hope on God's own love for us.

Paul writes to Timothy and also to us, "*The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" This is the Gospel message! He came to save sinners. And save us He did – by His *timely*, His *unique*, and His *atoning* death.

Rev. John Van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Ottawa, ON. 

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## The Assumption of Mary: the Eclipse of the Ascended Lord

By P. Aasman

### What is the Assumption?

To Protestant believers, Roman Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary is astonishing. The titles ascribed to her ("Queen of Heaven," "Mistress of the World," "Mediator of the Mediator," "Advocate for Sinners" and "Mary the Hope of All Mankind") can only be re-

garded as sacrilegious. Devotion to Mary has been growing for nearly two millennia, but has reached a crescendo in the past 150 years. In 1854 Pope Pious IX decreed that Mary had been conceived free from all stain of original sin, otherwise known as "The Immaculate Conception." Over the next hundred years, Marian piety became yet

more excessive. In 1950, Pope Pious XII announced as infallible dogma "The Assumption of Mary." The papal decree reads:

[I]t was her crowning glory to be preserved from the corruption of the tomb and, like her Son, to conquer death and to be raised body and soul to the glory of heaven to shine

refulgent as Queen at the right hand of her Son. . . .

Rome has applied the prophecy about Jesus Christ in Psalm 16 (David said to God in verse 10, "nor will you let your Holy One see decay") to Mary. Like Christ, she did not see corruption in the grave. When she died, she was transported body and soul into heaven where she lives immortal to reign at her Son's right hand.

### Where does the Assumption come from?

Roman Catholic scholars admit that they have no direct source either in the Bible or even in the Apostolic Fathers, nor are there any serious historical sources describing Mary's assumption. This doctrine is purely the product of tradition. Of course, not all tradition becomes infallible dogma. The Assumption of Mary has been promoted among other traditions because it is eminently 'fitting'. This is a special process in Roman Catholic theology. It goes by the Latin words *potuit, deuit, fecit*; that is *God could, it was fitting that He should, God did it*. For a thousand years, many Roman theologians have been saying *potuit* (God could preserve Mary from the corruption of the tomb), and *deuit*, (it was fitting for Him to do so), but only recently has Rome announced officially *fecit*, (God did it).

### The Gospel of the Ascension of Jesus Christ

There are many doctrinal persuasions of the Church of Rome that Protestants have found offensive, but the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary ranks among the worst. It is a point by point rejection of the glory of Christ's ascension. What we believe about Christ's ascension is summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, in Question and Answer 94: First: He is our advocate in heaven before His Father. Second: we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge. Third: He sends us His Holy Spirit as a counter-pledge. It is shocking to discover that precisely these three glories of the ascended Christ have been eclipsed by the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary.

### Mary as Advocate

Medieval theology pictured the Saviour as distant from His church. The righteous Christ was viewed as wrathful toward all people stained by the corruption of original sin. The idea grew that we need someone with maternal

influence over God to reawaken love for His adopted children. Rome was in fact denying the basic good news that God is "for us."

The Medieval theologian Gabriel Biel (died 1495) was not an original thinker, but, says Heiko Oberman, he gave the clearest expression to the Medieval faith. Biel makes the extraordinary statement that "Christ is not fully man but God-man." He taught that Christ did not fully belong to the human race because of his union to the God-head. Although Christ as Mediator represents us before the Father, we still need a mediator to represent us to the Son. This is the function which Mary fills. In contrast to "the God-man" Jesus Christ, Mary is fully human. We have no reservations about Mary's humanity. As one of us, she can be a fitting advocate for us in heaven. By her assumption into heaven, Mary bridged the gap between Christ and the church. Upon her arrival into heaven, Christ ceded the realm of mercy to Mary while retaining the realms of truth and justice for Himself. Mary thus became our mediator to the Mediator. She now exerts maternal influence on God as she implores her Son to show mercy to us. Oberman writes:

Mary holds a place of priority compared with her Son. There is *only fiducia* [confidence] *in Christ in so far as one has fiducia in Mary and her merciful influence on her Son* [italics in the original].

This Medieval piety has only grown more bizarre over the past 500 years with the consequence that people in the Church of Rome will sooner flee to Mary as their advocate in heaven than to Jesus Christ, for she is the one who personally loves them, not Christ. Rome not only permits this betrayal of the glory of Christ as our Advocate; she recommends and teaches it! Thus Mary has come to bear the titles, "Mediator of the Mediator" and "Advocate for Sinners."

*The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary is a point by point rejection of the glory of Christ's ascension*

### Mary as Pledge

Medieval theology is also the source of the idea that Mary is the "pledge of our glorious resurrection." If, as noted above, Christ is too distant for us to be our Advocate, then He is also too dis-

tant from us to be a meaningful pledge for us. We need someone closer to us. Hendrikus Berkhof states this directly. He writes concerning Rome, "Jesus' glorification functioned insufficiently as the guarantee of ours, since He was too little regarded as a man with and for men." Naturally, then, it is Mary who can function as a more sure pledge for us. Rome reasons in this way: While Christ has gained the victory over evil and death by rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, it is only Mary that brings this victory home to us. Oberman describes Biel as teaching thus: "Christ proves that a bodily resurrection is possible; Mary proves that this *possibility can become reality 'pro nobis'* [for us]" [italics in the original].

When Pope Pious XII announced the Assumption of Mary in 1950, he explained that this dogma was intended to rekindle hope in the resurrection of the body. The modern Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner writes along these same lines when he says, "The Church grants Mary as its own example, its own future in the resurrection of the flesh."

For the second time, the glory of Christ ascension has been eclipsed and has been thrust into the background so that it is relevant to us only in a distant way. We do not raise our eyes any longer to Christ nor do we take comfort from His flesh in heaven; rather, we look up to Mary and take comfort in her flesh. It is Mary, not Christ, who gives mankind hope for the future. Hence Rome honours her with the title, "Mary, Hope of All Mankind."

### Mary as Counter-Pledge?

It must be acknowledged at the outset that there is less correspondence between Roman and Reformed doctrine on this third point than on the previous two. Yet, it is surprising to discover how the two correspond. G.C. Berkouwer observes that Christ's salvation is so perfect and complete that there is room for only one co-worker: the Holy Spirit. But Rome has even made Mary to eclipse the glory of the Holy Spirit by assigning to Mary co-redemptive roles. It is not the Holy Spirit who is Christ's co-worker, but Mary.

Once again, the notion that Mary can actually displace the Holy Spirit is rooted in Medieval theology. Biel taught that just as Christ is the Mediator from eternity, so Mary must be the Mediator of the Mediator from eternity. In fact, Biel sees Mary as parallel to the

eternal Wisdom of God (referred to in Proverbs 8) who functioned as the Father's assistant when He created the world. But this is not the only point where Mary cooperates in tasks usually assigned to the Holy Spirit. Biel also coordinates Mary with Eve, for while creation disintegrated through Eve's selfish choice, it was made stable again through Mary's selfless sacrifice. In both the doctrine of creation and re-creation, the Holy Spirit has been pushed aside to make room for Mary.

### Conclusion

The Ascension of Jesus Christ is a doctrine which has always been precious to the church. Believers experience the power of the ascended Lord when His Holy Spirit touches them

through the preaching of the Gospel. When people wander from that Gospel and listen instead to the traditions of men, then they will be led by other spirits, evil spirits. Rome's action by which she veiled the glory of Christ's ascension with the doctrine of the assumption of Mary, demonstrates this. Therefore, a righteous celebration of Christ's ascension will be marked by the renewal of the church's pledge to adhere to what God has revealed in the Bible. It is only when we are led by the Bible that the power of the ascended Lord will touch His people to comfort them with the assurance that He is their advocate in heaven and that in Him we have our flesh in heaven; then too, the counter-pledge, the Holy Spirit, will renew the hearts and minds of God's peo-

ple so that they might seek the things that are above where Christ is.

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## Being in the lead: The task of officebearers as leaders<sup>2</sup>

By P.G. Feenstra

*In the previous issue, Rev. Peter Feenstra wrote about the characteristics of a wise and godly leader. Such a leader has prayer as a priority, works with the Scriptural norms, does not compromise on important things, leads with authority, is trustworthy, and guides with enthusiasm. In this second and last installment, the author examines some of the aspects of Biblical leadership.*

– Editor

### Leaders as shepherds

Scripture uses the metaphor of a shepherd to describe the work of those who lead. The overseers are to feed and tend the flock taking care that no one goes astray. The deacons are to serve the sheep showing to them the mercy of Christ, making sure no one suffers under the pressure of sickness, poverty or loneliness. Therefore I think it is wrong to simply call the minister the pastor of the church. The elders, deacons and ministers are all pastors under the chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. Paul encourages the Ephesian elders: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the

flock" (Acts 20:28). Peter writes: "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed, tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Where there is no leadership the sheep are scattered, become confused and each turns to his own way. Those who lead the flock are to guard the sheep and protect them against the attacks of false shepherds and wolves. Being in a position of leadership means protecting the flock against wolves in and outside the congregation. Paul says to the Ephesian elders: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29,30). 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 to confute

those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). That requires a solid grounding in Scripture but it also entails being familiar with the Three Forms of Unity as a tool to refute the false Christianity that is colourfully packaged on radio, television and in books and magazines. You have to know your "stuff" to refute false doctrine. Too often people who are Arminian are hailed as Reformed and Biblical scholars. It's especially alarming, to say the least, if the leaders in the church no longer know the difference.

Having the charge to guard the flock the elders must keep their minds on the church being watchful, observant and attentive at all times to the spiritual well-being of the people. They must watch out for people who are wandering and for new believers who are struggling to survive. Godly leaders are up-to-date and know the new trends and doctrines that are influencing the people.

Note well, the elders and deacons are to take care of *all* the flock. They will have to know what the young people are thinking; what is being studied in the various societies and study clubs; what kind of education the children are

receiving. Nothing is left to run on its own steam. The consistory has to give leadership to the young people, the Home Mission Committee and other organizations of the church. Sometimes we can criticize the direction taken by certain individuals but have we given good, sound, Biblical, reformed leadership?

All overseers must have the ability to teach the doctrine of Scripture. If you feel you don't have that capacity you must train yourself so that you can do it. Through the pro-active approach of teaching, "negatives" and problems are avoided. Without it the ministry of the local church is more like Emerge in a hospital – you're always bandaging and fixing problems. Many of the pastoral needs of the congregation are met when the elders teach and educate with the Word. The elders task of teaching isn't limited to reading a sermon if the minister is away. What about teaching a Bible class for the congregation? How about leading the societies? In this way you get to know what the people are thinking.

Protecting the flock also involves disciplining sin, exhorting those with improper attitudes and behaviour, seeking the lost. A healthy growing flock of sheep doesn't just appear; it is the result of the shepherd's skillful management of sheep and resources. He knows sheep and is skilful in caring for them. A good shepherd elder or deacon knows people. He knows how sensitive they are. He knows their needs, troubles, weaknesses and sins. He knows how they can hurt one another, how stubborn they can be.

### Watching over souls

Spiritual leaders are given an awesome responsibility. They are to watch over the souls of those in their charge. Thus Hebrews 13:17 says: *"Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account."* Officebearers in the church keep watch for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. Like the ancient city watchmen or shepherds of a flock, you must always be keenly alert, conscientious, and diligent. Watchfulness demands tireless effort, self-discipline, and self-less concern for the safety of others.

Officebearers are held accountable for what happens to the sheep. If we do not warn them of wrong and guide them in the truth we are held responsible. A watchful leader does not take control of everything but directs the membership to fulfil their role. He does not take the

responsibilities out of the hands of others but equips them for service. For example, the deacons aren't functioning as leaders by visiting all the poor, lonely and sick themselves but by encouraging the congregation to practice the communion they enjoy and celebrate at the table of the Lord. A minister does not have to take over the duty of parents and give young couples weeks of pre-marital training (as good as this training may be) but he should teach the parents to fulfil their God-given duty.

### Leaders are servants

Those who are in a position of leadership have no reason to feel proud or haughty. Instead, they are to be humble servants of the Master, Jesus Christ. Matthew 20:25,26 says: *"Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so with you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'" Jesus led His people by serving, always showing that He had their best interests at heart.*

In the same vein, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:1: *"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."* In a certain sense every officebearer must learn to be a deacon – to be a person who serves not his own interests but Christ's. Every church leader must be committed to work together in humble submission to Christ. He does not lead to control people, to promote his own views, or to gain a position for himself; rather, he serves Christ and His people.

In the congregation officebearers serve the cause of Christ showing compassion, washing one another's feet, loving as Christ loved us.

### Sharing the duties of leadership

Leadership in the church is not a one-man show but a shared responsibility. The burden shouldn't be on one or two or a handful who take their task seriously. It is never good for too few men to have too much power. Officebearers may not let a minister take control or direct things the way he wants things to go. They shouldn't think: "As long as the minister does it, then at least I don't have to do it."

Holy Scripture documents the benefits of shared leadership. Moses appointed able men to assist him in his task. The book of Proverbs says in chapter 11:14: *"Where there is no guidance, a people falls; but in the abundance of counselors there is safety."* The supervision of the apostolic churches was a team effort and not the sole responsibility of one person. The Lord Jesus Christ appointed and trained twelve men. The advantages of shared leadership is also illustrated in Acts 6 with the appointment of seven deacons who relieve the apostles of some of their responsibilities. Thus the deacons together with the elders form a collective leadership council.

Office-bearers are to work as a team of men who have the same goals and the same aim. They are not representing the views of a certain segment of the congregation. Council meetings are meant to strengthen each other to go out into the congregation to fulfil the respective duties.

Deacons, elders and minister must present themselves to the congregation as working as a team. Although it is a standing practice, I don't think it is really wise that a minister or an elder, in an official capacity, visits or counsels a member on his own. James 5:14 says: *"Is any among you sick (which means: spiritually weak and exhausted)? Let him call the elders of the church and let them pray over him. . . ."* Notice the plural, "Let him call the elders."

Shared leadership is good for at least three reasons:

1. It takes the burden off the minister. Too often the minister gets over-burdened with work that doesn't belong to him. The danger is real that the minister wants to leave because the work is too much or he becomes ineffective because he is suffering from severe fatigue. A church does not belong to the minister. Officebearers must work together, bearing the work load together, taking the heat of the criticism together.
2. It balances each other's weaknesses. We all have our strong points and our weak points. Ministers, elders and deacons make mistakes. There are things which we can learn from each other. Team leadership allows for a pool of talents and strengths to be developed.
3. It provides accountability. Most people like to take control. That possibility shrinks under shared leadership. Office-bearers can be

lazy, forgetful, fearful, or too busy to fulfil their responsibilities. It is tempting to avoid members who are hostile and unpleasant. Leaders need colleagues to whom they are answerable.

Church councils need to reflect the value of shared leadership when they plan to call a minister. Sometimes the calling church will ask questions about the minister such as: "Does he visit in the congregation? How is he with the young people? Is his wife also active in the congregation?" But are these questions really pertinent? A minister may be busy in the congregation visiting a lot of people but not getting to any spiritual issues. Is he doing his task just because he visits? Perhaps it would be more constructive if a calling church would find out from the church council and from the minister himself what he is doing in the congregation; what does he himself see as the focus of his work and how does he carry it out. Moreover, it would be beneficial to review what shared leadership entails.

### The qualifications for leadership

Contrary to the opinion of some, the offices are not open to all men in the congregation. Those ordained to office must be good leaders meeting the specific qualifications outlined in Scripture. In 1 Timothy 3 the ability to lead is set forth prominently as a qualification for the selection of an officebearer. Without this ability an overseer cannot properly carry out his work. We must insist on maintaining the qualifications for office as listed in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5 before and while serving. The Lord wants us to take these qualifications seriously. He has entrusted office-bearers with the task of managing and ruling His house. They are assigned the care of His children. A church council shouldn't be quick to nominate those who have just entered the congregation. Let them be tested for a period of time. The congregation should have the opportunity to get to know those who are nominated. The qualifications for office may not be passed off lightly. Are those nominated to the offices blameless? Are they able to teach and defend the faith as men committed to the apostolic doctrines? Do they hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience? The congregation will benefit if they are trained to look for such qualifications in their office-bearers. This can be done through the preaching or at

congregational meetings where this topic is addressed.

### Being an example

Office-bearers are to be examples of Christian living to the rest of the flock. Paul writes to Timothy: ". . . set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Peter says: "Tend the flock . . . not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2,3). That's why elders, deacons and ministers have to weigh every decision, also in their personal lives. Even if you are convinced that it will not harm you, what will it do for those souls placed in your care? Leaders do not sit in their ivory towers and dictate what the congregation does without applying it to themselves. Office-bearers must give leadership by example. They must be with the sheep, going through the valleys and travelling the path walked by the sheep. For example, how can a minister preach against materialism if he has an extravagant lifestyle?

### Leadership and the congregation

The congregation must view the offices Biblically and not as "those guys in church council." The government of the church is not done through a democratic process. Hebrews 13:17 summons us to obey and submit to our spiritual leaders. Submitting to leadership is questioned within society and that will undoubtedly influence the church so that members feel they have a right to protest every action and decision made by the church Council.

Members of the church are to yield to the authority of the officebearers even when they have a difference of opinion. A spirit of submission to the authority of your leadership is essential for growth, peace and joy in the congregation. In 1 Thess. 5:12,13 and 1 Timothy 5:17 the congregation is taught to esteem highly, honour and love its leaders. Both leaders and those who are led should make an effort to work and pray together to achieve oneness of mind and purpose.

### Conclusion

The duty of leading the flock of Christ is an enormous responsibility. Are the men appointed and ordained up to such a task? Absolutely not! They all fall short. The hands which bless God's people on the Lord's Day are defiled with sin. The voices that admonish,

comfort and encourage are not always instruments of righteousness. Every office-bearer can only do his work when he looks to the Lord for help. He must pray each day for strength and guidance. Ask the congregation to remember you in their prayers.

### A challenge to office-bearers for further development:

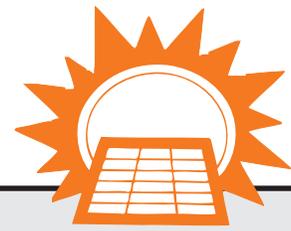
1. In our consistory we have been taking fifteen minutes to review a particular aspect which applies to our respective offices. A paper is handed out beforehand so that we can come prepared. Such an exercise gives food for thought and discussion and we would highly recommend it as a positive way of "in house" and "on the job training." Develop some forum whereby you are not only doing the "business" of the church but also discussing the aspects of your duties.
2. Take an evening, or part of a meeting to brainstorm where you believe there are weaknesses in the leadership of the church and come with suggestions as to how this can be improved. Think of ways in which you can share the duties more effectively.
3. We all have busy schedules. What can we do to be more effective leaders in the church of Christ?
4. At some point in your meetings discuss how familiar you are with the Three Forms of Unity. Are there ways you can improve your knowledge of these confessions?
5. Spend an evening with the congregation to discuss this topic with them.

May the words the Lord spoke to Joshua as he took on the task of being leader of the Lord's people incite us to be wise and godly leaders: "Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

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By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

... but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.  
Isaiah 40:31

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Most of us have a father, or we had a father until he passed away. Some of us are allowed to have our father until we are quite old, and some have lost their father when they were so young that they cannot even remember him. But almost everyone can show a picture and say, "That is my father."

The word "father" gives us a good feeling. If things are right, then there is a strong feeling of love between a father and a child. A father will protect his child, and he will do anything he can to help him/her. When a little child is scared of something it will feel a lot better when father is with him/her. It will feel safe when it can hold on to father's hand.

It is sad that things on earth do not always work out right. Because of sin, fathers and children make many mistakes. The result is, that a father-child relationship is not always as it ought to be. That causes hurt, or anger and frustration to the people involved, and it is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord.

In the Bible we can read in many different passages about father and son. It shows how important it was for a father to have a son. It also shows that the children continue in the ways of their father, and how important it is that the fathers show their children how they have to live and serve the Lord. Most of all the Bible tells us about the perfect relationship that has always been and will always be between the Father and the Son. For God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ from eternity into eternity. What we read about God's love for His Son, and the Son's obedience to His Father, that is the best example for us all of how we have to live together as loving parents and children. Even though we cannot always make that happen because of our sins, we know how the Lord wants it to be, and we can ask Him continually for His help to correct our mistakes and to ask for forgiveness.

But the Bible tells us more yet. For we read in it that the Lord does not only have the Lord Jesus Christ as His only begotten Son, but that He also adopted us as His children. Apart from our earthly father, we have our Father in heaven!

After the fall into sin, we had fallen into the grip of Satan who was going to bring eternal destruction upon us. But God the Father loves us. He sent His beloved Son into the world to free us from the power of Satan. The Son, in perfect obedience, obeyed the Father. He conquered Satan and released his grip on us, so that we now belong to the Father. Through the work of Jesus Christ the Father-child relationship between God and us is restored. We as His people, share that relationship with the Lord, yet He is also a personal Father to each one of us.

Our earthly fathers have to struggle with their own sins and weaknesses while they try to decide what is best for us, but the Father in heaven does not make mistakes. He, the God Almighty, is able to divide His attention over all of us at all times. Nothing we do goes unnoticed to our Fa-

ther. He hears all our cries for help, and He is aware of even our innermost secrets and feelings. He knows without a doubt what is best for us.

So when difficulties happen in our lives, when everything seems to go against us and we hardly know how to go on anymore, the Lord does not do that on purpose just to give us a hard time. We should never think that. Does a loving earthly father ever refuse something to his child just to give him a hard time? Of course not. Yet he sometimes has to say "NO" to something because he knows that it cannot be done for a reason unknown to the child. That is how our Father works in our lives, too. The Lord knows what is best for us, even when it might cause much hurt, or loneliness, or stress, or grief.

Christ Jesus conquered Satan, but the consequences of the fall into sin are still noticeable all around us. Therefore we still experience anxieties. But when we see God as our caring Father these things become easier to bear. For God hears our cry, and He will help and support us. When we try to rely on Him alone, He will help us to see our anxieties in a different light. He will open our eyes to the fact that, out of grace, we belong to Him. Difficulties in our lives may serve to bring us, and maybe even other as well, closer to Him. He will make us more aware of the future that is awaiting us. The Father will make us understand that we are not here to stay, but we are on our way Home. Maybe we have to suffer a little longer yet, but we are on our way to heaven.

The way to heaven has been opened to us by the Son. All we have to do is believe that all God's promises for us are true. As long as we, in God's grace, may hold on to that truth, there will be nothing that can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus.

*A father with his children sympathizes;  
Likewise for us God's pity swiftly rises.  
Let all who fear Him in His mercy trust.  
He knows our frame, that it is weak and humble;  
He keeps in mind that we are prone to stumble.  
The LORD recalls that we are only dust.*

Psalm 103:5

## Birthdays in June:

**17: Joan Koerselman**

Box 1312, Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

**20: Daniel Stroop**

193 Diane Drive, Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

**30: Beverly Breukelman**

2225-19 Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

I wish you a happy Birthday. Joan will be 40!! this year, Beverly 35! and Daniel 16.

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

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# A Flag in the Church?

By J. Faber

It was mentioned in one of the last issues of *Clarion* that the Council of a Canadian Reformed Church had decided as follows:

A Canadian flag (and stand) will be placed in (the lobby of) the church building in recognition of our status as a Canadian church and as sign of allegiance as citizens of this land.

To keep the discussion about this decision as brotherly and businesslike as possible I do not mention the name of the church. Every curious reader can find this out for him – or herself. I write this article simply to make my opinion known and to suggest in a modest manner that this Council should reconsider its decision.

### Three preliminary remarks

In order to prevent misunderstanding, let me first make three qualifications by way of preliminary remarks.

First, let me immediately declare that we may rejoice in the fact that in our land the Canadian flag is displayed more prominently now than it had been in the past. In this respect we could certainly learn something from our neighbours in the United States. On a personal note I may disclose that even before the Hon. Sheila Copps decided to use taxpayer's money in order to distribute Canadian flags, our house displayed the Maple Leaf.

Second, let me state that I think it proper that the Canadian flag and the portrait of the Queen of Canada is displayed not only in government build-

ings but also in our Canadian Reformed schools. A school is an institute to educate the pupils to serve God and the neighbour in public life. Show and tell! We should not only tell the students the history of our and their country, province and region but show and display federal and provincial symbols. The fact that at least the Ontario government does injustice to Christian parents who maintain so-called private schools should not determine our curriculum or the appearance of our school buildings. But does



this mean that we should have a Canadian flag in a *church*?

Third, let me also add that my reservations with respect to this matter do not flow from a false nature-grace dilemma or from hidden Anabaptist feelings. My previous remarks should make this clear.

We heartily subscribe to Article 36 of our Confession. Everyone – no matter of what quality, condition, or rank – ought to be subject to the civil officers,

pay taxes, hold them in honour and respect, and obey them in all things which do not disagree with the Word of God (Mt. 17:27; Mt. 22:21; Tit. 3:1; Rom. 13:7; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:17).

It is a remarkable thing that we even have an article about civil authorities in our church order. Article 28 speaks of civil authorities (in the state) and office bearers (in the church). As far as the last are concerned, they are duty bound to impress diligently and sincerely upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect which are due to the civil authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation

in this matter, and endeavour by due respect and communication to secure and retain the favour of the authorities towards the Church, so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

It is completely clear from the Scriptures that we should give due attention in the congregational prayer to the supplications for federal, provincial and municipal authorities. In our world that becomes a global village the ministers (I include myself) should be more aware of the political situation on the entire earth and feel themselves compelled in certain situations to pray even for the work of the United Nations and their peace-keeping forces. There is the apostolic admonition that speaks of intercessions for kings and all who are in high positions (1 Tim. 2:1-2). And the proclamation of the Word of God concerns the totality of life. Why not during a sermon in March or April a reminder of

the Christian way of filling out our tax form?

## Objections

But does this mean that a flag of Canada or the United States or the United Nations should remind the members of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches of their civil duties? Do we not have the Scriptures?

A church building is the place of worship of God. Everything points there to Him. Reformed people have been very sober in the structure of their church buildings, even when it came to a baptismal font or a permanent Lord's Supper table. Is a stand with a national flag in (the lobby of) a church building in conformity with the soberness of the Reformed liturgy? And what about the character of the church of God?

In a church building comes together the congregation of Him who first made the good confession before Pontious Pilate when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world . . ." (John 18:36) and Who now is the *Ruler* of kings on earth (Rev. 1:5).

In a church building gather christians who confess that their commonwealth – politeuma – is in heaven. The NIV translates very clearly: But our *citizenship* is in heaven (Phil. 3:21). The Jerusalem above is our mother (Gal. 4:28).

Here on earth we are strangers and exiles and we are seeking a homeland. The homeland we seek is not the old country – for that matter, we never had a Dutch flag in a Reformed church building – but we seek a better, that is a heavenly country (Heb. 13:13-16).

Our homeland is the new earth where there will be the great multitude that no one could count, *from* every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9).

Do I have to quote extensively from the first letter of Peter, addressed to the exiles of the Dispersion, the holy nation, God's own people? Let me only mention 1 Peter 1:1; 1:17, 2:11 and remind you of the word "aliens" both in the RSV and the NIV.

Should we have in our one federation a Canadian flag in the church of Chatham and an American in Grand Rapids? In the church of Lynden an American and in the church of Abbotsford a Canadian? Is this a good symbol of our common christian confession of the one, holy, *catholic* and apostolic church?

Let us also not forget the struggle of Christian Reformed brothers and sisters during the first World War, when e.g. the Rev. Herman Hoeksema and the Rev. J.J. Weersing refused to allow the flag in the church. "Soon after, Weersing and the teacher of the local Christian school were forced to leave town, pursued by a band of several hundred patriots. Some of these, dissatisfied with both official and vigilante measures, took the final step of burning both the church and the school."<sup>1)</sup>

What are the present feelings in our Reformed brotherhood, e.g. in the United Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches? Are they still aware of the danger of false nationalism in the catholic church of God? And if this is the case, should we not forgo all sorts of novelties that may hinder the badly needed union of Reformed confessors?

## Two concluding observations

In conclusion I make two other observations.

The name of the Free Reformed Churches is the name also of our sister churches in Australia and South Africa and I like it even better than Canadian Reformed. The beautiful name of Free Reformed reminds us of the struggle of our forefathers and foremothers in the Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands. It was the struggle against hierarchicalism and caesarism. There was not only the domination of the so-called higher ecclesiastical assemblies – hierarchicalism – but also the lordship of the state over the church which we call caesarism.

If we come to think of it, has this struggle against hierarchicalism and caesarism not always been the struggle of the church of God in history? There was the struggle against hierarchicalism – think of the church of Rome in the Middle Ages and even today within Vatican City – and against caesarism since the empire of Constantine the Great?

In my lifetime we experienced caesarism e.g. in the slavish attitude of the Orthodox Church in communist Russia and of the *Deutsche Reichs Kirche* in national-socialist Germany. I vividly remember the picture of bishop Ludwig Muller who in uniform brought the salute: "Heil Hitler!" Should we not be afraid of false nationalism in the church of God, especially in these last days, when the beast out of the earth

tries to make us worship the image of the beast that rises out of the sea of nations (Rev. 13)?

Our brothers Luther and Calvin were deadly afraid of *confusio regnorum*, a confusion of the reign of Christ over the church and his reign over the rulers on earth. They discerned in Roman Catholicism and in Anabaptism such a confusion of the realms under Christ's authority or His twofold manner of reign. May I refer to Calvin's exposition in his *Institutes* 3.19.15 about the two kingdoms, the spiritual and the political? "There are in man, so to speak, two worlds, over which different kings and different laws have authority."

My second observation concerns our Church Order. I mentioned Art. 28 but I should not be silent about Art. 30: The ecclesiastical assemblies "shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner."

If I am not mistaken, this article was formulated precisely against a *confusio regnorum* in the young Reformed churches of the Netherlands. Recently there have been very interesting publications about the Reformation in Antwerp and about the minutes of the consistory of the church of Dutch refugees in London. In my opinion they also make clear what the background is of Art. 30 C.O.: Consistories should stay away from false nationalist actions.<sup>2)</sup>

The question now arises: Was the decision concerning a flag in (the lobby of) a Reformed church building *in* – not *of* – Canada an ecclesiastical matter? My answer is obvious: No.

<sup>1)</sup>J.D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1984) pp. 88ff.

<sup>2)</sup>Joh. Jansen, *Korte verklaring van de kerkenordening* (Kampen: Kok, 2nd ed. 1937) pp. 134f. The recent publications are e.g. Guido Marnet, *Antwerp in the age of Reformation: Underground Protestantism in a commercial metropolis, 1550-1577* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); A.J. Jelsma and O. Boersma, eds., *Acta van het consistorie van de Nederlandse gemeente te London, 1569-1585* (The Hague: Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatie, Kleine serie, deel 76, 1993); O. Boersma, *Vluchtig voorbeeld. De nederlandse, franse en italiaanse vluchtelingenkerken in London, 1568-1585* (Kampen: Kok, 1994). These are excellent additions to A.A. van Schelven, *Kerkerads-protocollen der Nederduitsche vluchtelingenkerk te London 1560-1569* (Amsterdam: J. Muller, 1921).

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# Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



## AFRICAN CHILDREN'S HOMES – AN UPDATE

Where there is poverty, war, calamity, it is the little ones one aches for most – those left to fend for themselves without the “basics” we often take for granted. Through our Children’s Homes we attempt to reach some of these children made vulnerable by the death of parents, by poverty, by strife, and we nurture them, providing for them and also meeting their need to know their Creator and Saviour.

It’s been a while now since we last devoted an entire article to “our” children’s homes in Kenya – so it’s definitely time to bring you up-to-date. Partly our lack of communication was due to a dearth of information received from Kenya. Letters were sent out by the home managers a few times, but never arrived. Kenya is one of the better African countries as far as communication, etc. go, so it was surprising and discouraging for both parties involved. Finally however, we received letters from the children along with apologies for the delay. We also extend our apologies to those who waited so long for some word from the children they sponsor. The mails don’t always work as they should!

In passing on the letters received to individual sponsors, we were happy to note that several answered personal inquiries or asked about a particular person, pet, etc. It’s neat to see a relationship forming between these needy kids overseas and families, groups, or individuals here. *Everyone* benefits when that happens.

Almost all of the 165 children our homes care for are now sponsored with only a few sponsorships still available at the Divya Shanthi home in India. Occasionally this is also the case at one of the Kenyan homes, for example, recently several children graduated from Achecho and seven new children were admitted to the home. These were “offered” to the sponsors who had sup-



*Some of the Achecho children and staff showing the blankets purchased with gift money. (Mrs. Randa, the manager, is 3rd from the right in the back row.)*

ported the “graduates;” if they are no longer in a position to continue sponsorship, others are asked to step into the breach.

The homes manage to get by on forty dollars a month per child, an amount which is covered largely by sponsorship fees (\$30 per month). The remainder is supported from our general fund. The amount is minimal if you consider that it covers food, clothing, shelter, home staff, etc. and education. Though primary school education is free in Kenya, books and school uniforms must still be paid for. Fees for secondary and tertiary education are steep and we cover these for all of the children in our homes. Those students whose grades are high enough to permit advancement are encouraged to do so, staying at hostels run by the African Inland Church while continuing their studies. Again, there is a cost involved to which we contribute. We do so gladly for jobs are scarce in Kenya and an education is vital to procurement of those few positions available. Our responsibility for each child continues until he/she leaves the home, either following high school,

or if further education is pursued, after its completion.

Please make employment a matter of prayer as it is a deteriorating situation in Kenya. With little foreign investment (due in part to corruption in high places and consequent difficulties and expenses in starting and running a business), jobs are scarce. Plots of land which were formerly parcelled out to sons, are shrinking through this process and becoming less able to sustain families. Thousands trudge into Nairobi, the capital, on foot each day seeking work. Many do not find it. In a system where the only social security available is the traditional reliance on one’s relatives, many know extreme poverty. Some turn to crime and consequently the capital is becoming a less hospitable place to live. Since the warfare in neighbouring Somalia, refugees have brought guns into Kenya and safety is thus becoming more of a concern. We need to pray that this government may have wisdom, integrity and the ability to create a climate where investment is encouraged and jobs created.

Though the homes do get by on funds received, it requires careful management by the managers. The diet is basic though not unlike that of people living in the surrounding villages and homes from which the children have come. It relies heavily on maize and beans. Basically the children in Kenya eat maize porridge for breakfast and cooked maize (known as “ugali”) and beans for lunch and supper. Powdered milk is available a few times a week as are local vegetables, fruit in season and a little fish or meat. Now and then chapati (a type of flat bread) is prepared. No treats, no variety, but at least the children receive sufficient nutritious food three times a day to promote healthy development – unlike many of their fellow countrymen.

There is little money available for extras. Therefore it is always welcome when an unexpected gift arrives. Credo Christian High, for example, raised money and sent \$590 a few months ago designated for Acheho Home. Fifteen extra blankets and a new pair of shoes for each child were purchased and they were very thankful with this. The manager of Acheho, Mrs. Florence Randa wrote, “The appreciation we have is above and beyond weight and it cannot be measured either.”

In addition to funding the day-to-day running of the homes, we at CRWRF underwrite maintenance and additional expenses from time to time. Last year, for example, new toilets were put in at Kodich as well as four water tanks and a generator. The home’s occupants especially appreciate having light now, enabling evening study and other activities to run more smoothly.

The water tanks allow more rainwater to be held during the rainy season, but H<sub>2</sub>O is still a concern at both homes in Kenya. It is more acute at Kodich where during the dry season, Pastor Joel Birgen, the manager, must travel many kilometers over extremely rough roads to haul water. The barrels so collected must be used sparingly. Pastor Birgen accepts the situation and works within its confines as best he can, but he hopes that something can be done to find a lasting solution. Former attempts to dig a borehole at Kodich were unsuccessful and very disappointing. However, the need is such that we will try again. We are happy to have received funds through estate gifts last year which we hope to use, in part (if logistics can be worked out), for this vital work.



*Ten-year-old Joseph Bolo was one of seven children recently admitted to Acheho Home. Following the death of both of his parents he was left with an elderly grandfather who is no longer able to care for him.*

**Prayerfully consider the following:**

- the health, education and spiritual growth of the children. Praise the Lord that many of the children profess His name.
- the water situation, especially at Kodich. Give thanks that this home is now accepted and even valued by the surrounding community.
- employment for our “graduates” and the many looking for work in Kenya. Pray that the government may foster a climate where employment opportunities can be created.
- the managers and their task. Pray that they may receive the strength they need to do their work well.

Staffed by dedicated Christian teachers and located right on the Kodich property, the school has done very well. Since Kodich opened only seven years ago with young children, the oldest children in the home are now in class seven. This senior class (class 7) wrote a District mock exam in which they placed second out of 200 schools. Well done! They aspire to be among the best schools in the district. Pastor Birgen writes that they were faced with some opposition a while back (due to tribal tensions in the area and the fact that children in the home are not exclusively from the predominant tribal group), but “as the children excel in their learning within the region, we are admired now.” He adds that health-wise it has been a good year for the children with no major illness. His letter concludes with thanks and praise to God for our commitment and endeavors and a note that Psalm 23:1 has been especially meaningful to them. “God has been our shepherd and He has faithfully met our daily needs in a wonderful manner. His faithfulness and daily provisions to us here throughout the year cannot be counted or numbered.” We can only echo his thanks to God, also for enabling us to be used of Him in meeting the needs of these children.

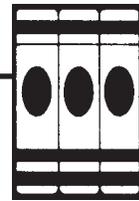
Hopefully this brings you more up-to-date on the homes in Kenya. We’ll focus on the Divya Shanthi home in India another time. Do not hesitate to call/write/fax/email if you have other questions you would like answered or if for some reason, you have not heard from “your” child in the past six months. (Generally, letters are passed on to you twice a year). And please include the homes and CRWRF’s efforts in your prayers, for it is only as God blesses, that our work will prosper.

Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

**Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund**

PO Box 85225  
 Burlington, ON L7R 4K4  
 E-mail: meerjo@networx.on.ca  
 Fax: 905-632-3888

All gifts are gladly received. Donors of \$10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deduction.



## Princeton Seminary's Majestic Testimony

**David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary. Volume 2. The Majestic Testimony 1869-1929. with a foreword by William S. Barker. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996. (hardcover, 560 pages, with illustrations; \$ 29.99 US).***

With this second and final volume on the history of Princeton Seminary,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Calhoun continues his fascinating account of this bulwark of orthodoxy. The story ends when the Princeton fortress fell to the forces of modernism in 1929 when the seminary was reorganized. Princeton was never the same again. From the conflict emerged Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1929 and eventually also the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936.

Calhoun shows that the ascent of theological liberalism to dominance was en route for a long time. Already in 1873 Francis Landey Patton, later to be Princeton Seminary's first president (1902-1913), brought charges of heresy against Rev. David Swing for not upholding the truths of the Gospel such as salvation through Christ alone. Patton lost. The presbytery acquitted Dr. Swing who subsequently withdrew from the Presbyterian church (p. 66-67). Over the next 50 years liberalism quietly seeped into the church, in spite of the fact that conservatives won important victories, such as suspending Charles Briggs of Union Theological Seminary in New York from office in 1893 for teaching views contrary to doctrine of Scripture and the Standards (pp. 135-136). Yet some presbyteries continued to ordain liberal students into the ministry so that by 1920 modernism was widespread in the church and liberals gained leadership positions (p.

332). The situation became so obviously desperate that when Machen visited Warfield weeks before his death in 1921, he expressed his hope that the present intolerable situation might come to an end by a split in the church. Warfield's response is telling. "No, you can't split rotten wood" (p. 318). Calhoun's detailed and sad chronicle of subsequent events reflects the accuracy of Warfield's blunt assessment.

In relaying the second part of the history of Princeton Seminary to its reorganization in 1929, Calhoun deftly covers the ground, making copious use of primary sources. There are two areas that will be of special interest to the readers of *Clarion* that I would like to touch on here.

### Princeton and evolution

The first is that despite the stated intent of the Princeton theologians to stay true to Scripture, they sometimes appeared to be open to evolutionism and were on occasion less than clear in rejecting it. Although Charles Hodge answered the question "What is Darwinism" with "It is Atheism" (p. 16), his son Archibald Alexander Hodge was more nuanced and took a more positive view of the possibilities of evolution than his father had done. He did not, however, accept the view that "the body of man had a genetic connection with some lower animal because 'of the specific assertions of Scripture'" (p. 82). B. B. Warfield once concluded a lecture on evolution (in 1888) by stating in part that "there is no *necessary* antagonism of Christianity to evolution, *provided that* we do not hold to too extreme a form of evolution" (p. 257). However, in 1908 he expressed a more negative assessment of the theory of

evolution when he wrote "For ourselves, we confess frankly that the whole body of evolutionary constructions prevalent today impresses us simply as a vast mass of speculation, which may or may not prove to have a kernel of truth in it" (p. 493 n. 10). Gresham Machen was reluctant to get drawn into a debate about evolution but he did "accept the possibility of a providentially guided evolution 'as God's way of working in certain spheres . . . through nature', but he insisted that the first two chapters of Genesis and the Christian doctrine of sin and the fall required the creative power of God in sharp distinction from evolution 'at the origin of the present race of man'" (p. 360). Machen's colleague, Caspar Wistar Hodge Jr., grandson of Charles Hodge, stressed the "largely hypothetical character of the evolution theories" but he "was willing to grant that the body of man, as far as the Bible is concerned, could have a genetic connection with the lower animals; it could have been made by God through providential activity rather than direct creation" (361).

What was the reason for this ambivalent approach to evolution at Princeton Seminary? Princeton was committed to the essential unity of truth in science and theology and rightly so. "Science and theology were allies in establishing the truth. God is the author of both Scripture and creation; so the Bible properly interpreted . . . could not conflict with the facts of nature properly understood" (p. 11). It would thus appear that Princeton at times overvalued the theories of science and did not always distinguish clearly enough between hypothesis and fact. This overvaluing of current scientific

endeavour may have something to do with the long-standing influence of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy at Princeton, both the College and Seminary (cf. pp. 413ff.). Mark Noll has noted that the legacy of John Witherspoon (president of Princeton 1768-1794) was to give Princeton Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and to move Princeton College into the mainstream of eighteenth-century higher education. This development went at the cost of the influence of Calvinism as mediated through Jonathan Edwards. It also allowed those at Princeton "to demonstrate through reason and science the truthfulness of revelation instead of presupposing revelation as the foundation for science and reason."<sup>2</sup> In so far as the Princeton theologians emphasized the priority of Scripture, they were on safe ground also in discussing the claims of science and Scripture. When they veered from it, their statements were not helpful.

Both Hodge and Warfield were convinced that "although truly established scientific fact may illuminate the meaning of Scripture, science must not determine the content of faith" (p. 259). Indeed, Warfield put it well when he warned that "a 'Christianity' which is to be kept in harmony with a growing 'science, philosophy, and scholarship,' beating their way onward by a process of trial and correction, must be a veritable nose of wax, which may be twisted in every direction as it may serve our purpose" (p. 259).

### The Dutch connection

For the readers of this magazine, it is also interesting to note the connections with Dutch theology in the time period under discussion. Gerhardus Vos who was born in Heerenveen, the Netherlands in 1862, was teaching at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids when Princeton invited him to come and become the first professor of Biblical Theology. After declining the invitation in 1892, the brilliant young theologian did finally accept the invitation at the urging of W. H. Green and came to Princeton to be inducted in office there in 1894. Vos's *Biblical Theology* is still in print and in it Vos traces the line of development of God's revelation through Scripture (pp. 138-140).

In 1898 Princeton University invited Abraham Kuyper to come and receive an honorary doctor of laws degree. While in Princeton, Kuyper delivered the L. P. Stone Lectures in the seminary chapel. His lectures on Calvinism made quite an impact. Kuyper's emphasis on reforming all culture for Christ impressed and pleased Princeton. "In the total expanse of human life,' Kuyper often said, 'there is not a single square inch of which Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare, 'That is mine!' Warfield praised Kuyper and his colleague Herman Bavinck for their 'wide-minded conception of the mission of Christianity in the world.'" In spite of this agreement with Kuyper, Warfield and the Princetonians were baffled by Kuyper's apologetical method (pp. 179-180).

Kuyper held that there is an absolute antithesis between the believer and unbeliever,

between Christian thought which recognizes God's sovereignty over all creation, and non-Christian thought, which proceeds on the basis of human autonomy. Working from differing starting points and holding differing assumptions, Christians and non-Christians, Dr. Kuyper believed, were not working on different parts of the same building but on different buildings. Just as there are "two kinds of people," Kuyper maintained, there are "two kinds of science." He therefore called for an approach that would array "*principle . . . against principle*" (p. 180).

Warfield and others at Princeton who were influenced by Scottish Common Sense Philosophy held greater expectations for the use of reason for convincing the unbeliever of the truth of Scripture (cf. pp. 413-417). Kuyper disagreed and emphasized that the Christian truth can only be appropriated by the work and testimony of the Spirit. Later another Dutch-American who taught at Princeton (1928-29), Cornelius Van Til, would take this continental Reformed legacy of the important place of presuppositions and develop it in his presuppositional apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary (1929-1975). I have heard Van Til say on more than one occasion: "I am only continuing the work of Kuyper and Bavinck."<sup>3</sup>



ACCEPTED to Rockway, ON  
**Rev. G. Wieske**  
 of Chatham, ON

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CALLED to Carman, MB  
**Rev. R. Aasman**  
 of Edmonton-Providence, AB

### In conclusion

This is a fascinating study of a very important period in American church history which in many ways helps us to understand the present North American ecclesiastical scene better. Calhoun has done his homework. He has also interwoven all types of interesting pieces of information. For instance, when students graduated, they not only received a degree, but also "a preacher's suit" – provided by the generosity of the women of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City (p. 174). The study's usefulness is enhanced by the inclusion at the end of the book of bibliographical notes, biographical summaries of faculty, extensive footnotes, and a useful general index covering both volumes. Highly recommended.

<sup>1</sup>For a review of the first volume, see *Clarion* August 25, 1995, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup>M. Noll, *Princeton and the Republic*, 1768-1822 (1989), 44 as quoted in S. T. Logan, "Theological Decline in Christian Institutions and the Value of Van Til's Epistemology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995) 161. Logan concludes that at Princeton, as earlier at Harvard, "Scripture was slowly and *unintentionally* replaced by human reason as the source of authority" (p. 161).

<sup>3</sup>This is not to suggest that the Princetonians were not aware of the important place of presuppositions, but they were less than consistent. Cf. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, 2:181-183, 417-421.