

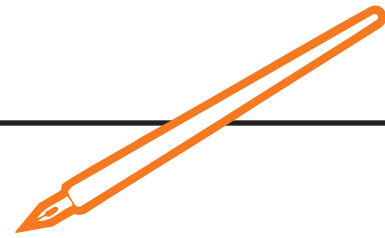
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*TCRC Conference, Seoul, South Korea
Seo-Moon Presbyterian Church*

By G.Ph. van Popta



Thankful for Christian school teachers

As I look out my study window, I see three public school teachers picketing the offices of the county board of education. At 8 o'clock in the morning, when they started pacing back and forth, it was quite cold. It's raining a bit. They hunker down in their coats. One pulls his toque down a bit and his gloves up over his wrists. They look miserable. Shall I bring them a coffee? I decide not to. After all, they've chosen to be out there instead of in their schools.

They stop everyone who enters the road that leads to the board offices. Canada Post is let by. A delivery truck backs up and turns around. A board of education vehicle passes through after a long conversation.

The rain stops. The sun comes out. Heavy coats, gloves and hats are shed. The three picketers look a little happier. They wave cheerfully at those who honk their car horns as they drive by.

Yesterday the 126,000 public and Roman Catholic school teachers left their classrooms and abandoned their chalkboards. They went on strike. Less than 1 % of teachers in Ontario reported for duty. 2.1 million students are on enforced vacation eight weeks after school began. The teachers are patting themselves on the back. They successfully staged the largest walkout by teachers in North American history.

It is an illegal strike. The teachers are under a current contract. Premier Mike Harris is seeking a back-to-work injunction that would subject the teachers to fines and their union leaders to fines or imprisonment if they disobey.

At the heart of the conflict is Bill 160, the government's Education Quality Improvement Act. The bill proposes new regulations governing size of classes, a fixed minimum amount of time the teacher must be in the classroom, possibility of hiring non-certified teachers for physical education courses and guidance, setting of tax rates for funding of education, collection of these taxes, and the funding of education.

The teachers union sees the control of education slipping out of its hands. To them, that is intolerable. Hence, the strike. They unabashedly call it "a political protest. They carry signs which declare: "Bill 160 hurts children;" "Teacher's care;" "Save public education;" and, "Standing up for democracy."

One question keeps emerging in my mind about the conduct of the teachers in this protest. If they are concerned about the children, and if they care, why do they so carelessly hurt the children by giving them the message that it is acceptable to flaunt the law? Putting aside the question whether their complaints are legitimate, the means they use to protest are illegal and revolutionary. They are under mutually agreed upon signed contracts to work. They are obliged to teach. They are guilty of open revolt. 2.1 million

students are learning some lessons they'll surely not forget: "If you don't like something, you may disregard the law;" "If it does not suit you, you do not need to keep your promise, even if you have signed your name to it." Some lessons! I wonder how these teachers respond to students who put what they've learned into practice in the classroom. The teachers have called down the government's authority. The students should now be able to call down the authority of the teacher. If a student flaunts school rules, what does the teacher have left to say? The teacher would need to praise the student as being a good disciple and having learnt his lessons well.

This strike makes me all the more thankful for Christian school teachers. I am thankful for schools that offer an education founded upon the Word of God and circumscribed by the Reformed confessions. I am thankful for schools that teach the students how to live in this world unto the glory of God and the welfare of their neighbour. I am thankful for schools that provide a safe environment for children to spend a substantial part of the week learning and interacting with peers. I am thankful for all of that. But today, as I see the three picketers trudging back and forth, I am especially thankful for Christian school teachers. Recently, someone prayed that we not be smug because "our teachers don't go on strike." A worthy prayer! There is no call to smugness, only to thankfulness.

Christian school teachers are different. They gladly acknowledge they are under authority. They will not "shut down the schools" if the body governing the school makes a decision they do not like. Christian school teachers keep the Fifth Commandment. They honour those in authority over them and submit themselves with due obedience, having patience with any weaknesses and shortcomings of those over them. Christian school teachers keep the Third Commandment. They realize that the contract to provide the service of teaching for an agreed upon salary is an agreement made in the presence of God. To break unilaterally that agreement is to play fast and loose with the Name of God. Christian school teachers keep the Eighth Commandment. They seek to promote the good of both their students and their employers, and deal with these as they would be dealt with.

Christian school teachers are vastly different from the teachers you find at the public and Roman Catholic schools. Christian school teachers model what it means to submit to those in authority rather than to revolt. They teach their students how to resolve conflicts in a Biblical way rather than a revolutionary way. They teach their students what it means to keep one's promise.

Hats off to Christian school teachers! I'm thankful for Christian school teachers.



God's Anvil

**"The word of our God shall stand for ever"
– Isaiah 40:8**

Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with blasting years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he; and then, with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon,
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The Anvil is unharmed – the hammers gone.

– John Clifford

What's inside?

We are very pleased to publish a report of the fourth meeting of the ICRC, written by the Rev. C. van Spronsen, one of our delegates to the meeting. At this conference, we meet many Reformed churches from around the world. That's a wonderful thing for them and for us. How true that the *holy church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world . . . joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith* (BC 27).

However, we also meet Reformed churches to whom we live next door. For instance, in Korea, we met the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA). If we are both willing to extend our hands across the ocean to greet each other in Korea, surely we are not unwilling to do so across the fence in our cities and towns. If we and the Free Reformed are going to grow towards each other, it will only come about through communication. In order to enhance this communication, Dr. J. De Jong introduces a study paper written by a Christelijke Gereformeerde (CGKN - sister churches to the FRCNA) minister, the Rev. A. Baars which deals with the appropriation of salvation. We thank *The Messenger*, periodical of the FRCNA, for allowing us to take the paper over.

Additionally, you will find several reports, press releases, and reader contributions. We wish you several pleasant hours of reading time.

GvP



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,
C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
46 Sulphur Springs Road, Ancaster, ON L9G 1L8
Fax: (905) 304-4951
E-Mail: clarion@compuserve.com

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202
Email: premier@premier.mb.ca
World Wide Web address: <http://clarion.home.ml.org/>

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By P.G. Feenstra

God's Plan Stands

Psalm 33:10-12

¹⁰The LORD foils the plans of the nations; He thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

¹¹But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.

¹²Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He chose for His inheritance.

Do you ever worry about the future? What would happen if the nations of the world and false religion would combine forces against the faithful church of Christ? Where would we be? Psalm 33 teaches us not to be anxious about such matters. For God will frustrate the plans, intentions and resolutions of political heads of state and also of religious leaders; of powerful countries who wield influence in the direction of world affairs.

We shouldn't think the LORD takes great pleasure in working against the plans of the nations. He does not foil the plans of man just for the sake of breaking them down. We cannot compare the LORD to a pesky family member who breaks apart in a few seconds what his brother or sister took all day to build. In verses 4 and 5 the psalmist confesses the opposite. All the work of the Lord is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. The Lord does not frustrate those plans which are good and just, but only those which are man-centered and run contrary to His will.

The examples in history are plentiful. When Israel was in Egypt Pharaoh made a plan to destroy the nation which God had chosen. The Amalekites tried to put an end to the people of God while they travelled through the wilderness. Later it was the Moabites, Philistines and Assyrians who did the same thing. World leaders often work against the plan of the Lord. At times the opposition is plain and obvious. Other times the plan of the Lord is opposed in more subtle ways. But the Lord frustrates every scheme directed against Him, against His counsel, against His people. This may not be immediately apparent. Sometimes He uses the wicked designs of people to fulfil His purpose. The nations may not even realize their plans are being thwarted. Yet in the end He

will be victorious. Military strength and a show of force impresses and subdues but the Lord has the power to stop it and to change the course of history for the sake of His church gathering work.


The counsel of the Lord stands forever. He will not be sent down a course He doesn't want to travel. No world power can frustrate the Lord's work. The Assyrians scattered the ten northern tribes and mixed them among the nations. Did they bring to nought the work of the Lord? Was His plan of salvation in the coming Messiah destroyed? Not at all. Isaiah says, "The LORD of hosts has sworn: 'As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand, that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains trample him under foot; and his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder.' This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:24-27).

Human ways are always changing. Nations and world leaders adjust their plans to the philosophy and ideas of the day. The map of the world changes constantly as superpowers rise and fall. But God's plan remains the same.

The main item on the Lord's agenda is the eternal freedom and liberation of His chosen people. That's why the psalmist says in verse 12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage." The "nation" is not a physical country but a people with whom the Lord has established His everlasting covenant. Putting it in New Testament language we can read it this way: "Blessed is the church whose God is the LORD." The people whom He has cho-

sen as His heritage are no longer restricted to one nation but they are spread throughout the world. Speaking to the church the apostle Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people . . ." (1 Peter 2:9).

The people who know this God and who call Him their LORD are declared blessed and happy. That's because He chose them to be His heritage. He grants them a special position since through His work in the church He seeks freedom and deliverance for all the world.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Blessed is the faithful church whose members follow the revealed will of the LORD in all their decisions and who know His plan for the future. 

Take it to the Lord

Take it to the Lord
Our Great and Mighty Sword.
When our burdens seem too much
The Lord our hearts He'll touch.
When our hearts weigh us down
It may seem we're going to drown,
But take it to the Lord
For He's our Mighty Sword!

There are days, we all feel
We just can no longer kneel.
Yet, the Lord our prayer awaits,
A hardened heart He hates.
Our burdens He joyfully bears
With loving patience He cares.
So do not delay
Come to Him today.
Take it to the Lord
Our Great and Mighty Sword.

Lorraine Horsburgh

Fourth Meeting of the ICRC

International Conference of Reformed Churches, held at Seoul, Korea, October 15 - 23, 1997

By C. Van Spronsen

The Fourth Meeting of the ICRC took place in the huge metropolis of Seoul in Korea, home to some 20 million people. Ever since its constituent assembly in Groningen, the Conference has experienced steady growth. It has met in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1985; in Langley, BC, in 1989; and in Zwolle, the Netherlands, in 1993. The 1997 Conference began with 14 members but admitted another 7 member Churches bringing the total to 21, representing over 450,000 people across the world. The Canadian Reformed Churches were represented by Dr. N.H. Gootjes and Rev. C. Van Spronsen. Rev. M. VanBeveren, the corresponding secretary of the Interim Committee and Mr. H. A. Berends, the treasurer also were present.

It is a wonderful experience to meet together with Reformed and Presbyterian brothers from all continents of the world and of many racial origins,¹ all standing on the one foundation of Jesus Christ, confessing the same faith and engaged in the same spiritual warfare. It is a blessing of the Lord to have this forum by which we may help, encourage and learn from one another how we are to be Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The hosting Church for this year's assembly was the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) with whom we have a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship since 1992. They did an excellent job of organizing and hosting this Conference, showing us real Korean hospitality and courtesy. Meetings were held in the splendid facilities of the Seo-Moon Presbyterian Church where meals were also provided in the dining hall. After some initial shuffling, all guests were accommodated comfortably in the Olympic Parktel hotel, adjacent to the Olympic Park with its whole array of facilities and buildings from the Olympics held in Seoul in 1988. This hotel also served as a youth hostel for many school students



Conference in session. (Left lower corner: Dr. N.H. Gootjes)

visiting the city from elsewhere, even abroad, which caused some congestion in the elevators in the evening.

Prayer meeting

On Wednesday evening, prior to the opening of the Conference, a Prayer Meeting was held, conducted by Dr. Soon-Gil Hur, president of the seminary. Rev. John P. Galbraith (OPC) delivered a sermon on *Perfecting Fellowship*, based mainly on Eph. 6:10-18. We are to display the unity we have in Christ and see our responsibilities in this world as well as over against each other. Striving for further unity needs a great deal of humility. Each one of us must be "as a dying man to dying men." He closed by expressing the wish and prayer that the ICRC may be an instrument in God's hand and urged us all to make the purposes of the ICRC a matter of our prayers!

The Seo-Moon Church choir contributed to the program and in the

congregational singing Korean and English voices blended together very well to the familiar melodies. After the Prayer Meeting there was an opportunity to meet the delegates and mingle with the local church members while enjoying some refreshments.

Opening

In his opening and welcoming words Dr. S.G. Hur mentioned that they would have liked to host the Conference in 1993 but that the facilities of the new seminary were not available at that time. Even now the new buildings are only half finished but they found an alternate venue. He welcomed us on behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. Although it is only just over 100 years ago that Christianity was introduced to Korea, the Lord has greatly blessed the advance of the Gospel in this nation so that now three quarters of the population are considered Christians. South Korea is the most christianized nation of

the Asian countries. They have gone through difficult times during the first half of this century but the blood and the sweat of martyrs have been the seed and fertilizer for the planting of churches.

As the executive the following were chosen: Chairman – Dr. S. G. Hur (PCK), Vice-chairman – Rev. J. J. Petersen (OPC), and Recording Secretary – Rev. P. Vander Meyden (FRCNA).

Rev. M. Van Beveren and Mr. H.A. Berends (both CDNRC) were re-appointed as corresponding secretary and treasurer respectively. A number of sub-committees were appointed to review the applications for admission as members. A fairly rigorous meeting schedule was agreed upon: breakfast at 7:30 a.m. and meetings to continue till 9:00 p.m. with some generous breaks in between.

In his secretarial report Rev. M. Van Beveren remembered the fact that Dr. K. Deddens was disabled by his illness from serving the Mission Committee for the full term. His place was taken by Prof. A. C. Boyd.

New member churches

According to the Constitution churches can be admitted if they meet the following standards (Art. IV 1):

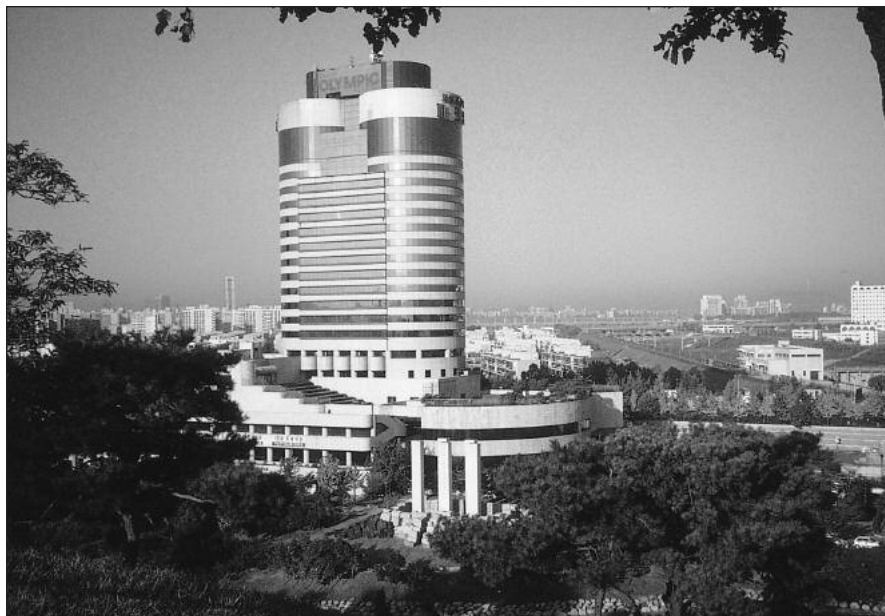
- a. faithful adherence to the confession standards mentioned in the basis (i.e. the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity);
- b. acceptance by a two-thirds majority vote of the member churches, every member church having one vote.

They must also be recommended for membership by two churches who already are members.

After favorable reports from the sub-committees who reviewed the applications the following churches were admitted as new members:

- The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (North America)*
- The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christelijk Gereformeerd)*
- The Evangelic Presbyterian Church of England and Wales*
- Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir N.T.T. (Indonesia)*
- The Reformed Churches of New Zealand*
- The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*
- The United Reformed Churches in North America.*

The Conference expressed regret over the withdrawal of the Free Reformed



Olympic Parktel hotel: accommodations for the delegates.

Churches of Australia. It was noted that the reason given was not disagreement with the ICRC as such but the fact that membership in the ICRC had not benefited the peace and harmony within their own churches.

Major issues

Overlooking the proceedings of the Conference one could say that the major issues or themes were those of church unity and missions. Besides the Interim Committee which makes all the practical arrangements for the Conferences the only other standing committee is the Mission Committee. Not only were these two themes the main items on the agenda but also in many of the informal talks amongst the delegates these were the recurring issues, understandably so, since the constitution in Art. III also states these as the purpose of the ICRC.

Church unity

Art. III of the constitution begins by stating that

The purpose of the Conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches.

It may therefore be expected that the matter of church unity receives due attention at each Conference but opinions may vary as to how far the ICRC can play a role in coming to greater unity.

The Dutch churches (Liberated) would like to see the Conference assume a more influential role by discussing “how the member churches can more concretely and effectively utilize the relation they have with each other.” They feel that “attention should be given to contacts and exchanges between institutions for the training for the ministry, combined projects in areas such as evangelizing, mission, assistance, as well as consideration of dogmatical and ethical questions.” They also proposed that the Conference “bring about a regional cooperation of the member churches in fulfilling their calling to be missionary churches.”

However, the consensus of the meeting appeared to indicate that the general preference was to keep the Conference a conference. It can only suggest or recommend but not “bring about” certain actions. Concerning regional conferences it was suggested, in line with the 1993 meeting, that “the member churches keep in mind the benefit of regional conferences on particular, timely topics, and plan such conferences when deemed appropriate.” This was also in line with the sentiments of the Canadian Reformed Churches expressed in the report of the “Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad” to Synod ‘95 that “unless a specific need can be cited, there is little justification for such regional conferences.”

In order to improve the relationship amongst the member churches it was recommended that whenever matters arise that would affect relationships

Old style building of the Changdok Palace of the "Chosen Dynasty."



Downtown Seoul, South Korea

with each other, such as a change in their doctrinal basis or ethical practices, the churches should inform the inter-church relations committee of the other members concerning the proposal, ask them for the official position of their church, and advise and keep them informed on developments in the matter as it is progressively dealt with by the church. This suggestion was also in response to proposals submitted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

This same Church also submitted a proposal for unity, a framework for discussion, together with a document outlining "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church." Since some of this material arrived on the late side and because of the significance of this topic it was decided that a special paper on "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church" be prepared for the ICRC 2001, with contributing speeches from both the Presbyterian tradition and the (Continental) Reformed tradition.

Under the heading of "Church Unity" we should also pass on the accepted amendment to the constitution Art. IV, 1. a, which now reads:

Those churches shall be admitted as members:

- a. who faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the

Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed faith."

This defines the faith shared by the member churches as the Reformed Faith expressed in the Three Forms of Unity and several versions of the Westminster Confession of Faith, thus making clearer the intent of the original wording.

In light of the purpose of the ICRC to "encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches" the delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of North America also held talks together and presented a positive report of their findings to their sending bodies. Both parties agreed that we must strive for a greater and stronger expression of our unity not only in Seoul, Korea but also at home in Canada. An interim relationship similar to ecclesiastical fellowship may be a wise stepping stone towards future federative unity.

Informal but informative talks were also held with the delegations of the Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.

Missions

Some of the activities of the Mission Committee were stagnated due to the disabling illness of Dr. K. Deddens who was the convenor of this commit-

tee. A Mission Newsletter appeared, though not as regularly as intended and neither did it seem to reach all the member churches. Another Mission Committee was appointed with the following mandate:

1. to update information from the member churches regarding missionary activity in general, and also about missionary training and methodology of mission in particular;
2. to ask the respective member churches to organize four different mission conferences, two years after each ICRC, one in the West (Curacao, Surinam, Brazil, Peru), one in Africa (South-Africa, Ghana, Republic of Congo), one in the East (Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, India, Papua New Guinea), and one in Europe (including Eastern Europe). The reports of these conferences have to be sent at least one and a half years before the next ICRC to the Mission Committee;
3. to ask the churches which are working among the Jews to contact one another and to send their report to the Mission Committee at least one and a half years before the next ICRC;
4. to inform the member churches each and every half year about mission work, stating also their needs and strategies in a newsletter;
5. to send the report to the Corresponding Secretary at least one year before the next ICRC.

The Mission Committee intends to publish a bi-annual *Mission Handbook* with all relevant material to fulfil part of this mandate. At the next ICRC a paper is to be presented on work among the Jews, not merely restricted to the Jews living in the state of Israel but focusing on Jews wherever they live.

In two areas, Latin America and Africa, mission conferences are already being held. For the other two areas sending bodies will be approached with the suggestion to organize such mission meetings. The ICRC also decided to have an amount available to assist those who could not afford to attend or are unable to pay the full travel costs.

Papers presented²

Mission also received much attention in two of the papers which were presented. Rev. M.T. Bube (OPC) spoke



Visiting ministers and some consistory members being served lunch in consistory room between Sunday's services.

on the *Principles of Reformed Missions*. In his presentation he stressed that it has pleased God to entrust to the church the effectual means necessary for His church gathering work: the preaching of the Word. In His Word the elders are fully supplied with all that is necessary for them to carry out this task. He cautioned against becoming dependent on para-church organizations which ultimately are not responsible to any particular church.

Rev. David John (Free Church of Central India) delivered a paper on *The Ministry of the Word amongst Asian Religious People (Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians)*. Rev. John gave much information on how these false religions promote different ways of achieving salvation over against the one way in Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scriptures. Since many of us throughout the world are confronted with these Eastern religions, a good discussion followed. Although we must seek to understand from where people come, there is no "special" approach for "special" people. The same full Gospel must be proclaimed to all with compassion and urgency.

Dr. Robert C. Beckett (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland) spoke on *Biblical Principles for the Relation between Church and State*. He affirmed the total sovereignty of God over all structures of authority in both secular and ecclesiastical realms. The New Testament does not give approval to any specific form of government. Both church and state are established by God under the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and are distinct structures that should peacefully co-exist and support each other.

Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (OPC) spoke on the *Challenges of the Charismatic Movement to the Reformed Tradition*. He addressed two issues: the meaning of Pentecost (being baptized with the Holy Spirit) and the cessation of certain gifts of the Spirit. Pentecost has its significance in terms of the history of redemption (*historia salutis*) and not in the ongoing application of salvation (*ordo salutis*). It does not provide a repeatable paradigm event for individual Christian experience. New Testament prophecy does not continue today now that the Canon of the New Testament is complete. In the discussions the need of continuing to be filled with the Holy Spirit was brought up even though Pentecost itself was a once-for-all event.

Dr. Soon Gil Hur (Presbyterian Church of Korea) spoke on *Women in Office, with Particular Reference to "Deaconesses"*. Eldership is clearly restricted to male members of the church because its task is to exercise authority over the congregation (1 Timothy 2:12). However, the diaconal office does not involve the exercise of authority. He therefore saw room for female members to be appointed as deaconesses or assistant deacons without being ordained. He noted that women were positively involved in the life of the apostolic church and several of them were also in a special category or capacity which could be that of deaconesses. This may be even more urgent in cultures where a strong separation of men and women is expected.

He warned us so that we would not be too shocked if upon visiting Korean churches the following Sunday we would see some women in robes, to-

gether with the deacons! Which was indeed the case. (See *Proceedings* for the full text of the speeches.)

Introductions

During the course of the conference observers of the following churches were given the opportunity to introduce their churches to the meeting: the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico, the Lanka Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Reformed Church of Japan, the Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Cardiff (UK), the Taiwan Reformed Presbyterian Church, Church of Christ in Sudan among Tiv and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, North East India Synod. Representatives of Christian Witness to Israel (London, England), the Institute of Reformed Theological Training (The Netherlands) and Missionary Training Institute (Korea) also received the opportunity to introduce their activity or institutes to the delegates.

The 2001 Conference

The treasurer, Mr. H. A. Berends presented a four-year budget, extending through the next ICRC meeting for a total amount of US\$ 119,000, or less than US\$ 30,000 per year. For our convenience the cost was neatly broken down, showing that for our Churches this would amount to US\$ 4,180.00 for the four years or .082 cents per member per year. Certainly, not insurmountable considering the benefits for others and ourselves!

The next Conference, in 2001 the Lord willing, is to be hosted a little closer to home: in the USA by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The Interim Committee in consultation with the hosting church will oversee the arrangements. Rev. M. Van Beveren, the corresponding secretary, and Mr. H.A. Berends, the treasurer were both re-appointed.

Praise and worship evening and closing

On Wednesday Evening we assembled for a Praise and Worship evening. Special guests were the Seoul Shalom Ladies' Chorus whose singing, in Korean and English, delighted the audience. Rev. C. Graham, professor of the Free Church College in Scotland, delivered a message based on Psalm 100:1, *Shout for Joy to the Lord, All the Earth*, dwelling on the reasons for joy as given in this Psalm. All thanks and praise were given to the Lord. On Thursday evening

we gathered together for the closing exercises. Dr. Hur led in devotions on John 17:14,15.

Concluding comments


In conclusion I will say that it was a great privilege to be part of this truly ecumenical event, to represent our churches there, to participate and contribute, and to flavour some of Korean life in the city of Seoul as well as in the Presbyterian Church of Korea. It was exciting to be able to preach the Gospel in the downtown Seoul Youngcheon Presbyterian Church (with the help of a translator!) and to experience the communion of saints with so many of a totally different culture.

The Korean hospitality was fantastic. They took excellent care of us realizing that the typical Korean dishes are not everyone's favourite. But with all the variety they provided no one had to go hungry. One day they took us on a sightseeing tour stopping at the construction site of the new seminary (most impressive!), visiting the Independence Commemoration Centre as well as the reconstructed Korean Yong-In Folk Village.

For Dr. N.H. Gootjes it was a bit like returning "home." After all, he had taught at the Korean Seminary in Pusan for nearly 10 years. Once word got around that he was in the country he received frequent visits from past students who clearly were most delighted to see him again. It became very obvious that Dr. Gootjes was and is very much appreciated also in Korea and that they still benefit from the writings he left behind.

During these 11 days in Korea I again became more convinced that the whole exercise of the ICRC is a most valuable event in the promotion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and the gathering of His Church. It at the same time broadens our view on the Lord's work as it takes place throughout the world by many of his faithful servants and churches.

¹It is also possible to cross many miles via the Internet. Visit the ICRC address at <http://our-world.compuserve.com/homepages/rc-janssen/icrc.htm>

²We heartily recommend you purchase a copy of the *Proceedings* which will be published shortly by Inheritance Publications of Neerlandia. These will provide you with the complete minutes, speeches, address lists, constitution etc. 

The first love

Meditation on Revelation 2:1-7 by the chairman of the past ICRC, Dr. S. G. Hur.

In our text we see a true church which is in crisis. The church in Ephesus had the marks of the true church. This church was very sound in doctrine. From the beginning it had excellent preachers. The apostle Paul had established this church during his second missionary journey. On his third missionary journey he stayed there for about three years and laboured night and day with tears (Acts 20:19). Later on Timothy preached there, and the Apostle John preached there too. No less than two apostles, Paul and John, had preached in Ephesus. Moreover, Timothy and Apollos had been preachers there. This church was flourishing. The congregation could distinguish between apostolic and false teaching. They rejected false apostles and their teaching.

Further, they faithfully exercised discipline. There had been Nicolaitans in their midst. These people were the libertines of the first century. They encouraged people to compromise with the world. They denied a clear distinction between the world and the church. They tried to secularize the church of the Lord. They hated their doctrine and deeds. But the Ephesian saints did not approve of them. The church in Ephesus maintained the marks of the true church: sound doctrine and faithful discipline. What a wonderful church it was!

However, the Lord, who is the head of the church, finds fault with the church of Ephesus. The Lord says: "You have forsaken your first love." This true church had forsaken its first love. What is this first love? It is the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus, which the Holy Spirit kindles in the hearts of saints. When the Ephesians first came to believe in Jesus Christ by the preaching of the gospel, they burned with zeal to do anything for Christ's sake. Most of that first generation had passed away. A new, younger generation had arisen, and they maintained the pure doctrine and faithful discipline. But they forgot that burning love, that great enthusiasm and devotion. We would call the practice of such a church dead orthodoxy. The Lord warned this church about dead orthodoxy and urged it to repent. Otherwise the Lord would come and remove its lampstand.

Brothers, delegates, we too are warned today. By God's grace we have maintained the marks of the true church. I trust that the churches which our delegates serve will maintain the pure preaching of the gospel and a faithful discipline in church life. This is beautiful. However, such a faithful church is always in danger of losing its first love.

How could such a faithful church forsake its first love, we may wonder? Yet the history of the Church tells us that this is a sad reality. We must be on the lookout for cold orthodoxy. Should we forsake our first love, sound doctrine and faithful discipline cannot save us. Slowly but surely the spiritual flame will go out and the Lord will remove the lampstand.

We must be sound in Biblical doctrines. We must protest against, reject, and fight against false doctrines. We must keep our Christian lives in purity. At the same time, we must also preserve that first love. If there is a burning heart for God, there will also be burning hearts for the communion of saints and the fellowship among the churches. Keeping the first love is the most important thing in our Christian life. In 1 Corinthians 13 we read: "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." A church which forsakes its first love and a Christian who forsakes his first love is actually dead. Therefore, let us continually pray for the preservation of pure doctrines and faithful discipline, steeped in that first love. Let us always pray that we may preserve that first love in our Christian life and church life.

RAY OF SUNSHINE



December birthday addition:

Marten Jansen

325-24 William Street, Shelburne, ON L0N 1S1
Marten will be 8 on the 1st of December.

The Appropriation of Salvation

Introduction

Some time ago I made a reference to a study paper prepared by the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands regarding the appropriation of salvation.¹ This study, written by the Rev. A. Baars of Middleharnis, Holland, – formerly a minister of the Free Reformed Church of Dundas, ON – was translated by Rev. P. VanderMeyden of the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI. It was published in *The Messenger*, the church paper of the Free Reformed Churches, in the interests of fostering greater understanding and promoting church unity. The document served as a discussion paper specifically between the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* and our sister churches in Holland, the *Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt*.

Rev. VanderMeyden published the discussion paper under the title “Towards a Discussion with Other Reformed Churches.” After introducing the study, he says:

What is needed is communication. It is possible that misunderstandings exist which need to be removed. It may also be found that perceptions are backed by sufficient facts to justify the conscientious

disagreements. Whatever the case may be – whether to resolve the misunderstanding or sharpen our mutual conscientious (but differing) convictions or both – communication of our mutual conscientious objections will serve our churches.

It is clear that Rev. VanderMeyden is very interested in communication, and that in particular with the churches that are directly connected to the parties involved in Holland, nl. the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

Rev. VanderMeyden noted that the study paper deals with only one of the outstanding issues regarding our differences with the Free Reformed Churches. The matter of experiential preaching and discriminating application in the preaching also needs to be discussed. Yet Rev. VanderMeyden is ready to begin talks. He goes on to say:

It will profit us mutually to address these issues in our discussion, not only on the consistorial level, but also in our writings, so that our membership can be involved in the process. If there will be unity down the road it must not be a top-down unity, but one which has developed because grass roots members of our two denominations have truly come to experience that we are one.

These are heart warming words, and I have no reason to doubt they are well meant. The reference to a “top-down unity” is unfortunate, since it carries some bad baggage. Granted the unity should not be built from the “top-down,” – if you can ever call it that without promoting misunderstandings – it should also not remain at the local level. The federation should be involved, most certainly also at the grass roots level! But the discussion must take place across the board, and should find some room in our church papers!

Therefore it is with our gratitude to Rev. VanderMeyden that we publish the discussion paper written in 1992 by Rev. Baars. It is a thoroughly confessional document, indicating how dearly the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (and the Free Reformed Churches) love the *Three Forms of Unity*. It opens issues regarding the interpretation of the confessions which affect us as Canadian Reformed believers as well. Therefore we are thankful for this initiative, and, the Lord willing, we hope to add some comments and reflections on the study paper in a future issue.

¹See *Clarion*, Vol. 45, #7 (April 5, 1996).

J. De Jong

The “Appropriation of Salvation” in the Creeds

– AN OVERVIEW –

(Part 1)

By Rev. A. Baars

1. A Definition

We begin with the question: What do we mean by the expression ‘appropriation of salvation’? Prof. Velema has given a good usable definition: by “appropriation of salvation we are especially concerned with the answer to the question how a person becomes and continues to be a partaker of salvation.”¹

By this we mean that, in the discussion of this topic, the emphasis is

mostly on the question how a person becomes a partaker of salvation. We must certainly not lose sight of the other aspect. Besides, in the next paragraph it will become clear that our creeds do not use the word “appropriation” merely in connection with justification by faith, but also in connection with the strengthening of faith (for instance, in relation to the Lord’s Supper). The concept thus covers the whole of the life of faith.

2. About the word “appropriation”

It is noteworthy that the word “appropriation” only appears a few times in the confessional standards.²

As far as the *Belgic Confession* is concerned, we are thinking of Article 22, which begins as follows:

We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His

merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him.

The word is also used in Article 35 in connection with the Lord's Supper:

But for the support of the spiritual and heavenly life which believers have. He hath sent a living bread, which descended from heaven, namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers, when they eat Him, that is to say, when they apply and receive Him by faith, in the Spirit.

There is just one more place, namely, in Lord's Day 23 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (H.C.), in Question and Answer 61, where, in connection with justification by faith, the church confesses:

. . . because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God: and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

In relation to these statements in the creeds Professor Trimp (Reformed-Liberated) made the comment that these references to appropriation must be seen primarily as the work of believers.³ Later he indicates that the appropriation can also be attributed to the Holy Spirit. He sees this happening in the classic *Form for Baptism*, in which it is said that the Holy Spirit by baptism assures us,

. . . that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives. . . .

It is indeed possible to speak of the Holy Spirit in distinction from the believer as subject of this appropriating work. Professor Trimp is also correct when he states that the creeds in the portions cited above emphasize that we appropriate salvation in Christ *by faith*. However, here two remarks need to be added.

First, our Confessions always present a close connection between true faith and the Holy Spirit (cf. for example, H.C. L.D. 7, Q.A. 21; L.D. 25, Q.A. 65). Thus, when it speaks about the appropriation of salvation by faith, it is rooted in the appropriating work of the Holy Spirit. This comes out very clearly in the above cited phrase in the *Belgic Confession*. Article 22:

. . . the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, appropriates him. . . .

Secondly, our Confessions also speak explicitly about the Holy Spirit as sub-

ject of the appropriation of salvation. In fact, alongside the word "appropriation" in the Confessions, there appears the corresponding expression "participation."⁴ At various times it is emphatically stated that it is the Holy Spirit Who makes believers partakers of Christ. For that we can refer, for example, to the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 20, Q.A. 53 and Lord's Day 29, Q.A. 79:⁴

What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit? . . . that He is also given me, to make me by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits. . . .

. . . That we are as really partakers of His true body and blood (by the operation of the Holy Spirit) as we receive by the mouths of our bodies these holy signs in remembrance of Him. . . .

We may conclusively say that the appropriation of salvation is primarily attributed to the Holy Spirit.⁵ It can also be said that believers appropriate salvation to themselves by faith which is the fruit of the work of the same Spirit.

*

Imputation and appropriation are closely related to each other. Yet they must not be identified with each other.

*

3 The Distinction

It is important to notice in what connection the creeds speak of the appropriation of salvation. It would be possible to point to several such connections; for example, the trinitarian context in which it is placed. We could speak of the well-known distinction between the accomplishment and application of salvation, or – as it could also be expressed – the accomplishment and administration of salvation.⁶

By means of this distinction in the concept of salvation it is emphasized that the salvation which Christ has *accomplished* for us is also *applied* to us by the Spirit of Christ. It should be evident that these two elements are closely connected and interrelated with each other. Yet we must not allow them to be confused, and therefore it is important to keep them clearly distinguished.

The words "accomplishment" and "application" appear in such a combi-

nation in the *Canons of Dort*. Head II, Rejection 6. The matter expressed by both concepts comes up in various other formulations.

Of the many instances we point to the following. In the *Heidelberg Catechism*, L.D. 6, Q.A. 17, we read that Christ is divine that He "might *obtain for*, and *restore to us*, righteousness and life."

In L.D. 17, Q.A. 45, it is said that Christ by His resurrection has conquered death "in order that He might *make us partakers* of that righteousness which He had *purchased for us* by His death."

This distinction comes out very clearly in L.D. 23, Q.A. 60 and 61. In the first answer we read that God "only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ," while in the next answer it is said "that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only." The believers says here that what God in Christ grants and imputes to him, becomes his righteousness before God by personal appropriation. Thus imputation and appropriation are closely related to each other. Yet they must not be identified with each other. The gracious imputation calls for a believing appropriation.

Finally, we refer to L.D. 27, Q.A. 74, where a similar distinction comes up in connection with covenant and baptism. There it is said of the children of the congregation that "redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult."⁷

The word "promised" can also be rendered "granted in the promise." What is granted (*geschonken*) in the promise we partake of by faith. The distinction intended here comes out most forcefully in the words "granting and partaking."

This summary overview helps us to see that this distinction, which comes to its sharpest formulation in the words granting and partaking, is based in our confessions. Those who would – for example, by way of a rejection of the subjective-objective framework – go so far as to refuse to honour this distinction and would allow the partaking to be absorbed into the granting, would short-change our confessions.

4. Spirit and Word

The Word of God is the means by which the Holy Spirit brings about the appropriation of a person's salvation. This is confessed very clearly in the answer to the question, "Where does faith

come from?" "From the Holy Spirit, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel" (H.C., L.D. 25, Q.A. 65).

How this relationship between Spirit and Word is to be understood has been a longstanding point of controversy. The viewpoint of our Reformed Confession can be typified by means of two prepositions: the Spirit works *by* and *with* the Word (*per verbum et cum verbo*). In the expression "by the Word" (*per verbum*) there is an emphasis on the close relationship between the Spirit and Word. We may not separate the Spirit from the Word, as is done in various forms of mysticism. The Holy Spirit does not work without the Word, nor is the Word bypassed, but He makes use of the Word as His instrument. At the same time it may be said that the Spirit works "with the Word" (*cum verbo*). Here special emphasis is placed on the sovereignty of the Spirit. Who may always work by means of the Word, but not always in the same manner. We could also say that the latter formulation calls attention to the special work of the Spirit with the Word.⁸

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It is characteristic of a Reformed point of view that it emphasizes both that the Holy Spirit works by the Word and with the Word.

*

It is well-known that on this point there is a difference of viewpoint between the Lutheran and Reformed churches. This difference actually did not exist yet between Luther and Calvin. We find the origin in the controversy about the Word as a means of grace, which is known as the Rhatmann controversy (±1625).⁹ Since that time Lutheran orthodoxy tended toward a one-sided emphasis on the position that the Holy Spirit works by the word (*per verbum*). The Reformed objection to this was that the Word too easily gained a magical power because the Spirit "automatically" makes the Word effectual. But the Spirit does not allow Himself to be locked within the confines of the Word. He makes the Word effective if and when He pleases. Thus it is characteristic of a Reformed point of view that it emphasizes both that the

Holy Spirit works by the Word and with the Word.¹⁰

In our Confession both aspects come out clearly. Accordingly, it is emphatically said in various places that the Spirit works by the Word. In this connection we think of the words just quoted in H.C., L.D. 25, Q.A. 65, where we read that the Spirit works "by (*per*) the preaching of the Gospel . . ." and *Canons of Dort* III/IV, Article 17: "For grace is conferred by means of (*per*) admonitions."

As we have seen, the phrase "with the Word" (*cum verbo*) is intended to defend that the Spirit is sovereign when He uses the Word. This aspect comes out clearly especially in one or two passages of the *Canons of Dort*; we are thinking primarily of C.D. III/IV, Art. 11 & 12:

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he *not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man. . . .*

. . . But this (i.e., this regenerating work) *is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation, that after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted, or continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable (inexpressible); not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead. . . .*

The fact that the regenerating effect of the preaching is not the result of a general enlightenment or "moral suasion," but is a special work of the Holy Spirit, is even more clearly laid out in C.D. III/IV, Rejection 7:

Who teach: That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gently advising . . . (This is) contrary to the whole Scripture which, besides this, teaches yet another and far more powerful and divine manner of the Holy Spirit's working in the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh,' Ezekiel 36:26.¹¹

To summarize we could say that, on the one hand, our Confession places a close connection between the Spirit and Word.¹² Under no condition may they be separated, for the Spirit works by the Word. At the same time, we may not disregard the teaching of the *Canons of Dort* that the Holy Spirit, Who is pleased to bind Himself to the Word, is still completely sovereign.

Footnotes

¹Bij de toeëigening van het heil gaat het speciaal om het antwoord op de vraag hoe de mens deel krijgt en deel houdt aan het heil." W.H. Velema. *De toeëigening van het heil in de prediking*, in W.H. Velema (ed.) *Delen in het heil*, (Kampen, 1989), (referred to below as simply, *Delen*). p. 41. J.M. Velema, *Wie zijn wij?* (Amsterdam, 1992). p.85 gives a description which is more to the point, but in the same line: "By the appropriation of salvation we understand the work of God's Spirit by which the sinner gains and maintains participation in the redemption which Christ has accomplished."

²Using the text of the Creeds found in the *The Psalter*, (Grand Rapids, 1991, NRC Edition). pp. 1-117.

³Trimp, C. *De toeëigening van het heil in het perspectief van historie en confessie*, in Velema (ed.) *Delen in het heil*. p. 27 ff.

⁴In the word usage of the creeds the word "participation" corresponds with "appropriation" in more than one way. The Holy Spirit cannot only be spoken of as working appropriation, but also as making us partakers. On the other hand, we react not only of "appropriating to myself by faith," but also of "partaking by faith" (cf. H.C., L.D. 12, Q.A. 32 – "partaker of His anointing by faith" – and L.D.25, Q.A. 65 – "we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only").

⁵We must make it clear that the position of Trimp actually comes down to the same thing. Cf. Velema (ed.) *Delen*, p. 29: "We must always begin with God and with the question how He desires to come to us."

⁶The two latter terms were the preferred usage of Prof. W. Kremer in his plea for trinitarian preaching. See for example, his: *Priestelijke Prediking* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976) pp. 23, 100. Though Kremer does interchange the term "the administration of salvation" with "application of salvation" (see p. 72).

⁷It is actually striking that in every question of the Heidelberg Catechism relating to Baptism there is a reference to the blood and Spirit of Christ as the source of our cleansing. This distinction is obviously of great significance especially in relation to Baptism.

⁸The inaugural address of Professor L.H. Vander Meiden, *De Bijzondere Geesteswerking met het Woord* (Dordrecht, 1949) is still significant here.

⁹Hermann Rhatmann (+1628) was a minister in Danzig, Germany, who published a treatise in which he taught that the Word had no power in itself to convert people, unless the Holy Spirit

applied grace along with it. In reaction to this virtually all Lutheran theologians opposed him and developed what was presented as the true Lutheran dogma, teaching that God's Word contained the converting power of the Holy Spirit in itself, that this power was applied to it by divine dispensation and is inseparably bound to the Word. (CF. Bavinck, Herman, *Het Woord als Genademiddel*, in *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. IV. p.437. [English readers will note with interest that this formidable work of Bavinck is being translated, P.V.])


¹⁰What Prof. Van Genderen writes in J. Van Genderen en W.H. Velema, *Beknopte Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1992), pp. 695 ff. is significant for this whole section. (This work is also in the process of being translated into English, P.V.)

¹¹These sections of the Canons of Dort had a very important function in the official discussions between the deputies of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* (corresponding with Free Reformed) and the *Gereformeerde-Vrijgemaakt* (corresponding with Canadian/American Reformed) Churches. See *Acta van de generale synode der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, 1962*. pp.241-243. Among other things, the point of departure in this discussion is of special significance: "We asked: Is not the central difference in the different understanding of this relationship (namely, of Word and Spirit)? The answer given was that the Word is the organ (orgaan) of the Holy Spirit. It was strongly stressed that the confessions speak of the Holy Spirit as working by, but not with, the Word. Appropriation has its place in the

preaching. "Compare this latter perspective with that of C. Trimp. *Klank en Weerklank* ("Sound and Echo") (Barneveld, 1989), p.129: "every sermon is actually from beginning to end appropriation work."

¹²About the close connection between the Spirit and Means of Grace the *Canons of Dort* also say: ". . . so even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what He of His good pleasure hath most intimately joined together" (C.D., III/IV. Art. 17).

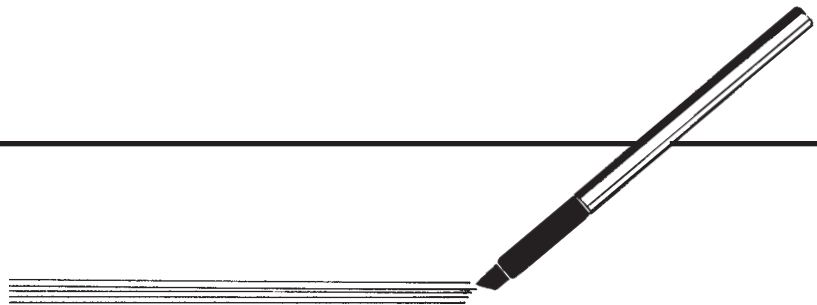
Rev. A. Baars is the pastor of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk of Middelharnis, NL.

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THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



In Byford, Australia, the question was raised why the abbreviated form for the Holy Supper is used in the afternoon only. It is not only in Byford that this question is raised. Now that in most churches the Holy Supper is held every second month and usually in the morning service it could be considered to alternate the shorter and the longer form.

Churches are receiving notice from the convening Church at Fergus that the next General Synod is to be held in Fergus, starting May 5, 1998.

The practical part of the training for the ministry is receiving more attention. The Church at Smithville is planning to have one of the students participate in some of the aspects of the ministry by sitting in on some consistory meetings and making certain visits to the congregation for the summer months.

The Watford School Society and the London and District School Society in Ontario have amalgamated. The education of the children will from here on be a joint effort. The Watford Society could (as a result?) give a sizeable donation to the Watford church building fund which will bring them much closer to the goal of erecting a new building.

Rev. Cl. Stam of Hamilton, ON will be on a sabbatical from Jan. 1 to August 1998.

Rev. H. Versteeg held his "farewell sermon" on September 21. For some twenty years he has worked as their missionary in Irian Jaya and the Lord granted many visible re-

sults. Much reason for thankfulness. Rev. Versteeg accepted a call to the Church at Chatham.

In Australia at a mission meeting the cooperating churches decided to grant Albany's request to be released as sending church after finishing its commitments to Port Moresby, Ekora and the two theological students. Armadale was requested to take up the responsibility for Lae, the remaining "mission post" of Australia.

Recently the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Edmonton (Free Church of Scotland) was made a "fully sanctioned charge" which means it was upgraded from a preaching station of the Toronto Free Church. So the Edmonton bulletin of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church informs us. Rev. Kent Compton was inducted (ordained) to the pastoral charge of this congregation. Since 1992 we live in a sister church relationship with these churches.

The new Flamborough Church in Ontario decided to return to the traditional way of having new office bearers sign the subscription form at the first council meeting rather than during the worship service in which their ordination takes place.

Last June I notified the Editorial Committee that I would like to pass on the hi-liter pen to someone else as of January 1, 1998 after hi-liting for some three years. I therefore request all the faithful senders of church bulletins, etc. to stop sending them to my address as of December 1, 1997. I am sure that as soon as my successor is known you will be informed by the editors of the new address. Hope to meet you in this column at least one more time!



*If you love Christ, you will
make much of your minister
on account of his being His gift.
(Charles Spurgeon)*

Pastor Dr. James Visscher – 25 years minister of the Word

The front cover of an attractive looking 14-page program with its professional layout announced: *Evening of Praise* (+ a bar of music)/Twenty-five years of God's Blessings/Pastor James and Mrs. Willy Visscher/October 1972 - October 1997/. The back cover displayed the text: "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news . . ." (Isaiah 61:1a).

At first glance I was surprised at the impressive number of psalms and hymns of praise we were apparently expected to sing, but as the evening progressed it became evident that the organizers had made wise decisions. More about that later.

The vice-chairman of the Church Council, Harry Moes, opened the evening (October 17) with Scripture reading and prayer. In his speech he reminded us that ministers are received for us and given to us by Christ. As both Pastor Visscher and Sr. Willy Visscher would want, we give thanks not to their work but to our heavenly Father for using them as His instruments.

Psalm 147: 1-7 sets the tone for this evening: to praise Him. Luther, who highly esteemed the gift of song, said that "let him to whom it is granted rejoice therein; and let him who lacks it seek, . . . but sing, for it is a good gift of the Creator."

We followed his advice.

Dave Kieft (vocal) accompanied at the piano the Koning brothers: Brian (guitar) and Steve (vocal) in "People get ready."

Next, br. H. Moes read a number of faxed congratulations. From the Board of Governors (Theological College) to its chairman: The Reverend Dr. J. Visscher; from Coaldale, AB (his first congregation), where he served from 1972 - 1978; from the Church at Aldergrove, which



Reverend James and Mrs. Willy Visscher

elder Bert Vane called a "full-fledged daughter of the Church in Langley," an allusion to the greater part of Aldergrove's congregation having been members of the Langley Church.

The Rev. J. Moesker presented congratulations on behalf of the churches which belonged to Classis Pacific. He referred to the fact that the Rev. J. Visscher had been pastor in Cloverdale from 1978-1987. Since the two colleagues live in relatively close proximity, they phone each other as "Jack down the hill" and "Jack up the hill" (the topography of their sub-division being hilly).

It is difficult to estimate how many of the Rev. J. Moesker's listeners were (initially) taken in by his reading from a letter, allegedly from the archives of the Board of Governors. At any rate, the enumeration of pastor Visscher's characteristics and his capabilities as mentioned in the "letter" was convincing, with hindsight. After his entertaining talk, pastor Moesker observed that because of the nine years which pastor Visscher had served in Cloverdale in

addition to the 10 years in Langley, he has now the distinction of being the senior minister in BC. He concluded by saying that "Praise belongs to God, Who gave wisdom, strength, and inspiration to do the work." On behalf of the congregation at Cloverdale he presented their gift, a framed picture.

Adding a Hebrew flavour to the musical proceedings, Angelina VanDyke (at the piano) sang with Dave Kieft a duet: "El Shaddai" [the Almighty].

As time progressed, the audience proved that they were quite capable of singing several stanzas of four, or even five, psalms and hymns in succession, without fatigue or losing pitch. The lively singing was accompanied by Alice Bergsma, at the console, who with well-chosen interludes stitched the different melodies seamlessly together. At this rate of singing we could expect to finish the ambitious program after all . . . So much for putting my initial uneasiness at ease.

The program's next number was entitled: "On a Lighter Note" in the course of which Mrs. Ginny VanderHorst and

Reverend Visscher,
Mrs. Visscher,
Oma Visscher,
Randal Visscher
– “On a lighter
note . . .”



Nadia Emmens,
Andy Emmens,
Andy Luiten –
“Andy and Andy”

Mrs. Greta Wildeboer (gently) joshed some of the lapses of the Rev. Visscher was said to have committed (in the past). The focal point of this skit was the pastor’s gown: a) made by Mother Visscher, b) adored by little girls, c) tripped over a staircase.

Finally, how many of us were acquainted with the fact that our pastor had studied political science before replacing it by theological studies?

The programme also featured the music of a unique group: Andy Emmens (mandolin), his daughters Karen (alto recorder, bodhran drum), Cindy (flute and recorder), Nadia (violin); in addition: Andy Luitens (guitar) with his sons Jonathan (guitar) and Matthew (clarinet). They played a variety of music in different styles and moods, and displayed fine musicianship. Their rendition of Hymn 48 (“If you but let the Father guide you . . .”) positively sparkled. It was appreciated that Karen as well added her clear trumpet sound to the congregational singing.

After having located a mike that suited his preference, the Rev. D. Van der Boom (Langley 1977 - 1983) put the question: “Whom do I represent?” and answered “No one.” In an approach

that was uncharacteristic of him, our Nestor structured his theme (i.e. *Pastor Visscher’s traits*) in the time-honoured fashion: 1. distinct; 2. disciple; 3. distributor. 1. Distinct: James Visscher was the first graduating student who had studied at the seminary consecutively. He was the last student to graduate after three years of study, and was one of the rare students who married after his graduation. 2. Disciple: First of the local church, then of the professors and, in his pastoral work: a full-time disciple of the Lord. 3. Distributor: He is entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel and thus distributes the good news of Christ’s love for His Church.

On behalf of the Langley congregation, Tako J. vanPopta presented our pastor and his wife with a painting of a B.C. coastal scene (in addition to the previous gift of a six-month “sabbatical”).

Randy Moes (Jr.) as president of ‘The Langley Youth Group thanked the Rev. J. Visscher for his assistance and advice. This was followed by a well-articulated performance by some 36 members of the group singing an Easter song: “Early in the morning.” They were accompanied on the piano by Vanessa Aikema.

CHURCH NEWS



NEW ADDRESS:

Rev. Henry Versteeg

481 McNaughton Ave. East
Chatham, Ontario
Canada N7L 2H2
home phone number 519-354-8946
study phone number 519-354-2503
(including fax on computer)
email: <versteeg@netrover.com>

* * *

NEW EMAIL:

Rev. C. Bosch

Burlington South, ON
Email: cbosch@netaccess.on.ca

In his response to the celebration, our pastor mentioned being surprised that 25 years had passed so rapidly. After all the positive things he had heard this evening, he said being left with a sense of unreality, since personal weaknesses will linger. He said that he could look back on 25 years of blessings beyond expectation and was grateful that his mother, too, could be present this evening. In paying tribute to his wife for her unstinting support, he also mentioned that the children had a formative function in his career.

Further, he pointed out that he had always “pastored” with much satisfaction, and added that a minister’s work cannot be done in isolation but that he needed the prayers of the congregation to support him, so that his needs may be provided for.

He expressed his thankfulness to the Lord for what has been given to him and his family, for the organization of this evening, and the work that could be done for the Church federation.

Harry Moes reminded the congregation to commend our pastor to the Lord in our personal prayers, and closed with thanksgiving. This ended a generous programme that attested to the praise we owe our Lord for His rich blessings.

The festivities continued in the informal setting of the church annex, where we could congratulate, socialize, and use a variety of refreshments.

Rienk Koat 

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Dear editor,

I wish to commend Dr. DeJong for his fine article on User-Friendly Evangelism. Reformed Christians can certainly laud the evangelistic zeal of Bill Hybels so long as they acknowledge that his methodology suffers at various points. Permit me briefly to underscore two of them:


For one, Hybels lacks an historical consciousness. Generally speaking, North American evangelicals have been hesitant, even without maintaining church confessions, to counter the theological doctrines of the historic church, but surprisingly quick to deny its liturgical tradition. In this respect, Hybels fits the mold. Hybels' conviction that the worshiping church should accommodate to the demands of a changing culture (e.g. become more visual oriented) envisions a church which is transient and fluid. This, one would think, is not very 'seeker-sensitive.' Personally, I would much prefer a stable church with deep

roots in history. History gives credence to a church; novelty makes it suspect.

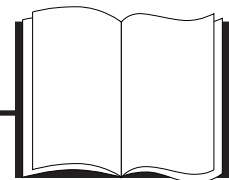
For two, Hybels lacks a covenantal consciousness. As a Reformed church planter, I have reached the conclusion that unchurched guests at a worship service should feel welcome, but not comfortable. Here, I believe, we have an important distinction – one alluded to by Dr. DeJong – which does justice both to our understanding of evangelism and ecclesiology (doctrine of the church). Reformed believers should welcome unchurched visitors with open arms. Ministers should be encouraged to do this from the pulpit before official, public worship commences (i.e. before the salutation). The unchurched visitor, however, should feel uncomfortable during worship. He should come to awareness that the salutation and benediction are not for him. He should realize that the assurance of pardon which comes through Word preached is for the covenant community, outside of which he stands. This feeling of dis-ease should

prompt him to ask, how can I receive this pardon, this benediction, this salvation? How can I sing songs like this to my Creator with His people? At this point, the unchurched visitor can be ushered to the elders who can enroll him in a membership or catechism class.

Permit me to conclude on a personal note. I was invited by my father-in-law (Dr. Nelson Kloosterman) to meet with the delegation of ministers from the Liberated churches who came to Chicago to investigate the Willow Creek phenomenon. I detected that these ministers have come to the conclusion that evangelism has been a neglected feature of their church life – something for which I am happy and thankful. The question which now confronts them is: how do we remedy this problem? I would hope and pray that their – and our – answer is not Willow Creek.

With kind regards,
Bill DeJong
Grande Prairie, AB 

READER'S FORUM



Bible Translations

Translating God's Word has been controversial through history. Also today, mellow, hot and cold words have been written and spoken on which Translation is the most correct, or the only correct one. Does it really matter? There are more than twenty-five different translations in the English language only. I'm sure that more will follow.

When we arrived in this beautiful country we used a Bible that had Dutch and English beside each other on the same page. And of course the English was that of the good old "King James." We got used to the Thee's and Thou's, had more difficulty with Thine and didst, but we learned.

Soon it became familiar, and we did not need the Dutch half anymore. The KJV became for us a "mother" language. The things we learned first as grown up children in a new land with a strange and difficult language. We became attached to the quaint words that were only used in church or when we read the Bible. Even today those words do not sound strange, for it is the Word of the Lord. To some those words are not to be replaced. We left the CanRC, joined the ChrRC and we used the RSV. The words were closer to what we used every day, so it did not take much getting used to.

Printing and selling Bibles is a good business. The Bible is off best sellers'

lists, because it was always on top. Simony has in history been a temptation hard to resist; many have fallen under its allure. More and more new copyrighted translations came on the market. In church we started to use the NIV and in due time we also purchased a copy at an outrageous price. It was printed well, had fine paper, and was easy to read. Sometimes, when reading out loud, the sentences did not flow rhythmically, but we got used to it and read it every day. Before long we even liked to read it, for the language was again more contemporary.

The Lord worked things in such a way that we went back to the CanRC and

got used to the RSV again without too much trouble. While traveling and staying in motels, we always check to see if there is a Bible in the room. If there is one we use the Gideon Bible that is there for our evening and morning devotions.

One day, reading out of this Bible the language surprised us, it flowed rhythmically, was easy to read and readily understood. We looked in front and discovered that it was a NKJV. Well we haven't looked back. We bought a NKJV study Bible and use that translation for reading out loud at table and enjoy it. The language sings, it is a pleasure to read from the NKJV. Of course we still have the RSV and the NIV and a KJV.

One reason given for the recommendation of the use of the NIV was that the editors of the translation are open to any suggestions that we may have regarding further changes. New editions of

the NIV are to be expected. How often do we have to change God's Word?


At one time there was only the Bible, which could be bought in several qualities. The believing reader or hearer read or heard this Bible trusting that the Spirit would work in his heart and mind so that it would become clear what the Lord wanted this particular Christian to know.

Things have changed apparently for now we cannot trust the individual believer to understand what the Lord wants to say. The NIV has something for everybody. When Synod approved the NIV it thought that it was approving a new translation of God's Word. Now there is a NIV Life Application Bible, a NIV Study Bible, a NIV Quest Study Bible and a NIV Women's Study Bible.

Are all these Bibles vetted and approved by Synod? Have they even been

reviewed by anybody, and are the "Kant tekeningen" free from Arminianisms and Theonomy? Who knows? Just some questions that may need answers.

The greatest thing about our Lord is that, contrary to the world that seemingly ever needs changing, He does not need change, His Word does not change. Does it make a difference which translation we are reading? I think not. The Lord uses all versions to call His people, and being "Dutchly Stewardly," would it not make sense to stick with the RSV if the copyright expires shortly? We could even have another printing of Bible and Book of Praise in one. Again we would have a ready made birthday present for our grandchildren when they turn six and proudly hold on to their own Bible in church!

Gerrit van de Kamp
Surrey, BC. 

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of the Classis Pacific Meeting in Langley on October 7, 1997

On behalf of the convening church, the Church at Chilliwack, the Rev. M.H. VanLuik asked the brothers to sing from Psalm 139: 1,2,13 and read from Ephesians 4: 17-32. He welcomed all the delegates and made mention of some highlights that have taken place among the churches and ministers of Classis.

The Church at Aldergrove reported on the credentials and stated that they were found to be in good order. A number of churches sent alternates and had instructions.

Classis was declared constituted and the following officers were appointed to act as executives:

Chairman - Rev. J. Huijgen
Vice-Chairman - Rev. J. Visscher
Clerk - Rev. E. Kampen

The agenda was updated and adopted.

Church visits to the following churches were read and received: Aldergrove, Cloverdale, Houston, Langley, Smithers, Surrey and Vernon.

The Church at Vernon audited the books of the Classical Treasurer and their report was received. There was no report from the Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry. The Committee for Needy Churches reported and rec-

ommended that the Church at Vernon receive financial support. This recommendation was accepted.

The Committee for Division of Classis submitted its report and recommended that Classis be divided into two classes. Classis Pacific West and Classis Pacific Interior. This recommendation was accepted, with the names being Classis Pacific East (composed of the churches at Abbotsford, Aldergrove, Chilliwack, Lynden, Vernon and Yarrow) and Classis Pacific West (composed of the churches at Cloverdale, Houston, Langley, Smithers, Surrey and Willoughby Heights). It was decided to continue to share financial costs for needy churches for at least the next five years.

The Church at Willoughby Heights had proposed a revision of the Classical Regulation; however, seeing that Classis Pacific will be divided, this matter cannot be dealt with.

Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held. One church asked whether another church was honouring the decisions of the major assemblies. An affirmative reply was given. Two churches asked advice in matters of discipline. Advice was given.

Arrangements were made for the next Classis. The Convening Church for Classis Pacific West will be the

Church at Cloverdale, the place will be Cloverdale and the date will be Tuesday, December 9, 1997 (alternate date: March 31, 1998). The suggested officers will be: Rev. J. Visscher, chairman, Rev. E. Kampen, vice-chairman, Rev. C. VanSpronsen, clerk.

The Convening Church for Classic Pacific East will be the Church at Abbotsford, the place will be Abbotsford and the date will be Tuesday, December 9, 1997 (alternate date: March 31, 1998). The suggested officers will be: Rev. D. Moes, chairman, Rev. M.H. VanLuik, vice-chairman, Rev. H. Boersma, clerk.

The following delegates are appointed to Regional Synod: Ministers: E. Kampen, J. Louwerse, R. Schouten, W.M. Wielenga (Alternates: D. Moes, C.J. VanderVelde, J. Huijgen, J. Moesker, in that order); Elders: G. Boeve, R. deHaan, C. Leyenhorst, W. Pleiter (Alternates: P. VanWoudenberg, C. deHaas, P. Jansen, J.F. deLeeuw, in that order).

Question Period was held.

Censure ad Article 34 C.O. was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

The Chairman requested the brothers to sing Psalm 31:1,2,15 and led in prayer.

The Classis was closed.

For the Classis, J. Visscher 