



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

*“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among men
with whom He is pleased!”*

Luke 2:14

*The editorial staff of Clarion wishes the readers a
blessed year of our Lord, 1999!*

*We count it a privilege to share the gospel and its
implications for today by means of this magazine.*

*May our gracious God continue to grant
his blessings.*

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Dear Krista, Ismay, Brendan, and Trevor

G.Ph. van Popta

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘Make two silver trumpets . . . they shall serve you for remembrance before your God: I am the LORD your God.’”
Numbers 10: 1-10

We received a very interesting package in the mail this week. Among the bills and the flyers was an envelope from Credo Christian Elementary School in Langley, British Columbia. It contained letters from four grade four students, Krista, Ismay, Brendan, and Trevor. Besides writing great things about their teacher and hockey, they asked some questions about our magazine. They are studying church history and needed to find out the connection between *Clarion* and the church. Although we will write the students individually, we will also answer their questions in this editorial.

What does “Clarion” mean?

If you look on the cover of *Clarion*, you will see a picture of two men blowing trumpets and an open Bible with “Numbers 10:1-10” written on the pages. In Numbers 10:1-10, the LORD told Moses to make two silver trumpets for calling the people of Israel together. These trumpets can also be called *clarions*. A clarion is a long, straight, slender metal tube that has a flared end. Blowing on it would make a very loud, clear, piercing noise. In fact, the word *clarion* comes from the Latin word *clarus* which means “clear.” The sons of Aaron, priests, were to blow the trumpets to give the people of Israel clear and important signals. They would make different sounds for different messages. Basically, they were used to indicate times of worship and warfare.

Why, then, do we call our magazine “Clarion” after the clarions mentioned in Numbers 10? With the articles we publish, we try to make a clear though piercing sound. Some articles have to do with happy celebrations. Other articles are meant to instruct the reader. Yet others give the sound of warning.

Where did Clarion come from?

Way back in 1952, forty-seven years ago, when there were only nine Canadian Reformed Churches, several minis-

ters and other men began a magazine called the *Canadian Reformed Magazine*. The idea was to publish articles faithful to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. This would serve two purposes. Some articles would instruct the members of the churches about the Word of God while others would tell about what was happening in the different congregations. There were only a few churches spread across a huge continent. Most of the church members had just immigrated from Holland. The *Canadian Reformed Magazine* was going to act, in a way, like glue to help the churches and members stick together. In 1973, the name of the magazine was changed to *Clarion: The Canadian Reformed Magazine*. Although the name changed, the purposes remained.

How many people work for Clarion and where do they work?

If you look under “Editorial Committee” in the masthead (usually right inside the first pages) you will see the names of six people called “editors.” At the moment, the editors are all either ministers of congregations or professors at our Theological College. That means taking care of *Clarion* is not their first task. First of all they are professors who train men to be ministers and missionaries, or they are ministers of congregations – just like your minister. In addition to their work as professors and ministers, they also keep *Clarion* going. The editors decide what should be published. At least once per year they get together to plan out the different topics that are going to be written about in the following year. The editors themselves write articles and they invite other people to write on certain topics. When they receive articles from different writers, some of the editors have the job to read them carefully to make sure the article is faithful to the Word of God, and that the spelling, grammar, style and punctuation are correct.

The editors live in Ontario (Burlington, Hamilton, Ancaster) and in Alberta (Edmonton, Coaldale). They all work out of their own studies but are linked together by e-mail, fax, and telephone.

Many men and women write for *Clarion*. If you look through several issues, you will see some names appear regularly. We are very thankful for the regular contributors who spend a lot of time writing for our magazine.

Clarion is printed in Winnipeg by Premier Publishing. This company, owned by some people of our churches in Winnipeg, owns *Clarion*.

I did not quite answer the question of how many people work for *Clarion* because it is a hard question to answer. There is the publisher, the six editors, and many contributors. *Clarion* has no employees. Rather, it has many people who work for it in their spare time.

Clarion's purpose

Several of the questions have to do with the purpose of *Clarion*. The goal of our magazine is to provide the readers with good, upbuilding articles which are based upon the Word of God and faithful to the Reformed confessions. Some articles will teach; others will challenge; yet others will comfort and encourage. Some have to do with what we believe; others have to do with how we are to live.

You will also find news reports and stories of things happening in our churches in Canada and the United States of

America. We will report on events in our sister churches in Australia, Scotland, Korea, South Africa, and the Netherlands. We will tell about what is happening among God's people throughout the world.

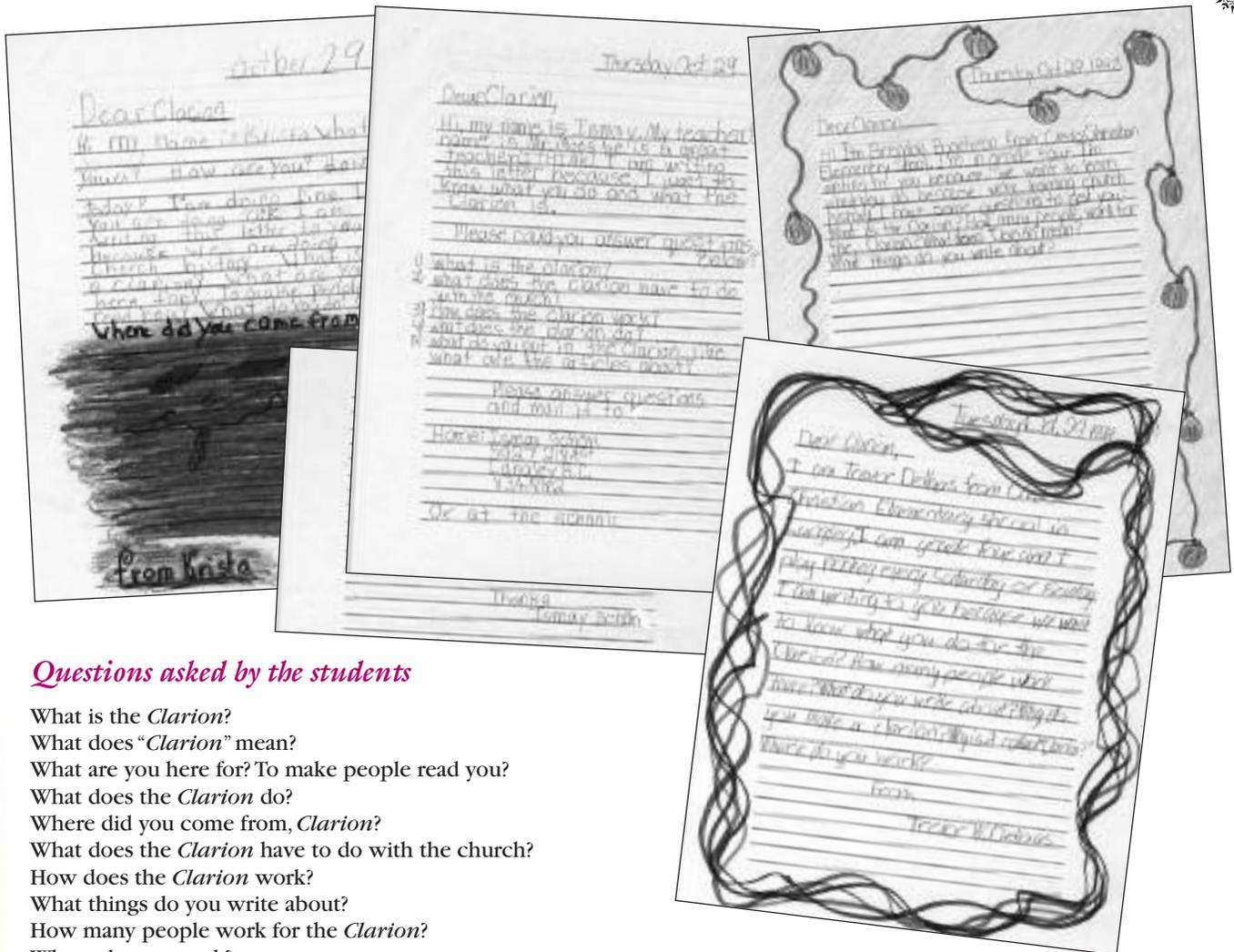
Just like the *Canadian Reformed Magazine* wanted to instruct and inform the readers, so *Clarion* wants to instruct and inform.

Although *Clarion* is not owned by the Canadian Reformed Churches, yet it wants first of all to be a tool for building up and strengthening the members of these churches. Many people from other churches read *Clarion* as well. We are very happy about that.

Thankfulness and best wishes

The LORD has been good to us. He has allowed us to bring another year of publication to a close. Soon we will begin our forty-eighth year. It is our prayer that the LORD will be pleased to use us in 1999 to provide worthy articles that will build up and develop life in our churches and so help us all to remain under the Word of God in what we believe and in how we live.

As the one providing the Year End editorial, I wish all our readers God's mercy and grace for the upcoming year of the Lord, 1999. May He bless you in all your good endeavours! God be with you all! Best wishes, Krista, Ismay, Brendan, and Trevor! Best wishes to all!



Questions asked by the students

- What is the *Clarion*?
- What does "*Clarion*" mean?
- What are you here for? To make people read you?
- What does the *Clarion* do?
- Where did you come from, *Clarion*?
- What does the *Clarion* have to do with the church?
- How does the *Clarion* work?
- What things do you write about?
- How many people work for the *Clarion*?
- Where do you work?
- What do you put in the *Clarion*, like, what are the articles about?

What's Inside?

You are holding in your hand the ever popular Year-End issue of *Clarion*. In it you will read best wishes from many of your brothers and sisters in the Lord as well as many greetings from our business communities. May the Lord grant us all a pleasant festive season and a great year in His service.

We offer quite a variety and number of articles for your fireside reading pleasure:

- Dr. N.H. Gootjes has written another (the eighth consecutive Year-End) article about the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Rev. W. de Hollander once again reviews the events of the past year.
- Dr. J. Visscher supplied a second installment on the Acts of General Synod Fergus.
- Rev. J. Mulder returns to the recent Synod's OPC decision.
- Rev. D.G.J. Agema writes about fostering wholeness in the family.
- Dr. J. De Jong comes back to the topic of the appropriation of salvation. He also submits a press review.

Then there are the number of reports nicely illustrated: on a trip to Haiti; on *Campfire!*; the latest Guido graduation ceremony; the Ontario women's league day; the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Ebenezer* Christian School in Chatham.

Besides Hiliter and an Observation Deck, you'll find a few reader contributions.

Lots to read!

This brings us to the end of another issue. Another 650 pages of print added to the body of that which has been written in the world. We, at *Clarion*, sincerely hope we served you well by way of instructive and informative articles. Oh, you probably did not agree with everything you read. At times we may have provoked and annoyed you. Other times, we may have made you smile or shed a tear. We hope we always made you think and reflect. If we made you reach for your Bible to check what you read by the infallible Standard, we are glad. It is our prayer that the Lord God will be pleased to use *Clarion* as an additional means to build up his churches and people in the true Christian faith and walk of life.

GvP



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Confessing the Virgin Birth

N.H. Gootjes

*“ . . . and you shall call His name Jesus, for
He will save his people from their sins”
Matthew 1:21*

The Christian church learned over a long period of time to confess the truths revealed in the Scriptures. God guided history in such a way that it became more and more clear to the church what to confess. We can notice how God gave insight in the faith and the strength to resist heresy. This led to many creeds being formulated during the first 500 years of the Christian era. Many of these creeds were originally creeds of local centres of Christianity, others were made by national or even international councils. It is fascinating to see how the confession concerning Jesus Christ's birth developed. A glance at this development will make us grateful for the insight the church gained in the course of its history.

Not in the creed

One noteworthy fact is that not all early creeds mention the virgin birth. There are several which do elaborate on the Son of God, without referring to the virgin birth. The most important of these is the creed adopted by the Council of Nicea in 325, by more than 350 bishops (ministers) from all over the Greek speaking world. The reason for this omission cannot be that this creed is too brief, as a matter of fact it speaks extensively about the Son:

(We believe) in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from

true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man¹

It is understandable that this creed deals extensively with the divinity of the Son, as this was disputed by Arius and his followers. All the more does it surprise that the virgin birth is not mentioned.

This is not the only early creed without reference to the virgin birth, however, there are others phrased in a similar way.² Moreover, there are a number of creeds which do mention Mary but are silent about the work of the Holy Spirit in the birth of the Messiah.³ That fact confronts us with the question whether these early creeds were wrong in omitting the virgin birth. If that is not the case, do we require too much when we include this doctrine in our confession?

When we compare the early creeds with Scripture we soon realize that not everything which is recorded in Scripture received a place in the creeds. Moreover, not just matters of minor importance are omitted, major works are left unmentioned. That begins already in the statement about God the Father. The only work mentioned in connection with the Father is the creation of the universe. No reference is made to the fact that God continues to maintain and govern the

world. Crucial historical events such as the fall, God's punishment and the promise of salvation are not included either. We can, therefore, not say that the creeds mention all the important events. Actually they say very little about the work of God the Father.

The early creeds say more about the coming and the work of God's Son. This is consistent with the fact that this period of God's work is more comprehensively recorded in Scripture. Four books in the Bible are devoted to the coming and work of the Son. But again, the creeds are very selective in what they include. Nothing is said about his miracles and his teaching. Without denying these important parts of Christ's work, the creeds concentrate on his coming into the world, suffering, death and resurrection. They concentrate on crucial stages in his work.

Now we must answer the question whether the Council of Nicea is to blame for not speaking of the virgin birth. Let us look at what it does say:

Who because of us men and our salvation came down and was incarnate. The expressions are derived from two well known passages in the gospel – John 3:13: “the one who came (down) from heaven” (see also 6:38) and John 1:14: “the word became flesh”. In confessing the coming of Jesus Christ, the Apostles' Creed followed the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the Nicene Creed followed John's gospel. These two

formulations are not mutually exclusive. Actually they nicely supplement one another.

What the Nicene Creed mentions is important in itself. There has always been much speculation about the reasons for the incarnation. One such speculation was that the Son by his incarnation united the two opposites, the eternal God and the created world, in Himself. As if God is far from a world which He Himself had created! This kind of speculation is excluded by the creed when it states that our salvation was the reason why the Son of God came into this world. The whole human race had fallen into sin and could not escape from it by its own power. Then God's Son came down from heaven to set free the people bound in slavery to sin. This is the biblical perspective on the coming of the Son. It is so important that it is expressed in his name. The angel told Joseph that Mary would bear a son "and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins", Matthew 1:21.

This particular emphasis on salvation is not expressed in the Apostles' Creed, but we need not blame the Apostles' Creed for this omission. In a similar way, we need not blame the bishops present at the Council of Nicea for not mentioning the virgin birth. They did not deny Christ's miraculous way of coming into the world, but they were concerned with two important aspects: He became true man, and He came to save us.

Why included in the Creed?

Of course, we are thankful that the virgin birth was included later. As early as the Creed of the Council of Constantinople (381) the confession of the Son contains this sentence:

Who, for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and became man⁴. This formulation of the virgin birth is very close to the earlier form of the Apostles' Creed:

who was born from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary.⁵ Why was the virgin birth included in the confession of the Son of God?

The answer cannot be that the virgin birth was mentioned because it is a great miracle. To be sure, it is a mighty wonder, beyond our understanding, but there are other marvellous events of Christ's life recorded in the gospel which are not included in the creed. Christ's stilling the storm and calming

the sea with a command clearly proves his divine power over nature. The raising of people from the dead, and in particular the raising of Lazarus are extraordinary and comforting facts. The disciples were utterly amazed at these displays of his divine power, but the creeds do not mention them. The church saw no need to mention these proofs of Christ's divine power separately in its creeds.

A better answer is that the virgin birth fits well with the other events from Christ's life: his birth, his suffering and death, his resurrection, ascension and installation as king at God's right hand. The church recognized that the virgin birth needed to be included among these pivotal stages in Christ's life.

We can still go one step further. The Nicene Creed refers particularly to our salvation. Among all the things the Son

of God did for our salvation, the virgin birth is first and foremost. The human race was in dire need of someone to save it. It could not, however, produce a saviour since all are sinners. The creed, by referring to the virgin birth, now underlines that the Saviour could not be produced by sinful men. It was God who made salvation possible. The Son was willing to come in human flesh, and the Spirit of God formed his human body in Mary. In mentioning the virgin birth, the creed underlines that our salvation depends on a miracle done by the Spirit of God.

We are very thankful, that the church has left behind the original Nicene Creed, and now uses the expanded version, including the statement concerning the virgin birth. This needs to be maintained over against any teaching as if we can save ourselves.



Drawing of Augustine

Those who deny the virgin birth move away from the very foundations of our Christian faith.

A new formulation

There is yet another stage in the development of the creeds that requires our attention. There is not only a difference between the 'original' Nicene Creed of 325, and the 'revised' Nicene Creed of 381, there is also a difference between the 'original' Apostles' Creed and the 'revised' Apostles' Creed. In the 'original' Apostles Creed, the Spirit and Mary are combined, when it says about the Son:

who was born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary.

In the later version of the Apostles' Creed, however, the work of the Spirit is distinguished from that of Mary:

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary.

What was the reason for this change?

Looking at the history of the Apostles' Creed, we notice that this expanded form is first found in France, in the creed of Riez, dating from the end of the fifth Century, and in the creeds of Arles and Toulon, from the sixth.⁶ This seems to indicate that the change originates in France, and that provides an indication to look for the background of the change in Augustine, for he was at the time very influential in France. It can be noted that Augustine was not comfortable with the expression of the Creed on the issue of the virgin birth. In his commentary on it he discussed the difficulty that the expression 'born from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary' might suggest that Jesus

was the son of the Holy Spirit.⁷ It could even sound as if Christ's birth was a parallel of the many classical stories about half-gods, sons of a god as father and a woman as mother.

Augustine did not come up with a different formulation, but he did attempt to solve the problem. He pointed out that Christ is never called Son of the Spirit, but always Son of the Almighty Father. Moreover, those who are born of water and Spirit (John 3) are called sons of God the Father and the church as mother.⁸ Augustine's solutions did little to resolve the problem, however they did alert his readers to a problem in the formulation of their creed. Any misunderstanding is prevented in the French formulation of the Apostles' Creed. In the providence of God, this late French version later received dominance, and was eventually taken over by the church in Rome. And so we received the formulation that the Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary.

God led the church to recognizing that the virgin birth is a fundamental issue in the Christian faith. Our salvation does not depend on the fact that Lazarus was raised from the dead, but it does depend on the fact that the Son of God was born from the virgin Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit. The church has even found a formulation that correctly expresses this great truth. We, today, may profit from centuries of thinking about this central truth of our religion. To us is given the task to maintain this miracle that God did for our salvation, in a world that needs this Saviour.

¹ See for text and translation, J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3. ed.; New York: Longman, 1972), 215f. This creed must be distinguished from the creed that is usually called 'Nicene Creed', which is the creed adopted at a later council, the Council of Constantinople, 381, see the introduction to the Nicene Creed in our *Book of Praise*, 437.

² The creeds of Ceasarea and of Jerusalem, see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 182, 184.

³ See the examples in Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 184, 185; 186 and 188. In this context, the creed submitted by Arius to prove his orthodoxy is particularly noteworthy, see Kelly, p. 189. It speaks of the incarnation but does not refer to the virgin birth. Arius probably did not feel he needed to mention the virgin birth in order to be considered orthodox.

⁴ See for the original text Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 297, the translation follows the decision of Synod Fergus, 1998, see *Acts General Synod Fergus 1998*, 179.

⁵ See for the older text of the Apostles' Creed, Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 102.

⁶ See the texts of these creeds in Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 179.

⁷ See Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 377, who refers to Augustine's *Enchiridion*, ch. 38f. Augustine makes the same point in *Sermo* 214, 6. Cyril, too, appears to have had some problems with this expression, see Kelly, 324.

⁸ This appears an unconvincing argument, for the cases of the incarnate Son and of the regenerate believer are very different. Dr. J. Faber suggested in a personal conversation that this second parallel may mean that cooperation in Christ's incarnation does not make the Spirit Father, just as cooperation in a person's regeneration does not make the Spirit the father of the believer.



THE GUIDING STAR

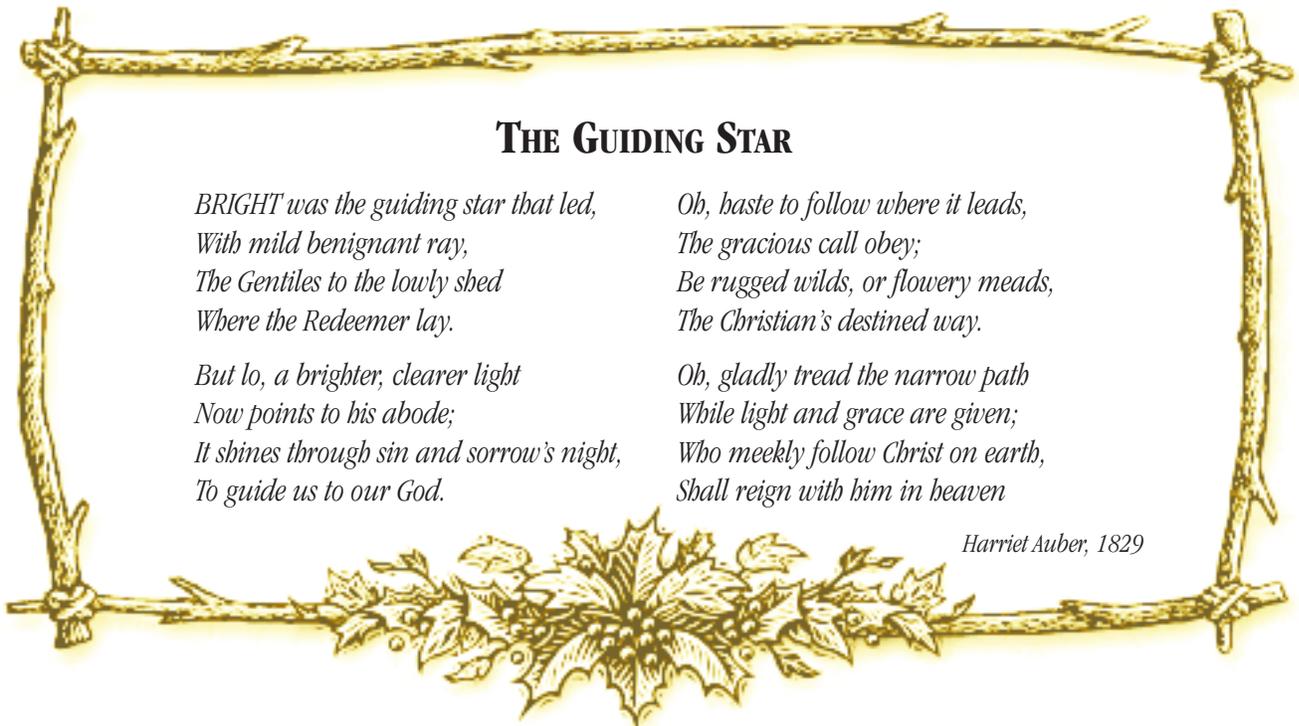
BRIGHT was the guiding star that led,
With mild benignant ray,
The Gentiles to the lowly shed
Where the Redeemer lay.

But lo, a brighter, clearer light
Now points to his abode;
It shines through sin and sorrow's night,
To guide us to our God.

Oh, haste to follow where it leads,
The gracious call obey;
Be rugged wilds, or flowery meads,
The Christian's destined way.

Oh, gladly tread the narrow path
While light and grace are given;
Who meekly follow Christ on earth,
Shall reign with him in heaven

Harriet Auber, 1829





Treasures, New and Old

R. Eikelboom

“And He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’”

Matthew 13:52

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace (Luke 2: 14a).

Through the windows of my study, the world appears to be at peace. The ground is covered with a thin layer of snow. The trees, a short distance away, are gorgeously covered with hoarfrost. In the background I see the snow-capped Canadian Rockies. Hanging over all that is the deep blue sky of the prairie. The story of Christmas – the shepherds in the field, and the angels singing their song of glory to God – it could all have happened right here.

But downtown Calgary is just ten minutes down the road. And Calgary is no different from any other city in the world: full of offices, factories, and houses. Full of cars, busses and trains. But most of all, full of people. And where there are people, there is no peace. Instead there is constant struggle. Struggle to pay the mortgage. Struggle to keep in physical shape. Struggle to juggle the career and the family. And when we see these struggles, peace is just another illusion. Even the word peace seems to belong to another language. Or maybe even another world. For here we find no peace.

But Christmas is a miracle precisely because it took place in a world that does not know peace. For when the angels came down into the field of Ephrathah, when the glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds, the stable in Bethlehem was dark. There were no angels around the manger to praise the newborn King, who was the Son of

God. No glory of the Lord shone around Him. While the glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds, the Light of the world was left in darkness!

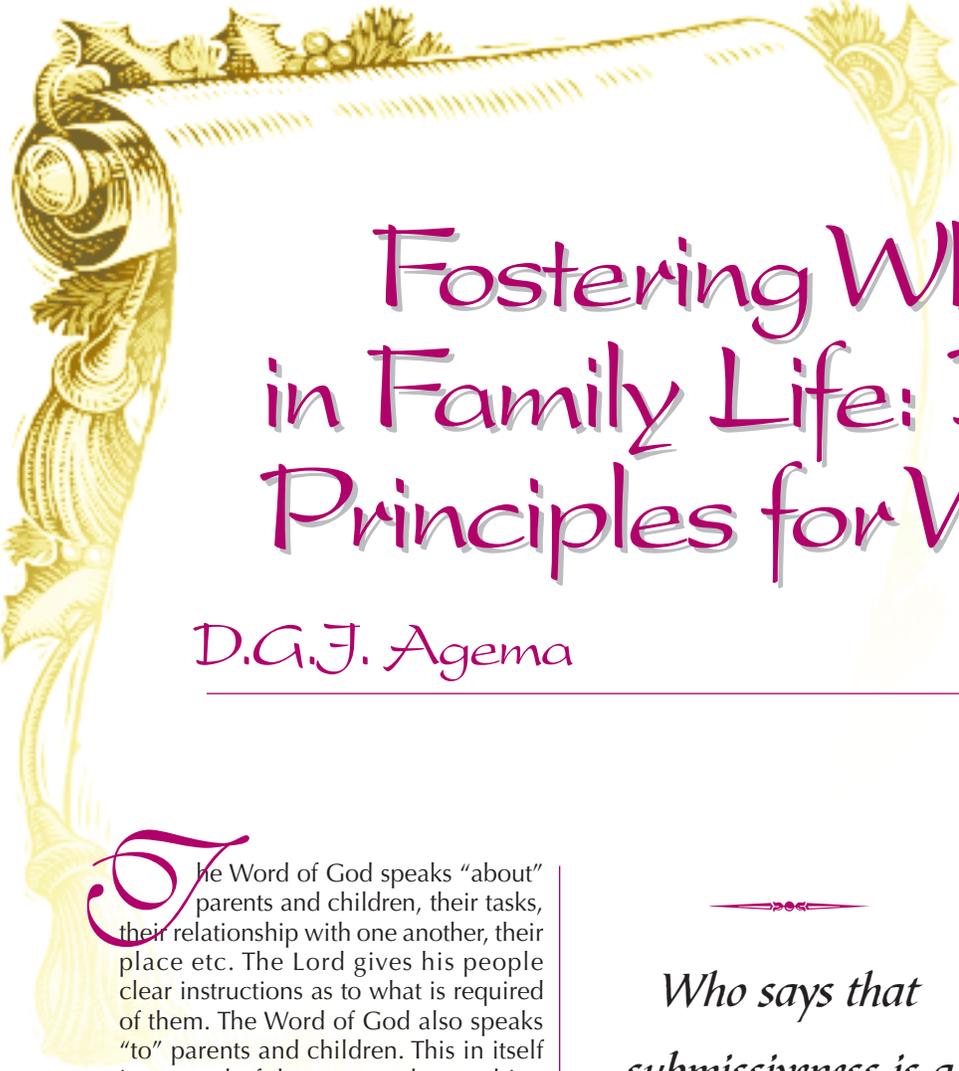
The song of the angels emphasizes the darkness of Bethlehem. For they did not sing of “glory to God in Bethlehem” but “glory to God in the highest,” even though God the Son was no longer in the highest heaven. He had just vacated his throne. He had just emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant. And as a servant He was already walking the road that his Father had prepared for Him – the road of suffering and humiliation that would lead to the cross! No longer is He God in the highest, and no longer is He glorious! The song of the angels – the song of God’s glory – is a song of his humiliation! It is about what Jesus Christ had before and what He left behind when He came down from heaven. It is a bitter reminder of what used to be!

On the first Christmas, the angels sang because Jesus Christ, who is true and eternal God, gave up his heavenly glory. He left it all behind Him when He entered into this dark, sinful world. But if we sing the song of the angels today, its meaning is quite different! After all, Jesus Christ is no longer a servant, and He is no longer on earth! Instead He bore the wrath of God until it was finished. In this way He obtained for us the gift of peace with God, which means eternal life! And then He arose from the dead. He ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of his Father so that once again the Lord Jesus

Christ is God in the highest! When we raise our voices to sing glory to God in the highest, we sing of his glory; we sing of the glory that is the reward for his suffering! Because now it is not the angels who sing this song, but man instead. Once, in Luke 2, the children of God listened to the servants of God singing this song; but today, by the grace of God, we have come to understand this song, and we sing it as well! And even as we sing, we look forward to the time when not just angels sing this song, and not just mankind either. Instead we look forward to the day described in Revelation 7, when a great multitude of people and angels – when all the creatures of God – together sing this song!

And now I look out of my study window again. The world hasn’t changed. It still looks peaceful. I know that there is much misery, much suffering, and many struggles out there. But yet the peace that I see on this beautiful winter’s day is more than an illusion. I want to hold on to it; I want to treasure it, because it is a foretaste of peace! I want to treasure it because the Son of God abandoned his heavenly glory and came into this dark miserable world so that we might shout his praise and declare his glory. So that He might give us peace. Have a happy, peaceful Christmas. And may the peace that you enjoy on Christmas day make you hunger for the eternal peace that is coming! 

Rev. Richard Eikelboom is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Calgary.



Fostering Wholeness in Family Life: Biblical Principles for Wholeness

D.G.J. Agema

The Word of God speaks “about” parents and children, their tasks, their relationship with one another, their place etc. The Lord gives his people clear instructions as to what is required of them. The Word of God also speaks “to” parents and children. This in itself is a wonderful matter and something we should not step over too quickly. Our LORD speaks to adults and children. He gives adults as well as children a place in his covenant. God is not the God for adults only, but claims our children for Himself also. Children are not half-members, or members on a trial basis, but full members of God’s covenant and congregation, no less than adults. The Lord shows this in instructing the parents how to deal with their children and the children how to respect their parents.

Some principles for fostering wholeness

To work this out and come to some principles for fostering wholeness in family life, we do well to look first at the Old Testament. The fifth commandment comes to mind, “Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.” The commandment addresses the children. They too fall under the heading: “I am the LORD your God.” This is a biblical principal for wholeness. The LORD who redeems

—•••—

*Who says that
submissiveness is a
defeat? It is a
spiritual victory, as
wonderful as singing
and praying.*

—•••—

his people claims the lives of parents as well as children in the service of thankfulness. You can also think of the task given to parents to instruct their children in the fear of the LORD (Deut 6). The LORD gave feasts, ceremonies, and landmarks which “forced” the parents and the children to talk about the mighty deeds of the LORD in the past. This is a principle of wholeness as well. As parents and children we are to confess the mighty deeds of God. Yes, the children come to know these mighty deeds and so learn to trust in the LORD

through instruction by the parents. The book of Proverbs, too, is filled from beginning to end with practical instruction to parents and children. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and thus also a principle for wholeness in family life.

In the New Testament this is no different. Not only did the Lord Jesus come into this world as a baby and grow up as a child, He also called the children to Himself and blessed them. Furthermore, the apostles also addressed parents and children showing them their tasks in the Lord. One of the most well known passages is Ephesians 6: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Within the letter to the Ephesians, the part in which Paul writes about leading a life “worthy of the calling to which we have been called,” this wholeness is also addressed. You can also say, Paul writes about this within the context of the renewal of our lives in the power of Christ and by his Spirit.

Be subject to one another

I do not want to go into detail about the specific instructions given to the parents and children, but ask your attention to what precedes them. I like to deal with Ephesians 5 : 21. Here we first have to deal with a translation problem.

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) translates this verse as follows: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." This means the RSV takes these words as a command ("Be subject"). In addition, the RSV uses the words of verse 21, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" to introduce the relationships that Paul deals with further, namely between husband and wife, parents and children, masters and slaves.

The New International Version (NIV) follows the same idea. It translates: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Also here verse 21 is a separate sentence. The difference is that in the printed page this sentence functions as the conclusion of the section that starts in 4:17, which has as heading: "Living as children of Light." In addition to this, a note on this verse in *The NIV Study Bible* reads:

The grammar indicates that this mutual submission is associated with the filling of the Spirit in verse 18.

The command 'be filled' (v. 18) is followed by a series of participles in the Greek: speaking (v. 19), singing (v.19), making music (v.19), giving thanks (v.20) and submitting (v.21).

The New King James Version follows this grammar and correctly translates verse 21 as follows: "submitting to one another in the fear of the God." We are not dealing here with a new command or a new sentence, but a further application of the being filled with the Holy Spirit of verse 18. The connection is not in the first place with what follows, but with the verses that precede, in which Paul has written about the work of the Spirit of Christ. Verse 21 is the conclusion of a sentence that starts in verse 18. "Be filled with the Holy Spirit." He contrasts this with being filled with wine, which is not good for that leads to debauchery. This being filled with the Holy Spirit is seen, or manifested in several ways: addressing one another in psalms, singing and making melody. It is seen in giving thanks to God the Father, and it is also seen in being submissive to one another.

This grammatical point is not a minor detail. The instruction of verse 21 is to be connected to what Paul says about the Holy Spirit. You can also say, this being submissive is the work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, what is the work of the Holy Spirit? It is to renew the people of God. The Spirit opens what is closed, brings to life what is dead. He opens up the

lives of sinners. He shows his power in making people ready and willing to serve God. He makes people clean. He makes people beautiful in that they begin to live to the honour of God from the heart. He does this by the Word of Christ. Listen, look what He does. He makes us address one another in psalms. He makes us sing and make melody. He makes us give thanks always and for everything. He also makes us become subject to one another. Submissiveness is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's children. Before we come to read about the husbands and wives, the parents and children, the masters and the slaves, we first are reminded of this fruit of the Spirit: being subject to one another.

I stress this because submissiveness can have a negative ring in our ears, in the ears of parents and children. When children hear that they have to be subject, or submissive, they almost automatically resist. As parents we don't like

it either. Human nature doesn't like it. Submissiveness is seen as defeat. Stand up for yourself and don't let others tell you what to do, is the answer. Submissiveness is seen as something passive. You let things happen. But that is not how the Bible speaks about submissiveness. It is an activity, a spiritual activity. It is not a defeat, it is a victory, a spiritual victory. It is as wonderful and important as addressing one another in psalms, as singing and making melody, as thanking God always and for everything. The Holy Spirit makes us willing and ready to be subject to one another.

Respecting the task or calling of the other

Having criticized the RSV and NIV for grammatical incorrectness, I must add that their approach is not without reason. It cannot be denied that the words of verse 21 are also closely connected to what follows. That scholars see these words as a change from the



one paragraph to the next is not so strange. In what follows Paul uses this concept of submissiveness several times. He will say to the wives that they have to be submissive to their husbands, to the children that they have to obey their parents, that certainly involves submissiveness, and to the slaves the same applies. There is definitely a connection. Notice, however, that in the verses that follow this submissiveness is coming from one side: wives to their husbands, children to their parents, slaves to their masters. The reason for this is that the husbands, the parents and the masters all have a position of authority. The renewing work of the Holy Spirit does not make people into revolutionaries who throw all existing structures over board. The Spirit helps to recognize and respect the structures as given by the Lord God Himself, in marriage, family and at work.

It is striking that in the verses that follow Paul speaks of being subject when he addresses one side. It is striking, because in verse 21 he addresses both sides, be subject to one another. Again this shows that verse 21 is an instruction in its own right. This being subject is mutual. That is remarkable, for how can two be subject to one another? How is this possible? Authority means one is to lead and the other is to follow. Paul addresses this in the verses that follow. Before he comes to these particular instructions he says: be subject to one another. It is a general principle that precedes all the other instructions, or, you can say, this must characterize how each one functions within a relationship, as a result of being filled with the Spirit of Christ.

To be subject to one another means that we respect the task or the calling the other has. This task, or calling comes from the Lord. Human nature says I take care of myself. Emancipation says, I don't want to be ruled by any one. The Holy Spirit helps us to recognize our place before God, not only my own place but also the place of the other. In the way I fulfil my task I have to show that I respect the other's task before the Lord. No, the Lord does not take the difference between parents and children away. Think of the texts that teach children to obey their parents, and fathers to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In fulfilling my task as parent or child I seek the best for the other, and do what I can to give the other the room to serve the

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*In fulfilling my task
as parent or child I
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other, and do what I
can to give the other
the room to serve the
Lord. That makes
people beautiful.
That is wholeness.*

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Lord. That makes people beautiful. That is wholeness. That is the love 1 Corinthians 13 sings about. We do not demand a place for ourselves, but see each other's place before the Lord.

Here we are dealing with family relationships, the relationship between parents and children. The Lord gives each a place. If we are first of all concerned about our own place, and our own rights then we do not show that we walk in the Spirit. The relationship between parents and children is so easily damaged by pride and refusal to be the least. The relationship between parents and children can also be damaged in that we are too concerned with our own task and do not recognize the task of the other. That counts for both sides. I want my child to do what I think is best. Surely this is done with the best of intent, but yet it is not giving the child room to serve the Lord in his own place. Or, as a child I want my parents to give me all the freedom I desire, not recognizing that my dad or mom have a task before the Lord. That is the point here.

All too often we end up being against each other as parents and children. It becomes a battle. The Spirit says, stop that, and before you say anything more see your place before God and see the other's task before God. Now, do your utmost to help the other

fulfil his or her task before the Lord. You see, that does not put parents and children at the same level, but it places us together before the Lord. What can I do as parent to help my child fulfil his or her task in our relationship before the Lord? What can I do as child to help my dad or mom fulfil his or her task before the Lord?

Who says that submissiveness is passive? It is a spiritual activity. Who says that submissiveness is a defeat? It is a spiritual victory, as wonderful as singing and praying.

Out of reverence for Christ

It all sounds wonderful, but it can be very difficult. Certainly we all fall short, every parent, every child. There is no perfect parent, there is no perfect child. That does not mean we can dismiss these words as a dream. Paul includes the words: "out of reverence for Christ." He works this out in what follows in showing each group what they have in the Lord.

These few words, are very rich words: "Out of reverence for Christ." When we deal with submissiveness we are directed to Christ. He was submissive in everything. I think of what Paul writes in Philippians 2. He humbled Himself all the way to the cross. But then Paul also says: "have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." Christ was submissive in our place. In being submissive He atoned for our sins and shortcomings, also our sins as parents and children. The grace of Christ binds a family together. At the same time we may say that being subject is not a dream, for He gives us the strength. He works it in us by his Word and Spirit.

We have a task as office bearers in this regard as well. We have to encourage and help parents and children. As you do this you become aware of your own shortcomings as well. The help we may give is not to come across as, "look how well I can do it", but we may direct the families to the grace and Spirit of the Lord. Surely we all stress the importance of praying and singing together as family. It is equally important to show the need to be subject to one another, out of reverence for Christ.



Rev. Agema is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Attercliffe, Ontario. He first presented this material at the Ontario Office-bearers Conference on April 25, 1998.

Year-End Review

W. den Hollander

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.”

Matthew 10: 27,28

Another year is drawing to a close. We are about to enter the last year of the century. Especially with the year 2000 coming into view so closely, we may be more inclined to look ahead than to reflect on the past. However, it has always been a sound scriptural axiom that we “consider the present in light of the past and that for the consideration of the future the present is of primary importance” (or as a Dutch poet, Willem Bilderdijk, once expressed it in one of his proverbial sayings: “In the past lies the present, in the ‘now’ what is to come” translation mine). This is so true, because the Lord of history is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The year 1998 was a “Year of the Lord,” as will be the year 1999, 2000 and following years. The Lord has been moving history to its culmination at the time of his return, and He will continue to do so till that day.

Also when we review the year 1998 we see this dynamic character of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly the history of his church gathering work shows that it is dynamic, as we confess in our Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 21: “. . . the Son of God . . . gathers, defends, and preserves for himself . . . a church” Therefore, in Lord’s Day 48 we confess it to be the Lord’s instruction in the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer, that we should pray: “Pre-

serve and increase Thy church.” The progress of this work may seem unnoticeable when we review it over the period of only one year; nevertheless, upon close scrutiny it does become evident. Again, the Lord has blessed his churches richly in many ways so that a review of his work should move us to deep gratitude.

Outstanding among all the events which took place among our federation of churches is the General Synod which was held in Fergus during the month of May. Prior to this Synod, the churches were kept busy studying the reports of the various synodical committees and writing comments in response to them. During the time of preparation, the edi-

tors of *Clarion* helped the churches by a variety of submissions in which the workings of Synod and abbreviated versions of these reports were presented. Following the publication of the Acts of General Synod, the important work of studying and scrutinizing these Acts began. As an overall impression from these publications we may thankfully observe the progress which could be made, showing the Lord’s ongoing faithfulness, confirming this dynamic character of his church gathering work.

This progress appears, for instance, in the reports about activities of many local churches and, at the federal level, of the synodical committee for the



General Synod convening church at Fergus, ON

promotion of ecclesiastical unity with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA). General Synod Fergus observed this progress with gratitude and gave its committee a more focused mandate with a view to these churches. The reports of the meetings at which the representatives of the respective federations of URCNA and Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) speak about these relationships also expressed this progress. The recognition of our common confessions, church order, and ecclesiastical activities, have led to encouraging plans and recommendations so far. The desired ecclesiastical unity reflecting the unity in the true faith is coming in sight more and more clearly. In the form of an exchange of articles published in *Clarion* about the important matter of the "Appropriation of Salvation," a growing mutual understanding and appreciation between FRCNA and CanRC could be pursued with the same objective in mind. However, let us now see the same ongoing church gathering work of the Head of the church in the smaller and more common activities and events that took place in the local churches during the year 1998.

Ministry of the gospel

It is in accordance with the fourth commandment of the Law of our LORD that the ministry of the gospel be maintained. This work of thankfulness could continue unhindered most, if not all, of the time. Even during the terrible days of the infamous Ice Storm in the Ottawa Valley and elsewhere at the beginning of the year, the church of Ottawa was able to conduct its services. We should not take this for granted, nor should we enjoy this privilege without due gratitude. Due to a vacancy it may be that a congregation must suffice with the reading of a sermon during its services, but that still is an adequate way of ministering the gospel for the edification of the congregation. All these blessings may seem our usual routine, yet the gifts come with the obligation to make the most of them. May the Lord's continued care and ongoing work with his Spirit and Word not testify against us.

In order to review the movements of those servants whom the Lord uses for this work of ministry, I would like to look at what happened in the various classical regions. Starting in the region closest to (my) home, Classis Ontario North


*Preach the Word,
 be urgent in
 season and out of
 season, convince,
 rebuke, and
 exhort, be
 unfailing in
 patience and
 in teaching.*

2 Timothy 4:2

has seen the minister of the church at Ottawa, the Rev. J.L. van Popta, move to Coaldale. We can be sure that it was not the experience with the Ice Storm which caused this move, but rather that the church of Coaldale needed a minister urgently after the passing away of its former pastor, the Rev. J.D. Wielenga. Thanks to the acceptance of a call by Cand. M. Jagt, however, Ottawa may not be vacant too long. Another congregation in Classis North, which had been vacant for quite a few years, the church at Fergus, received a favourable response from the Rev. J.D. Louwerse, from Houston. This acceptance came after many previous calls had been declined, such as the calls extended to the Rev. Messrs. J. Ludwig, J. Van Woudenberg, and P.G. Feenstra during this past year. The Rev. C. Bosch decided that he should decline a call from the church at Aldergrove and continue his work in Burlington-South. Finally, the newly established congregation of Flamborough rejoiced at the news that the Rev. J.

de Gelder, from Smithville, accepted the second call they extended to him. As a note of interest regarding Classis Ontario North, I may add that we will see this Classis split into two, Ontario North and Ontario Central, as of January 1999.

As far as movement among ministers in Classis Ontario South is concerned, not much has changed during this past year. Except for the impending move of the Rev. J. de Gelder from Smithville to Flamborough, all other ministers in this classical region continued their ministry in their present congregation. The Rev. J. Van Woudenberg did not only decline the call from Fergus, he made the same decision with respect to calls from the *Redeemer* congregation of Winnipeg and from the church at Cloverdale. Worthy of special mention in regard to the churches in Classis Ontario South is that the sending church of Hamilton, together with its supporting churches in this region, were gladdened with the acceptance by the Rev. A. de Graaf of a call for the work at their mission field in Brazil. On the other hand, it was with deep sorrow and regret that Classis Ontario South of October 7 had to give approbation to the request of the church at Rockway, with the concurring advice of the deputies for Regional Synod, to proceed to the deposition of the Rev. T. Hoogsteen. Finally, one of the former ministers in this Classis, the minister-emeritus of the church at Chatham, the Rev. J. VanRietschoten, celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry on November 11, 1998.

In the central region of our vast country we find Classis Alberta-Manitoba. There, not only the vacancy of the church at Coaldale came to an end but also the vacancy in the church at Carman was filled when they received a new pastor in the person of the Rev. J. Moesker, who came to them from Cloverdale. The *Redeemer* church at Winnipeg received a decline not only from the Rev. J. Van Woudenberg, as I mentioned; also the Rev. P.G. Feenstra, and Rev. J.D. Louwerse declined the calls extended to them. The church south of the border, in Denver, Colorado, was in the news quite a bit during this past year. The leave of absence they had granted to the Rev. M.A. Pollock did not lead to the desired solutions in the problems they encountered. Instead, Classis was asked to approbate his release from office altogether. Classis granted this request with the concurring

advice from the deputies for Regional Synod. In order to fill the vacancy, calls were extended to the Rev. Messrs. C.J. VanderVelde of Yarrow and J.G. Slaa of Elora, as well as to Cand. D. VandeBurgt. The last call was crowned with an acceptance.

Moving west, we reach the coastal province of British Columbia. What used to be Classis Pacific now has been split into two Classes, namely Pacific East and Pacific West. In Classis Pacific East, the Rev. W. M. Wielenga received a call from the church at Flamborough, but he decided to continue working in the church at Lynden, Washington. At moment of writing, he is deliberating a call from Kelmscott-West, Australia. The church at Aldergrove experienced a very difficult time due to the developments with the Rev. J. Boersma. These resulted in his resignation and the withdrawal of him and his family from the congregation. With the call extended to the Rev. C. Bosch, Aldergrove tried to fill this vacancy but was disappointed with a decline. A special event which took place in the life of the pastor of the church at Yarrow was his marriage. One of the ministers-emeritus living in the Fraser Valley, the Rev. W. W. J. Van Oene, celebrated the 55th anniversary of his ministry as well as of his marriage. A switch which is about to take place in Classis Pacific West is the move of the Rev. J. Huijgen from Smithers in the north to Cloverdale in the south. His move, together with the impending departure of the Rev. Louwse for Fergus, will leave our congregations in the

Bulkley Valley vacant in the near future.

Congregational life

For the proper maintenance of the ministry of the Word a good and functional building has always been experienced as a real blessing. In several congregations, building projects came to fruition. For the church at Rockway, the first fruits show in the fact that they progressed from sharing the Lincoln church building to moving into the auditorium of a St. Catharines High School, which set the stage for further building plans. Now they have their own property in Tintern, a building committee which is hard at work to prepare building plans, and a building drive which got off to a good start with generous pledges and donations. Also the church at Watford has kept moving towards their own building. Although the project did not develop without some setbacks, the progress now is evident both technically and financially. In the case of Calgary and Houston the fruits of their building labours ripened to the point at which the congregation could take possession of facilities which make for thankful worship and praise. Finally, it is not only important that the congregation can gather in a comfortable building; for the minister to work and live in the environment of a suitable manse is a real bonus as well. Well, the Lincoln pastor sure is enjoying his new living quarters, which apparently are adequate enough for entertaining large gatherings of visitors too.

Among the priorities of truly Reformed churches, the proclamation of God's Word and a manner of worship which is in accordance with the Word of God are on top of the list. In view of this, discussions have taken place concerning the Bible translation to be used in the worship services. Many of our churches have now introduced the NIV as their preferred translation. Also the attention for a liturgy which is pleasing to God ranks high among us. The church at Barrhead discussed the possibility of increased participation by the congregation and came to the introduction of the "responsive Amen" (please see Hi-Liter for latest – editor). For the accompaniment of the congregational singing, the church at Brampton purchased a new organ while the church at Toronto saw the rebuilding and expansion of its organ come to completion. During the time in which the organ could not be used, Toronto enjoyed the musical talents of many a pianist in their midst. At special occasions the Toronto congregation also saw the musical accompaniment enhanced with trumpet and flute.

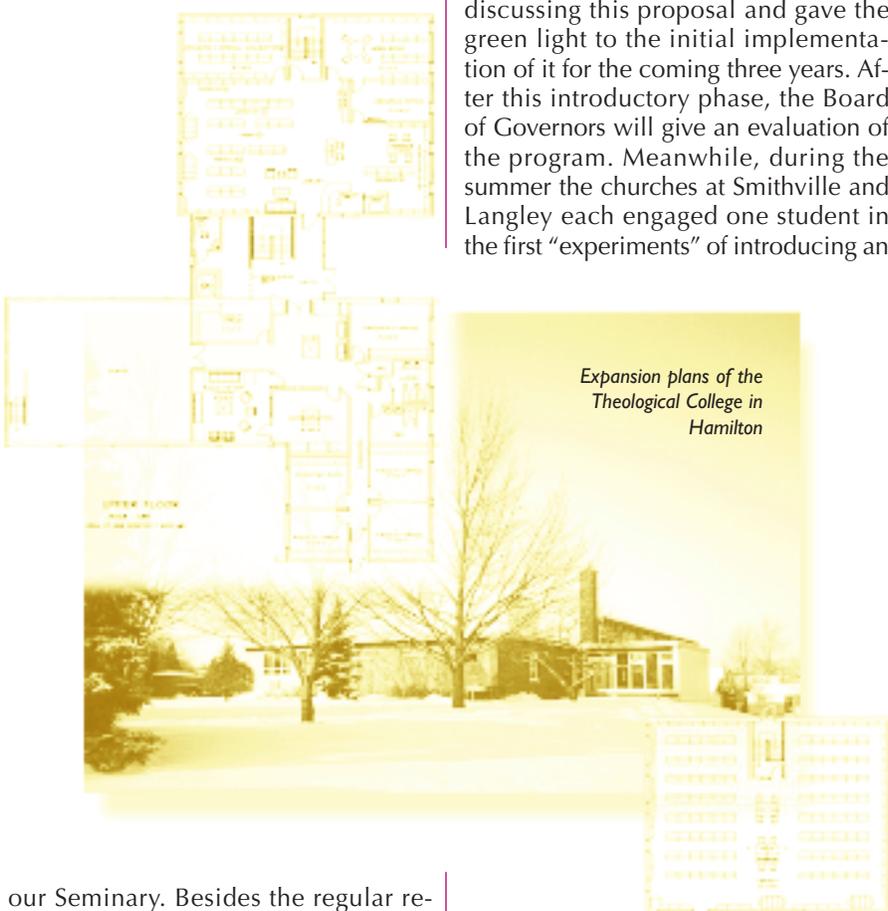
Throughout the year the regular activities of study societies could proceed unhindered. Also in other ways the functioning of the communion of saints is experienced as members employ their talents and gifts in various ways. It is delightful to see how creative a congregation can become when the members are moved by the Spirit of God and become a hand and a foot to one another. Special occasions such as church picnics, family sports nights, potluck suppers and the like, also strengthen the bond among the members. In Burlington-South the contact between Council and the youth of the congregation was enhanced by an evening of sports, which resulted in an increase of respect for the leadership too. A new and bold endeavour is underway in the Grand Valley and Orangeville area where a Greek Club came off the ground. Before long the ministers may be able to quote the original text at some point in their sermons.

Theological College

Speaking about the ministry of the Word, liturgy, original texts in Greek and Hebrew, we cannot but direct our focus on the Theological College of our churches. Among the important issues on the agenda of General Synod Fergus 1998 were the matters pertaining to



Calgary's new church building



discussing this proposal and gave the green light to the initial implementation of it for the coming three years. After this introductory phase, the Board of Governors will give an evaluation of the program. Meanwhile, during the summer the churches at Smithville and Langley each engaged one student in the first “experiments” of introducing an

our Seminary. Besides the regular reports about the good progress of the work which is done so diligently and faithfully by those who make up the College population (notably the staff, the assistants, and the students), General Synod was asked to consider special plans presented by the Board of Governors. For the expansion of the library, plans and proposals were prepared which intend to facilitate future needs and possibilities. Synod came to the unanimous decision to move ahead with these plans, seeking the support from the churches for them. Throughout the federation a fund drive is going strong which will hopefully generate the necessary funds and pledges to begin implementing the plans.

In order to stay abreast of developments in the work of ministry among the congregations, an adequate training – both academically and practically – is another priority in the work at the College. Over the past years the Board of Governors has listened attentively to feedback from the churches about the practical aspect of the training for the ministry. Careful consideration of this feedback has led to the proposal for a “Pastoral Proficiency Program,” which was presented to General Synod as well. General Synod took ample time

internship for the practical training of these students. Although the official accounts of this endeavour have not come in yet at this time, the first reports from students and members of the respective congregations are very positive.

This Review was due for submission on November 20. In the history of the College, this date is important as an occasion for thankful commemoration. On that day, it was exactly thirty years ago that Synod Orangeville 1968 decided to establish our own Theological College. Remembering that occasion immediately brings to mind the man of the “first hour,” Dr. J. Faber. Although not actively involved in the instruction at the College, Dr. J. Faber is still able to work behind the scene as member of

the senate of the College. Yet, his work does not stay behind the scene only. He still climbs the stage too, at times, or ends up otherwise in the limelight.

In order to promote the pursuit of ecclesiastical unity, our former Principal addressed gatherings in Wellandport and Wyoming to speak about the confessional history of the Canadian Reformed Churches. He did so together with the well-known Dr. P. Y. De Jong, who spoke on the confessional history of the United Reformed Churches in North America. As well, Dr. Faber and Dr. Gootjes were able to visit Korea for the purpose of attending the Congress on Calvin Research which is held every five years, and took place this past August in Seoul, Korea. In conjunction with this visit, he enjoyed the privilege of attending the opening of the new facilities of the Korea Theological Seminary in Chon-Ahn. In view of the desire, expressed again recently at the General Synod Fergus, to strengthen the bonds with the Korean sister churches, Dr. Faber and Dr. Gootjes went out of their way to strengthen the “Korean Connection.”

Evangelism

Among the activities of the local congregations, the work of outreach is a never-ending challenge for the members’ creativity and cooperation. For the equipment of the saints throughout the federation of churches, the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce publishes an insert in *Clarion* a few times per year. This insert, called *Outreach*, contains articles that help the members in their endeavours to reach out individually and collectively. One of its contributors, the Rev. D. Moes, carries this task further yet by organizing for his congregation an Evangelism Training Course. In Orangeville, the Evangelism Committee was blessed in its efforts to obtain air-time for the broadcasting of sermons via a local radio station.





Korea Theological Seminary in Chon-Ahn

In the work of outreach, cooperation among the churches in our federation continued to function well. For a second time, the organization of *Camp-fire!* was a success. For four weeks a Summer Bible Camp was organized for groups of children from the Hamilton Inner City Mission as well as for children from Canadian Reformed communities and their friends. This work took place again under the supervision of the council of the Hamilton congregation. As well, the churches of Ancaster and Burlington-South joined forces in a Home Mission Worker Project. On September 13, Brother Richard Bultje, who graduated this year with a Diploma of Theological Studies from our Theological College, was set aside for the work of inner-city mission in the greater Hamilton Area. Ancaster's work of outreach also included activities in the Arrell Youth Centre, a youth detention centre. Through the so-called "Genesis Group," a Bible Study endeavour, and through regular interaction with the young offenders they share the gospel of deliverance in Jesus Christ from sin and slavery. Finally, in the context of discussions about evangelism, mission, and mission aid, we can observe a growing awareness for the inherent unity between an outreach in Word and deed. Hence we should mention the activities of the Edmonton *Providence* congregation in this connection where they seek to bring "relief and deliverance" by way of cooperation with the local food bank.

Mission

This matter of "Word and Deed" was also prominent at the First Mission Aid Conference, organized by the Board of Mission and Mission Aid in Hamilton on August 27-29. At this Conference, representatives from several churches in-

volved in the work of Mission and Mission Aid came together to discuss their work. By way of reports on their varied activities, those who attended received an overwhelming amount of information about the developments and projects in mission fields such as Brazil, Papua New Guinea, Irian Jaya, and Smithers, and also about projects of CRWRF, *Camp-fire!*, Home Mission Worker, and the like. The publication of a compilation of speeches and reports will enable many others to reap the fruits of the success of this first conference.

Another "first" in the work of mission was the First National Conference of Reformed Churches of Brazil, held in Unaí, Brazil. Representatives of eight congregations came together in order to discuss the feasibility of establishing a federation of Reformed Churches in Brazil. The Conference decided that, the Lord willing, this federation should be established in July, 2000. During the two years before that date, discussions among the participants should address important issues such as the relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, the recognition of baptism in other religious circles, and other matters. In the meantime, it may be noted with thankfulness that the work of church planting continued. With the move of the Rev. E. Venema to another station, namely Japaratinga, and work planned in Porto Calvo, this ongoing work of gathering and increasing the church of the Lord Jesus Christ became evident once again.

The same may be said about the work of the sending church of Toronto, together with its supporting churches. The Rev. S. 't Hart and his family moved to Papua New Guinea where they began their work of Reformed mission. Even though this country may have seen quite a bit of "mission work," the Reformed

work of mission is poorly represented. The Toronto missionary became actively involved in the congregation of Port Moresby, while the contacts with the actual mission post at Ekoro were strengthened as well. In preparation of their move to Ekoro, a short term worker in the person of Brother Terry Veenendaal, a retired widower from Carman, Manitoba, has been working hard to build them a house in that place. The cooperation between the Australian sending church of Armadale, working in Lae, PNG, and the Toronto Board of Mission, has been good and fruitful this past year. Through visits back and forth, exchange of minutes and reports, as well as through the services of Rev. 't Hart in Lae and in the examination of two native candidates for the ministry, this work could already make good progress in its beginning stage.

Other Events

Among the events which took place in the midst of the churches, special happenings in our schools and school societies are always noteworthy. At least, the 25th anniversaries of *Timothy* School in Hamilton and of *Ebenezer* School in Chatham certainly were occasions for joyous celebration and pleasant reunions. The same may be said, of course, of the yearly graduations which take place not only at the level of the junior high but also and especially at the secondary high schools. As far as the schools among us are concerned, the *Covenant Teachers' College* moved to its new premises, the beautifully renovated and decorated former building of *Timothy* School (located in the shadow of the completed and enhanced facilities of *Guido de Bres* Christian High School). The *Teachers' College*, as the institution for the training of teachers for our Reformed

schools, is in the peculiar position, however, of operating this year without an actual student enrollment. This situation is receiving all the attention of board and staff in terms of evaluating its structure, curriculum, and activities.

The membership of the churches in our federation does not only pay much and special attention to the education of its youth. Also the members with special needs receive their care and support. For instance, the much needed opportunities provided for members with special challenges through the Anchor Home Organization received continued counsel and leadership. The Anchor Home Society has seen quite a turnover in its executive and board during this past year, while the home received a new director in the person of Brother B. Van Goolen. Besides, the Canadian Reformed Society for a Home for the Aged Inc. continued to operate Mount Nemo Christian Nursing Home and the Hamilton *Ebenezer* Villa. The Board and Management of this organization continued to facilitate the care required for the elderly, especially for those who develop impairments and challenging behaviours. They are in the process of introducing a special care unit, which provides a safe, supportive and low-stress environment. Meanwhile, due to government policies and for purposes of improved efficiency, the board is considering the application for an additional 32 licensed beds, bringing the total up to 92 beds.

During this past year our Young People Societies had their study weekends,

*The Lord has
blessed his churches
richly in many
ways so that a
review of his work
should move us to
deep gratitude.*

our Men's and Women's Societies had their League Days. I mentioned already the rallies which were held for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity. During the days of commemoration of the Great Reformation, Reformation Rallies were held in East and West, while the Southern Alberta Reformed Study Centre even organized a study weekend for the purpose of remembering the great deeds of the Lord in the Great Reformation. Other regulars among the greater gatherings, of course, are the yearly Convocation and Anniversary of the Theological College, as well as the meetings organized by the Burlington Reformed Study Centre

(this year addressing matters of liturgy and worship).

Since I started out this review drawing the attention to that dynamic church gathering work of our Lord Jesus Christ, I should conclude with the activities and contacts in the work abroad. The Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) continued to solicit support for the work done at the John Calvin Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus. However, through these contacts much needed support for relief in Egypt and Sudan was requested by our MERF organization as well. Also in the pursuit of contact with the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico (IPCM) much progress could be reported. The work of spreading the Biblical doctrine of Christ as Redeemer through reformational activities in local communities (families), schools, and churches in the Mexican society received wider knowledge and support among us. Instrumental in that process are the contacts with Canada as pursued among others by our Dr. C. Van Dam. Recently the needs for relief and support were investigated by the CRWRF, namely through a combined visit of Dr. Van Dam and Brother C. Diomedi, a member of the church of Toronto. During this past year, the IPCM was in the news for reasons of joy in its celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Juan Calvino Seminary. It was so for reasons of sadness as well due to reports about riots and upheavals among the Chiapas, leading even to the murder of Christians.

Of course, this review is not complete by far. So much more is happening from day to day, from week to week, among the congregations. Perhaps there were special events which did not reach the attention of your "reviewer." The above, however, is more than enough to fill us with deep gratitude for the goodness and grace of our God. We become overwhelmed by the evidence of the blessings which the Head of the church is showering upon his people. Hence with a view to the future we have a firm confidence that He will continue to lead and guide us. He will certainly provide for us what we need in employing our talents and gifts readily and cheerfully for the edification of the other members, serving together the edification of the churches. Yes, at the end of another year of the Lord the outcome of all these blessings should incite us to much praise and thanksgiving to the LORD our God.



Brother Terry Veenendaal at Ekoro mission post





Access to the Table

J. Visscher

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

1 Corinthians 11:26

Fourth Mark of the True Church?

In reading through the Acts of Synod 1998 and how relations with foreign churches are to be governed, it is apparent that fencing of the Lord’s table has become a major condition as to whether or not the Canadian Reformed Churches can enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with a particular church. Synod Fergus has told the OPC that it is not sufficient for us to agree on a mutual statement dealing with the fact that the Table should be supervised. It went further and has told the OPC that “a general verbal warning is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required” (Acts, art. 130). It has told the committees dealing with the Reformed Churches in Quebec and the Reformed Church in the United States to raise the same matter. In the case of the ERQ, the Committee has to deal with “the fencing of the Lord’s Table and possible different practices among the various congregations” (Acts, art. 97). In the case of the RCUS, the Committee has “to resolve the matter of proper supervision of the Lord’s Supper so that only those who confess the Reformed faith will be admitted” (Acts, art. 51).

These decisions raise the question, “Where are we heading as Canadian Reformed Churches? Are we turning

the matter of access into the Table into the Fourth Mark of the True Church? Are we saying that all of those churches that give a verbal warning to their members and guests are seriously in error? Furthermore, are we saying that as long as they do not do more than that (or as long as they do not supervise it like us) that we can not enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them?”

No Problem If . . .

Now, I for one would have no problem with saying this and adopting this kind of position if I was convinced that this is what Scripture demands of us. For surely that is the bottom line in the Christian life, as well as in all inter-church discussions. If the Scriptures tell us that something must be done in a certain way, then we do not argue. We submit. We may wonder about it. We may even struggle with it. However, if God’s Word tells us that this is the way it is, that ends all argument. God’s Word rules supreme.

What Does The Word Say?

So what does God’s Word say about access to the Table? Does it tell us who may attend and who may not? Yes, it does. A quick reading of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 reminds us that the Table is holy, that eating at it or from it requires self-examination, and that partaking in an unworthy manner has dire consequences. Because of this, local churches

need to make sure that everyone who takes part in the Supper is made aware of what can happen if a proper approach to the sacrament is lacking. Only those who know the meaning of the Supper, who know themselves and their sins, who seek everything in Christ, may attend. All who are ignorant about these things or ignore proper self-examination and its fruits, should not attend. They are playing with God’s judgment.

So one can say that it is completely in line with Holy Scripture that those who partake need to be educated, warned, admonished about the consequences of eating and drinking judgment to themselves.

What About Particulars?

Next question. Does the Bible anywhere tell us *how* this is to be done? Does it go into particulars and insist that all the members need to be visited in the week before the Lord’s Supper and given the green light by the Consistory, as they did in Calvin’s Geneva? Does it tell us that upon a satisfactory assessment the elders should hand out tokens to those who are permitted which should be surrendered upon entering the church, as was done in Scotland? Does it say that if you are guest you need a piece of paper called “a travel attestation” before you can attend, as is customary in the Canadian Reformed Churches?

I do not find such regulations anywhere in my Bible; can you find them in yours?

Still, you may be wondering, “what about the elders? Does Scripture not say that they have the duty to regulate the Lord’s Supper in one or other of these specific ways?” Again, my understanding of Scripture makes me think of Acts 20:28 and those well-known words of Paul to the Ephesian elders, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” It also reminds me that the elders need to be on their guard against wolves that seek to ravage the flock (Acts 20:29-31). As such the elders are the guardians and the servant-leaders of the church and they have a duty to care for the members, as well as to maintain the holiness of the church and her sacraments.

Yet does Scripture anywhere tell them specifically how they are to do this? Does it tell them that they should use a verbal warning? Does it tell them that a verbal warning is not enough? I can not find these kind of specifics in my Bible, can you?

Where does that leave us? Surely when we examine the Synod decision in the light of what Scripture teaches, we can only say that in demanding that the OPC, or any other church, regulate the Lord’s Table in a certain *specific* way, we are going further than Scripture itself does. The biblical principle is that the sacrament needs to be kept holy, but nowhere does the Bible say exactly how the churches should do this. To decide on a certain practice and make that a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, when the Scriptures themselves do not specify this, makes that decision into a supra-scriptural one! It exceeds the demands of God’s holy Word.

Let’s Be Clear About This

Now, in saying this I am not arguing for an unsupervised Table. Personally I have always been quite happy with our Canadian Reformed Churches practice of travel attestations. I think it is a good one and should be maintained, as long as it is maintained charitably. By that I mean that we should not become rigid and formalistic about it. For example, if a visitor from another church in the federation forgets his or her travel attest that should not automatically disqualify them from the Table. A consistory can make use of the

telephone, the fax or the internet. It can even assign two elders to speak to the person making the request. Quite simply, there are ways to maintain a good practice without turning it into a law of the Medes and the Persians.

At the same time, when it comes to access to the Table, I am convinced that here the elders of the church have a task. They have to keep the Table holy. They have to visit the members and make sure, insofar as they are able, that those who partake are worthy. They also need to deal with guests.

What About “Fencing”?

But how must one deal with guests? Presbyterian churches have a long history of dealing with guests (and in part members too) by what is called “fencing.” What that means is that the minister gives an explanation of the sacrament, invites all who have properly examined themselves to partake and all who have not to refrain from doing under the penalty of incurring the wrath of God. If any of you have ever been in a conservative Presbyterian church on Lord’s Supper Sunday, you will have experienced this “fencing.”

How shall we evaluate this practice? Many of us who are raised in the Reformed tradition may have no objections against “fencing” as such. What we object to is the fact that often this is the only thing that happens. A verbal warning is all that is given. Is that enough? Personally I do not think so. I think that the elders need to deal with the guests in a more meaningful way. On occasion I have debated this matter with my Presbyterian brothers and many of them are in full agreement. A policy that takes the holiness of the Supper more into account is needed.

Yet, as much as I favour our approach and defend it, the question is this, “Can we insist that our Presbyterian brothers have to adopt our approach because it alone is scriptural? In addition, can we say that failure to do so is such an issue that we must break fellowship over it?” I would call that “a bridge too far.” As Canadian Reformed people we may be of the opinion that “fencing” alone is inadequate but we cannot prove it *because Scripture does not absolutize a certain practice*. On the matter of Lord’s Supper admission, Scripture gives us the principles and expects us to insure that our practices flow out of them.

Hence I do not believe that we can say that “fencing” is an absolute obstacle on the road to Ecclesiastical Fellowship. I am also convinced that what Synod 98 should have done is adopt the Proposed Agreement as presented by our Committee, enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC and make the matter of Lord’s Supper supervision a matter for ongoing study and discussion within such a relationship.

Words of Protest

Now I can imagine that my views on this matter will not be shared by all. There will be some who feel that I am straying from the straight and narrow Canadian Reformed path on this matter. But to this I say, “what path?” Indeed, I would insist that when it comes to guests at the Lord’s Supper, we have a developed policy for how to deal with guests from churches in our own federation and from sister churches. As for whether or not we have a policy for guests outside of our churches and sister churches, that remains a matter of debate and uncertainty.

I would refer the readers to the Acts of General Synod 1986 and to a very extensive report from our Contact Committee with the OPC (see: pages 119 ff.). That Committee examined in depth the issue of outside guests at the Lord’s Supper and came to the conclusion: “our Churches never adopted a general rule (in the Church Order) for admission of guests to the Lord’s Supper, and that we therefore cannot ask this from the OPC either” (see: p.135).

After reading the Committee’s conclusion, Synod 1986 sought to plug this hole by stating in a consideration that “Synod considers that Article 61, C.O., is the rule which governs the admission of all those who seek to partake in the Lord’s Supper.” Yet this is sure to raise the question, “Does the fact that there is a consideration buried somewhere in the Acts of Synod mean that we have now ‘adopted a general rule?’” If it is, then it would appear that many churches and church members are not aware of it.

A Failure To Define Our Position First

Indeed, all of this highlights something. It reminds me of the fact that we are developing a history of making demands on other churches while failing to define first our own position. For example, we have also said to the OPC that they need to practice “confessional

membership” but what precisely is that? Where do we define such membership? I cannot find it in the Scriptures, in the Confessions, not even in the Church Order. I know of communicant and non-communicant members. I do not know of confessional and non-confessional members.

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

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

Sabbath-Sunday

The same goes for another issue that may well become another condi-

tion in the area of inter-church relations, namely the Sabbath-Sunday matter. The Committees appointed to meet with the ERQ and RCUS need to speak with them further about this issue. So how are they going to do this? Surely, they can only speak to them on the basis of what is stated in the Scriptures, the Confessions and Church Order.

And what do these documents say about the Sabbath-Sunday issue? Scripture says a great deal, but how to interpret it all remains a matter of study and discussion. The Confessions say very little, except for Lord’s Day 38. The Church Order outlines no specific practice either. So how shall these Committees approach the matter? They can only do so on the basis of our official documents.

Is that enough though? From the documents received by Synod 98, it appears not. Indeed, from them you would think that our churches have adopted a clear stand on the Sabbath-Sunday issue. Not so! Nowhere have we ever officially said “you shall not mow your lawn on Sunday. You shall not shop on Sunday. You shall not go to the restaurant on Sunday.” Well, if we have never gone on record with such statements or adopted an official policy on the Sabbath-Sunday matter, how can we now demand of other churches that they need to have one in place before we can recognize them?

Mind you, I am not at all in favour of cutting lawns, going to Wal-Mart or McDonald’s on Sunday. I urge both my family members and church members to respect the principle of rest for themselves and for their neighbours. Yet my personal approach to these matters is not the issue. The issue is our approach *as churches*. Have we ever adopted a common set of guidelines with respect to the Lord’s Day? (I think the term “Sabbath-Sunday” are misnomers.) Until we do, we can not go further than our official standards and documents. We can not insist that another church must have what we ourselves do not have. Our own house should be in order before we go about trying to arrange the furniture in our neighbour’s house.

So Where Does That Leave Us?

In general, all of this leaves us with the need to practice a greater degree of consistency in our inter-church relations. More specifically with regard to the OPC, it leaves us with a synod decision that raises many questions and that needs to be appealed by the churches. It is not right for us to demand of other churches that they must accept our extra-biblical position on access to the Lord’s Supper before we can enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them.

BETHLEHEM! OF NOBLEST CITIES “O sola magnarum urbium.”

*BETHLEHEM! of noblest cities
None can once with thee compare;
Thou alone the Lord from heaven
Didst for us incarnate bear.*

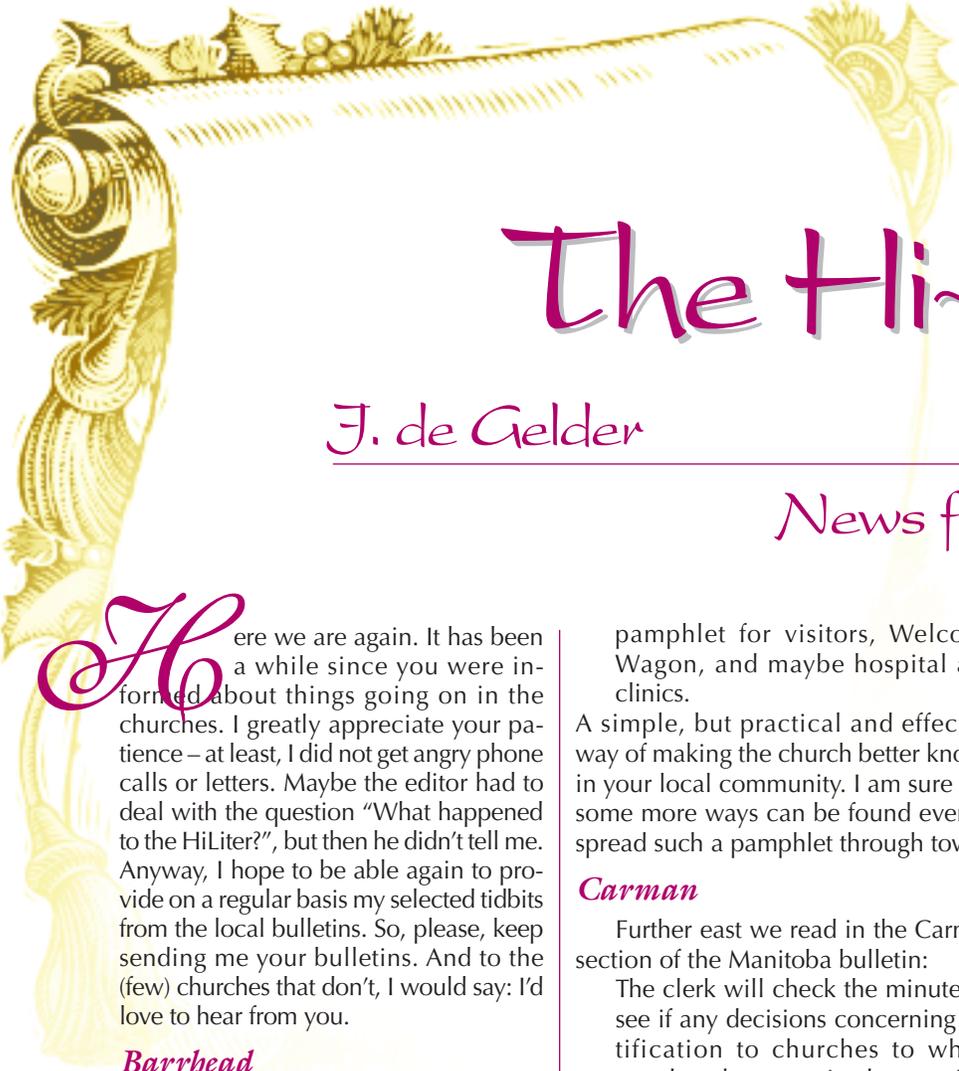
*Fairer than the sun at morning
Was the star that told his birth;
To the lands their God announcing;
Hid beneath a form of earth.*

*By its lambent beauty guided,
See, the Eastern kings appear;
See them bend, their gifts to offer,
Gifts of incense, gold and myrrh.*

*Offerings of mystic meaning! –
Incense doth the God disclose;
Gold a royal child proclaimeth;
Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.*

*Holy Jesu! in thy brightness
To the Gentile world displayed!
With the Father and the Spirit,
Endless praise to thee be paid!*

*Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (4th Century)
Translated by Edward Caswall, 1849*



The Hi-Liter

J. de Gelder

News from Here and There

Here we are again. It has been a while since you were informed about things going on in the churches. I greatly appreciate your patience – at least, I did not get angry phone calls or letters. Maybe the editor had to deal with the question “What happened to the HiLiter?”, but then he didn’t tell me. Anyway, I hope to be able again to provide on a regular basis my selected tidbits from the local bulletins. So, please, keep sending me your bulletins. And to the (few) churches that don’t, I would say: I’d love to hear from you.

Barrhead

Let us start in Alberta. Perhaps you remember that a while ago the consistory in Barrhead had proposed some changes in the liturgy. The input of the congregation led to the following decision:

Since a significant number of the members of the congregation does not appear convinced of the changes proposed by the consistory, and yet a majority of the respondents would favor some change in the liturgy, consistory decides not to proceed with the implementation of any changes at this time, for the sake of peace, harmony and unity in the congregation. In my opinion a wise and Christian way of dealing with sensitive issues that are not directly of a confessional nature.

Taber

What do the people in your own city, town or area know about your local church? In Taber they did this:

Rev. Lodder drafted a pamphlet with information about the Canadian Reformed Church. The pamphlet was scrutinized. After some minor changes it was decided to use this

pamphlet for visitors, Welcome Wagon, and maybe hospital and clinics.

A simple, but practical and effective way of making the church better known in your local community. I am sure that some more ways can be found even to spread such a pamphlet through town.

Carman

Further east we read in the Carman section of the Manitoba bulletin:

The clerk will check the minutes to see if any decisions concerning notification to churches to which members have received attestations have been made. This concerns the practice of some churches who, after issuing an attestation to a member who is moving to a different church’s jurisdiction, send a letter to that church informing them that this member is coming.

A commendable practice. Unlike our Dutch sister churches, we do not have this as a rule in Article 62 of our Church Order. Strictly speaking one could say that the responsibility of the consistory that issues the attestation stops after the attestation has been given to the communicant member(s) involved. It then becomes their responsibility to hand it in. When General Synod Cloverdale, 1983 was finalizing the revision of the Church Order there was a recommendation from the Church at Hamilton to add to the proposed Article 62: “Notice shall be given to the receiving consistory that an attestation has been issued” (Acts Article 91, B4 re. Article 62). Synod did not adopt this suggestion, based on the following consideration: “. . . after an attestation has been issued to a certain member, the consistory has

no supervision over such a member” (Acts Article 91, C3 re. Article 62).

You wonder, not only about the pastoral wisdom, but also about the correctness of this consideration. When a member receives an attestation in, let’s say, Ottawa, because he is moving to, let’s say, Langley, does this mean then that, during the two or maybe three weeks needed for the transfer, he is without supervision? After all, the supervision and the pastoral care of the receiving consistory cannot start before the brother has presented his attestation.

Would it not be better to say that the pastoral responsibility of the consistory that issued the attestation stops at the moment that the brother has become a member of the receiving church? This would then also give the issuing consistory the responsibility to notify the receiving church that a brother is coming with an attestation.

The benefit would be that, if the above mentioned brother from Ottawa decides not to hand in his attestation in Langley, he will not be able to withdraw from the church secretly and without warnings and admonitions. For if the elders do not receive this attestation after a certain period of time, they will try to visit the address on the notice sent by the issuing church. Then they may find that either the brother will change his mind and give the attestation, or he will refuse to receive them. In that case the issuing church should be notified that the brother has refused to hand in his attestation.

Well, the fact that sending this notice is not regulated in Article 62 CO does not have to prevent the churches from sending such a notice. As a matter of fact, Synod Cloverdale added in the above mentioned consideration:

"Whether a notice shall be given must be left up to the consistories." So, let's make it a habit.

Winnipeg

Article 43 CO urges consistories and major assemblies to take proper care of the archives. But when, during the annual Church Visitation, the visitors ask whether this is done, you will sometimes get carefully worded responses, like: "Sure, we try our best", or: "Usually we can find what we seek." In Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg a lot of work was done to put things in order, and the consistory received a detailed report. We quote some interesting parts.

An orderly, up-to-date and accessible archive is not like a library with interesting historical reviews. An archive consists of actual documents that show the actions/activities of the church. These then form the source of the history of the church. One important decision is what to keep and what to destroy. Much material (by volume) does not have to be kept for any length of time. For example, information in preparation of Classis, Regional and General Synods. These temporary, broader bodies established archives for their own purpose. What the local church keeps are, of course, the Acts of these broader assemblies. Any document or records that show the activities of the church, must be kept. In other words, anything generated by the church, has to be stored in a secure, safe place, such as minutes books, decision books, letters, committee mandates (minutes, reports and records), bulletins, yearbooks, proposals to major assemblies, building plans, financial statements (not bills), membership cards, etc.

Documents related to discipline actions should be kept by the clerk of the consistory for at least three years after the "issue" has been clearly resolved.

Before filling in proper categories, all documents received by the archivist, must be registered, classified, and identified in relation to the minute book. Access to the archives is only allowed with the written approval of the consistory. As a rule, all access/borrowing is to be recorded and no originals but only their copies may, for a limited time, be allowed to leave the archives.

More could be quoted, but it is clear that being an archivist is a more significant job than you may have thought. In Winnipeg they have learned a lot, they say, from a draft of guidelines composed for a course in our sister churches in the Netherlands.

Toronto

I found the following consideration in the Toronto bulletin. Important enough for some self examination for all of us.

Council's attention was drawn to the matter of church attendance. A trend seems to be developing of attending the afternoon services elsewhere. Of course, there could be a very special

occasion which could bring you to a different congregation, but this should be a rare exception. The exception should underline the rule that we belong in our own congregation, heeding the call from our office bearers calling us for worship. We placed ourselves under their governance and supervision, so that our attendance is an act of obedience. Besides, the present trend makes it very difficult as well for the minister to work on a certain need among the congregation [through his preaching that is, JdeG] if the members' attendance appears uncertain. It defeats as well the good purposes for the wise practice regulated in the Church Order that there should be ongoing instruction in the doctrine of salvation through the exposition of the Catechism.

Kelmscott

There is some good progress in the new missionary developments within our Australian sister churches. We read in the Kelmscott bulletin:

The focus of the report is a recommendation to call br. F. Dong as a missionary worker among Chinese people. Br. Dong now has less than one year to finish his theological studies, DV. The committee recommends that the Dong family should reside in and operate from Australia for the foreseeable future. The call to br. Dong must be made as soon as possible due to the long lead time required for immigration procedures. If the Dong family does not have approval to come to Australia within approximately one year from now they will have to return to China. This situation is to be avoided. It is noted that the congregation has supported the Dong family for more than five years in preparation for the mission work among the Chinese people. On the basis of the above Consistory

**RAY OF
SUNSHINE**



**January birthday
change of address:**

Janine Smid

510 2nd Street, RR 7
Strathroy, ON
N7T 3H8



A SONG OF WONDER

*Frame, my tongue, a song of wonder,
Let the noble numbers ring;
Sing the glorious triumph crowning
Our Redeemer, Christ the King;
Sing the sacred immolation
That from death revoked the sting.*

*By the tree the crime of Adam
Plunged the earth in blighting sin;
From the tree man's woe was measured,
All the evil lay therein;
On the tree, by God's appointment,
Christ must die the world to win.*

*Thus the work of our salvation
Was by law divine ordained,
Thus by good to ill opposing,
Was the tempter's power restrained;
Whence the evil, thence the healing,
Whence came death true life is gained.*

*In his holy hour the Saviour
From the halls of heaven is come,
Takes the flesh of human nature;
So to save the flesh from doom;
Born as man, the world's Creator
Issues from a virgin's womb.*

*In a stable poor and lowly,
He, a tender child is born,
With a manger for a cradle,
Our Redeemer lies forlorn;
Swathing him in bands, the mother
Shields the Babe from shame and
scorn.*

*Thirty years are soon completed,
And the day of woe is nigh;
Comes the hour of man's redemption,
When the Christ is doomed to die;
On the cross, a lamb, uplifted,
Lo! the Lord of earth and sky!*

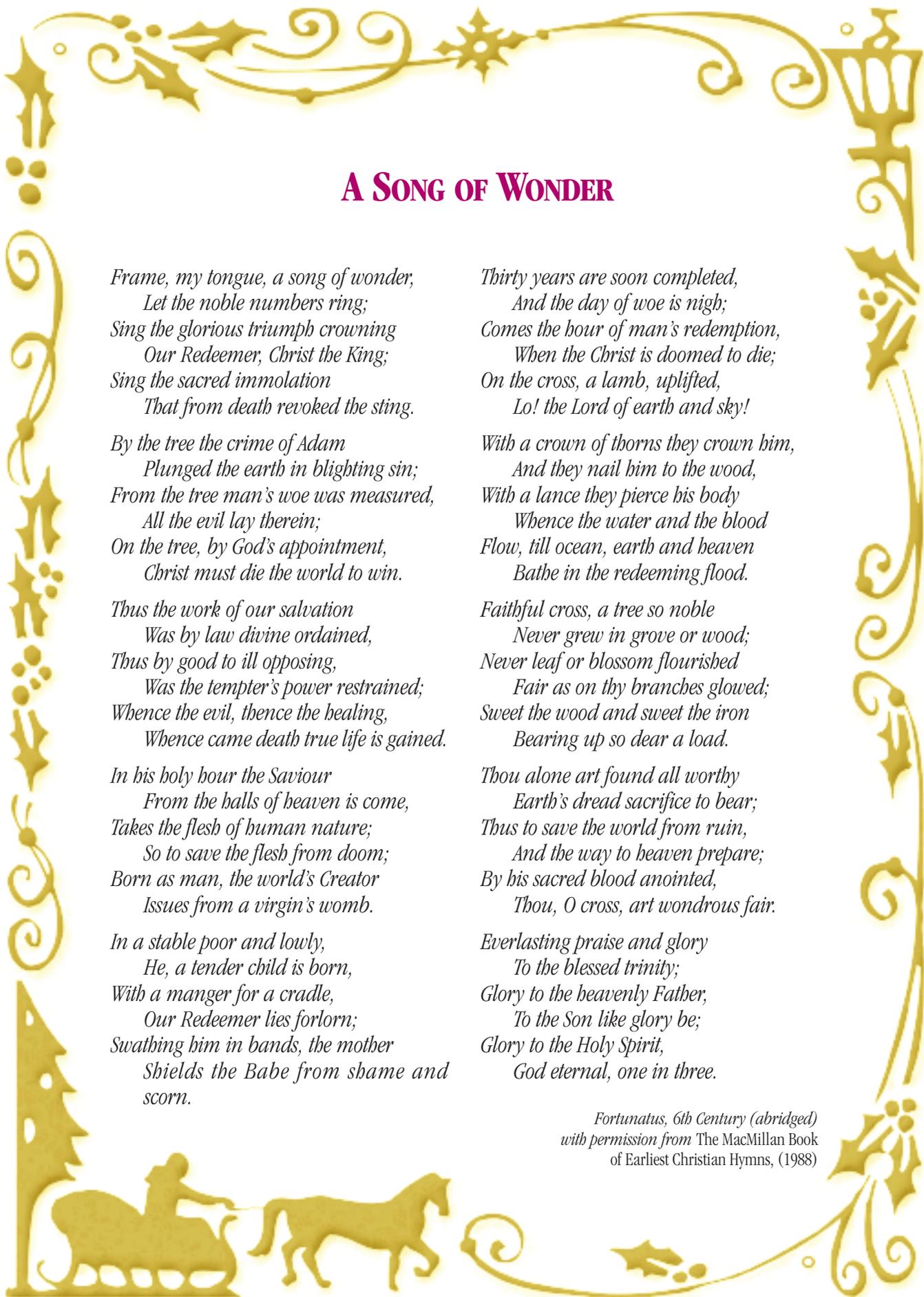
*With a crown of thorns they crown him,
And they nail him to the wood,
With a lance they pierce his body
Whence the water and the blood
Flow, till ocean, earth and heaven
Bathe in the redeeming flood.*

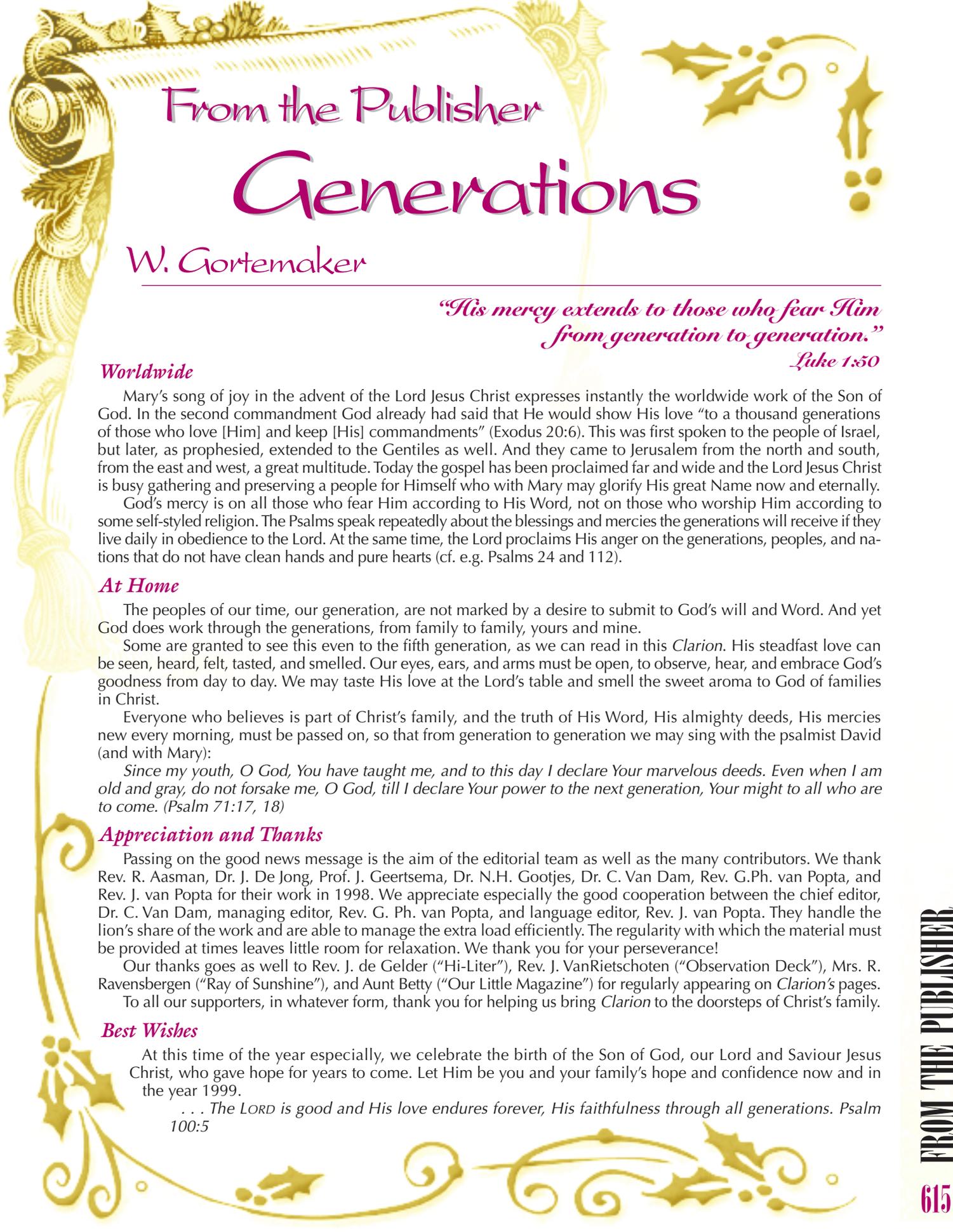
*Faithful cross, a tree so noble
Never grew in grove or wood;
Never leaf or blossom flourished
Fair as on thy branches glowed;
Sweet the wood and sweet the iron
Bearing up so dear a load.*

*Thou alone art found all worthy
Earth's dread sacrifice to bear;
Thus to save the world from ruin,
And the way to heaven prepare;
By his sacred blood anointed,
Thou, O cross, art wondrous fair.*

*Everlasting praise and glory
To the blessed trinity;
Glory to the heavenly Father,
To the Son like glory be;
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
God eternal, one in three.*

*Fortunatus, 6th Century (abridged)
with permission from The MacMillan Book
of Earliest Christian Hymns, (1988)*





From the Publisher

Generations

W. Gortemaker

*“His mercy extends to those who fear Him
from generation to generation.”*

Luke 1:50

Worldwide

Mary's song of joy in the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ expresses instantly the worldwide work of the Son of God. In the second commandment God already had said that He would show His love "to a thousand generations of those who love [Him] and keep [His] commandments" (Exodus 20:6). This was first spoken to the people of Israel, but later, as prophesied, extended to the Gentiles as well. And they came to Jerusalem from the north and south, from the east and west, a great multitude. Today the gospel has been proclaimed far and wide and the Lord Jesus Christ is busy gathering and preserving a people for Himself who with Mary may glorify His great Name now and eternally.

God's mercy is on all those who fear Him according to His Word, not on those who worship Him according to some self-styled religion. The Psalms speak repeatedly about the blessings and mercies the generations will receive if they live daily in obedience to the Lord. At the same time, the Lord proclaims His anger on the generations, peoples, and nations that do not have clean hands and pure hearts (cf. e.g. Psalms 24 and 112).

At Home

The peoples of our time, our generation, are not marked by a desire to submit to God's will and Word. And yet God does work through the generations, from family to family, yours and mine.

Some are granted to see this even to the fifth generation, as we can read in this *Clarion*. His steadfast love can be seen, heard, felt, tasted, and smelled. Our eyes, ears, and arms must be open, to observe, hear, and embrace God's goodness from day to day. We may taste His love at the Lord's table and smell the sweet aroma to God of families in Christ.

Everyone who believes is part of Christ's family, and the truth of His Word, His almighty deeds, His mercies new every morning, must be passed on, so that from generation to generation we may sing with the psalmist David (and with Mary):

Since my youth, O God, You have taught me, and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come. (Psalm 71:17, 18)

Appreciation and Thanks

Passing on the good news message is the aim of the editorial team as well as the many contributors. We thank Rev. R. Aasman, Dr. J. De Jong, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Dr. C. Van Dam, Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, and Rev. J. van Popta for their work in 1998. We appreciate especially the good cooperation between the chief editor, Dr. C. Van Dam, managing editor, Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, and language editor, Rev. J. van Popta. They handle the lion's share of the work and are able to manage the extra load efficiently. The regularity with which the material must be provided at times leaves little room for relaxation. We thank you for your perseverance!

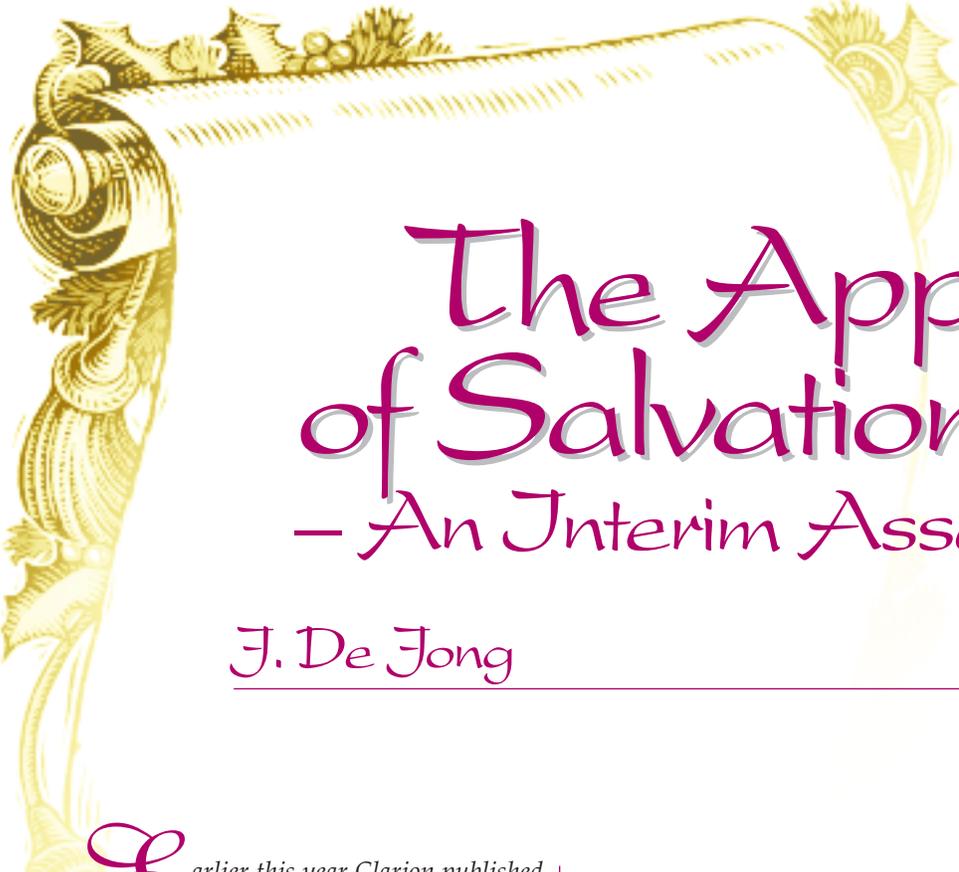
Our thanks goes as well to Rev. J. de Gelder ("Hi-Liter"), Rev. J. VanRietschoten ("Observation Deck"), Mrs. R. Ravensbergen ("Ray of Sunshine"), and Aunt Betty ("Our Little Magazine") for regularly appearing on *Clarion's* pages.

To all our supporters, in whatever form, thank you for helping us bring *Clarion* to the doorsteps of Christ's family.

Best Wishes

At this time of the year especially, we celebrate the birth of the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave hope for years to come. Let Him be you and your family's hope and confidence now and in the year 1999.

... The LORD is good and His love endures forever, His faithfulness through all generations. Psalm 100:5



The Appropriation of Salvation

— An Interim Assessment

J. De Jong

Earlier this year *Clarion* published an exchange on the differences between the Free Reformed and the Canadian Reformed approaches on the “Appropriation of Salvation.” This was in regard to the publication of the statement written by Drs. A Baars as a discussion paper for the Dutch situation. Dr. J. De Jong now gives some further reflections on this exchange. Editor

Readers may recall that the exchange on the matter of the appropriation of salvation that was presented in *Clarion* after the publication of the statement on the “Appropriation of Salvation” written by Drs. A Baars.¹ It may be helpful to present an additional reflection on the Free Reformed position on appropriation as it appeared in the statement of Drs. Baars and the further response of Rev. VanderMeyden. Some elements of these pieces indicated that while we have the same basis and wish to adhere to the same confessions, there are essential differences in the interpretation of the confessions, and in the way they are to be read. It seems as if these differences also have significant effect on the view of preaching, and it is to this issue in particular that we turn in this interim assessment.

The Objective-Subjective Distinction

Let me begin by reviewing the standpoint on the distinction between the subjective and objective elements in

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*God realizes His
promises in the way
of believing
appropriation!*

—♦♦♦—

appropriation. One of the features noticeable in both Drs. Baars and in the ensuing statement of Rev. VanderMeyden is the insistence on retaining a rigid distinction between the “objective” and the “subjective” aspects in appropriation, an insistence which also includes the use of precisely these terms. While I agree that we must distinguish between promise and appropriation, and that this distinction is clearly reflected in the confessions, we certainly need to caution against separating these two, or simply operating with a rigorous and air tight distinction. It is not clear to me why allowing the appropriation in a specific sense to be absorbed in the granting would, as Rev. VanderMeyden quoting Drs. Baars in his piece says, “do injustice to our confessions.”² This

would only be the case if we asserted at the same time that this absorption in effect nullifies the call to appropriation, or that therefore granting implies partaking in every case.

It seems to me that Rev. VanderMeyden’s piece has quite adequately stated the central question of the issue. For, in speaking about appropriation, he says “a further distinction must be made between the effectual work of God’s grace by His Holy Spirit (from the divine perspective) and the believing embrace of Christ and His benefits offered in the promise (the same work from the perspective of human experience).”³ Is it not so that in the former case, that is, in looking at appropriation from the divine perspective that here appropriation is in effect a component of what is promised? For God realizes His promises in the way of believing appropriation! Did not Prof. Trimp remind us that in effect appropriation is part of what is promised, even though this appropriation is not granted to each and every child?⁴

The different approaches come to view in the reference to Lord’s Day 27 HC. Rev. VanderMeyden says that in this Lord’s Day there is a distinction between granting and partaking. But to be honest, when I read Lord’s Day 27, that distinction is not present. Has not this distinction been *read into* the Lord’s Day? To be sure, the distinction is found in our *Form for the Baptism of Infants*. It

states: “. . . since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation, we are through baptism, called and obliged by the Lord to a new obedience.” But this distinction is not found in so many words in Lord’s Day 27 which only confirms the very truth that the Profs. Trimp and Van Genderen brought forward, namely, that although we must distinguish promise and demand, the promise at the same time has its fulfilment (our keeping the demand!) incorporated within it, (even though this does not actually happen to each and every baptised child). Rev. Hendrik De Cock already brought this out in his explanation of the questions of the baptismal form.⁵

Our confessions should not be read with a rigid “objective-subjective” scheme in one’s mind. For they deal extensively with both Christ’s *application* of His blessings, and our *appropriation* of those blessings. But in the end, application and appropriation are altogether the one divine work of Christ, through His Word and Spirit. And while the beginning of regeneration is always *solely* a divine work, its continuation, although altogether divine, incorporates within it the (acted upon) cooperating work of people.

So, too, the beginning of regeneration and its continuation must be kept together in our approach. Here the Canons of Dort do not speak in an essentially *different* way than the Belgic Confession. If anything we have a difference of *emphasis*, certainly not of content. In my view, the essential danger of imposing the “objective-subjective” scheme onto the confessions is not only to drive a foreign wedge between the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, but also to unduly isolate the *subjective* element. The real danger of an imposed scheme is that the subjective factor begins to live a life of its own, apart from the one all-comprehensive work of God in the life of the believer.

Word and Spirit

I see no essential difference with the Free Reformed position on the point of the relation between Word and Spirit. Yet as I see it, the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit is not explicitly emphasised in the confessions in the way that it is brought forward in Drs. Baars’ *Overview*, and in the further commentary on this state-


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ment. Rather, the confessions appear to bring out much more the parity and harmony between Word and Spirit.⁶ So, for example, Lord’s Day 21 can say that Christ gathers His church “by His Spirit and Word”. Both aspects come out very clearly in Article 24 BC (“. . . worked in man by the hearing of God’s Word and by the operation of the Holy Spirit . . .”) and in Article 33 BC where, in dealing with the sacraments, the confession states: “He has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external senses both what He declares to us in His Word and what He does inwardly in our hearts.” Here the Spirit renders the Word effectual in working in human hearts.

The Canons of Dort really do not speak in any different way. In Chapter III/IV 9, in dealing with the question why some who are called do not come, it says, “It is not the fault of the gospel . . . nor of God who calls through the gospel and who even confers various gifts upon them. . . .” While this cannot be understood as the saving operation of the Holy Spirit, it certainly points to an accompanying work of God with the gospel, indicating that He does what is necessary to apply the word to the hearer. Chapter III/IV 11 speaks of the saving operation: “He takes care that

the gospel is preached to them, and powerfully enlightens their minds by the Holy Spirit, so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God.” Word and Spirit are always taken together!

Preaching and Experience

It seems that different perspectives in these areas have a considerable impact on the view of the preaching, and its relation to human experience. These differences in interpretation also affect the view of the relation between the preacher and the congregation, and how the congregation must be viewed by the preacher. For example, my remarks on the preaching are taken by Rev. VanderMeyden’s statement as “a practical result of Kuyperian presumptive theology, its formal rejection notwithstanding.”⁷ But this cannot be true! For Kuyperian presumptive theology was precisely assertive in the *wrong sense*, communicating to the elect the predicted certainty of their salvation while simultaneously holding out to all others (the non-elect) the uncertainty about the promises of salvation given to them at baptism.

Is there not in the Free Reformed approach the danger of introducing a similar sort of over stated certainty, albeit in a different direction? For the statement of Rev. VanderMeyden appears to defend the presumptive *un*-regeneration of a segment of the congregation. Who are these “unconverted” of whom he speaks? To be sure, the confession speaks about hypocrites and we also have no doubt they can be present in the church at any given time. But the congregation cannot be addressed according to the presence of these hypocrites, since although they are in the church, they are not really a part of the church, (see Art. 29 BC). We agree that hypocrites must be exposed and called to repentance. And, as Lord’s Day 31 states, it must be “publicly proclaimed and testified to all unbelievers and hypocrites that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest upon them as long as they do not repent.” But does this preclude seeing the congregation as a corporate unity? If so, why? And how do we see the children in this approach?

If the confessions are read in such a way that this distinction between the converted and the unconverted is forced into it at every point, so that we by human construction (objective-subjective) end up with consistently two distinct

groups in the congregation whereas in Scripture and confession there is in the real situation only one church of God with wheat and chaff mixed together, then one danger arises: in such a forced construction Word and Spirit are severed to such a point that while all share the Word, and necessarily only some share the Spirit, therefore there necessarily must be unconverted in the church who need to be specifically addressed *as such* at any given time.

Here the shoe pinches! For while we can agree on matters a long way, to insist that there must at all times be unconverted in the congregation who stand over against the converted, and to read this insistence back into the confessions and Scripture itself will not only cause theological problems, but harm people in their life of faith. For preaching of this sort generates the perennial question (in Kuyperian lines!): am I really converted? Or to what category do I belong? And how can I be sure? We have here a question of how the confession must be interpreted, and what constitutes an accurate reading of our common basis. In my view, accurate interpretation is not reflected in the insistence upon a preconceived "two group" view. In fact, forcing this scheme onto the confession betrays a tendency to isolate experience from a man-centred rather than God-centred perspective. Reformed preaching that adequately brings forward the experiential aspect will always speak of an experience and gift that is the *common property of the entire church*, even though at the moment of speaking not all in the assembly either have shared such an experience or are willing to open themselves to it.

Let me end on a positive note! I respect the willingness of the Free Re-

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formed to work with and within the basis we have, and I believe exchanges of this sort, in a spirit of fraternal concord, help us not only in understanding our confessions, but also in appreciating different backgrounds. Hopefully it will lead us back to a more thorough understanding of Scripture and our doctrinal heritage. In my humble opinion, it's something that is badly needed!

Editorial note: Rev. P. VanderMeyden thought it best to decline the offer to respond to this article. He did mention that Prof. De Jong clarified some of the issues in a manner which serves the mutual understanding. Dr. De Jong sincerely appreciates Rev. VanderMeyden's input into this discussion. 

¹ See *Clarion*, Vol 47, #11,12 (May 29, 1998 and June 12, 1998)

² Cf. *Clarion*, (June 12, 1998) 282

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C. Trimp, *Klank en weerklank*, (De Vuurbaak, Barneveld, 1989), 57. Prof. Trimp quotes Dr. J. Van Genderen (*Christelijk Gereformeerd!*), who says: "At the same time we maintain that the very nature of God's covenant with us necessarily implies that God comes to us with demands as well as promises which are co-extensive. True, it is a demand which we are not able to meet in our own strength. But also the fulfilment of the covenant demand has been promised to us!" See J. Van Genderen, *Covenant and Election*, (ET of *Verbond en Verkiezing*, Inheritance Publications Neerlandia, 1995), 69.

⁵ See H. De Cock, *Verzamelde Schriften*, (ed. by W. Van 't Spijker and D. Deddens, et. al., Den Hertog, Houten, 1986) Vol. 2, 551.

⁶ Here the line of Calvin has been followed, cf. *Institutes*, I. vii.4, II.v.5, II.i.4, III.ii.6. McNeill says: "Calvin . . . characteristically affirms the necessity of a conjunction of the Word of Scripture with the operation of the Holy Spirit," see note on II.ii. 5. Calvin called the Spirit the "inner Schoolmaster" cf. *Institutes*, III.i.4.

Church News

*Change of address
January 1, 1999*

Rev. J. Huijgen
formerly of Smithers, BC

18955 Sunrise Avenue
Surrey, BC V3S 7M5

*Called by the church of
Aldergrove, BC*

Rev. C. Van Spronsen
of Surrey, BC

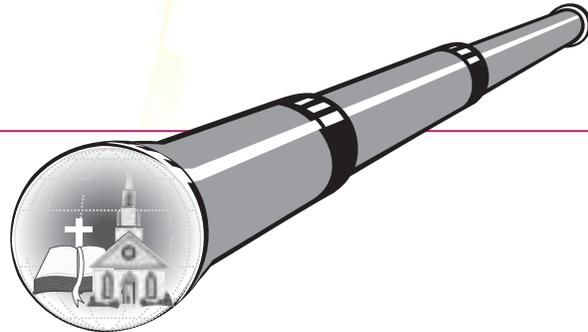
*Declined the call to serve the
newly-instituted church of
West-Kelmscott, Australia*

Rev. W.M. Wielenga
of Lynden, WA



Observation Deck

J. VanRietschoten



Free Reformed CD Archive

The Free Reformed Churches of North America have produced a CD archive of their doctrinal standards, historical documents, pamphlets, and theological research tools. The disk takes advantage of the powerful search tool Folio Bound Views and is the editorial product of Mr. Chris VanDoodewaard. The Publications Committee makes the disk available for \$45 CDN and proposes to expand the product annually.

Available from Mr. C. VanDoodewaard, 18 Marlene Street, St. Thomas, Ontario N5R 1B3 (51. 9) 631-6987 Fax (519) 633-0336

– *Christian Observer*

Zambian Churches Unite in Opposing Homosexual Organization.

Most churches in Zambia are united in their opposition to the registration of a homosexual rights organization in their country. Although homosexual practices are a criminal offence in Zambia, a group known as LEGATRA (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender Association) has declared its intention to register with the government.

Officials of the main denominations, including Roman Catholic, Reformed, Pentecostal and Evangelical,

issued condemnations of LEGATRA and its aims. High-ranking government officials suggested that they would refuse the application for registration.

The church officials, such as Ignatius Mwebe of the (Catholic) Zambian Episcopal Association, insisted homosexual activities would contribute to the moral decay of the nation. . . . Japhet Ndhlovu, moderator of the Reformed Church of Zambia, said, We cannot legalize sin in the name of human rights and constitutionalism. What is immoral is immoral, no debate about it. A former Reformed Church moderator, Foston Sakala, condemned the activity but suggested there might be more understanding for such an organization later, 20 or 30 years from now.

On September 17, the Christian Council of Zambia, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia and the Zambia Episcopal Conference issued a joint statement declaring they could not condone the registration of LEGATRA. (ENI)

– *REC News Exchange* Vol. 35:10 (October 1998).

MARS Seeks Accreditation

Mid-America Reformed Seminary has begun the process of seeking accreditation for its Master of Divinity degree program. The seminary, founded in 1982 in the Northwest Iowa town of Orange City as an alternative to Calvin Theological Seminary and primarily in-

tended for conservative Christian Reformed students, has broadened its focus over the years. Seminary growth both led to and resulted from a move to Chicago, and the seminary has now decided to seek accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the primary accrediting body for graduate seminary training in the United States.

“Accreditation is basically a means of exercising some kind of mutual accountability between institutions of a similar kind and program to make sure that minimum standards are in place,” said Mid-America professor Dr. Cornel Venema, who is coordinating the accreditation effort. Venema noted that some evangelical seminaries have gotten into difficulty over their theological stances with other accrediting agencies, but he didn’t expect such problems from ATS. “Most of the Reformed and Presbyterian seminaries are either accredited or pursuing accreditation,” said Venema. “We’re not interested in accreditation if at any point we have to compromise something of which we are convicted.”

– Dr. Cornelis Venema, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 229 Seminary Dr., Dyer, Indiana 46311 (219) 864-2400

– Mr Darrell Todd Maurina, 5783 141st Avenue, Holland, Michigan 49423-9374





Press Review Good Grief?

J. De Jong

*“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.”
Matthew 5:4*

One of the summer issues of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) paper *The Banner* gave an extensive report on their Synod 1998 held last June in Grand Rapids. The report labels the synod as “uncompromising yet unifying”. With regard to the issue of women in church offices, the reader can guess what this language means. The position taken since 1995, opening all church offices to women, still stands. A study committee was appointed to review the 1995 decision, but this too is not expected to bring about any major changes of approach. The line of Synod 1998 was to continue on the path the church has chosen with respect to the women in office issue.

It was then somewhat disconcerting to read editor Suk’s comments on the *grief* displayed at synod 1998. Under the heading “Synod’s Good Grief” he writes:

Anyone who sat through Synod 1998 would have been struck most, I think, by its sorrow. In times of communal prayer, delegate after delegate offered up words such as these:

“Comfort us as we walk through this dark valley. Bring peace to all of us throughout the United States and Canada who are pained by these divisive events. While we may leave sad and broken, don’t let us leave in despair. Thank you Lord for a time of repentance and a time of tears.”

The sorrow that so many delegates were feeling first came to expression on Wednesday night. Synod had spent more than an hour discussing whether ministers who had fomented schism in the Christian Reformed Church should merely be *released* from ministry in the CRC or whether they could be *honourably released*.

Delegates had expressed – and properly so – a good deal of righteous indignation on account of the way some schismatic church leaders had unfairly and incorrectly portrayed the doctrines and practices of the CRC. After a while, however, others rose to describe and mourn the damage schism had done to their churches and families. Rev. Howard Vanderwel, synod president, summed up that raw discussion, saying, “Some of our members have said and done things that have hurt us, and we’re trying to figure out how to handle the pain.” After that the delegates prayed together.

Suk then alludes to the large amount of investment funds lost with the fall of the IRM Corporation in the western US, a corporation that handled a large block of the investment money among CRC members. He says:

As the child of immigrants to Canada, I can remember the days

when everyone drove a jalopy, worked blue-collar jobs, and wore darned socks. Over the years, though, we’ve educated ourselves, built big churches, and established Christian schools that are the envy of other evangelicals. There were always some irritating doctrinal debates going on, of course, but for the most part we thought the way we did church was the way others should do church. We were proud.

Perhaps some readers will object to synod’s grief, saying, “After all, those wonderful institutions still exist. Anyone can suffer a financial setback. The leaders who fomented schism were all troublemakers anyway. And God wants us to rejoice in him, always. So let’s not get too long in the face.”

But the godly sorrow expressed by this year’s was exactly right. We see through tears things we could never see half as well dry-eyed.

One third of the psalms, after all, and large parts of the rest of the Old Testament, is lament. In the New Testament Jesus groaned to see a deaf and mute man and wept at his friend Lazarus’s grave. The apostle Paul had unceasing anguish for his fellow Jews who would not accept Christ. In Romans 8 he describes how even creation groans under

the weight of sin and how Christians groan with longing as we wait for all things to be made new. Even the Holy Spirit groans at the throne of God, where the Spirit prays for us (v. 26). As long as the church remains mired in this world of sin, tears will be a staple for citizens of the kingdom of God.

Perhaps more significantly, among the prayers of mourning there emerges another biblical theme. Lament psalms often conclude with expressions of confidence in God. The psalmist who begins by saying, "Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord. . . . Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy," finishes his lament with the words, "I put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love, and with him is full redemption" (130). There are unique blessings in sorrow but we will always remain strangers to it if all we ever do is rejoice. Similarly, Jesus taught us, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matt 5:4)

So after expressing their sorrow, delegates also prayed, "We know, Lord that your Spirit is one of healing and reconciliation" and, "You have promised that you will never walk away from us or the church. Remind us of what we learned as children, Lord. We are always in your hand."

And that is how this year's synod should be remembered. Delegates arrived weary, worn, and sad. Once there, they found a resting place in God. In the end, they left with a deeper sense of the church's absolute dependence on the grace of Jesus, who once made a promise to Paul that our entire denomination can bank on: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

It is remarkable that after labelling synod's "good grief" as "godly grief" Suk does not offer any further explanation as to the character of "godly grief". Rather, he turns to the Psalms before moving on to the references to "groaning" in Romans 8. But "godly grief" as Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians 7 is a grief especially marked by *repentance* and *return*. Addressing the Corinthian congregation he says in chapter 7:9,10:

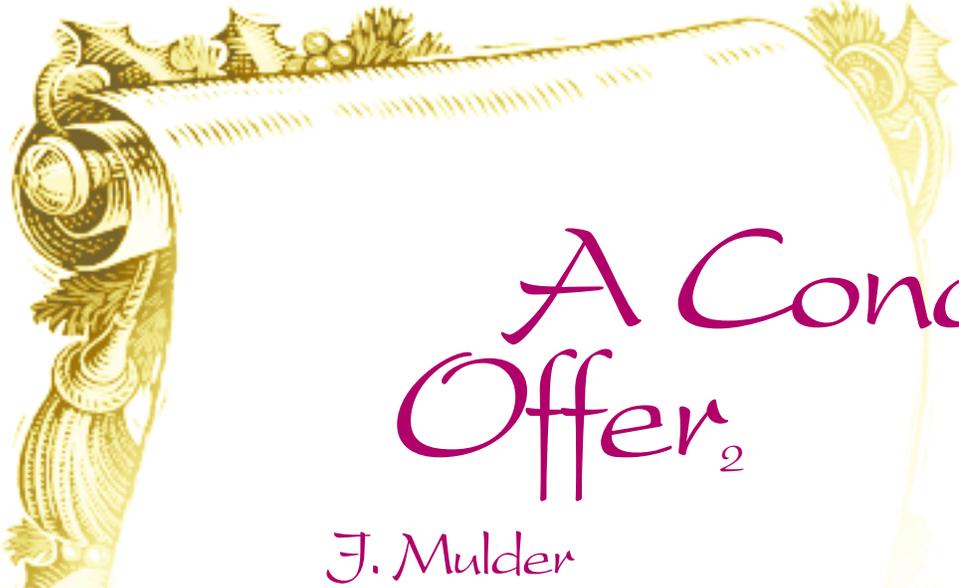
As it is I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death.

Precisely in this context, in which the expression "godly grief" is used, the apostle speaks about a grieving to repentance, and a grieving that leads one back to the pathways of God's Word. There is something about the term "uncompromising" that does not fit at all with "godly grief", especially with an issue like that of women in office. With the weight of the textual evidence op-

posing women occupying either a ruling or teaching office in the church, how can one speak here of a grief that leads to repentance? Are we not faced here with empty words, while simultaneously the clear teaching of the Bible is pushed aside?

Suk gives me no sense of a "godly grief" at Synod 1998. Rather, we have the report of a persistent and deliberate journey to the position of current mainstream protestantism, the church that compromises the truth of God. Paul says that "godly grief" brought him joy. But for us, the stand of the CRC Synod 1998 only brings continued grief. Here there is nothing that unifies, and no true consensus; we only have the *uncompromising*





A Conditional Offer₂

J. Mulder

Concerning Wayne Pleiter's "Raising the bar too high?" (Clarion, 47:22, p. 530).

I would like to make a few comments.

1. Br. Pleiter. writes:

While the assertions of Rev.'s VanPopta and Mulder is that these matters (supervision of the Lord's table) are merely of a church order nature, Synod 98 sufficiently establishes that they are of a scriptural and confessional nature.

Nowhere in my article, *A Conditional Offer* (47:14, p. 338), did I even mention the Church Order, let alone that the supervision of the Lord's table is *merely of a church order nature*. I did not write that for I know too well that the question how you supervise the table of the Lord has everything to do with what you believe and confess the Lord's table to be. (By the way, neither did Rev. Van Popta write that supervision of the Lord's table is *merely* a church order matter! He never used the word *merely*! Br. Pleiter added that! One word can make quite a difference!)

2. Br. Pleiter also writes about what he calls the *practical/theoretical argument* and says that this is *in some way a deceptive one* and may create a false dilemma. I wholeheartedly agree. But br. Pleiter should admit that I did not introduce this argument (nor did Rev. VanPopta); rather, Synod Abbotsford 1995 did. This General Synod considered that the question how to admit guests to the Lord's table "deals with certain *practices* in the OPC and not its confessional documents" (Acts Synod 1995, Art. 106 B.3). According to Synod 95, this practice does not undermine the OPC's confes-

sional integrity as a true Church. Synod Fergus 98 upheld these statements. The church at Watford asked Synod 98 to declare that Synod 95 erred in stating this (Acts Synod 1998, Art.130.E.4.d). The church at Attercliffe pointed out to Synod 98 that these practices deal with matters about which our confessions speak (Acts Synod 1998, Art.130.E.4.e.iv). Also the church of London was of the opinion that Synod 95 was wrong in making these statements and this church rejects this "confessional-practical distinction" (Acts Synod 1998, Art.130.E.4.f.v).

It was not me (nor Rev. VanPopta) who made this distinction which, according to br. Pleiter is "in some ways deceptive."

My point was and is that in spite of what these churches asked and without refuting what Abbotsford 95 stated, Synod 98 did make this OPC *practice* of how guests are admitted to the Lord's table a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. If the OPC does not change this practice, and the next General Assembly does not declare that in admitting guests to the Lord's table a general verbal warning is not sufficient, then there will be no Ecclesiastical Fellowship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC. Then also the present relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the OPC has to be reconsidered by our next general synod (Synod 1998, Acts. Art. 133.VI.G.J).

3. Br. Pleiter continues to speak about an "*agreement*" we have with the OPC. But br. Pleiter should realize that after Synod Fergus 1998 *there is no agreement with the OPC anymore*. Our Committee for Contact with the OPC

reached an agreement with the brothers of the OPC. A common basis for Ecclesiastical Fellowship between these two churches was agreed upon. Synod 1998 was asked to decide accordingly and take over this agreement reached by both Committees. However, Synod decided not to do this but to add to it. The addition may be only a few lines – to be exact only thirty one (31!) words – but it is definitely not an unimportant addition. Synod did this without consulting the brothers of the OPC. It was a one-sided alteration.

Consequently, there is, of course, no agreement anymore. We better state this openly and clearly.

This decision of Synod 98 first has to be discussed with the brothers of the OPC, and if they can agree with the addition Synod 98 made, they are to pass this agreement on for adoption by their General Assembly. Everyone who knows a bit about the history of our contact with the OPC also knows that this will be quite a process again! If that process is clearly demanded by the LORD, then we must do it! But is it?

4. In conclusion, my point still is the question whether this conditional offer is warranted on the basis of Scripture and Confession.

I know that br. Pleiter and others will say: But we don't ask an unscriptural thing. Synod 1998 has made this sufficiently clear!

That might be true. You may even add that according to the OPC's own Westminster Standards they *should* be stricter when admitting guests to the Lord's table. True again! But let's not forget that every OPC congregation and

session presently has the freedom and the right to break with the practice of a verbal warning only. No General Assembly has demanded or does demand this particular practice of a local session. Therefore I can see that it will be very hard for the next General Assembly of the OPC now to demand of all local congregations and sessions to admit guests the same way we typically do.

Also, after all that br. Pleiter wrote to defend Synod 98's decision it is not clear at all why, on the one hand, the discussion regarding differences in confession and church polity can take place

within the relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, but on the other hand, this matter of a verbal warning had to be made a condition before such fellowship can be established. After all, these differences in confession and church polity are also weighty matters! You will remember that they concern topics as "visible and invisible church," "the covenant," "assurance of faith," "observance of the law," and "the authority of ecclesiastical assemblies." If these matters can be discussed within the framework of a sister church relationship, this issue of a verbal warning could

also have been a fine topic for discussion to serve the mutual upbuilding in the faith and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. For don't forget, allowing the present practice in the OPC does not, according to Synod Abbotsford 1995 and Synod Fergus 1998, undermine the OPC's confessional integrity as a true Church.



Rev. J. Mulder is minister-emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-Waterdown. He served as convener of the Committee for Contact with the OPC from 1977-1992.

Watford



On September 15, 1998, the official sod turning ceremony took place for our new church building near Kerwood, ON. From l-r: Rev. J. Van Woudenberg, Mr. John Janssens, chairman of the building committee, and Mr. Bruce Smith, M.M.P. of Middlesex County.

November 9, 1998. The church building is taking shape.





Reader's Forum

Out of Concern for the Canadian Reformed Churches

Wm. Van Spronsen

Church Unity in the Acts of Synod Fergus 1998

This contribution is written out of deep concern for decisions made regarding the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) in Article 51, L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ) in Article 97 and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Article 130.

Although I have to be very short, and I am sure, incomplete, yet this matter is of the greatest importance for:

- a. the unity of Christ's Church on earth,
- b. maintaining the true Reformed character of the Canadian Reformed Churches and
- c. most importantly, the honour of the Head of the Church, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prior to Synod Fergus, it was established, either by previous synods or committees, that the churches under discussion are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ because they accept God's Word for what it really is and they consider the Reformed Confessions to be a true summary of the Scriptures. This point is not refuted in the *Acts* of Synod Fergus. Yet Synod Fergus (as well as

previous synods) has again raised obstacles which stand in the way of the pursuit of unity or Ecclesiastical Fellowship with other true Churches.

The greatest concern of Synod Fergus seems to be fencing (supervision) of the Lord's Table and observing the Lord's Day. The important question is: should these concerns of Synod Fergus really be raised as obstacles for unity with other churches of our Lord Jesus Christ? Many pages are written in the acts to defend the synod's stand on this matter. It is my conviction that a very important and decisive factor is missing in Synod's deliberations, namely the consideration: *what does it mean to be Reformed?* It should mean the same as it always has been, namely *being bound to God's Word*. Important and decisive is: *What does Scripture say?* What is the Lord's will?

When we apply this historical Reformed principle to the issues under discussion, the question should be asked (and answered as well): Are the practices of the RCUS, the ERQ, and the OPC regarding the fencing of the Lord's Table and observing the Lord's Day against God's Word? Can we say to these churches: what you are doing

here is *against God's will and Word*? Can we? This is the all important and decisive question. This question must be answered if we as Canadian Reformed Churches want to be and remain obediently Reformed. If we are able to show that their practices regarding fencing the Lord's Table and observing the Lord's Day are not in agreement with God's will and Word, we must call the RCUS, the ERQ, and the OPC to repentance before unity can be pursued any further. If we cannot clearly show them that they are acting against God's Word, and we maintain the obstacles to unity with other faithful churches as expressed in the articles of Synod Fergus under discussion then one can only conclude that *our traditions, our practices, or our understandings have become normative or decisive, rather than God's Word*. And this is, as I see it and as I read it, indeed the case.

Am I too bold in stating this? I think not. Consider only this one, short quotation found on page 43 of the *Acts*: ". . . the Lord's Supper is not fenced in a manner compatible with *our Reformed understanding* of what the Bible requires on this point" (Consideration B, my emphasis). Also on page 43 (Consideration E), Synod

Fergus states that, among other points, Scripture and Reformed Confessions teach that more than one worship service per Sunday should be held. With this statement Synod Fergus has brought our Reformed practice of two worship services, which has no Scriptural or confessional stipulation, to the level of Scriptural norm which other Churches ought to abide by.

With this Synod Fergus states that "our understanding" and our practices are *normative* rather than God's Word. The same thought is found more often in the Acts of Synod Fergus. This is my deep concern because this thinking is *not Reformed*.

This concern should not be considered simplistic. I hope and pray that this concern will be accepted as simply Reformed. I am deeply concerned and unhappy with the direction the Canadian Reformed Churches are heading as confirmed by parts of the Acts of Synod Fergus. This is the only reason for presenting these matters to you. It may well be true that the issues of fencing the Lord's Table and observance of the Lord's Day need be to discussed and clarified. The thrust of this writing, however, is that *we may not make our practices, traditions, or understandings binding or conditional* while considering unity with other faithful Churches. What are the Canadian Reformed Churches, what is the Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, going to do about reversing this trend which is incompatible with being obediently Reformed?

I would like to avoid all possible misunderstanding. This is not an argument for more freedom with regard to the Lord's Day. Neither is this an appeal for a different practice of fencing the Lord's Table. I only write this because I am really disturbed by the direction of the Canadian Reformed Churches, a direction which comes to the fore again in the Acts of Synod Fergus. A direction which is incompatible with being Reformed. May the Lord of the Church guide us all into the way of obedience.



Wm. Van Spronsen is a member of the Canadian Reformed Church of Langley, BC.

FROM EAST TO WEST, FROM SHORE TO SHORE

*From east to west, from shore to shore
Let every heart awake and sing
The holy Child whom Mary bore
The Christ, the everlasting King.*

*Behold, the world's Creator wears
The form and fashion of a slave;
Our very flesh our Maker shares,
His fallen creature, man, to save.*

*For this how wondrously he wrought!
A maiden, in her lowly place,
Became, in ways beyond all thought,
The chosen vessel of his grace.*

*She bowed her to the angel's word
Declaring what the Father willed,
And suddenly the promised Lord
That pure and hallowed temple filled.*

*He shrank not from the oxen's stall
He lay within the manger bed.
And he whose bounty feedeth all
At Mary's breast himself was fed.*

*And while the angels in the sky
Sang praise above the silent field
To shepherds poor the Lord most high
The one great Shepherd, was revealed.*

*All glory for this blessed morn
To God the Father ever be
All praise to thee, O Virgin-born
All praise, O Holy Ghost, to thee.*

*Caelius Sedulius (died c. 450).
translation By J. Ellerton (1826-93)*

"Look to the Author of Authority!"

Thea Heyink

The 37th Annual League Day of the Canadian Reformed Women's Societies in Ontario held on October 21, 1998, in Ancaster, Ontario

Wednesday morning dawned cool and cloudy, but the weather did not dampen the spirits of 370 women and several gentlemen as they filed into Merrit Hall in Ancaster. The President, Mrs. M. DeGelder, called order at 10:10 a.m. to begin our 37th League Day. Mrs. Rose Woudenberg accompanied us as we sang Psalm 8:1, 2 and 3. Psalm 8 was also the Scripture reading, and the President led in opening prayer. After some words of welcome, she explained the theme of the day, "Look to the Author of Authority."

The President made several announcements. The collection for the day would be for Anchor. She passed on greetings from sisters in Australia and the Netherlands. Roll Call was held, with a special welcome to a sister from Grand Rapids, a sister from Holland, and two sisters from the west.

We then sang the League Song, after which we opened Scripture at Psalm 2 and Romans 13:1-7. Mrs. DeGelder introduced Rev. G. van Popta as the speaker of the morning. He spoke on "Authority: A Wonderful Gift that Provides Order, Health and Safety" (this speech will appear in a future *Clarion*).

Rev. G. van Popta

Why is authority often thought of in negative terms? Because of sin and man's inherent unwillingness to submit, and because authority can be and



Rev. George van Popta

is often abused. Both rejection and abuse of authority cause disorder, havoc, sickness, even death. All authority belongs to and flows from God. He has authority in creation, as Creator and as Redeemer. God has given authority to his Son. God has made Him both Lord and Christ. Christ also has authority inherently as He is God himself. This authority comes to us through the Spirit who speaks to us through the inspired and useful Scriptures concerning faith and life (2 Tim 3:16; BC Art. 5).

God the Father, being the Author of authority, also comes to us in other

agents, such a parents, church, and state. The state (including the police and the law courts) is an agent of authority, and thereby the servant of God (Rom. 13:1ff; BC Art. 36). They have been given power to wield the sword.

What must be the style of authority? All in authority must follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in how He exercised authority (Mark 10:45) by being servants (John 13, 1 Peter 5). Legislators in our country, officebearers in our churches, and parents in our families must use their authority in service. Their authority is limited. Man's authority is limited. We must obey God rather than man. Only God has unlimited authority.

When authority is not exercised properly, when those in authority think they have unlimited authority, abuse can happen. We can be thankful that abused children are coming forward; there is much hope today for them, for healing. The consequences can be devastating. Abuse is deadening. It breeds sickness and spiritual death. What is a child victim of abuse to do? The child must go to someone else in a position of authority for help. The victims must know the church stands by them.

The rejection of authority also has bad consequences. Today's anti-authority philosophy is largely based on the ideas of the French Revolution

(1789-99). The motto of the time was: Man can exist apart from God.

The media today scoffs at authority. Entertainment (television) ridicules authority. On many sitcoms, father is portrayed as a lazy bumbler. Many unions are opposed to authority, bringing disorder and violence on the picket line. When God, the ultimate authority, gives authority to those on earth, and this authority is exercised in a manner of service, there will be order and well-being, in family, church and society. If it is abused there will be sickness and death. When authority is rejected, there is disorder, sickness and havoc, but when authority is accepted/respected, order, health and safety prevail.

A time for discussion was held right after the speech. Many questions were dealt with from the floor. Rev. Van Popta was heartily thanked for his speech and for answering the questions.

After a delicious luncheon was enjoyed by all, the President once again called for order. Our national anthem was sung, after which Mrs. Amanda Poppe shared a story, a German folk tale, called "The Wooden Bowl," by Heather Forrest, and a poem "A Little Boy and an Old Man." These supported the theme of authority and love among the generations. The deep silence that reigned during her stories testified to how all enjoyed them.

In preparation for the afternoon topic, John 17:1-5, 1 Timothy 5:1-16, and Lord's Day 39 were read. The President introduced the speaker for the afternoon, Mrs. Elaine Prinzen. The topic was entitled "Positively Under Authority: The Role of Authority in the Adult Children/Parent Relationship."

Elaine Prinzen

Scripture teaches children to honour and obey their parents from the cradle. It is understandable that parents' authority is manifested over the young child, so the question arises concerning the extent of that authority over the grown child with a family of his own. Mrs. Prinzen described the goals of parental authority, namely the orderly progression and functioning of families, the mirroring of the parent-child relationship to that of the Father and his Son, and the fostering of a servant relationship between parents and children. Parents' authority over grown children is the Lord's way of teaching the younger by the elder, as it has pleased the Lord to teach and mold one generation through

Mrs. Elaine Prinzen



the experience and wisdom of the previous generation.

Mrs. Prinzen went on to give practical application to parental authority over grown offspring. Scripture is not as clear about the understanding of parental authority when the child has reached adulthood and has left home. The rules of the familial home no longer apply; however, Scripture is clear that the adult child is not to stray from the teachings of his parents administered during his childhood.

When young adults publicly profess their faith and establish their own homes, parental authority ends. They are now accountable to God for their actions and accept the authority of the elders in the church. However parents should and must still play an active role in the young peoples' lives, who must not shun the parents' knowledge and experience. As parents grow elderly, the roles may change, but the honour and respect must continue to grow. It is the duty of the children to care for elderly parents, both physically and financially if necessary, and with the right attitude – of gladness and humble submission in a spirit of love. If we do not care for our parents in that way, we are worse than unbelievers who have never seen Christ's sacrificial love or the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. The only time we are not to submit to parental authority is when their teachings go against the Word of God, or they

abuse their authority. The child must then admonish the parent in compassion and humility.

In conclusion, Mrs. Prinzen stated that it was necessary at all times to pray for guidance, knowledge and understanding, to submit to the proper authority, and to honour and respect our parents, heed their teaching, and walk in the way of the Lord.

Discussion ensued, and once again many questions were submitted and discussed. The President thanked Mrs. Prinzen for her excellent speech and answers to the questions. She concluded that we have been occupied with the topic of authority, that it should be shown in the light of service. We can find answers to our questions in the Book, written by the Author of authority.

The collection for Anchor totaled \$1400.90. The next League Day would be held, D.V., in Burlington East. A hearty thank you was extended to the hosting society, the babysitters, and the accompanist.

Question period was held, and several suggestions were made for the next League Day. In conclusion, the Vice-President, Mrs. Werkman thanked Mrs. De Gelder for a job well done. In closing we sang Hymn 60 and Mrs. Dora Van Popta closed with prayer. In was a considerable length of time before the hall emptied out and silence reigned once again. The Lord graciously granted us a wonderful day in study and fellowship.



Campfire 1998

Nestled in the beautiful Hockley Valley, near Orangeville, Ontario, is Campfire's home base: the Good Year Memorial Boy Scouts Camp. There are few places in God's creation as breathtaking as the Hockley Valley at early dawn when the fog lifts and peels away from the hills. It was in this setting that over 200 campers, counselors and staff came together this summer to enjoy *Campfire!* 1998. Over the span of four weeks we had the opportunity to forge new friendships, play crazy games, swim in pools, lakes and ponds and sing countless songs. But no matter how spectacular the scenery or how many fun games we played, nothing took our breath away as much as having God teach us through his Word and witnessing his grace in the lives of everyone at camp this summer.

A Day at Camp

At 6:45 am. the alarm clocks abruptly reminded us that a new day had arrived. The staff and counselors began each morning with prayer, Bible study and planning for the day ahead. Devotions over, the rest of the morning ran its course with cabin pack Bible study, breakfast and clean-up, our daily chapel and crafts. Then it was back to the lodge for lunch before we embarked upon an exciting afternoon of sports activities, archery, swimming, canoeing, or a turn at the very challenging "Confidence Course". Throughout the day, good times reigned, practical jokes were

played and campers and staff broke into silly songs at the least provocation. But there were also quiet times, when the fun gave way to more direct focus on God and his Word: during our devotions with campers, after each meal, at chapel and around the campfire at night.

The Campfire! Campfires

Some of the most memorable times for staff and campers alike were experienced around the last campfire of each week. Here, the campers were given the opportunity to express to the group what they had liked, disliked and gained from their stay at camp. It was in this setting, that we were audience to some of the most wonderful statements of young faith and growth:



"I've learned a lot about the Bible and about being a Christian. I used to think that reading the Bible and going to church was for old people, but I was wrong. It's for me as well!"

"I learned that even when people make fun of you for going to church, or being a Christian you have to still love them and pray for them."

"I've never really done anything like this before. I thought it would be boring."

All I ever do is sit in front of the TV and say "Mom, I need more video games!" But my Mom thought camp was a great idea. I'm glad she did, cause I wasn't bored for a moment. I love it here!!"

Through these children, the Lord provided us with a special glimpse into how He was using our camp as an instrument in his Kingdom.

A New Adventure for Campfire!

This summer was witness to our first ever Teen Leadership Camp. Thirty campers between the ages of 13-16 descended upon our camp from our churches across Ontario. We decided to organize a teen week this year for three reasons. First, we needed to have

a program for campers that were too old to attend children's camp, (ages 8-12), but too young to be Counselors-in-Training, (ages 16-18). Second, we wanted to provide young teens with leadership training to equip them to fill counselor positions in coming years. Finally, we saw a need in our community to challenge teens in their walk with Christ. A week at *Campfire!*, away from

the day to day distractions of modern society, stressed to the teens the importance of being a leader for Christ in this world, and reinforced the reality that being a Christian doesn't rob them of all the fun and excitement in their lives.

Our theme for the week was "Christian Courage." We took a look at the life of the prophet Jeremiah and how the Lord taught him humility, boldness



Photos by Jason Hart

and perseverance. We discussed what it means to have the courage to suffer, to speak out for God, and to live a life of service for Christ. Realizing that God alone cultivates this courage, we challenged the teens to spend more time with Him, by reading their Bibles daily and praying continually. Our guest speaker, Adrian Dieleman, encouraged each of us to make a vow to spend at least five minutes *each day* in personal Bible reading. We were very excited to see many of the teens begin to keep this vow already during their time at camp.

Throughout the week we as staff came to a better understanding of the pressures that Christian teens face in this world and even from their own peers. A non-committal and apathetic faith life is expected of them – because only a “cool” faith is “cool!” But the Lord detests lukewarm Christians. We called the teens to live their lives in the context of eternity and not just for the blink of time that this life represents. By the end of the week we could see God softening the heart of the teens who began the week showing apathy towards the Bible, to being excited about it and wanting to share it with others.

Children's Camp

The Children's Camps brought their own challenges and blessings. Three separate weeks saw over 110 campers sharing in the program. The majority of children came from our church community, along with their neighbourhood friends and contacts. We also had the privilege, as we did last year, of hosting a group of children from the Inner City Ministry operated out of St. David's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton's underprivileged “East End”. Unlike last year, however, we decided not to segregate the campers into their own week of camp, but instead to run an integrated camp. We reached this decision after much prayer and advice from the Directors of the St David's programs and from the council and Evangelism Committee of our patron church, *Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church* at Hamilton. Looking back, we can say with conviction that this decision was truly blessed by the Lord.

Each week seven or eight participants from the St. David's programs were bused up to camp from their homes in Hamilton. After arriving at camp the St. David's kids were put into different cabin packs, together with the other campers, and no further distinc-

tion was made between the campers for the remainder of the week. Our task was made simpler in that the campers, save a few seasoned veterans, did not know each other. Most came to camp too shy and concerned about fitting in themselves than considering from where their newfound friends had come. Any preconceptions on the part of the counselors and staff that the children from downtown Hamilton would be markedly different from those of our own community were soon lost.

The chapel theme for the Children's Camps was “The Children of God.” We studied how God worked in the young lives of Jacob, Samuel, David, Mary and

Jesus. We discussed what it means to be an obedient child of God and how the Lord calls us to practice unconditional love and forgiveness. Although the children from our church community were generally more familiar with the Bible stories than those from downtown Hamilton, this often worked to the benefit of the camp. On the one hand, the St. David's kids gleaned a lot of wisdom from their peers. On the other hand, the children from our church community were confronted with questions that are sometimes left unasked in an established church community, such as:

“Why did Jesus have to die?”

“How do you know if you are saved or not?”

“What is salvation?”

These questions presented an excellent opportunity for counselors to discuss the fundamentals of the Christian faith with *all* of the children. They also gave all the campers an opportunity to realize that even the simple questions need to be addressed.

God blessed the staff and counselors by means of the campers. We were challenged by the campers to live up to everything that we encouraged them to be. To lead by example, we had to learn humility and service. Many counselors and staff found it challenging to lead the group in a Bible devotion and prayer. We forgot that Christ uses even our weaknesses for his purpose. The Lord taught us courage this summer, and it was only by his grace that we were able to successfully complete another year at camp.

With Thankful Hearts

We thank the Lord for giving us such a beautiful summer in the breathtaking hills of the Hockley Valley. We thank the parents for entrusting their children into our care. Thanks to our staff and counselors by whose constant devotion, some for four straight weeks, camp went so smoothly. Thank you Council, Evangelism Committee and congregation at Cornerstone for your invaluable support and guidance. A special thanks to the congregation of Orangeville for their generous hospitality. And thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project, both in prayer and in action. Most importantly, thank you Lord Jesus for allowing us to do this work as an act of gratitude for You, our risen Savior. Thank you LORD for *CAMPFIRE!* 1998!

By: Director Chipper
for the *Campfire!* Committee 

In the coming months we plan to send out our annual report to consistories and evangelism committees across Ontario. We encourage you to discover more about our camp by borrowing and reading one of these reports. If your church is outside this area, or if you would like a personal copy, we will gladly send you one upon request. A small donation to help cover postage and handling costs would be greatly appreciated. A copy of the report can also be sent via e-mail.

Please contact us with your questions and, or comments.

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Faithworks Trip to Notre Maison Orphanage, Haiti

Angelina Schutten

In the pre-dawn hours of August 1, a group of six young people met at Toronto Airport. We were nervous about where we were going. After many months of preparing for the Haiti trip by raising money, getting the proper medications, and educating ourselves with information about Haiti, we now gathered together at the airport. Rev. G. van Popta, who had come to see us off, read Psalm 121 and prayed with us before we boarded our plane. We were off to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to volunteer for two weeks at Notre Maison Orphanage. Notre Maison, a Christian orphanage, is home to 37 abandoned, mostly handicapped, children. It takes care of their physical needs and teaches the children to know the Lord.

Impressions of Port-au-Prince

We arrived at 3:00 p.m. What a sight! Garbage everywhere! Goats, chickens, cows and skinny dogs roamed the streets. The urban streets are worse than our gravel back roads. The drivers are crazy. At street side are little markets. Cooked meat, with flies, sat in the hot sun. Animal hooves were in full view as part of the public offering for sale. Walking by this scene made us feel sick. To think that people actually eat this!

The weather was hot. It rained three nights while we were there. Some of us took refreshing showers in the rain. When it rains, the people throw their garbage into the streets so it gets washed away. Those living at the top of the hill have clean streets but you can

imagine what it is like for the people at the bottom of the hill.

We had to be careful when we walked in the city. We women in our group were not allowed to wear tank tops or show our knees in public otherwise we would be associated with non-Christians.

Life in the orphanage

We experienced life and death situations during our stay. The doctors can be uncaring in Haiti. This was demonstrated in the case of little baby Moses. He lives at the orphanage and was struggling for every breath. The doctors would not look at him because he had

hydrocephalus (water pockets on the brain). Medical opinion was that Moses was so handicapped that he would die anyway. Some doctors told us to give him steroids. Still others advised that Moses would grow out of it. Frustrated, we returned with Moses to the orphanage. He went into a coma the next morning. We rushed him back to the hospital to show the doctors that this baby was not going to live unless he had a tracheotomy (a tube insert in the esophagus). We had to shake Moses to keep him from falling asleep otherwise he would stop breathing. Finally a doctor performed the surgery. Moses re-



The Haiti Team: Candice Sanderson, Lucille DeBoer, Marylynn Kottelenberg, Richard Bultje, Ange Schutten and Jocelyn Ludwig

ceived his tracheotomy and could breathe much easier.

A typical day at the orphanage begins at 6:00 a.m. and concludes close to 10:30 p.m. We ate breakfast at 6:00 a.m., after devotions. Then we would get the children up and feed them. From 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. is music hour. The children would listen to a tape and clap and sing. At 9:00 a.m. the orphanage starts school. The older children learn ABC's and numbers. The younger children learn how to build with blocks, talk on the toy telephone, etc. Children unable to participate in the above two groups have physiotherapy. We would massage their limbs, moving them up and down and around to keep them from becoming stiff. School ends at 11:30 a.m.

After lunch, the children rest for about an hour. During this time some of us would catch a catnap or do odd jobs like clearing out the fish tank, cleaning the wading pool, and some painting.

After nap time we would bring the children out on the balcony to enjoy

some free time until supper time. After supper, we bathed the children and put them to bed for the night. Then we would have some free time. Evenings were filled with devotional study and writing in our journals, after which we would finally go to bed. Each day was long but very rewarding.

The feed truck

During our second week, we traveled to the mountains and fed 2,493 children. Two "feed" trucks go to the mountains every Wednesday and Saturday. They stop at selected spots.

Children and some adults (the ones that aren't too ashamed) come to these stopover spots to receive food. In the feed trucks were three big pots of cooked rice and several sacks full of little bags of flour. At each stop the children would sing some songs and recite a text from a Creole Bible. The organizers would show a chart that outlined God's plan of salvation. Through Jesus, He gives us love, grace and mercy. We

in response, give Him our love. We have our hope and faith in Him. After this talk, we would pray. The children would then line up with their containers and we would scoop the rice into their pots. Several children didn't have any containers so they just held out their shirts. This was a real eye opener for us all. You see it on television or hear about starvation on the radio, but to see this pathetic scene up close brings tears to one's eyes.

At the conclusion of our trip we thanked the Lord for guiding our paths, protecting us from harm and danger and bringing us back to our loved ones. This was a wonderful experience that we had together, an opportunity to share with others. We also thank all who sponsored us and supported us in prayer during our stay in Haiti.

We ask that you continue to pray for those who remain behind in Haiti. Their needs are great. Ruth Zimmerman, director of the Notre Maison Orphanage, said to us, "You have shown



The busy town streets of Haiti

A poem written by Barbara Seth, a visitor to the orphanage.

I AM A CHILD OF GOD

*Please don't pity me, I am a Child of God
I was born in a country of strife and unrest,
Where human life has little value
I am a Child of God*

*In a country where almost everyone is
hungry and poor,
I am an orphan and so poorer still
But, I am a Child of God*

*Born in Haiti where only those able survive,
I was born disabled and, in many cases,
left to die.
I am still a Child of God*

*Read my story, look into my face
Help Ruth give me a home, hope
and a future.
For I am a Child of God.*

Moses back at the orphanage after his tracheotomy. Lucille is holding him.

Ange holding Friendly during music hour



This is the line-up at one of the stops that the feed truck stops at.



Line up for food, but first the chart of the plan of salvation.



An Evening of Celebration

P. Leistra

*Guido de Brès Christian High School's
22nd Commencement, October 30, 1998*

Guido de Brès Christian High School's twenty-second commencement can be described as an evening of celebration. We celebrated every student's accomplishment of attaining their Ontario Secondary School Diploma after four years of hard work. We also celebrated outstanding individual achievements. Most of all, however, we celebrated with one another the fact that we have a faithful Father who upholds our school so that we may continue to instruct our children in his ways.

The evening began with a standing reception for the sixty-six graduates, their families and the staff in Guido's gymnasium. There was a bountiful assortment of "finger foods" (the term hardly does justice to the menu) provided by the ladies' auxiliary. As principal of Guido, Mr. VanDooren welcomed all the graduates and their families and encouraged students to mingle with one another and with the teachers to get caught up on the various goings-on over the summer. Mr. Wiersma then took the floor to present the Blue and Gold awards – a prestigious award given to students who participated in a wide variety of school activities throughout their four years at Guido. It was an outstanding compliment to the graduating class of 1998 to hear that there were thirteen people (Wow!) who won the award this year. After the presentation, a sense of nervousness and excitement started to creep



Andy Jairam, valedictorian

into the gymnasium as the time approached to relocate to the venue of the commencement ceremony.

With nearly one thousand family members, friends and supporters in attendance, the commencement ceremonies were opened by the Chairman of the Board, Mr. VanderHoeven. Mr. VanderHoeven set the tone for the evening reading from Colossians: In Christ, "all things were created by Him and for Him" (1:16).

The address to the graduating class was given by the Rev. P. Aasman: "In Christ All Things Hold Together." Rev.

Aasman, himself a graduate of Guido of the class of 1979, discussed the appropriateness and indeed the necessity of Christian education, even in subjects like Geography and Math. Since all the disciplines fit together to form a whole, they all must point to the same goal. While most say that the Arts and Sciences are for man's pleasure and improvement, we know far better – all things were created for Christ and his glory. The students of Guido de Brès are reminded of this as they enter the school: In the front foyer, there is a plaque bearing a quotation from the man after whom the school was named, reading, in part, "God created all things . . . to the end that many may serve his God."

After Rev. Aasman's speech, the students were called individually to the stage to receive their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas. Thereafter, several scholarships were awarded to students who attained exceptionally high levels of achievement. The speeches were then capped off with the valedictory address, given by Andy Jairam. His speech was a light-hearted yet sensitive look at the four years of (mis)adventures of the class of 1998.

There were other contributions which made the evening a success – including four pieces by Guido's choir and soloists – but suffice it to say that all the speeches and presentations had one common theme: By Christ all things were created to worship and glorify Him.



The Rev. P.Aasman gave the commencement address



The evening began with a reception

Alisha Ravensbergen sang on behalf of the grads

Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

Daniel Aasman
Gerald Alkema
Neal Baartman
Geoffrey Bartels
Lee-Ann Beintema
Leslie Blokker
Eric Bos
Shaun Bos
Alison Buitenhuis
Melanie Dantuma
Ewout DeGelder
Andrew DeJager
Joni Dekker
Elsa den Hollander

Cameron Diek
Gregory Donker
Jan Groen
Jeffrey Harsevoort
Daniel Hartman
Michael Havenaar
Joshua Hofsink
Irene Homan
Erika Hopman
Anna Hordyk
Wilbur Horlings
Margaret Huizing
Andy Jairam
Marja Jans

Nathan Jansen
VanDoorn
Nathan Kampen
Matthew Keep
Harold Kelly
Grant Kottelenberg
John Linde
Harry Linde
Mark Ludwig
Anya Malda
Sherri Malda
Ryan Mans
Sheryl Oostdyk
Femmie Peereboom

Sietze Peereboom
Kariann Piper
Alisha Ravensbergen
Adrian Reinink
Rik Reinink
Scott Roodzant
Leah Smeding
Albert Smouter
Nicoline Torenvliet
Ann-Marie
VandenOever
Janine
VanderHoeven
Daniel Vanderveen

Aren Vandervelde
Peter Vandervelde
Albert Vanderwoude
John VanHengstum
Ryan VanHof
Tracy VanStraten
Douglas VanVeen
Herman VanVeen
Henrietta Vis
James Vis
Bradley Visscher
Matthew Werkman
Albert Woudenberg

Awards

The Harry Aasman Memorial Scholarship

Elsa den Hollander

The George DeBoer Memorial Scholarship

Grant Kottelenberg

The Guido de Bres Alumni Scholarships

Leah Smeding
Marja Jans

The Premier School Agendas Ltd. Scholarships

Irene Homan, Erika Hopman,
Ryan Mans, Janine VanderHoeven

The Edward M. Stam Memorial Scholarship

Ryan Van Hof

The Guido de Bres Participation Awards

Daniel Aasman, Gerald Alkema, Alison Buitenhuis,
Erika Hopman, Andy Jairam, Grant Kottelenberg,
Tracy VanStraten

The Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award

Andy Jairam

The Governor-General's Bronze Medal

Grant Kottelenberg



Thus Far the Lord has Helped Us

Jerry Tillema

"The Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, 'Hitherto the LORD has helped us.'"

1 Samuel 7:12

The 25th anniversary of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Christian School of Chatham, Ontario, was a celebration of thankfulness to God. In the past 25 years the student population has nearly doubled and the building has been expanded to twice its original size.

Much planning and sprucing up of the school was done for the celebration and open house with its many displays. People from far and near attended.

The beginning of the events of October 17, 1998 was highlighted by a tree planting ceremony. Three generations of the Br. and Sr. A. Koster family and Mayor Bill Erikson of Chatham-Kent cheerfully assisted. Br. Adrian Koster reminded us of the words of Deuteronomy 6:2, "So that you, your children, and their children after them may fear the Lord your God . . ." and Psalm 78:4 ". . . we will tell the next generation. . ."

For the evening program we read Psalm 119:1-16, the passage that was also read at the official opening of the school 25 years ago: "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. . . How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word."

Br. John De Boer, who was chairman in 1973, gave a brief history of our humble beginnings. From a Friday night Bible school we became an elementary day school situated next to our church property. This school is based on the Bible and its teachings as summarized

1973



1998

25th Anniversary
of
Eben-Ezer
Canadian Reformed
Christian School

"Thus far the Lord has helped us."
1 Samuel 7:12



Three generations of Kosters and Mayor Erikson planting a tree.



in our Reformed Confessions, the Three Forms of Unity.

Many reflections from students, congratulatory messages sent in, and "well wishes" from the floor were received. The students, teachers and friends told how the school helped them in their walk of life with the Lord. Some of the words spoken were: "All praise to God." "I am thankful I was taught in a Christian school." "Hopefully in another 25 years we can come

back for the 50th anniversary and reminisce about the good old days."

Throughout the evening praises were sung by the audience and the school choir.

The chairman, Br. Pete Bergsma, presented Rev. H. Versteeg as the guest speaker for the evening and he concluded his introduction with the words, "He is our pastor whom we definitely appreciate."

After we read Psalm 33, Rev. H. Versteeg gave us a timely message.

Sr. Wanda Veenema expressed gratitude for all the prayerful support and dedication received. After thanking those who helped make this day one to remember, she closed the evening with prayer.

Refreshments and a time of fellowship were enjoyed in the church basement.



Jerry Tillema is a member of Chatham Canadian Reformed Church.



Mayor Erikson speaking with Rev. Versteeg.



The children making a joyful noise.

Excerpt of Rev. H. Versteeg's Speech

Brothers and sisters, the training of our children in the academics from a biblical perspective, is a matter of the communion of saints. We say that we are the people of God, a body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and indeed, that is what we are. However, saying that makes us co-responsible for the education of the children of the congregation. The education of our children is thus a communal responsibility. The children are also the future of the Church, are they not? Therefore, even for the sake of the Church we must be concerned about the education of the children of the congregation, and thus do whatever we can to insure that all our children can be taught in the three "R's" from a biblical perspective.

Brothers and sisters, when we are faithful in this calling, as congregation, then we may also expect God's "unfailing love to rest upon us," "as we put our hope in" Him. I can just hear someone say, "but is the education of children not ultimately the responsibility of the parents?" Indeed, in the end, it is the parents' responsibility before the LORD to send their children to the school where his Will and Word is honoured. However, our responsibility as congregation is to see to it that such a good qualified school does exist, both on academic standards and on biblical standards.

From that perspective what we have received from the LORD thus far, with the help of the LORD, is certainly worth much rejoicing, praise and thanksgiving. Under the blessings of the LORD, the LORD has allowed the board, the fac-

ulty, and the membership, in their voluntary help and financial contributions, to prosper.

Let us, however, not stop with what we have. Not that we want to be greedy or unthankful. Far from that. Let us, however, continue to grow in accordance to need, in accordance to our calling from the LORD and in accordance to the prosperity with which the LORD blesses us. That the need is there will be clear to anyone who would come to school on a snowed-in day and see all the children burning off their energy in a relatively small area, after being pinned in their seat for a number of hours. That the calling is there should also be clear from our communal, congregational responsibility for the children of the congregation as the future of the Church. That the prosperity is there, is for everyone to judge for themselves with respect to how the LORD has blessed each of us in the last 25 years.

Let us, however, do as our parents did, that is, put our trust and hope in the LORD. May our children 25 years from now, be able to look back and say the same thing of us, as we can of our parents tonight, and say thank-you to them for their faithfulness and their trust in the LORD. The LORD blesses those who trust in Him and are faithful to Him.

May the LORD continue to bless the work of the school board, the faculty and the membership. But let us make that more of a communal congregational effort. We will surely be blessed when we do so, and there will be much more rejoicing and singing of praises to God. Let us be challenged, on this evening of rejoicing, seeing how much the LORD has blessed the work of our hands done in faithfulness to Him, thus far. Let us be faithful and He will surely bless us.

PRESS RELEASE OF REGIONAL SYNOD EAST

November 11, 1998, held in
the Attercliffe Canadian
Reformed Church.

1. On behalf of the convening Church at Attercliffe Rev. D.G.J. Agema called the meeting to order. He requested to sing Hymn 11: 1,2,3 and read Isaiah 2: 1- 5. He spoke some appropriate words about this passage in connection with the fact that it was Remembrance Day. He then led in prayer to ask a blessing over the work of Regional Synod. The chairman welcomed the delegates, as well as a group of students from ACRES.
2. The representatives of the convening church, Rev. Agema and br. A. Kingma examined the credentials, which were found to be in good order. All primi delegates were present. Regional Synod East 1998 was then declared to be constituted.
3. The following officers were chosen: as chairman: Rev. P.G. Feenstra, as vice-chairman: Rev. J. DeGelder, and as clerk: Rev. D.G.J. Agema.
4. The officers take their places, and the chairman thanked the church at Attercliffe for the preparatory work done, as well as Rev. Agema for opening of Regional Synod. He also expresses appreciation for the trust placed in the elected brothers.
5. After a short break the agenda was adopted. Besides the executive, three committees were appointed to prepare proposals to enable Synod to deal with the various appeals.
6. Synod was then adjourned for committee work for the rest of the morning. At 11.00 a.m. the brothers came together. Hymn 42:1,8 were sung, and one minute of silence was observed, followed by the singing of the national anthem.
7. At 2:15 p.m. Synod was reopened by the chairman. After the singing of Psalm 33:3 roll call was held, which showed that all brothers were present.
8. Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington proposed that Art. J of the Regulations of Regional Synod (*These Regulations may be amended or revised by a majority vote of Synod*) be changed as follows: "Changes in these regulations can be made by a majority vote of Synod only when a proposal with grounds has been submitted to Regional Synod East. Such a proposal shall

only be dealt with after the consistories have had the opportunity to discuss the proposed changes. Synod decided not to accede to the proposal of Burlington Ebenezer on the grounds that the current regulations of Reg. Synod East are of a technical nature and therefore do not warrant the general consent of the churches as proposed by Burlington Ebenezer.

9. With thankfulness Synod took note of the decision of Classis Ontario North of September 18, 1998 to split Classis Ontario North into two classical districts, effective January 1, 1999. Synod reminded the churches of the implication of this decision for future delegations to a Regional Synod. See Art. 47 C.O. In connection with Art. 48 C.O. Regional decided to appoint one deputy and one alternate from each classical region.
10. Synod dealt with an appeal of Rev. B.R. Hofford from the church at Grand Rapids. Rev. Hofford appeals a decision of Classis Ontario south of June 10, 1998, to declare an appeal submitted by him inadmissible. Synod decided that Classis Ontario South of June 10, 1998 erred in declaring this appeal inadmissible, on the following grounds: 1. Art. 31 CO states that "If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly . . ." 2. Art. 31 CO does not require that the consistory present a response to an appeal before Classis can come with a just judgment 3. Given the fact that Rev. Hofford has a complaint concerning a documented consistory decision his appeal was admissible.
11. After a preliminary discussion in closed session on a proposal with regard to an appeal, Synod was adjourned for more committee work.
12. At 7:20 p.m. the chairman reopened the meeting, and requested to sing Psalm 66:4. Roll call showed that all brothers were present.
13. Synod went into closed session again and dealt with the appeal mentioned in art.11.
14. In closed session a letter from a brother was declared inadmissible, and after that Synod dealt with another appeal.
15. Synod received two reports of deputies Art. 48 C.O. The deputies for Classis Ontario North reported that they were not called to act in

this capacity. The deputies for Classis Ontario South reported that at two occasions their assistance was requested by Classis Ontario South.

16. Synod thankfully received the financial report of the treasurer of Regional Synod, br. D. VanAmerongen, covering the period of November 1, 1997 - October 31, 1998. Because of the balance on hand, it was decided not to assess the churches at this time. The church at Lincoln reported that the books of the treasurer had been audited and found to be in good order. Synod then discharged the treasurer from his responsibility for the period Nov. 1, 1997 - Oct. 31, 1998.
17. Synod received with thankfulness the report of the church of Brampton with regard to the inspection of the archives of Regional Synod, maintained by the Church at Toronto. It was reported that the documentation of Regional Synod 1997 were found to be in excellent order.
18. Regional Synod made the following appointments:
 - Deputies art. 48 CO: from Classis Ontario-South : Rev. D.G.J. Agema, alternate Rev. G. Wieske; from Classis Ontario-Central: Rev. G. Nederveen, alternate Rev. W. den Hollander; from Classis Ontario-North : Rev. A.J. Pol, alternate Rev. P.G. Feenstra
 - Treasurer: Br. D. VanAmerongen, Grimsby.
 - Church to audit the books of the treasurer: The Church at Lincoln.
 - Church to maintain the archives: The Church at Toronto.
 - Church to inspect the archives: The Church at Brampton.
 - Convening church for the next Regional Synod East: Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington; date: November 10, 1999
19. The question period was briefly made use of.
20. The chairman ruled that censure ad art. 34 CO. was not necessary.
21. The Acts were read and adopted, and the Press Release was read and approved for publication.
22. The chairman requested the brothers to sing Psalm 99: 1, 2 and led in closing prayer. Then Regional Synod East 1998 was closed.

J. DeGelder, vice-chairman of
Regional Synod East 1998



Our Little Magazine

Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers

Are you enjoying school? Do you have lots of friends with whom you do lots of activities? Does your teacher give you lots of fun things to do? I know how hard school can be some of the time, but it can still be lots of fun, especially when you work together as a team. Make sure you use the talents that God gave you, not just for yourself, but to help others if you can and when you can.

Write to me again, won't you.

Lots of love
Aunt Betty

WHEN JESUS COMES

This wonderful thing shall be accomplished for all true believers (Luke 21:27-28).

They shall gather together His elect from the four winds (Matt 24:31).

He will receive His own into this place (John 14:3).

This sound shall be heard from heaven (1 Thess 4:16).

These shall be judged (Matt 7:22-23).

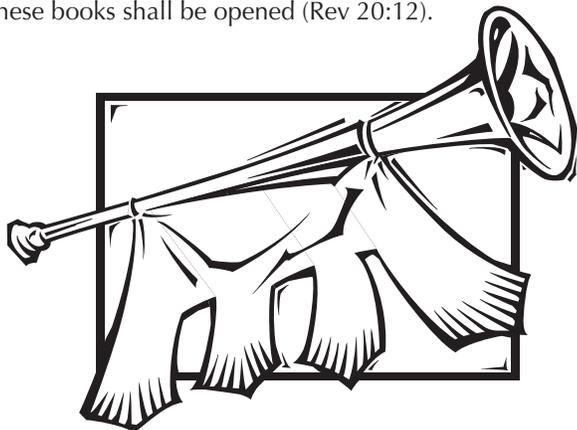
These shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the clouds (1 Thess 4:16,17).

These shall pass away with a great noise (2 Peter 3:10).

These shall rise first from the dead (1 Thess 4:16).

It will be as much of a surprise to them as to us (Mark 13:32).

These books shall be opened (Rev 20:12).



VALENTINES

If you were asked to pick out people who might have sent valentines during biblical days, who would you pick? Match the person with his or her likely valentine.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 Jacob, Genesis 29:18 | a Isaac |
| 2 Ruth, Ruth 4:13 | b Sarah |
| 3 Zipporah, Exodus 2:21 | c Rachel |
| 4 Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 12:24 | d Mary |
| 5 Rebekah, Genesis 24:67 | e Boaz |
| 6 Samson, Judges 16:4 | f Delilah |
| 7 Elkanah, 1 Samuel 1:8 | g Naomi |
| 8 Abraham, Genesis 17:15 | h Hannah |
| 9 Elimelech, Ruth 1:2 | i Moses |
| 10 Joseph, Matthew 1:24-25 | j David |

FIND THE LINK

Example: A king of Israel and a king of Scotland – David

A carpenter of Nazareth and a governor of Egypt

A son of Alphaeus and a son of Zebedee

A woman of Magdala and a sister of Lazarus

A son of Jacob and a city at first called Laish

A citizen of Tarsus and a king of Israel

The husband of Sapphira and a disciple at Damascus

A sorcerer of Samaria, a leper of Bethany and two of the twelve apostles

A son of Jacob and a priest of Jerusalem to whom the baby Jesus was taken

A city, a mountain and a tribal area of Canaan

A city of Syria and a city of Pisidia in Asia Minor

WHICH?

Only one of the four suggested answers in each group is correct. Which?

Noah's ark was made of (a) cedar wood, (b) gopher wood, (c) fir wood, (d) olive wood.

Paul found an altar "To the Unknown God" at (a) Lystra, (b) Antioch, (c) Ephesus, (d) Athens.

"Honour your father and your mothers" is (a) the second, (b) the fourth, (c) the ninth, (d) the fifth commandment.

A sabbath day's journey was about (a) one mile, (b) two hundred yards, (c) five miles, (d) five furlongs.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is found ONLY in (a) Mark, (b) Luke, (c) Matthew, (d) John.

Goliath was (a) an Ammonite, (b) an Assyrian, (c) a Philistine, (d) a Perizzite.

The eighth plague of Egypt was of (a) frogs, (b) boils, (c) locusts, (d) flies.

The wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt under the direction of (a) Nehemiah, (b) Elisha, (c) Jeremiah, (d) Ezra.

The man who helped Joseph of Arimathea to bury Jesus was (a) Barnabas, (b) Matthias, (c) Zacchaeus, (d) Nicodemus.

The "Street which is called Straight" was in (a) Jerusalem, (b) Damascus, (c) Shiloh, (d) Ramoth Gilead.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

7 *Harold Sikkema*

9 *Ashley Vanderploeg*

15 *Kristen Schoon*

22 *Heidi Kingma*

22 *Kim vanDyk*

24 *Justin Broekema*







*Season's
Greetings*
from all of us at
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