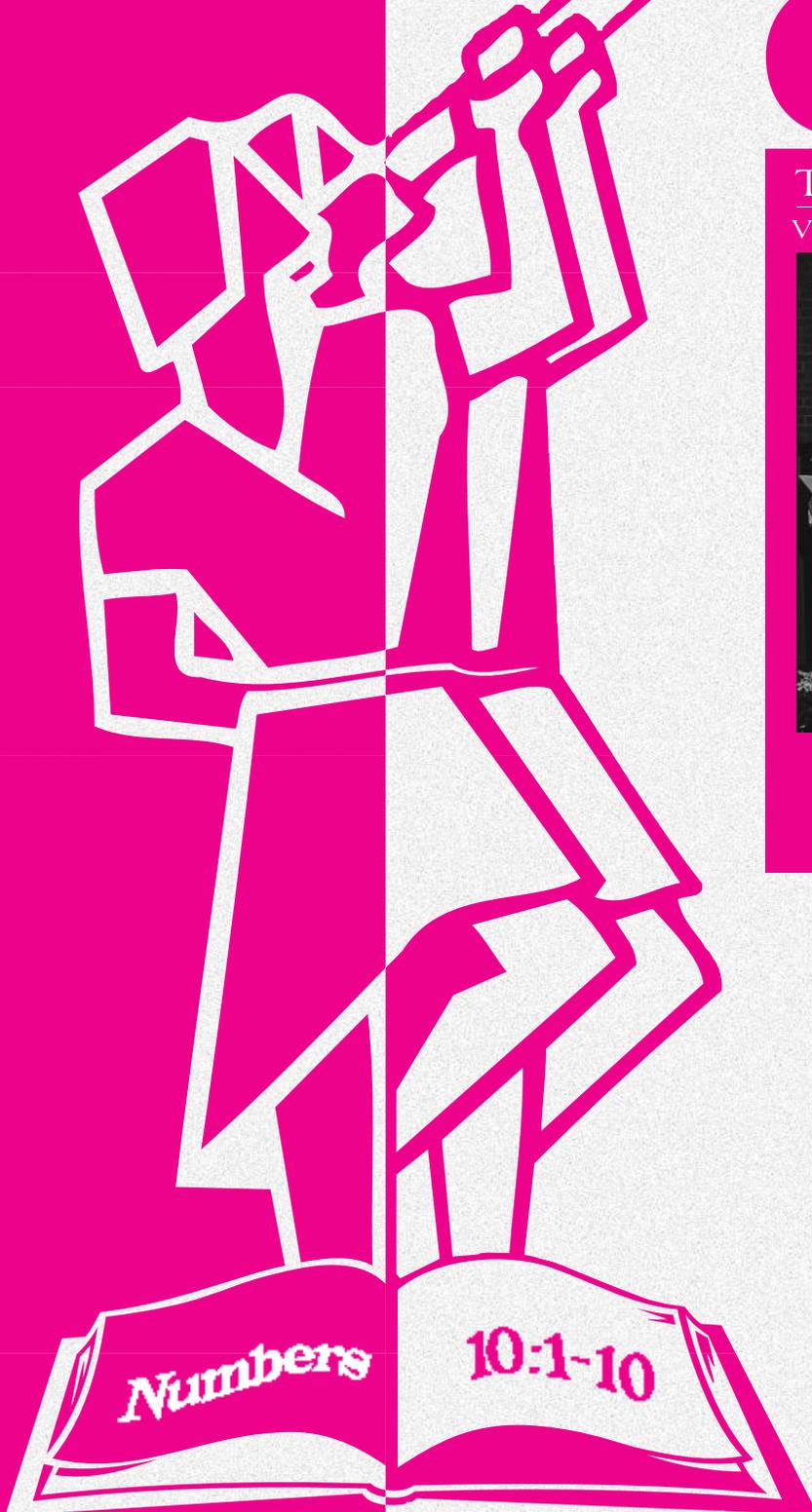


# Clarion

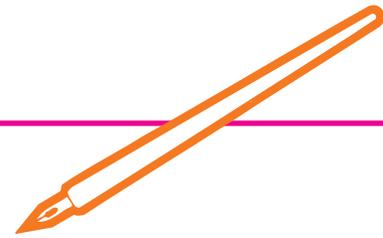
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*Theological College 1999  
Graduating Students*



By J. Geertsema



## Thanksgiving 1999

### The weather in 1999

We give thanks to God for harvest and labour in October 1999. This year had abnormal weather patterns. In the West the air was characterized as winter air till the end of July. The consequence was snow in July in Alberta and even in the South western United States. I was told that in central British Columbia the warmer weather only began after July. On the prairies the spring brought snow and especially rain. So much rain fell that entire fields remained inundated for such a long time that seeding became impossible. And this happened after the previous year had also been difficult for many. East of the prairies large areas remained quite or very dry throughout the spring and the summer. This was the second year of dry weather. It very much hindered the normal growth in the fields.

Of course, this abnormal weather with its consequences was more of a problem in rural areas. In the cities life continued very much as normal. City people heard and saw about it on radio and television, but their daily routine and daily labour were not affected. We no longer live in a time where agriculture occupies some ninety percent of the workforce. Farmers and their hired hands form perhaps only about five percent of the population nowadays. Nevertheless, we all, whether working on a farm or not, depend for our food on the produce of the land. Wheat and other grains, with potatoes and vegetables, and with fruits from shrubs and trees, are still very much (the basis for) the products we eat. If the grass does not grow and the wheat and potatoes do not produce in a large area, we all will find out about it in the prices we have to pay in the stores.

There is another cause why many people living in the city hardly feel the impact of the weather on a plentiful or meagre harvest. We do not depend on the food production in our own area anymore. The food we buy in the stores comes from all over the world, from all five continents. Specifically with respect to what we eat, we certainly have become global citizens. And yet, we remain dependent on what grows in the fields and on trees and shrubs. It means that we remain dependent on the One who makes it all grow. It is the God who promised after the flood (Genesis 8:22) that,

as long as the earth endures,  
seedtime and harvest,  
cold and heat,  
summer and winter,  
day and night  
will never cease.

And so, if we look at the harvest world-wide, we can say that again a winter and summer went by, with cold and heat, with seedtime and harvest. And again we can see the faithfulness of our God. Although the harvest was rather meagre or hardly there in some areas, in others it was good. Again

enough food grew for the peoples on the surface of the earth. This shows God's goodness.

### The people in 1999

This does not mean that every person now also has enough to eat. There are regions and even nations where people are starving. However, the cause is not that the earth did not produce enough. The cause is rather human sin. In some areas food is wilfully destroyed because there is too much of it. For when there is too much of a product in a certain region, the price goes down too far. Shipping all the good food to poor and hungry people costs too much, however. Therefore, in the sight of the hungry food is destroyed for reason of money. Such actions appear to go against the will of the Creator. When our Lord Jesus had fed more than five thousand people, and all had eaten their fill, He commanded his disciples to gather what was left over. He said that nothing should go to waste.

We hear also of hunger and starvation as the result of political pride of totalitarian leaders who show only disdain for the common people and deny their needs. Or we hear of hunger as the result of political strife and civil war – of those who want political power for themselves, again at the cost of the people. Obviously, in such cases, hunger is not the result of an earth that is falling short and unable to produce enough. Human sin and mismanagement is very much the cause of the misery of lack of food.

More should be said about the people in 1999. In general, the picture of human behaviour of people is not such a good one. Fewer people will thank the Creator and Redeemer for providing for them. They do not acknowledge God in their life anymore. God is pushed out of their daily existence. Increasingly, people, specifically in the western world, only know to use the name of "God" as a swear-word. What God calls sin, many consider not only good but even a pleasure. Ever more we live in a world where people are lost in darkness because they want it this way. And modern life becomes increasingly tense. People live more and more in fear. There is fear of being attacked, violated, mugged, robbed, cheated, and so on. For people become hard, rough, insensitive, full of hatred and evil. God brought the flood, we read in Genesis, because the world was filled with violence. If anything is growing in our world, then it is violence. Not only do we hear about violence all over. We also notice that the showing of violence is increasing rapidly on the television and in the movies. (No, I don't go to the movies but see them advertised.) One of the reasons for this increase of violence in the means of entertainment is that the masses want to have it shown. They want to indulge in it. The attitude of humankind is becoming more hard and rough. It shows not in the last place, for instance, in the

**We can say that the LORD God is warning our world in the abnormal weather patterns and in calamities as floods and storms and earthquakes.**

killing of the unborn and the cry for the so-called mercy-killing of the elderly and the sick. Further, the more people bow down for the false god Mammon (Money), the more selfish and discontented and violent they become. If we had to place one false god above all others today, the choice would probably be Mammon. We might call him one of the most powerful and (in the end) destructive brain-children of the devil, the evil one. In his address on the last days (Matt 24) our Lord told us that in that time the love of many will grow cold. It means love and care will increasingly disappear out of society. The feelings of others are less and less taken in consideration. This is a picture of the last number of years, but also again in 1999.

We can say that the LORD God is warning our world in the abnormal weather patterns and in calamities as floods and storms and earthquakes. But with all the warnings, there is still the goodness and patience of the LORD. He still provides seedtime and harvest, food and drink. He still gives to so many a daily job and an income through it. It is a miracle of God's enduring and bearing with this world that is so hostile to Him in its rebellious blindness.

### True thankfulness in 1999

But let us watch out now. Let us take heed that we who do thank the LORD for harvest and labour because we acknowledge Him as the Creator and Upholder of all things and as the provider in all our needs. Let us not make the mistake of placing ourselves above this wicked world and look down upon it as bad, while we are good. Are we so good? We give thanks. We'd better! But is that our own doing? Is not all that we have a pure gift, not in the least our faith? Are we, in ourselves, not just as wicked? Read Romans 2 and apply it to the church today. The very fact that we are inclined to look down on others, on the wicked world, is sinful. The Lord did not look down on the lost. He proclaimed the gospel to them. He ate with those lost in unbelief and sin. He called them to repentance in love for those who were lost. He wanted to share with them the salvation He would obtain for them through his cross. He wanted to restore the lives of those lost in the power of sin, so that their lives would again flourish in the light of God's grace.

Those who are thankful to God for his gifts of love and care, see in God's gifts God's heart that is open for them. In gratitude for this undeserved grace and love, they open their own hearts for the lost world, the lost people, around

them. They desire to share God's gifts with them. Thanking God is placing oneself in God's service and with others build the church that lives by the gospel and brings this message of deliverance also to the world. Thanking God means further opening one's heart even more towards the other lost sinners.

**Those who are thankful to God for his gifts of love and care, see in God's gifts God's heart that is open for them.**

We are thankful for God's gracious providing of harvest and labour. It again enables us as his children to sustain the church with all that is involved in it. We think of church life locally and in the federation, mission work at home and abroad, the Theological College, charity, the education of the covenant youth based on the Word of God as we confess it in our Reformed standards. It is not always easy for all. However, we receive the means from the LORD, and give from what is and remains his own for his cause. David expressed it so beautifully when he gathered the freewill offerings from the people for the

building of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 29:14ff): "Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." David was amazed at the amount the people offered and praised God for it. If someone would gather the budgets of all the churches (which includes money for the federation, for mission, for the Theological College), and of all the schools, and add the amounts of the collections for the needy at home and elsewhere, we probably would be amazed about the blessings of the LORD. He gives us, who are but a rather small community of churches, year after year so much that we can give from what He gives us and what remains his own.

I mention here specifically the gifts for the new library for the Theological College. After all, this issue of *Clarion* is also the annual College issue. The College received what was needed to start building. The present library is full. The floor, never built for the present weight, and overloaded already for quite some time, can get some relief again. We may continue to build up this tool for our work at the College, as professors, other staff, and students. Indeed, we give thanks to the LORD. He gives us from what is his to serve Him, as his children, and together as his churches. C



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Our Little Magazine

By P. Aasman

## God's Personal Name

*"God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers . . . has sent me to you.'"' Exodus 3:15*

I was quietly eating my lunch with my Grade 3 class. Two girls sitting in front of me were chatting away. Something one of them said struck me as very strange.

"My opa turned 75 years old on Sunday", she said.

I was confused. Opa wouldn't turn seventy-five for quite awhile yet. Besides, how did she know who Opa was. Had she ever met him? Did Opa maybe know her and I didn't know it? And what did she mean by calling Opa, "My opa"? His name was just "Opa", not "My opa."

I don't recall exactly how things unfolded for me, but I soon discovered that quite a few people went by the name Opa. In fact, I learned that it is a generic word that describes a relative. It turns out, "Opa" wasn't my grandfather's name at all. He had become an opa among many when grandchildren were born to him. I realized that if I wanted to know who that dear man really was, then I'd need to know more about him than the name "Opa" represented. Soon I learned opa's last name, and a few years later, I even learned what his first name was.

Something along these lines has happened with our God. In prayer, we address him with many different names, but are any of these names personal ones? Every name that you use in prayer can probably be understood in a generic way. Nearly every religion calls the divine being they worship "God" or "Lord." Many have called them by the name "Father" or "Spirit." I don't mean that there is a problem with using such names for God. There is an important confessional truth contained in the very notion of addressing our God with generic names. He is *the* Father, *the* Lord, *the* Spirit.

But the fact is, there is one name for God which He shares with no other so-called god, a name to which our God alone answers. It is a name that God delights in. It is a name He gave to the church as a special treasure at a crucial moment of time. It is the name Yahweh.

Our God called Moses on Mount Horeb to lead his people out of Egypt to freedom and prosperity in the land of Canaan. But before sending Moses off, God said to him, "Say to the Israelites, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers – the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you.'" It is clear from this passage that when God gave to his people his own personal name, then He gave them something exceedingly sacred, but also something very precious to encourage them for the great journey they were about to take. Immediately after giving his personal name to Moses, He added, "This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation" (Exodus 3:15).

"Forever" has not ended yet. "From generation to generation" is the line of the covenant which continues unbroken to the present. Therefore, Yahweh remains God's name, and He *wants* to be remembered as Yahweh. He has said so as directly as could be.

But this great personal name of God has been buried more than 2000 years ago by Jewish superstition (Jewish teachers decided that it was blasphemous to pronounce God's personal name), and to our shame, the Christian church has yielded to this superstition and has left God's personal name buried so that even in 20th Century translations like RSV, NASB, NIV and NKJV, God's personal name makes not a single appearance in the sacred text. For us, God's personal name lies hidden under a code: the word LORD in the Old Testament is a code that stands for Yahweh in the Hebrew text.<sup>1</sup>

To address our God as "Lord" is comforting and beautiful. But we should understand that his name is Yahweh. It is God's special treasure given to us. Let's treasure it, and use it.

*Rev. Paul Aasman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Grand Valley, Ontario.*

<sup>1</sup>Unfortunately, many people naturally suppose that the capitalization of every letter in the code-word LORD is a grammatical code signifying respect. Sadly, one code gives birth to another because the first one is not universally understood.



### *What's inside?*

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others* (2 Timothy 2:2). In obedience to that word of Paul, and by the pure grace of God, we maintain the Theological College in Hamilton. Many men have passed through the lecture halls – first on Queen's Street, now on the Mountain – to take their place preaching the good news of salvation on mission fields and in the midst of the congregations. Recently, five men graduated from the College – five men whom the Lord will use in his sovereign way and time for the work He is doing in the world. We are pleased to present to you our annual Theological College issue which will tell you about the convocation. In these pages you will find the first part of the speech Dr. Gootjes delivered at the College evening, the principal's report, the words spoken by the Women's Savings Action, and a College Corner. You will also read about a "first" – the first female graduate from the College. May the Lord bless our Theological College and use it as a powerful tool for good in the church and the world.

Around this time of the year we pause at what we call "Thanksgiving Day." Prof. Geertsema reflects on this in the editorial. Rev. Paul Aasman supplies the meditation, and Mrs. Ravensbergen, the Ray of Sunshine. In addition, you should find a letter, a review and some press releases.

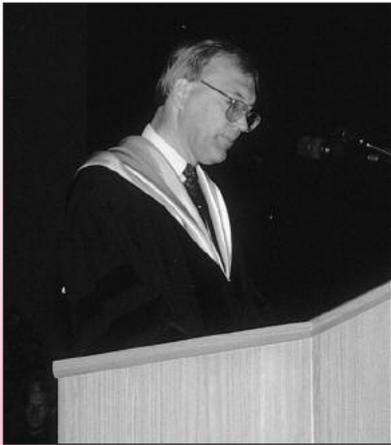
Enjoy the reading!

GvP

# The Promises at Baptism<sup>1</sup>

(First of Two Parts)

By N.H. Gootjes



On the joyous occasion when a child of the congregation is baptized, more is done than just the simple ceremony of sprinkling the child with water. The Form for the Baptism of Infants is read. Baptism is a ceremony rich in content. The parents should know about the meaning and background of baptism. Moreover, the children, when they grow up, must learn why they themselves were baptized, for a sacrament is not a magical ceremony but a meaningful sign.<sup>2</sup> The Form explains the meaning of this sacrament so that we would know what God wants to point out to us in baptism.

One of the things explained in the Form, is the meaning of the baptismal formula. Before our Lord Jesus Christ left this world to go to heaven, He said to his disciples: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). This is explained in the Form as a three-fold statement:

- The Father testifies to us that He establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us . . . ;
- The Son promises us that He washes us in his blood from all our sins . . . ;
- The Holy Spirit assures us that He will dwell in us and make us living members of Christ . . .

The question can be raised whether the explanation given in the Form for Baptism is correct. Perhaps the most diffi-

cult of these three statements is the third, that of the Holy Spirit. Can these words be applied to all children that are baptized? Does the Spirit dwell in all of them?

The Scriptures are clear on the issue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: He does not automatically dwell in God's people. The basic text for this is what Peter explained to his hearers on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Peter is speaking here to Jews who had taken responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36). Now that they have seen and heard of the exaltation of Jesus Christ. They should no longer reject Him, but rather they ought to believe in Him. Then their sins will be forgiven and they will even receive the Holy Spirit. This shows that those who believe in God, and in Jesus Christ will receive the Holy Spirit.

**A sacrament is not a magical ceremony but a meaningful sign**

That believers have the Holy Spirit dwell in them is confirmed in many texts from the New Testament. To mention one, when Paul emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit for a Christian life, he stated: "You are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you." He added: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." Those who believe in God and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent, have received the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Since the day of Pentecost, receiving the Holy Spirit is the result of acknowledging Jesus Christ. Those who are without the Spirit, do not believe in God and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. The Holy Spirit dwells in all who have a New Testament faith.<sup>4</sup>

The question must be raised how the Form for Baptism can speak of in-

dwelling in connection with very young children. How can the Form say about infants that the Spirit will dwell in them? How can the Spirit dwell in them when they are still infants and know nothing consciously?

Once the problem is seen on the issue of the Holy Spirit, it can be extended to the statements concerning the Father and the Son. In connection with the Father, the Form for Baptism speaks about providing us with all good and averting all evil or turn it to our benefit. This contains a reference to Romans 8:28. But Paul is here speaking about those who "love God, and who have been called according to God's purpose." In other words, he is speaking about the believers, the elect. How can the Form for Baptism use this statement about believers for all baptized children?

A similar question arises in connection with the promise of the Son. According to the Form, "He washes us in his blood from all our sins and unites us with Him in his death and resurrection." This, too, is taken from Scripture, it can be found in Romans 6:5. Paul is writing here about those who are united with Christ. How can the Form for Baptism use this text for all who are baptized? Is the Form correct in applying these three statements to the infants of believers?

In the following discussion, we will deal particularly with the promise concerning the Holy Spirit, although at the end we will come back to all three promises. The issue is how the statement that the Spirit will dwell in them can be applied to all baptized children.

## Other forms

The first thing to do is to take a look at the background of these statements. Our Form is the result of a development. Do these earlier Forms, too, speak of a promise of the Spirit, or is our Form an exception? Is the Form in line with the general views of the Reformation?

Our Form dates from the 16th Century, in its present form it dates from 1574. This was an adapted, shortened version of the Form made by Peter Datheen of 1568. Datheen took as his

model the form made in Heidelberg for the Reformed churches in the Palatinate and published in 1563. And that goes back to the Form made for Geneva.<sup>5</sup> In other words, our form is the result of a development from Geneva via Heidelberg to the Reformed liturgy in The Netherlands.

In these forms, variations occur in formulating the promise of the Spirit. Datheen did not speak of indwelling. He formulated the promise of the Spirit as follows: The Holy Spirit will be in eternity the teacher and comforter of us and our children.<sup>6</sup> This formulation was taken over from the Form of Heidelberg, made by Olevianus.<sup>7</sup>

Calvin's formulation was different again. He refers in connection with the Holy Spirit to regeneration, which he takes as giving up everything of ourselves into death and rising up to a new life.<sup>8</sup> He adds: "We receive therefore in baptism a double grace and benefit from our God unless we in our lack of gratitude destroy the power of this sacrament."<sup>9</sup> It should be noted how Calvin emphasized the reality of the gift. He sees it as received in baptism, unless it is expressly refused.

This brief overview shows that there was no unanimity in the formulation of the statement concerning the Spirit. Three different expressions are used, taken from different texts of Scripture. The Forms, however, speak of a promise of the Holy Spirit which only the believers will receive.<sup>10</sup> Yet, they are not only applied to the adult believers but also to their children. And the question must be asked how the promise of the Holy Spirit could be applied so generally. Experience teaches us that not all baptized children eventually come to faith and begin to obey God.

## Calvin

If we investigate the theological background of the statement concerning the Holy Spirit, we discover that it has been defended in two ways. This becomes apparent when the views of two reformed theologians, Calvin and Ursinus are investigated. To begin with Calvin, there was a development in his explanation of infant baptism. In the very first edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin defended infant baptism on the basis that children can have faith. He stated that no men are saved except by faith. For this reason, baptism also rightly applies to infants, who possess faith in common with adults.<sup>11</sup>

In the later editions of his *Institutes*, Calvin changed his whole approach to the issue of infant baptism. He flatly contradicts his previous argument. He

now says that infants ought to be put in a different category than the adults. Calvin argues extensively that infants of believers are participants of the covenant. He bases his argument for infant baptism squarely on God's covenant and circumcision. To give a somewhat lengthy quote:

And let no one object against me that the Lord did not command that his covenant be confirmed by any other symbol that circumcision, which has long since been abolished. There is a ready answer that for the time of the Old Testament he instituted circumcision to confirm his covenant, but that after circumcision was abolished, the same reason for confirming his covenant (which we have in common with the Jews) still holds good. Consequently, we must always diligently consider what is common to both, and what they have apart from us. The covenant is common and the reason for confirming it is common. Only the manner of confirmation is different – what was circumcision for them was replaced for us by baptism.<sup>12</sup>

**Does the form for baptism refer to God bringing about faith and repentance in infants before they are baptized?**

However, when Calvin is pressed by the opposition, he goes beyond this and appears to indicate that God may sanctify in the womb. Calvin does not want to make this into a general rule but he mentions the example of John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was not yet born (Luke 1:15).<sup>13</sup> Later in the same debate, Calvin says that God has used another way in calling many, giving them true knowledge of Himself by inward means, that is by the illumination of the Spirit apart from the medium of preaching.<sup>14</sup> Calvin does not mean to say that they would have the same knowledge of faith, but he does not want to deny that infants, and even unborn babies, may have faith.<sup>15</sup>

These quotes have played a role in the struggle of the Liberation, when presumed regeneration was made to form the basis for infant baptism. This doctrine of presumed regeneration cannot be found in Calvin. However, he did consider it possible for God to bring about faith and repentance in infants before they were baptized, and even before they were born. He attributed this to a particular work of the Spirit.

The question arises whether the Form for Baptism refers to such a special work of the Holy Spirit in infants. In the next instalment we hope to have a look at the views of Ursinus, and then to answer this question.

<sup>1</sup>This is the first instalment of the speech which I presented in an abbreviated form at the Convocation on Sept. 10, 1999. The second part will be published in the next issue of *Clarion*, D.V.

<sup>2</sup>See on the meaning of sacraments, N.H. Gootjes, 'Tekenen en Zegel' in *Radix*, 24,1 (1998) 2-20.

<sup>3</sup>See for this, e.g., R.B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) 16-20; N.H. Gootjes, 'De doop met de Heilige Geest' in *Radix* 13 (1987) 153f.

<sup>4</sup>See also 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Ephesians 2:21f; 2 Timothy 1:14; 1 Peter 2:5; see on these texts e.g. N.H. Gootjes, 'De doop met de Heilige Geest', 154ff.

<sup>5</sup>See C. Trimp, *Formulieren en gebeden* (Kampen: Van den Berg 1978), 37.

<sup>6</sup>See for the text, J. Ens, *Kort historisch bericht* (ed. S. Van Velzen; Kampen: S. Van Velzen, jr., 1864), 164.

<sup>7</sup>See for the text, W. Niesel, *Bekennnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche* (2. ed.; Zürich: Zollikon, n.d.), 145.

<sup>8</sup>The term 'regeneration' is used in the same sense in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33.

<sup>9</sup>See for the text, P. Barth ed., *Calvini Opera Selecta* (2. ed.; München: Chr. Kaiser, 1970), vol. 2, 31ff.

<sup>10</sup>A reservation must be made for the formulation in the Heidelberg form. The reference to the Holy Spirit as teacher and comforter is taken from John 14:26 and is specifically applied to Christ's disciples; see C. Trimp, *Betwist schriftgezag* (Groningen: Vuurbaak, 1970) 25f.

<sup>11</sup>J. Calvin, *Institutes* 1536, ch. 4, 23 in P. Barth (ed.) *Opera Selecta* (München: Kaiser, 1926) vol. 1, 136; translation in F.L. Battles (tr. and ed.) *Institution of the Christian Religion* (1536), 137f.

<sup>12</sup>J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, xvi, 6 (ed. J.T. McNeill; Philadelphia: Westminster Press) vol. 2, p. 1329.

<sup>13</sup>J. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, xvi, 17; 1340.

<sup>14</sup>See also this statement: "Therefore, if it please Him, why may the Lord not shine with a tiny spark at the present time on those whom He will illumine in the future with the full splendor of light – especially if He has not removed their ignorance before taking them from the prison of the flesh?", *Institutes* IV, xvi, 19, ed. McNeill, 1342.

<sup>15</sup>See on this H. Kakes, *De doop in de Nederlandse belijdenisgeschriften* (Kampen: Kok, 1953) 112f. and R.S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 196f. J. Van Genderen is critical of this aspect of Calvin's defense of infant baptism, see his article 'De doop bij Calvin', in W. Van 't Spijker a.o. eds., *Rondom de doopvont* (Goudriaan: De Groot, 1983) 288ff. 



## A Special Evening

On Friday September 10, the Theological College held its 30th College evening, and 25th Convocation in the auditorium of Redeemer College in Ancaster. The orchestra level was filled to capacity as many church members, guests, as well as friends and family of the graduates travelled from near and far to be a part of this evening. Letters of congratulations and encouragement were received from five churches in Australia, as well as from the Deputies for the training for the ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. It was an evening in which the bonds of fellowship with our sister churches in Australia were strongly felt, even though we are separated by a great distance.

### The Principal's report

In his principal's report, Dr. N.H. Gootjes reviewed the work of the College in the last academic year. The highlight of the year has been our Expansion Fund drive, supported by so many people! We are truly grateful for the generosity of so many people through which the target amount for the project could be reached. That means that plans are well on track to get the project moving very soon. Tenders have been solicited, and the final paper work is being done at city hall to have the project approved. We owe our deep gratitude to our supporting community, and above all to our heavenly Father for making this possible!

### The address

The evening's featured speaker was Dr. N.H. Gootjes, who teaches in the department dealing with church doctrine. His speech was entitled "The Spirit's Promise in Baptism," a topic about which there is much discussion today. He brought forward the teaching of Scripture that the baptism of infants is based on the promises of God given in his covenant, and not on any internal work which may have already taken place in the child. Although the Spirit's power to perform a sanctifying work upon an infant even while in the womb was acknowledged, this could not be a



Mr. Peter Holtvluwer, Mr. Ken Wieske, Mrs. Darlene Smith, Mr. John Koopman, Mr. Frank Dong, Mr. Ted Van Raalte

basis for baptism. We do not presume the Spirit's work at baptism, but confess the *promise* of the Spirit at baptism. This speech, which no doubt will be helpful for many of us today, is published elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*.

### The graduation

Next the six graduating students were called forward to receive their degrees. Among them was our special graduate supported by a church in Australia, Frank (Lihun) Dong. Frank originally came from the People's Republic of China. In the course of his university training Frank, and later his wife Jianhui, were introduced to the teachings of the Bible through an American missionary couple working in China, Tom and Diane Lawrence. Frank first worked as an businessman in China for four years, and later received the opportunity to travel to Australia to study at the Australian Business College. While there he came into contact with some members of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott. He became convinced of the Reformed faith and decided to pursue a life of preaching the gospel to his fellow Chinese people. With the help of the Reformed community, Frank enrolled in Perth Bible College in Perth, Australia. He was encouraged by the

church of Kelmscott, where he had become a member, to continue with his aim and desire of passing on the good news of Jesus Christ to his native people according to the opportunities that God would grant.

Since that time, Frank's education in Hamilton towards the Master of Divinity degree was sponsored by the Australian churches, and he hopes to work among his own people in whatever and wherever opportunities are opened to him. May the Lord open a road for Frank to use his gifts in calling others to faith and repentance in the name of Jesus Christ! It was also gratifying to see Diane Lawrence in the audience, having travelled from Hong Kong to witness this special occasion for Frank and Jianhui. Present also was Jianhui's mother, who came from the People's Republic of China to visit her family, and to be present for this special occasion.

The second graduate for the Master of Divinity degree was Peter Holtvluwer who originally came from Ottawa. He has accepted a call to the church of Aldergrove, and with his wife Erica, and young family, he looks forward to working on our beautiful west coast.

The third candidate for ministry graduating this evening was John Koopman. John recently accepted a call to

the Free Reformed Church of St. Thomas, (Ontario), and hopes to move there shortly with his wife, Sue, and their four children. John has been very active throughout his student years, and also served as an elder in the Free Reformed Church of Brantford. It was gratifying to have several guests from the Free Reformed Churches, and we continue to hope and pray for closer ties with this body of churches.

The fourth graduate for the work of ministry was Ted Van Raalte known among many westerners because of his internship in Langley, B.C., in the summer of 1998. Ted has accepted a call to *Redeemer* church in Winnipeg, and he and his wife Christine are looking forward to working in the new congregation there.

The fifth graduate for ministry, Ken Wieske, accepted the call for the missionary work *Maranatha* Church of Surrey, B.C. conducts in Brazil. Ken, along with his wife Tamara, sees this as a major challenge, yet they are looking forward to preaching the gospel among the Brazilians in and around Recife. We are thankful that in this way Rev. Boersema's work can be continued!

Our final graduate, receiving the Diploma of Theological Studies, was Darlene Smith (nee VanderPol). Darlene, who recently married a former graduate of our College, John Smith, is currently working at Anchor Home for the Handicapped. She worked hard during her stay at the College, and learned a lot about what is required in the ministry.

In his word of thanks, candidate Van Raalte noted that all ministry candidates originally were planning to pursue different professions. God called them to a glorious task! We extend our heartfelt best wishes to all our graduates! May the Lord also guide and bless them in their life of service in his kingdom!

### The Women's Saving Action

Because of our thirtieth anniversary celebration, Mrs. Joanne Van Dam presented a short history of the work of the Women's Saving Action. She mentioned the pioneering work of the two "founding" ladies, Mrs. Geraldine Selles and Mrs. Elizabeth Lindhout. It was good to see brother Cornelis Lindhout (now over 90!) in the audience, a fitting tribute to the ladies of the "first hour." Thankfully the work of collecting funds also continued well in the past year, and once

again a pledge for \$25,000 was handed over to the principal. If one considers all the money raised for the expansion, then this added gift for the College community is a real testimony of the love and dedication of the sisters and the supporting community.

The evening came to a close with the singing of the national anthem, to which the words of the fourth stanza were added. This stanza is a prayer for continued peace and prosperity in our Dominion. Calvin always maintained that true peace and prosperity can only be upheld through the proclamation of the Word of God, and the call to continue obedience to his ordinances and statutes. We pray that also this year's graduates may work for God, church and country to the expansion of the kingdom of God upon this earth. May the preaching of the Word not only be a salt in the land, but a message of life throughout all places of God's dominion, so that his counsel may come to its glorious completion on his chosen day.

After a time of refreshments and fellowship the evening came to an end. Above all we give thanks to our heavenly Father who allows this work to continue. May it serve the building of his church and the glory of his Name! 

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By Dr. N.H. Gootjes



## Principal's Report, 1999

In gratitude to our heavenly God and Father, I can report that our Theological College could continue to serve the churches during the academic year 1998-1999. That is not as obvious as it may sound. Theological schools do not automatically continue to exist. That became painfully obvious in the Netherlands, when the government decided that three of the six fully subsidized theological institutions would be closed. Concentration to three institutions would increase productivity and cut costs. Leiden University is one of the places which will lose its theological department. This is the oldest theological department in that country, founded by prince William of Orange in 1575 as a reward for the

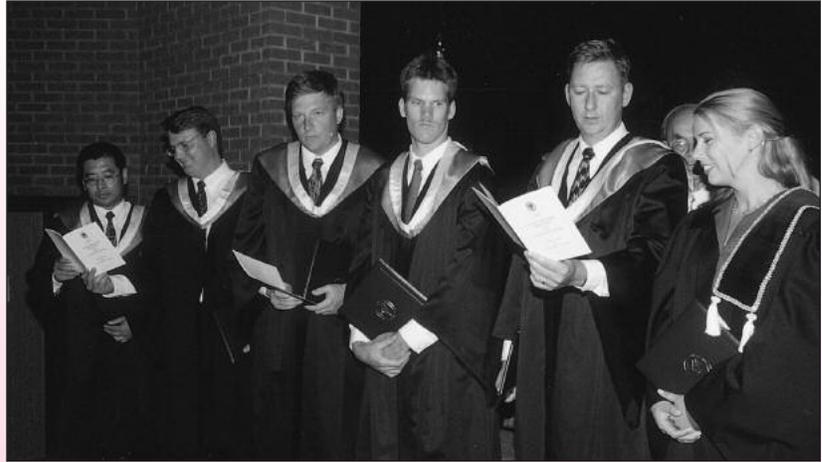
brave resistance of the city during a lengthy siege by the Spanish troops. Another is the Seminary in Kampen where H. Bavinck taught, and where S. Greijdanus and K. Schilder taught before the Liberation of 1944 and which followed the (synodical) Reformed Churches. The third is the theological department of the municipal University of Amsterdam. These schools received full support from the government. They were, therefore, dependent on the government for their continuation, and were cut.

Our Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches opened its doors thirty years ago, in 1969. We are not dependent on support from the government. The churches support their

own training for the ministry. We are thankful that God provided the churches with the means for establishing our College, and that He continues to make it possible for our College to fulfil its task for the benefit of these churches, and for God's church worldwide. Actually, we have been blessed in the fact that the College can expand its facilities. A successful drive led to contributions coming from East and West and even from the Southern hemisphere. We thank the local representatives, the regional coordinators, and here in Hamilton, Br. Smouter and Catharine Mechelse for all the work they did. In particular we are grateful to the many church people nationwide and "down under" who con-



Mr. Ted Van Raalte – a word of thanks



Thankful graduates



... and a thankful family

tributed. We at the College want to state again that we hope to continue serving the churches, so that the churches may continue to serve God.

### Students

During the previous convocation, the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred to three graduates, Mr. Marc Jagt, who is now serving as minister of the Canadian Reformed congregation in Ottawa, Ont., Mr. John Smith, who continues his studies at the University of Toronto, and Mr. Doug Vandeburgt, who is serving as minister of the American Reformed congregation of Denver, Colorado, U.S.A. Mr. Richard Bultje received the Diploma of Theological Studies, and works as an evangelist for Streetlight Ministry in downtown Hamilton.

Six students hope to graduate tonight. Mr. Frank Dong, Mr. Peter Holtvluwer, Mr. John Koopman, Mr. Ted Van Raalte and Mr. Ken Wieske will receive the Master of Divinity degree. Mr. Holtvluwer has accepted the call to the Canadian Reformed church at Aldergrove, BC; Mr. Koopman, the call to the Free Reformed church at St. Thomas, Ontario; Mr. Van Raalte, the call to the

Canadian Reformed church at Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Mr. Wieske the call for mission work in Brazil, extended by the Canadian Reformed Church at Surrey, BC. Moreover, Mrs. Smith, we know her better as Darlene VanderPol, will receive the Diploma of Theological Studies. This marks the first time a female student receives this diploma.

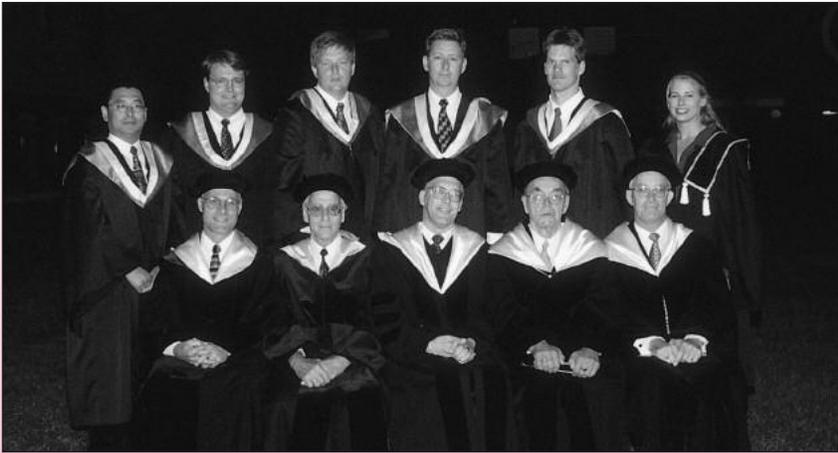
One freshman student decided to discontinue his theological studies. Three new students have been admitted to the Master of Divinity program: Mr. David de Boer, of Calgary, Alberta, Mr. Nick Gunnink, of Cloverdale, BC, and Mr. Mick TenHaaf, of Ancaster, Ontario, originally from our sister-churches in Australia. As a result, we will have less students than during the previous academic year. Looking at the coming two or three years it appears that there will be a steady influx of students. And there are still vacancies to be filled in the churches. We believe that the work of the College will not be in vain in the Lord.

### The teaching

Again it may be noted with gratitude that the teaching could continue

unhindered during the past year. The Lord gave health and strength to both professors and students. Prof. J. Geertsema, who presented a speech on the epistle to the Hebrews at last year's convocation<sup>1</sup> taught his courses during the first semester, but was on sabbatical during the second semester of the past academic year. The New Testament courses were taught by Rev. G.H. Visscher, of the Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario. We thank the consistory of this church for allowing their minister to teach at the College. And we thank Rev. Visscher for the dedication and enthusiasm with which he taught the courses, and for the good cooperation within the Senate. Rev. Visscher closed this period off by presenting a speech at the ministerial meetings in Coaldale and Hamilton, on newer interpretations of Paul's rejection of the "works of the law." We are also grateful that Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff again taught a number of lectures in the church history course. Her work is much appreciated.

A special lecture was given by Dr. H.J. Selderhuis, of the Theological University of the Christelijk Gereformeerde



Back row (l-r): Mr. Frank Dong, Mr. Pter Holtvluwer, Mr. John Koopman, Mr. Ken Wieske, Mr. Ted Van Raalte, Mrs. Darlene Smith  
Front row (l-r): Dr. J. de Jong, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Dr. J. Faber, Dr. C. Van Dam

Kerken in the Netherlands. On October 22, 1998, he discussed "The Hiddenness of God in Calvin's Commentaries on the Psalms." Moreover, Rev. Semeniuk, of the Reformed Evangelical Church in Western Ukraine, spoke to the College community about the church situation in the Ukraine, on April 28, 1999. He gave a moving account of a church that had been preserved under many years of communist oppression.

We can also mention special activities. Dr. J. Faber travelled far and wide, but he did not forget Hamilton. He presented a paper at a conference in Kampen, The Netherlands. His topic was "Spiritual Cargo of Secession Theologians in America, 1860-1900." He also presented and published a speech on "The Confessional History of the Canadian Reformed Churches." At the beginning of the second semester, he gave a special lecture at the College on "Word and Spirit in Calvin's Institutes." We are thankful that he was able to do all this, and we pray that the Lord may continue to give him strength.<sup>2</sup>

In June 1999, Dr. J. De Jong visited the churches in Alberta and Manitoba. His address to the congregations dealt with "Church Historical Notes on the Dawn of a New Millennium." To the Office Bearers' Conferences the topic "Preaching as a Listener: The Role of the Hearer in the Preaching of the Gospel" was presented. Dr. C. Van Dam travelled even farther. He and his wife visited the sister churches in Western Australia and Tasmania, and also the Reformed churches of New Zealand. He spoke about Diaconal Care in the Old Testament, Clean and Unclean, and Worship. He also presented a slide show on theological study and the

place of our College in it. We are thankful for such visits, which strengthen the bonds between the Theological College and the churches which support the College and in turn receive their ministers from the College.

Dr. N.H. Gootjes gave some guest lectures at the invitation of Mid America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, U.S.A., on November 10,11, 1998. In three lectures, aspects of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit were discussed. A public lecture dealt with the issue whether miracles still happen today. It is valuable for us to stay in touch with other Reformed theological institutions, not only in the Netherlands but also in Korea and in the U.S.A.

Although not directly related to the teaching, it should also be noted here that Rev. J. De Gelder has been appointed to be the coordinator of the Pastoral Proficiency Program. Rev. De Gelder, in consultation with the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Flamborough, has been found willing to take up the care for this program. We are thankful for this development, and we hope that this program will make it easier for the students to make the transition from the College to the manse.

### The Library

We are excited about the fact that the green light could be given for the expansion of the building. Support has come in from all parts of the nation and from Australia. In addition, the Women's Savings Action has given money, not only for the regular purchase of books, but also for the expansion. We thank all donors for their contribution and the local committees for bringing everything together. The new library will

provide a setting which is conducive for concentrated study. It also will allow us to keep up the strength of the library and to develop weaker areas. We greatly appreciate the work our Librarian, Margaret VanderVelde has done for it. We realize that the move will require even more work, but isn't it fun to be able to plan out a new library?

May the Lord grant that the actual building can begin during this fall so that it can be completed before the next academic year.

### Finally

Having come to the end of my three years of principalship, I want to thank all with whom I cooperated, the colleagues in the Senate, Catharine Mechelse as Administrative Assistant and Margaret VanderVelde as Librarian. I also thank the Governors for the good cooperation over these three years. I have appreciated the work each of you does in his different capacity within the Board. Much of the work goes unmentioned as it is work in the background, but it is indispensable for a smooth operation of an institution such as the College. Looking back over these years, we may say with gratitude that the College has done its small share in God's worldwide work.

We should not only look at the past, we should also look toward the future. All the work by so many people is done so that the College can train men for the ministry of the word. The College has thirty years of service behind it. But it is not time to rest on our laurels, or to admire them. We will move into the third millennium, if the Lord Jesus does not return before that. What function will our College have? It used to be said at the end of a speech like this: *Vivat, crescat, floreat Academia nostra*: May our school live, grow and blossom. That would, perhaps, be saying too much. Growth is not important in itself. We do not have a dream of becoming big, we will never be able to compete with the big theological institutions that already exist on this continent. On the other hand, we should not become stagnant. We should continue to investigate how we can best serve the Lord and his churches. May the Lord be with the Theological College to again fulfil its calling during the coming year.

<sup>1</sup>J. Geertsema, "The Perfection of Christ Jesus and our Perfection," in *Clarion*, Oct. 2, 1998, 473-477.

<sup>2</sup>J. Faber, "The Confessional History of the Canadian Reformed Churches," in *Clarion*, 48, 3,4,5; and "Word and Spirit in Calvin's Institutes," in *Koinoonia*, 18:1 (Spring 1999). 

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# Presentation of the Women's Savings Action

## at the College Evening – September 10, 1999

### Mr. President, Members of the Board and Faculty, Graduates, Brothers and Sisters

This year we may celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Theological College and the 30th anniversary of the Women's Savings Action. What a blessing! On this occasion we would like to take stock, to check the inventory, so to speak. But before we look at the present situation we would like to reflect for a moment on the past.

#### 1. Reflecting on the past

Why was the Women's Savings Action established? Why should women of the church provide the funds for the purchase of books and periodicals for the library of the Theological College? As women of the church we wanted to show that we were wholeheartedly behind this important task of training ministers of the gospel. Raising these funds was something we could do.

How did it come about? In 1969 at the annual meeting of the League of Women's Societies in Ontario a unanimous decision was made to organize the Women's Savings Action. This decision followed the example of the Netherlands where a similar savings action was started to raise funds for the library after the Liberation in 1944.

When Women's Societies across the country were approached, there was an enthusiastic response. Soon there were representatives in every congregation. Each address received a tin with a blue label marked "Women's Savings Action" (some of you may still use them!). And once or twice a year the representative along with other volunteers collected and counted what had been saved in their congregation. Mrs. Selles and Mrs. Lindhout coordinated the country wide effort.

At the College evening in 1970 Mrs. Selles on behalf of the Women's Savings Action was able to announce with great thankfulness that the total collected was



THANK YOU  
TO ALL LADIES

Coordinator  
Mrs. J. Van Dam



Coordinator  
Mrs. E. Hofsink

\$2,544.46 – the cooperation of all the sisters and the amount collected had been beyond expectation!

Over the years this labour of love has been blessed abundantly. The amount that has been collected has grown steadily and the amount that could be given for the library has increased manifold. For 30 years we could give out of thankfulness for the many good gifts we may receive from the Lord, above all, for the gift of his Son. What a joy to do our part so that the gospel might be proclaimed even to the ends of the earth!

#### 2. A look at the present

This 30th anniversary of the Women's Savings Action is a memorable milestone, a wonderful opportunity to count our blessings, to take stock, to check the inventory, so to speak.

Let's take a grassroots approach. The Women's Savings Action has developed into a well functioning network of representatives in almost all of the congregations of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. Much credit for the success of the Women's Savings Action must go to these faithful, front line representatives and their

helpers. Also, of course, to the donors who this year gave \$25,358.27. Your hard work, love and enthusiasm makes it possible to hand over that cheque to the College each year. Surely, the first blessing to note as we make our Anniversary inventory, are the hard-working individuals behind the numbers.

We continue our inventory. And we need to take note, next, of the appreciation of the College community for the contribution of the Women's Savings Action. Library staff and faculty gratefully recognize the role of the Women's Savings Action in the maintenance and growth of the library. Valuable stock, as we count blessings on the occasion of this 30th anniversary.

Our inventory must also include the prayerful determination on the part of both library staff and the Women's Sav-

ings Action and all concerned to keep the library up to date. To keep it relevant to all our lives as we move into the next millennium in which God will give us new opportunities and new challenges in serving Him. As we give thankful attention to past and present blessings, this part of our "stock" will be a mainstay of our prayerful preparation for the future.

The major feature of our Women's Savings Action inventory this 30th anniversary has to be the library itself. To a great extent the result of the work of the Women's Savings Action, the library is supplemented each year in various areas of the curriculum, and supports, too, the research needs of the faculty. It contains some 24,000 volumes in a variety of languages including English, Dutch, German, French, Greek and Latin. The library includes, too, 170

periodicals and journals. Interestingly, the library also includes a "respectable" rare book collection of which the oldest volumes date from the 1500s.

Did I hopscotch my way through that inventory? I don't pretend it's complete. On the occasion of this 30th anniversary of the College and the Women's Savings Action, however, we praise God for blessings He gives in the willingness, zeal, and dedication of his people as we support this project we undertook 30 years ago and continue today. It is our prayer that God will use this library to instruct and inspire the future pastors of his people.

Mr. Principal, it is with great gratitude that we may present you with a pledge for \$25,000 for the coming year. C

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Dealing with the issues

Some months ago, the General Assembly of the OPC made a decision concerning their relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Within a matter of days, all the ministers of our federation were informed of that decision via e-mail. We understand that it is a serious decision; and that it will require some sort of response from our side. I am disappointed, however, that neither the Committee for Contact with the OPC nor *Clarion* has seen fit to inform us of these matters. Instead we could read about it in *Christian Renewal*. I have nothing against *Christian Renewal*, but this is in the first place a matter of the Canadian Reformed

Churches. And the Canadian Reformed Churches are not synods and classes. Instead they are grandfathers and grandmothers, moms and dads, and children. In other words: the people who read *Clarion*!

Now my concern is not that the people of the church need to get information as soon as possible. Instead I am concerned that committees from General Synods send reports to the churches about six months prior to the next synod; individual churches can send their comments to synod; and then the 16 delegates can sort everything out from there. But that's not the way that it's supposed to be. Instead matters that concern the churches should be discussed in the churches first. Consis-

tories should deal with them, and bring proposals to their respective classes, Regional Synods and General Synods. If that would happen, our next general synod would not have to deal with 7 or 8 different proposals on how to deal with church unity. Instead they might have three, which have all been extensively dealt with already. And more importantly, a discussion process will take place where people in congregations, consistories, and classes will have the opportunity to build something up together! More profitable than just getting the Acts afterwards and shooting everything down!

I urge your readers to consider that all matters on the table at General Synod Neerlandia in 2001 must come either via committees (appointed by Synod Fergus 1998), or appeals, or otherwise they had better go via consistory and a classis and a Regional Synod first. Otherwise they should not even be dealt with. Finally, this is not an attempt to re-invent the wheel, but simply a proposal that we go back to the basics of our adopted Church Order.

R. Eikelboom  
Calgary C



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# RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“ . . . provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Luke 12:33b,34

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the month of October harvest decorations pop up all over the land (at least in Canada!).

It is the time of the year that most of the harvest is gathered in. We see bushels of corn and of other fruits. When you go for a ride in the country there are pumpkins, squash, and grapes. It is a time of abundance in many parts of our prosperous country.

Also in the church we are thankful for all these good gifts. We even have a worship service focussing especially on that. We thank the Lord for a year in which He made the crops grow, gave us the ability to do our work, and enabled us also to be faithful in taking care of each other in the church community. There is the opportunity for us to put some extra money into the collection bag – if we are in a position to do so – that we may show the Lord our thankfulness.

We ought not to take our blessings for granted; rather, we must acknowledge that everything we receive is a gift from the Lord. We can work from early in the morning until late at night, but if the Lord does not bless our endeavours, everything we do is in vain. It is very nice when everything we do goes smoothly and when we are successful in our work. But we cannot accomplish anything on our own, and earthly blessings are not the only things to live for.

For do we all have reasons to be thankful? What if things did not go so well for us? Maybe we lost our job, or our business, or we became very sick; maybe we lost a loved one, or we still did not get what we have been praying for – for such a long time already. Maybe, instead of getting better, our health deteriorated, or maybe the Lord still did not take us away, as we had hoped. How can we give thanks if everything seems to be going wrong in our life?

If we think that way, we have forgotten one thing. It may be that we have lost everything of material value. The whole crop in the field may have been lost, or maybe even our house and all our possessions. But there is one thing that we can never lose. And that is our love for the Lord. If we cling to Him with our heart and soul, we will never lose Him, for He will hold on to us. The one thing that really matters is our spiritual wellbeing. Our body may be frail; our mind may be unable to un-

derstand; our legs may be unable to carry us; our ears might not hear and our eyes might not see, but our faith in the Lord will never fail. For faith lives in our hearts, and it is strengthened by the Holy Spirit. When we belong to the Lord in heaven, there is nothing that we can lose. When the end of our lives here on earth comes, we cannot take anything along with us. Then we will appear before God's judgment seat. Jesus Christ will be there to clear us from all our sins, if we belong to Him. He will enable us to go into God's eternal dwelling. All our infirmities will be taken away from us. We will receive a perfect body, and there will be no more sin.

Give thanks to the Lord? Of course we have reason to do so. And not only on Thanksgiving Day, but always. If we receive many challenges and disappointments in our lives here on earth, we will be the more able to concentrate on our future in heaven. For worldly treasures only last as long as we are here, but our heavenly treasure is of eternal value.

*Our outer nature wastes away;  
Yet inwardly, from day to day,  
We are in Thee renewed, O Lord.  
Our suff'ring here is soon endured:  
The harvest it for us prepares  
By far outweighs our woes and cares.*

Hymn 56:1

## Birthdays in November:

**3: WILMA VAN DRONGELEN**  
306 – 33375 Mayfair Avenue  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

Wilma is the only one this month, and she hopes to celebrate her 42nd birthday. Congratulations, Wilma.

Until next month,  
Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Reg. Road 20, RR 1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0  
Tel: 905-957-3007  
E-mail: RWRavens@netcom.ca





## Common Grace in Discussion

Both the *Christian Observer* and the *Christian Renewal* recently published a Committee Release of discussions held between representatives of the United Reformed Churches (URC) and Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) meeting together with regard to the issue of common grace. Readers will recall that the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) went through a serious schism in 1924 that led to the formation of the PRC. The central issue of contention in the dispute was the doctrine of common grace. The Synod of Kalamazoo 1924 adopted the so-called "Three Points of Common Grace." Although these three points no longer have doctrinal status in the CRC, the theological baggage they entail has carried over into the CRC. In their pursuit of renewed ecumenical relations with the PRC, the URC have recently taken greater distance from this theological baggage. In the committee discussions the brothers have clearly moved to a position close to that defended in the PRC – a position also by K. Schilder, whose views on this matter had great influence in the Reformed Churches in Holland, (RCN [Lib]). The object of the discussions is to heal old wounds and come to a greater understanding of the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Since the "common grace debate" was one of the crucial elements of the criticisms that many "concerned people" (and later Liberated people) had against the Kuyperian optimism of the 30s and 40s, it is of interest to pay attention to these discussions today. Let me only introduce certain "clippings" of the Committee Press Release to get a flavour of the issues:

The second paper presented by the URC, entitled, "Unofficial Response" of the URC on common grace, had three sections, each dealing with one of the three points of common grace. It began by saying that "we deeply regret the 1924 CRC decision on common grace because it is poor theology, not well

grounded in the Scripture or confessions, and it was and continues to be destructive of the unity of the church." The URC paper also expressed concern that the 1924 decision may be partially responsible for a "blurring of the lines of the antithesis" in the CRC. The paper noted that "grace" in the Scriptures "is something that is always in the context of redemption in Christ. . . . Neither Scripture nor the Confessions uses the word 'grace' to describe God's dealings with the reprobate. Neither should we."

**Providence here ends up being a rather neutral term that does not bring out what God is actually doing in his dealings with humanity in general.**

### Is grace common?

Regarding the first point of common grace, which maintains a common attitude of favour (common grace) on God's part toward the reprobate as well as the elect, the URC paper acknowledged "a general benevolence of God toward His whole creation (Psalm 145:9 and Matthew 5:44-45) . . . expressive of the nature of God. . . . This benevolence is especially for the sake of the elect, that God's plan of redemption may be completed before His wrath is fully visited upon the wicked." It was also noted that from such texts as Acts 14:16,17 and Romans 2:4 we conclude that God has shown the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering toward the reprobate wicked (cf. Romans 9:22), and that they in return, have despised God for such goodness and that "the punishment of the wicked will be that much greater for not

rendering thanks to God for all His goodness shown to them."

### The general offer

With respect to the "general offer of the gospel" which the CRC made reference to in support of the idea that God's grace is shown to all, the URC wrote, "While we are not necessarily convinced by the logic that says that an offer presupposes the ability to comply, we nevertheless reject any interpretation of the Scriptures or Confessions which depicts God as having unfulfilled desires or which depicts God as having contradictory wills within Himself. The Lord's intentions are never thwarted."

On the second point of common grace, regarding God's restraint of sin in the world, the URC committee wrote that it had no difficulty with the wording of the CRC decision but objected to the setting of common grace, "However, as the Lord's sovereign purpose of restraint is carried out, it is not such that the Holy Spirit works with the 'capital' of man's remaining natural goodness. There is no such thing. . . . That would indeed be to deny the Biblical doctrine of total depravity."

The Committee release also gives a summary of the Protestant Reformed position on common grace:

The PRC paper on the first point of common grace made it clear what the PRC does not oppose as well as what it does oppose. The PRC does not object to the teaching that the "reprobate as well as the elect receive many good gifts of God. Nor do they object to explaining these good gifts which God has given in terms of God's providence. Also the PRC do not deny that God loves his creation, his world, the things which He has made, and that Christ died a cosmic death in that his atoning sacrifice included the redemption of all creation in order that it

might be glorified in the world to come. What the PRC does object to is the idea that Scripture or the confessions teach “that God loves all men, is gracious to them and shows his mercy to them. . . . The PRC insists that the Scriptures teach that God hates the wicked and that his curse is upon them in all their life. The texts which teach this are Psalm 73, Proverbs 3:33 Psalm 5:5, etc.”

### The PRC and the “General Offer”

Regarding the well-meant offer of the gospel, the PRC stated it does not oppose “that the gospel, in obedience to Christ be preached to all nations. The PRC is deeply involved in mission work both in this land and abroad.” The PRC believes that the gospel should be preached to all “indiscriminately, i.e., to the elect and reprobate alike” although obviously, no one knows who are elect and who are reprobate. The PRC does not oppose presenting to all who hear the gospel, the demand to repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ believing also that “God is serious in this demand . . . that God hates sin and unbelief and delights in repentance and holiness. The PRC believes God is pleased with the repentance of sinners.” What the PRC does object to is the idea “that in the gospel God expresses his desire (intention, purpose, goal, longing) to save all men.” Such an idea would lead to a “universalizing of the atonement” for if God offers salvation to all but Christ only died for some, then God would be mocking those for whom Christ did not die. A free offer would therefore imply a universal atonement. If the atonement is universal but all are not saved, then the doctrines of election and predestination also fall by the way-side. “The well-meant offer embraces Arminian theology because, in reducing the gospel to an offer, it leaves the decision whether to accept or reject the offer to the choice of man’s free will.”

### A discussion reopened

It is gratifying to see some of these issues resurfacing into discussion again, and also to note that on both sides progress towards greater understanding is being made. The same issues also surfaced in discussions between the PRC and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

(OPC) but with less results. The PRC is a church opposed to the “free and well meant offer.” The OPC is clearly a church in favour of preaching the “well meant offer.” Yet, the discussion indicates that older issues which were never satisfactorily resolved end up returning again on the agendas of various churches, especially those who experienced divisions as a result of their stand. Some of the tardiness in coming to satisfactory solutions no doubt stems from terminological or semantic differences in the various sides. But behind the terminology real issues of the preaching of the gospel are at stake!

For it is precisely in his calling actions and in his providential dealings that He shows the justice of his righteous decree.

### The mood at Synod

Delegates at the URC synod in Hudsonville were not entirely happy with the tendency evident in the committee release, and especially with the willingness of the URC committee to accommodate as much as possible to aspects of the Protestant Reformed position. In fact, it was the dalliance not with the Canadian Reformed Churches but with the Protestant Reformed Churches that led to the hesitation at the floor of synod to approve the work of the Ecumenical Relations Committee entirely. Approval was granted with reservations regarding formulation, but this only came after it had been clearly indicated by several delegates that they had no interest in moving towards the PRC position on the well meant offer.

To be honest I could understand the position of the delegates who expressed their reservations about the tone of the Committee release. For example, the second URC paper is very strong in the rejection of the term “grace” to describe as they put it “God’s dealing with the reprobate.” (Note the terminology as formulated from the perspective of God’s eternal decree!) The URC Committee members were willing to speak of a benevolence of God to his whole creation, but as they see it this benevolence is especially maintained for the sake of the elect. The PRC brothers did not use the term “benevolence” but were willing to speak of many “good gifts” of God to the repro-

bate; yet they prefer to explain these gifts in terms of God’s providence. Anyone can see that the positions here are very close, and that both committees (or the one committee of combined representatives) have reiterated a firm farewell to the common grace theology prevalent in the CRC since 1924.

### Providence or favour?

While we can concur with a rejection of the term “grace” to describe God’s working with mankind in general, I do not think we come to a suitable circumscription of these dealings just by appealing to God’s providence in the way promoted by the PRC delegates. If God is “benevolent” (URC) and gives the reprobate many “good gifts” (PRC) it is hard to attribute this strictly to his providence. Providence here ends up being a rather neutral term that does not bring out what God is actually doing in his dealings with humanity in general. In this approach the work of the Father (providence) is in danger of being seen as divorced from the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

One can sense in the report that the PRC committee members strongly follow the line of Herman Hoeksema in their view of God’s dealings with the reprobate, and in their view of the well meant offer. In some respects this was also the view taken by Dr. K. Schilder, who flatly rejected the use of the term “common grace,” and stressed that if one wanted to use it, he should also be ready to speak at the same time of a “common curse.” Schilder had an eye for the *two sided* character of God’s dealings in the world, and therefore strongly opposed allowing the balance simply to be tilted to the one side of grace. To capture his view he used the word substrate for God’s providence, that is, a *substrate* upon which God exercises and administers both grace and curse, both blessing and wrath, all according to his good pleasure.

In LINK with you



Check out Clarion’s website at:  
<[premier.mb.ca/clarion.html](http://premier.mb.ca/clarion.html)>

Churches Note: We invite you to link Clarion’s homepage to your church’s homepage.

However, this rather neutral term “substrate” or even the term providence itself (as used by the PRC delegates in their paper) does not really reflect in an accurate way the relationship of God’s dealings with people to his work of the salvation of the elect. The terms are too coloured by a perspective in which everything is determined by the outcome or goal of God’s work. And in so far as the URC delegates have adopted some of this language, they too should be cautioned against overreacting against the older CRC position.

Would it not be better for us to use the terms coined by Rev. S. G. De Graaf in his well known study on the covenant?<sup>1</sup> De Graaf called the covenant of the beginning a “covenant of favour” that is never abrogated even in the dispensation of grace. Hence in the dispensation of the covenant of grace, one can see God’s “good gifts” or his “benevolence” in the world, that is, his common good gifts as continued signs and tokens of his favour according to the terms of the original covenant he made with our parents Adam and Eve in paradise. He does not go back on his promises and his word, does He? Even when we fail, He remains faithful to what He has promised. To be sure, within these continued expressions of committed covenant favour there are also signs of disfavour and wrath. But even these signs of disfavour and wrath leave room for repentance and return, as long as it is still called “Today,” and the hour of consummation has not yet dawned.

### **Covenant Administration!**

God’s providential dealings in the context of the covenant of grace can then be seen in a more concrete way. They constitute the administration of favour or disfavour according to the terms of the original covenant, all in the context of a new and better covenant sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> When these sorts of administrations occur in the context of that new covenant, as a living part of God’s providence they always tend to the salvation of the elect and to the condemnation of the reprobate and the gain-sayers. But in themselves these dealings are always “well meant” – that is they carry on aspects of favour promised in the original covenant (of paradise), and incorporate within themselves a constant call to repentance and conversion, and to faith in Jesus Christ and his promises.

### **A serious offer!**

Therefore, one cannot but have his difficulties with the PRC position as stated in the release, which claims that the well meant offer does not include God’s desire to actually save those who hear the gospel. Admittedly “desire” is probably not the best word to use, but we cannot deny God’s clearly revealed will of prescription to save those who are called. To deny this would tend to charge God with dissimulation in the gospel offer. Nor do the PRC delegates escape that charge by stating that God would be engaging in mockery if He actually went ahead to genuinely call those He never intended to elect anyway. For it is precisely in his calling actions and in his providential dealings that He shows the *justice* of his righteous decree. His genuine call is an integral means to fairly and justly convict those who refuse to accept his will. He genuinely calls to the table of life all who hear, and in his call He expresses his will that all who hear may come and be saved! When in obstinacy people persist in rejecting that call of love, God shows his justice in that He has left all without excuse. Even though He

## *The Pleasures of Public Worship*

### *Psalms 84*

*How pleasant, how divinely fair,  
O Lord of hosts, thy dwellings are!  
With long desire my spirit faints,  
To meet the assemblies of thy saints.*

*My flesh would rest in thine abode,  
My panting heart cries out for God;  
My God, my King, why should I be  
So far from all my joys and thee?*

*The sparrow chooses where to rest,  
And for her young provides her nest;  
But will my God to sparrows grant  
That pleasure which his children want?*

*Blest are the saints who sit on high,  
Around thy throne of majesty;  
Thy brightest glories shine above,  
And all their work is praise and love.*

*Blest are the souls who find a place  
Within the temple of thy grace;  
There they behold thy gentler rays,  
And seek thy face, and learn thy praise.*

*Blest are the men whose hearts are set  
To find the way to Zion’s gate;  
God is their strength, and, through the road,  
They lean upon their helper, God.*

*Cheerful they walk with growing strength,  
Till all shall meet in heaven at length;  
Till all before thy face appear,  
And join in nobler worship there.*

Isaac Watts, 1719

has done his all according to the terms of the original covenant, and even though He has followed through on this, and in love administered both chastisement and favours, and still more, extended his love in the preaching of the gospel, – when then they still persist in rebelling against Him their guilt will be plain for all to see. That continued *paradise-style* of God forms in itself a testimony to his surpassing justice, mercy and truth.

Therefore, while we acknowledge that there cannot be two contradictory wills in God (and there never are) we cannot accept a position which suggests that God gives an offer which is not well meant, or somehow lacks the expression of his mercy, favour and love to all the hearers. We need to continue to affirm that in the preaching of the gospel both in evangelism contexts and on the mission fields God’s *grace and love* is shown to all who hear. The preaching of our missionaries must be a preaching of the love of God for lost sinners! Let us hope that, in the desire and zeal for unity, our brothers in the URC do not lose sight of this important truth!

<sup>1</sup>I refer to S.G. De Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance* Vol. 1-4, (Paidaia Press, St, Catharines, 1977-1981) a translation of *Verbondsgeschiedenis*, 2 Volumes (Kok, Kampen, 1955). See Vol. 1: *From Creation to the Conquest of Canaan* (1977) page 29.

<sup>2</sup>All this is clearly expressed in the Noahic covenant, sometimes called the “covenant of longsuffering,” see S. De Graaf, (Volume I), p. 60





## Press Release of Classis Ontario South, Sept 15, 1999, held in Smithville Ontario.

### 1. Opening

On behalf of the church at Smithville, the convening church, br. P. Oosterhoff opened the meeting of the delegates with a word of welcome to all delegates and visitors. He specifically welcomed br. Poppe and his wife as well as the grade 8 class from the John Calvin School in Smithville. He requested the delegates to sing Ps 63:2,3. He then read Acts 20:13-38, and led in prayer.

Br. Oosterhoff reported on additional material that came in since the proposed agenda was sent out. The delegates from Smithville examined the credentials and found them to be in good order. Br. Oosterhoff requested the moderamen suggested by last classis to take their positions, and classis was declared constituted. The moderamen were Rev. G. Wieske as chairman, Rev. H. Versteeg as clerk, and Rev. J. VanWoudenberg as vice chairman.

Rev. Wieske took the chair and first of all thanked the church at Smithville for its work as convening church. For items of memorabilia he mentioned the birth of the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. VanVliet, and the son of Rev. and Mrs. VanWoudenberg. He congratulated br. Dong, a recent graduate from the Theological College who was among the visitors, with his graduation from the theological college. He also mentioned that Rev. Hofford has now been dismissed from service in Grand Rapids.

### 2. Adoption of the Agenda

Smithville supplied classis with a revised proposed agenda: this agenda was adopted.

### 3. Examination of br. D. Poppe for speaking an edifying word

Br. Poppe delivered his sermon proposal on Isaiah 35:8-10. After judging the sermon proposal sufficient to proceed, br. Poppe was examined in doctrine and creeds. After br. Poppe promised not to write or speak against the doctrine as summarized in the three forms of unity, Classis decided to give br. Poppe permission to speak an edify-

ing word in the churches for a period of one year. The chairman requested the singing of Psalm 79:5, and then lead in thanksgiving prayer. Opportunity was given to congratulate br. Poppe and his wife.

### 4. Question Period (CO 44)

After lunch, question period was held.

Grand Rapids requested classis to appoint Rev. J. VanWoudenberg as counsellor: this was granted.

Hamilton informed the churches that Rev. Kroeze will preach his farewell sermon on Nov. 7, 1999 in Maceio and at that time Rev DeGraaf will preach his inaugural sermon. Rev. Kroeze will repatriate in Tasmania late in Dec. 1999 or Jan. 2000 if no call is forthcoming.

In closed session several churches requested and received advice in matters of discipline.

### 5. Appeals

In closed session an appeal was dealt with.

### 6. Correspondence

Classis received a letter from Rev. Van Hal, who will be chairman of the upcoming Classis Ontario of the United Reformed Churches, inviting classis to send a delegate to this upcoming classis on Sept 22, 1999 in Woodstock. Classis accepted this invitation and appointed Rev. Wieske as the delegate.

### 7. Report from Chatham, re assessment for needy students

Since there are no needy students at the moment, classis decided that there will be no assessment for the upcoming year.

### 8. Report from Ancaster, re fund for needy churches

Ancaster reported that the Church at Blue Bell has indicated that it will not need financial support in the upcoming year, and that the Church at Blue Bell expresses appreciation for the support given over the years. Classis also expressed thankfulness for this development.

Ancaster reported that the Church of Grand Rapids has requested financial assistance. The church at Ancaster sub-

mitted a proposal to address this request. Classis decided on an assessment of \$15.00 per communicant member.

The chairman thanked the church at Ancaster for all its work put into this report.

### 9. Appointments

Suggest moderamen for next classis:

- chairman: Rev. Agema
- clerk: Rev. Wieske
- vice: Rev. Versteeg

Date and place for next classis: Dec 8, 1999 in Ancaster

Delegates for Regional Synod East:

- Primi ministers: J. Ludwig, Cl. Stam, J. VanVliet
- Alternate ministers (in this order): D.G.J. Agema, G. Wieske, J. VanWoudenberg
- Primi elders: P. Oosterhoff, H.T. Vandervelde, G. VanWoudenberg
- Alternate elders (in this order): R.J. Oosterhoff, J. Koster, K. Jager

### 10. Personal Question Period:

Opportunity was given for personal questions.

### 11. Censure ad Art 34, C.O.

The chairman thankfully ruled that censure was not needed.

### 12. Adoption of the Acts and Press Release:

The Acts and Press Release were approved.

### 13. Closing:

The chairman requested the singing of Hymn 40:1,3,4, and then he led in prayer. The chairman declared classis closed.

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## Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, held September 17, 1999

### 1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church of Toronto, Rev. W. den Hollander called the meeting to order. He read Acts 17: 22-31 and requested the meeting to sing Ps 146:3,4. He led in prayer and welcomed the delegates.

## 2. Examination of Credentials

The church of Ottawa examined the credentials. All the churches were properly represented.

## 3. Constitution of Classis

Classis was constituted and the following officers took their place:

chairman – Rev. G.H. Visscher;  
vice-chairman – Rev. W. den Hollander;  
clerk – Rev. G. Nederveen.

The chairman thanked the church of Toronto for the preparation of this Classis. He remembered the call the Rev. C. Bosch received from the church of Launceston, Tasmania, and expressed thankfulness for the fact that he may continue his work in Burlington-South.

## 4. Adoption of the Agenda

After a few deletions from the Provisional Agenda were made, the Agenda was adopted.

## 5. Signing of the Form of Subscription

Since the Rev. G.H. Visscher could not be present at the March 12, 1999 Classis, the vice-chairman read the Form of Subscription and Rev. Visscher signed it.

## 6. Reports

- a. Church visitation reports were received and read of visits made to the church of Burlington Ebenezer, Burlington-South, Burlington-Waterdown, Flamborough, Ottawa, Toronto. These reports were all received with gratitude. Unique was the fact that all the churches were visited and reported on in one Classis.
- b. Report of the church of Burlington-South re Inspection of the Archives: found to be in good order.
- c. The Treasurer's report was received and read. Br. J.J. Poort informs Classis that the assessment for the year 2000 is \$2.00 per communicant member. Classis re-iterated a decision of Classis January 26, 1984, "to urge the churches to attempt to keep the expenses down as much as possible."
- d. The report from the Committee for Needy Churches was read and discussed. Classis decided:
  - not to receive the financial statements and budget of the

Church of Ottawa, which were included;

- to support the church of Ottawa according to the requested amount;
- to use for this support the funds available to Classis Central Ontario in accordance with the decision made in this regard at Classis Ontario North of December 11, 1998, art. 10A4;
- to instruct the Committee for Needy Churches to cooperate with their counterparts of Classis Northern Ontario to establish the assessment for the year 2000 and inform the next Classis of this amount. [As per Acts, Art. 10A4]

## 7. Question Period acc. to Art. 44 C.O.

The churches declared that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. Only the church of Burlington Ebenezer requested the judgment of Classis in a matter of discipline. Advice was given in closed session.

## 8. Correspondence Received

A letter from the church of Guelph, making Classis aware of an error in the Press Release of the March 12, 1999 Classis (Church for Financial Aid to students for the ministry: should *not* be Guelph). Received for information. The Acts showed the correct appointment (of the church of Flamborough).

## 9. Appointments

Classis made the following appointments for Classical examinations:

- Coordinators: Rev. C. Bosch and Rev. W. den Hollander;
- Exegesis Old Testament: Rev. G. Nederveen;
- Exegesis New Testament: Rev. G.H. Visscher;
- Knowledge of Scripture: Rev. M. Jagt;
- Doctrine and Creeds: Rev. J. de Gelder;
- Church History: Rev. W. den Hollander;
- Ethics: Rev. M. Jagt;
- Church Polity: Rev. G. Nederveen;
- Diaconiology: Rev. C. Bosch;
- Other appointments:
  - Church Visitors: Rev. C. Bosch, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. G. Nederveen;

- Church for taking care of the archives: Burlington-Ebenezer;
- Church to inspect the Archives: Burlington-South;
- Treasurer: Br. J.J. Poort – Alternate, br. J. Dykstra;
- Church to audit the books of the Classical Treasurer: Burlington-Waterdown;
- Church for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry: Flamborough;
- Church to audit the books of the Fund for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry: Burlington-Waterdown;
- Committee for Needy Churches: br. F. Lodder, br. B. Hordyk, br. W. Van Huisstede (treasurer: F. Lodder);
- Church to audit the books for the Fund for Needy Churches: Burlington-Waterdown;
- Observer Free Church of Scotland: Rev. G. Nederveen.
- Convening church for next Classis, December 10, 1999, Burlington Ebenezer;  
Suggested officers: chairman, Rev. C. Bosch; vice-chairman: Rev. G. Nederveen; clerk: Rev. G.H. Visscher;
- Delegates to Regional Synod East, November 10, 1999 at Burlington Ebenezer:  
Ministers: Rev. C. Bosch, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. G.H. Visscher, primi; and as alternates the Rev. J. de Gelder, Rev. M. Jagt, Rev. G. Nederveen (in that order);  
Elders: br. J. Hutten, br. G.J. Nordeman, br. B. Poort, primi; and as alternates br. K. Veldkamp, br. H. Terpstra, br. D. de Gelder (in that order).

## 10. Question Period

Question Period was held.

## 11. Censure acc. to article 34 C.O.

The chairman determined that Censure was not required.

## 12. Adoption of Acts and approval of Press Release

The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and approved for publication.

## 13. Closing

The chairman thanked the brothers for their good cooperation. After the meeting sang Psalm 118:1, the Rev. Visscher closed the meeting with prayer. 

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers

You are now back at school, and no longer on vacation. Are you enjoying your new class, maybe a new teacher, maybe even a new school? Do you have the same friends, or are you making some new friends? You must have all been very busy during your vacation, because I only received a few letters. My mailbox was very empty.

Well, have a wonderful time at school. Make sure you do your work as best you can.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

## Unscramble the Words

By Busy Beaver Nicole Wierenga

1. KWOR \_\_\_\_\_
2. WROC \_\_\_\_\_
3. EEPJ \_\_\_\_\_
4. DEFE \_\_\_\_\_
5. ELAF \_\_\_\_\_
6. CKLCO \_\_\_\_\_
7. RADH \_\_\_\_\_
8. TSIH \_\_\_\_\_
9. KOTO \_\_\_\_\_
10. YATNGINH \_\_\_\_\_

## Unscramble the Words

By Busy Beaver Jolene Wierenga

1. ASYDI \_\_\_\_\_
2. OWEFLR \_\_\_\_\_
3. UCJEI \_\_\_\_\_
4. RPEPAP \_\_\_\_\_
5. DRWOS \_\_\_\_\_
6. OPNOS \_\_\_\_\_
7. RTINA \_\_\_\_\_
8. LYAP \_\_\_\_\_
9. ONAPI \_\_\_\_\_
10. SEOKICO \_\_\_\_\_

## BEFORE OR AFTER

1. Solomon was born before or after Absalom's rebellion? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Christ preached His great sermon on the Mount before or after His temptation in the wilderness? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The angel of the Lord appeared to Mary before or after he appeared to Joseph? \_\_\_\_\_
4. The shepherds visited the Christ Child before or after the wise men came to present their gifts? \_\_\_\_\_
5. God created the lights of heaven before or after He had made the firmament? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Noah built an altar before or after the great Flood? \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah before or after Lot lost his wife? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Sarah died before or after the marriage of her son Isaac? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Esau was born before or after Jacob? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Jacob was married to Rachel before or after he was married to Leah? \_\_\_\_\_



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Jolene Wierenga. Thank you also for your puzzles. It must have been a lot of fun staying over at Oma's house. And then to be allowed to stay at another friend's house and also go camping. You must have had a very busy summer, Jolene. You will write again, won't you and tell me when your birthday is. Bye for now.

Welcome also to Nicole Wierenga. Thanks for your puzzle too. When is your birthday? You must have fun with all your sisters and lots of pets too. Do you help your sisters to keep the pets' cages clean and make sure they have enough food? Write again soon, Nicole.

