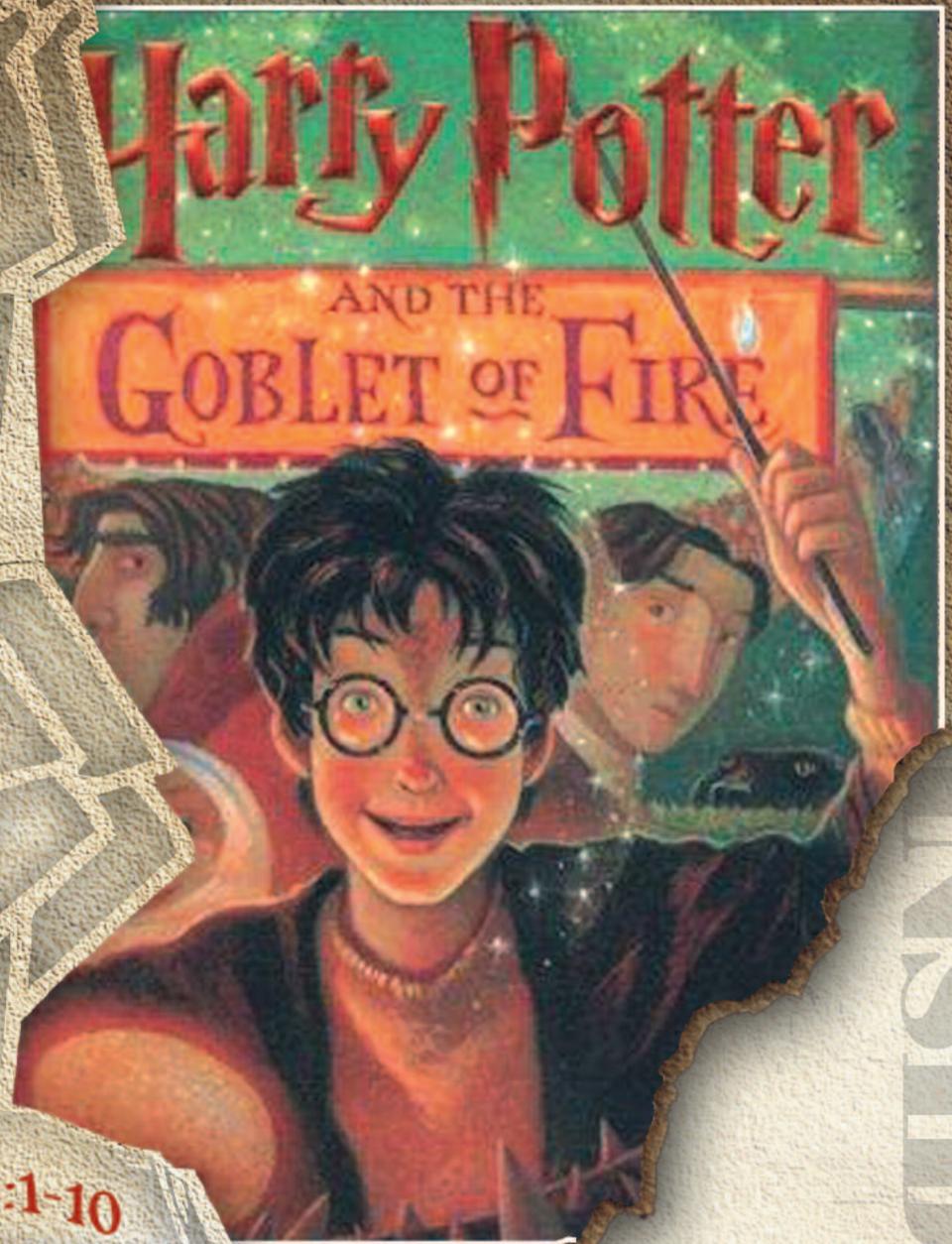


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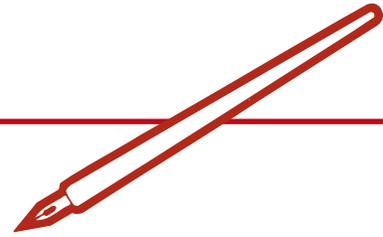


Numbers

10:1-10

*The
“Other” War
in our World*

INSIDE!



By Cl. Stam



Praise-Music: a misnomer?

This is not an editorial against what is often called “Praise music” or even shortened simply to “Praise.” As we work our way through this editorial, the reader will see that this is clearly not my intention. What is the point? It is very simple, but important: the name Praise-music is a complete misnomer, a wrong name and therefore it can lead to unwanted confusion.

Why broach this topic? I recently was reminded that the term “praise” as indication of a certain style of music is not just known among us in North America, but also is used in Europe. In *De Reformatie*, a Reformed weekly published in the Netherlands among our sister-churches, there was in Volume 76, No. 46 (September 15, 2001) a program of the annual College-Day of the Theological University in Kampen. This College Day is a major attraction, and gives the members of the churches an opportunity to see the facilities, and to hear the professors and governors in gatherings that take place throughout the day at various venues. One such venue was especially adapted to attract young people. It was announced as “youth gathering” and it featured Prais[e], youth choir, band, and professional drama. I can imagine how different this gathering was from the ones held elsewhere in the city. But that is not my point, either. Notice that the music in that gathering is called “Praise.” The original text in *De Reformatie* printed “Prais” without an “e,” and it may well be that this is the name of a band that presents praise music.

The holy catholic church cherishes and uses music from various times and periods.

Contemporary Christian music

My point is now that whenever we use the term “praise music” for a certain style or genre, we qualify that music in contrast to other forms of music. The name gives the impression that this music is truly “praise,” and I am left with the feeling that there is also music used in the churches that is not praise music. In any case, it is suggested that in this music the emphasis is, more than in other styles, on the element of praise. If you really want to praise God, you should use praise music for this. This music is truly uplifting for the soul and pleasing to the Lord.

I do not know where the term “praise-music” originated. I cannot say who first used it or coined it. I don’t

have the time to research this. It doesn’t matter. I hear the term often being used also in our churches. We have praise choirs/groups who give praise concerts. Again, I have no problem with these efforts in themselves. But the name is a complete misnomer, and I think it has to go.

The proper name for this music is Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). When that name is used, it is accurate and acceptable. The other music used in the churches is called “traditional Christian music.” I make this point because it may seem that by the term “praise-music” it is suggested that traditional Christian music (for example the Genevan tunes) are not praise-music and or cannot function as such anymore. Then the term “praise-music” takes on a derogatory tone over against traditional church music. I trust that this is not the intention of those who use the term praise-music. But lest a wrong impression be left, let us use the proper and exact terms. The holy catholic church cherishes and uses music from various times and periods.

New songs will be incorporated as time progresses to the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Traditional Christian music

The basis of the church’s music has always been the Psalms. There is a reason for this. These are the songs which the Lord Himself revealed and gave to his people that they should learn them. When we sing these songs, we may know for sure that the words are pleasing to the Lord and glorifying for his Name. God has written his own liturgy, and we should never forget this. Our tradition is, therefore, to give prevalence to the singing of parts of Scripture put to rhyme and music. There are many hymns in use in the churches that are part of this tradition. And this means also that we have as Reformed churches avoided songs which focus rather on a person’s feelings than God’s glory. We wanted to be guided in our praise by God’s self-revelation. I am not starting a discussion here on exclusive psalmody. If such a discussion ensues, I will not even participate in it. It would be a waste of time. We have received from our faithful fathers beautiful, moving, scriptural hymns, which should be sung also today. The Christian church has a great and rich tradition when it comes to music and song, and I will never throw that

overboard. In fact, I'd like to see some more traditional Christian music (TCM) added to our *Book of Praise*.

Fortunately the Synod of Neerlandia has made an opening in this direction on the basis of the request of some of the churches. We might consider having a supplement printed which incorporates certain hymns, tested by time and loved by believers, and also hymns that are contemporary. I feel strongly that our traditional Christian music, used in the Reformed Churches, is also praise-music. Some may prefer CCM to TCM but the character of the traditional music is also that it is praise-music. Today's generation has not discovered what praise is. The catholic church has known this throughout the ages and still does today.

Semantics or dynamics?

The difference between Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and traditional Christian music (TCM) does not lie so much in the contents or the lyrics, but in the musical style. Even traditional hymns, such as Amazing Grace, are accompanied by different instruments, revitalized and energized with some rhythm and beat, and suddenly it is called praise-music.

Is this a matter of semantics or does it touch the dynamics of worship? I think the latter is the case. Today's generations have grown up with a different kind of music than those of the first part of this century. Contemporary music is generally more lively and upbeat. There's nothing wrong with that in itself. But let's not go overboard by calling contemporary music praise-music as opposed to traditional music. Let us use the terms CCM and TCM, for then we do justice to both forms of music.

I expect that in the time to come there will be some use of contemporary Christian music (CCM) in the church services. There are already some contemporary Christian songs that we love to sing at various occasions. The music of our time will find its way into the catholic liturgy, and one day what is now contemporary will become traditional. That is part of the dynamics of liturgy: it is not a timeless format which can never change, but based on God's Word and faithful to that Word, living liturgy allows and encourages people to praise God in their own time, in line with the church of all ages. New songs will be incorporated as time progresses to the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise-music? The church has been singing God's praise for thousands of years, in different ways, with different musical styles, but always in accordance with God's revelation. Liturgy is not that we get to sing our song, but that we sing his song. CCM that meets this standard will become TCM. 

What's inside?

Rev. Cl. Stam writes about praise-music in the editorial. His point is that this terminology is a misnomer because it implies that traditional church music is not praise-music. The church has been singing praises to God for thousands of years and will continue to do so until Christ's return.

Some time ago, Rev. E. Kampen presented the readers of *Clarion* with a report on last year's meeting of the ICRC. Dr. J. DeJong now submits his own press review on this meeting. The two articles complement each other and allow us to gain a better understanding of what transpired at this meeting.

Prof. J. Geertsema delivered his farewell address at the Thirty-Second Anniversary Meeting of the Theological College held on September 7, 2001. He dealt with the difficult topic: Is Conversion after Apostasy Impossible? This question is raised in connection with Hebrews 6:6. We have in this issue of *Clarion* the first of two parts of his speech.

As Rev. K. Jonker makes clear in his article, there is more than one war going on in our world. The "other war" even includes such figures as Harry Potter. You will have to read his article to see what this means.

We have an article by Ron Bos which examines a recent survey about the correlation between personal Bible reading and a positive outlook on life. This survey was taken before September 11 of 2001, but it acts as a commentary on the implications of this event for our world.

This issue contains our regular column, *Treasures New and Old*, as well as *the last* Press Release of Classis Ontario South.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher
Managing Editor: R. Aasman
Coeditors: J. De Jong, N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3
Fax: (780) 418-1506
E-Mail: raasman@canrc.org

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

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

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By E. Kampen

The Surpassing Greatness of Knowing Christ Jesus as Lord

"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

Philippians 3:8

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul writes about "the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8). It is this confession that can be heard in the first Lord's Day of the Catechism in response to the question, "What is your only comfort in life and death?" There it is said: "That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ."

The age in which we live makes it difficult to see the full impact and the true comfort of this confession. This is so because our age is so focussed on horizontal problems, like those of broken or strained human relationships, poverty and sickness – anything that takes the joy out of life in this world. There is a desire to find solutions to these problems. If a solution cannot be found, there is a desire to find some sort of comfort in dealing with those problems to at least make life bearable. It would seem that belonging to Jesus would give comfort. In all the miseries of life, at least Jesus is a true friend who comforts and consoles, who loves unconditionally.

While it may sound comforting to speak in such a way about belonging to Jesus Christ, that misses the point of what Paul is saying. Contrary to the horizontal orientation of our age, Paul is vertically oriented. He is speaking about his relationship with God. That is the thrust of this passage where Paul is dealing with the question of how sinners can be right with the holy God. Don't forget that the fundamental question facing mankind is: How do sinners become righteous, so they may escape God's wrath? Paul lists the things he might be able to present as being pleas-

ing to God, like his ancestry, his credentials as a Pharisee and his scrupulous keeping of the law. All these things, however, do not give comfort. As Paul explains in the letter to the Romans, "no one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the law." He writes that he considers all things rubbish because works of the law do not contribute toward being righteous before God. Only those who belong to Jesus Christ are righteous before God through faith in Christ.

We can think again of the way Lord's Day 1 expresses why it is such a comfort to belong to Jesus Christ. It says, "He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil." Do you see that vertical orientation, that awareness that in Jesus Christ our problem with God has been addressed so that we are reconciled to Him?

It is critical for our comfort that we recognize that Jesus Christ has addressed our vertical problem, reconciling us with the Father. If we don't see that, we might think we find comfort in knowing Jesus as Lord, and we might find much direction for our lives in Scripture, but in the end, we miss the point of Scripture. Scripture is really a vertically oriented book in that it exposes the problem between God and man, and shows us God's gracious answer to that problem in Jesus Christ. It is only the person who truly knows his sins and misery who can speak of the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus as Lord.

Does this mean that having Jesus as Lord does not help us in dealing with the horizontal problems? That would be drawing wrong conclusions. How it

helps us can be seen when we keep in mind the whole letter of Paul to the Philippians. Paul wrote this while in prison with the real possibility of being put to death. The calmness and confidence with which Paul writes easily makes us forget this fact. Yet, it is exactly knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord that makes him write so calmly in the first chapter about living or dying. Since he is at peace with God in Christ there is no fear of dying. This same confidence leads him to say in chapter four that we should rejoice always and not be anxious about anything. It also enables him to say that he has "learned to be content whatever the circumstances." There are also those well-known words "I can do all things through him who gives me strength." You will understand that Paul is not giving a little slogan here to encourage us to do what seems impossible. No, he is speaking here about the secret of the Christian life, how one can face all the hardships, especially those occasioned by our faith in Christ. The secret is in knowing Christ Jesus as Lord and that as a consequence, you are righteous before God. When that is the case, nothing else really matters anymore.

Dear readers, do you always keep in mind that our basic human problem is vertical and that Jesus Christ has come to deal with that problem? If you do not see that, you will not be able to confess the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. When you do see how Christ Jesus has addressed your vertical problem, you can also face your horizontal problems with a peace that transcends all understanding because you know that you are at peace with God and the God of peace is with you. 

The “Other” War in our World

By K. Jonker

Presently in our world, a war is being fought against the Taliban. This war is against terrorism, curtailing the eruption of the hatred of power-hungry man. In this world another war is waged. The Reformed church calls this war “the spiritual war” (Lord’s Day 52, Q/A 127).

As Christians we live in a world in which our sworn enemies – the devil, the world, our own flesh – do not cease to attack us. This war is against temptations, curtailing the eruption of man’s hatred against God. In this spiritual war we are our own worst enemy because of our sinful nature. We have to confront our evil desires head on with the weapons of faith, hope and love.

Our fight “in the world”

Our modern culture forms another front of the spiritual war. As students or disciples of Christ we oppose any form of evil (1 Thess 5). Our Lord said of us that we are the salt of the earth, the light of the world (Matt 5). We oppose the decay and the darkness in this world. Unlike the Taliban we don’t use extremist evil to reach our goal but the peaceful good of the gospel: Christ, the only Saviour of the world, is our strength. He is the conqueror of all evil. This truth does not make us activists (as if we must save the world), neither does it make us moralists (as if we can impose our views on others). Our place in this world, and therefore at the front of our modern culture, is to hold on to the banner of Christ to promote, defend and preserve the true faith in doctrine and life. Our doctrine, then, is not dry theological stuff but it is the knowledge of the living Word for a lost and dark world. The gospel is our life-link. We want to keep a firm grip to this Word, so that we don’t drift off and be swept away (Heb 2). At the same time, in our life we want to be holy and pleasing to God, by his mercies not conforming any longer to the pattern of this world but approving what God’s will is. We live a different life than those who live without Christ.



Our culture war in the past

In the Reformed church of the past, the true confession was expressed in a clearly accepted life pattern: supportive family life with regular devotions, involvement in congregational Bible studies, and wholesome family and church entertainment. In this spiritual atmosphere certain cultural things were not accepted: for example, playing cards, dancing, going out to visit a bar or a theatre, boys and girls spending much time together outside the homes.

*What, then, must we do
in our leisure?*

Through our modern entertainment means (radio, TV, video) and transportation means (the car) the preserving and conserving walls of home and church are broken through. Now the secular culture penetrates into our homes and lives, but God’s covenant demand of living a holy life has remained the same. What, then, must we do in our leisure? What music must we listen to? What programs and videos

can we watch? What books do we read? In today’s cultural world the spiritual war is basically the same as some decades or generations ago. We have the same weapons. However, the war becomes fiercer and uglier.

Our spiritual warfare today

At the end of October, our world was busy with Halloween. Last week our world was hyped up by the release of the first movie of Harry Potter. In both events we hear and see things which are linked to magic and witchcraft. Many look at these expressions of our modern culture as innocent children’s entertainment. However, among Christians the opinions vary greatly.

Who is Harry Potter?

Harry Potter is the hero-wizard of four recent children books written by J.K. Rowling. At the moment her books are being devoured by many. It is said that the Potter craze has turned thousands of television junkies into readers. However, we also hear that many parents don’t want their children to read “Potter” since they claim that he is pure evil. They ask for a ban on all Harry Potter books in their schools and libraries. An e-mail has been sent

around the world, claiming that the books promote satanism and are outright blasphemous. However, this e-mail was based on fabricated reports and messages and did not do justice to the books. All the commotion in the press made me decide to read the first book of the series, *The Sorcerer's Stone*. The book indeed paints a fantasy world full of magic. It is a gripping story. Harry lost his wizard parents when he was a baby because of the evil spell of Voldemort. Harry has a narrow escape from this evil wizard. A scar on his forehead is his life's memory of the attack. Harry himself is a wizard but doesn't know it until his eleventh birthday. On that day he is invited to enroll at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. At that school Harry is introduced and practices the skills of magic. It is a cleverly created fantasy of a boy's life on how to cope with life and to be successful.

Yes, to a certain extent I enjoyed the book and as a literary fantasy the book

does not contain satanism. However, what about if you see me with a pair of round glasses and a broomstick? I am not just kidding, for that's what happens in our culture of today. A fantasy story

*Our fight is fierce but
our victory is certain!*

often doesn't remain a fantasy but it is acted out! Now, don't worry, I won't do this, but many others do. At the moment the shops are full of Harry Potter wizard's items. In a movie the story is acted out. So, often the Potter books are not just read and laid aside but are played and experienced. Don't we then arrive in a more real world where people get involved in the evil and darkness from which Christ has redeemed us? I think, here, our modern culture is playing with fire. Beware of Satan! The same must be said in regard to (New Age) fan-

tasy role playing and/or computer games (e.g. Dungeons and Dragons; Wizard games).

In the world but not of the world

True, we cannot flee our modern culture. Joseph had a task at the Egyptian court full of magic. Daniel and his friends were placed in very much the same environment at the Babylonian court. The Bible indeed contains many references to the world of magic. However, in the Bible the darkness is conquered by the light! Joseph had his life in God. Daniel and his friends refused to live the Babylonian life of witchcraft. Paul condemned Simon, the sorcerer. What do we confess? "That for the sake of my very salvation I avoid and flee all idolatry, witchcraft and superstition" (see Lord's Day 34, Q/A 94). The Lord's command is still, "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess 5). Our fight is fierce but our victory is certain! 

Those True Heroes

By Ron Bos

Recently, a Christian publishing house commissioned a survey that showed a strong correlation between personal Bible reading and a positive outlook on life.¹ The survey suggests there is now scientific proof that studying God's Word is not just good for the soul, but good for one's mind and body as well.

Survey results found that 82 percent of regular Bible readers described themselves as "at peace" versus 58 percent who never read Scripture. Seventy-eight percent of Bible readers said they felt "happy" all or most of the time versus 60 percent of non-readers. Eighty-one percent of readers said they were satisfied with life in general as opposed to 63 percent who don't

open the Good News. And 94 percent of Bible readers believe life has a clear purpose and meaning versus 76 percent of non-readers.

The study was based on just over one thousand interviews, which were conducted among a sample of adults who reflected regional and ethnic makeup, meaning a fairly broad cross-section of American society was surveyed. It is noteworthy to take into account the survey was conducted in July 2001, before terrorism was unleashed in the United States of America.

No surprise

The positive statistics among regular readers of God's Word come as no surprise to those who are of the

Reformed faith. Indeed, one hopes that we who have immersed ourselves in the Reformed doctrine would show a more positive outlook on life through the knowledge that the LORD so guides our lives that each of us can confess "that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head."

Our reliance on God's holy Word is underscored by one of the bulwarks of the great Reformation, *sola scriptura* – only scripture. The sufficiency of the Scriptures is summed up in the well-known words of Psalm 119: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path."

On the other hand, what is surprising at first glance is the relatively robust

indicators of a truly positive outlook from those who never read the Bible. From our side of the equation, it's unfathomable that a positive outlook on life can be possible outside of faith in God's Word and grace.

The world with its faith in humanity has given us the heroes of its faith.

However, when we take the time to reflect on what the study really shows about people who don't read the Bible, we again discover there is nothing new under the sun. We only have to turn to the Bible – of course! – to understand that our society is no different than the world of the early Christian martyrs, the priests and kings of Israel or the naysayers of Noah's age. The unbelieving world has consistently ignored God, scorned his Word and placed its hollow faith in the power of man.

Some heroes

Some power. The world with its faith in humanity has given us the heroes of its faith. These have stretched the line of mankind itself, from Cain to Ahab; from Herod to Pontius Pilate; from Darwin to Marx; from Gloria Steinem to Jean Chretien. All have washed their hands of God's Word and inflicted the world with their contagious strains of humanism and their good news of modern (wo)man. Some heroes.

To their downfall, they continue to grope about, seeking in the darkness of society the answers to life's meaning and mysteries. They are, as the author of Acts states in quoting Isaiah:

...ever hearing but never understanding . . . ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.

Shaken lethargic confidence

Have the events of September 11 softened the calluses and removed some of the scales from the world's eyes? There can be no doubt the world has since been in dire need of comfort and healing. In these post-modern

times, the reality of evil has shaken the lethargic confidence of man in himself. The Lord has guided world events to show unequivocally yet again that there is evil to be reckoned with.

The horrors we have recently witnessed in America, however, pale to the horrors of previous generations. We need only recall the atrocities of the Holocaust, the brutality of Idi Amin, the genocidal cleansing in Rwanda. But the September 11 horrors smacked us between the eyes and took our breath away because we saw things instantly, live via satellite – things that our imaginations said should not happen, would not happen, could not happen.

But they did. And in the days and weeks that passed, we could hear a whisper and catch a glimpse of people turning to the Creator for comfort and strength. We witnessed the most powerful man in the world, President George W. Bush, implore his fellow Americans to go home and pray. (Sadly and to his shame, Prime Minister Chretien merely called on Canadians to find solace in the arms of our federally blessed multiculturalism).

While it is true that in times of disaster or grievous personal loss, the majority of people turn to God in prayer. Alas, it is often a superficial reaching out, and when the storm has been weathered God is forgotten once more.

Not forgotten

But the Lord will not be forgotten. He has demonstrated this time and again throughout the Old Testament by continually calling his people Israel to repentance and reliance on his Word and promises. So He governs world affairs in such a way that his warning calls cannot be ignored.

Many will heed his call, at least for a time. But many will also return to their humanistic ways like the sower's seeds in the parable of Jesus that fell on rocky soil. Lacking deep roots in the rich soil of God's Word, they soon withered and fell away.

Yet the Saviour's parable also speaks of the seeds that do take root and flourish in God's creation. These are the people who marvel at God's grace and immerse themselves in the study of the Scriptures – the Good News for modern man. They live their lives for the up building of their neighbour to the ultimate glory of God.

We should pray consistently for these people who are now searching for meaning in life amid the pain and rubble in their souls and on the ground in America. Pray that the Lord may also graciously grant them an extra measure of faith so that they now test the spirits of this age against the Word of God.

Need to pray

And we need to pray for ourselves, as well. Pray to God that He will continue to bless us richly with his Word and Spirit so that in humbleness we continue to place our trust in Him. Then, in reading the Bible and applying it as the rule for our lives, we may continue to be "at peace" and "happy" for it will be well with our souls.

But the September 11 horrors smacked us between the eyes and took our breath away because we saw things instantly.

And then, with thanks to God and his undeserved grace, we open our Bibles and take our collective cue from the true heroes of faith. They appear throughout God's Word and many are highlighted in the much-loved chapter 11 of Hebrews. They are Abel and Enoch, Abraham and Moses, and Rahab and Gideon. Those are heroes. This we know for, directly or indirectly, the Bible tells us so!

¹*The Good Book* – article by Newsday's Carol Eisenberg, published in the November 13, 2001 *Edmonton Journal*

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Is Conversion after Apostasy Impossible?

A Look at Hebrews 6:6 (Part 1)¹

By J. Geertsema

Foreword

Fifteen years ago, the first professor in the New Testament Department at our College, Professor L. Selles, retired. At that occasion he presented a farewell speech devoted to the explanation of Hebrews 13:14. It reads (RSV): "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come."

In the beginning of his address, Professor Selles said that in order to come to the right understanding of a text, it is very important to pay attention to its context. He took this term "context" with a double meaning, namely in a historical sense and in a textual sense. "Context" was for him the historical situation in which a text is written; at the same time, it was the textual situation, the chapter or even the entire book to which it belongs. Agreeing with this approach, I shall follow the same method. My address tonight deals with a different text from the same Epistle to the Hebrews, namely 6:6. The sentence begins in verse 4. It reads [the words not in verse 6, but in verses 4-5 are placed within brackets] : "(It is impossible) to restore again to repentance (those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift [=Christ], and became partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God), and have fallen away in apostasy, because, as for them, they crucify the Son of God again and expose Him publicly to contempt." We shall first try to determine the historical context or situation, and then we shall look at the written context in chapter 6, restricting ourselves to the verses 4-6.

Introduction

The author of this letter states that it is impossible to renew to conversion church members who have fallen away. People have struggled with this text. Someone even wrote that it is the most

difficult problem in our epistle. The difficulties are not only of an exegetical nature (what does the text really mean?). The problem is also of a theological and a practical nature. Theologically, it can be asked: Is this not in conflict with the teaching of God's love? Practically we can ask: If conversion of church members who have fallen away from the faith is impossible, does it then make sense to pray for their conversion? What does this mean for the efforts of ministers and elders, and of the congregation, not to mention the efforts of parents and other relatives, to bring them back to the Lord and his service? Does this text declare all those efforts and prayers beforehand unsuccessful, and, therefore, useless?

People have struggled with this text.

Our investigation consists in three sections. First we shall deal with questions concerning the historical situation, as indicated in the letter. In the second section, we shall pay attention to the written context of the text. And we shall end with two conclusions and two consequences.

Part I: The historical context

1) Who were the readers?

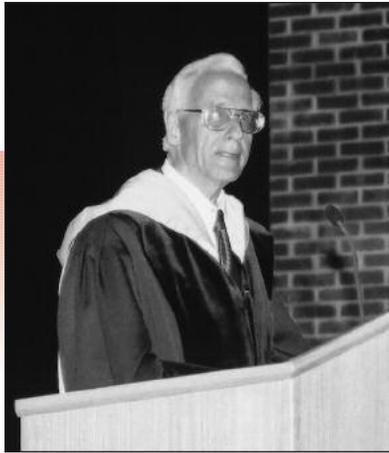
We should begin by reading this hard to understand statement within its historical context. The first question which must be considered concerns the original readers. Who were they? For our purpose, it can be narrowed down to this question: Were the first readers believers from the Jews or from the Gentiles? Up to the nineteenth century, practically all the interpreters of Hebrews agreed that it was clear from

the epistle's contents that the first readers were Jewish Christians. The basic ground was that Hebrews focuses so much on the contrast between the Old Testament, or covenant with its worship in the earthly sanctuary as shadow over against the New Testament, or covenant as fulfillment of the old in Christ Jesus. An additional point should be brought forward. In the Greek text there is a superscription above our epistle which reads "To the Hebrews." It is generally assumed that it is not put there by the author himself but comes from later copyists. However, the oldest manuscript that is still extant, Papyrus 46 from about 200 A.D., contains this superscript already. Its truth was not denied in the early church but has always been accepted until a more critical approach came up. Due to time constraints, we cannot discuss counterarguments here now. We accept this conclusion: the addressees were Christians of Jewish descent.

2) Where did these Jewish-Christian readers live?

Again, up to roughly the nineteenth century, practically every interpreter was convinced that the addressees lived in and around Jerusalem. For the last two hundred years, however, there is quite some disagreement. Some scholars argued that the first readers were living in cities in Asia, such as Ephesus or Colossae. The main contender with Jerusalem, however, became Rome. And presently Rome gets the majority of the votes. So we restrict our brief discussion of this second question to these two places.

One of the arguments in favour of Rome as the residence of the Hebrews is the use of the term "leaders" in Hebrews 13:7,17, 24 for the office-bearers instead of terms like "elder" or "bishop" (i.e., overseer). The reasoning is as follows: Two later Christian authors who



Prof. J. Geertsema

were members of the Church in Rome, used this term “leaders” for the office-bearers. This means that the term was familiar in the Church at Rome. The conclusion is then that the addressees belonged to the Church at Rome. However, other explanations are possible. For example, one can just as well reason from the Church at Rome’s familiarity with this term “leader” that the author of our letter lived in Rome. And this leaves open the possibility that the addressees had their residence somewhere else. It is also possible that they lived in Jerusalem. The following texts

They were then persecuted and their earthly possessions confiscated.

point to it that the term “leader” was well-known in Jerusalem. See Acts 7:10 (where Stephen in Jerusalem uses the term to indicate Joseph’s position in Egypt) and 15:22 (where the term is applied to Judas and Silas as “leaders among the brothers” in Jerusalem); see also Luke 22:26 (where the Lord uses the term in the circle of the disciples and applies it to them in their future position as leaders). Therefore, this use of the term “leader” in Hebrews does not convincingly point to Rome. It can just as well be used to prove that the letter was directed to Jerusalem.

One of the arguments used against Jerusalem in favour of Rome as destination of our letter, is the assumed poor condition of the church in Jerusalem. The New Testament speaks of collections gathered for the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:29-30 and Rom 15:26-27,31; Gal 2:10; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9).

Many scholars claim that this is in conflict with the picture presented of the addressees in Hebrews 6:10 and 10:32-34. For these verses mention the works of love for the Lord’s name and of support and service which the addressees provided to each other in former days. They were then persecuted and their earthly possessions confiscated. These verses also indicate that this support was still going on, when the author wrote his letter to them. However, this picture in Hebrews 6 and 10 is not really in conflict with the condition of the Jerusalem church as we know it from the New Testament, nor with Jerusalem’s receiving support from the Gentile churches. First of all, the picture of the early Jerusalem church which Luke presents in Acts 2-5 is one of love for the Lord and of sharing earthly possessions with one another. In the second place, Acts 8:1-3 mentions the ravaging persecution under the fierce Saul of Tarsus. This was in the same early period, and agrees also with Hebrews 10:33-34. The members of the church in Jerusalem were scattered, though the apostles remained in the city. It must have been with some members, while others returned, especially after the persecution had ended. The church in Jerusalem not only continued to exist but also grew. Before his three missionary journeys and at the end of each of them, the apostle Paul visited the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30, 15:2, 18:22 [“he went up” is a standing term for going up to Jerusalem], 21:15). Moreover, the few collections from outside do not deny further ongoing help from inside. Besides, if the churches in and around Jerusalem were so poor that they completely depended on aid from abroad, these collections from Antioch (Acts

11:29-30) and from Macedonia and Achaia (Rom 15:26-27) would have been a mere drop on a hot plate. There is no reason to think that Hebrews 6:10 and 10:32-34 would not fit the church at Jerusalem.

On the positive side, a very strong argument in favour of Jerusalem as destination is that the epistle presupposes that the temple worship in Jerusalem is still practiced but is close to disappearance (see 5:1-3, 8:3-5 and 13:10-11 in combination with 8:13). Our epistle speaks here about the appointment of the Levitic priests and the offering of animal sacrifices in the present tense. And in 13:10 the author says, “We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.” These words state in the present tense, as a present reality,

The warning against apostasy comes with increasing forcefulness.

that believers in Christ Jesus eat from his sacrifice at the Lord’s table. In the same present tense, as a present reality, it says that the Jewish priests who serve in the temple, have no right to eat from this table of the Lord. Further, the author writes in 8:13 that the old sacrificial order is close to disappearance. This is a clear indication that our epistle was written before 70 A.D. But this point will be elaborated later. We can now already say that these data are much more in favour of Jerusalem than of Rome as residence of the first readers. Our conclusion is therefore that Jerusalem as the place of residence of the addressees is to be maintained with the early church and the interpreters up to the nineteenth century.

A supporting argument can be derived from the epistle of Clement of Rome, written on behalf of the Church at Rome to the Church at Corinth. Two things in this letter can be mentioned. First, in this letter of Clement our epistle to the Hebrews is extensively quoted. This shows that Clement knew our epistle. Clement also writes about grave persecutions in the congregation at Rome (chapters 5-6), connecting this persecution with the recent death of Peter and Paul. This points to the days of Nero, about 64 A.D. Second, we find the present tense as description of the still functioning temple

worship in Jerusalem, as we found it in Hebrews, also in this epistle of Clement of Rome (chapter 41). These two points indicate that this early Christian letter of Clement indicates a date of writing soon after the death of the apostles. And since Clement quotes Hebrews, his letter confirms that Hebrews, too, is written before 70 A.D. (see Edmundson, 194-195) (see the next point).

3) When did these Jewish readers in Jerusalem receive this epistle to the Hebrews?

This is the most important of the first three questions for determining the historical situation. There are basically two approximate dates competing here: the one before 70 A.D. and the other about 90 A.D. The arguments in favour of the early date of before 70 are convincing, in my opinion, on the following basis. There is first again the point that the author writes that the disappearance of the old order is near (8:13). Since this disappearance took place in 70 A.D. with the destruction of the temple, our epistle appears to have been written not long before that date.

We should take note of the fact that there is an intense urgency in our epistle. The warning against apostasy comes with increasing forcefulness in 2:1-3, in 3:6 and 12, in 4:11-13, in 6:4-8 (of which our text is part), and is presented in a climactic way in the chapters 10:19-39 and 12:25-29. We read in the last part, among other warnings, that "God will judge his people," while it is "a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:30-31), and that God is a "consuming fire" (10:27 RSV).

In this connection, 10:25 is of great significance. We have there the well-known words, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see *the Day* drawing near" (RSV). The crucial question is here: What is the meaning of this term "the Day?" We shall try to determine the meaning first from the context of our epistle; then from the Old Testament revelation, and thirdly from the teaching of Christ.

Many (e.g. F.W. Grosheide, 243) are of the opinion that the author meant with this Day the day of Christ's return to judge the living and the dead. The very remarkable thing is, though, that our author writes, ". . . as you see the Day drawing near." At that moment, he himself and the readers

see that the Day is coming near. Every one who had eyes could see the Day coming. This makes it difficult to assume that the author refers to the day of Christ's return. For with respect to that final Day, our Lord has said that no one knows when it would be there. Here, however, it is stated: you see it is near.

Now the author has already said in chapter 8:13 what he saw coming near. In chapter 8 he placed over against each other the old covenant with the animal sacrifices, as established at Mount Sinai, and the new covenant with the one perfect sacrifice of the perfect High priest, Christ Jesus. As conclusion, the author writes then in verse 13, "By calling it [this covenant in Christ] 'new,' He [God] has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging is near disappearance." Combining these two texts (8:13 and 10:25), we conclude that what the author and the readers saw drawing near as *the Day* was the Day of the disappearance of the Old Covenant.

The disappearance of the old temple system would take place through a compelling violent action.

Furthermore, there is an important question: How this disappearance of the old order would take place? Would it take place in a slow, gradual process, step by step? Would the Jewish leaders, the teachers of the Law, the priests and the Levites, and the people as a whole, willingly allow the entire mosaic temple service with its animal sacrifices to cease and disappear? The answer is obvious. They definitely would not do so. Instead, they would fight to hold on to the Law of Moses. In other words, the disappearance of the old temple system would take place through a compelling violent action. Therefore, we conclude that the author, seeing the near disappearance of the old mosaic system of worship, sees drawing near the violent destruction of the temple, and of the people of the temple. When we now connect 8:13 and 10:25 with the verses following the latter, 10:26-31, which speak about the Lord's punishing vengeance and his judging of his people, then *the Day* appears to be another day of God's terrible wrath and judgment.

In this light of the following verses, the expression "the Day" reminds us of the Old Testament term "the Day of the LORD," which is always a day of wrath and judgment. It occurs in Amos 5 for the Day of God's punishing wrath over Israel, the ten tribes, bringing the Assyrian captivity. More than a century later, in Isaiah 2:12 and Zephaniah 1:14, this Day of the LORD is Day of his anger, that brings the Babylonian captivity on Judah. Then, after Israel's return from captivity, in Malachi 3:2 and 4:1, God speaks again about a coming Day of the LORD as a day of wrath. This time the Day of wrath is linked to the LORD's own coming in his Son Christ Jesus with his forerunner John the Baptist.

We learn from these texts that the term "the Day of the LORD" in the Old Testament is not one specific Day, once in Israel's history. It occurred more often, and as day or time of God's covenant wrath and judgment. (We leave out here that this Day also carries an aspect of redemption for the believing faithful.)

In this light, and especially with Malachi's prophecy in the background, it is not strange that also the New Testament can speak of the Day as such a Day of the LORD's coming in anger and with judgment, both against Jerusalem about 70 A.D., and again at the time of Christ's return as the final judge. We find this term "the Day of the LORD" in different formulations, for instance, as "day of judgment" in Matthew 10:15; 11:22; Jude 1:6; as "the Day of the Lord [which] will come like a thief in the night" in 1 Thessalonians 5:2; and as "the great Day of their wrath" [of God and the Lamb], in Revelation 6:17.

We mention also the expressions "the Day of the Lord (Jesus) (Christ) (1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:6,10). In all these and other cases the Day points to the last Day as the day of Christ's return as judge. When, just as in 10:25, the term is used in an absolute formulation as simply "the Day" in Matthew 25:13, Romans 13:12 and 1 Corinthians 1:13, the context points also there to the last Day. However, as is argued above, the term "the Day" in Hebrews 10:25 refers to a day of wrath and judgment over his people (cf 10:30), preceding "the last day."

The interpretation of "the Day" in the light of the Old Testament "Day of the LORD" as a time of the LORD's wrath and judgment finds further support in many words of our Lord Jesus as

recorded in the gospels. He spoke frequently about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This destruction would be so radical that not a stone would remain on the other (Matt 24:2). The Lord also said, "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:20). These words of Christ, "When you see" and "[its desolation] is near," could well be the background of the formulation in Hebrews 10:25, ". . . as you see the Day drawing near."

Referring to the words of Christ as a background for Hebrews is all the more justified, since the author himself referred to them in 2:3 (cf 1:2). Christ's words were handed over to the author and his readers by those who had heard them from the Lord. And because the Lord's words of judgment on Jerusalem, its temple, and unbelieving Israel received an important place in the gospels, we may assume that they belonged to the words which the ear-witnesses handed over to the author and his readers. We may further assume that the Lord's words about Jerusalem's killing of the prophets and of the Son of Man, and about the blood of them being avenged on "that generation" (Matt 23, Luke 13) were included. We can point here also to texts as Matthew 11:16; 23:32-35; 24:34; Luke 7:31; 11:50; and 21:34, where the Lord uses the expression "this/that generation" in connection with coming wrath and judgment against the people of his days who harden in their refusal to believe in Him.

In this connection special attention is to be paid to Matthew 10:23, where the Lord says to his disciples whom He would send out as his apostles, "When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes." The Lord speaks here of the task of his apostles after his return to heaven, when they have to go on with the work of preaching and teaching to Israel. The Lord's coming, pointed to in the words "before the Son of Man comes" cannot refer to his coming before his death at the cross. Nor is there any indication that it refers to his coming at the end of history. Therefore, it rather points to his coming to punish Jerusalem after a period of patience for Israel from his death and resurrection to the fall of Jerusalem. This is in line with the prophecies of Malachi. In 3:1 God says

through this prophet: "See I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant whom you desire will come," says the LORD Almighty." We take note of the verb "to come," used twice here for the coming of the Lord Himself. Then it says in verse 2, "But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire." And in verse 5 it says,

The addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews were Jewish Christians who lived in and around Jerusalem.

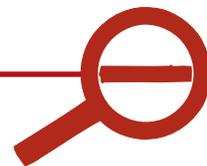
"So I will come near to you for judgment. . . ," says the LORD Almighty." In chapter 4:1, we hear Malachi continue, "Surely, the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace." Another indication is verse 6, speaking about the coming of Elijah who will turn the hearts of the

fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." This can be connected with the end of Malachi's prophecy: ". . . or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Since this coming of Elijah refers to the coming of John the Baptist (Matt 11:14; 17:10-13), the coming of the Lord with judgment against the unrepentant unbelievers refers to wrath connected directly with the Lord's first coming, which then is his coming with judgment in 70 A.D.

Our conclusion with respect to the historical context is that the addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews were Jewish Christians who lived in and around Jerusalem, shortly before the destruction of this city and its temple when also the old order of worship ceased. In other words, the addressees received this letter most likely sometime between 65 and 70 A.D.

¹Prof. J. Geertsema delivered this farewell address at the Thirty-Second Anniversary Meeting of the Theological College held on September 7, 2001. 





The ICRC Meets

Although Rev. E. Kampen recently published his report in *Clarion* concerning the meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches held last June in Philadelphia, PA, our readers may be interested in gathering an additional impression of how this assembly, in which we are involved, transpired. Rev. Robert Grossman, who was present as a delegate of the RCUS wrote the report of the meeting for the August 2001 issue of the *Reformed Herald*. It is written quite obviously from the point of view of the RCUS, but includes a good summary of what took place. Here follows his report of the meeting:

The International Conference of Reformed, (ICRC) an ecumenical organization of some twenty-two conservative Reformed church denominations from around the world, met in Philadelphia, PA, from June 20-27, 2001. This year's meeting was hosted in the United States by

the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, one of the two largest member churches in North America. ICRC meetings are held all over the world. The last ICRC meeting was held in Korea in 1997, and the next one will be held in South Africa in 2005, the Lord willing. The purposes of the International Conference

The ICRC is a good mix of Bible-believing Reformed Churches from around the world.

of Reformed Churches are to provide an ecumenical gathering and exchange of information with each other for Bible-believing Reformed Churches from around the world, to foster cooperation in world-wide

missions among its member churches, and to study jointly the issues facing Reformed Churches as they seek to hold to and spread the historic Reformed faith.

The ICRC, which held its first assembly in 1985, was begun through the joint efforts of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – Liberated (GKN Liberated) and the Free Church of Scotland (the denomination of the late professor John Murray of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia). As a result, several of the member churches of the ICRC are daughter Churches in North America, Africa and Australia of the GKN Liberated and the Free Church of Scotland. Added to these are a number of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches that have no direct historical connection with the European founders of the ICRC. Thus the ICRC is a good mix of Bible-believing Reformed Churches from around the world, even while maintaining a character peculiar to its founding denominations. The Reformed Church in the U.S. (RCUS) joined the ICRC in 1993.

The 2001 assembly of the ICRC was held on the campus of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, while the delegates were housed and fed a mile up the road at Beaver College (which changed its name to "Arcadia University" on July 16, 2001). The location of this year's meeting provided an excellent opportunity to renew memories and acquaintances for two RCUS delegates, recent synod president Rev. Vernon Pollema and the undersigned, who spent much time together as fellow "farm-country" students from 1961-63 at Westminster. The other RCUS delegate was the Rev. Ron Potter, chairman of our Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee.



With Rev Yonson Dethan (Musyafir Churches of Indonesia) in front of Westminster Seminary.



New York City from the harbour; after September 11, the twin towers are no longer a part of the skyline.

The Work of the Assembly

The ICRC meets for one full week every four years, which seems only reasonable when most delegates travel one-fourth to one-halfway around the world to attend. Unfortunately this year's agenda was short on substance and a good bit of time was used in long breaks from the meeting without alternative activities, although the RCUS delegation did meet with a number of other delegations during these times to some good effect. A correspondent from the *Netherlands Dagblatt*, (sic, JDJ) a conservative daily newspaper published by Reformed folks in Holland, was fascinated by the fact that the RCUS strikes out into new cities around the United States to found new congregations, a practice unheard of in the Netherlands. This, of course, is not unique to the RCUS but is also practiced by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). This brother, who was also a delegate of the GKN-Liberated to the ICRC meeting, is planning an article on this subject, high-lighting the practices and growing results in the RCUS.

One very good practice of the ICRC is that of inviting various member churches to report on their denominations and recent developments in them. For some reason only a few Churches were given time to give such reports this year,

even though there was ample time during the week of meetings. Rev. Pollema had written a very informative report on the RCUS but was never called upon to present it. Nevertheless useful information was gained by the delegates on a number of new ICRC Churches and about Churches that were attending as visitors.

The papers

Another good practice at ICRC meetings is the presentation of pa-

pers written by experts (more or less) on subjects of importance to the life of the Churches. In the past some of these papers have been very valuable to the Church. Unfortunately several of the papers this year were written to rehash peculiarities and differences between the GKN-Liberated and the Free Church of Scotland (and their descendants) on a number of issues including the "unity of the Church."

The GKN-Liberated have a peculiar view of the Church (among Reformed Churches) holding in common with Congregational Churches to the autonomy of the local congregation and holding that Classes and Synods are voluntary associations of congregations with no more authority than the local churches wish to give them. The presence of this viewpoint in the founding culture of the ICRC makes it a wonderful talking arena, but keeps it from actually doing much, which was of frustration to the Third World delegates in attendance and to others who might see a more active role for international ecumenical relationships.

One very good paper was presented this year on the subject of "Work Among Jewish People." The presenter by Rev. John S. Ross, is a British pastor and professor with some experience in Evangelizing Jews. His paper defended the



Prof. Hans Maris (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, NL) at the reins of an Amish transport vehicle in Lancaster County. His passenger is Rev. A. De Graaf (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, NL), with Rev. John Goris (Reformed Churches of New Zealand) in the rear, looking for a spot to climb in.

necessity of including Jewish people among the objects of evangelism and spoke of principles and methods by which these peculiar people ought to be approached. The Reformed view is that the Jews who reject Christ are no longer God's special people and now live as just another pagan nation, even though they give lip service to the Old Testament and its God. The RCUS delegates, along with Rev. Ross and others, found themselves perplexed and dismayed when the reaction to his paper among some Dutch background delegates, especially the missions professor of GKN-Liberated Seminary in Kampen, was what we Americans could only consider an ill-advised harangue against Jewish people (the speaker later apologized for some of his more intemperate remarks, but discussion of the real issue of biblical approaches to unbelieving Jews was permanently side-tracked). Nevertheless, Rev. Ross's paper was a valuable part of the Conference.

Another paper that provoked real discussion was one on Hermeneutics (proper interpretation of the Bible) by Dr. Jacob Van Bruggen of the GKN-Liberated Seminary. Dr. Van Bruggen focussed on the "history of redemption" nature of Scripture (the fact that the Bible's teachings on various subjects comes step by step in history, rather than all at once as a finished systematic product, a fact which is generally called "progressive revelation" in U.S. circles) The undersigned and Dr. George Knight III, an OPC delegate, attempted to engage Dr. Van Bruggen on the question of whether this means that the Bible's teaching in an early section might perhaps be set aside, or even be changed, by a later part of Scripture. In his paper, Dr. Van Bruggen had given issues as such as male leadership and capital punishment as those which might be affected by the historical nature of revelation, but seemed not to wish to push these issues in the following discussion.

Other Papers

Other papers included one by Rev. G. I. Williamson of the OPC in which he urged the adoption of exclusive psalms as the proper application of the Regulative Principle of Worship (a position re-

jected by most Reformed Churches, including the OPC) and one by Rev. Cornelis Pronk of the Free Reformed Churches of North America discussing the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian believer (his denomination tends to emphasize a conversion-experience type of application of redemption).

Dr. Jacob Van Bruggen of the GKN-Liberated Seminary focussed on the "history of redemption" nature of Scripture.

Some Decisions

Other actions besides the major issue reported separately below included proposing to the next ICRC the adoption of a more direct creedal subscription to the Reformed and Presbyterian confessions on the part of the member denominations, rather than the agreement to the more nebulous "Reformed faith" contained in the confessions that would need to be abstracted from them. This recommendation came from the RCUS, as did a recommendation to require member Churches to submit every eight years to the same standards for continuing in the ICRC as they had

to have for joining, that is, lively adherence to their creeds and the recommendations of two other ICRC member churches. This latter recommendation was soundly defeated, the assembly desiring the present method of requiring a two-thirds vote of the ICRC Churches to remove a member Church.

The One Day Outing

An interesting and valuable sidelight of the 2001 ICRC was a one-day excursion to Princeton, NJ and New York City. The whole ICRC group travelled by tour bus to Princeton, where we viewed not only Princeton Seminary (from which the leaders left in 1928 to found Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia) but also the Princeton Cemetery where many of the greats of American history are buried. Men such as Charles Hodge and other famous Presbyterian professors, as well as President Grover Cleveland and the infamous Aaron Burr all rest in Princeton Cemetery. From Princeton the group travelled to Staten Island, from which we took the ferry to the south end of Manhattan Island passing the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island on the way. While in Manhattan we walked the famous Broadway and Wall streets, and many ascended the World Trade Center where we spent an hour on top of the tallest building in New York.



The island of Manhattan, looking north from the former World Trade Center, south tower. Peter Minuit, governor of the colony of New Netherland, bought the island from the Indians for sixty guilders in 1626.

Division of the Free Church of Scotland

The really hot potato issue of the ICRC 2001 was the recent split of the Free Church of Scotland into two antagonistic parts, one comprising about sixty percent of its membership and the other forty percent. Since both groups claim to be the true and constitutional Free Church of Scotland, the ICRC was faced with which one's representatives, both or neither, to seat as delegate members of the Conference. This lamentable division in what has been for many years a solidly Reformed Church resulted from fundamental disagreement among its pastors about how to deal with accusations of sexual misconduct against a leading pastor and professor of the denomination. Four unrelated women accused this pastor of varying degrees of sexual assault, and a woman in Australia confessed to having an adulterous affair with him for some time. The denominational committee charged with overseeing pastors refused to investigate these charges or question the accused pastor about them even when civil charges were brought by the four women in Scotland. In a strange bit of "justice," the single civil judge who heard the charges accepted the strange theory that certain conservative pastors in the Free Church, many of whom are known worldwide as godly men, were jealous of the accused pastor and had concocted a conspiracy to get these five women to bring false charges against him. In the end, since the group demanding that the charges be investigated in the church courts would not be quiet, the General Assembly brought discipline against them, and they then renounced the Assembly as not truly representing the Church or its Constitution.

The ICRC Committee for setting up the 2001 meeting assured the minority group that their case would be heard and asked the minority not to challenge the credentials of the delegates from the majority group of the Free Church of Scotland. The minority agreed not to challenge at the early stage of the meeting, and in one vote the delegates voted unanimously to seat all the delegates from all the churches. Thus the majority group was de facto accepted as the legitimate

representation of the Free Church before the case even came before the ICRC. When some ICRC leaders then demanded that the ICRC not involve itself in the internal affairs of a member church (against the ICRC Constitution), some of the delegates, including those from the RCUS, objected that we had already done so by seating the majority group. The RCUS delegation realized this without even knowing about the details of the case, because what had happened de facto was clear. As things turned out, the ICRC invited the minority group to make application for membership in the ICRC, it being a fact that they and the majority were already acting as separate denominations.

The really hot potato issue of the ICRC 2001 was the recent split of the Free Church of Scotland into two antagonistic parts.

Conclusion

When it became clear that the business of the 2001 Conference had been accomplished, the leader of the RCUS delegation, Rev. Ron Potter moved to amend the agenda so that the meeting could be concluded a day early. This was passed and the meeting closed on Wednesday evening, July 27. Although this fifth meeting of the ICRC was perhaps not as full of useful activity as some earlier meetings have been, the ICRC continues to be a valuable and truly international community of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches seeking to remain true to Scripture and the historic Reformed faith. It should be noted that the ICRC Secretary, Rev. M. Van Beveren of the Canadian Reformed Churches has served faithfully for many years, and that its Treasurer, Mr. H.A. Berends, also of the Canadian Reformed Churches does an excellent and precise job of setting up and caring for the budget of some \$75,000 that the ICRC expends every four years. It was a great personal blessing to rub shoulders with Reformed delegates from all over the world and we trust that

our scattered denominations will also benefit from their association in the ICRC.

A brief comment

I prefer to let this article stand on its own without too many comments from my side. I appreciate the frank and forthright way Rev. Grossman has expressed himself. He leaves no doubt as to where he stands, which in itself is laudable. However, his words do beg for some remarks in response:

First, where did Rev. Grossman get the idea that our church polity is congregationalist? And in what way does this polity imply that it does not provide a vehicle to get things done? It makes me wonder what kind of a polity the RCUS defends! (Incidentally, the first ICRC meeting was held in Groningen in 1982, I believe, not 1985).

Then the paper of Rev. John Ross, I, too, found this an interesting and rewarding paper, and I mentioned this to the speaker. But why does Rev. Grossman neglect to mention that the view taken by Rev. Ross was precisely the opposite of the one Rev. Grossman himself defends as the accurate view? That was the issue which the Dutch delegate sought to point out. His methods may be questioned, but in all fairness to the person concerned, I think it would be appropriate to concentrate of the *issues* at stake in the discussion, and not strictly on the way these points were made. And I would also ask what other Dutch delegates expressed such strong disapproval?

As far as the division of the dispute in the Scottish churches is concerned, we should be careful to present a view favouring one side of the dispute. To be sure, the various charges concerning improper behaviour were brought up against Prof. Macleod. But in point of fact, nothing has been proven concerning his erroneous behaviour, and the civil court dropped all charges. From this distance we are wise not to immediately imply that this as a miscarriage of justice. Does Rev. Grossman have access to all the facts?

For the rest I appreciate the comments of Rev. Grossman. His remarks concerning both the faithful labours of Rev. Marinus van Beveren and Mr. Henk Berends are noteworthy, and also deserve mention in our "own" paper! The many years of faithful service of these brothers was truly appreciated at the Conference. 



Press Release of Regional Synod East of November 7, 2001 held in Ancaster, Ontario

Opening

On behalf of the convening church at Blue Bell, Rev. G. Ph. VanPopta of Ancaster calls the meeting to order. The delegates sing Ps. 46:1,3. The Scripture reading is Psalm 11. Rev. Van Popta speaks some fitting words in connection with Psalm 11, also in light of the current events in the world. In prayer a blessing is asked over the meeting. Rev. VanPopta welcomes the delegates as well as Rev. R. Stienstra and Rev. J.Dykstra from the United Reformed churches in North America (URNCA). He reports that the credentials were found to be in good order. Regional Synod is declared constituted. The following officers are elected:

Chairman: Rev. J. DeGelder

Vice Chairman: Rev. D.G.J. Agema

Clerk: Rev. G. Nederveen.

The chairman expresses thankfulness to the church at Blue Bell for convening Regional Synod to the church at Ancaster for hosting Synod, and to Rev. Van Popta for opening the meeting. Rev. Van Popta is seated as a member in advisory capacity. The agenda is adopted.

Correspondence

Classis Ontario South of September 9, 2001 notifies Regional Synod that as of January 1, 2002 it will have divided into two regions. Regional synod notes that this will have implications for future delegation to regional synod in light of Art. 47 C.O.

2. Regional Synod received a letter of the second clerk of General synod 2001. This letter is received for information.

Recognition of Fraternal Delegates from the URCNA

The chairman mentions the progress in the relationship between our federations since our last respective general synods. He expresses thankfulness to the Lord for this development. Rev. Stienstra addresses Regional Synod on behalf of the URCNA. He brings warm,

well-meant and hearty greetings. He highlights the many streams of unity between our federations at different levels. The URCNA will have to ratify the decision of Escondido 2001. He requests the prayers of the Canadian Reformed churches in this time of deliberation within the URCNA and expresses the need for the blessing of the Lord as our churches seek each other. The Lord will provide as we grow together.

The chairman thanks Rev. Stienstra for his words.

Appeals

1. In closed session an appeal is declared inadmissible.
2. Regional synod appoints a committee to prepare a proposal in answer to another appeal. After lunch the committee presents this proposal. In closed session the proposal is discussed. Regional Synod decides to deny the appeal.

Reports

The following reports are received

1. Deputies ad Art. 48 C.O.
2. Report of the church at Brampton that the archives of Regional synod 2002 are in good order.

Appointments

1. Deputies ad Article 48
 - from Classis Central Ontario: G. Nederveen, (alt. W. denHollander) as deputy for Classes Northern Ontario and Niagara
 - from Classis Northern Ontario: P.G. Feenstra, (alt. B.J. Berends) as deputy for Classes Northern and Western Ontario

- from Classis Niagara: D.G.J. Agema, (alt. G.Wieske) as deputy for Classes Central and Western Ontario
 - from Classis Western Ontario: Cl. Stam, (alt. J. Ludwig) as deputy for Classes Northern Ontario and Niagara
2. Treasurer Regional Synod: br. D. VanAmerongen (342 Russ Rd., Grimsby, ON L3M 4P4). The assessment for Regional Synod is set for \$1.00 per communicant members
 3. Church to audit the books: Lincoln
 4. Church to keep the archives: Toronto
 5. Church to inspect the archives: Brampton

Next synod

Convening church: Burlington Fellowship

Date: November 6, 2002.

Closing

The chairman thanks the brothers for their cooperation and the brotherly atmosphere in which Synod could deal with the matters on the agenda. The chairman is thanked for his leadership. The sisters of Ancaster who prepared the meal are thanked. The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved for publication. Synod sings Ps. 87: 1,2,3. The chairman leads in prayer and declared Synod closed.

For Regional Synod East 2001

D.G.J. Agema

vice chairman at that time. 



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By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers,

Back to school after the Christmas and New Year break comes so quickly, doesn't it? You're off school for a couple of weeks and then back again. It seems like you've only just gotten out of school and you're back there, for another few months. But remember, it's always good to learn more. Especially as you get older, you realize how much you learned when you were at school.

And it is also when you are older that you realize how much you still have to learn. There is a saying that goes "you learn something new every day." That is very true. There will never be a time when someone will know everything.

Yet, there was one man who did know everything when He was on earth. Yes, that was our Lord Jesus Christ. He even knew what the people were saying or thinking about Him. Wouldn't that amaze you, if it happened to you?

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

Puzzles

Trees and Plants to Find

Which trees or plants are needed to complete the following Biblical quotations?

1. "Consider how the _____ grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these."
2. "So he ran ahead and climbed a _____ to see him, since Jesus was coming that way."
3. "During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own _____ and _____."
4. "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the _____, it will burst into bloom."
5. "(Much people) took _____ branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!'"
6. "So give orders that _____ of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians."
7. "'No longer will the people of Israel have malicious neighbours who are painful _____ and sharp _____. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.'"
8. "Then the trees said to the _____, 'Come and be our king'."
9. "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a _____, sat down under it and prayed that he might die."
10. "Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a _____ in Migron."

Genesis Word Search

by Rosemarie Hordyk

B	S	R	Q	D	E	B	A	U	Q	P	P
T	R	I	A	S	S	E	N	K	R	A	D
Z	V	U	S	R	T	P	V	U	X	Y	Z
B	D	C	G	A	R	D	E	N	A	O	B
B	U	Q	A	E	N	D	S	A	E	S	A
A	D	Z	B	O	N	E	V	E	R	G	O
P	E	O	N	C	R	E	A	T	I	O	N
C	E	D	E	A	Z	D	S	X	F	D	B
O	S	W	O	M	A	N	A	I	I	Z	X
A	Z	E	E	M	U	Z	V	W	S	O	N
P	T	D	V	S	P	U	O	Q	H	S	A
O	E	Q	U	E	C	B	I	R	D	S	M
N	O	O	P	G	N	I	N	R	O	M	O

FIND:

MAN	WOMAN	CREATION	GOD
ADAM	BONE	GENESIS	EVE
GARDEN	EDEN	BIRDS	DARKNESS
SEA	MORNING	SEED	AIR

February Birthdays

12 Stephanie Verhelst	15 Rosemarie Hordyk
27 Rebecca van Dijk	28 Rianne Boeve



FROM THE MAILBOX

Thank you to *Rosemarie Hordyk* for your letter and puzzle. It was great to hear from you again after such a long time. I'm sorry I forgot your birthday. I hope you have an enjoyable day on 15 February. Isn't it great to come from a big family? Are you the youngest of the family? And you have lots of pets at home. Do you have to help take care of them all?

Thank you also for your puzzle. I have put it into this edition of *Our Little Magazine*. Write again soon, won't you, Rosemarie.

Thanks also to *Rhonda Wiersma* for your letter and jokes. It is always nice to receive jokes in the mail. You were really spoiled by your family and friends on your birthday, weren't you. Even to get a purebred Arab horse. Are you going to be able to train him soon, so he doesn't get too tricky for you? Bye for now.



Aunt Betty

c/o Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

