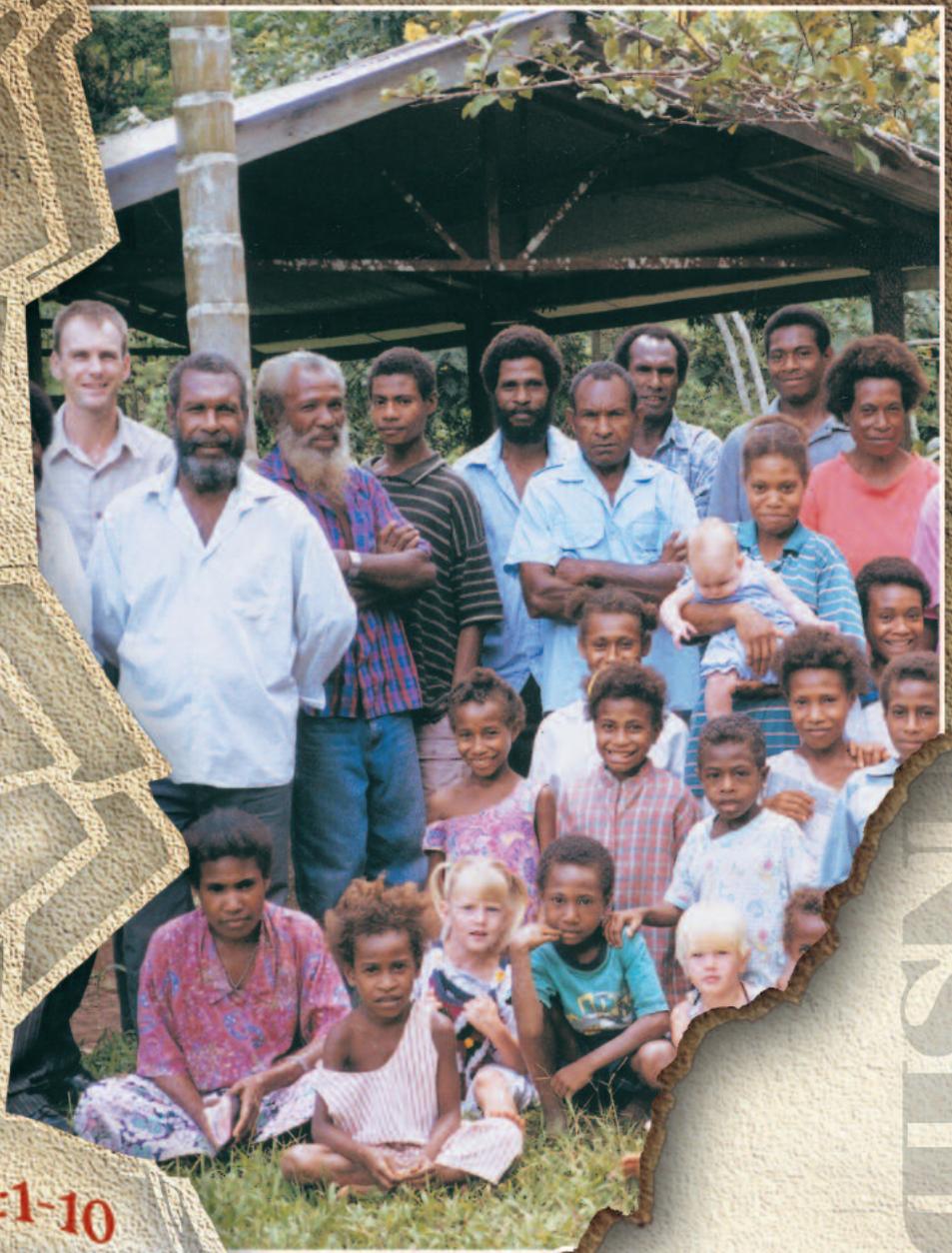


Clarion

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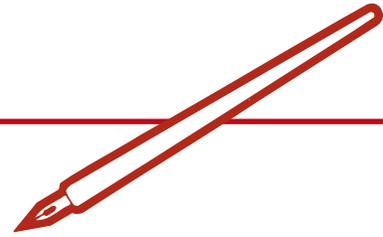


Numbers

10:1-10

*Pentecost
and Missions*

INSIDE!



By N.H. Gootjes



Celebrating the Spirit

One Spirit

Every year, the church receives the opportunity to celebrate the feast of the Holy Spirit, on the fiftieth day after Easter, the day of Pentecost. Come to think of it, it is remarkable that there is no special feast day in the church for the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. We do remember the coming of God's Son into the world on Christmas, and his death and resurrection on Good Friday and Easter, and we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit, but we have not set aside a special commemoration of the Father and his work of creation. But then, each week is a reminder that God made the heavens and the earth in seven days.

The emphasis is on both the individual members and the communion.

However that may be, around this time we celebrate Pentecost. We remember that the Spirit appeared in this world in an exceptional way, with the sound of a loud wind. He showed his presence in tongues of fire. According to Luke, the Holy Spirit reached out to the individual people on that day. He not only made his coming visible in the fiery flames, these flames even divided and came to rest on each of them, as a sign that they all had received the Spirit. It was a clear proof that they all shared in one and the same Holy Spirit of God. The emphasis is on both the individual members and the communion. The Holy Spirit was given to the individual believers of Jesus Christ. But it should not be overlooked that one and the same Holy Spirit came down to dwell in them. Having the same Spirit unites believers in the bond of obedience to the heavenly King, Jesus Christ.

This causes us to glorify God, and thank Jesus Christ for sending the Spirit in this world. There is only one Holy Spirit given in this world. Just as there is only one God and Father of all, and one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

All believers

Already on that first day of Pentecost, it was made clear who it is that receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. Luke, recording the events of that day, states: "All of them were filled with the Spirit." That does not mean that all people present in Jerusalem on that day received the Holy Spirit.

Many, both citizens of Jerusalem and people who lived temporarily in that city, came to the place where Christ's congregation was together. They had heard of the unusual events and were curious to see the results. They had not received the Holy Spirit. They were mere onlookers, drawn by curiosity and perplexed by the things they saw happen in the room where Jesus' followers were. Peter called them to believe in Jesus Christ, for the rule is that only those who believe in Jesus Christ and all He has done for our salvation receive the Holy Spirit. But the followers of Jesus Christ, who had been together in that room, were all filled with the Spirit.

But today, Christians are often divided up into two groups: people who have the Spirit, and those who do not. It is somewhat similar to a problem Paul encountered in Corinth. Some of them said: "I follow Paul," and others: "I follow Apollos." And some surpassed everyone by claiming: "I follow Christ" (1 Cor 1:12). As if Paul brought a different gospel than Peter. As if a person can be a follower of Jesus Christ and ignore Paul and Peter. As if someone would be a better Christian by following Jesus Christ, and forgetting all the things Paul has written, and all the things Peter has told Mark.

In a similar way, some Christians claim for themselves: "I have the Holy Spirit." As if they are the only ones who have received the Holy Spirit. As if the Holy Spirit can be claimed by one believer in Jesus Christ with the exclusion of others. People quickly make a distinction between themselves as the real owners of the Spirit and others who are not. Between the enthusiasts and the careful. Between the doers and the thinkers. Between the quick movers and the people who clean up after them. Between the psalm singers and the hymn singers. As if only the elite receives the Holy Spirit.

We can learn something from the enthusiasm of new Christians.

We should not grieve the Holy Spirit by claiming Him for ourselves. It is the other way around: He claims us, Christian believers. He came, for an important reason, to dwell in all who believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son and our Saviour. He works in all of us urging us to use our abilities for the well-being of the whole congregation, and for the continuation of Christ's work in this world. We do not have the Holy Spirit to be proud of our achievements, but to honour God in our lives.

Christ has not only given his blood for us to save us from our sins, He also has given his Spirit to renew us to be his image. The Holy Spirit is at work in us to teach us how to live a life that is pleasing to God the Father, and is obedient to Jesus Christ, our heavenly and highest king. The Spirit is active in our sanctification, changing us into obedient followers of Christ.

About one hundred years ago another view became prominent. People saw that churches existed as dead institutions, where nothing much happened. It was often a civil and civilized religion, without heart and without enthusiasm. To restore the fire, a repeat of Pentecost was sought, with speaking in tongues, and sometimes even ecstatic behaviour. While the Protestants had emphasized

What's inside?

On Pentecost, the risen, ascended and victorious Christ sent out his Holy Spirit for the purpose of gathering, defending and preserving his church. We who live almost 2000 years after this event, have seen the blessings of Jesus Christ's Pentecostal work. He has gathered his church from many tribes, tongues and nations. As his church, we pray that his kingdom may come, and all the elect may be brought in. How we long for the day when as one multitude we will sing a new song on Mount Zion to our God!

In this issue of *Clarion*, several articles are written with Pentecost in mind. We see the significance of the Holy Spirit actually working in our hearts, as well as looking at Pentecost from the perspective of missions. Closely connected with this, we have a meditation which focuses on the ascension of Jesus Christ which took place shortly before Pentecost.

We have in this issue our regular column, *Education Matters*. There are three press releases of classes. There are also two letters to the editor, along with responses. People tell me that they enjoy letters to the editor. We appreciate the lively interaction. May this serve to sharpen our outlook on different issues and thus help each other come to a good perspective.

RA



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holy life as the main work of the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal movement emphasized that we should regain the speaking in tongues and other extraordinary events recorded in Acts.

The New Testament clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit was given to dwell in us and to renew us so that we live a life of obedience to God. To mention only one text out of many, Paul urged the Galatians to live by the Spirit without gratifying the desires of the sinful nature (Gal 5:16). He also provides a whole list of sinful actions which we should not commit: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness and orgies. And he adds another list of things we should concentrate on as Spirit filled Christians. All this should be done in the Spirit: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25).

But this does not exclude enthusiasm. Obeying God in our daily lives should not be done reluctantly, out of fear for punishment. We can learn something from the enthusiasm of new Christians. They see the change in their lives, and the positive impact of their faith on their lives. We who are long term Christians, need to recover this conviction that it is a great thing to be renewed by the Spirit, and to live it out in our daily lives.

Pentecost places us in the heart of a lifelong struggle. The Spirit lives in our hearts to make us more and more obedient to Christ, our heavenly King. And we can be full of joy that the Spirit is working in us, to change us. That is the best that could happen to us. The Spirit did not come to dwell in us to make us feel bored because there are so many things we would like to do but are not allowed. He came to live in us, to make us temples, so that we may serve God in our lives. Through the Spirit, what we do daily becomes a part of our worship of God. And that is something to be enthusiastic about.



Dr. N.H. Gootjes is professor of Dogmatology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.



By G. Wieske

Ascension – The Beginning of the End

“In my Father’s house are many rooms . . . I am going there to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2a, c).

The disciples were saddened, troubled, and confused because of all that had happened on the last evening that they would be together with their master: They were humbled by his great love when He washed their feet, they were perplexed that one of them would betray Jesus, and they were very upset when He said that Peter would deny Him. What were they to make of all this? What was going on? Why was Jesus going to leave them? They couldn’t do without Him, especially not now when the Jews were dead-set on getting rid of Jesus.

For three years the disciples had followed Him, incurring the wrath of the establishment. They had come to love Him and were willing to die for Him. And now this? Now He was going away? What was to come of all the blessings He had spoken of to them? Was this how God’s glorious kingdom would come? Everything was so much different than they had expected.

Yes, He would be going away; the Jews would kill Him. His death, however, would not be in vain. His death is the price He must pay to redeem his church, to usher in the kingdom of peace and glory. After three days He would rise again from the dead to demonstrate that God’s justice has been satisfied, that a new era will dawn.

Jesus speaks the comforting words of our text for these reasons, words that the disciples and we badly need to hear, words that indicate the promise of his ascension. He will leave them so that He can go to his Father in heaven to be glorified, to receive the throne of the universe, to pour out his Holy Spirit, to be in charge of all things.

Hear our Saviour say: “In my Father’s house are many rooms . . . I am going there to prepare a place for you.” Our Saviour came to suffer and die, and by his death He took our sins away so that we are justified. But that’s not all! Salvation is more than forgiveness; its final blessing is our glorification when all believers will live forever with

their Father in heaven. That state of glorification is what the idea “My Father’s house” stands for.

God doesn’t live within the confines of four walls; the heavens are his dwelling place (Deut 26:15). His throne is in the heavens (Isa 66:1). The New Jerusalem is the city of God that will encompass the new creation. It will be without a temple because the Lord God and the Lamb are its temple (Rev 21). This city is the final destination of the believers. The rooms Jesus talks about must not, then, be understood as restricted spaces but, rather, they tell us that there’s plenty of room in our “Father’s house.” In this house every child of God will have a reserved place wherein they will all permanently reside with their heavenly Father. Jesus ascends to prepare a place for his church.

Our Saviour isn’t speaking merely of our death, brothers and sisters. It’s true, though, that already then we will go to be with Him; but that’s not the end. At death only our spirit or soul goes to Christ, but our body stays in the grave and returns to dust. In our text, however, Jesus speaks of our total existence. He speaks of a time when his preparation work will be finished, when our place in “Father’s house” will be ready; He speaks of a time when He returns! (verse 3).

We wonder, however, why He tarries so long. At these times we must recognize that there is a church to be gathered from every tribe, tongue and nation. That’s why the Gospel must be preached to all nations. That’s why the Holy Spirit was poured out, the Spirit of Christ who not only brings people to faith but who also conforms them after the image of their Saviour. He sanctifies them to live for their Lord and neighbour. It is this work that will take time. All who have been chosen must come to faith and obedience.

The opposition to this work, however, is powerful. Satan and his followers do what they can to wean God’s children away from Him and his service. The

disciples knew everything about Satan’s evil work, and so do we. The saints have no permanent city here. They are aliens and strangers in this world (1 Pet 2:11). Their citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20).

Our transient state on this earth makes the words of our Lord so full of comfort and encouragement. Our homelessness is what makes the ascension such a joyful event. The ascension marks the beginning of the end. Jesus Christ is readying our reservations with the Father. Already now we may experience his great love. In prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in life and death we cherish his Fatherly care knowing that nothing is able to separate us from his love.

But it’s going to be much, much more glorious, brothers and sisters! John speaks of that in his first letter (3:2). Hear him say: “Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is.”

Here on earth the believers are marginalised and discriminated against. Many suffer cruelly and even die for their faith. And though we still enjoy relative peace and prosperity, we feel out of place. We live in a culture that has no time for God and the Gospel. We see sin mushroom and wickedness grow. It doesn’t take much to become discouraged and troubled. But Christ says: “In my Father’s house are many rooms. And I’m going there to prepare a place for you! I’m making everything ready for the day you will live with my Father. In the perfection of the new creation. In the heavenly Jerusalem.” What a comfort for those first disciples and for us. Now we can cope. Now we remain of good courage. The ascension is indeed the beginning of the end. The end will usher in our glorification. Then we will finally be home with the Father. 

Rev. G. Wieske is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Rockway, Ontario.

Pentecost and Missions: Some Second Thoughts

By W.L. Bredenhof

From many pulpits and in many books it has been said: Pentecost was when the gates of the church were flung wide open. Before Pentecost, God was essentially concerned only with the Jewish nation. Pentecost represents a radical shift, a dramatic transition. In an instant, the focus of God's work has become universal, rather than national. In his book *God-Centred Evangelism*, R.B. Kuiper echoed this point of view when he wrote, "The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church implemented the transition from nationalism to universalism."¹ If this is correct, the events of Pentecost in Acts 2 are very important for missions. Indeed, this would be the critical turning point for the Christian church in its mission to proclaim the risen Saviour.

The Pentecost sermon of Peter was addressed to the covenant people of God who had been dispersed all over the world.

However, it appears that there is reason to question whether this well-established understanding of the significance of Pentecost is sustainable. There are several clues that lead us to this suspicion, but the most obvious clue is found later in the book of Acts. In Acts 10, we read the surprising story of how Peter was led to abandon his narrow vision of God's family. Peter is brought to Cornelius. Cornelius is led to faith in the Lord Jesus. Peter then vexes his brothers in Judea by even daring to eat with this Gentile. In chapter 11, Peter is called to defend his actions and he does so cogently. The ef-

fect is stunning: "When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life'" (Acts 11:18).

This conclusion is reached in Jerusalem, the same place where Pentecost had taken place presumably a short time earlier. This kind of response from the "apostles and brethren" in Jerusalem provokes a question: why did they make this conclusion when Pentecost had signified "the transition from nationalism to universalism?" Wouldn't it be natural for us to expect that the apostles would not be surprised that Gentiles were being brought into the church? But that isn't the case. Rather, the apostles and the early church did not see Pentecost as the definitive moment at which a shift took place from nationalism to universalism.

Acts 2

This is further evidenced by a closer look at Acts 2 itself. The chapter begins with a description of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 5 we read "And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven." Jews had come from all over the Roman Empire to attend the feast of Pentecost. Along with the ethnic Jews, there were also a number of proselytes (devout men) – people who were essentially Jewish, having been circumcised and who followed the Torah. This is not undermined by the list of places that follows. The list simply outlines where these Jews have come from – it says nothing as such about their nationality. In fact, the visitors from Rome are not described as Romans, but as "Jews and proselytes," possibly foreshadowing the work of the apostle Paul

later in the book.² It is also striking that Peter's sermon is addressed to the "Men of Israel" (2:22), "the house of Israel" (2:36), and "men and brethren." The evidence is clear: Peter was preaching to men who were Jews. The Pentecost sermon of Peter was addressed to the covenant people of God who had been dispersed all over the world.

Thus, we may say that there is a universalism already present in the Old Testament.

When this dispersion happened, the Jews took the faith of their fathers along with them. The amazing thing is that they also spread their faith. It is not clear whether this proselytizing was passive or active (more likely the former)³ – but the result was the same: many people from other nations came to believe in the God of the Bible. The numbers may not have been huge, but they were large enough for there to be detailed discussions about the status of proselytes in various rabbinic writings.⁴ We have to take note of this because it is consistent with what we find in the Old Testament.

Old Testament background

Already in the Old Testament, God was concerned with the nations. Israel was definitely "the apple of his eye," but He had not forgotten the other peoples. Two examples will suffice, both well-known. Twelve chapters into the Bible, God promised Abram, ". . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). The prophets are full of God's attention to the foreign

nations – though most of this attention is negative. One of the remarkable exceptions is Jonah. The prophet Jonah is sent to Nineveh because God doesn't want this city of 120,000 to perish under his wrath – even the livestock of the city fall under his concern! God truly has a heart for the nations.

Thus, we may say that there is a universalism already present in the Old Testament. We could call this an *incipient* universalism. It is incipient: it is in an early stage. This universalism does not come to full expression in the older dispensation. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Lord worked through his people and their dispersion to bring outsiders into his fold. This incipient universalism continues into the early New Testament period. We see our Lord Jesus in Matthew 8 speaking of the great faith of a Roman centurion. He does the same with a Syro-Phoenician woman in Matthew 15: "O woman, great is your faith!" This incipient universalism only continues through the event of Pentecost.

This happens because the shift from a predominantly Jewish to a Gentile focus follows the contours of the mission outlined by the Saviour in Acts 1:8, "... you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." As the mission of the apostles moves outward in that pattern, so does the scope of the gospel shift radically from an incipient to a full-blown universalism. However, Pentecost does not represent this radical shift. Rather, we should look to the experience of Peter in Acts 10 as the defining moment. The gospel at that moment is ready to move outward in a forceful way and God brings the revelation to Peter as a stimulus to this radical shift. He then works with His Holy Spirit to bring the realization of this shift to the believers at Jerusalem.

But what about... ?

Having said that, there are several places in the early chapters of Acts which would appear to contradict this thesis. In Acts 6, there was a dispute between the Hebrews and the Hellenists. In response to this dispute, seven men were chosen as what we would today call deacons. Many commentators have noted the fact that these seven have Greek names. However, we should not think that these men were not of a Jewish back-

ground. Rather, the term Hellenist refers to a Greek-speaking Jew.⁵ In verse 5, we are even informed that Nicolas was "a proselyte from Antioch." This piece of information reinforces the fact that the Hellenists were essentially Jewish, though not necessarily ethnically Jewish.

In Acts 8, the gospel goes out to Samaria. On this point, we don't need to spend a lot of time for the reason that Jews and Samaritans shared a similar heritage. The Samaritans were a sect of the Jews. Even more troublesome, at least at first glance, is the account of Philip and the Ethiopian in that same chapter. In Acts 8:27, we read that this man had "come to Jerusalem to worship." Who did he come to worship? The fact that he was reading from the gospel of Isaiah would seem to indicate that he too was a proselyte. We infer this also when Luke notes no surprise on the part of the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem. If this man had been a "raw Gentile," we might expect the kind of reaction we find in Acts 11:18. Instead, this is accepted as part of the manner in which God has been working up to this point (including Pentecost): incipient universalism. Believers from a non-Jewish background are easily accepted into the church, so long as they come into the church as circumcised proselytes.

From the moment He sought out Adam in the garden, God has always been concerned for the lost in whatever corner of the earth they may be.

With Cornelius and his household in Acts 10, there is a significant change. It is true that Acts 10 describes Cornelius as a devout man, but the difference here rests with the fact that he is uncircumcised. He respected God, was generous with his wealth, and prayed to the Lord all the time (Acts 10:2). Still, he had not taken the step of becoming circumcised and did not follow the ceremonial requirements of the Torah. For Jewish purposes, he was a Gentile. Cornelius represented the bridge in redemptive-history by which also we have been ingrafted into the people of God. This moment demonstrated pow-

erfully that the doors of the church are open for those who are not Jewish by birth or circumcision. So, the gospel-acceptance worked in Cornelius was indeed a, if not *the*, radical step forward. At this point, also the book of Acts shifts focus from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria to the rest of the world. Chapters 12 and 13 find Saul and Barnabas being sent out to the other nations. If Pentecost was really the dramatic shift from nationalism to universalism, why did the apostles not go out to the ends of the world earlier? No, we find that there is a pattern that follows the Lord's outline in Acts 1:8. This pattern and the incipient universalism which undergirds it lead naturally to what happens in Acts 10.

Pentecost and missions: some conclusions

So, where does this leave Pentecost? For one thing, as already mentioned, Pentecost does reinforce the fact that God's concerns are broader than ethnic Israel. This is evidenced in that large numbers of proselytes were present and also turned to the Lord Jesus in faith. However, the deepest significance of Pentecost for missions should be seen in its relation to the covenant people of Israel. Pentecost, the speaking in foreign languages, the sermon of Peter – all of these things served as warning signs to Israel. In Isaiah 28:11, the speaking of God in another language served as sign of a curse.⁶ Most of Israel had rejected the Messiah and the speaking in foreign languages signalled that God was ready to move on. Peter's sermon highlights this aspect as well, since he is trying to show his Jewish listeners that the one they crucified is both Lord and Christ. So, we can say that Pentecost is prophetic of the definitive shift that takes place in Acts 10, but it is not the definitive shift itself.

Finally, we should naturally say something about the Old Testament background of the Pentecost feast itself. Pentecost represented the culmination of the Feast of Weeks. This feast ended with the offering of two loaves of unleavened bread. This symbolized the first fruits of the harvest. Seen against this background, Pentecost does illustrate the bringing in of the first fruits of the "Christian harvest" of men. But note well that this says nothing about the nationality or religious status of those being gathered in. First-fruits have nothing to do with universalism as such, but

they definitely look forward to a greater harvest. Once again, we catch a sense of the prophetic nature of Pentecost.

From all of this we learn something very important about our God: He always has been and always will be a "missionary" God. From the moment He sought out Adam in the garden, God has always been concerned for the lost in whatever corner of the earth they may be. Today, our God continues to send out missionaries to those in darkness. "To the ends of the earth" is a goal that remains. Those of us who are privileged to serve in this task ought to be humbled by the fact that it is not our work. We see very clearly from the Scriptures that God sovereignly brings all the lines together in his time. He is at work in us and in those who hear the message which is preached. We can look through sacred history and witness God's power in extending his church everywhere. We can look around us today and wit-

ness the same thing. When Gamaliel advised his colleagues in Acts 5:39, he was right: ". . . if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it." His work cannot be overthrown! That is our confidence today and we praise God for it!

¹ *God-Centred Evangelism*, R.B. Kuiper, Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1994 reprint, p.76. For a more recent statement of this notion, cf. *The Call of Grace*, Norman Shepherd, Phillipsburg: P & R, 2000, p.74.

² Cf. *The Book of the Acts* – Revised Edition (NICNT), F.F. Bruce, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, p.57.

³ Although Bruce informs us that Jewish proselytizing was carried on energetically in Rome: *op.cit.*, p.58.

⁴ Cf. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, E.P. Sanders, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, p.206ff.

⁵ For a convincing argument that this is the case in this passage, cf. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Fully Revised), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, sub 'Hellenist.'



Called to the church of Edmonton (Immanuel), Alberta:

Rev. W.B. Slomp

of Neerlandia, Alberta.

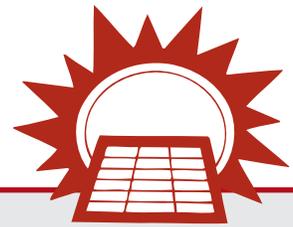
⁶ To be sure, there is also a blessing aspect to this speaking in foreign languages, namely miraculous evidence of the pouring out of the Spirit. Both aspects are drawn out in "Tongues: Sign of Covenantal Curse and Blessing," O. Palmer Robertson, in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 38:1 (Fall 1975), pp.43-53. 

Rev. W.L. Bredenhof is missionary in Fort Babine, British Columbia.



Sunday School in Fort Babine, BC.

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”
Acts 2:38, 39

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

When we read our Bibles daily we often hear about the Holy Spirit. We have all heard of the Trinity, and yet it may seem difficult for us to understand and believe. Ever since creation, the Holy Spirit was there. Some people in the Old Testament times were given the power of the Holy Spirit to lead the people, or they were given a special task. We think, for instance, of Moses.

We may all be familiar with Pentecost and what happened on that day. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit of God was poured out on the church of Christ. In Acts 2 we read of what happened. They were all together in one place and suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.” The Spirit enabled the believers to speak in other languages. Peter explains what has happened; to all the people he says that God has promised long ago to send his Holy Spirit to the church. At Pentecost this was made a reality. They all received the Holy Spirit.

Many people who were listening to Peter did not believe before. Many of these people were the ones who put Jesus on the cross. They now asked what shall they do. Peter tells them to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and they also will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord gave a very beautiful gift here. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we receive faith and that therefore we can love and serve Him. He makes us strong every day and helps us to serve the Lord. When we pray to God every day we may ask Him for the Holy Spirit to work and dwell in our hearts, for He has promised in his Word to give Him to us.

When we have the Holy Spirit in us we cannot but have the Lord. How do we show that we love and want to serve God? The Bible says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. The Holy Spirit makes every part of our life want to serve God. The first three words, love, joy, and peace, show how we are to live to God and to others, and shows us that we are alive in Christ. Patience, kindness and goodness are the fruit of how we live together. The faithfulness, gentleness and self control shows that inside our hearts we desire to change and love God. In all that we do the fruit of the Holy Spirit should be there.

For us as sinners, it is sometimes very hard to live as God wants. We should never give up because He promises to work in us every day of our life. We become stronger every day if we pray for the Holy Spirit to work in us.

Pentecost still means a lot to us today. The comfort of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is that He will never leave the Church. Where the Church is, there is the Spirit. To know that the Holy Spirit lives in us is a gift that is greater than anything in the world. Through joy and sorrow the Lord promises to be there. Even in our most difficult days when we feel as though we cannot carry on, the Lord promises to be with us through his Word and Spirit. What a comfort to belong to such a loving Father. We can also be comforted with the words of this beautiful hymn:

*He has come the Holy Spirit!
Jesus left us not alone
When He went up to inherit
Might and glory on the throne,
For He sent the One He promised;
Holy Spirit, Power of God.
Let us spread this truth abroad
And unceasingly declare it.
Let us now our voices raise:
To the Spirit we give praise.*

*Praise the Spirit who, proceeding
From the Father and the Son,
In the truth the Church is leading.
Let us praise Him everyone!
Him who is both Gift and Giver,
Him the Sender sent to earth,
Holy God and yet poured forth.
Praise, O people Him forever:
He true life to you imparts,
For He dwells within your hearts.*

Hymn 36:1,2

Birthdays in June:

17: JOAN KOERSELMAN will be 45
Box 1312, Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

20: DANIEL STROOP will be 21
193 Diane Drive, Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

30: BEVERLY BREUKELMAN will be 40
2225 – 19 Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

Congratulations to you all on your birthday. We hope and pray that you will have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends, and also with the Lord's blessing in this new year.

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman
Mailing correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
1-905-563-0380



Teaching Science and The Topic of Evolution

By Lydia VanVeen

Science is a regular part of the program of studies in Maranatha/Emmanuel as it is in any school. For the past few years, the staff in Fergus, has been discussing the science curriculum and the teaching of science.

Our discussion of the science curriculum began for practical reasons. The science texts were outdated, and we were looking to purchase a new series. In addition to this, the Ontario government has been quite busy introducing new curricula in grades 1-11. We spent some time evaluating the new science curriculum for grades 1-8, and we liked the topics and skills within this curriculum. We had to consider, however, what makes the teaching of science different in our Christian school compared to that in the public school; the science curriculum is the same, and even the same textbooks may be used, but is there any difference? Why do we actually teach science?

As a result of a number of staff discussions and meetings, the following rationale was developed, stating why we teach science and what we hope our students will achieve as they follow the science curriculum throughout the years:

Science is in God's hands; therefore, the students must believe that God created the natural world and that it operates under his providence. Since the fall, man has not been able to fully carry out our [sic] mandate to subdue and have dominion over the earth. Even though we see only a partial revelation of God's glory, we can still see the orderliness of creation and man's required response of obedience and praise. Man must not use his knowledge of the natural (living) and physical (matter and energy) world to establish his own glory but to confirm God's majesty and grace. Our increased knowledge of science is then seen as a confirmation of the subservience of all things to God's will, so that we can truly proclaim that ". . . the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the fir-

mament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

To that end, the teaching of science should strive to meet the following expectations:

- a) show the student the richness, variety and uniformity of creation
- b) present science as a cultural activity through which God is glorified
- c) help the student understand daily occurrences through a structural study of creation
- d) deepen the student's knowledge of the general structure of science with its variety of concepts, laws, theories and methods
- e) increase the student's skill in communication and observation of the physical and biological world
- f) develop the student's sense of humility since science cannot reveal everything about God's creation
- g) develop increased understanding of the living and physical aspects of the world beyond the student's local experience, through practical investigations

From the above statements, one can begin to understand that science is a wonderful subject to teach. It provides a marvelous opportunity to speak together as a class about the wonderful world created and upheld by our God. "By Him all things were created . . . and in Him all things hold together" (Col 1:16,17) expresses this very well.

In the end, we decided to adopt the topics as presented in the Ontario Curriculum. We found that these topics and skills easily fit within our rationale. A new textbook series was purchased which followed the new curriculum; however, given that the texts we use are secular, we are faced with the theory of evolution. How do we deal with this challenge within the classroom? Do we simply overlook these pages of the text? Do we simply dismiss the theory by telling the students that the world is not billions of year old? It is not that easy, nor should it be.

The theory of evolution cannot be ignored, as its implications and specific world view come through not only in science text books, but also in magazines, educational programs on television and video and in the newspaper. It is important that our children know how to confront this theory; they must

learn how to question and discern the 'wisdom' of this world. Especially the students who enter the public high schools and secular colleges and universities will be faced with this theory. They'll need to be able to oppose this theory and they can do this more effectively if they themselves are familiar with the theory and its implications. Some graduates from our school, who have completed their secondary years in the public high schools (as Emmanuel only offers up to Grade 10) have mentioned that they are faced with the theory of evolution in their grade 11, 12 and OAC classes. There were a number of students that felt adequately prepared to defend creation over against evolution, but that they were glad that in Emmanuel the theory of evolution was discussed. They found it easier to confront the theory when they were familiar with it. Their responses remind us that we should not ignore the theory of evolution, but speak about it when it comes up in science and/or other subject areas.

Do we teach the students all the tenets about the theory of evolution? No. We also do not spend a lot of time disputing the details of the theory. We approach the theory of evolution and its implications using guided confrontation, depending, of course, upon the age of the class. We begin with what we read in God's Word and compare it to what is stated in the text book. In doing so, hopefully the students begin to develop the knowledge and the confidence to recognize and challenge the theory of evolution.

So teaching science and especially dealing with the theory of evolution and its world view can be a challenge. It can be humbling. I do not know all the answers to the students' questions, but it is rewarding to speak together about and explore God's world. As we study the various topics within the text and within the curriculum, we can speak about the power and majesty of our Lord. He truly has created all things, and He also continues to uphold all things. All that we learn points back to Him. The laws of physics, the reactions of chemicals, the workings of the cell, the relationships within the ecosystems, the wonders of the universe, all point to Him. Through the study of

science we explore his creation and come to know our God in all that He has done and continues to do within his providential care. This makes the study of science so important, so challenging and so wonderful!



Miss VanVeen is a high school teacher at Maranatha-Emmanuel Christian School in Fergus, Ontario. She originally wrote the article for the local school magazine, The Link, Nov. 2001, but has edited it for our column.

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A Modest Proposal for Furthering Christian Education at Covenant Christian High School (and Other Schools)

By David J. Engelsma¹

It was a good meeting in every respect. I refer to the annual society meeting of Covenant Christian High School in Western Michigan. There was a solid slate of nominees for the board. There was a good spirit. Obviously, the men were pleased with our Protestant Reformed high school in Western Michigan. Adoption of the budget was unanimous and without dispute.

The agenda informed the society that the board will be hiring a special education teacher for the coming school-year. The purpose is to teach certain covenant young people with special needs. This is right.

The Covenant Christian High School foundation reported a sizable and growing fund of money. This is to supplement the income from tuition and, thus, in part, keep the tuition as low as possible. The Foundation urged that all consider including the Foundation in their will, surely good stewardship of God's goods.

Although the tuition had to be raised to \$4,300 per student, it is by no means out-of-line with tuition in other Christian high schools. The next day the *Grand Rapids Press* reported that tuition this coming year at Grand Rapids Christian High School will be \$5,300 per student.

The attendance was impressive. More than 140 men filled the music room, to do the business of the covenant.

But there were very few older and old men at the meeting—men whose last child has graduated from Covenant, grandfathers, great-grandfathers.

This is the subject of my modest proposal. (Lest anyone suspect that I pat myself on the back for attending, and, therefore, discount my proposal, I note that I have a child attending Covenant this coming year. My presence was unexceptional. It was required).

I suppose that this characteristic of Covenant's meeting may also be true of the society meetings of other Christian schools throughout North America. My proposal will be of interest, therefore, to the other schools as well.

Probably, we take for granted that the old men do not any longer attend the society meetings. Perhaps, we have become accustomed to it, that a man attends his last meeting the year that his youngest child graduates from the school.

Nevertheless, this is surprising. The school is a covenant institution. It is a vitally important covenant institution. Its concern is God's name – Jesus Christ – in God's creation. The students, who by their learning are to know, bear, and honor this name, are the children of the church. The entire church benefits from the school's faithfulness, as the entire church will suffer for the school's unfaithfulness.

My modest proposal is that men continue to attend the society meetings after their own children graduate. Thus, they will demonstrate their lively interest in the school. This will be encouragement to the younger men. The mere presence of the older and old may discourage rash ventures, just as the presence of younger men may overcome the tendency of age to stagnant conservatism. Like the church, the school needs young and old.

By attending, the older men make themselves available to serve on the board. The older should have a presence on the board, as indeed they do at Covenant Christian. They should be willing to serve. Their zeal for Christian education does not end with the dying strings of the postlude at the graduation exercises of their youngest child. Their experience over many years counts for much in the ongoing cause of the covenant, Christian education. The wisdom of the older is useful to the school.

How many older men in Western Michigan could be lively members of Covenant's society? 100? 200? More? What a powerful furthering of Christian education it would be, if the society meeting had to spill out of the music room into the gymnasium.

My modest proposal, however, includes more than the attendance of the

older men. It is modest, but not that modest. Let these older men, without children in the school, and, therefore, relieved of the responsibility of tuition, commit themselves to an annual contribution to the budget of the school. Membership in the society for them would include this annual contribution. The board could figure on these contributions in preparing the budget. Suppose that 100 in this special category were to give \$200 a year. \$20,000 would go either toward lowering the tuition or toward raising the salary of the teachers. Suppose that 200 older men pledged \$300 a year each, not an unreasonable amount. The society would have \$60,000 to keep tuition down and to increase teachers' salaries.

The idea is not novel or utopian. It has kept at least one of our Christian schools in existence for many years. Older men and others in the congregation without children are depended upon for support, including fixed financial support.



As I was walking to the meeting across Covenant's parking lot, I met another who was also on his way to the meeting. He is an old man, well up in his eighties. I could not refrain from telling him how glad I was to see him attending the meeting and how important it is that men like him attend.

He turned to me with an uncomprehending face.

"Why?" he asked. "I belong here. This is my school."

Indeed.

The Education Matters column is supported by the CRTA-East. Reader responses or articles can be sent to abkingma@kwic.com or to Clarion.



¹David J. Engelsma is professor of dogmatics and Old Testament at the seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Grandville, Michigan. This article was originally published in the Standard Bearer of May 1, 2001, and we have received permission to reprint the article in full. Prof. Engelsma's points are worthy of our consideration and for our encouragement as well, as there are indeed also many among us who do support our local Reformed schools before and beyond the years that their own children attend. Within the covenant community, it is always our turn to contribute to the training in godliness of the next generation, and Professor Engelsma illustrates that well.

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.

Dear Editor:

Given Prof. DeJong's disagreement with my letter to the editor in *Clarion* of March 1, 2002, I feel obliged to respond to his words. For starters, Prof. DeJong quotes from books by Rev. Boersma and by Calvin, and recommends that these should "be carefully reviewed and assimilated by brother H. DeJong." Since neither the claims made by Rev. Boersma nor those of Calvin are proved from Scripture, these are of little relevance.

Prof. DeJong states: "One will notice in reading Matthew 24 that there are two aspects to the question of the disciples: 'And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' ... referring to the end time, the time of Christ's final return." The actual question of the disciples deserves attention, but let us first determine whether indeed "the end of the age" is to be identified with the final return of the Lord Jesus.

We read in Matthew 12:32 that "whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age (*aioon*) or in the age (*aioon*) to come." Much can be said about this word *aioon* (age): it denotes a period of time, an era, along the lines of English phrases like "the computer age." As such it has nothing to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 9:26 states "But as it is, he has appeared once and for all at the end of the age(s) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This passage refers to the close of the Aaronic era (not to Christ's return), and calls it "the end of the age." This will also be the "end of the age" which the disciples ask about.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11: "Now these things happen to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom *the end of the ages has come*" (emphasis

mine). So we come to understand that "the end of the age(s)" already existed in the time of Paul. Based on this text, the things that happened to the Israelites also have relevance for us, and we find in this the answer to Prof. DeJong's comment that "to assert that the signs mentioned by Christ refer strictly to events in the days of the disciples is to deny that the words have relevance for us."

Now let us deal with the actual question of the disciples. It is rendered in Matthew 24:3 as "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" referring to the "disappearance of the old temple system." In Mark 13:4 we read "Tell us, when will *this* be, and what will be the sign when *these* things are *all* to be accomplished?" and in Luke 21:7, "Teacher, when will *this* be, and what will be the sign when *this* is about to take place?" (emphasis mine throughout). This question clearly does not refer to the last coming of the Lord Jesus, but to the time and sign of the destruction of the temple, which the Lord Jesus already touched on in Matthew 23:38.

Prof. DeJong points to Matthew 8:11 and 10:18 as maintaining a world-wide perspective. The former has no bearing on Matthew 24:3, while the latter must be read in the context of Matthew 10:23, where the Lord Jesus says to the disciples: "For truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes." When the apostles are flogged in the synagogues and are dragged before kings and governors (verses 17, 18), this can hardly be seen as a world-wide perspective. This was also proven by Prof. Geertsema in *Clarion* of January 18, 2002, page 39 (left column).

Prof. DeJong did not interact with my reference to Matthew 24:33, 34 where we read: "This generation will not pass away till *all these things take*

place." This statement harkens back also to the preceding verses 29-32, of which Prof. DeJong says that "the text clearly has a world-wide perspective, which begins to receive more prominence after verse 29." So the Lord Jesus says "this generation" (the Jews of the day) will experience these things, but Prof. DeJong says that it "has a world-wide perspective." This is an unsubstantiated contention. It is clear from Scripture that no such "world-wide perspective" need be attached to these verses.

Thank you for publishing these comments.

With brotherly greetings,
H. DeJong, Edmonton

Response:

I still have difficulty with the position taken by br. H. De Jong. The positions of Calvin and Rev. Boersema are dismissed as being of "little relevance," and the expression "age to come" as used by the Lord Jesus (Matt 12:32) has "nothing to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus."

Nothing to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus? On what basis can an assertion like this be made? The evidence Br. De Jong offers is to my mind weak. First, he takes what are essentially different expressions from the letters to the Hebrews and the Corinthians (the first), ("the *ends of the ages*" — note the *plural*) and interprets Jesus' words in Matthew 12:23 in the light of these expressions. Second, he fails to interact with other places in which Jesus uses the expression "age to come" (singular) or "end of the age" (singular) and employs them specifically in the context of the discussion concerning his coming.

On the first point, without going into the details of each text, I would suggest that the method employed by br. De Jong is incorrect. One cannot use statements of the apostles to determine

the meaning of Christ's words. That is reading Scripture backwards. The words of the apostles can *guide us* in the interpretation of Jesus' words, but they do not provide *the key* to his statements. With regard to the phrase "the ends of the ages" as used both by Paul and the writer of Hebrews, it may suffice to say that the expression refers to the entire period from the work of Christ on earth to his *parousia* or final coming. Conversely, texts in which the Lord Jesus speaks about the fulfillment of "all these things" in the period of one generation (the generation of the disciples who became apostles) refer strictly to the *inauguration* of the kingdom of glory, the final consummation of which we await upon his return on the clouds.

On the second point, may I suffice with a few examples? When Jesus uses the expression "the age to come" (singular, as in Matt 12:32) in Matthew 13:39, is he just speaking about the end of the "Aaronitic era?" But what about the role of the Son of Man who has been sowing seed for generations until the time of the harvest? Or when he says in Mark 10:30, "and in the age to come eternal life," is he speaking about the end of the "old temple system?" When the Lord promises the disciples that he will be with them to the "end of the age" (Matt 28: 20), is this also a reference to a loose metaphor, say, something like a "computer age?"

With these remarks I would suggest that the discussion be closed. Br. H. De Jong will likely remain unconvinced, but I do not think it is productive to carry on an endless debate on the interpretation of the many texts in Scripture dealing with Christ's return. On points like these, there can be freedom of exegesis, and people may have different opinions. The so-called preterite view has never been declared to be against the confession of the church. However, I do hope that the (few) texts I have brought forward will serve to remind readers that any interpretation which discounts a "world wide perspective" or a reference to Christ's coming (*parousia*) is one-sided and distorts the proper perspective on what the Lord Jesus is saying.

*With brotherly greetings,
J. De Jong*

With this letter to the editor and the response, the editors have decided to close the discussion.

Dear Clarion Editor,

The excellent series by Dr. Oosterhoff dealing with Faith and Science are much appreciated, and prompt me to respond to Rev. VanLuik's article on the Lord's use of creation for his redemptive purposes.

In his article, Rev. VanLuik refers to the concept of "chaos." "Out of chaos the Lord created a perfectly ordered world," and "The order of creation was turned to chaos" at the time of the crucifixion.

Chaos, as a concept is part of modern theories of origin, and is actually antithetical to the concept of God's sovereignty. If God is sovereign (and He is) then there is not, and cannot ever be chaos. At creation, God, in his sovereignty, fully determined the being, existence, and course of all reality outside Himself, and in his providence God certainly employs his creation for his redemptive purposes.

It is easy to fall into the use of modern "scientific" terminology, such as chaos, and I'm confident that Rev. Van Luik also holds to the doctrine of God's sovereignty. God orders and controls every atom and every molecule, and employs each one for the redemption of his children. What a glorious message.

*Harry Harsevoort
Ancaster, Ontario*

Response

I appreciate the concern of br. Harsevoort that we do not undermine the sovereignty of God. The very purpose of the article was to convey how the Lord is in absolute control of every aspect of creation. He does not only control the lives of man, but He even controls creation for his redemptive purpose. All of creation must serve the glorious goal He has set from eternity. The difficulty arises from our brother's concept of "chaos." Since he understands that this word belongs to modern "scientific" terminology, I can understand his reaction. I have used the word from a completely different perspective that far predates modern scientific understanding of the origins of the world. The Oxford English Dictionary, using examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries gives the following meaning, "The 'formless void' or 'abyss' out of which the cosmos or order of the universe was

evolved." The word has its origin in the understanding of Genesis 1:1 where the Lord reveals that "the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep."

This chaos in the beginning cannot be understood to mean that God has no control over it. In fact even the chaos is created by God and subject to his rule as revealed in the fact that He had the power to bring order to the chaos He created. In Genesis 1 the Lord shows that the chaos He created was an inhospitable place for man to live. But the Lord in his sovereign good pleasure brought order to the chaos in order to prepare a place for man to dwell. It is impossible for man to live on the earth that is formless and empty of plants and animals and that is dark. It would be a living hell for man. Now sin has disturbed this beautiful order God has given creation. Therefore God often disturbs the order of his creation as a warning to man. He gives man a taste of how horrible it will be to live in a place where He no longer maintains the beautiful order of creation. It is how he used his creation to free Israel from Egypt, and how our Lord experienced something of the Father's total rejection on the cross. In the final judgment God will use the chaos to punish the wicked. God is sovereign in the way He uses creation for his own purposes. He is master over every aspect of his creation. He shows his complete mastery over the chaos He has created. I hope that this will help to address the legitimate concerns of our brother. It is indeed important that we do not allow modern theories of origin to undermine our understanding of the awesome power of the Almighty One of heaven and earth.

M.H. VanLuik

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Press Release of Classis Pacific East, March 7, 2002, held in Vernon, British Columbia

On behalf of the convening Church at Vernon, elder H. Lodder welcomes the delegates to Vernon. He requests the singing of Psalm 127:1, 2, reads Romans 15:1-13 and leads in prayer. The delegates from the Church at Lynden find the credentials to be in good order and classis is constituted. The following officers are appointed, Rev. W.M. Wielenga as chairman, Rev. M.H. VanLuik as vice-chairman and Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer as clerk. The chairman thanks the Church at Vernon for the work done by the convening church. The agenda is adopted.

Correspondence Received:

The church at Lynden send Classis a letter received from the Committee with churches in America (CCCA) concerning contact with the Reformed churches of the United States. Classis decides to extend an invitation to the RCUS Western Classis to send an observer to the next Classis.

Classis deals with an appeal from br. and sr. VandeBurgt, asking Classis to judge that the method of celebration of the Lord's Supper used by the church at Chilliwack is not in agreement with the decision of General Synod. Classis denies the appeal.

Report from the Committee for Needy Churches with the request from the Church at Vernon for additional financial support should they call and receive a minister. Classis adopts the recommendation of the committee to agree to such support should it be needed.

Reports

Classis receives a report from the treasurer of Classis for the years 2001 and 2002. The treasurer is thanked for these reports and for the work he is doing.

The Church at Yarrow gives a report on the Archives of Classis. It was found that the documents of Classis June 26, 2001 were incomplete. A letter from the Church at Abbotsford requesting that all documents dealing with

matters pertaining to Classis be sent to the Church taking care of the archives under a separate cover.

Church visit reports are received for the Churches at Chilliwack and Aldergrove.

Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O.

All Churches affirm that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. There are no churches that need the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their Church.

Appointments

The Church at Yarrow is appointed as the convening Church for the next Classis. Classis will be convened in Yarrow on June 27 at 9 a.m.: alternate date is September 26, 2002.

The suggested officers for next Classis are: Chairman – Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Vice-chairman – Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer and clerk Rev. R. Schouten.

The committee for examination of students for the ministry is reappointed.

The Church Visitors, Rev. R. Schouten, Rev. M.H. VanLuik and Rev. W.M. Wielenga are reappointed as are the alternates, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde and Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer.

The Church at Abbotsford is reappointed as Church for taking care of the archives of Classis and the Church at Yarrow as the Church to inspect the archives.

Brother R. Leyenhorst is reappointed as treasurer of Classis and the Church at Vernon is reappointed as the Church for auditing the books of the treasurer.

The Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry is reappointed as well as the Committee for Needy Churches.

Deputy for preaching arrangements is Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer.

Classis reappoints the delegates to Regional Synod appointed by Classis September 20, 2001.

The chairman thankfully notes that Christian Censure (article 34 C.O.) was not necessary.

Acts of classis are adopted and Press Release is approved.

The chairman requests the singing of Hymn 58:1, 2 and the chairman gave thanks in prayer after which the delegates enjoyed a wonderful lunch prepared by the ladies of the Church at Vernon.

*M.H. VanLuik
Vice-chairman*

Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, held March 8, 2002

On behalf of the convening Church of Toronto, Rev. W. Den Hollander called the meeting to order. He requested the singing of Psalm 146:1, 2, 3 and led in prayer. He read 1 Corinthians 3:10-23 and gave a brief meditation on this passage, exhorting us to do our work as servants given by Christ to his churches, to build on the foundation He has laid in himself, recognizing our work also will pass through the judgment of God. He welcomed the delegates and gave a special word of welcome to Rev. Stienstra of the United Reformed Churches.

The Church of Ottawa examined the credentials. The churches were properly represented. The Church of Burlington-Waterdown had an additional instruction.

Rev. Den Hollander declared classis constituted. The following officers took their place: chairman: Rev. C. Bosch; vice-chairman: Rev. M. Jagt; clerk: Rev. G. Nederveen.

Rev. Bosch thanked the Church of Toronto for its work in convening classis. As he highlighted matters relating to the life of the churches, he noted that the Church of Toronto had recently extended a call to Rev. Theo Lodder of Taber as a second missionary and that the Church of Burlington-Waterdown was still seeking a minister.

After a few additions to the provisional agenda, the agenda was adopted.

The Committee for Needy Churches submitted a report. After a lengthy discussion, classis instructed this committee to seek assistance from classis Northern Ontario March 15 for the continued support of needy churches for the year 2002. The church for the auditing of

the books of the Fund for Needy Churches reported that the books for this fund are well organized and in good order. The state of the Fund for Needy Students was also found to be in good order.

The churches reported that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. In closed session advice was given to the Church of Flamborough on a matter of discipline.

The Church of Burlington/Waterdown requested monthly pulpit supply. Classis granted this request for a year.

As per Article 47 CO, Burlington Fellowship was advised by classis to convene the next regional synod in September, not November.

Rev. Stienstra was given the opportunity to speak to classis and conveyed greetings from the brothers in the United Reformed Churches of Classis Southern Ontario. He also drew our attention to some of the different nuances we have in church polity that will need to be recognized as we work towards full unity.

The Church of Burlington Ebenezer was appointed to convene the next classis, for June 14, to be held in the Burlington Ebenezer Church, at 9:00 a.m. The following officers were suggested: chairman: Rev. J. de Gelder; vice-chairman: Rev. G. Nederveen; clerk: Rev. C. Bosch.

A question was asked about attending the classes of the United Reformed Churches. The chairman asked whether censure was necessary. It was not required. The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was approved for publication. The chairman thanked the brothers for their good co-operation. After the singing of Psalm 133:1, 2 he closed the meeting with prayer.

*For Classis,
M. Jagt, Vice-chairman, e.t.*

Press Release of Classis Niagara, March 20, 2002

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church at Attercliffe, Rev. Agema invites us to sing Psalm 118:1,6. He reads John 8:47-59 and takes the opportunity to briefly explain this passage. He also notes that this is the first classis of the new classical region Niagara. Next he leads us in prayer. He welcomes all the brothers, including Revs. J. Dykstra

and J. Tuinstra from the United Reformed Churches.

2. Constitution of Classis

The credentials are in order. All delegates are present, although only one delegate from Blue Bell could be present. Classis is declared constituted. The moderamen is as follows: chairman - Rev. D. Agema, clerk - Rev. K. Kok, vice-chairman - Rev. J. Van Vliet. The credentials from Grassie and Smithville have instructions on them and these will be dealt with shortly. The agenda is adopted.

3. Question Period ad Art 44 CO

The chairman asks the appropriate questions. Smithville asks for advice on whether collections in the worship service can be for other causes than the needy within the congregation. Advice is given. Grassie requests monthly pulpit supply for six months starting in September 2002. This request is granted. Smithville makes a similar request and is also granted pulpit supply.

4. Proposal from the Churches

The Church at Attercliffe proposes that a committee should be appointed to update the classical guidelines now that a new classis has been formed. It is decided to form a committee. Some brothers will be appointed later in the meeting. The next convening church will take care that a Subscription Form for this new classis is prepared.

5. Fraternal Delegate from the United Reformed Churches

On behalf of Classis Southern Ontario of the URC, Rev. J. Dykstra addresses classis emphasizing that we must all focus on our commitment and obligation to serve our Lord together. Patience and understanding will be needed. Rev. Kok responds. Classis breaks for coffee.

6. Appointments

The following appointments are made: Classical Treasurer: br. D. Van Amerongen; Church to Audit the books: Grassie; Church for the Archives: Attercliffe; Church for Needy Student Fund: Lincoln; Church for Needy Churches: Smithville; Church Visitors: Revs. Agema and Wieske (alt. Rev. Kok); Deputies ad Examina – Revs. Agema and Van Vliet. The convening church for the next classis is Blue Bell. Date: June 19, 2002. Place: Lincoln, ON. Proposed moderamen: chairman – Rev. Kok, clerk – Rev. Agema, vice-chairman – Rev. Wieske. The Church at Attercliffe is asked to work on updating the classical guidelines and come with a proposal to the next classis. The pulpit supply roster for Grassie and Smithville is approved.

7. Personal Question Period

Question period is made use of. On behalf of the consistory at Blue Bell, Rev. Kok informs classis that the house congregation in Laurel has been disbanded and the members in that area are now considered scattered members of the Church at Blue Bell.

8. Adoption of Acts and Press Release

The chairman thankfully concludes that censure ad Art 34 CO is not necessary. The clerk reads the acts. They are adopted. The vice-chairman reads the press release. It is approved.

9. Closing

Rev. Agema asks us to sing Hymn 2:1, 2 after which he leads us in thanksgiving prayer. Classis is adjourned.

*J. Van Vliet
(vice-chairman at that time)*



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By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers

Remember a few weeks ago, when we spoke about the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross? That was Easter.

This time, we will remember Ascension Day. Forty days after He died, the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead. Remember the Apostle's Creed. He arose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. You confess that every time you sing Hymn 1A.

What does Christ's ascension mean for us? Well, it is really important that we realize that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then He could not have been true God. Think about what the Catechism says, that Christ was true God and true man. If Christ had not been true God, he would not have risen from the dead and we would not be saved from our sins.

Imagine that. We wouldn't even be Christians, because Christ was not real, anyways.

But we are not allowed to think that way. We know that Christ was real. He died for our sins. He arose from the dead to prove his power as God. And He saved us from our sins, so that we do not have to die in our sins. We can rest assured that when we die, we will be with Him.

Isn't that a great comfort?

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

May Birthdays	
14	Rachelle Smeding
23	Chevon Komdeur
28	Jodi Feenstra

Puzzles

Jokes

I have some great jokes and riddles for you.
I found these in a really good book.

- Knock, knock
- Who's there?
- Thumping.
- Thumping who?
- Thumping green and slimy just went up your trousers!
- "Doctor, doctor, I keep thinking I'm a fruit cake!"
- "What's got into you?"
- "Flour, raisins and mixed peel."
- What happens to witches when it rains?
- They get wet.
- Why do cats have fur coats?
- Because they'd look pretty silly in a raincoat!

Sight

Sometimes we forget how important our sight is.

Fill in the blanks with the name of the person who saw something.

1. _____ saw a man in a chariot on a desert road, Acts 8:26-27.
2. _____ saw a bright light on the road to Damascus, Acts 9:1-3, 26:13.
3. _____ saw a sheet descending with four-footed animals, reptiles of the earth and birds of the air, Acts 10:9-12.
4. _____ saw the Lord "high and exalted," Isaiah 6:1.
5. _____ was old when he saw "the Lord's Christ," Luke 2:25-26.
6. _____, when he was being stoned to death, saw Jesus in the heavens, Acts 7:55, 59.
7. _____ saw a woman bathing and later sinned because of it, 2 Samuel 11:2-4.
8. _____ saw Elijah go up in a chariot of fire, 2 Kings 2:11-12.
9. _____ saw an angel in a vision who told him to send to Joppa for Peter, Acts 10:3-5.
10. _____ saw the fingers of a man's hand write on the wall, Daniel 5:15.

FROM THE MAILBOX



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Graham Bartels*. It seems you must be very busy when you are not at school, with all the things that you like to do. Do you enjoy school, too? It must be nice to have your teacher live across the road from you. Do you visit her lots and help her with things

that she needs done, too? Write again, won't you.

Welcome also to *Denise Bartels*. Of course you aren't too young. Do you like it in Grade 1 at school, Denise? I'm sure you must have a lot of fun there. It would be very nice if you made some puzzles for the other Busy Beavers. You must like doing the puzzles in Our Little Magazine, also the ones from other Busy Beavers. They are a lot of fun, aren't they. Bye for now, Denise.



Aunt Betty

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