

*A Reformed
Confessor?*

*Humility and
the
Communion of
Saints*

*French: Who
Needs It?*



*We need to know what we believe
and of what we speak.*



J. Visscher

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A Reformed Confessor?

We need to know what we believe and of what we speak

Identity problems

Do you have an identity problem? Are you sometimes at a loss as to what to call yourself? When people ask you what you are, what do you say: "I'm a believer" or "I'm a Christian" or "I'm a Reformed Christian" or "I'm Canadian Reformed"?

Of the four answers just mentioned, I suspect it is the last two that give us the most problems. And why is that? It relates to the fact that often we do not know quite what to do with that word "Reformed." What really does it mean? What sort of content do we pour into it? How do we define and explain it? The result is that we are faced with a dilemma: should we use it or avoid it?

What it means

In light of this it may be beneficial that we first spend a few words on the matter of meaning. What does it mean to be Reformed?

Theologically and historically this question has produced both short and long answers. There are those who keep their answer short and say that being Reformed simply means being biblical. Nevertheless, there are a lot of conservative Christians out there who claim to be biblical but who do not at all consider themselves to be Reformed.

The result is that often more has been said and needs to be said. There are those who attempt to be more specific and add that to be Reformed means that you confess the four solas: sola scriptura (Scripture alone), sola gratia (grace alone), sola fide (faith alone), and solus Christus (Christ alone).

Still, this answer too has often been deemed lacking and in need of further clarification. The consequence is that some insist that you need to add TULIP to the mix: (T= total depravity, U = unconditional election, L = limited atonement, I = irresistible grace, P = perseverance of the saints).

But then again, some are not happy with keeping it to five points and would like to add even more. Several

of the suggestions include: covenant theology, infant baptism, redemptive historical as well as experiential preaching, the regulative principle of worship, amillennialism, the law and gospel distinction.

And you thought that all of this was easy?

A definition

Still, we do need to work with some sort of definition. So what shall it be? My suggestion would be to say that being Reformed is all about adhering to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures as summarized and confessed in the early creeds of the Apostles, Nicea and Athanasius, as well as in the Reformed confessions: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Second Helvetic Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Standards. In other words, being Reformed is all about being a confessional Christian. Almost all of the additional content that people want to pour into the word "Reformed" is included and explained in one or more of these creeds or confessions. In them one finds the struggles, debates, insights, and agreements of the ages. In them one also finds the best of Christian thinking and theology. Simply said: my "reformedness" is found and explained in my confessions.

Solidly Reformed

Yet there is more to the story. For being Reformed is not just a matter of expressing agreement with some ancient documents. It also represents a way of looking, thinking, seeing, and acting.

To be more specific, let me go out on the limb a little further and state that if we are going to be Reformed, we need to be so solidly. What do I mean by that? It means that we need to know what we believe and of what we speak.

Yes, and then the first thing that comes to mind here is the Word of God itself and our understanding of it. How well do we know it? How much time do we

spend with it? How earnestly do we grapple with its contents? A Reformed believer is a person of The Book! Such a person makes reading and reflecting on it a priority in their life.

To assist in all of this one would do well to adopt a regular reading schedule in which the entire Bible is read through regularly. Such schedules are readily available. Also you may want to consider obtaining a copy of the Bible on CD or on mp3 format for listening to on the way to and from work.

In addition to being a diligent student of the Word, such a person also knows his or her creeds and confessions. To help you in this, I would say that each of our homes could benefit greatly from reading and consulting a book like that edited by Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair B. Ferguson called *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* (Baker Books, 1999). In it one finds the confessions that were previously mentioned handily arranged in columns for easy reference.

In short, then, a real grounding in the Word and the confessions is part and parcel of what it means to be Reformed. It will help to fashion that faithful person described in Psalm 1 and Matthew 7. Why is he able to stand? He is able to do so because he meditates on the law of God constantly and because he builds his life wisely on the bedrock of God's inspired and infallible Word. He knows the Word and he knows those creeds and confessions that handle that Word so wisely and so well.

Humbly Reformed

Besides a need to be solidly Reformed, there is also and always a need to be humbly Reformed. There is a temptation in being busy with the things of God. It is the temptation of thinking that you can either save yourself or else make a most meaningful contribution towards your own salvation.

In the Old Testament the dominant sin was idolatry. Time and again one comes across God warning his people not to make idols and not to lean on them, seek it from them, or believe in them. In the New Testament not nearly as much is said about idolatry. Does this mean that it was not there? Hardly! Idolatry is always present in the human heart. Why? Because at bottom it contains the idea that we can contribute towards our own salvation. We love our works and we especially love our religious works. They make us proud and smug.

The result is that we need an antidote. And what is the antidote to idolatry and to all do-it-yourself religion? What best counteracts our pride and conceit? It is grace! It is the kind of grace that Paul reminds us about in Ephesians 2 – "It is by grace you have been saved" (v 5). He even repeats it in the verses 8 and 9 –



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"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."

All boasting is excluded! A Reformed believer works humbly and thankfully with the gifts of God. He or she knows that it all comes down to grace. Therefore, there is no room for a puffed-up spirit. There is no climbing up on one's high horse and looking down with scorn and contempt at others. There is no resorting to the quick and easy condemnation of those who fail and fall. Life before God is grace. On the whole I am no fan of slogans but here is one that bears repeating daily – "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Catholicly Reformed

To solidly Reformed and humbly Reformed, we can add a third feature and I have called it "catholicly Reformed." What is that? Is there even such a word as "catholicly?" Yes, there is (I looked it up in my *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and it is there on page 226), and it does not have anything to do with the Roman Catholic Church either.

Years ago when I was a student at the Theological College, I sat under the teaching of Dr. Jelle Faber and he loved to speak about the catholic character of the church, as well as the catholic character of the Belgic Confession. His theological training and his doctrinal studies dealing with the ancient church fathers made a profound impression on him and showed him that the works of God are deep and wide and long.

And we need that awareness today too. Believers in every age run the danger of thinking that all new biblical insights and theological ideas start with them. There is this silly game that we play of trying to take the credit for something that we think is utterly new. There is this vain conceit which leads us to assume that we are the only ones or the first ones who truly have a handle on this truth or on this or that point of doctrine.

At the same time there are those who opt for the extremes. On the one side there are those who absolutize their own church traditions and practices and insist that every other church in the world has to do things like they do them or be declared suspect. On the other side there are those who are quick to criticize the church and her teachings, liturgy, and traditions. They would throw a great deal overboard after stamping it redundant.

Far better is the approach which takes into account that our God through his Son has been busy building his church from the beginning of time and will be busy until the end of time. We are meant to learn from the past, from its saints and theologians, its controversies and disputes, its struggles and

challenges. We are also meant to learn from our faithful brothers and sisters around the world and how they live out their faith. The Holy Spirit has been and remains active in so many places, among so many peoples, and in so many tongues.

The result is that Reformed believers have both a sense of history and geography. They embrace the God who works through the ages and they rejoice in the God who works around the world. They have an eye for the universal workings of God. They are catholicly Reformed.

Boldly Reformed

When one is solidly grounded in Word and confessions, humble in one's attitude and catholic in one's perspective, there is a fourth thing that emerges and that is a boldness in one's spirit. Rightly can we speak of being boldly, or even, aggressively Reformed.

In saying this I do not mean that we are to be noisy, pushy, or insensitive. Such an approach does not accord with the style of our Lord and Saviour, nor does it harmonize with the fruits of the Spirit like kindness and gentleness. Rather ours is to be the boldness of an Apostle Paul who tells the Philippians and us, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (4:13). In other words, it is a boldness rooted in Christ and in the faith that He works in us.

Unfortunately, however, this is not always what we see in Reformed believers. All too often we come across as insecure or uncertain in our convictions. We shy away from wielding the sword of the Spirit in our witness. We retreat in the face of opposition and resistance. We offer far too many profuse apologies for this or for that. Instead of being boldly Reformed, we come across as being hesitantly or reluctantly Reformed.

There is something in Mark 9 that may help cure this timidity. It has to do with a demon-possessed boy, his healing by the Lord Jesus, and a question by the disciples. Their question was this, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" (v 28) The answer of our Saviour was, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (v 29).

Why could the disciples not expel the demon? Was it due to their faltering faith? Was it because Satan's power was no match for theirs? Whatever it may have been, one thing is clear and that is that the antidote for powerlessness and weakness is prayer. Only prayer drives out demons. Only prayer makes up for a lack of power, courage, and zeal. Being boldly Reformed has nothing to do with will power, genes, or upbringing; instead, it has everything to do with prayer. Our petitions can draw down for us from God a confidence and forthrightness that fills the gospel with wings.

In closing, dear reader, if you wear the name of being Reformed, wear it well. Indeed, wear it solidly, humbly, catholicly, and boldly.



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Humility and the Communion of Saints



MATTHEW 13:52

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

(Philippians 2:3-4)

We often like to speak about how beautiful it is when there is communion among the saints. “Behold, how good, how pleasant is the union, When brothers live together in communion!” we sing from Psalm 133. But what about when brothers and sisters live in disunity? While union among saints is pleasant, disunity and broken communion is ugly. Where do we begin looking for answers when saints don’t get along?

The solution is found not by looking first at your fellow-saint in the church of Christ. The solution is found by looking first to Christ Himself. At the root of healthy church unity and a healthy communion of saints is the humility that is modelled by Christ and motivated by Christ. For proper relations among the body of Christ, the members of that body must look to their Head!

That’s why when the Apostle Paul addresses the matter of church unity in Philippians 2, he first addresses the matter of unity with Christ. He calls the saints in Philippi to “make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (v 2). What motivates this communion among the saints? Paul says: “If you have any

encouragement from being united with Christ...” (v 1). Communion with saints flows from communion with Christ! Behind the exhortations about unity in the church in chapter 2 is the gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul proclaims to the church in chapter 1.

This gospel of Jesus Christ has direct implications for lifestyle: “Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). Specifically, the gospel has implications for relations among believers. The effect of the gospel is a new attitude toward the self and a new attitude towards others. Not “what can I get out of the church and what can I get out of others?” but “what can I give to the church and what can I give to others?” Not selfish ambition, but selflessness. Not pride, but humility.

This attitude of humility goes against much of the thinking of today. Our world encourages us to think in terms of getting as much as possible for as little as possible and to look out for our own interests only. An American entrepreneur by the name of Robert Ringer published a book called *Looking out for Number One* which sums up this philosophy of life: you are number one and you should

focus on looking after yourself. But there’s another word for this philosophy. Do you know what it is? It’s “selfishness.” You don’t need to read this book to figure out how it works. Sadly, because of sin, it comes naturally to everyone.

Selfishness is a sinful attitude and it destroys. It leads to broken relations between husbands and wives, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters. Let’s be honest, when relationships in families and in the church break down, what’s really behind it? When you strip through all the wrapping paper of grudges and disagreements, the “he said” and “she said,” what’s often underneath the brokenness? Sin. The sin of selfishness.

But in the lives of the saints of Philippi and of saints today, it should and can be different. Saints have heard the life-changing gospel of Christ. As a result of communion with Christ, you share in the life-changing work of the Holy Spirit, who enables you to have communion with others by humbly focusing on their interests and not just your own.

But not only does Christ’s work motivate this new type of selfless thinking, Christ’s work also models it. In verse 5 Paul goes on to say,

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Jesus Christ was entitled to heavenly glory and honour. Instead, He "made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (v 7). The royal Son of God emptied Himself and walked on a painful road of obedience and suffering, even death on a cross! Verse 8 sums up Christ's attitude: "He humbled Himself." Humility! Humility for Jesus Christ meant enduring the shame of crucifixion and the horror of the wrath of God. Why? It

was all about seeking the interests of others, the saints He'd come to save.

It's this humble attitude patterned in Christ that thankful saints saved by Christ are to imitate! This Christ-like attitude of humility, this Christ-like activity of looking to the interests of others, is to be evident in the body of Christ. In humility, considering others better than yourselves – that means being willing to sacrifice to be of service to your brother or sister in the church. It means acknowledging that God places

you in the life of others, not so that you can get what you can out of them, like a leech or parasite, but so that you can give to them and serve them as members of the same body.

That's how Christ-like humility is at the root of a healthy communion of saints. Thankfully developing communion among saints does not lie primarily in figuring out the details of disputes between brothers and sisters. It lies in an underlying attitude of humility towards each other and dependence on Jesus Christ.



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High Notes in the History of the Hymns: "The Church's One Foundation"

In the last decades of the nineteenth century Anglican hymnody reached its high point. Following the struggles with non-conformists in the preceding centuries, the Anglican Church re-asserted itself as the established church in England. Once associated with those who dissented, hymns entered the liturgy of the state church, and Anglican composers took up their pens with confidence. The church seemed strong, both in the United Kingdom and in the British colonies. It was during this Victorian period that the triumph-song "The Church's One Foundation" was written.

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

Hymn 40:1

Samuel Stone (1839-1900) was a vicar in London who authored several poems and hymns, including a collection on the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed. "The Church's One Foundation" is a hymn inspired by Article Nine, which is about "The Holy Catholic Church: the Communion of Saints." Stone published these hymns in a larger collection called *Lyra Fidelium* (1866).

A doctrinal controversy in the Anglican Church was the specific occasion for the writing of this hymn. The bishop of the South African country of Natal, a certain John Colenso, caused suspicion regarding his orthodoxy when he published a book that questioned the long-held teachings about the dating of the first five books of the Bible. Affected by higher criticism of Scripture that was influential at the end of the nineteenth century, Colenso applied the modern theories of history, archaeology, and anthropology in his book, *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. In it he questioned the historicity of the books of Moses and the traditional dating of them. Bishop Robert Gray of Capetown, South Africa took up the cause of conservatism and Colenso was deposed in 1863, though he succeeded in appealing the matter.

"The Church's One Foundation" was composed as a celebration of the victory of orthodoxy. It appeared that while the highly influential writings of modern theorists were affecting theologians and church leaders in continental Europe, in the Colenso case, at least, the Christian faith did not buckle before the onslaught of modern science.

Hymn 40 (altered; one verse removed)
Text: Samuel Stone, 1866
Tune: Samuel S. Wesley, 1864

The one who sings this hymn only as an anthem of the church of all times, places, and peoples, overlooks the fact that it was written in response to a particular

situation in the Church of England. And whereas it may be tempting to apply the words, "by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed" (verse 3) to any denomination that has suffered internal strife, they allude to one specific doctrinal conflict. In fact, the original hymn included an entire verse, which does not appear in the *Book of Praise*, that refers to the Colenso controversy:

The Church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish,
Is with her to the end;
Though there be those who hate her,
And false sons in her pale;
Against or foe or traitor
She ever shall prevail.

As noted above, "The Church's One Foundation" belongs to a class of hymns called triumph-songs; the well-known "Onward, Christian Soldiers," which was written during the same period, is another hymn in this class. These songs often contrast the present circumstances with the hoped-for consummation at the end of time. At the same time, such hymns often express a sense of isolation. In verse three and five of Hymn 40 there is a hint of the separation of church and society that became marked at the turn of the century. For this reason the hymn continues to appeal to Christians in post-modern, secular society. In the eyes of believers in denominations that have suffered schism "The Church's One Foundation" is an anthem that lends credibility to the embattled but surviving church.

The tune to which this hymn is sung was composed by Samuel S. Wesley (1810-1876), originally for another, much older hymn. According to anecdote, the name "Aurelia" (from the Latin word for "splendid") was given to it by Wesley's wife when it seemed destined for success. Most experts consider it one of the best hymn-tunes associated with the triumph-songs of the Victorian era: it boasts a memorable melody and a confident movement.

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Towards a Common Songbook (Part 3)

The Songs of the Church must be Biblical

In the last article we introduced the three broad principles the United Reformed and Canadian Reformed synods adopted for the Joint Songbook Committee to use in selecting songs for the future common songbook. In the following articles we will take a look at each of the eleven guidelines (please see sidebar).

The first guideline is:

The songs of the church must be thoroughly biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This first and very basic guideline contains two thoughts. The first is that the songs in the songbook must be biblical. We can refer here, again, to what Augustine said: "No one can sing anything worthy of God which he has not received from Him ... then we are assured that God puts the words in our mouth."

You know the expression: you are what you eat. There is a lot of truth there. It is also true that to some degree you are what you sing. These two images have more in common than one might, at first blush, think. The Word of God is like food. Peter, speaking about the Word of God, calls it "spiritual milk" (1 Pet 1:24 - 2:2). In Psalm 81:10 the Lord said to Israel, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." How good it is for God's people to

take the very words of Scripture upon their lips with which to praise God in song.

In the past, as well as today, heresy often infiltrates churches by way of their songs. Even if gospel truth is being proclaimed from the pulpits, the singing from the pews can deny that truth.

When we sing the Psalms, we are singing songs that are biblical. Although we, as Canadian and United Reformed churches, want primarily to be Psalm-singing churches, we do not hold to the position of exclusive Psalmody as some Reformed churches do. We also sing hymns – but they must be biblical.

What is meant by "biblical"? That can mean two things. First it can mean that the words of the hymn are a paraphrase of Scripture. One of many possible examples is the hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," which is found in both the *Psalter Hymnal* and the *Book of Praise*. This hymn is a paraphrase of Isaiah 9:2-7. It can also mean that the hymn derives from the teachings of Scripture although it is not a paraphrase of a specific passage. An example in the *Psalter Hymnal* is "Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus." "I'll thank Thee, O my God and Saviour" is an example in the *Book of Praise*. Many other examples could be given.

Please note that the guideline says the songs must be *thoroughly* biblical. *Remotely* biblical is not good enough. For example, in the popular chorus-like song, "As the Deer," the songwriter refers to God as "the apple of my eye." If you check the wording in the Bible (the expression occurs four times), it is God who says that his people are the apple of *his* (divine) eye. That is to say, God keeps his people constantly in mind; He never forgets them. The phrase in the popular chorus completely distorts the Bible text.

Or, take the classic hymn, "Now Thank We All Our God." At the end of the second stanza in the *Psalter Hymnal* version we read: "And save us from all ills in this world and the next." We wonder, for the Christian, what "ills" are to be expected in the "next world?" This line is made more biblically faithful in the 1984 *Book of Praise*: "And save us from all ills of this world in the next."

The guideline makes another point: the songs of the church are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has clearly revealed Himself to be the triune God. We also confess that in the Athanasian Creed, "... we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity."

The Joint Songbook Committee has resolved that the basic structure of the songbook should be trinitarian. That we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity ought to

be clearly reflected in the songbook. We need to have songs that praise God the Father our Creator, God the Son our Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier.

May God grant us a thoroughly biblical songbook by which we and our children may praise and worship our triune God!

Principles and Guidelines for the Selection of Music in the Church

Principles:

The song of the church us to be suitable for the church's worship to the glory of God.

1. The songs of the church are to be scriptural

In content, form, and spirit the church's songs must express the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Augustine, referring to the singing of Psalms, said, "No one can sing anything worthy of God which he has not received from Him. . . then we are assured that God puts the words in our mouth."

2. The songs of the church are to be a sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15)

Singing is an important element of the congregation's response to God's redeeming work in Christ Jesus and the Word proclaimed in the worship service.

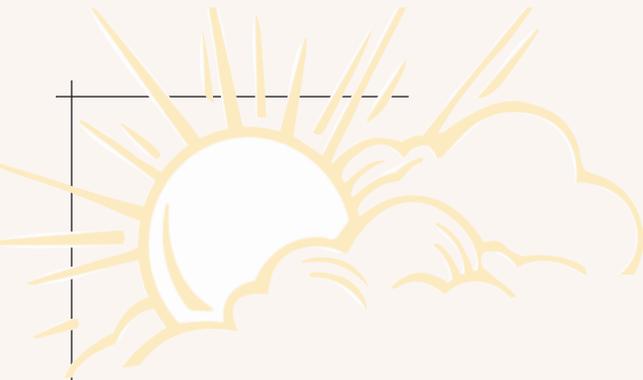
John Calvin wrote, "Singing has great strength and power to move and to set on fire the hearts of men that they may call upon God and praise Him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal. This singing should not be light or frivolous, but it ought to have weight and majesty."

3. The songs of the church are to be aesthetically pleasing

The songs for worship are to be a beautiful blend of Godhonouring poetry and music (Ps 92:1-4).

Guidelines for Selecting Songs:

1. The songs of the church must be thoroughly biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ps 147:1).
2. The Book of Psalms is foundational for the church's songs. Therefore, all of these Psalms, in their entirety, ought to be included in the church's songbook.
3. When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text (2 Tim 3:16).
4. In the case of songs other than the versification of Scripture, the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture (Prov 30:6) as summarized by our Reformed confessions.
5. The songs of the church must be intelligible (1 Cor 14:15) and edifying to the body of Christ (Col 3:16).
6. The songs of the church must reflect and preserve the language of the church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends (Rom 12:2a).
7. In content and form, the songs of the church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, and individualism.
8. The music of the song should suit the text.
9. The music of the church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Where possible, use is to be made of music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage (e.g., the Genevan psalm tunes and the Scottish Psalter).
10. The music of the church should not be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the church and the worship of God (Eph 5:18-21).
11. The melodies and harmonies of church music must be suitable for congregational singing, avoiding complicated rhythms, excessive syncopation, and a wide range of pitch.



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

1 Chronicles 29:11

The words used in this text are very similar to those used in the Lord's Prayer: "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." This expression of praise will be the theme for this article.

When we read these words from our text, we see how King David gives all honour and praise to his heavenly King. David was near the end of his life and is here thanking God for the preparations he was allowed to make for the temple that would be constructed by the hands of his son.

It was in this context that David praises the Lord for remaining faithful to the promises given to their forefathers. Also for bringing the children of Israel into the promised land. Here David confesses: "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness..." and at the end of verse 11, "Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom." This was quite something for the king of Israel to say. For he did not say, "Mine is the kingdom," but rather recognized the covenant Lord to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Lord has shown Himself to be the ruler of Israel by routing their enemies and governing them through his laws and ordinances.

The Lord Jesus taught us how to pray with a view to the victory which He has accomplished. He no longer sends us to the temple with bulls and goats, but teaches us to call upon his Father. He no longer commands sacrifices, but teaches us to ask for forgiveness. The way He teaches us to pray shows that the curtain in the temple has been torn by the power of his obedience and the tremendous sacrifice He has made. He has conquered the power of Satan, as we learned in the previous article. He has established his kingdom. David could rejoice because the Lord has given his people the victory over our enemies.

Seeing the way in which the Lord Jesus has taught us to pray, we too may rejoice even more since the Lord's dwelling is no longer confined to a temple here on earth. Rather, Christ has ascended into a sanctuary made without hands. The victory for which David already blessed the Lord so many years ago is fully obtained by his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us keep our eyes focused on Christ our Saviour and King on high. May we find peace, joy, and comfort when we read the words of Revelation 21:22. "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." Here the Lord shows us the heavenly Jerusalem descending on to the earth and no temple is seen in it. For the temple is Christ. All praise, honour, glory, and worship will be given to this King. Hold fast to his sure promises, for a glorious future awaits those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!

For all the kingdom, Lord, is Thine,
All power and majesty divine.
Thou who wilt be our Helper near,
Who in Thy Son our pleas wilt hear,
Who hast unbarred salvation's door,
Thine be all praise for evermore.

Hymn 47:9

Birthdays in August:

- 4 TERENCE BERENDS will be 30**
Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road , RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 5 PHILIP SCHUURMAN will be 47**
c/o R. Draaistra
117 Diltz Road , Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2
- 9 ROSE MALDA will be 49**
Oakland Centre, 53 Bond Street, Oakville, ON L6J 5B4
- 18 FENNY KUIK will be 54**
140 Foch Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2C 5H7

Congratulations to you all who are celebrating a birthday in the month of August. We hope you have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father grant you many blessings from above. Till next month,

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman
548 Kemp Road East, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
905-563-0380



Richard Hoeksema

*Richard Hoeksema
is a high school teacher in
Neerlandia, AB*



French: Who Needs It?

As a “French-as-a-Second-Language” teacher, the title of this article is one I have to answer fairly frequently, not just from students, but also from parents. It is a legitimate question which I hope to answer in this brief article.

First, though, note that attitudes affect all that we do. Our perception of something determines our opinion. Something I am unfamiliar with I will question. For example, I have never eaten goat’s eyeballs, so the idea that it is a delicacy in some countries is repulsive; I believe I do not like them. The same goes for those wonderful grubs we may have seen in Mission presentations. They do not appeal to me either.

So what does that have to do with French and, in particular, French instruction? French language instruction is seen as an optional course of study. It may be an area of interest for some; perhaps those who take the course hope to become teachers, ministers, or linguists. But, for the normal Joe, many believe there is little value in it. French will not get students a better job; French will not help them become better citizens. In fact, some people believe, French instruction is a waste of time for the average

student and even superfluous for the below-average student.

In reality, though, studies have been made and comparisons done in connection with second language instruction and invariably students with a good grasp of a second language perform better academically. These students also have a better grasp of the variances between cultural groups and thus tend to be more community minded.

When people are advised of such benefit of learning a second language, they often wonder: “Why French, why not another language, such as Dutch? After all it is the language of our heritage, is it not?” This cannot be denied. For most of us, Dutch is our heritage language. Many can see some benefit in Dutch instruction, because our children can then communicate with their relatives, read good books, etc. However, because we live in Canada, there are pressures to learn French. In reality the question comes back to, “Why French?” and not, “Why not Dutch?” Provincial expectations in this regard are as follows: grades 5-8

- Alberta: second language required grades 4-9
- Saskatchewan: second language required grades 10-12

- Manitoba: second language required grades 7,8, senior I
- Ontario: French grades 4-9
- Quebec: English each secondary year of study
- Nova Scotia: second language required grades 4-9
- New Brunswick: second language required elementary
- P.E.I.: second language required elementary
- Newfoundland and Labrador: second language required elementary
- NWT/Nunavut: second language required elementary
- Yukon: second language required grades 5-8

Most of the above information is taken from a 1998 source. This source, as well as others, shows a clear movement toward a higher requirement for second language instruction. In virtually all cases there are allowances made for native languages and, in most cases, for mother tongues or other second languages.

Not surprisingly, post-secondary institutions are seeing the value of second language instruction as well and thus expect students to have some proficiency in a second language. Post-secondary institutions are not alone; the world of business also clearly rewards bilingual employees.

For example, consider Peter Robinson, CEO, Mountain Equipment Co-op. This B.C. based company was looking into Quebec for expansion. As a result they placed their employees through French training. While they do not have a bilingual requirement for MEC, they do pay a premium for bilingual employees. Robinson claims that this move to bilingualism has made his company more innovative and competitive than it was.

Students with a good grasp of a second language perform better academically

But what about teaching French in our schools? If one will need French in his career, surely one can learn it when needed. But will most of us ever use it? We might be surprised when we look back into our heritage. Any history buff, especially church history, will know that if we look a little further into our heritage, many of us will end up in France or Southern Belgium. As churches we trace ourselves zealously back to the Great Reformation under the leadership of John Calvin. When we study Calvin, we learn about his arrival in Geneva from France. This was facilitated by another person of eminence in history: Guillaume Farel. Farel zealously defended the Scriptures and the Reformation but did not have the organizational skills and the presence to lead the church in Geneva, so he called a young

student whom he believed would have those qualities while still maintaining the essential doctrine of Scripture: John Calvin.

This history has also come to this country. We know of l'Église Réformée du Québec. Their seminary is named for Guillaume Farel. . . Farel Institute. We have been working with these churches over the last number of years, providing both financial as well as spiritual support. In addition, the Canadian Reformed Church at Owen Sound works with these churches in various ways.

In conclusion, studies show the benefit of second language instruction, we live in a bilingual country, we have a unique French Reformed heritage worthy of study, and we have been placed in this country for a purpose. We could pursue other languages, but for what purposes? Yes, there is a lot of good Dutch reading, both ecclesiastical and historical. In my opinion as a second language teacher, students are not interested in learning a second language regardless of what it is. From a school's standpoint, French makes

Post-secondary institutions and the world of business are seeing the value of second language instruction

a lot more sense than another language, since these requirements are on the rise, not only for university entrance, but also for the workforce. I recently received a brochure from a

Church News

Called by the church of Lincoln Ontario:

Rev. J. de Gelder

of Flamborough, Ontario.

Declined the call to Hamilton, Ontario:

Rev. J. VanWoudenberg

of Guelph, Ontario.

Accepted the call to Chilliwack, British Columbia:

Rev. R. Ijbema

of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands (Liberated) at Voorburg, the Netherlands.

business college that guaranteed placement of FSL students in the job of their choice. Their basis for this claim, you may ask? Twenty-five years of 100 per cent success in such placements. At schools we should be concerned, as teachers, parents, and students, with the students' academic learning. The findings prove that second language students perform better in their mother tongue when they learn a second language. Can there then be any other conclusion but to teach French to our children, so they can benefit from this knowledge and become more positive members of their Canadian communities?

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us

Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the United Reformed Psalter Hymnal Committee and the Canadian Reformed Book of Praise Committee, held April 20-21, 2006 in Ancaster, Ontario

This meeting was the sixth combined meeting of the two committees, the role of host alternating between the committees.

Opening

Rev. G. Ph. van Popta, convener of the *Book of Praise* Committee, led us in opening devotions. All members of each committee were present. The meeting schedule was established and the proposed agenda was adopted. The previous combined meeting's minutes were accepted as an accurate reflection of that meeting. Matters from the minutes were taken care of.

Reports on work done since last meeting

Each of the committees reported on their work completed since the previous combined meeting:

The URCNA Committee, because of the great distances, holds on-line meetings. Three meetings were held since November. At these meetings a report was prepared in connection with the CanRC desire to maintain the entire Genevan Psalter in the Common Song Book. Other work that was completed was the review of the *Trinity Hymnal* hymns and a provisional report to CERCU.

The CanRC Committee (SCBP) reported that they have met four times. Working under the original mandate (maintenance of the *Book of Praise* and evaluating hymns for possible addition), the SCBP continues to receive requests for

permission to reprint parts of the *Book of Praise* for various reasons. Other tasks include evaluating suggested changes due to misprints and other errors, applying to all areas of the prose section, and contemplating proposing to General Synod to replace some of the new metrical versions of the Psalms recently produced by Dr. Helder. Review of the new hymns, to be proposed to the next General Synod, is nearly completed.

The second mandate, to work together with the *Psalter Hymnal* Committee of the URCNA towards a common song book, was also actively pursued. At the last joint meeting, the SCBP presented a paper with reasons for retaining the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter*. There is no official contact with the URCNA's "Prose Committee;" therefore, the SCBP is considering to request the upcoming General Synod to appoint a new committee (perhaps a subcommittee reporting to the SCBP) to work together with the URCNA Prose Committee.

There is some congruence between the two *Book of Praise* mandates as the Joint Committee has approved most of the additional hymns the SCBP is proposing to be added to the *Book of Praise*.

Fostering awareness of our work

There is a request from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to share some of the development work of the common song book. It is agreed to share all the public data available.

The Psalter section – an open discussion

An initial discussion was held on the contents of the Psalter

section of the new song book. In order to obtain a clearer understanding of the issues that live on both sides, we had prepared two resources: a paper outlining the historic development, unique character, and significance of the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* used as the only source for singing Psalms in the CanRC, and a response to this paper outlining the URCNA perceived reluctance to accept such a relatively unknown collection for use in worship services. This discussion was fruitful in that it allowed difficult but very important questions to be raised and now can serve as a foundation to build on in finding solutions.

Even though our church orders indicate the importance of the use of the Psalms in worship, we understand that it will take effort to increase the awareness of the rich beauty of these Psalms. We are investigating ways of educating local communities, e.g., by committee members and experts visiting some of the classes.

Within the context of our shared commitment to federative unity, we jointly need to determine our commitment to the status of the new song book. Will it be used to the exclusion of other books and collections, or will it become yet another source to sing from? We need to identify clearly some of the differences between our committees in our report to synod and this will include the matter of keeping or not keeping all 150 Psalms of the *Anglo-Geneva Psalter* intact. Given the significance of the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* for the CanRC, the mere thought of tampering with the unique collection will prove to be difficult for many. However, for the sake of unity, and working under

the assumption that the new book will be the only song book used once full federative unity is reached, it may become necessary to consider alternate forms of the Psalter section. Perhaps such a Psalter may consist partially of selections taken from the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* and partially of Psalms taken from other sources, provided these selections meet the accepted guidelines.

As a combined committee, we are grateful that we could have open and edifying discussions on difficult matters that are dear to our heart and to the hearts of many church members.

Hymns review – continued

The *Psalter Hymnal* hymn review, started at our previous joint meeting, was continued. Of the remaining forty-one hymns of the *Psalter Hymnal* we reviewed, twenty-five were selected to be added to the gross list. Once the gross list is complete, the final review will take place.

We also made a start on evaluating the *Trinity Hymnal* hymns. We decided to take the approach, with respect to these hymns, to require a motion to include them, rather than a motion to exclude them, since they are not currently part of the collections

either of our churches use. We reviewed nineteen of the hymns, of which ten were added to the gross list including two already in the *Book of Praise*.

Mutual report to synods

We also decided that a common report, serving both our synods, will be prepared. Areas where we seek direction/recommendations:

- Genevan Psalms issue (can the restriction to include all 150 Genevans be lifted).
- Merger should happen before the completion of the common song book. The completion of the common song book should not be a condition for merger.



Front row, left to right: Dr. C. van Halen-Faber, Rev. G. van Popta, Mrs. D. Jasperse, Rev. E. Knott, Dr. N. Gootjes, Rev. D. Royall, Mr. C. Nobels

Back row, left to right: Rev. R. Wynia, Rev. A. Vander Pol, Rev. R. Lankheet, Rev. D. Agema, Rev. D. Vandermeulen

While we are committed to the production of the common song book, as mandated, we are proceeding with the conviction that merger does not depend on the adoption of a common song book. The report needs to be clear that there are good reasons.

- In our work together it is clear that educating the churches is a paramount. How can our respective synods help us to educate? We are (going to be) doing some work to make information public by way of articles; special gatherings have been held in the Niagara Peninsula; there may be a need to travel to various locations. We have also agreed to post our Principles and Guidelines and other "public" data on a website.

Next meeting

We agreed to meet again DV in October, 2006 in Jenison where the URCNA Committee will be the host. Items on our agenda will include a report by a sub-committee regarding the use of the first person singular pronoun in the Psalms. We will also investigate copyright-related matters.

Closing

This meeting was a very productive one and for the first time we formally addressed the place of the Psalms. Even though not all issues were resolved, mutual points of view received greater appreciation and areas of tension could be identified. At times the work seemed overwhelming, but if we are truly convinced in seeking the unity that the Lord of the church requires from us, remaining issues can surely be overcome.

In closing we sang from both the *Book of Praise* and the blue *Psalter Hymnal* and joined in prayer. The chairman adjourned the meeting.

*Submitted for the Joint Song
Book Committee
Chris J. Nobels, Secretary SCBP*

Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the Board and Committee of Administration, Inter-League Publication Board, May 16, 2006

The chairman of the Board, Mike Vandeburgt, opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. All were welcomed, including new members Brian Jager as treasurer and John Schutten on the Board of Directors.

Roll call

For the Board – representing the League of Men's Societies in Ontario, John Schutten and Mike Vandeburgt. Representing the League of Women's Societies in Ontario, Mary DeBoer and Betsy Kingma.

For the Committee of Administration (CoA) – Paul DeBoer, Cathy Jonker, Brian Jager, Debbie Swaving, and Theresa Westrik. Annette Nobel was absent with notification.

The agenda was established.

Marketing report

Theresa Westrik has sent newsletters out to all ILPB representatives to keep them informed. Information sheets about the ILPB Direct Book Club have

been updated. Advertising in various magazines was reviewed and suggestions were made to increase publicity and exposure for the books that are printed. The web page (www.spindleworks.com/ILPB) and the price list are being updated.

Sales report

Debbie Swaving reviewed the sales statistics for the last year. It has been a good year and sales have increased steadily over the last few years.

Progress report

Cathy Jonker reviewed the progress of books being worked on. A spiral-bound workbook on James by Rev. Schouten will be available for the September study season. Inventory is maintained by reprinting as needed. Books on general topics have received a new look and all books have an updated logo.

Financial report

Brian Jager reviewed the financial statements. The cash flow is good and the financial situation is positive. The budget for 2006/2007 was presented. Revenue and expenses are expected to remain roughly as they were in the last year.

General

Discussion was held regarding the Bible translation used in reprints. It was decided to maintain our policy to update reprints with the version currently used in the churches. The Board updated the CoA on books that are being reviewed for publication.

Question period was held. The press release was approved and the meeting was closed with prayer.



Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, held on June 9, 2006 in Burlington

On behalf of the convening church of Toronto, Rev. W. den Hollander called the meeting to order. He led in prayer and read from Scripture 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28. He gave a brief meditation on this passage, after which he invited the assembly to sing Hymn 58:1, 2. He then welcomed all the delegates, with a special word of welcome for Rev. J.L. van Popta, who was present for the first time as delegate from Burlington Fellowship, and for Rev. C.F. Heiberg, who was present as fraternal delegate from Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches.

The credentials were examined by the delegates of the church at Ottawa and were found to be in good order. The credentials from Burlington Ebenezer came with an instruction.

Classis was then constituted. Officers were Rev. den Hollander, chairman; Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman; and Rev. J. Huijgen, clerk.

The chairman mentioned as memorabilia,

- The passing away of Prof. H.M. Ohmann, who served as professor Old Testament at the Theological College from 1971 – 1981.
- That Rev. Huijgen declined a call from a church with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not have ecclesiastical fellowship.
- That the vacancy in the church of Burlington Fellowship has come to an end with the installation of Rev. van Popta.

The chairman read the Form of Subscription for ministers in

Classis Central Ontario, which was then signed by Rev. van Popta.

The proposed agenda was adopted with some changes.

The church visitation reports were read of visits to the churches in Burlington Ebenezer, Burlington Fellowship, Burlington-Waterdown, Flamborough, Ottawa, and Toronto. With much gratitude Classis took note of the fact that positive reports could be submitted and expressed this by singing Hymn 6, after which Rev. DeGelder led in prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God's abundant blessings in the churches in our classical region.

A report from the church of Flamborough re: Financial Aid for students for the Ministry was tabled, briefly discussed, and taken note of.

In the question period according to Art. 44 CO all the churches answered the first two questions in the affirmative. In closed session one church asked and received concurring advice of Classis to proceed in a matter of discipline.

In response to an overture of the church of Burlington Ebenezer regarding a possible amendment of Art.63 of the Church Order, Classis decided to overture Regional Synod East, to be held in November 2006, to overture General Synod 2007 to change Art. 63 CO to read:

Article 63. Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers – as authorized by the consistory – solemnize only *monogamous* marriages *between a man and a woman* as are in accordance with the Word of God.

The solemnization of a marriage may take place either

in a private ceremony or in a public worship service. The adopted Form for the Solemnization of Marriage shall be used.

On behalf of Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches Rev. Heiberg, pastor of Zion URC in Sheffield, ON addressed Classis. He reflected briefly on the developments in the relationship between the URC and the CanRC and expressed gratitude for good contacts locally and regionally. He wished Classis as well as the churches in the region the Lord's blessing. The chairman responded with appropriate remarks.

In closed session Classis dealt with an appeal.

Classis appointed the church at Burlington Ebenezer as convening church for the next Classis, scheduled for September 15, 2006. Suggested officers are Rev. Huijgen, chairman, Rev. den Hollander, vice-chairman, and Rev. DeGelder, clerk.

In the question period Rev. M. Jagt reported on a visit he made to the Presbytery of New York and New England of the OPC.

The chairman concluded with gratitude that Censure according to Art. 34 CO was not needed.

The Acts were read and adopted, after which the Press Release was read and approved.

The chairman thanked the church of Burlington Ebenezer for hosting Classis and requested the singing of Hymn 64:1-4, after which Rev. Huijgen led in thanksgiving prayer. The chairman then closed Classis Central Ontario of June 9, 2006.

For Classis Central Ontario of
June 9, 2006

Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman
of that Classis