

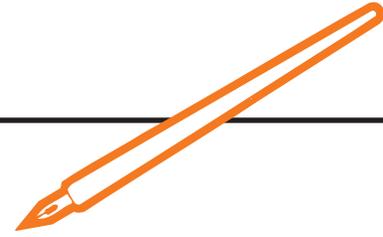
# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
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*The Light of the Gospel in Mexico*





## The place of emotions in our worship

In ancient Greece, there were two basic ways of thinking about emotions. They remain the general standard for thinking about emotions to this very day. The Epicureans said that the emotions were the only guide for living, that all truth is grounded on our feeling of pleasure and pain. We should live in pursuit of the greatest pleasure and avoid pain. In reaction against Epicureanism, Stoic philosophy taught that emotions and feelings were irrational and deceptive. We should rid our lives of emotions, both the painful and pleasant, in order to achieve a supremely rational life, free of emotions. Stoics strove for what they called, "apathy."

Reformed Christians tend to lean toward the Stoic view of life rather than the Epicurean. We must live rationally, not emotionally. And our worship must be calm, sedate, appealing to the mind and not to the emotions. We must not permit feelings to be the basis for our actions since that would promote mysticism and subjectivism. In all kinds of ways, Christians today are making feelings the starting point for their lives. For instance, Pentecostalism is a sell-out to Epicureanism since people abandon their minds in the belief that God will take possession of it and lead people to speak in tongues. People must lose control over their minds so that a person might be "slain by the Spirit." Most recently, this has become manifest in what has been called the "Toronto Blessing" where people begin to laugh uncontrollably, fall bodily to the ground and start making strange noises without consciously deciding or wanting to do these things. We would say that they have severed the controlling influence of their minds and have given themselves over to pure emotions.

Evangelical worship too is often a sell-out to the general Epicurean view where all that matters is our feelings. One of the greatest projects among Evangelicals today is developing the liturgy of worship by introducing all kinds of novelties so that the order of worship might appeal to outsiders, give everyone a positive experience in worship and so that when it is done, everyone might be sent on his way shouting their hallelujahs. Here the measure of worship has become: does it delight us? This is the corruption of worship which Calvin feared when he said that the more a practice "delights human nature, the more it is to be suspected by believers."

There has of late been a growing interest in Puritanism, especially in the great revivals which were held by Jonathan Edwards in New England. However, the notion that we need revivals, can also be controlled by the Epicurean view. Revival meetings are often carefully crafted affairs in which the whole service is arranged to solicit emotional outbursts of sorrow over sin, and streaming tears until people are howling with grief. Extraordinary emotion becomes a goal that people seek as a kind of seal of authentication to prove that the Holy Spirit has worked conversion there.

It is not strange, then, that Reformed Christians should be suspicious of emotions. The Epicurean view of things is clearly discernable in the Christian world and we must resist it. But is it right for us, then, to lean toward the Stoic view of life? Should we blacklist emotions? Are emotions sinful? Should we be rid of them? Should our worship be an appeal to the rational mind and not to the emotions?

That would be impossible, and misguided. Emotions are not in themselves sinful. They are part of God's good creation. They are not the result of the fall into sin as some people tend to think. And emotions have been redeemed by Jesus Christ so that they might rest at the very centre of the Christian life. In fact, God has given us the Bible for the very purpose of evoking an emotion in us: the emotion of love. The 10 commandments are summarized by one word: love. But God seeks many other emotions in us: regret, grief and hatred for sin; joy in Jesus Christ; comfort in the Holy Spirit and trust in the Father. These are all emotions which the Bible seeks to evoke from us.

It is not surprising then to discover that our confessions reflect the Bible's focus on emotions. The Heidelberg Catechism is carefully arranged to create an emotion in us: comfort. The Canons of Dort unashamedly seeks to evoke an emotion in us too: joy in God's sovereign election. The closing article of each of the four chapters is a song of praise to God based on the doctrine explained in that chapter.

So the world view of Stoicism cannot be the answer for us. Both the Stoic and the Epicurean world views are wrong. We must not pit reason and emotions against each other. Heart and mind must be united. Thus did God create us. Even contemporary psychology recognizes that human emotions and human reason are intimately related.<sup>1</sup> And the

Bible also describes the emotions and the mind as united. The Hebrew idea of "to know" demonstrates this point very nicely. When we read in the OT that a man knew his wife, then it is clear that this did not just mean he knew about her. It means that the man and the woman have experienced mutual love in the conjugal act, so that their knowledge of each other has been intensified by a heightened emotion of love for each other.

David's prayer in Psalm 86 shows his perception of the fact that we need to have the thinking mind and the feeling heart in union, for he asks God,

Teach me your ways, O Yahweh,  
and I will walk in your truth;  
give me an undivided heart,  
that I may fear your name.

David prayed for an undivided heart because he did not want the emotions of his heart to lead him away from what Yahweh taught his mind. He prayed for an undivided heart, a heart that was united to his mind so that the thoughts of his mind might be driven by the passions of his heart. It is a prayer in which he sought that his mind should be the grounds for his life, and his heart should provide the driving force of it.

Our worship must be grounded on knowledge. We must know what God teaches us in the Bible. Service for God can be good only if it is based on God's word and not on the precepts of man. But Biblical knowledge is powerful. The word of God goes out and accomplishes great things. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to create understanding in our minds so that we accurately know God, but then he also lifts our hearts up. The Holy Spirit does not only enable us to rationally think right thoughts; he also enables us to emotionally want right things. He sheds light into our mind and into our heart. He unites our heart and mind in the service of God.

Therefore, our worship must not only contain a rational appeal to the mind; it must include an emotional appeal to the heart as well. A sermon that does not wound our proud heart has not wielded the sword of the word well enough. A song following the sermon must be a response of sorrow and/or joy that rises from the heart. Preaching must evoke passion, zeal, emotions. But the emotions are build upon knowledge, so that they might be lifted up to a mind enlightened by God's holy word.

The Pentecostal power of God must grip our hearts, but not by abandoning our minds. The evangelical joy of worship must be ours as well, but only by forming our worship in the way God commands it. And our hearts must be smitten by revivalist grief, but not in pursuit of the emotion itself, but in pursuit of holy living to glory of God.

*Rev. Paul Aasman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Grand Valley, ON.*

<sup>1</sup>E. Gr. writes "even the most elementary perceptual effect is emotionally 'coloured' from its very inception," in "Emotions and Motivation, Human," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1988), 18:533:1b. Similarly, W.P. Wilson writes, "Thinking and feeling are inextricably linked," and he describes that linkage thus: "Ideas are of no value until the emotions are attached to them, since the emotion provides the force for action.," in "Emotion," *Baker Encyclopaedia of Psychology* (1985), 354,355.



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By P.G. Feenstra

## Zion the City of God

*For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.*

*Psalm 132:13*

Many of the Old Testament psalms extol the glory of Zion, the city of God. The word "Zion" has its roots in a term meaning "fortress" or "fortified tower." Zion is the place the Lord has chosen as His dwelling place, where His people can find refuge and strength. Psalm 132:13,14 says, *"For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation: 'This is my resting place for ever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it'."*

The Lord promises to provide His people with all that they need for body and soul from within the walls of Zion; from within His fortress. Again Psalm 132 fills us in, *"I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints with shouts of joy"* (15,16). Along these same lines, the Lord declares through the prophet Isaiah, *"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins." God's righteousness and justice will fill Zion. "The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He will fill Zion with justice and righteousness; and He will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is his treasure"* (Isaiah 33:15,16).

What God is doing in Zion causes the people of God to speak wonderful and praiseworthy words about the city of God. The sons of Korah express this beautifully in Psalm 87, *"Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God."* In a different song, they lead the congregation in praise of this city, *"Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, His holy mountain. It is beautiful in loftiness, the joy of the whole earth . . . Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation . . ."* (Psalm 48:1,2,12,13).

But does it make sense to sing the songs of Zion today? Yes! For Zion in both Old and New Dispensation represents the church which is the bulwark (the fortress) of the truth. *"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven . . ."* (Hebrews 12:22). You have come to the heavenly Zion, that is, to the assembly whose origin is in heaven.

The glory and the beauty of the city of God is not in golden streets and precious stones nor does it hinge on the

people as such. The church is rich in the grace of God. Salvation, help and deliverance come forth from Zion through the ministry of reconciliation. The dignity of the church lies in the cross of Christ.

When the people of God during the Old Testament dispensation saw Mount Zion they could confess: there lies the place God has established and chosen for Himself in His love for us. They could draw a connection between Zion and their relationship with the Lord. We can do the same thing today. The Lord in His good pleasure chooses to live among His people. While other cities are founded and built by the guidance and power of the Lord He chooses the church as the centre of His spiritual government. As John Calvin writes in his commentary on the Psalms, "Pure religion, true worship and the doctrine of godliness, were to be recognized as the pillars of Zion. This is the place where the truth is to be preserved and the unity of the faith maintained." The church, as Zion, has a firm foundation because God dwells with His people by His Word and Spirit. Let us, speak glorious things about the church Christ bought with His precious blood. 

### What's inside?

This time we lead off with a guest editorial. The Rev. Paul Aasman of Grand Valley, ON, writes for us on the place of emotions in our worship.

We are also pleased to begin publishing a four part series on the topic of evangelism by the Rev. John Van Popta of Ottawa. While we, as churches, have got things rather well together when it comes to church life, church order, and Christian schools, we often wonder *and often disagree* when it comes to our evangelistic task. This series of articles is intended to help us move forward in this in a consciously confessional, covenantal, and church-directed way. In the initial article, the author arrives at a definition of evangelism.

Recently Dr. Van Dam had the wonderful opportunity of teaching at the Seminario Teológico Juan Calvino in Mexico City. In this issue and the next he will tell us about the Seminary, the churches supporting it, and his experiences there.

Dr. Gootjes updates us on recent happenings at the Theological College in Hamilton.

In addition, you will find sundry other articles for your reading pleasure.

And . . . have a nice summer.

GvP

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# Evangelism: The church's missionary task in the world<sub>1</sub>

By J.L. Van Popta

## 1. Introduction

The various congregations in the federation have very uneven approaches to evangelism. Some do nothing; others are planning urban mission projects. Some members do not think they have a personal task in this matter. Others think their church should do more; or their committee should do more; or their brother or sister should do more. Some, on the other hand, think they should do less. "All this enthusiasm about evangelism lately!" Some in the church become suspicious of those who want to evangelize; they suspect those who are willing to engage others with the gospel of being less than Reformed. This series of articles is aimed at developing a clearer understanding of the church's, the congregation's, and individual Christian's role in this matter.

This study will begin with some basic ideas and from there attempt to develop some practical ideas for Reformed Evangelism. In this article, and in three more following it, we will attempt to: 1) define what evangelism is; 2) give some biblical justification for evangelism; 3) delineate some aspects of evangelism. We will ask: 4) How effective are we? 5) What is missing? Then we will 6) examine what we as churches are doing in the area of evangelism; and finally 7) make some practical suggestions.<sup>2</sup>

In this first article we will attempt to formulate a definition for evangelism. That will help us to focus on the other aspects in the following articles.

## 2. Distinctions

"What is evangelism?" In this context we need to ask, "What is mission?" We must also ask, "Is there a difference, one from the other?" Intuitively we understand that there is a link between the two. Evangelism and mission are concerned with bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are outside the church. Discussing the rela-

tionship between the two helps to define evangelism.

In this discussion some have made all sorts of distinctions. One distinction that has been made is this: *Mission* is when the church sends a minister/missionary (and maybe a missionary helper) overseas to preach to those who have never heard the gospel. In distinction to that, *evangelism* is when the church calls a minister into our inner cities and slums to preach to the people there.

A second distinction that has been made by some is this: *Mission* is when a minister preaches to those who have never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation. *Evangelism* is when a minister preaches the gospel to those who have heard but have fallen away. Others say, "No, that is not right!" and make another distinction. *Mission* work is when the church calls a minister to preach to non-church members. *Evangelism* is when individual church members tell others about the gospel.

I can think of other distinctions that have been made. Some have spoken of *intentional* and *unintentional* evangelism. Others speak about *organized* or *unorganized* evangelism. We could go on. Perhaps you can think of some others. Many of these distinctions, however, have been used to limit the role of the individual church member in the work of spreading the gospel. I believe that all church members, young people, children even, young adults, men, women also, office bearers and ministers have a task in spreading the gospel of salvation. Their individual careers will make the shape of their task and the boundaries of their role different from each other. Their career or gender or age (well maybe age) does not exclude them from an evangelistic task.

### 2.1 Deadness

In Isaiah 2:3 the following words can be found:

Many people will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain

of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob."

A commentator writing on the passage wrote:

By these words (Isaiah the prophet) declares that the godly will be filled with such an ardent desire to spread the doctrine of religion, that every one not satisfied with his own calling and his personal knowledge will desire to draw others along with him. And indeed nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his brethren, and keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast.

This commentator continues:

This points out to us also the ordinary method of collecting a Church, which is, by the outward voice of men; for though God might bring each person to Himself by a secret influence, yet He employs the agency of men, that He may awaken in them an anxiety about the salvation of each other. By this method He likewise strengthens their mutual attachment, and puts to the test their willingness to receive instruction, when every one permits himself to be taught by others.<sup>3</sup>

These words commenting on the prophet Isaiah were written by none other than John Calvin. We should look at Calvin's words for a moment that they sink deeply into our consciousness.

When Calvin writes that they are not satisfied with their own calling, he does not mean to say that they are not satisfied with their career or occupation, or place within the church – say a laborer who wants to be a minister; or a woman who wants to be an elder. No, he means they are not satisfied with their own calling, their call to faith; they are not content with that. They do not say, "I'm saved, that's good enough!" No, they desire to draw others along to faith in Jesus Christ.

Later on in his commentary on these verses Calvin writes that in New Testament times the mountain to which the many are going is the Church of God. We should notice what Calvin writes about this. "Indeed nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that *deadness* which would lead a man to disregard his brethren, and keep the light of knowledge choke up within his own breast." We must not be content with our own call to faith, but must desire with zeal to draw others with us.

In Calvin's thought, keeping silent about the gospel among unbelievers is a deadness incompatible with faith. Rather, we should speak out, each and every one, and so participate in the church gathering work of Jesus Christ. Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism says that Christ gathers His church. Calvin says that all believers are to participate in that work.

The ordinary way, according to Calvin, of Christ gathering His church, is through the outward voice of believers. This voice can come through the offices of the church, the ministers and elders – yes of course! But it can also come through the voice of the body of Christ, the congregation, and through each Christian.

### 3. Canons of Dort

The *Canons of Dort* can help us here. Many Reformed people think that the *Canons* are a difficult and dusty document. You study it once while you are in catechism. Then perhaps you study it once or twice more in your life at Men's or Women's Societies. There some keener will beat you over the head with it: "It says 'such and such' in Chapter 2 Article so and so of the *Canons of Dort* and therefore you are Arminian!" Then you tremble in your Sunday shoes and think, "Oh no, not me, I'm Reformed!" And you are cowed into silence.

But the *Canons of Dort*, though the least known, are not a difficult nor dry theological treatise. In fact the *Canons* in their presentation of *Election* in Chapter 1 and *Redemption* in Chapter 2 lay a ground-work for all evangelistic and missionary efforts. The doctrine of election should cause Reformed confessors and Reformed Churches, of all confessors and churches, to have the greatest zeal for evangelism. A truly Reformed church is an evangelizing Church.

The *Canons of Dort* 1.1-3 read:

Since all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and deserve eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had

been His will to leave the whole human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn it on account of its sin, according to these words of the apostle: *that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; and, the wages of sin is death.*

But then the gospel message!

But in this the love of God was made manifest, that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16.)

So that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom He will and when He wills. By their ministry men are called to repentance and to faith in Christ crucified. *For how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?*

And here you see the role of *the church* in mission and evangelism. As Calvin says, God uses the human voice to collect His church.

The wrath of God remains upon those who do not believe this gospel. But those who receive it and embrace Jesus the Saviour with a true and living faith are delivered by Him from the wrath of God and from destruction, and are given eternal life.

So then the only way to eternal life is through faith in Jesus Christ presented in the gospel. Chapter 2 Article 5 reads:

The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men, to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe.

The promise of the gospel is to be announced and proclaimed universally to all peoples and to all men. To nations and races – all peoples. To individuals – all men. The promise comes: those who believe shall not perish. The command comes: you must repent from sin and believe. That is the bottom line of the gospel. A promise and demand that must go out to all and everyone, collectively and individually, without discrimination. The *Canons of Dort* highlight this evangelistic calling of the church and the task of God's people.

Calvin points out that it is a deadness which would cause believers to be silent about the gospel. The *Canons of Dort* set out the biblical doctrine that the gospel must be proclaimed universally to all men. As Reformed confessors we note that it is Christ who gathers his church, but we then with the *Canons* and Calvin remember that Christ uses, first of all, the human voice and the agency of men to do that gathering work.

### 4. Definition

We will now attempt a definition. In the following articles I hope to work out some of the implications of this definition as well as demonstrate its validity.

*Evangelism is the activity of Christ Jesus, exercised through the church, by which the church, officially, corporately and individually, calls all nations of the earth, and all persons, without discrimination, to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, so that being His disciples and being baptized, they be brought into the fellowship of the church.*<sup>1</sup>

Rev. J.L. Van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in the Nation's Capital.

<sup>1</sup>In the Spring of 1996 the Evangelism Committee of the Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, together with the Committee of the Church of Carman invited me to speak on any subject I chose concerning evangelism. The following is the result of my study. It also incorporates ideas that were generated by the discussions that followed on consecutive evenings in November 1996. I will always remember the warm hospitality, even as we dealt with the worst blizzard that struck the area in 30 years. I will never forget how many came to Carman church even as the weatherman posted the required "blizzard warnings." I also delivered this talk in Burlington in December 1996 (with a second invitation for Jan 1997), in Ottawa April 1997, as well as in Coaldale in May 1997. "Thank you!" to those who thought to ask me to speak on this subject. It caused me to organize some ideas into a more coherent whole. I do not suggest that this is a definitive work on evangelism but I hope that it will spur us on to greater faithfulness in this matter. May it serve to build up the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup>These articles, being born out of a speech, do not have extensive footnotes. I acknowledge that many of my ideas were derived from reading various books on evangelism. I am unable now to give credit where it is due. C. John Miller's *Out Growing the In-grown Church* served as the impetus for much of what I write.

<sup>3</sup>Calvin, John. Commentary on Isaiah 2:3

<sup>4</sup>Adapted and modified from J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*. Pg. 62.

# COLLEGE CORNER

By N.H. Gootjes



At the time of my writing, we have come to the end of the lectures, and the exams have been written and marked. Another year of study and teaching is behind us. Graduating students will present themselves to Classis to be examined, so that they may become available for calls from the churches. We are grateful to God that He has been with us and has given us strength in the past semester.

We realize that all the more since the Lord has taken from us one of our governors, our brother Adrian VanEgmond. He had been involved in many decisions that were taken in the past years and he was entering his final year as governor. He had participated in the two major projects I will discuss below. In the midst of his many activities in business and for the church, he was called away. We thank the Lord for everything our brother has been able to do for the Theological College. May He surround his wife and children with the comfort of the gospel.

There are also more positive events to write about. Our New Testament teacher, Prof. J. Geertsema, was invited by Dr. J. Van Bruggen of the Theological University at Kampen to teach a course on Hebrews during the end of April and May. As a result, Prof. Geertsema, after having completed his courses here, left for the Netherlands. It is an honourable task for Prof. Geertsema, and a sign of the good relationship that may exist between the University in Kampen and our College.

In my College Corner of January, I mentioned that it would be my turn to visit the churches in Alberta and Manitoba. I wondered how cold it would be there in January. Now I know, it was minus 35 degrees in Calgary and a few days later we had freezing rain on the way to and from Neerlandia. However, I enjoyed the contact with the churches. As the College is the College of the churches, we feel it is important for us to be in touch with the churches. Lecture tours, as they are now organized on a regular basis, are an important way of maintaining this contact.

## Practical training

It was felt for some time that theological students would benefit from

some direct exposure to the practical work of a minister. Every church member knows, of course, what belongs to the task of a minister. It looks different, however, when you have to do all of it in the same week: sermon preparation and delivery, teaching several catechism classes, pastoral visits and preparation for a consistory meeting. A closer look at the workload and the work week of the minister could help the students to become better prepared for the ministry.

This issue has been studied for some time, and plans have matured so that a proposal can be sent to Synod Fergus, 1998, the Lord willing. The plan provides for several additions to our program. For example, to prepare the students for the reality of catechism instruction, several lectures on pedagogy will be given, and the student will teach a number of catechism classes under supervision. Moreover, seminars on counselling will be organized. The most far-reaching proposal is an internship of three months for theological students, which they must complete before they may present themselves to classis for their preparatory examination. Experienced ministers will be asked to supervise the students. During this period, the student will deliver one sermon per week, and he will be involved in ministerial activities such as home visits and hospital visits.

Several aspects of this new direction were first extensively discussed by the Board of Governors and the Senate. Afterwards, the proposal was discussed with the students, who looked at it from their perspective. Overall, their reaction to this addition to the theological training was positive, although it will increase their study time. They also came with several comments and remarks that were used to fine tune the proposal.

We are thankful that such a far-reaching plan could be made in great harmony between all parties concerned. We hope that it will be well received by Synod Fergus, 1998.

## Library

The second major project that was discussed in the past year was the expansion of the library. Actually, Synod

Abbotsford 1995, already dealt with a proposal of the Board of Governors to expand the library facilities. The reason is that our present library is nearing its capacity. A good solution would be to add a building designed as a library to the present building. Synod Abbotsford agreed that expansion of the College was warranted. The Board of Governors was asked to present an exact evaluation of needs and possibilities.

In the two years following Synod Abbotsford, this issue was extensively studied and discussed. What are the present needs of a library? In this context, the question was considered whether libraries would not become smaller rather than larger, in view of the new information technology. The specialists assure us, however, that books will not go out of date. Actually, what has been observed up to now is that greater accessibility of information has increased the use of books.

Another issue that had to be looked into was how large the library building would need to be. A projection of the expected increase in the volume of books was made. Moreover, the new regulations of the government had to be taken into consideration and the library must be made wheelchair accessible. Better facilities for study in the library need to be provided, as well. From these and other considerations a proposal resulted which will be presented to the upcoming Synod.

Needless to say, we are very enthusiastic about this. We have in our library a resource necessary for theological studies. Such a library needs to be kept up to date, and increased in depth. We are very thankful for the books we have, as the result of the generous donations we receive from the Women's Savings Action. We hope that these books may eventually be housed in a functional library building.

## College evening

I would like to use this opportunity to remind you that the College Evening will be held, the Lord willing, on September 5, 1997. We hope to see many of our readers, there.

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# The Light of the Gospel in Mexico

(first of two parts)

By C. Van Dam

Recently there has been some contact between the Seminario Teológico Juan Calvino in Mexico City and the Theological College. Last November Dr. John P. Roberts of the Mexican seminary visited Canada and became acquainted with our training for the ministry in Hamilton. This initial visit led to an invitation from the Mexican faculty to our faculty in Hamilton for someone to give a week of lectures on Old Testament topics. With the financial support of the Board of Governors I was able to give Old Testament lectures from May 7 to 14. It was most encouraging to see the faithful and diligent work for the Reformed faith that is being done in Mexico City and I would like to use this opportunity to report on my stay there. After all, this seminary is not well-known in our circles and neither are the churches that this institution serves.

Let me first tell something of the history of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico (IPCМ). With this background, we can better appreciate the situation at the Seminario Teológico Juan Calvino.

## Background to the IPCM

As early as 1872 American Presbyterian missionaries were active in this Roman Catholic country. Their zeal was blessed with the eventual establishing of a confessionally strong church. This is the church which since 1947 was known as the National Presbyterian Church.

However, starting in the 1930's and especially in the 1940's there was mounting concern that the National Presbyterian Church (NPC) was becoming Barthian, embracing higher criticism in biblical studies and promoting social gospel ideals. When in 1946 Dr. Felipe Delgado Cortéz started to write against these worrisome trends a rift quickly developed between Dr. Delgado C. (and others who were concerned)



*The office bearers of the Gethsemane IPCM in Mexico City (plus yours truly). The minister is Virgilio Crisóstomo, second from left in front row. He also teaches at the Juan Calvino Seminary.*

and the national leadership of the church (consisting of the NPC's General Assembly executive and remaining American [PC-US] missionaries). Many protests against the new trends were mounted but to no avail. The church was becoming broadly evangelical at the cost of the distinctives of the Reformed faith.

By 1947, after the entire ecclesiastical appeal process had been exhausted, Dr. Delgado and others saw that the church could no longer be returned to its original commitments and so saw no other option but to leave the National Presbyterian Church and establish the IPCM of Mexico. They had to take this drastic action in order to preserve the true doctrinal heritage in Mexico and therefore did not consider their action schismatic. Indeed, they considered the IPCM to be the true continuation of the National Presbyterian Church. At the time of the founding of the IPCM there were a total of 1,517 members in seven congregations with a total of six ministers. These congregations were scattered throughout Mexico.<sup>1</sup>

In 1948, the Seminario Teológico Juan Calvino was founded. Dr. Delgado and others taught and administered the seminary from 1948 to 1962.

In order to strengthen the work in Mexico, Dr. Delgado looked for contacts with Reformed churches elsewhere. Eventually this desire led to the establishment of a fruitful working relationship with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) with which the first official contact was made in 1961.<sup>2</sup> It is instructive to note that in the process of coming to this association, the CRC judged, among other things, that the IPCM was not schismatic in their leaving the National Presbyterian Church. This judgment was made because of a challenge that was raised on this point from within the CRC. The CRC also judged that the IPCM was doctrinally sound "adhering to the Westminster symbols and now also to the Three Forms of Unity of the Christian Reformed Church as being the true interpretation of Scripture."<sup>3</sup>

Although later supported by the CRC, the IPCM was not a mission church of the CRC but retained its own



*The church building of the Gethsemane IPCM. They are saving for a third and final floor. The auditorium encompasses the first two floors, with a balcony. Our group worshipped here on Sunday morning, May 11.*

autonomy. However, because of the theological strength of the CRC as a conservative Calvinist church, Dr. Delgado thought it wise to turn over the leadership of the seminary to the CRC. The years 1962 to 1980 were on the whole years of productive cooperation with a CRC minister heading the seminary as rector or principal. In the 1960's the CRC also funded the purchase of the building which now houses the seminary in Mexico City.

The IPCM grew slowly but steadily. In 1974 the South-East Presbytery was formed and this was followed in January, 1979 with the establishment of the River Region Presbytery (so called because of the great jungle rivers which run through this area). Because there were now three presbyteries, a synod could be held. The mechanism for this was organized and the first General Synod met in 1979. (It is interesting that right from the start the IPCM had a General Synod and not a General Assembly.) That same year, the IPCM asked the CRC that the CRC return the control of the Seminario Juan Calvino to the IPCM. The return of the seminary to the leadership and direction of the IPCM took place in 1980, with the formal transference of documents pertaining to the purchase of the seminary occurring a year later in Grand Rapids.

The good relations with the CRC were, however, not to last. In 1981, the

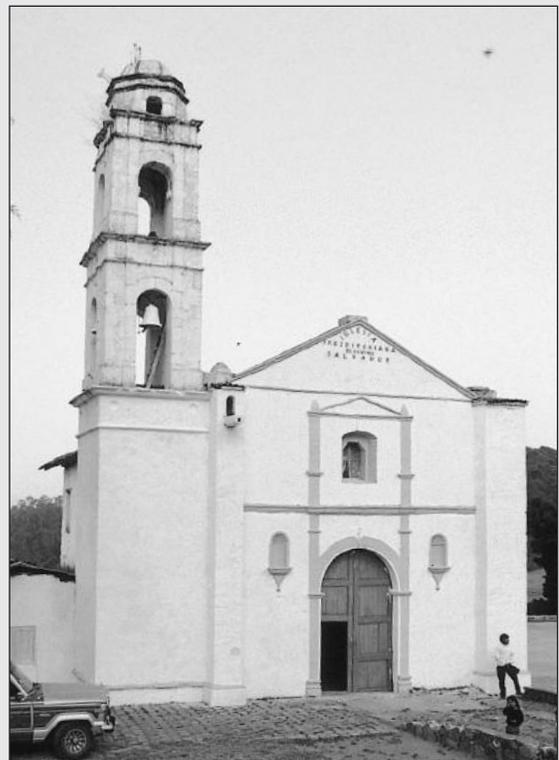
CRC sent a professor to the seminary who had been accused of being a Marxist subversive in Guatemala. Unaware of his background, the IPCM accepted him as a professor. The students however soon discovered that his teachings were more in accord with

Marxism than with Scripture and complained about it. One must remember that these students knew Marxism well since their education in Mexican state schools were an indoctrination in this philosophy and world view.

After the Education Committee of the Seminary conducted a day long examination of this professor, the accusations against him were sustained and the Education Committee removed him from the faculty of the seminary. The CRC missionaries in Mexico responded by rallying to the defense of the accused professor and demanded that the IPCM recognize him as professor or face the consequences of all the CRC missionary personnel leaving the IPCM. The IPCM maintained their position. The General Secretary of the CRC Board of Foreign Missions for Latin America then wrote a letter, not to the next General Synod of the IPCM, but directly to all the pastors of the IPCM stating that financial benefits would be lost to them as ministers unless they renounced the course of events at the seminary of their churches and align themselves with the CRC. It is telling that in spite of the poverty of the pastors, only one responded.

This letter from the CRC Board of Foreign Missions was followed up by a visit to Mexico of the top CRC leadership of the Board of Foreign Missions

*The IPCM church building in Miahuatlan, a lonely village of the Mazahua Indians, high in the mountains west of Mexico City (at an elevation of about 10,000 feet). This is a seventeenth century church building of abode, one of the very few churches that has actually changed ownership from Roman Catholic to Protestant. We worshipped here Sunday evening on May 11.*



for Latin America. These men met in a hotel room, not with the recognized national leadership of the IPCM, but with the one Mexican pastor who had responded to their divisive letter mentioned earlier. After the meeting, this Mexican pastor tried to convene all the IPCM pastors to an emergency meeting of a General Synod. About half of them responded to his invitation even though it was completely out of order since the normal ecclesiastical steps to such an emergency General Synod were not followed. In spite of the illegality of this meeting, those who had been elected by the last General Synod to lead the next General Synod did show up uninvited to try to salvage the unity of the churches. However, they were rejected by the meeting. Those who had come to this irregular synod meeting decided to go along with the CRC.

Thus the IPCM was split down the middle in 1984. Those who followed the CRC became mission churches of the CRC and those who rejected the CRC course of action remained the original IPCM. The number of those congregations (and ministers) which affiliated with the CRC were approximately 17, and those who continued the original IPCM comprised 20 orga-



*The village of Miahuatlan with the church in the centre of the picture. In this setting it is easy to understand why the church members who are scattered in the surrounding country can walk for hours before reaching the church.*

nized churches (each with various unorganized churches, mission churches and evangelistic preaching stations) with 20 ministers. Nine of the ten professors of the faculty of the seminary remained with the original IPCM.

This schism was a horrible (and unnecessary) event in the history of the IPCM, brought about by gross interference on the part of the CRC in the internal affairs of the IPCM, in this case the seminary. After all the leadership of the seminary had been returned to the IPCM and they were fully justified in determining who should teach there. Their desire to keep their seminary reformed should have met the respect and encouragement of the CRC instead of the wrath of the CRC missionaries and the Board for Foreign Mission.

The IPCM's General Synod made an official appeal to the CRC about this matter by letter, but when the CRC did not respond in disciplining the professor in question, the IPCM concluded that there was a lack of discipline in the CRC and that the CRC therefore no longer showed all the marks of the true church.

Since the IPCM was a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES), the IPCM (through its Synodical Secretary) appealed to the RES as to how the CRC could be a member of good standing in the RES and allow liberation theology. When the RES did not respond, the IPCM left the RES in 1984. The IPCM's leaving the RES was also influenced by the lack of RES action over against unbiblical tolerance practised by the Reformed (Synodical) churches in the Netherlands.

Since the IPCM broke their ties with the CRC and the RES, the IPCM was in for a very difficult time. Their numbers were halved and their financial struggles were severe. At the same time, however, the IPCM experienced the breaking of the ties with the CRC and the RES as a liberation and they were happy to be free and on their own. This situation also gave the IPCM a chance to reevaluate their contacts and relationships with others. The feeling was strong that if in the future there should ever be contact with another church again this would not be on the basis of a missionary dependency. The consensus grew that in the future any relationship with another church should be based on the following priorities. First, there should be a strong doctrinal agreement for the IPCM wants to be a faithful confessional church. Second, there should be a meaningful ecclesiastical relationship in which questions, concerns, and gifts could be shared and biblical solutions sought together through ecclesiastical committees. Third, missionary opportunities in Mexico should be worked at together.

At present the IPCM in Mexico enjoys peace and quiet. There are about 30 organized churches, with a like number of unorganized congregations and numerous mission stations, mostly in rural areas with a native population. The widespread poverty of many people is also reflected in the membership of the IPCM. The IPCM has small churches scattered in cities, but the majority are found in rural and mountainous areas. These regions in particular



*The poor burro with me as a load! To my right is fourth year seminary student Valentin Alpuche.*

mostly operate in a non-monetary economy. I saw the results of the Sunday morning offering in Miahuatlan, an Indian village: a number of eggs, a quantity of corn meal, some meat and a few pesos. This is indicative of the widespread poverty that exists in the largely rural IPCM.

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup>For this and related information see the Report of the Christian Reformed Board of Foreign Missions in *Acts of Synod 1964 of the Christian Reformed Church*, Supplement 9.D (pp. 194-195).

<sup>2</sup>It is of interest that the CRC Board of Foreign Mission considered the IPCM to be closest to them of the different Presbyterian bodies active in Mexico. This Board was therefore happy to respond positively to the invita-

tion of the IPCM to become involved in their work in Mexico. See *Acts of Synod 1961 of the Christian Reformed Church*, Art. 79.V.B and Supplement No. 32-A.

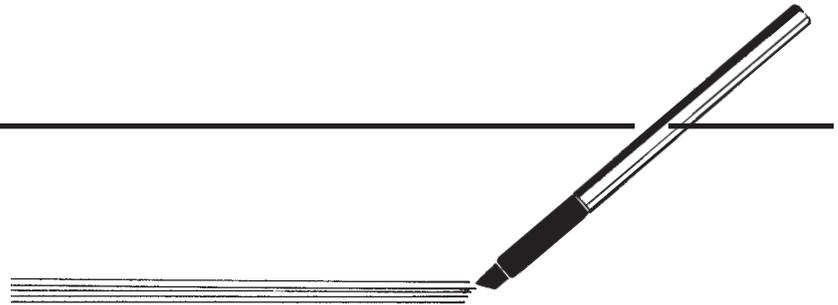
<sup>3</sup>*Acts of Synod 1964 of the Christian Reformed Church*, Art. 34.VI and Supplement 9.D. On the matter of whether the IPCM was schismatic or not, see *Acts of Synod 1963 of the Christian Reformed Church*, Art. 99.I and *Acts of Synod 1964 of the Christian Reformed Church*, Art. 34.VI. 

## THE HI-LITER

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### News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



Not much happened in the past week? Ask Rev. C. Bosch of Burlington South!

"Last week the Lord fed and clothed and comforted all three hundred and thirty of us. He heard thousands of prayers and answered them. He forgave our sins and kept us safe on the way to work and to school and back again. . . . Last week Christ moved history another week in the direction of His coming. He ruled the nations for the sake of His church. The sun and moon and stars were kept in their place for us. God defended and preserved us. Indeed a lot happened for us the past week."

\*\*\*

Summer is upon us and a number of congregations are preparing themselves to host an influx of holidayers. In the East as well as the West reminders are posted in several bulletins welcoming visitors but also reminding them of certain expectations. "We also request you to come to church dressed in a way that reflects that we are worshiping the Lord in His holy presence. We ask you honour the same standards we try to maintain. We believe this is important first toward God, but also as witness to our surrounding community."

\*\*\*

Consistories are receiving a letter from the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise concerning alternate melodies to the Apostles' Creed. This letter is dealt with in different ways but in Calgary they found a unique way. They "pasted" the letter on to the organists!

\*\*\*

Other exciting things are happening in Calgary. After 33 years of being in Calgary the congregation could begin construction on their own building. (A joint project with the School Society.) A sod-turning ceremony marked another milestone!

\*\*\*

Victoria Day is long past by now. In Burlington-South this official celebration of the Queen's birthday was re-

membered by singing the royal anthem immediately after the afternoon service the Sunday before.

\*\*\*

Summer Bible Camps are becoming more popular. A camping weekend was held in Owen Sound by a group of young people who are part of an organization called Faithworks, under the offices of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund. A Children's Summer Bible Camp will be held in August with the endorsement, support and guidance of Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton. The name has been changed from Camp Jam to Campfire. This is an outreach program intended for inner city children.

\*\*\*

When a Church introduces itself as "A Friendly Church with a Faithful Message" my thoughts wander to Prov. 27:2: "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips."

\*\*\*

The ministers of the West held a two-day Ministers' Conference in Abbotsford, BC in May. A total of 25 ministers attended including some from the Orthodox, United and Free Reformed Churches.

\*\*\*

The Family Post tells us that "Rev. Agema will be busy with church visitations for the next few months and several exchanges have been arranged." One wonders if he is planning to visit all the Churches in Canada!

\*\*\*

In Legana, Tasmania the consistory dealt with special reports on a number of members no longer attending the church services. A comment is made which, sadly enough, is true in more congregations namely that "it is often found that communication with these members by the congregation just does not happen. An improvement in attending to the Communion of Saints (Q and A 55 H.C.) is necessary."

\*\*\*

Have a good summer, all Canadians, and a bearable winter, all Australians! 



## Press Release of Classis Ontario South of June 11, 1997 held at Attercliffe, Ontario.

### 1. Opening.

On behalf of the convening church at Watford, Rev. J. VanWoudenberg called the meeting to order. He requested the delegates to sing Psalm 111:1,3,5, and led in prayer. He welcomed all the delegates and all visitors. Special welcome was extended to br. R. Pot, as well as to Rev. Kenneth McCleod and elder Norman McPhail, representatives of the Free Church of Scotland of Livonia, Michigan (the Detroit area). He noted the following items of memorabilia: although Ancaster's call to Rev. W.M. Wielenga of Lynden was declined, a subsequent call to Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta was accepted; Rev. G. Wieske accepted the call to Rockway, leaving the Church at Chatham vacant; Rev. J. VanWoudenberg declined the call to Coaldale.

### 2. Examination of Credentials.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. All churches were duly represented. Blue Bell had only one delegate. Although Rev. Wieske was not delegated by a church, no one objected to him serving as clerk as suggested by the last classis.

### 3. Constitution of Classis.

Classis was constituted, with the following moderamen: chairman: Rev. D.G.J. Agema; vice-chairman: Rev. J. VanWoudenberg; clerk: Rev. G. Wieske. The chairman thanked the convening church for the work of preparation.

### 4. Adoption of Agenda.

After a few changes the provisional agenda was adopted.

### 5. Preparatory Examination of br. R. Pot.

The documents were found to be in good order. After br. Pot presented his sermon proposal on Exodus 7:1-6, classis in closed session judged that the examination

could continue. After a coffee break and roll call, Rev. Agema then examined in Old Testament exegesis (Deut. 18), Rev. VanWoudenberg in New Testament exegesis (Matt. 4:23-5:20), and Rev. Cl. Stam in doctrine and creeds (BC 27-32; CD 5). After each exam the other members of classis had opportunity to ask questions. In closed session classis declared br. Pot eligible for call within the Canadian/ American Reformed Churches for a period of one year.

In open session br. Pot was informed and congratulated of this decision. Br. Pot then promised to teach only in accordance with the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. After singing of Psalm 98:2 and prayer, the members of classis were given the opportunity to congratulate br. Pot and his wife.

### 6. Preparatory Examination of br. S. 't Hart.

After lunch, Psalm 33:1 was sung and the roll was called. Br. 't Hart was welcomed. The documents for the examination were found to be in good order. After br. 't Hart presented his sermon proposal on Gen. 12:1-3, classis in closed session judged that the examination could continue. Rev. Agema then examined in Old Testament exegesis (2 Kings 2), Rev. B. Hofford in New Testament exegesis (Eph. 4), and Rev. Stam in doctrine and creeds (BC 22-26; CD 3/4). After each exam the other members of classis had opportunity to ask questions. In closed session classis declared br. 't Hart eligible for call within the Canadian/American Reformed Churches for a period of one year. In open session br. 't Hart was informed of this decision. After promising to teach only in accordance with the Word of God as summarized in the three forms of unity, the chairman congratulated him on behalf of classis. After singing of Psalm 67:1 and prayer, the members of classis were given the opportunity to congratulate br. 't Hart and his wife.

### 7. Address by Rev. K. McCleod from the Free Church of Scotland at Livonia, Michigan.

After a coffee break, Rev. K. McCleod thanked the classis for the invitation to witness the examination of the students and to speak to classis. He spoke words of appreciation for what he and elder McPhail heard in the examinations and for the unity they felt. He gave some background regarding their isolated congregation in the Detroit area. The chairman responded with appropriate words.

### 8. Question Period (C.O. 44).

The chairman asked whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church.

Chatham requested to appoint Rev. VanWoudenberg as counselor in the period of vacancy, and to have pulpit supply once per month during the period of vacancy. These requests were approved. Chatham also requested advice in a disciplinary matter. In closed session advice was given.

Grand Rapids requested advice regarding C.O. 39. Advice was given.

Rockway requested advice regarding discipline. In closed session advice was given.

### 9. Appeals.

After supper, Psalm 135:1 was sung and roll call was held. In closed session an appeal was dealt with.

### 10. Approval of the call from the Church at Rockway to Rev. Wieske.

All the documents were found to be in order and approval was given.

### 11. Reports.

A. The treasurer's report was received with thankfulness. The recommended assessment of \$3.00 per communicant mem-

- ber for classis and regional synod together was approved.
- B. The auditor's report for the treasurer's books was received with thankfulness. The treasurer, br. VanAmerongen was thanked for his work.
  - C. Watford reported that the classical archives in London were found to be in good order.
  - D. An auditor's report for the treasurer's books was received.
  - E. A report was received from br. Ytsma, the treasurer appointed by Chatham for the fund for needy students. Classis adopted the recommended assessment of \$5.00 per communicant member. Classis thanked br. Ytsma for his 45th annual report.

### 12. Church Visitations.

The church visitors reported on visitations to Ancaster, Attercliffe, Chatham, Grand Rapids, Hamilton, Lincoln, London, Rockway, and Smithville.

### 13. Appointments.

- A. Next classis: Ancaster was appointed as convening Church for next classis on Sept. 10, 1997 in Hamilton. Classis suggested as officers for this classis: chairman: Rev. J. DeGelder; vice-chairman: Rev. Wieske; clerk: Rev. Agema.

- B. Br. VanAmerongen was reappointed as treasurer for classis.
- C. Lincoln was reappointed to audit the books of the treasurer.
- D. London was reappointed to take care of the classical archives.
- E. Watford was reappointed to inspect the classical archives.
- F. Chatham was reappointed to care for the fund for needy students.
- G. The Church visitors were reappointed.
- H. The examiners were reappointed.
- I. Monthly pulpit supply for Chatham was arranged.
- J. Lincoln was appointed to represent Classis at the installation of Rev. Wieske.

### 14. Personal Question Period.

Rev. Stam reported on the ongoing local contact between Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church and the Rehoboth United Reformed Church of Hamilton.

### 15. Censure (C.O. 34).

The chairman judged that censure was not necessary, and he thanked the brothers for the good cooperation.

### 16. Adoption of Acts and Press Release.

The Acts were adopted and Press Release was adopted.

### 17. Closing.

The chairman asked the brothers to sing Ps. 105:1,2,3 after which the chairman led in prayer. The chairman closed classis.

For Classis,  
J. VanWoudenberg,  
vice-chairman e.t.

## CHURCH NEWS



CALLED to Taber, AB  
and Orangeville, ON

#### Candidate Richard Pot

New phone number: 905-388-7398

\*\*\*

CALLED by Hamilton, ON for mission work in Brazil

#### Candidate Stephen 't Hart

\*\*\*

CALLED to Chatham, ON

#### Rev. R. Aasman

of Edmonton Providence, AB

\*\*\*

CALLED for mission work among the Carrier natives – Smithers, BC

#### Rev. H. Versteeg

of Toronto, ON.

\*\*\*

As of July 1st, 1997, new treasurer for church at Orangeville is

#### Mrs. Janet Nieuwenhuis

RR 7, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z3

\*\*\*

The 1996-97 school year ended on May 16, 1997 with a chapel by Dr. N.H. Gootjes. The Convocation Evening will be held on Friday, September 5, 1997. Classes for the 1997-98 school year will begin the following week.

\*\*\*

Dr. C. Van Dam departed for Mexico on May 7, 1997. He gave his six Old Testament lectures at the Juan Calvino Seminary which is located in a suburb of sprawling Mexico City. It was also a fact-finding mission regarding these Reformed churches in Mexico. These churches hope to be present at the International Conference of Reformed Churches to be held later this year.

THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE  
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES  
**The Twenty-eighth Anniversary Meeting and the  
Twenty-third Convocation of the Theological College**

will be held D.V., on

**Friday, September 5, 1997 at 8:00 p.m.**

in the auditorium of Redeemer College (Hwy. 53, Ancaster)

Dr. C. Van Dam will give an address on

#### **God With us: The Gospel of the Holy of Holies**

The Master of Divinity Degree will be conferred on

Roelf Christiaan (Karlo) Janssen

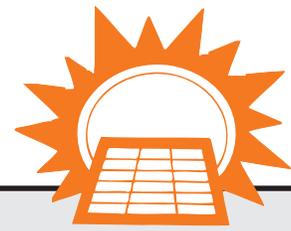
Dirk Philip Poppe

Richard Edwin Pot

Stephen Andrew 't Hart

Stephen Carl Van Dam

A collection will be taken for the Theological College Building Expansion (tax receipts available)



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“...feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, “Who is the LORD?”  
Proverbs 30: 8b and 9a

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Would it not be nice to be very, very rich? You could live in one of those fancy, huge houses with a beautiful yard and a swimming pool, you could travel and stay in expensive hotels, and you could just buy anything you wanted. Don't you think you would be really happy then?

Sometimes we dream that way. And then for a little while we think that money would take care of everything. But, is that true? I don't think that all rich people are always happy. Often they are so busy that they cannot even relax in their beautiful house and/or pool. Even when they are rich they still worry, about how to make more money yet, or about what to do with their money. They install security systems so that nobody can steal their possessions, and they always have to be on the go to socialize with their many friends. Worst of all, for many of them their lives are very busy, but also very empty for there is no room for the Lord. When you are so rich that you can do everything with your money, then you do not need the Lord. You can take care of yourself, what do you need the Lord for? Among the wealthy people there are many who are very needy because they try to live without the Lord.

The Bible teaches us that we should not put our trust in material things. We have them here on earth for a while, but we cannot take anything along when we die. The Lord does not look at our possessions, but He looks at our heart. The Lord wants us to show in our lives that we belong to Him and that we depend on Him for everything. God's children do not keep everything for themselves, but they give their money to the Church, the schools, the colleges, and for the support of those who cannot support themselves. Doing that makes them happy, because they know that they only return to the Lord what He first gave to them.

It is not nice to be poor. It is very difficult when you cannot look after your own needs. You usually do not have many friends when you are poor, and many people may even look down on you. You cannot help other people as you would like to, and you have to miss many nice things that other people have or do. Nobody would wish to be poor.

So, nor being rich nor being poor is something to wish for. The only thing we can really wish for is, that we may belong to the Lord. And that is not a wish or a dream, but that is reality. We confess that in Lord's Day 1 of the Catechism, “. . . but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.” That comfort is there for all God's covenant children. That means that we do not have to worry about anything else. Whether we are rich or poor or in between, whether we are healthy or sick, whether we can look after ourselves or when we need someone to help us and to take care of

us, we all may share in that same comfort: we belong to Jesus Christ. And when we belong to Him, we may be assured that He also will take care of us. He owns us, He knows us, He understands us, He forgives us when we confess our sins. He is there for us every day of our lives and He gives to each of us what we need in our lives. Even when that is sadness, or sickness, or poverty, or a handicap, or anything else, He gives it to us so it will strengthen our faith, and keep us close to Him. There is not one day in our lives that we can live without Him. He is close to us, and He wants us to live close to Him, and to show that we depend on Him. We can do that by showing that we are content with our lives the way the Lord has decided our circumstances. It is good, for the Lord wants us to be like that.

So there is hope and comfort for all of us whatever our circumstances may be. For we belong to Jesus Christ, our Saviour. He died for our sins, and has given us the promises of a perfect, eternal future where we all will be the same in Him.

Do in extortion not confide;  
In stolen goods do not take pride;  
Set no vain hopes on theft and plunder.  
Put not in growing wealth your trust;  
The greatest riches are but dust;  
Set not your heart on earthly splendour.

God once has spoken, twice I've heard  
His sure and never-shaken word:  
To God belongs the power and glory,  
And steadfast love is Thine, O LORD,  
For Thou dost every man reward  
According to his work before Thee.

Psalms 62:6,7

## Birthdays in August:

- 5: **Philip Schuurman**  
156 St. Catharines St., Unit 12  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
- 9: **Rose Malda**  
Oakland Centre, 53 Bond St.  
Oakville, ON L6J 5B4
- 18: **Fenny Kuik**  
140 Foch Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R2C 5H7
- 23: **Jack Dieleman**  
5785 Young Street, Apt. 704  
Willowdale, ON M2M 4J2

Phil will be 38, Rose will be 40!!, Fenny will be 45!!!, and Jack 25! this year.

Congratulations to all of you.

Until next month, Mrs. R. Ravensbergen, 7462 Hwy. 20, RR#1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

by T.M.P. Vanderven

## Extol Him with Music and Song

Psalm 95:

*Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our Salvation.  
Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song.*

To the Christian, worship of God has always been – and always ought to remain – the focus for all of life. The singing of God’s praises, the Bible tells us, is a most important part of this worship. Our Christian faith has inspired many artists to produce magnificent artworks praising their Lord and maker: paintings (think of Rembrandt), poetry (think of John Donne), architecture (think of the great cathedrals in Europe), and much music as well. In this music review, I draw your attention to the choral music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, the Dutch grandmaster of music inspired by the Great Reformation of the 16th century.

Despite the atrocities of the religious wars which swept across Europe during the 16th and 17th century (the 80-

years war in the Netherlands; the 30-years war in Germany, both coming to an end in the Peace of Westphalia [Munster] in 1648), this period saw an enormous outburst of religious and cultural activity inspired by the new doctrine of the Reformation. Both Luther and Calvin strongly encouraged the people in their personal worship of their God and Father, and both Reformers were directly instrumental in the creation of a book of hymns and psalms for use in church and family worship. It was Calvin’s *Genevan Psalter* that inspired the Dutch composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. This Psalter had been introduced to the Dutch Reformed Churches for use in the worship services in a translation of Petrus Datheen.

**Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621)**  
**PSAUMES DE DAVID** (Psalms of David)  
**The choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, UK**

**Directed by Richard Marlow**  
**BMG Connifer Classics 74321-16850-2**  
(app. \$Can 22.00)

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck was born in 1562, some 30 years after the Reformed churches established themselves firmly in his home country, Holland. Jan’s father was organist of the main church in Amsterdam, known as the “Oude Kerk” (the Old Church). We may assume that the young Jan helped his father at the organ during the playing of the mass. Jan became organist in 1577, at the age of fifteen, and held that post until his death in 1621 – a term of 44 years! By that time the City of Amsterdam had joined the Reformation. Sweelinck rarely ventured far from Amsterdam, except on business trips in order to give advice on organ building, or perhaps to purchase a harpsichord for the city magistrate. As city musician his task was to play the organ twice every day before and after the church services (the organ was not used during the services), and as a diversion for the people. The church was a popular meeting place – in the same manner as large



shopping malls are today – with the organist providing a musical backdrop.

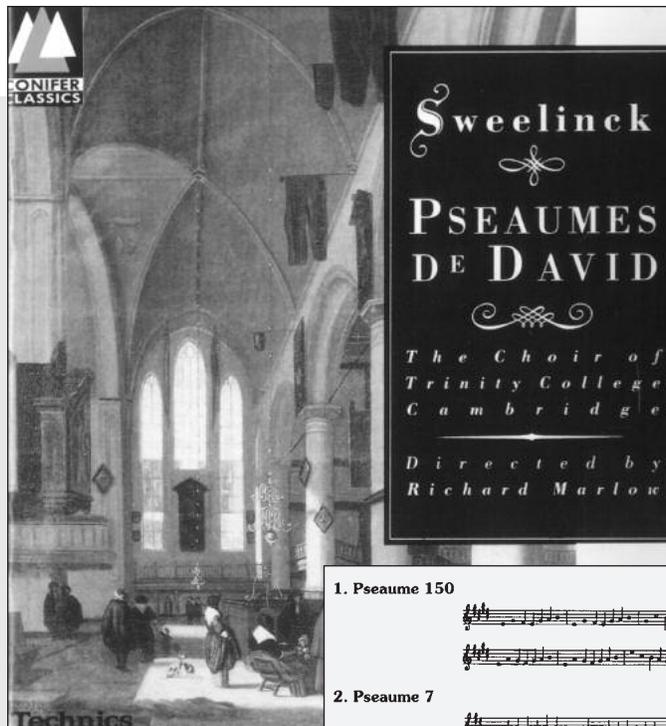
Sweelinck made a name for himself with his instrumental and vocal compositions, and as a teacher of the organ and of composition. What remains of his output consists of 254 vocal works, including 153 psalms (he set three psalms twice), and 72 instrumental works mainly for organ and/or harpsichord. He has been nicked-named “the organist maker,” drawing students from all over Europe, especially from North Germany. Among his most famous pupils

we note Heinrich Scheideman and Samuel Scheidt. A century later, both Bach and Handel underwent the influence of the Dutch master’s instruction.

Throughout his lifetime Sweelinck worked on his Psalter, creating a monument of Dutch sacred music unequalled by anyone. The first volume of psalm settings were published in 1597, while the final volume of psalms was published shortly after the composer’s death in 1621. Each setting is based on the tunes and texts of the Genevan Psalter (first published in 1562). Richard Marlow has this to say about these tunes:

*The Genevan psalm-tunes are noble, dignified melodies. When sung liturgically by a large congregation, their strong, stirring strains must have resounded impressively in the vaults of the Oude Kerk. Yet how refreshing and enjoyable – doubtlessly taxing too – Sweelinck’s polyphonic arrangements must have seemed to musicians long familiar with these traditional tunes and accustomed to hearing them performed in more routine fashion at church services.*

These settings were not intended to be used in church services (during which the Dutch translations of Petrus



1. Pseume 150



2. Pseume 7



3. Pseume 1



Dathenus were used, set to the original Genevan tunes, and sung unaccompanied under the direction of a precentor as is still done today in the Free Church of Scotland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America). The performance of these pieces requires quite some vocal skills, and as such are not suited in a church service. These vocal masterpieces were meant for *informal devotional and musical recreation* (Marlow). Sweelinck was a member of the Amsterdam musical society, and dedicated the second volume of psalms to the committee of this society. Undoubtedly, these unaccompanied settings were studied and performed during the meetings of this society of musicians and music lovers.

The CD reviewed here offers fifteen of Sweelinck's psalms, taken from the third volume published in 1614. These artful settings are written for four (Psalms 1, 74, 134), five (Psalms 19, 37, 100), six (Psalms 7, 62, 89, 110), seven (62, 148) and eight (Psalm 43, 101, 150) voices, using the original French text. Some psalms are presented in their entirety (for example, Psalm 148, 150), while only one or two stanzas are included of other psalms (Psalms 34, 43).

Sweelinck carefully considered the text of each of the psalms in order to determine the nature of the musical setting. His purpose was to bring out the meaning and mood of the words as effectively as possible. Sometimes he did this quite graphically, as in Psalm 150 in which you will hear the harp (*le harpe*) making its arpeggios, the cymbals (*le tabour*) and with your mental eye "see" the dances in the line *Haut sa louange resonnent*. The use of echo techniques create a pallet of colours which highlights all of creation far and near. The setting of Psalm 7 centres on the sigh of the believer: *O Lord God, save me from all them that persecute me*, as does the eight-part setting Psalm 43: *defend my cause*. There is a stillness in Psalm 1 that paints the joy of being blessed: *Blessed is the man who delights in the law of the Lord*. This is an example of a setting using a *cantus firmus*, the slower moving melody is easily recognized in the midst of faster moving parts. From one stanza to the next, the melody switches from the female voices to the male voices, creating different moods and colours in the process. In Psalm 100, Sweelinck uses yet another strategy: the two outside

stanzas are sung by the full choir, while the two inner stanzas are given to the female voices only. In this manner, the composer creates telling contrasts within the four minutes it takes to perform this psalm setting.

I selected just a few samples. This is music to be listened to repeatedly, perhaps one psalm at a time. Every time you will discover new details. Familiarity with the French text will, of course, help greatly to appreciate what the composer has created in such a skillful way (an English translation is provided). These compositions stand out for their rich colours and melodic inventiveness, while the link with the original tune is always clearly present. Compare them with the settings of Goudimel (available under the title *Psaumes de la Réforme* and reviewed on an earlier occasion), composed some forty to fifty years earlier. I highly recommend that our choirs will add the Goudimel and the Sweelinck settings to their repertoire. They are intended for smaller choirs in order to keep the intricate part singing as clear and light as possible – two or three voices to a part will be excellent. Initially, it will require quite some effort to learn to sing them well, yet our choir members will find great satisfaction in performing this music.

The psalms are sung by the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, UK (the program notes do not indicate how many choristers there are), under its director Richard Marlow. An excellent example, in my opinion, of beautiful, well-balanced, and detailed *a capella* singing. The performance holds its own quite well, also after repeated listening – always a good test.

Add this valuable disc to your collection, and spend time to become familiar with these beautiful settings of our beloved psalms.

**Related discs:**

Psaumes de la Réforme. Ensemble Claude Goudimel. Naxos 8.553025. Reviewed in *Clarion* Vol. 46 No. 2, January 1997.

Sweelinck: Organ works. James David Christie, Organ. Naxos 8.550904.

**Information:**

Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians: Sweelinck.

Program notes: Richard Marlow.

