



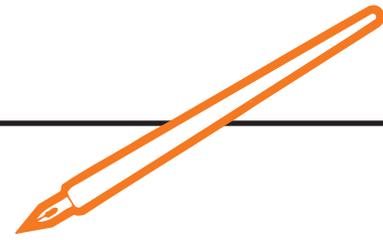
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 46, NO. 22 OCTOBER 31, 1997



*Someone might possibly
dare to die*

By C. Van Dam



The need for the Reformed faith

Latin America is in the midst of spiritual renewal. In a part of the world that used to be painted solid with Roman Catholicism, reports indicate that a Latin American version of “The Great Awakening” seems to be taking place. The statistics speak for themselves. Early in the 1980s there were about 18.6 million Evangelicals in Latin America. Currently there are almost 60 million. According to the Latin American Catholic Bishops Conference eight thousand convert to evangelicalism every day. These numbers mean that Evangelicals make up seven to thirty-five per cent of the population in some Latin American countries and are becoming more numerous than practising Roman Catholics in Guatemala, Brazil and Nicaragua. It is significant that two out of every three Evangelicals in Latin America are Pentecostal. Estimates suggest that forty percent of the world’s Pentecostals live in Latin America.

In several important ways the predominantly Pentecostal renewal has had a very good effect on the populations of these countries. Pentecostal preaching has been instrumental in the conversion of sinners, including the down-and-out prostitutes and drunks. Fathers have become more sensitive and dedicated to their families and a clearer sense of purpose in life has meant that many are developing themselves and moving up in society. Pentecostal churches have brought the social classes of poor and rich, illiterate and educated, together in a way unknown to Latin America previously. Also racial lines and castes are being crossed as never before. All in all a new and more open social atmosphere is being created.

In a fascinating and perceptive article,¹ Pedro C. Moreno, a Bolivian lawyer, mentions the above developments and says that one might conclude that the “pentecostalization” of Latin America promises a bright and prosperous future. He notes however that serious doubts and uncertainties remain about whether the explosive growth of pentecostalism will bring forth the long awaited and much needed economic and social transformation of Latin America. One observer even suggests that if there is ever substantial economic improvement in Latin America, it will not be because of the Evangelicals, but in spite of them. Why is that?

Moreno notes that pentecostalism hinders the further renewal of society for three reasons. Firstly, the line is drawn too sharply between the religious and the secular. Even though Moreno himself is Pentecostal, he laments the “religious paranoia” by which he means that

church members place great importance solely on “religious” matters at the expense of every other activity or aspect of life. . . . Many believe, for instance, that they perform “spiritual things” only while reading their Bibles, attending church, or praying. Everything else – studying, working, sleeping, eating – is just “secular” or “worldly.” Only that music is “spiritual” or “Christian” which explicitly refers to the Bible or to Jesus. Even

money spent on charity and the family may be thought to have no spiritual basis unless explicitly given to the member’s church.

Moreno goes on to note that the pattern of Pentecostals despising or at least minimizing their studies or professions and the value of their work has also diminished the importance of “other areas of life such as education, business, and especially politics (seen largely as Satan’s domain).”

The second reason why pentecostalism hinders the further renewal of society is their unnecessary rejection of reason in favour of emotion. It is true that secular rationalism has led to a disregard for the plain teachings of Scripture, but sole reliance on emotion is not a good response.

The insistence on faith-healing and becoming prosperous through prayer has led many Pentecostals to believe that the “miraculous” is the rule, and the “natural” is secondary. Personal responsibility disappears when all character flaws and sins are blamed on demons from whom one needs to be “delivered.” This kind of emotionalism borders on simple superstition when used as a substitute not merely for secular rationalism, but for rationality as well.

The attack on the use of one’s reason has resulted in the abandonment of much intellectual endeavour together with the study of church history and dogmatics. Even the Bible is placed in a secondary role after experiencing the Holy Spirit and being led by Him. “Indiscriminate acceptance of extra-biblical ‘revelations’ and prophecies is also common.”

Thirdly, the message of salvation in Christ alone is preached in such a way that it can result in an escapist mentality of fleeing the world, if the emphasis on our responsibilities here on earth is not stressed as well. Many Pentecostals have adopted a short-term perspective on life. Why bother participating in politics, economics, and the renewal of society when there is no future here anyway? Christ is returning. “The only people who are really doing God’s work and pleasing Him are evangelists, pastors, teachers, prophets and apostles.” This attitude is discouraging for professionals in the many different areas of life and breeds mediocrity.

Regular readers of *Clarion* will notice from the above that what is needed in Latin America is the full Reformed faith – the Biblical faith. The gospel is not just for Sunday but is for all of life. Since the Reformation this truth has been proclaimed anew with vigour and needs desperately to be heard in this part of the world. God has saved the whole man and He redeems all of life. “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31)! No flight into mysticism and subjectivism – the Word is our guide. It is through the Word that the Spirit leads us. No escapism from this world. Although not of the world, we are in the world and Christ has urged us to be a salt and a light! Society needs to be renewed through the leavening work of the gospel (Matt.

5:13-16; 13:33). The gospel redeems marriage, family, labour and labour relations (see, e.g., Col. 3:18-4:1).

The tremendous vacuum of a true spirituality is great in Latin America. The Pentecostal faith is not enough. The Reformed faith is needed. This fact underlines the urgency for Reformed mission in Latin America. May the Lord bless the work of our missionaries in Latin America and those of other Reformed churches such as our sister churches and the Free Reformed Churches. May also the work of the Juan Calvino Seminary in Mexico City be blessed. It strives to raise the full and pure light of the Biblical doctrine, the Reformed faith, in Mexico. And because of Mexico's position of leadership in Spanish Latin America, its efforts will also have impact on the rest of that part of the world. How a scholarly defense of the faith and the full arming of indigenous Reformed preachers and missionaries is needed! May the Head of the Church bless those who labour therein.

And, may we in the comfortable western world take note of the warning of the severe limitations we just saw, constraints that actually can cause evangelicalism to hamper and obstruct the full impact of the gospel – also in our lives and country. Indeed, let us reaffirm our commitment to and appreciation for the full Reformed faith. We cannot and may not settle for less.

"Rapture and Renewal in Latin America." *First Things* June/July 1997, pp. 31-34. This editorial is indebted to this article for the information about the subject being discussed.



What's inside?

In the editorial, Dr. Van Dam writes about what seems to be a Latin American version of the "Great Awakening" taking place. In Mexico and other Central and South American countries people are turning to the Lord in great numbers. However, due to a heavy influence of Pentecostalism, the full gospel is not being proclaimed. There is a great need for Reformed mission in that part of the world.

Once again we have prevailed upon the historiographical skills of James Dykstra and asked him to contribute an article commemorating Remembrance Day. In the Western world we live in freedom. Many have given their lives, have dared to die, that we may live in freedom. Lest we forget. . . .

In "On the other hand . . .", Rev. G. Nederveen responds to Rev. VanOene's recent article on the revision of the Nicene Creed. Is it not, perhaps, rather regrettable that we started tampering with the texts of the ecumenical creeds some years ago? It seems that a fair bit of heat is being generated in our discussions surrounding revisions, revised revisions, and linguistic updates and improvements. One begins to think that we might have done better had we left the ecumenical creeds as we received them when we came to this continent. Likely, the last word has not yet been spoken on this.

Ought we, as Christians who know they live out of the Lord's hand, have the word "accident" in our vocabulary? In Reader's Forum, Adrian Dieleman discusses this point.

In addition to this, you will find a few other contributions. Happy reading!

GvP



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,
C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
46 Sulphur Springs Road, Ancaster, ON L9G 1L8
Fax: (905) 304-4951
E-Mail: clarion@compuserve.com

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

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1997	Regular	Air
	Mail	Mail
Canada*	\$34.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$39.00	\$52.00
International	\$55.00	\$84.00

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055

Advertisements: \$11.25 per column inch

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – The need for the Reformed faith — C. Van Dam	476
Meditation – What are you doing with My children? — D.G.J. Agema	478
Someone might possibly dare to die — James Dykstra	479
Poem – Gebed van een 65-plusser. A Prayer of a 65-plus — translation by Ralph Winkel	480
On the other hand . . . — G. Nederveen	481
Congratulations Rev. Clarence Stam — Rev. Jan DeGelder	483
Great is Thy Faithfulness! – A Celebration of Twenty-five Years in the Ministry — Erica Holtvluwer	484
Two Exciting Days in the Life of Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church — Ted Van Raalte	485
Reader's Forum – God is in control — Adrian M. Dieleman	487
Letters to the Editor	488
Book Review – Beeley, Ray. <i>The Roaring of the Lion, A Commentary on Amos</i> . — R. Aasman	488
Press Release	289

By D.G.J. Agema

What are you doing with My children?

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. ³ I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. ⁴ If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, ⁵ I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.'"

Leviticus 20:1-5

Can you imagine parents sacrificing their own children? The thought is horrible to us. Yet it happened. The Bible speaks about it. The people of Israel were living in a world where parents were prepared to sacrifice their own children. What a horrible practice, you say. Yes, we can be thankful that we live in a society that protects children. Although, at the same time we can wonder whether the current abortion practices are any better than the child sacrifices in the past.

But why would parents sacrifice their children? This was done to obtain the favour of the gods. It was not that these parents did not care for their children. It was exactly because they cared for these children that they had to be willing to sacrifice them. The gods demanded what was most dear to you and if you were willing to let go of your child the gods would be impressed and you would obtain their favour.

The LORD warns His people not to follow this practice. The many texts in the Bible that deal with this horrible custom show that this warning was no luxury. To make it worse yet, in spite of the clear warning by the LORD, Israel did follow this abominable practice. It became an accepted custom, and the leaders gave the example. We read in 2 Kings 17:14-18 that the northern kingdom, the Ten Tribes, were sent into exile exactly because of this sin. That should have warned the Southern Kingdom, Judah; however, it followed suit. Kings like Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their children in Jerusalem. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel warned the people that they would also go into exile for this reason.

Why would the LORD forbid this custom? Not only is human sacrifice in itself wrong, but also the children of Israel were not to be dedicated to the idols. The children of the covenant belong to the LORD and therefore may not be given to the idols. In Ezekiel 16 the LORD accuses His people of giving the children that they bore to Him to the idols. In forbidding this horrible practice the LORD protects the bond He has made with our children through the blood of the covenant.

This has consequences for our children. They are, as we confess in L.D. 27, distinguished from the children of unbelievers. They belong to the LORD. This also has consequences for the parents, for the LORD watches over the way we train them and bring them up. He desires the hearts and the love of our children. He asks the question: What are you doing with My children? We should not think that the way we bring up our children is something neutral. The LORD watches over and will judge the way we bring them up. The LORD fights for His children against the evil powers that are in this world.

When men fell into sin in Paradise the LORD set enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The aim of the devil is to make the seed of the woman, or the seed of the covenant, his followers. He who has the youth has the future, the saying goes. Satan knows this as well, and therefore aims his skillful and powerful attack at the youth of the covenant.

In our society we do not have the practice of sacrificing children to idols as it was done in the days of Israel. But let's not think that the idols have gone

away. John ends his first letter by warning against the idols. There are so many idols today who prey on our children. These idols have their temples and media to send out the message and convince many. Are we aware of them? Are we aware of the subtleness of their attacks. Do we realize that today's idols can use the modern technology to infiltrate our homes and our lives?

Yes, do we realize that the LORD is watching over the way we bring up our children at home? What are we doing when we let them watch whatever they want, and listen to whatever they want? Is that not sacrificing them to the idols? What are we doing if our concern is that our children keep up with what this world has to offer and do not miss out?

The LORD asks us the question, "What are you doing with My children? He takes this very seriously. He will not tolerate it when His people sacrifice their children to the idols. Remember that Israel lost its land and was sent into exile because of it. The same happened to Judah and Jerusalem. Didn't the Lord Jesus say that whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Him to sin, it would be better for him to have a millstone fastened around his neck and be drowned in the depth of the sea?

The children in our homes are the LORD's. That is a wonderful gift. They are so special in the eyes of the LORD that He watches over them and how they are taught. He wants them to acknowledge His fatherly goodness and mercy. Yes, as parents and children together we may live from His mercy. 

Someone might possibly dare to die

By James Dykstra

Gathering together in Valcartier, Quebec, thousands of Canadian men began training for what many simply came to call "the Great War." More colorfully, others have dubbed it as "the war to end all wars," and we know it as simply "World War I." Young men from across the country, totaling in the hundreds of thousands by the war's end, had volunteered to fight a distant enemy and, if the need arose, had volunteered to die.

For Canadians this war was a remarkable one. For the Belgians, the French, or the Russians, the enemy was close by and was an immediate and real threat to their homelands. For the Canadians, Germany and Austria were far away. The Canadians did not fight to protect themselves. They could not for, aside from a handful of German U-boat class submarines spotted off shore, the war was hundreds and thousands of miles away. It is remarkable enough to have the bravery to die to protect your own country, but to safeguard your family you might possibly have enough courage. To sacrifice yourself for strangers you may never meet, who live far away and don't matter to you, that is valor that is hard to comprehend.

To die is fearful, but to die in warfare is a special sort of horror. World War I could be considered to be the first truly modern war, where science combined with brutality to make killing an art. Poison gas made its appearance, and as chlorine was replaced by mustard gas, the Allied troops were quickly trained in the usage of masks. "It was explained to them that four breaths of the deadly gas was sufficient to kill; the first breath produced a spasm of the glottis; the second brought mental confusion and delirium; the third produced unconsciousness; and the fourth, death."

A type of "flame projector," capable of hurling fire up to 100 feet, was used to great effect during the war. It can scarcely be imagined the results that a flame thrower could have in the close-quarters battles fought in the trenches. Nail studded clubs and trench knives claimed their victims as well, but per-



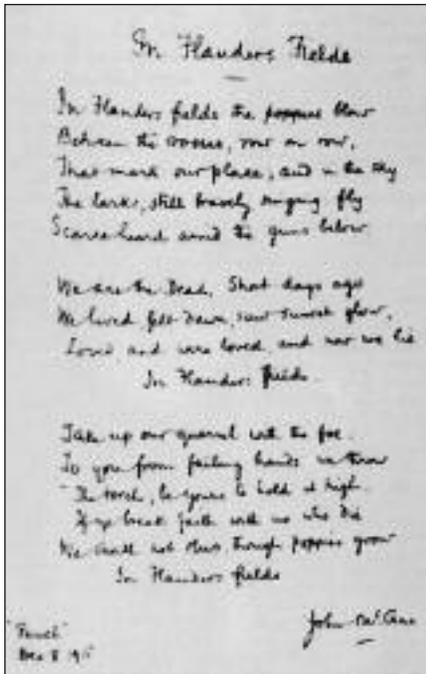
Canadian machine gunners dig themselves into shell holes on Vimy Ridge, France, April 1917 (courtesy NAC/PA-1017).

haps the most devastating weapon to be mastered during the war was artillery.

When attacking the trenches on the other side of the open no man's land, machine guns could readily be used by the defenders to mow down the attacking force. To avoid the huge casualties that this would cause, the defenders' trenches had to be emptied before they were assaulted. Artillery was used to do this. The artillery shells which exploded in the trenches didn't merely kill the enemy soldiers but leveled anything and everything that was anywhere close by. When the bombardment ended, those not dead or maimed beyond recognition were easily captured or killed as they were often left suffering from "'shell shock,' a derangement of body and brain, paralyzing nerve and muscle centers and frequently producing insanity." The use of artillery allowed mass scale killing from a distance. You no longer had to face the opponent. Your only reminder of the suffering and death you had inflicted was the human body parts and blood that were flung back on to your own lines by the force of the artillery explosions.

Into this scene of carnage the Canadians voluntarily entered. What motivated them is hard to figure out. There was certainly the notion of Empire, the colonies remaining faithful to mother Britain in her hour of need. A Canadian colonel suggested that "the love of country and empire which had been no obvious thing burst forth in a patriotic fervor as deep as it was spontaneous and genuine." Put simply, the Empire that the Canadians had ignored, they now defended. While this is certainly partially true, it remains unsatisfying.

There was more at work. The Canadians believed they were fighting for "freedom and liberty." For nothing more concrete than giving others freedom from evil, than the chance for the rest of humanity to live life quietly and justly, thousands of our countrymen were horribly killed or brutally maimed. A French general observed that "nothing in the history of the world has ever been known quite like it . . . the Australians at the Dardanelles and the Canadians at Ypres, fought with supreme and absolute devotion for what to many must have seemed simple



McCrae jotted down this most famous of war poems in 20 minutes during the Battle of Ypres (courtesy NAC/C-128809).

abstractions, and that nation which will support for an abstraction the horror of this war of all wars will ever hold the highest place in the records of human valor."

The historians who have analyzed this war cannot truly make sense of it. Rightly, they can point to cases of mismanagement, and incompetence in the running of the army. The best known is the tale of the "Ross rifle," a weapon that worked well in target practice, but whose utter failure in battlefield conditions cost numerous Canadian lives. The historians can point to friction in the army command that caused battles to fail and, ultimately, brought many young men to an early demise. The historian is trained as a professional cynic, equipped to second guess the past, and so can readily show all sorts of failures and weaknesses in the men and the command of the Canadian armed forces during the Great War. His cynicism fails him in the end. What the historian cannot do, is explain why, despite the horrors that war brings on, any sane man would voluntarily go to fight for the freedom of a country that is not his own.

Though it is hard to fathom how men could go to their deaths while fighting for an "abstraction," it can be made a little easier to comprehend. You must understand the idea of dying for someone you don't know and who doesn't know or love you. You need to grapple with the idea of self sacrifice. You are forced to remember that no

human being is capable of this in his own strength. You have to grasp the concept of a miracle. When all is decided, where cynicism fails the challenge, a miracle seems to be the only way to explain what happened.

To grasp how young men can sacrifice themselves to protect the freedom of others, to comprehend this unfathomable enigma, one must remember the source of all miracles. One must recall that no man does good on his own. To truly know that minute of silence on the 11th of November and understand why Canada and so many other countries are allowed to live in freedom and prosperity, one must always be aware that without God, none of it would have been possible.

Lest we forget.

When not writing articles for Clarion, James Dykstra studies to become a cynical historian.

All direct quotes come from:

March, Francis A. *History of the World War: An Authentic Narrative of The World's Greatest War*. Toronto: John C. Winston, 1918.

Photos:

The Canadian Encyclopedia Plus Copyright©1996 by McClelland & Stewart Inc. 

Gebed van een 65-plusser.

Heer, u weet zelf beter dan ik dat ik ouder word en dat er een dag zal komen dat ik oud ben. Bewaar me voor de noodlottige gewoonte te denken dat ik over ieder onderwerp, bij iedere gelegenheid mijn mening moet geven. Verlos me van de neiging andermans zaken op te knappen. Help me om bedachtzaam te zijn en niet humeurig, behulpzaam, maar niet bazig. Weerhoud me ervan eindeloze bijzonderheden te vertellen, geef me vleugels om snel ter zake te komen. Verzegel mijn lippen wat betreft mijn pijnen en kwaaltjes. Ze worden erger en met het klimmen der jaren neemt de lust toe ze steeds weer voor anderen te repeteren. Ik durf niet te vragen om een beter geheugen, maar wel om een toenemende nederigheid en minder zelfverzekerdheid als mijn geheugen in strijd schijnt te zijn met het geheugen van anderen. Laat me een beetje lief mogen blijven, niet een zuur oud mens, maar iemand die prettig en gemakkelijk in de omgang is. Geef mij het vermogen om iets goeds te zien op onverwachte plaatsen en leer mij talenten ontdekken in mensen in wie ik dat niet had verwacht. En laat me, o Heer, ze dat dan ook ens vertellen. Amen.

A Prayer of a 65-plus.

Lord, you know better than I that I am getting older and that a day will come that I will be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking that I, at every opportunity, have to give my opinion about every possible subject. Aid me to be thoughtful and not surly, helpful but not bossy. Keep me from telling endless little particulars, give me wings to get down to business quickly. Seal my lips about my pains and ailments. They are becoming worse and with the passing of the years the desire increases to repeat them endlessly to others. I do not dare to ask for a better memory but for more humbleness and less self-assurance if my memory seems to be in contrast with the memory of others. Let me remain lovable, not an old sourpuss but someone who is a pleasure to be with. Give me the ability to see something good in unexpected places and teach me to discover the talents in people in whom I never expected them. And Lord, let me be able to tell that to them. Amen.

Translation by Ralph Winkel

On the other hand . . .

By G. Nederveen

October 2, 1997, was the date when the Book of Praise Committee would meet for the eleventh time in just over two years. The reason for this meeting was to finalize its report to the churches so that the consistories would have it six months in advance of General Synod, as per mandate. Our efficient secretary had prepared a draft of the report which landed on my desk on September 30. A quick review of the package revealed that there was also a photo copy of an article by the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene regarding the provisionally adopted Nicene Creed ("A Revision Revised," *Clarion*, September 19, 1997). And that is how I got to read the article before my own copy of *Clarion* was stuffed in my mailbox on October 3.

Of course, as a member of the Book of Praise Committee I was interested to find out what the Rev. VanOene had to say. I always read his articles. This is not flattery, but fact. How surprised I was, therefore, to find a different VanOene on the printed page. He went 'a plowing' with someone else's calf. And there it came: br. Rienk Koat, certified translator etc., with all the degrees, laurels and credentials attached. The stage was set: a 30 page report on which 250 hours were spent and which a university professor judged to be a fair translation and a 'sound scholarly document' (p. 414). I rubbed my eyes. Was this the same person writing who some time ago commented about 'impeccable credentials'? (See *Clarion*, November 29, 1996, p. 538). Was I supposed to be impressed by this list of credentials? If that was the intent, it did not work. For several reasons.

Background

Rev. VanOene writes that he received a copy of the report by br. Rienk Koat and that he was impressed by it. I will deal with its content a little later. Before I say anything else, let me make it clear that I do not write on behalf of the present or former Book of Praise Committee. They have no knowledge of my writing this response. I am simply responding as an individual who wants to show the other side of the coin to

offset some of the things Rev. VanOene presents as facts.

First I want to respond for a moment to his lament that the "Kcoat" report was sent to the Book of Praise Committee but never acknowledged. I remember reading this report nearly three years ago. It was written in response to the completed report of the Book of Praise Committee to the churches. Let me say no more than that the church at Langley sent it to the committee with a lukewarm commendation.

Since the Book of Praise Committee had finalized this part of its mandate, the committee received Langley's submission for information. Because Langley's response came as a reaction to the finished report of the Book of Praise Committee, the correct address for their submission would have been Synod 1995. The church at Langley should have mailed it to Synod Abbotsford with a letter to the effect that Langley was not impressed with the Book of Praise Committee report – if that was indeed the sentiment of the brothers – and requested synod to mandate the next committee to study the report by br. Koat. And for the record, that is also what I, on behalf of the committee, personally conveyed at that time to the chairman of the consistory at Langley. In that way we acknowledged receipt of the report and our course of action.

Where are we today?

Three years have passed. The current Book of Praise Committee has met eleven times since receiving its mandate. Requests for comments on the provisionally adopted version of the Nicene Creed were mailed to the churches. At our October 2, 1997 meeting the committee still had not received a submission by Langley. Instead, the church at Langley sent a toned-down version of the original "Kcoat" report to all the consistories in September of 1997. (Burlington Ebenezer received a copy on September 23). Langley requested each consistory that if they agreed with the content of the report to send their views and comments to the

Two questions come to mind here. First of all, since the church at Langley had the "Kcoat" report in its possession since late 1994, why are they setting the wheels in motion almost three years later, when the Book of Praise Committee is again finalizing its report to the churches? Why did they wait three years? I would say: it is too little too late. That is bad and sad enough.

My second concern is the question: Is Langley doing the right thing? They are asking the churches to plough with someone else's calf, as Rev. VanOene is doing with his article in *Clarion*. In the secular world this is known as collusion. I believe firmly that this is not the proper ecclesiastical route. I also wonder: Why are they doing this seven months before the start of General Synod 1998? Every elder could know that the report of the committee to the churches has to be mailed six months before synod is convened. I am convinced that the churches should just receive the report for information and let the church at Langley present its own case at Synod 1998. The churches should leave the calf in the pasture. But just in case they also plan to go ploughing, I request a public forum, like Rev. VanOene did, to shed a different light.

Step by step

Let me now, step by step, review each point. Some will receive more attention than others. I will follow the same numbers system as in Rev. VanOene's article.

1. Synod's simple version is to be preferred. There is no need to translate 'as well as'. We cannot improve on simplicity; we can only embellish it.
2. "Only-begotten." Omission of the hyphen was probably an oversight, and I support its inclusion.
3. "Being" of one substance.

Is it necessary to insert the word "being" as both br. Koat and Rev. VanOene advocate? No, it is not, because we are dealing here with concise credal statements about the Lord Jesus Christ. We

confess Him to be “God of God . . . begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.” The accumulative description of who Christ is leaves no doubt that these concise statements reinforce the idea that the Son of God shares the same quality with the Father.

Brother Koat’s examples in support for his argument are weak at best. The sentence about the happy couple is simply incomplete without the word ‘being,’ and would therefore be incorrect English. The same holds for the reference to Philippians 2:2. That is not the case with our creedal statements. Therefore br. Koat’s argument is not convincing.

4. “Through whom” or “by whom?”

Rev. VanOene considers br. Koat’s reasoning irrefutable. Who am I to refute? But I will defend that “through” is the better translation.

We all acknowledge God the Father as the creator. We say: the world was created by God the Father. But in this section of the Nicene Creed the church is making a statement of faith about the Christ, not the Father. And Scripture indicates clearly that the Father created the world *through* the Son. This has nothing to do with listing examples of “through” as penetration. These examples may look impressive, but they are beating air. God the Father is the agent: the world was made *by* Him. Christ the Son is the medium: the Father made the world *through* the Son. That is also how the RSV and NIV translate Hebrews 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 8:6. For that reason I fervently hope that for clarity’s sake the churches will adopt the version “*through* whom all things were made.”

5. Synod’s version is to be preferred.

Brothers Koat and VanOene feel that repetition of the word ‘for’ is more emphatic. I ask: emphatic of what? I would argue that the single use of ‘for’ emphasizes precisely that Christ came into the world to save sinful mankind. The second ‘for’ is superfluous.

6. “Became incarnate” or “was incarnate?”

Here again I differ from both brothers and support the synod’s version. Brother Koat asserts that “was incarnate” is the preferred translation because the incarnation took place only once. He therefore believes the change to “became incarnate” is not for the better. Then

he writes: “Quoted usages of the verb ‘become’ *lack* the immediacy and directness of the simple ‘was’ in this context.” I must honestly admit that this does not make sense to me. How does the verb ‘become’ *lack* immediacy? The simple fact is that at one time Christ was not in the flesh. He became man. I’m sure that during catechism instruction about the two natures of Christ all our ministers teach the distinction that the Son of God, at His incarnation, remained what He was (and is), namely God, and *became* what He was not, namely man. I am not convinced by br. Koat’s argument, and would strongly suggest that the synod’s version is a marked improvement.

7. “He was crucified” or “and he was also crucified?”

There is no doubt in my mind that the synod’s version is better. The suggestion to leave the word ‘also’ in the text even though it is not in the Greek is not helpful. Does it really enhance or clarify the flow of thought and the dynamics of the statement? Don’t forget that we are dealing with concise creedal statements! If the ancient fathers who wrote the Nicene Creed wanted to enhance the text with ‘also’, they could have and would have done so.

8. “He arose” or “arose again?”

Both translations are possible. Nevertheless, I would support synod’s rendition for two reasons. First, “he arose” is a more dynamic statement that reflects the glorious exclamation found in Scripture: He has risen! In the second place, “He arose” leaves no room for possible misinterpretation since it does indeed diminish the possibility of thinking that Christ has risen before.

Brother Koat writes with some indignation: “I do not in the least subscribe to your suggestion that it seems ‘to imply that Jesus Christ has risen before this,’ as if this notion might ever find foothold in orthodox Reformed theology.” I share his thinking here. But I have a question. Why was our brother so diligent – and rightly so – to make sure that the word “only-begotten” was hyphenated? Because, he argues, that “without a hyphen the word ‘only’ could be taken in the meaning of ‘merely’” (see point 2, p. 414). I agree. However, I could counter his argument by saying: “I do not in the least subscribe to your

suggestion that the notion of ‘merely’ might ever find foothold in orthodox Reformed theology.” My point is simply this: just as I appreciate and agree with the fact that the brothers Koat and VanOene want to prevent misconceptions regarding “only-begotten,” so it is prudent to prevent misconceptions regarding Christ’s rising from the dead. It is always best to waylay the possibility of misinterpretation right from the start and prevent all possibility of thinking that Christ has risen before. That is what the more dynamic statement “He arose” does far better than “He arose again.”

9. “At” or “on” the right hand?

Once again our brother gives plenty of examples that simply do not prove the point. He does not prove that the expression “sit *at* the right hand” lacks the idea of authority. Just listing standard expressions like ‘sit on the bench’, or ‘sit on the Senate’, or ‘sit *on* the throne’, and then deducing from them that only the translation ‘sit *on* the right hand’ – which is *not* a standard expression! – conveys authority, is overstating one’s case. Neither is it convincing. Acts 7:56 relates that Stephen saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. And who of us has not heard Lord’s Day 19 of the Heidelberg Catechism explained with reference to 1 Kings 1:19 where Solomon honours his mother above all the others in his presence by having her sit *at* his right? In the Apostle’s Creed we say that Christ sits *at* the right hand of God. So in the Lord’s Supper form: let us lift up our hearts to where Christ is, *at* the right hand of God. Synod’s version is a definite improvement in today’s English.

10. Shall I? It is getting tedious, but let me defend that “He will come again” is correct. Let me do so by quoting from a university text book. Randolph Quirk and Sidney Greenbaum write on page 47 regarding ‘will’ and ‘shall’:

Will for future can be used in all persons throughout the English-speaking world, whereas *shall* (for 1st person) is largely restricted in this usage to southern BrE (British English [GN]).

On page 54 they write:

Shall is, on the whole and especially outside BrE, an infrequent auxiliary with restricted use compared to *should*, *will*, and *would*; *will* is generally

preferred, except in 1st person questions: Shall I . . . ? (*A University Grammar of English*, London: Longman, 1973)

11. The original Greek does not have "with glory" between commas.

12. "Through" or "by" the prophets?

Either one is acceptable. Br. Koat finds support for his translation "by the prophets" in the KJV. It is interesting that Hebrews 1:1 to which he refers, is translated in the NIV as "through the prophets." It is also worthy to note that in 2 Peter 2:20-21 we read that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. They spoke from God as they were carried along or moved by the Holy Spirit (NIV, RSV). The 'from God' seems to point in the direction that "through the prophets" is the preferred translation. God used the prophets through whom he spoke to his people. I fail to see how the translation 'through' would undermine the thesis of "organic inspiration," or how 'by' would support it.

13. My preference here is for "we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church." Regrettably, synod did not take over the committee's proposal.

14. "Acknowledge" or "confess" one baptism?

As I read the quote from S.I. Hayakawa, I was wondering what that same semanticist would have to say about the word 'confess' in

today's usage. We don't hear that side. In my opinion his view of 'acknowledge' is a rather restricted one. I doubt whether it has the overriding connotation of reluctance, as he suggests. If that is the case we better quickly change Hymn 2:1. So far, however, I have not sensed any reluctance on the part of the congregation when we sing: "O God, we praise Thee, we *acknowledge* Thee as Lord." I *gladly* acknowledge Him as my Lord. I suppose, because either translation is acceptable, the committee did not see the need to recommend any change. Neither do I.

15. Here, too, my preference is for the committee proposal which synod did not take over. Still, synod's version is acceptable because "we look forward to" expresses a sense of longing, as does "we await."

In conclusion

This brings me to the end of a rather lengthy exercise. I agree with the brothers Koat and VanOene that the adoption of a revised version of the Nicene Creed is an important matter. That is why I have taken the time to shed a different light on the subject for all to consider.

One other item needs a quick mention. Rev. VanOene was surprised and annoyed that the provisional adopted version of the Nicene Creed found its way into the latest edition of the *Book of Praise* (p.413). He considers it a "presumptuous action" and a "mistake"

which he hopes will not be repeated at any time. He then makes a comparison with other decisions made for the Book of Praise Committee to carry out. For example, the "alternate melodies." Imagine that the Committee had put these things in the *Book of Praise!* (p.414). I can assure my esteemed teacher that this would not happen. But I wonder if he is fair in his comments. As in the past the committee has incorporated into the *Book of Praise* all synodical decisions when synod *adopted* certain items. And there lies the difference. The "alternate melodies" were not adopted; the current version of the Nicene Creed was, albeit provisionally, but which in effect takes the place of the 'old.' Or do we have two versions running at the same time? I, for one, only read the provisionally adopted version of the Nicene Creed in the worship service. Is that, too, presumptuous?

The publication of the provisionally adopted version in the *Book of Praise* was not a matter of presumption nor was it a mistake. The committee simply carried out synod's mandate. Rev. VanOene may not like that, and it may have annoyed our brother, but that is the way it is. Perhaps it is a lesson for all, especially for the brothers at synod to clearly define the mandate to their committees.

Rev. G. Nederveen is minister of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington, ON. 

Congratulations Rev. Clarence Stam

On September 22, 1997, it was 25 years since the Rev. Clarence Stam was ordained as Minister of the Word in the Gereformeerde Kerk at Langeslag in the Netherlands.

After a few years he crossed the Atlantic, and since then he has served several churches in Ontario: Burlington-West, Smithville, Attercliffe (for 8 days), Fergus and Hamilton. Of the 6 years in Smithville, one year was spent in the Netherlands to complete his studies at the Theological University in Kampen.

Many remember with thankfulness and appreciation Rev. Stam's ministry, his preaching and teaching. The spontaneity of his wife Margaret has also contributed to this appreciation.

The ministry of the Word is a wonderful task. At the same time, as a minister you must also deal with differences and disagreements. There are times that you are confronted with lengthy discussions and clashing opinions. Rev. Stam had his part of these experiences too, in consis-

tories as well as in major assemblies. How beautiful, then, to work as officebearers in mutual trust, sharing a deep love for the Lord, for His Word and for His Church.

Memories fade away, but the brothers and sisters in the churches served by Rev. Stam won't forget how, by God's grace, he has been instrumental in the upbuilding of God's people. Indeed, by God's grace – the same grace in Jesus Christ, which was and is always in the very centre of Rev. Stam's preaching.

Rev. Stam, we extend to you our heartfelt congratulations with this anniversary. We give thanks to the Lord for His care over you, your wife, your family, also in difficult times, during the past 25 years. May the King of the Church continue to enable you to serve Him faithfully, with God's honour, God's glory, God's awesome holiness at the heart of your ministry.

Rev. Jan DeGelder, Smithville

Great is Thy Faithfulness!

– A Celebration of Twenty-five Years in the Ministry

By Erica Holtvluwer

The sounds of raucous laughter filled the room, interrupting the chatter and intermittent strains of piano music which filled the air. A crowd had gathered around a large blown-up photo of the Reverend Clarence Stam in which he glared at the camera with a mixture of incredulity and menace. The members of the gathering chuckled good-naturedly at the captions which various congregation members had penned beneath the comical picture. One clever caption in particular drew many guffaws. It read, "What do you mean they've cancelled my sabbatical?!" The aforementioned photo, along with many similar bygone memories of Rev. Stam and his family, adorned the walls of the Guido de Bres Community Centre on September 20, 1997. The occasion for this look back into the past was the marking of Rev. Stam's twenty-five years as minister of the Word. The council and congregation of "Cornerstone" Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton hosted an "Open House" to celebrate with the Stams and commemorate this milestone.

Reverend Stam began his ministry in 1972 as the newly-ordained minister of the congregation at Langeslag in the Netherlands. After three years, he accepted a call to the "Great White North." The congregation at Burlington-West was elated to receive a minister from Holland who spoke English like a native! As the years passed, Rev. Stam continued his ministry in Canada in the Canadian Reformed churches at Smithville, Attercliffe, and Fergus before settling down in Hamilton. He has faithfully served at "Cornerstone" since 1988.

In the more formal portion of the Open House, all of Rev. Stam's former congregations were represented (with the exception of Langeslag which sent its greeting via mail) by members who brought warm greetings, fond memories, and best wishes. These speakers all gave testimony to the faithful work



Rev. and Mrs. Stam

which Rev. Stam has done over the past twenty-five years. The blessings of the Lord were made evident once again and God was given all praise for His work through this servant.

The vice-chairman of the Hamilton council, Dr. Art Witten, was also given an opportunity to address the gathering. Brother Witten gave thanks to God for His work through Rev. Stam who is able each week to carefully and thoroughly explain Scripture and show us the joy of the Reformed faith. Br. Witten also made note of the many times that Rev. Stam showed evidence of "understanding the spirit of our time" by seizing our attention with song titles such as *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* or *Give Me Some of That Old Time Religion*. Many of our pastor's sermons are vividly memorable not only because of these timely cultural references but primarily because they consistently bring the pure gospel to the flock. The support of Mrs. Stam who, "in her quiet, down to earth way," reminds us that our Rev-

erend has a first name was also a reason to give thanks and to encourage her to continue in her faithful work.

In connection with this celebration, the Hamilton council officially announced that Rev. Stam is being given a six month sabbatical beginning in January of 1998. Eager to complete many unfinished projects as well as have time to "replenish the batteries," Rev. Stam has accepted this offer with much gratitude. In his closing words, Rev. Stam admitted openly that the greatest joy in all of his work is the preparing and delivering of sermons. His prayer is that this time of rest will enable him to continue doing so with renewed vigour in the fall of 1998. Upon reflection, the celebration of Rev. Stam's twenty-five years in the ministry reminded all those present that indeed, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." (Rom. 10:15) May God continue to bless Rev. Stam and his family for many more years so that His Name may be glorified. 

Two Exciting Days in the Life of Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church

By Ted Van Raalte

One of the few vacant congregations of our federation once again has its own pastor. On August 31 Rev. George van Popta was installed as the new pastor of Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church, coming to us from Taber, Alberta.

His brother, Rev. John Van Popta of the Ottawa Canadian Reformed Church, conducted the morning service in which his younger brother was installed. In a sermon on Isaiah 62:6-7 he explained that the LORD protects Jerusalem by placing watchmen on her walls (his theme). To drive home the analogy of the watchman, he asked us how we would respond to the message that a missile attack is imminent. Clearly, anyone who would ignore the warning would be foolish. So too when God's servant, the watchman, warns his people, they must listen and act. Thus the watchman's proclamation would restore Jerusalem's (church's) condition (point one). Rev. George was then exhorted to practice intercessory prayer for the congregation to ensure Jerusalem's continuation (point two). This must go on until the world's praise greets Jerusalem's consummation (point three).

Following installation the chairman, on behalf of the consistory, read a pledge of support



Rev. John and Rev. George van Popta



Rev. and Mrs. van Popta. Who is in the driver's seat?

for Rev. van Popta. Several of the churches in the classical region gave their congratulations and prayers.

The afternoon service featured the inaugural sermon of the new pastor. He too chose to preach on the words of Isaiah the prophet, this time from chapter 40:9-11. He proclaimed, "Here is your God! He is your 1. Saviour, 2. Sovereign, and 3. Shepherd.

While it is interesting that the two brothers should preach on the same book, there was no mistaking who was who. The Rev. John has straight hair, no glasses, and a very deep voice while the Rev. George has curly hair, glasses and was (is) more animated.



One of the exciting games. (Yes, these are adults.)



More Dad! Push me again!

Both brothers have been members of the Ancaster congregation in the past together with their families. In fact, as we learned after installation, Rev. George, his wife, and four of their children, were founding members of the congregation in 1985 when he was studying.

The next day being a holiday, the whole congregation was present for a

welcome day/church picnic at Christie Lake Conservation Area. A hard-working committee arranged some wonderful games for the children and gave the adults an excuse to act like children too (see photos). Mr. Bill Wieske prepared cotton candy for all ages.

Mr. Bill Smouter introduced the family van Popta. Two teachers from Guido de Bres high school adminis-

CHURCH NEWS



As of September 7, 1997, the Re-hoboth Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington West has split into two churches: the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-Waterdown and the Canadian Reformed Church of Flamborough.

Please note that the mailing addresses are as follows:

Canadian Reformed Church of
Burlington-Waterdown
1225 Hwy 5, RR1,
Burlington, ON
L7R 3X4

Canadian Reformed Church of Flam-
borough
c/o E. Schouten,
374 5th Concession E., RR1
Waterdown, ON
L0R 2H1

Both churches share the facilities at
1225 Hwy 5, Burlington

Rev. G. H. Visscher serves the
church at Burlington-Waterdown.

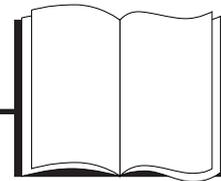
The church at Flamborough has
called the Rev. J. de Gelder of
Smithville, ON.

tered a quiz about Ontario which made Rev. and Mrs. van Popta wonder if they really should send their children there or not. While the congregation filled out a quiz about itself, Rev. and Mrs. van Popta had about a 70% success rate at matching couples of the congregation. The only society to represent itself was the Men's Society, though they were rather speechless. Rev. van Popta thanked the congregation for the past days, rating our welcome as high as an Albertan welcome. He was sure, however, that the tender beef of our hamburgers had to be *Alberta beef*.

Pastor and congregation alike look forward to many fruitful years.

Ted Van Raalte is a student of theology in Hamilton.





God is in control

By Adrian M. Dieleman

This past summer, it seems, has been a season of deep awareness of the sanctity of life. The *Clarion's* September 5th issue has picked up on this awareness, presenting two articles on the topic of death through "accidents." Even the cover photo has a caption reading "Accidental death: Does it make sense?" And now I see in my latest issue, September 19th, that our esteemed brother, Professor Geertsema, also continues this discussion with another enlightening article. But I am deeply concerned over the careless use of this word *accident*, not only by these authors but by the Reformed community as a whole. I am especially concerned because typically we are very cautious in our circles about the way we use words. I think, for example, of the way we describe (and rightfully so) that we don't choose God, but He chooses us. Another example is that we don't wish each other 'Good luck' but instead we say 'God's blessing' (some of my friends even call our 'pot-luck' dinners, 'pot-providence' dinners!). Or as one Dutch friend recently informed me, 'sterkte', that is 'I wish you all the strength you need'.

Without much reflection I can think of numerous occurrences of death or near death – on a bicycle, in a car, off a boat, on the job. Our response is to talk and pray about these events as "accidents." But when I hear a prayer in which God's help is requested for those in accidents, I wonder if the prayer-leader would ever refer to a baby born with a disability as an accident? I doubt it.

The word *accident* is described in the Oxford Dictionary as "an event that is without apparent cause, a sequence of misfortune." And fortune of course, refers to chance or luck. My own paraphrase for this definition of the word *accident* is "an irreversible act of fate." These are (unintentionally) pagan words

coming from the lips of the Reformed community.

I think that without realizing it, we are classifying terrible things as the world classifies them, even if this is not what we mean. There is no doubt in my mind that we believe that God controls every aspect of our lives, that even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30 NIV). And even though we do not always understand why God allows things, even bad things, to happen in our lives, we know He is in control.

Apart from being unbiblical, the use of the word "accident" doesn't even accurately explain the terrible events that we've all heard of or experienced. When we describe an event as an accident we make it sound like there's nothing that can be done to prevent it from happening. We think that injuries are not preventable. But they are, and there is something we can all do to prevent injuries and even death. But the first thing to do is realize that the majority of "accidents" are not accidents. They are not fate, destiny or bad luck. Ninety percent of all injuries, whether from a car crash, diving, or whatever, are the predictable result of our own conscious choices. These injuries are the leading cause of death for people aged one to 44 – they kill more people under 20 than all other causes of death combined. Each year 3.8 million Canadians are injured and 13,000 die as a result of their injuries. And most of these injuries could have been prevented if someone (ourselves or others) had made a different choice. We hear occasionally of those car crashes where a vehicle gets blindsided by another vehicle. Even then, it is mostly true that someone made a wrong choice, whether it was in regard to drinking, speeding, unnecessary risk or careless driving.

Injuries are not accidents – they are predictable and preventable. I'm not

suggesting that we can control everything: "we all must die," as we read in 2 Samuel 14:14, but we do have a responsibility that comes with being a believer in Christ, and it is this responsibility that I'm speaking about.

And I'm speaking here of something with which I am familiar. You see, I am one of the statistics. Due to some bad choices made when I was a teenager, I will spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair as a quadriplegic.

But through this and other events, God called me to repentance and enriched my life in ways I would never have dreamed. He has also given me the wonderful opportunity to speak with young people (and older people) across Canada, about injury prevention and about the more important responsibility of recognizing that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

During a presentation, I mention five *smart risks* that we can all take to reduce the possibility of injury. They are: Buckle up; Drive sober; Look first; Wear the Gear; Get trained.

The time has come to eradicate the word *accident* from our vocabulary. Instead, let's come up with another word to describe what happened: a crash, a blunder, an injury, a dumb risk, or just plain old "crossing the stupid line." And remember, God is in control and works all things for the good of those who love Him.

For further discussion on this topic, please feel free to contact me at e-mail: zwingli@hwcen.org

Adrian Dieleman lives in Ancaster, ON



The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

With reference to the article "A Revision Revised" by the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene (Sept. 19, 1997) I would like to make the following observations:

First, I consider myself fortunate that the Rev. VanOene found the issue at hand important enough to write an informative and persuasive article about it. Furthermore, I could not have found a better advocate to plead the cause.

Second, despite the author's almost legendary punctiliousness, a couple of typos and an omission were found in the article. On p. 415 (middle column) we read: "give us this daily our daily bread." The correction will be obvious. In the third column (same page): "Hereby the manner in which the Lord Jesus will come again is describe." Just add a 'd'.

Finally the omission: In the third column of p. 416 we read: "Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. . . ." The wording in the report of the Langley Consistory reads:

"Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified . . ." (a rendition that is faithful to the original locution).

Rienk Koat
Langley, BC

Dear Editor:

Re: "Combined parental schooling or home schooling" ("Reader's Forum") by br. A. Blokhuis, *Clarion*, July 25, 1997.

I fully agree with br. Blokhuis. He rightly emphasizes the relation between church and school. The one cannot be separated from the other since it is all a matter of communion of saints. It was indeed the commitment after the Liberation of 1944. Br. Blokhuis rightly points out that today, about 50 years later, many seek their own comfort first, e.g., in "baking down South," while there is so much that is in dire need of help and support. It seems that for many it is not even a point to think twice about: "Shall we go to Florida, or shall we, a little

less comfortably, stay with the home church and do our duty in the communion of saints where we belong." It is a reason for great concern that some of our ministers and professors are stimulating that attitude by going there and holding an "edifying word." Those who warn against this are, often times, disregarded or called "narrow minded," or something like that. If such things are happening, then it is clear that the communion of saints is not functioning well.

W. De Haan
Wardsville, Ont.

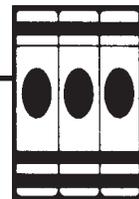
Dear Editor:

I really enjoyed and benefited from Rev. John Van Popta's articles regarding evangelism. Coming from a Baptist background originally, I sometimes still find this area a little confusing. The articles helped me.

Sincerely in Christ,
Sharon Bratcher
Blue Bell, PA 

BOOK REVIEW

By R. Aasman



The Roaring of the Lion

Ray Beeley, *The Roaring of the Lion, A Commentary on Amos*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997. (117 pages, paperback, \$ 7.99 US)

Church members often seek recommended material for personal or more formal Bible study. While *The Roaring of the Lion* may not satisfy those looking for more exhaustive exegesis, it certainly can be recommended for Bible study. Ray Beeley competently guides the reader through the Book of Amos so that the message of this book becomes very clear. In other words, it does not simply generalize or offer all kinds of historical and cultural details. Although it is fairly short, *The Roaring of the Lion* is a true commentary on Amos.

The book starts with two chapters which offer a very good background and review of Amos' prophecy. The rest of the book examines the nine chapters of Amos verse by verse. After explaining a number of verses which form a unit, the author presents a variety of points for meditation on the preceding verses. This is well-structured and helpful for either personal study or for a more formal Bible study group which is working through the entire prophecy of Amos. The points of meditation can be used as an outline for Bible study. The book is well written and very readable. Also young people will find it enjoyable to read this book.

The author does a good job of explaining the circumstances in which Amos prophesied. Amos lived in the

eighth century during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, before the dreadful Assyrian invasion of Israel. Amos, a shepherd of Tekoa (the south), was sent by God to prophesy against Israel (the northern kingdom). This was a time of tremendous peace and prosperity. Sadly, it led to spiritual formalism and complacency and a love for material things. The covenant people thought all was well with their soul because they had their religion, and meanwhile, they lived in their most vile sins. The prophecy of Amos is God's judgment and warning against Israel. We read in Amos 1:2, "The LORD roars from Zion." This is like the roar of a lion which is the warning of impending death and destruction unless the people take warning and repent.

What the author does consistently and very clearly throughout his commentary is demonstrate that the warnings against religious formalism and living complacently in sin are still very valid for us today. The modern reader is constantly called to examine himself in the light of God's Word in Amos. Some might feel that the author tends to exemplarize the text somewhat. For instance, in Amos 1:1, the author quickly uses Amos as an example for us today: like Amos who humbly spoke by revelation, not human wisdom, "do we have the personal conviction of 'a man sent from God?' or do we merely speak words which we have learned by heart or picked up from books?" One might get the impression that the point here is more that Amos' experience is an example for us today rather than first seeing the significance of God's work of redemptive history being fulfilled here. Nevertheless, it should be understood that the author firmly places in the foreground the glorious and comforting truth that the LORD is the covenant God who warns His people

to live in faithfulness and obedience before Him. Those who do not repent will be punished. At the same time the LORD does not forget His promises: He will preserve His elect remnant. The LORD God works out His purpose in all of history which culminates in His redeeming love in Jesus Christ.

The book is rich in its cross references with both the Old and New Testaments. Other commentators are often quoted, particularly John Calvin. The author shows that the final verses of Amos (9:11-15) bring the whole prophecy of Amos together and offer hope to the faithful remnant of God's people. The author clearly rejects higher criticism which says this section of hope is out of character for Amos. I have a concern about the author's explanation of Amos 9:14 where he writes, "the New Testament does appear to teach that there may well be a considerable return of Israel to the Lord before the time of the end (cf Rom. 11:15)." The author would have been better, as he often does, to follow John Calvin here. Of course Paul does speak

about elect Jews being saved in the New Testament era (Rom. 11:26) but one opens the door to some strange teachings when speaking of "a considerable return of Israel." I do not think it was the author's intention to do this, but it could be misunderstood by the reader and lead to wrong conclusions. However, for the rest, the author treats this final part of Amos' prophecy very well, showing the triumph of Christ's kingdom which delivers the captives and liberates them from the waste places of their former lives.

This book will be most beneficial for studying the Book of Amos. It will also cause the reader to examine himself and to experience the truth of what is written in 2 Tim. 3:16,17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Rev. R. Aasman is minister of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton.



PRESS RELEASE



Press Release Classis Contracta Ontario South held at Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church in Chatham – October 2, 1997

Purpose: To approbate the call of Rev. H. Versteeg to Chatham.

1. Opening
On behalf of the convening church of Chatham, Br. R. Beintema opens the meeting at 8:00 p.m. The delegates sing together Hymn 29:1,2. The Scripture passage read is Psalm 47. Br. Beintema then leads in prayer asking for the Lord's guidance over the meeting that this meeting may also be conducted to the Lord's Glory. The delegates are welcomed.
2. Examination of Credentials
The church at Chatham reports that the credentials are found to be in good order. The churches of London, Watford and Chatham are properly represented.
3. Classis is declared constituted.

Classis accepts the suggested officers as moderamen for this Classis Contracta as follows:

- Chairman – Rev. J.E. Ludwig
Clerk – Br. R. Beintema – will also be responsible for the Press Release, recording and distribution of the Acts of Classis.
4. The agenda is reviewed and adopted.
 5. Documentation review
 - A – letter of call.
 - B – Rev. Versteeg's acceptance letter.
 - C – letter from Chatham accepting responsibility for Rev. H. Versteeg effective Oct. 6, 1997.
 - D - letter of release from Toronto.
 - E – letter of release from Classis Ontario North.
 - F – signed declaration from Chatham stating that the proper announcements were made and that the congregation had given its approval to the call.
 - G – Rev. Versteeg's attestation from Toronto.

All of the above documents were reviewed and found to be in good order.

Classis Contracta grants its approval to the call extended to Rev. H. Versteeg.

6. The church at Watford is appointed to attend the installation service on Oct. 12, 1997 in the morning service.
7. Question period is held. No questions are asked.
8. Christian censure is held according to C.O. Article 44. A spirit of harmony and co-operation is thankfully acknowledged.
9. The Acts of Classis Contracta are read and adopted.
10. Rev. Ludwig thanks the delegates for their assistance with this Classis and on behalf of Classis congratulates Chatham with their new minister. Rev. Ludwig asks for the Lord's Blessing on Chatham council and Rev. Versteeg that they may work in harmony together to the upbuilding of the congregation and the furtherance of His Kingdom.
11. Psalm 47 is sung together after which Rev. Ludwig closes the meeting in prayer.

