

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

VOLUME 47, NO. 12

JUNE 12, 1998

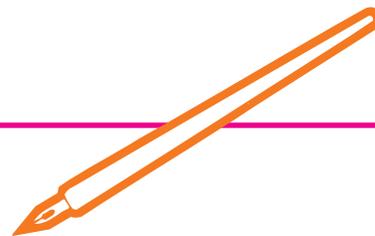


*Canadian Reformed Church
building at Calgary, AB*

Numbers

10:1-10

By G.Ph. van Popta



Testing the Decisions

At the time of writing this editorial, General Synod Fergus had just completed its work. The delegates, their wives and children, are glad about that! By now, the sixteen men will, Lord willing, happily be back at their homes enjoying the company of their families and their regular work in the congregations and in the market place.

That General Synod Fergus has finished its work means that the consistories and membership of the churches must *begin* their work – the work of testing the decisions. In our churches we have the excellent practice of ensuring that each family and single communicant member receive a copy of the Acts. Everyone ought to read through them. Admittedly, Acts of Synods do not make for the most gripping reading. It will not be the book you think of first to take along as you head to the beach this summer. And yet, it is important that the membership know what decisions have been taken. After all, the decisions will affect you. If you have questions about or difficulties with a particular decision, then you can approach your consistory on them.

As important as it is for everyone to read the Acts, it is the more crucial for the consistories to scrutinize them. The consistories have the duty to test them in the light of the Word of God, the Confessions of the church, and the Church Order. The consistories will need to see if the decisions taken on a variety of matters can stand in the blazing light of God's Word, whether they conform to the Three Forms of Unity, and whether they were made in loyalty to our adopted Church Order. This was the norm under which the delegates laboured. The credentials with which the two Regional Synods sent them to General Synod Fergus bound the delegates to Scriptures, Confession, and Church Order. The ministers and elders promised to work under that yoke. We, now, must see whether they were faithful in this. This is not a matter of distrust. Not at all! Rather, it is a matter of fulfilling mutually agreed upon responsibilities. Testing the decisions of the General Synod is one aspect of what it means to be bound together in a federation of churches.

In Article 31 of the Church Order, we have agreed that “. . . whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.” In order to see whether a decision agrees or is in conflict *with* the standard, it must be tested *by* the standard. Since the consistories as governing bodies of the churches must work with the decisions, the consistories must test. Bringing a decision into the life of the congregation must not be done automatically or slavishly but purposefully and consciously.

The consistory does not, by its act of scrutinizing the Acts of a General Synod, *make* the decisions settled and binding. Rather, the consistory must see whether it can *hold* the decisions which have been made as settled and binding. If, after having tested a decision, the consistory concludes that it was made in accordance with the agreed upon standards, well and good! The consistory thereby acknowledges that decision to be settled and binding. If, however, after having applied the standards, the consistory concludes the decision cannot stand in light of Scriptures, Confession, or Church Order, then that particular decision is not considered as settled and binding. Prof. J. Kamphuis, quoting Voetius, says that if an ecclesiastical decision is in conflict with the Word of God, then it may not be executed. The necessary consequence of stating that a decision cannot be held as settled and binding is that the consistory then appeal it to the next General Synod.

General Synod Fergus decided to take advantage of today's technology by maintaining a web page on the Internet. Every day the previous day's decisions were posted. Anyone interested and with access to the Internet could follow the decisions as they were made instead of having to go by rumor and second- and third-hand information. In years past, we always had to wait several months for the Acts to be published before we could read the official text of the decisions. Now we could read them on a daily basis. This has both positive and negative aspects to it. The positive side is that it is good for the membership of the churches to be as

*That
General Synod
Fergus
has finished its
work means that
the consistories
and membership
of the churches
must begin their
work – the work
of testing the
decisions.*

informed as possible. Except for a few closed session items, the decisions taken by a General Synod are not made in secret. Why not get the decisions out as soon as possible! The negative side to it is that the sixteen brothers probably felt like they were in a fish bowl. Perhaps they even felt like the odd harpoon gun was aimed at them.

Since the decisions of General Synod Fergus are readily available on the Internet, it is very tempting to start commenting on them. However, we will refrain. Likely, there will be some discussion on various decisions in future pages of *Clarion* – especially, I would think, on those decisions that have to do with how we are going to relate to other Reformed churches at home and abroad since General Synod Fergus in some respects put us in a holding pattern, and perhaps even peddled us back. The question can be asked whether General Synod Fergus has not, in some cases, raised the bar too high. But I wasn't going to comment. . . .

General Synod Fergus has completed its agenda. Sixteen faithful men of God have done their work as best they could. It's now up to the churches to test this work. **C**

What's inside?

General Synod Fergus is history. Now all that remains are the decisions. Stapled in the middle of this issue, you will find the second report on Synod by *Clarion's* on-site reporter, the Rev. P. Aasman of Grand Valley, Ontario.

Much of Synod's time was consumed by overtures, appeals, discussions, deliberations and the making of decisions having to do with our relationships with other bodies of churches. For the thirteenth General Synod in a row, the matter of our contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) was on the agenda. The decision General Synod Fergus took on the OPC, including observations, considerations and recommendations, consists of almost 12,000 words. Yes, twelve thousand! Probably the longest decision ever taken in the history of our churches.

Clarion often ends up with articles relating to "church unity." This is not by accident. Anyone who takes seriously the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ that his people be one cannot but be interested in "church unity." It's actually amazing that while the Lord broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile two millennia ago (Eph. 2:14) – and *that* wall made the Berlin Wall look like a picket fence – a half dozen or so confessionally Reformed churches manage to keep their barriers up. In this issue, you will find articles dealing with our contact with the United Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches. In Article 27 of the Belgic Confession we confess that the church is *joined and united with heart and will*. Do we have a heart for each other? Are we *willing* to break down the barriers, be courageous, and work hard for the unity of the church of Jesus Christ as we enter the third millennium? Or will we be content with continued brokenness?

GVP



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: C. Van Dam

Coeditors: R. Aasman, J. De Jong, J. Geertsema, N.H. Gootjes, 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 1998

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$34.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$39.00	\$52.00
International	\$58.00	\$85.00

* Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT

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 – Testing the Decisions — G.Ph. van Popta	....278
Treasures, New and Old – the Lord's Message Rang Out From You! <i>A Lesson in Role Modelling</i> — J. VanWoudenberg	.....280
A Response to Comments on Appropriation — P. VanderMeyden	.....281
Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. R. Ravensbergen	.....285
Church Unity Talks in Wellandport — G.Ph. van Popta	.....286
Letters to the Editor	.....288
Press Release – Church Unity Discussions: Canadian Reformed, United Reformed — Rev. John A. Bouwers	..289
News from the American Reformed Fellowship, Palmetto, Florida — Martin VanderVelde	.....290
Book Reviews – C. Bouwman, <i>The Book of Ezra, Nine Sermons</i> — reviewed by C. Bosch	.....291
D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, <i>Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons</i> — reviewed by P. Aasman	.....292
<i>Every day: Daily Readings with the Bible</i> — reviewed by G. Nederveen	.....292
Reflections – The Struggle of Faith — A letter from Henriët	.....293
Press Release	.....294
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	.....295

By J. VanWoudenberg

The Lord's Message Rang Out From You! A Lesson in Role Modelling

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell us how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.

1 Thessalonians 1:7-10

Paul praised the Thessalonians for responding to the gospel by imitating the devotion of Paul (and hence of Christ), and by becoming role models themselves. But why become a role model? Of course a life of service promotes God's glory and our own benefit – and such should be incentive enough to live as a role model. But in 1 Thessalonians 1 Paul emphasizes how such living especially benefits our neighbours.

Paul speaks about the ever widening influence of the role modelling of the Thessalonians: "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere."

With Thessalonica being an important trade centre with major roads and naval access, news from this city spread fast. So also the news of how the young believers responded to the gospel by latching on to Christ in all of life in spite of strong opposition.

This rapid spreading of the report of their faith helped Paul in his work. Paul often encouraged believers in the Lord's service by reporting to them how the gospel had taken root and bore fruit in other places (see 2 Cor. 9:2). "But now," writes Paul, "we do not need to say anything about you. Why not? Because it's old news already! The other churches have heard all about your faith already!" By the report of their lifestyle that others far and wide have heard about, the Thessalonians have, as it were, stolen some of Paul's thunder. But Paul does not mind at all! Rather, he rejoices: Without Paul himself reporting, other believers have already been en-

couraged by news of the work of God evident among the Thessalonians.

**God uses also
Christian lifestyle
and Christian living
to spread the
good news. . . .**

Here we see the importance and power of role modelling. The modelling of the Thessalonians is helping Paul in his work of strengthening the churches and spreading the gospel. Literally Paul says, "For from you has rung out the word of the Lord." By being role models, they were spreading the Word of God. God uses also Christian lifestyle and Christian living to spread the good news and to complement the preaching. When we imitate Christ in his zeal to serve God in what we say, in what entertainment we go to, in our work habits, in the way we interact with others, in the care we show, in our humility, then we can have such a tremendously positive effect. We thereby "ring out God's Word."

Generally people think about outsiders when speaking about the importance of living a Christian life. However in 1 Thessalonians Paul focuses on the effect of Christian living on insiders, upon fellow believers. In the words of verse 7, "And so you became a model to all the believers. . . ."

Just as Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to continue on with their role modelling for the sake of fellow be-

lievers, so the Spirit urges us to do the same. Some of our churches may be located in big cities, others in more isolated areas. Yet none of us live on secluded islands. The reports of our response to the gospel and of how we live and interact do not stay with ourselves or our own congregations.

We should meditate on some questions: Does our very practical every day living, serve as a model life and an encouragement for fellow believers? More particularly, do our lives as God's people in one congregation serve as a model and as a blessing to God's congregations elsewhere? What report comes out of our local church? Is it a report that encourages the other churches, or does our church have a bad name? This is an important matter! Are we serving to promote the gospel, or are we demoting it by how we respond to the gospel, by how we live, by how we interact with each other, and by how we deal with issues?

Getting closer to home: how do our lives and our ways of living affect fellow congregation members? Are we role models that stimulate each other by our walk of life, or don't we really care about how our actions and lives affect our brothers and sisters? Do we live in unhealthy competition? Do we live in bitterness toward each other? Do we seek to correct wrongs by the tit for tat principle? Or do we humbly seek to spur each other on in godly living by our humble example as to how things should thankfully be done? Do we seek to spur each other on by tactful interaction in the communion of saints, by scripturally dealing with problems, by consistent caring for sick,

by genuine interest for the welfare of the lonely?

Getting more specific: How do we treat new-comers in the congregation? What about weak members, fringe members, or straying members? Does our practical way of living and interacting benefit them? Do they taste and see deep-rooted humility and thankfulness in us? Or is our humility and thankfulness just theoretical? Do we promote Christian living by humbly inviting them into our homes and letting them see and experience what Christian living is all about?

Some more questions: How do more mature members conduct themselves before the young people? Are our lives exemplary? It is a fact that young people, as they grow up, can often become deeply disappointed with older members when they see how their actions are so inconsistent with their confession. Then they can quickly write off the church as a bunch of hypocrites. Do

we live lives that justify such statements? Or are we truly role models?

Does our very practical every day living, serve as a model life and an encouragement for fellow believers?

Parents, are we good role models for our children – role models in the matters of godliness, thankful living, respectful attitude toward authorities, humble working in the congregation, proper dealing with problems in the congregation? Or do our children learn by our example to shun less likeable members, to treat authorities disrespectfully, to treat God’s Word lightly by sleeping through sermons, to gossip, to not worry about Bible study and prayer?

At this point who does not feel the shoe pinching? But knowing the gospel of the forgiveness of sins, let us not despair. Instead let’s honestly face these questions so that we may be spurred on to become ever better role models, realizing the powerfully positive effects this has for our children and our brothers and sisters far and wide. Let’s not leave the role modelling to others. Let not hockey players be the role models for our children. Rather, let us ever strive to be role models ourselves, realizing what a privilege such a position is. By living as role models we do nothing less than spread the Word of God – the Word which the Spirit uses to give faith and strengthen faith to those around us far and wide.

Let’s resolve to thankfully live as role models!

Rev. J. VanWoudenberg is Minister of the Word and Pastor to the Canadian Reformed Church in Watford, together with whom he resolves to live as role model.



THE APPROPRIATION OF SALVATION

– A Response to Comments on Appropriation

By P. VanderMeyden

In the previous issue of Clarion, Dr. J. De Jong’s response to the document “The ‘Appropriation of Salvation’ in the Creeds” was published. What follows is the reaction of Rev. P. VanderMeyden, minister of the Free Reformed Church at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

– Editor

We appreciate that the *Clarion* printed the translated document of Rev. A. Baars, entitled *The ‘Appropriation of Salvation’ in the Creeds – An Overview* and that Dr. J. De Jong brought the document into discussion by his comments. These are very important areas of consideration for the spiritual well-being of our churches.

I welcome also the opportunity to respond to Dr. De Jong’s comments. Dialogue of this kind in the spirit of

charity is a proper way to remove those preconceived notions which hinder us from coming to a correct understanding of each other’s theological and methodological convictions. It will help us discern the degree to which we are agreed. This better understanding will either give us liberty to express further oneness as denominations or it will serve to substantiate that our differences are too fundamental to warrant a full union. In either case (and we must not prejudice the outcome) I trust that the constructive effect will be that, through a better understanding of each other’s true beliefs and practices, we will have grown in our respect for each other as fellow-members of the one church and body of Christ.

I do welcome the opportunity to respond, but I have some hesitation. I

cannot presume to speak on behalf of Rev. Baars. It will be difficult to simply respond to the comments of Dr. De Jong without correcting possible misunderstandings of Rev. Baar’s article. When I do make such interpretive statements, realize that I am not speaking for the author of the *Overview* but am simply expressing how I understand Rev. Baars, and how I would respond.

As a general comment, those who read both the *Overview* and Dr. De Jong’s *Comments* will realize that there is much about which we are agreed. Dr. De Jong even expressed that he “concurred whole-heartedly” with the *Overview*, “. . . in general.” Similarly, we also can agree with and be thankful for what Dr. De Jong stated in his *Comments*, “. . . in general.

It is clear, however, that when it got down to specifics, Dr. De Jong had some concern, and questions about the manner in which we understand and apply this matter of “appropriation” in our theology and preaching.

Objective-subjective distinction

I find it very significant that Dr. De Jong accepts the “correct distinction between granting and appropriating the promises.” But, after he has agreed with this, he appears to confuse what has just been distinguished.

In reference to Lord’s Day 23 he says, “the language here distinguishes two sides to appropriation: the granting of the promises, and the appropriation of the granted promises.” It seems that De Jong will only concede to the distinction if these two aspects are viewed as inseparable “sides” to the application of salvation.

Related to this is De Jong’s rejection of the “subjective-objective framework” to which Baar’s refers, asserting that it “does not fit in a covenantal context.” His fear of an “objective” aspect distinguished from a “subjective” aspect “entirely divorced from it” indicates that he does not want a distinction which implies that there could be a granting without appropriation.

However, we prefer to go somewhat further in the distinction of the two aspects of the *application* of salvation. Let me explain. Once we distinguish the *accomplishment* of redemption (Christ’s death and resurrection) from the *application* of redemption, and reject the Arminian formulation of it, a further distinction of the *application* is that of *granting* (offering of Christ in the gospel promise) and the *appropriation* (participation in Christ by faith). However, in this saving *appropriation* a further distinction must be made between the effectual work of God’s grace by His Holy Spirit (from the divine perspective) and the believing embrace of Christ and His benefits offered in the promise (the same work from the perspective of human experience).

Using the example of the application of justification, a reference to Lord’s Day 23 demonstrates that this latter distinction is in view when comparing the phrase, “imputes to me” and “I . . . receive and apply the same to myself.” Though he recognizes that these are related (since it is God works in us to will and do of his good pleasure), Rev. Baars warns that “imput-

ing” and “appropriation” must not be identified with each other.

Experiential preaching necessitates such a distinction simply because in the life of a believer the comfort of justification cannot be experienced without this conscious appropriating activity of faith. “Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

However, (as we understand Rev. Baars to be teaching) the Creeds go farther than simply distinguishing two aspects (or “sides”) to the application of salvation to the believer. There is something broader in the administration of the gospel and promises of the covenant. In Lord’s Day 27 there is a distinction between *granting* and *partaking*. Children of the congregation are objects of a granting in the promise of the Covenant, but this promise does not imply an automatic saving application. What they are “granted in the promise” they are called to appropriate personally in the way of repentance and faith. A birthright was granted to Esau which he did not appropriate, but despised.

There is a danger which results when we do not properly distinguish these aspects of the Covenant administration. Rev. Baars warns that “a rejection of the subjective-objective framework” that tends to “allow the partaking to be absorbed into the granting” would do injustice to our confessions. One wonders whether De Jong’s hesitation about this distinction is rooted in a refusal to distinguish receiving the promise from receiving the saving work of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. De Jong rejects the “objective-subjective” distinction because it “does not fit in a covenant context.” Yet this distinction is so clear when we consider the history of the Covenant. A “promise was left” to many Israelites of entering into the land of Canaan who did not enter in. Why? The Bible teaches that the promise (objectively “left” to them) was not mixed with faith (subjective believing appropriation) in them that heard. The warning of this applies to us too. “Let us therefore fear . . .” (Heb. 4:1,2, cf. Heb. 3). The distinction of the objective (grant) from the subjective (appropriation) seems to fit quite well in the administration of the Covenant.

Does the rejection of the “objective-subjective” distinction in covenant theology not also raise practical questions? Could it not lead to the development of a spiritual presumption? Does it not have a tendency to nurture the assump-

tion that, since saving grace is “granted in the promise” of the covenant, therefore (simply by virtue of that promise) we may believe that we personally participate in that salvation? Is the appropriation then not practically absorbed into the promise?

Principle and progress

Dr. De Jong questions the distinction in the usage of the word “regeneration” in the Canons and the Belgic Confession. It is widely recognized that in the Reformed creeds “regeneration” is used in both the broad sense of the *manifestation* of a renewed life (as in the Belgic Confession Art. 24: “this true faith . . . doth regenerate”) and the narrow sense of the implanting of the *principle* of new life in the heart (as described in Canons of Dort, III/IV, Art. 11,12). H. Bavink states that “there is no doubt that the Netherlands Confession in Art. 24 simply speaks of regeneration in the broader sense . . .” which he distinguishes from “regeneration as the infusion of the first principle of new life.” He goes on to explain that, “the distinction between regeneration and conversion, as it came up later, was still unknown in the days when the Netherlands Confession of faith and the Heidelberg Catechism were composed.” Berkhof recognizes the different usage of earlier reformers but states: “In present day Reformed theology the word ‘regeneration’ is generally used in a more restricted sense, as a designation of that divine act by which the sinner is endowed with new spiritual life, and by which the principle of that new life is first called into action.”

In the light of this it is confusing to me that De Jong would write: “the distinction in the *Overview* is too forced” and that he would go on to prefer to speak of “regeneration as the continual process of growth in faith and sanctification.” If we overlook our different usage of terminology we could perpetuate theological debate.

If De Jong’s main concern is that there should not be such a severe separation between the initial planting of new life and the conscious development of it in a life of repentance and faith then we would certainly agree with the note of caution. The Free Reformed have always taken strong exception to the idea of a “slumbering regeneration” as A. Kuyper proposed it, the presence of a seed of new life which does not come to conscious manifestation in conversion and faith

until many years later. Such a concept is surely not in keeping with Scripture and has no support in our Creeds.

If Dr. De Jong's intention is to reject such an extreme separation of regeneration and its conscious fruit in repentance and faith, then we surely would agree. This distinction should not be emphasized so as to lead to the view that regeneration as a seed can be separated for a long period of time from its conscious activity. But to make the distinction is not only useful theologically, but it is also valid biblically and confessionally. Rev. Baars has documented that this distinction is inescapable in the *Canons* (cf. *Overview*).

Word and spirit

It is obvious that on the point of the relationship between the Word and Spirit in the work of salvation our emphases are different. We both value the teaching that in the appropriation of salvation the Holy Spirit works by means of the Word. But our perspectives have different theological emphases, which in turn come out in the emphasis of the preaching.

The strong emphasis on the Word as the medium of saving grace (which we observe in Canadian Reformed theology) leads Rev. Baars to express a caution about assuming that the Word is "automatically" effectual unto salvation. He reminds us that the Holy Spirit "makes the Word effective if and when He pleases."

On the other hand, the strong emphasis on the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit (which the Free Reformed insist on) leads De Jong to suspect "a certain tendency to isolate the role of the Spirit above and beyond the Word."

We may assure Dr. De Jong that there is no desire to isolate the work of the Holy Spirit, but only to insist that the Spirit's work by the Word is sovereign ("... as he will" 1 Cor. 12:11). Rev. Baars' summarizing statement confirms this: "On the one hand, our Confession places a close connection between the Spirit and Word. Under no condition may they be separated, for the Spirit works by the Word. At the same time, we may not disregard the teaching of the *Canons of Dort* that the Holy Spirit, who is pleased to bind Himself to the Word, is still completely sovereign."

The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) teaches us that something more is needed than the mere preaching of the Word. By the sovereign effectual work of the Spirit the Word is applied so that

new life takes deep root and bears fruit. Ezekiel was called to preach to dry bones and as he did the Lord was sovereignly pleased to send His Spirit and there was movement, flesh and life (Ezek. 37). But not all preaching can be assumed to lead to life. It is according to God's sovereign will that it is either "a savour of life unto life" or a "savour of death unto death" (2 Cor. 2:16).

The order of faith and regeneration

Dr. De Jong's comments on "Faith and Regeneration" are rooted in his insistence that regeneration describes, not the narrow sense of implanting the principle of new life, but the whole process of conversion and sanctification. For this reason he insists that faith "precedes regeneration" and has a "crucial role . . . even at the very beginning of regeneration." He prefers to use the word "regeneration" as defined by the earlier reformers. We would prefer to define it in the narrower sense as the beginning of new life. There does not seem to be much sense in debating this point. But we do need to reckon with it when the word "regeneration" is used.

When in this context Dr. De Jong insists on keeping the Word and Spirit more closely together, he implies that not doing so could lead to the danger of mysticism. We cannot agree more. To speak of an "unexplainable and inexpressible mystical experience" without any reference to the Word of God as the means by which it was worked and the standard by which it must be tested is indeed an unbiblical mysticism.

Faith as principle and activity

Under the heading "Faith as Root and Shoot" De Jong warns about two dangers. The one being the danger of isolating regeneration and rendering the on-going conversion of secondary importance. The warning is well placed. And we could agree that both being born again and living a Christian life are important. Neither should be emphasized at the cost of the other.

However, Dr. De Jong asserts that "the Reformed answer is that no specific accent needs to be placed on the initial experience of faith or regeneration." In the light of the *Overview* it is questionable whether this is consistent with the "accent" of the *Canons*.

His warning against viewing "faith as an ongoing act of appropriation" is also difficult to understand. We would have no problem with De Jong's distinction between faith as "root and



NEW MAILING ADDRESS:

Canadian Reformed Church of Cloverdale

Clover Square Village
17790-#10 Hwy
P.O. Box 34051
Surrey, BC V3S 4C0

* * *

CALLED TO Cloverdale, BC

Rev. J. VanWoudenberg

of Watford, ON

* * *

CALLED TO Flamborough, ON

Rev. W.M. Wielenga

of Lynden, WA, USA

shoot." Nor would we deny that there is that aspect of faith when it is viewed as a principle of life or a seed (*potentia*) which exists as a permanent grace in the heart of the believer. We value very much the Synod of Dort's confession of the preservation of the saints. A true believer need not fear the loss of this principle of eternal life. But one who professes faith but has become indifferent, careless or continues in sin has a good reason to ask whether he ever had true faith in his heart at all.

However, in the context of the present discussion we are speaking of the exercise (*actus*) of faith. Is faith not to be called to conscious activity throughout our life as believers? Does a fall into sin not interrupt the joyful assurance of salvation (Psalm 51:11,12)? After a Christian falls into sin does faith not consciously appropriate the promises anew (for example, in the case of Psalm 51)? Does faith not grow and thereby consciously appropriate richer aspects of the knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18)?

Would Dr. De Jong not agree with this? As we read on it appears that he would agree that there is the possibility of "an interruption of the exercise of faith." He does also speak of struggles and weakness in faith, and that there is a "growth in knowledge and assurance

resulting from maintaining the exercises of faith."

Having assured him that we subscribe to the preservation of the saints and that our call for continued exercises of faith does not imply a fear of believers "falling away," I trust that Dr. De Jong would no longer see a "danger" in viewing the continual exercise of faith as an "ongoing act of appropriation."

Preaching and appropriation

In the last section of Dr. De Jong's *Comments* we meet some encouraging citations of a document written by A. Hendriks. The concessions made about preaching being discriminating and experiential symbolize some positive movement. The difference continues to be a matter of how these things are actually worked out and applied in the preaching.

Rev. Baars in his *Overview* urges that the Creeds' emphasis on and description of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration should not be neglected in our preaching and pastoral labours. Dr. De Jong from this draws the conclusion that "this would imply a focus upon experiential aspects in the preaching, with particular emphasis on those elements of regeneration that do not include conscious appropriation of the Word as preached." This makes him uncomfortable, but Rev. Baars is simply suggesting that we do in our preaching what the Creeds are doing in their explanation of regeneration (*Canons*, III/IV, 11-14). Such preaching of course, should not simply consist of some mystical description of personal feelings and impressions but in accordance with exposition of the Scripture passage being preached, and, yes, "within the overall framework of due respect for the history of redemption." The Word is not only the means by which regeneration is worked; it is also the standard by which its authenticity is discerned.

Dr. De Jong does not agree that the preaching must be discriminating in such a manner as to distinguish believers from unbelievers in the congregation. "The whole congregation must be seen as the one people of God. . . . Threats and admonitions must be directed to believer and unbeliever alike. . . ." In the preaching he would only discriminate "various stages of faith" or "circumstances in spiritual life." Presumably he would not discriminate between the saved and the lost, the believer and the hypocrite in the congregation. He

would leave that to the Lord. He states that it is "through this preaching of the full counsel of God to the whole congregation that God in effect discriminates: He gathers His elect and drives the unrepentant away."

This perspective which views the congregation with a corporate optimism and stops short of addressing the unconverted and unbelieving with descriptions of their state as distinguished from those who bear the true marks of faith, we view as a practical result of Kuyperian presumptive theology, its formal rejection notwithstanding. We believe strongly that Reformed preaching must reckon very honestly with unbelief and with pointed application address the fact that there are, even in the Covenant congregation of the Lord, those who are not yet spiritual children of God. It would be a point of pastoral neglect for "the children of the kingdom" to be "cast out" without having been personally warned by the watchmen on the walls of Zion that they had no right to think "peace, peace" when they were not in fact at peace. The marks of their lost condition need to be *described*, and repentance must be *urgently prescribed*. It is exactly when we preach with pointed, conscience-piercing applications to the unregenerate members of the congregation that we may expect that the Holy Spirit would apply the discerning

Word (Heb. 4:12) as His instrument in their conversion.

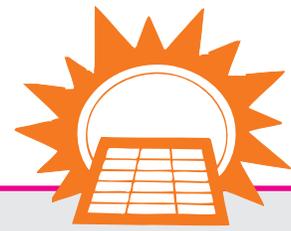
I suppose we have mutually detected each others emphases which we mutually describe as "one-sidedness." We appreciate the warnings about the danger of moving too far toward mysticism with an emphasis on the Spirit's sovereignty. We must indeed remember that not only must we be born again *by the Spirit*, but we are born again *by the Word*. We probably need some caution about the danger of being *descriptive* at the cost of the *prescriptive* aspect of the Gospel. After all, we must not only *examine ourselves* whether we have true faith; we also must *believe* in order to be truly saved.

We can also be edified by appropriating the warnings of a brother.

I hope this discussion has been clarifying. I must apologize if I have not understood Dr. De Jong rightly. Undoubtedly not all questions have been answered, and probably more have been raised. But if some added understanding of each other has developed as a result of this brief dialogue then its purpose has been served.

Faith seeks understanding. Our primary goal in this discussion is not to understand each other better, but that we may mutually grow in our knowledge of the Lord through His Word. Yet in this way we will also come to a richer experience of the unity which we have in Him. C





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.
Galatians 5:22

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Are you enjoying your life? Or are you depressed because of all the difficulties you have to face every day? It is wonderful if you can be happy. If all is well with you, and if you have all the things you need in this life, then you are probably reasonably happy. Maybe you are enjoying your life so much, that you do not even want it to end, even though we all know that the end will come, either when we die, or on the day of Christ's return.

How do we know that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts?

If you are ill, or in other ways unable to participate in the enjoyable things that are going on, then you might be looking forward to the end. Or are you afraid? We all live in different situations, and we all have different attitudes towards life. Yet to the Lord we are all the same. He has given the same promises to everyone of us. We are all living in a world that is totally damaged as a result of the fall into sin and we are all prone to sin. Every day we are confronted with our sins. But at the same time we receive, by grace, the promise that we will be delivered from those sins and out of the power of Satan.

Not only did the Lord give us that promise, but He already gave us more: we received the Holy Spirit. His Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of all the believers. How do we know that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts? Do you feel that, or does He enable you to do remarkable things? Then, maybe, you wonder if you have received the Holy Spirit. No, we do not have a special feeling, and we may not be able to do anything remarkable, but the Bible tells us about the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. It tells us in the above mentioned text what kind of characteristics we will display when we let the Holy Spirit take charge in our lives. One of those characteristics is peace. That is peace in our hearts, peace with the circumstances in our lives, peace with the Lord. When we have peace with the Lord, then we can take what comes our way without complaint or anxiety. Then we will be able to treat other people with gentleness even when they are not gentle with us. Then we will be patient and kind. And we will not do that to show everyone how good we are, but to show to them how good the Lord is. He will be the centre of our lives and everything we do we will want to do in obedience to Him.

When we have peace with the Lord, then we can take what comes our way without complaint or anxiety.

When the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, and we are at peace with the Lord, then we will not be afraid of the future. For we know that everything will be well, since we

belong to our Father in heaven. He will help us to dislike the sins that we see happening around us, and to recognize and fight the temptations that Satan sends our way. He will help us to pray and to long for the return of the Son on the clouds of heaven.

When we try to live and pray guided by the Holy Spirit, then the longing for the last day will grow stronger and we will become more and more disgusted with our sins. Our thoughts will concentrate on the Lord and His Kingdom and the freedom which we received through Jesus Christ. We will have less time to think about the things we do not have, or the things that bother us. We will be amazed about the grace in which the Father chose us to be His people.

Do we enjoy our lives? Of course we may enjoy the good things that we receive. But we will never be totally absorbed in our life if we are filled with the Holy Spirit. For now we know how we notice the presence of the Holy Spirit. He gives us a strong longing for the future. He fills us so much with the things that pertain to the everlasting future, that we can handle our temporary pain and grief which we may have to suffer now. The Holy Spirit whom the Lord Jesus poured out on His Church on the day of Pentecost is our lifeline through the valley of darkness. Thank the Lord for His goodness. Thank Him for the Holy Spirit.

*I wait for God to hide me;
My soul, with longing stirred,
Shall hope, whate'er betide me,
In His unfailing word.
For Thee, LORD, I am yearning
With more intense desire
Than watchers for the morning
To dawn of day aspire.*

Psalms 130:3 Book of Praise

Birthdays in July:

4: James Buikema

c/o R. Feenstra, RR 1, 4326 Sixteen Road
St. Ann's, ON L0R 1Y0

20: Charlie Beintema

29 Wilson Avenue, Chatham ON N7L 1K8

28: Jim Wanders

538 Wedgewood Drive, Burlington ON L7L 4J2

29: Tom Vander Zwaag

"Anchor Home," 361 30 Rd, RR 2
Beamsville ON L0R 1B0

James and Jim will be 37, Charlie 23, and Tom 45.

A very happy Birthday to all of you, and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Reg.Rd. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
e-mail: RWRavens@netcom.ca

Church Unity Talks in Wellandport

By G.Ph. van Popta

On May 9 an audience of several hundred Reformed believers gathered in the Wellandport United Reformed Church to listen to two distinguished scholars and humble servants of the Lord Jesus Christ – Dr. P.Y. De Jong and Dr. J. Faber.

The meeting was hosted by the council of Rockway Canadian Reformed Church and led by its minister, the Rev. G. Wieske. It was another meeting in an on-going series of meetings between the Immanuel and Trinity United Reformed Churches of St. Catharines, and the Canadian Reformed Churches of Lincoln and Rockway.

Dr. De Jong spoke on the confessional history of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) while Dr. Faber spoke on the confessional history of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).

Dr. P.Y. De Jong

Birth and growth of the CRC

Dr. De Jong took us back to 1857, the year of the formation of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). In that year, four congregations comprising 750 members with one minister seceded from the Reformed Church of America (RCA). One of the issues was that of Free Masonry. The RCA allowed members, even church leaders, to be Free Masons.

The fledgling CRC and its members received no support from their Dutch mother church, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk (CGK), which had seceded from the liberal Hervormde Kerk in 1834. The CGK continued to send immigrants to the RCA. For the first twenty-five years of its existence, the CRC grew very slowly.

This changed in 1881 when both the CRC and the RCA sent fraternal delegates to the synod of the CGK. The RCA delegate defended the Masonic Order and membership in it. This awoke the CGK to who their North American sister really was. After its 1881 synod, the CGK began sending immigrants to the CRC. The churches of the second secession (the Doleantie of 1886) also di-



Dr. P.Y. De Jong, Dr. J. Faber,
Rev. G. Wieske

rected immigrants to the CRC. These were years of rapid growth.

... the infection in the CRC is that the clarity of divine Scriptures is no longer confessed

In 1892, the two seceded churches in the Netherlands united. Although there was unity, there were also differences on some theological issues, for example, on infra- or supralapsarianism, and the ground for baptism. These discussions came across the ocean to the United States of America too. While some followed the way of thinking found in the Secession, others were convinced Dr. A. Kuyper and the Doleantie constructions were better. At the Synod of Utrecht, 1905 in Holland, the differences were noted in a "Pacification Formula." This brought peace to the churches in the Netherlands. Three years later, a CRC synod adopted the formula as well.

Stabilization

The years between the World Wars was a time of stabilization in the CRC. It took a stand against an unorthodox millennialism and against higher criticism of the Scriptures.

During these years it suffered its first major schism when, in 1924, the Rev. J. Danhof and the Rev. H. Hoeksema led some 3,000 people out over the common grace issue and formed the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Despite this blow, these years were the heyday of the CRC. Evangelicals were envious of how CRC people gave to church, school, and other benevolences.

Dr. De Jong remembered Dr. K. Schilder's 1939 visit to the States. In twenty-three days, the young P.Y. De Jong heard Dr. Schilder preach or lecture eighteen times.

Drift and division

After the Second World War, a period of theological drift and division began in the CRC. Unorthodox voices began to be raised in Calvin Seminary. A new magazine, *Torch and Trumpet*, was founded to call the church back to the old paths. In the 1960s, the synodical GKN and the Free University in Amsterdam began having a negative effect on the CRC. For example, Dr. Lever's ideas about evolution began to gain some currency. The division widened with the adoption of the Report on the Nature of Biblical Authority. It was not that the report was so bad, but it placed a few question marks beside our confession of the authority of Scripture.

Rapid decline

The 1970s marked a period of rapid confessional decline in the CRC. The authority and clarity of Scriptures were questioned. Dr. De Jong very emphatically stressed that *the infection in the CRC is that the clarity of divine Scriptures is no longer confessed* (cf. Article 5 of the Belgic Confession). The notion that Scripture says both *Yes* and *No* on an issue – for example, women in church office – has become the problem. According to Dr. De Jong, women in church office is only the boil on the infection. The infection is the denial of the clarity of divine Scriptures. The speaker also said that the continuing influence of the synodical GKN was detrimental to the CRC.



Dr. P.Y. De Jong

Further, growing prosperity became a problem as well.

URCNA

Out of this CRC emerged the URCNA – a federation of churches that have returned to the Word and the Reformed confessions. Dr. De Jong said that the URCNA and the CanRC stand on the same basis; however, he urged all to be patient. He said that we as churches will need to talk about church order (a church order is still evolving in the URCNA); about a seminary (Mid-America and Theological College); a church book (*Book of Praise* and *Psalter-Hymnal*). Dr. De Jong said that neither church can force its own baggage on the other.

The speaker said that he would like to see local churches of both federations grow together by way of having combined meetings such as the one at which he was speaking. They ought then to proceed to recognition of one another as sister churches with the consequent occasional pulpit exchange and table fellowship. After that, we will need to talk about how to get together without insisting on uniformity.

... neither church can force its own baggage on the other.

He also said that the URCNA first needs to get together with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (a federation of churches which seceded from the CRC in the 1980s). After that the URCNA needs to unite with the CanRC and the Free Reformed Churches.

Dr. P.Y. De Jong ended by urging all who were there to pray for and prac-

tice the unity to which our Lord Jesus Christ called us.

Dr. J. Faber

After Dr. De Jong spoke, Dr. Faber delivered his speech on the Confessional History of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The following report will be brief since we plan to publish Dr. Faber's speech.

Dr. Faber began where Dr. De Jong finished – emphasizing the commonality of the URCNA and the CanRC. We stand on the same confessional basis. As well, we have a common Dutch Reformed church history going back to 1571 with the breaking point being 1944.

Throughout his speech, Dr. Faber worked out the theme that the history of the CanRC is one of always returning to the Reformed confessions. He took us on a trip through church history beginning at the Secession of 1834, the Doleantie of 1886, the Union of 1892 (confirmed at Synod Utrecht, 1905), the Liberation of 1944, and the establishment of the federation of CanRC in 1954. In every case he showed how our fathers simply wanted to be confessionally Reformed.

Secession, 1834

Many Canadian Reformed people have roots in the Secession of 1834 led by Rev. Hendrik de Cock. The Secession was a movement away from modernism, liberalism and Arminianism, back to the Gospel that proclaims a rich Christ to poor sinners. Both the sovereignty of God's grace and the responsibility of man, as confessed in the Canons of Dort, were taught again. As well, the confession about the church (Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession) was taken seriously. The identity of the CanRC has been shaped by the confessional character of the Secession.

Doleantie, 1886

This second secession movement out of the Hervormde Kerk was also in reaction to modernism and the higher criticism of Holy Scriptures. One cannot think of the Doleantie without thinking of Dr. A. Kuyper, the most influential man of this movement. He defended powerfully the Form of Subscription. He emphasized office (Lord's Day 12). He strove for the autonomy of the local church. We, as Canadian Reformed people, have learned much from Dr. Kuyper and the Doleantie.

Union of 1892 (and its confirmation in 1905)

It was certainly a wonder of God's grace that the churches of the Secession

and of the Doleantie found each other so quickly. They had both had a separate synod in 1888 and united in 1892. This shows that both movements were motivated not by a spirit of sectarianism but by true biblical and confessional ecumenicity. By the grace of God, this union came about because the brothers bound themselves and one another only to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity, and the Church Order of Dort.

The identity of the CanRC has been shaped by the confessional character of the Secession.

Yes, there were theological differences. These were discussed after 1892. This led to the Pacification Formula of Synod Utrecht, 1905. This was a compromise (within the bounds of the confessions) that consolidated the Union of 1892. Dr. Faber emphasized that "1905" taught us that we must be able to accept differences of theological opinion within the framework of a firm commitment to the Three Forms of Unity. This is an element in the confessional history of the CanRC.



Dr. J. Faber

Liberation, 1944

Dr. Faber spoke extensively about the Liberation. Despite the Pacification Formula of 1905, General Synods 1942 and 1943 bound certain theological positions – especially relating to the doctrine of presumptive regeneration – upon the churches. Ministers, elders and professors who could not agree with these theological opinions which went beyond Scripture and confession were unlawfully suspended and deposed by the General Synod. These

synodical actions made the Liberation necessary. The churches of the Liberation returned simply to the confessions.

... if our fathers brought two groups of churches together – in four years (between 1888 and 1892) – surely we, under God's blessing, can as well.

Conclusion

When Liberated immigrants came to Canada and the USA, they found out rather quickly that they could not walk with the CRC nor the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). The CRC chose for the Synodical Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The PRC accepted a

binding doctrinal statement about the covenant of grace which was similar to the Dutch synod's pronouncements. And so these immigrants felt compelled to establish Canadian and American Reformed Churches. But they were not motivated by a spirit of sectarianism. Proof is that in 1963 and again in 1977 they appealed to the CRC on the basis of Scriptures, Confessions and Church Order to return to the old paths.

Dr. Faber ended with saying that the CanRC have followed with sympathy and interest the reformation movements in the OCRC and the URCNA. Synod Fergus 1998 (which was meeting at that time) had on its table proposals to strengthen contact with these former CRC churches with a view towards union.

Dr. Faber concluded with a call to the unity our Lord calls us to. He made the point that if our fathers brought two groups of churches together – in four years (between 1888 and 1892) – surely we, under God's blessing, can as well.

Comment

This reporter enjoyed very much the two speeches. It was a great thing to attend such a meeting hosted by a Canadian Reformed Church in a United Reformed Church building. It was great to listen to two faithful men of God speak about the work the Lord has done in gathering His church and keeping it faithful to the Word. It was great to hear from both Dr. P.Y. De Jong and Dr. J. Faber the call to the unity of the church. Do we have the courage to heed the call? 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPC and Lord's Supper

Re: Prof. Van Dam's article in *Clarion* (May 1, 1998) regarding "the OPC report at Synod Fergus."

Rev. Hofford wrote about the OPC: "There are members in good standing in the OPC who are admitted to the Lord's Supper, yet reject infant baptism." Prof. Van Dam reacts:

It should be noted that in view of the requirements for admission to communicant membership in the OPC this is clearly an exceptional situation, just as having members in the CanRC Church that do not believe in infant baptism is an exception as well.

I consulted the *Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995* about that. On pages 94-97 we find the Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the OPC, Rev. J.J. Peterson. I will quote a few lines from that speech. On the bottom of page 96 I read:

You see, do you say to that Baptist family when they say to you "we have found a church home. You feed us. We meet our Lord when you preach, we want to be part of that fellowship – we want to join this church." How do we respond? Do we say, we will work with you and teach you and in one, two, three, I've even heard five years, we will welcome you into the church and to the sacraments. Do we? Brothers, no we don't. We, with Philip and the eunuch and Paul with the jailer – "then, immediately he and his family were baptized. The jailer brought them in his home and set a meal before them. Immediately he and his family were baptized. He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole fam-

ily. Risky? You bet. Babes in Christ – first generation believers. The smell of the world, the smell of the Baptist cling to the clothing but they have taken the step of faith and united with a Reformed body of Christ and they don't really know what they are getting into, and you don't know what the Lord has put in your way, but you move on in full trust of the Lord of the covenant – and you preach and you teach and you fellowship – and the Lord gathers for Himself, by His Word and Spirit, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life. That's not farfetched. That's not unreal. That's the congregation in Bowie, Maryland and in Roswell, New Mexico and in Bath, Maine, and in San Antonio, Texas. Twenty of the 100 who will gather for worship next Lord's Day are Baptist. Four of the adults are members, but all of those families are teaching their children the Scriptures and even the catechism.

And now, one last line, for it will become too long: "And we feel, we cannot, we must not, exclude them from the body of Christ and the sacraments."

This is said by the official delegate of the OPC. Prof. Van Dam says: "An exceptional situation." Rev. Peterson says: "They don't really know what they are getting into, and you don't know what the Lord has put in your way." The right supervision of the Lord's Supper requires more than that. These Baptist people like to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a Reformed church, but the Lord of the covenant with His baptismal promises is denied.

Several times we could read in *Clarion* that the main divergencies do not exist anymore. I am convinced that those who say or

write that should be more realistic and should not glance over these facts.

W. DeHaan, Wardsville, ON

The KJV

In *Clarion* 47/8 P. 196 Rev. Gerhard H. Visscher gives a book review of Jerome M. Julien's book: "What the Spirit says to the Churches." In this review he makes the statement: "It is also regrettable that the use of the KJV even means that sometimes the congregation is indirectly addressed with 'thee's' and 'thou's'." This statement is not explained, but it leaves the impression that the KJV addresses the congregations of Revelation with language reserved only for God. It must be clarified, however, that the KJV does not use "thee's" and "thou's" to specifically refer to God, but rather it uses the second person pronouns in a scholarly way to distinguish singular or plural pronouns in the Bible. "Th" pronouns (thee, thou, thy, etc.) indicate a single person or entity while the "y" pronouns (you, your, ye) indicate the plural. Unfortunately this distinction is not apparent in modern English (where "you" is used for both) but is apparent in the original languages of Scripture. This distinction in the KJV is very helpful in Bible study. It accurately allows the reader to determine who is or are being referred to in a text. An illustrative example would be Rev. 2:10, 13.

Rick Duker, Edmonton, AB

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number. 



Church Unity Discussions: Canadian Reformed, United Reformed

The second round of official ecumenical discussions between the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches took place on April 27, 1998 at the Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton. Picking up where we left off at our February 2 meeting, this meeting was also characterized by open and frank discussion undergirded by a spirit of mutual brotherly respect. The discussion focused upon our mutual objective and subsequently upon coming to a strategic plan of action for moving forward together.

In terms of the objective of the meetings, the URC delegation presented the following: Faithful Reformed federations who have identical confessions interpreting the Holy Scriptures, and who have the same historic Church Order as basis and model for their church government, and who have traveled a similar ecclesiastical pathway in history, have a Scripturally mandated objective to seek integrated federative church unity. The Canadian Reformed delegation was in full agreement with this statement both in terms of its seriousness of purpose, as well as in terms of its far reaching implications.

The committees of the respective federations had also each come to the meeting with prepared submissions proposing strategies for the way forward. The Canadian Reformed delegation proposed a process comprised of three phases, namely: initial recognition, acceptance, and advanced recognition. In response to this proposal, the URC delegation proposed a small revision consisting of the phases exploration, recognition and integration. In similar ecumenical dialogue involving the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands, the terms *verkenning*, *herkenning* and *erkenning* have been used. Clearly there was no disagreement in terms of the general procedure to be followed.

It was in terms of specifics, however, that differences of opinion between the two committees became evident. According to the plan of action set forward by the Canadian Reformed brethren, the official recognition of one another as

“true churches” would be the culmination of phase one. This would be publicly noted in phase two, at which time initial forms of cooperation in societies, Bible study and evangelism would be recommended between congregations at local levels. Under this arrangement, the understanding of the Canadian Reformed delegation was that pulpit exchanges and the opening of the fellowship of the Lord’s table to one another should not take place until the discussions reached the third phase and both federations entered into a form of federative agreement at the synodical level.

Under the proposal of the URC delegates, recognition of one another as “true churches” would take place in the second phase of discussions, leading immediately to the opening up of the respective pulpits and Lord’s Supper tables to one another. Envisioned would be a form of ecclesiastical fellowship as the means to attaining full integrative unity. The URC delegation urged that such opening of pulpit and table was a necessary consequence of recognizing one another as “true churches” where the gospel is purely preached, the sacraments rightly administered and church discipline faithfully exercised (Belgic Confession Article 29). The Canadian Reformed delegation expressed hesitation about such an approach for fear of the churches becoming comfortable with ecclesiastical fellowship and losing interest in full integrative unity, producing, as a result, a sinful pluriformity of the church (where one simply remains comfortable with the side by side existence of many denominations). The URC delegates countered this objection with the assertion that the proposed Canadian Reformed approach could lead to the very sin of pluriformity in practice, ironically, as a result of a strong stand against it in principle.

No conclusions were reached with respect to the formal definition of strategy. There was fundamental agreement, however, that together, the committees should press forward in clarifying any doctrinal issues and uncovering any practical and historical obstacles that may need to be faced, in the confidence

that the specifics of the way forward would become clearer in the process. Whereas the URC delegation was prepared to enter into a full range of doctrinal discussions pertaining to some of the doctrinal concerns of the Liberation of 1944, it was the Canadian Reformed who suggested that such discussions should only be entered into where necessary. They cited the Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1969 where a memorandum of agreement is recorded between the CRC and the CanRC and doctrinal obstacles between those two federations were effectively set aside. The Canadian Reformed brethren see that agreement as part of the “line of history” of the United Reformed Churches. It appears that such an emphasis on the “line of history” is stronger among the Canadian Reformed than among the United Reformed.

For the next meeting, to be held in Hamilton on September 21, 1998, it was decided that the brothers Rev. R. Stienstra (URC) and Rev. W. Den Hollander (CanRC) would work out a joint submission on the doctrine of the Church in an effort to move us forward. Any subsequent developments at the committee level will be communicated to the churches of both federations in order to keep all churches informed.

That way forward will certainly require that we learn to be patient with one another, obediently creative in our approach and bold in faithfulness. May the Lord, who gathers His church, grant it.

The Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches were, once again, Dr. J. DeJong, Rev. W. Den Hollander and Elder H. VanderVelde. Representing the Committee for Ecclesiastical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America were the Revs. J. Bouwers, R. Stienstra and P. Vellenga.

For the meeting,
Rev. John A. Bouwers

Rev. Bouwers is minister of Immanuel United Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario.



News from the American Reformed Fellowship, Palmetto, Florida

It has been a long time since you have heard something from us. It was not the lack of information about what is going on at Palmetto that caused the delay. There were many other reasons why news from the Fellowship was slow in coming. The most important one we will mention at this time, namely, is the change in the committee. Brother Tony VanderHout resigned as member of our committee. For many years he took care of the publication sector of the Fellowship. He did this work with joy and dedication and he was very proficient in this work. Moreover he had all the equipment and personnel at his fingertips. Our committee lost in him a very capable member and we are very thankful for all the work he has done for us. After his resignation we gradually started to understand what his work really did entail.

Mind you we do not want to blame brother VanderHout for any delay of information; on the contrary, the blame for that falls entirely back upon us. But thinking of the French saying: "He who excuses himself does in fact nothing else that accuse himself," we will refrain from finding any excuse.

The news we want to share with you will, in the first place, deal with our Sunday gatherings at Palmetto. As early as the second half of October the first Florida goers begin to arrive. Mind you, it is only a trickle and the first few Sundays they meet together at the home of a brother and sister, to listen to a tape of one of our ministers. But as soon as the number increases, let me say more than fifteen, we make use of the facilities of the First Baptist Church at Palmetto. The church has granted us hospitality for many years already for which we are truly thankful. They did not charge us any fees for it, but of course it is our obligation to remunerate them for their beautiful facilities which fortunately are air conditioned – a must for Florida.

When the month of December arrives the Sunday attendance goes up to an average of forty to forty-five. This year around Christmas it even peaked into the sixties. One of the reasons the attendance is so high is that many brothers and sisters of the United Reformed Churches, the Orthodox C.R.C., the Free

Reformed Churches and the Protestant Reformed Churches also come together with us. It stands to reason that the discussions about unity with some of these and the Canadian Reformed Churches are followed with great interest, since this would have important consequences also for our gatherings at Palmetto, as you easily can understand.

This season we had a minister for thirteen Sundays to lead the worship services and we consider this a great improvement over the times we only had a minister for a month and a half or no minister at all. Still we hope that more ministers and professors will make themselves available to help us out at Palmetto.

When there is no minister we make use of the video tapes. More and more churches have or get the equipment to make these videos. We are thankful that they make it available for us too. Again this made it much better than listening to a tape only, though we do realize that not the person of a minister is the most important thing, but the message he brings us from his Sender. The ministers who do help us out during the winter season receive free accommodation. We have a mobile home available for them. They also receive financial help in their travel expenses.

We realize that not every minister or professor always had the time available to go to Florida for a couple of weeks, still we welcome them heartily when they are able to do so and we really appreciate the help of those who already assisted us in the past years.

After the morning worship services there is always a coffee social to become acquainted with each other, since there seldom passes a Sunday that there are no newcomers in our midst. For those who have no place to go there is an opportunity in the building to stay over, provided you have taken your own lunch along, or you might be invited by the brothers and sisters who stay for a longer time in Florida to join them for lunch at their homes.

How is this all financially running, e.g., with the cost of the facilities, mobile home and other expenses? With great thankfulness we may relate that throughout the years we never have had lack of the necessary funds. The greater

part of the money comes through the regular collection. However, those who stay in Florida for longer than one month pay a free will offering of \$160.00 U.S. per season.

There are of course brothers and sisters at Palmetto who quietly do a lot of work for the Fellowship without being paid. They don't want to hear a word of praise for it! We are thankful for their free labour too!

Alas, we know that we do not have a regular church at Palmetto, as some mistakenly have misunderstood us from former publications, but we certainly do experience the communion of the saints in our worship services. Moreover, we hope and pray that under the Lord's blessing we may have a Church of our Lord Jesus Christ at Palmetto. The Lord's hand is not shortened and with Him all things are possible. Most Reformed churches were established that way in Florida.

We also experience that many of the "oldtimers" have passed away or are unable to come anymore because of bodily conditions. But we are also amazed that many newcomers have taken their place. We regularly receive phone calls for information about where we worship, what times or even about possible accommodations. Lately we were also approached by people who work for longer or shorter times in Florida. Probably it will be helpful to give you some phone numbers in Canada and Florida in case you need some information. First of all the place of worship:

The Welcome Center of Palmview Baptist Church at U.S. 41 and 49th Street, *Palmetto*, Florida.

Time: 11:15 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Phone Numbers in Canada:

1-905-681-1688

1-905-563-8383

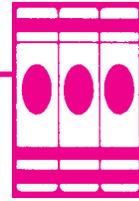
Phone Numbers in Florida:

1-941-729-4863

1-941-739-1306

1-941-748-3651

On behalf of the Fellowship
Martin VanderVelde 



C. Bouwman, *The Book Of Ezra, Nine Sermons.* (Kelmscott, W.A.: Pro Ecclesia Publishers, 1997), 64 pp.; no price given.

By C. Bosch

It is not often that we get to read a collection of sermons by a Reformed minister, although those who are on the Internet can have them at the touch of a button! When these do appear in print they are usually found within the blue covers of the Preach the Word booklets. While they are found in not a few consistory rooms as well as on some pulpits (just in case . . . !), they are not a 'household' item. With these nine sermons preached by Rev. Cl. Bouwman of Kelmscott, Pro Ecclesia fills at least a part of the void. They were preached in the course of 1995 and early 1996. In presenting them, Rev. Bouwman expressed the hope that, "through reading them 'the man of God' will become the more complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16ff).

The book of Ezra is a book of restoration and of anticipation. Together with its 'twin,' Nehemiah, it reveals God's grace as He made good His promise broadcast by Jeremiah. God would visit His people and would return them to Jerusalem. He "who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and obey His commands" (Neh. 1:5) would keep His promise of the Messiah alive. The temple would be rebuilt with a view to Jesus Christ who would "suddenly" come to it. (Mal. 3:1). This coming would not be because of the faithfulness of God's people who would need ongoing reformation and continual encouragement by the prophets of the Lord (Haggai and Zechariah).

These sermons focus on the sheer grace of God who moves the hearts, not only of covenant people but also of heathen kings that He might make progress in His plan of salvation. Time and again Rev. Bouwman wants us to see it was all God's doing and we are simply called to submit to Him in reverence and humility. Our eyes too are to be fixed on our God, eminently wor-

thy of glory and praise. This God-centred focus is in evidence in almost every one of the themes. All ministers of the Gospel are under divine orders to preach Christ. With these sermons the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ is clearly heard. May all those who hear it and read it receive it in faith.

The texts Rev. Bouwman chose for the sermons are all very short. Yet this does not mean the context is neglected. As a matter of fact the author even provides us with ample footnotes, "in an effort to share some of my 'kitchen work' with the reader." These, as well as the sermons themselves, give evidence of considerable study.

While I have considerable appreciation for these sermons, I do have some questions regarding the interpretation and application of some of the texts. Preaching on Ezra 2:1, Rev. Bouwman suggests that the reason comparatively few Jews returned from captivity was because they "received mercy, received more, much more mercy than did those other covenant children whom God left in the land of their exile." (p.13) This appears to view God's church-gathering and church-reforming work from the viewpoint of election rather than from the perspective of God's covenant. As a result, the congregation is urged to praise God for His grace in being allowed to "belong to the congregation where God's Word of life in Jesus Christ is proclaimed" (p.16), yet little or nothing is said of covenant obedience. Yet it is clear that those whose hearts God "stirred" responded in obedience to the Word of God proclaimed by Cyrus! Despite many words concerning the grace of God, the danger of exclusivism is here. This is borne out by the statement, "The Christians that be in the community around us, though they be children of God by covenant too, God has not stirred up and gathered to His Church." Is this not judging "rashly and unheard?" Is this not a rash judgement? Does it do justice, e.g., to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia? Let's be humble, and speak with discretion.

I also had some difficulty with the author's exegesis of Ezra 4:3. Here the

leaders of God's people rejected their neighbours' request that they be allowed to help rebuild the temple. These neighbours are characterized as, "enemies of Judah and Benjamin" (Ezra 4:1). It is clear from 1 Kings 17 that they were rank syncretists. While they worshipped the Lord they also "served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought (1 Kgs. 17:33). Rev. Bouwman limits the application of this text to issuing a warning against the dangers of false ecumenism. Consequently the sermon concludes, ". . . unless God joins us together with others through serving one God in one way (and that's through obedience to His Word) it is not for us to extend the hand of fellowship" (p. 36). Would it not have been equally appropriate to warn against every form of syncretism? Reformed people are not immune to the dangers of pretending to serve the Lord while they're busy adopting the idolatrous customs of our society. We may very well refuse any cooperation with other Christians yet miss the mark of our high calling to be obedient, living stones of the city of God. Besides, Ezra 4:3 is not only re-active but it calls for a joyful, determined, proactive, response to God's call to be such "stones" in His church-building work.

My criticism of some aspects of these sermons does not take away from my overall appreciation of them. Rev. Bouwman does show that the blessings of the Lord make us very rich. The sermons direct the hearers to bow before our great and holy God who forgives our sins and who will surely build His church. The eighth sermon (on Ezra 8:23) greatly encourages us to be earnest in humble prayer.

May this little booklet be a blessing in our midst. Whether this Gospel (for that's what it is) is proclaimed from the pulpit, read at home or studied at the societies, it will be a valuable resource. I hope they will soon be readily available on this continent.

Rev. C. Bosch is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-South.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons. Introduction by Iain H. Murray.* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995) xxxii + 268 pages; \$ 25.95 U.S.

By P. Aasman

To the cynical reader, a book containing sermons with provocative titles is a recipe for disappointment. Too often he has found that the author claims to address matters which the author only touches on, or treats in a shallow manner. The titles of the twenty-one sermons listed in the Table of Contents of this volume are provocative; but not only do the sermons grip the reader's imagination, they satisfy his expectations.

The thirty-two page introduction by Iain Murray is an important addition to this collection of sermons. Murray speaks of the late Lloyd-Jones (died in 1981) as a preacher who keenly felt the calling to be evangelistic in his preaching. He steadfastly rejected the notion that you must fix the church to fit the seeker; rather you must preach the message to hit the hearer. Evangelistic preaching is different from regular preaching, for while a Christian needs to be admonished, comforted, instructed and encouraged, a non-Christian needs only one thing: to be convinced of sin and humbled before God.

Of special interest is Lloyd-Jones' conviction that evangelistic preaching must draw from the Old Testament Scripture. He deplored the neglect of the Old Testament by contemporary Christianity, especially in the evangelistic context. Conversion to Christianity demands the Old Testament. The Old Testament is the voice in the wilderness crying out to prepare the way of the Lord. The evangelical idea that the world only needs to hear Christ to accept him, has dispensed with the Old Testament stress on sin and reverence for God. Murray points out that it is this deficiency in evangelical preaching which Lloyd-Jones tried to rectify.

The strengths of these sermons are many. He identifies the primary sin of the non-Christian world as pride, and he uncovers it in surprising places. He denounces society's intellectual snobbery toward religion in general, and toward Christianity in particular. He bursts the idea that man is ennobling himself through evolutionary growth, and he permits God's word to expose the folly of putting one's trust in human technological development. He is furthermore outraged at liberal Christianity's emasculation of the Old Testament historical

record, and he regularly chastises evangelical Christianity's failure to focus on mankind's problem of sin. He keeps asking and answering Biblically the existential question of why we have suffered and are suffering so much in the 20th Century. Some of his emphases will seem rather dated to the decades after the Second World War; nevertheless, he confronts the reader with the timeless message that sinners need to be humbled before the all-encompassing God.

The style of these sermons is unique. Often, the sermon rushes off on some apparently irrelevant tangent, as Lloyd-Jones takes his hearers to some distant thought that has, it seems, nothing whatever to do with the text, only to come rushing back to the text to highlight an evangelistic message with remarkable pointedness that leaves the reader utterly convinced that this is the only interpretation of the text. This style can be disconcerting, however, as the reader cannot help but wonder sometimes if Lloyd-Jones should not have stuck a little closer to his text.

A more serious problem is that Lloyd-Jones shows sympathy for the Wesleyan persuasion. He cites Wesley and Luther together as men who had once experienced a season in which the wrath of God for their sins oppressed them, but then their grief was turned to joy at the realization of God's grace in Christ for them. The doctrine he illustrated here is of course essential Christianity: there is no joy in Christ without grief over sin. However, the Wesleyan idea goes beyond this and insists that every individual needs to identify the moment when he was humbled by grief, and raised by grace. In one sermon, Lloyd-Jones describes this moment in Jacob's life at Penuel, where Jacob at last is converted and comes to true faith in God. It is highly questionable, however, to say that Jacob came to faith here, since there is much evidence of faith prior to this story.

The most troubling thing about Lloyd-Jones for Reformed readers, however, will be his shameless use of the exemplaric method to explain the text. What that means is the Lloyd-Jones will often explain a text by saying that it is an illustration of something we must experience too. For instance, the struggle of Jacob with an angel is described as "a perfect picture and representation of conversion, a man coming into a true Christian experience." The healing of Naaman the Syrian is described as a "striking illustration" of the fact that the only real thing that a person needs is a relationship to God. Again and again, he describes the Old Testament as a se-

ries of illustrations and demonstrations of eternal truths.

Having said this, one will be quite surprised to discover that after the most exemplaric type of statements, Lloyd-Jones unfolds some of the most delightful redemptive-historical insights. This is possible because not only does he believe that the Old Testament contains eternal truths, but that it contains the exact same message as the NT: That God delivers men from death by faith in Jesus Christ. One would have to conclude, then, either that we find in this volume exemplarism at its very best, or that the dividing line between exemplaristic and redemptive-historical preaching is not so clearly defined as former generations would have us believe. Given the fact that these sermons are decidedly both exemplaristic and redemptive-historical, the later possibility would have to be true.

Rev. P. Aasman is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Grand Valley, Ontario.

Every day: Daily Readings with the Bible. Kelmescott, Australia: Pro Ecclesia Publishers, 1996. Paperback, 410 pages. Price: \$24.00 Cdn.

By G. Nederveen

As the title suggests, this is a book for daily devotional reading. It covers 365 days of the year, and also has a section on special Christian feast days and days of commemoration. The book is a combined effort of nine ministers from Australia and Canada.

The most contributions are from the pen of G. VanRongen. He took care of the months of January (on Genesis), May (on various Scripture passages), part of December (on Luke), and the Special Days. This is followed by three contributions from P. van Gorp on the book of Revelation. During the month of June he covers chapters 1-4, which is continued in November (Rev. 5-11), and concluded in December (Rev. 11-19). This makes for a good overview of the last book of the canon. The Revs. C. VanSpronsen and W.W.J. VanOene have teamed up on writing devotionals on the book of Psalms. The former made selections from Psalms 1-73 (February), the latter looked at Psalms 76-106 (August). Then there is an excursion by C. Bosch through the Song of Songs (March); on Philippians/Samuel by W. Huizinga (April); and on Jonah/Job by G. Wieske (July). The final two contributors, A. VanDelden (September) and P.K.A. de Boer (October)

wrote on various Scripture passages. Each section is concluded with a Psalm or Hymn selection for singing around the table.

It has been quite a while since a daily devotional from some of our ministers appeared in print. This book fills that gap. I will not go into a detailed evaluation of each section, but simply give you an impression of a few things that are offered. January's dish is the book of Genesis in which Rev. G. Van-Rongen gives a bird's eye view of the first Bible book. Genesis informs us about the "pre-history" of Israel as God's covenant nation. He draws the main lines of God's covenant keeping

and makes repeated links to the New Testament to put the message of Genesis in a Christological setting.

Rev. C. Bosch treats the subject of sexuality in the Song of Songs with candour and sensitivity. His writing style is pleasant and his way with words makes each daily instalment a pleasure to read. There is also an interesting section on King David taken out of 1 Samuel. And, almost as a given, the beloved Beatitudes receive attention.

I appreciate the approach of treating large portions of a particular Bible book or even a book as a whole. That is a bit more challenging to the contributors than the "pick-and-choose-

method," but it is more beneficial to the reader.

The book contains a helpful Index with reference to the biblical passages. Two minor comments: I know that publishers try to keep cost down to make a book affordable. Still, I regret that the publisher chose such a flimsy cover that, I'm afraid, will not last long. The other comment is that the clarity of the photocopying is not consistent. In my copy it varies from being very clear to fairly faint. For the rest, a helpful devotional that gives food for thought and discussion. My appreciation for the work done. I'm sure that you will read it to your benefit. **C**

REFLECTIONS

The Struggle of Faith

A letter from Henriët

My struggle of faith is a hard struggle and every day I have to fight not to fall back into that hole of questions, revolt and sorrow.

I have a serious illness for which there is no cure. I live with a maimed body, always in pain, day in, day out; I thought, "My whole future ruined." Everything around me seemed dark. I did not dare to hope for better days. So often I have been disappointed. So often I have prayed, first for a cure, later for a lessening of the pain . . . or just that the illness might go into remission.

Nothing changed

There was no cure or relief; it became even worse. There came a time, therefore, when I did not pray anymore. What good did it do me? My thoughts became darker and the words in the Bible which earlier had given me strength and comfort, had no more meaning for me – I even became angry about them. What good to me are words that say: *God will give you whatever you ask when you pray to Him in His Name.* And what about: *God does everything for your good.* I did not want to think about this at all. What "good" is there if you go from being a healthy girl to being an invalid in constant pain?

In the beginning of this year I had radical surgery. In prayer I had learned to accept that I should have this operation. But then it turned out to be a disappointment. I have been so angry and

rebellious. And scared. I wondered, "Did God not hear me? Am I so much worse than everyone else that I have to bear so much?" I doubted everything, including myself and God.

At the same time I felt guilty before God. What right did I have to speak to God in this way? Every day I grieved God with my sins. Every day again I must seek forgiveness for everything I do wrong in thought, word and deed. How can I be angry with God when I have received so much good from Him? Those feelings of guilt before God became so great that I became afraid of them. I have talked a lot about all this with my family, a few good friends, the minister and an elder. Together with the minister I have discussed Rev. C. Bijl's booklet, *As Rich as Job* (1989).

I have learned to see what is really important. I have learned to hope in spite of all the negatives. I have learned to believe that God finds me to be just as important as someone else. I am no less than someone else. While I thought that everything was going wrong, I grew in the faith.

Growing in faith

I experienced the value of faith. I saw the poverty of those who did not believe in Jesus Christ. Through my sickness and struggle of faith I learned to live consciously and intensely. Because of this I can now mean much more for others.

I have especially learned to talk about my faith and the struggle of faith. I had found my sickness to be senseless and wanted to force God to lead things differently. My sickness, however, has made me live more consciously with God. Although I am weak physically, God has made me strong spiritually and He has made me grow in faith.

I have learned that this is the most important thing in life. Growing in faith is much more important than my health, or my work and leisure activities (although I would love to be able to do all those different things).

My sickness is not gone, the pain stays and I do not understand it all. I still have questions and sometimes I am rebellious. But God has let me experience the most important thing of all in life: His love and faithfulness.

This article first appeared in Gereformeed Kerkblad, edited by Rev. C. J. Harryvan of Lelystad, the Netherlands and is reproduced here, slightly revised, in translation, with permission.

Translated by Ralph Winkel. Mr. Winkel is a member of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton. He writes, "The reason that I translated this article is that many of us, including myself, can identify with Henriët. I hope that all of us can echo Henriët's words: 'The most important thing in this life is God's love and faithfulness!'" **C**



Press Release of Classis Ontario-South March 25, 1998 in London, ON

Art. 1

On behalf of the convening church of Blue Bell and Rev. K.A. Kok called the meeting to order. He requested to sing Psalm 138:1,2, read Romans 15:1-13, and opened with prayer. The delegates, as well as the visitors were welcomed.

Art. 2

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order, with all the churches duly represented. There were two instruction.

Art. 3

Classis was then constituted and the following officers were appointed: Rev. B.R. Hofford, chairman, Rev. K.A. Kok, clerk and Rev. J. DeGelder, vice-chairman. The chairman mentions some items of memorabilia.

Art. 4

The agenda was adopted, after the addition of one appeal.

Art. 5

The chairman read the Form of Subscription for the ministers in Classis Ontario South, which was then signed by Rev. H. Versteeg.

Art. 6

Br. P. Holtvluwer was then examined in view of his request to receive permission to speak an edifying word. The relevant documents are scrutinized and found to be in good order.

The candidate presented his sermon proposal on Luke 14:15-24, which was discussed in closed session and judged to be sufficient to continue the examination.

Rev. Kok examined in Creeds and Confessions. After discussion in closed session classis decided to grant br. Holtvluwer permission to speak an edifying work in the churches for the period of one year, according to the

adopted regulations. This will take effect upon completion of his third year at the Theological College.

Art. 7

Classis took note of the letter from br. T. VanRaalte, third year student at the Theological College, as well as of the supporting letters from the Deputies for examination and from the Langley Canadian Reformed church, and discussed br. VanRaalte's request to be examined early in view of a planned internship in the Langley Canadian Reformed Church. Classis granted his request.

Art. 8

Br. T. VanRaalte was then examined in view of his request to receive permission to speak an edifying word. The relevant documents were scrutinized and found to be in good order.

The candidate presented his sermon proposal on Matthew 12:43-45, which was discussed in closed session and judged to be sufficient for the continuation of the examination.

Rev. Kok examined in Creeds and Confessions. After discussion in closed session classis decided to grant br. VanRaalte permission to speak an edifying word in the churches for the period of one year, according to the adopted regulations. This will take effect upon completion of his third year at the Theological College.

Art. 9

After lunch the chairman reopened the meeting. Psalm 101:1,2,6 was sung, and roll call showed that everyone was present.

Art. 10

The question period ad Art. 44 C.O. was held, and it could be noted with thankfulness, that in all the churches the ministry of the office-bearers is continued, and that the decisions of the major assemblies are honoured. In closed session advice was asked by and given to the church at Grand Rapids. The church at Rockway received advice in some matters of discipline.

Art. 11

In closed session Classis dealt with two appeals.

Art. 12

After dinner the chairman reopened the meeting. After the singing of Psalm 76:1,2 and roll call Classis continued with and finished the discussion on the appeals.

Art. 13.

The church at Chatham asked advice with regard to a request for financial assistance from a student at the Theological College. Chatham was advised to refer the brother to Classis Ontario North, since he comes from a church in that classical area.

Art. 14

Classis made the following appointments:

- Convening church for the next classis: the church at Chatham.
- Suggested officers for the next classis: Rev. J.E. Ludwig, chairman, Rev. B.R. Hofford, clerk, Rev. K.A. Kok, vice-chairman.
- Date and place for the next classis: Wednesday, June 10, 1998 in Smithville.

Art. 15

Personal question period was briefly made use of.

Art. 16

Censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not needed.

Art. 17

The Acts were read and adopted and the Press Release was read and approved for publication.

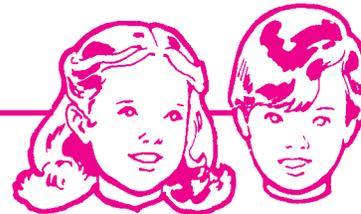
Art. 18

The chairman requested to sing Hymn 50:1,6, led in thanksgiving and closed Classis.

For Classis Ontario-South
of March 25, 1998,
Rev. J. DeGelder,
vice-chairman e.t.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Last time we spoke about seeing a baby baptized in church. This time we will speak about seeing people go to the front of the church for the Lord's Supper.

On the night before the Lord Jesus was hung on the cross, He knew that He was about to die on the cross. So, He asked two of His disciples to go into the city, to prepare the Passover. This was a feast that had been celebrated since the Israelites came out of Egypt so many years before.

At that dinner, the Lord Jesus told the disciples to take the bread and eat it, and to take the wine and drink of it. Just like at the Lord's Supper table in your church, where the Minister offers bread and wine to the people at the table. Do you know what the bread and wine mean? When the people eat the bread and drink the wine, they know that they have to remember that they are eating and drinking of the Lord's body and blood. This doesn't mean they are really eating someone's body and drinking their blood.

That is why we have Lord's Supper several times every year. We know that the Lord Jesus asked us to remember Him in this way.

Puzzles

By Busy Beaver Jaclyn Nobel

PRAYER PLACES

Wherever people are, they may call to God in prayer. Match each person with the place where he or she prayed.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Jesus, John 11:38-41 | a In a tower |
| 2. Peter and John, Acts 3:1 | b On a mountain |
| 3. Paul and Silas, Acts 16:23-25 | c On a sick bed |
| 4. A group of women, Acts 16:13 | d At a grave |
| 5. Jesus, Peter, James and John, Luke 9:29 | e In a fish |
| 6. Jonah, Jonah 2:1 | f In bed |
| 7. Habakkuk, Habakkuk 2:1 | g In jail |
| 8. David, Psalm 63:6 | h At a river |
| 9. Daniel, Daniel 6:10-11 | i At a window |
| 10. Hypocrites, Matthew 6:5 | j In the Temple |
| 11. Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:1-7 | k On street corners |

PEN PALS WANTED

Coert (11) and Petra (9) Waagmeester from die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk, Johannesburg, South Africa would like pen pals. You may correspond with them in English via letter, or e-mail. Address

P.O. Box 597
Kelvin 2054, Rep. of South Africa.
e-mail: waagmeester@ibi.co.za

KIND DEEDS

The Bible has many examples of kindness. Fill in each blank with the deed of kindness shown.

- Abraham let Lot have first choice of _____, Genesis 13:8-12.
- Jesus was presented _____, _____ and _____ by the Wise Men, Matthew 2:1,11.
- The good Samaritan helped a man who was robbed by _____ up his wounds, Luke 10:30-37.
- Jesus praised a widow because she gave _____, Luke 21:1-4.
- Simon, a Cyrenian, carried Jesus' _____, Luke 23:26.
- Mary anointed Jesus' feet with _____, John 12:3.
- Boaz rewarded Ruth because of her kindness to her _____, Ruth 2:5-11.
- David allowed Mephibosheth to _____ for Jonathan's sake, 2 Samuel 9:6-7.
- Rahab aided spies by letting them down _____ through a window, Joshua 2:1,15.
- Jonathan gave David a _____, _____ and _____, 1 Samuel 18:4.
- Dorcas made _____ and _____ for widows, Acts 9:39.

STUDY THE POSITION!

By studying the position of the parts given, we can supply extra parts from D and LAND to make

CASTER S

"D-on-caster" and "S-under-land." This is applied to Bible names below, including some books of the Bible. Study the position carefully in each case and see if you can find the full names.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. <u> J </u>
ON | 9. <u> PR </u>
BS |
| 2. <u> D/CAS </u> | 10. ASHR |
| 3. GKS | 11. <u> N </u>
I |
| 4. <u> MACED </u>
IA | S
R
A
H |
| 5. ADH | |
| 6. <u> AD </u>
IJAH | 12. <u> DEUTER </u>
ON |
| 7. H/EB | 13. J/DAN |
| 8. TCORH | 14. ADABAB |
| | 15. BEJAMN |

