

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 47, NO. 22 OCTOBER 30, 1998

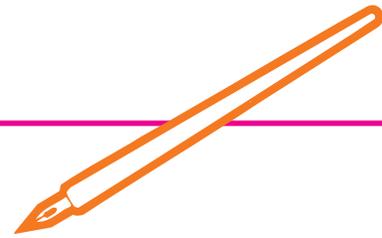


Remembrance Day

Numbers

10:1-10

By R. Aasman



The German Who Opposed Hitler

Remembrance Day. It is a day of profound emotions as we reflect over the men and women who fought and died in the wars of this century. Particularly, World War II stands out for most people because of the horrendous atrocities committed by Adolph Hitler. Millions died. Even little children were executed. How was it possible that National Socialism in Germany and its idol, Adolph Hitler, could turn much of the world upside down with its destruction and death? How was it possible that the German people themselves went along with this and did not try to prevent the egotistical tyranny of Hitler's killing machine? In fact, they did not all go along with Hitler and National Socialism. There were many who tried to oppose Hitler. There were also those who tried to defeat Hitler by means of the Word of God. One such man was a German theologian named Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906. At a very young age he started to study theology and demonstrated not only a keen intellect but also a devout character. He came under the influence of Karl Barth which is something to keep in mind when reading or studying Bonhoeffer's writings. At the age of twenty-four, in the year 1930, Bonhoeffer became a lecturer in Systematic Theology at Berlin University. At this very young age, he quickly recognized that National Socialism stood totally opposed to God and his Word. National Socialism was the worship and promotion of man's own glory and power. In 1933 he publicly denounced both National Socialism and Adolph Hitler. He made clear that the German people were accepting Hitler as their idol and their god. Understandably this did not endear Bonhoeffer to the authorities. As World War II was about to erupt, Bonhoeffer's American friends got him out of Germany. They feared for his life.

However Dietrich Bonhoeffer was not content with securing his personal safety. As he made clear in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, to believe in God's remarkable grace in Jesus Christ means a calling to practise one's faith, no matter what the sacrifice might be. A Christian must be prepared even to die for the surpassing worth of proclaiming and standing up for the gospel. Bonhoeffer could not let Hitler go unchecked in his murderous and tyrannical quest for power and dominion. He believed that he not only had to oppose Hitler, but Hitler and his plans had to be defeated. He would do that with the Word of God. Therefore Bonhoeffer returned to Germany.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Challenging with the Word of God

We should recognize the implications of a German theologian standing up against his political leader. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was originally a traditional Lutheran who saw a sharp distinction between politics and religion. He gradually changed from this idea of the separation between church and state. He saw Adolph Hitler as the antichrist and that it was therefore Bonhoeffer's duty to oppose this tyranny. He saw it as his Christian duty to put faith into practice and to stop the man who opposed God and the teachings of Scripture. Bonhoeffer also bemoaned the fact that the Lutheran Church in Germany had not done its duty in warning the German people against National Socialism and Hitler. He wrote about the dangerous preaching of "cheap grace."

This style of preaching called people simply to believe in Jesus Christ without adding that faith leads to obedience and the complete surrender of one's life to God. He wrote the following in *The Cost of Discipleship*:

Where were those truths which impelled the early Church to institute the catechumenate, which enabled a strict watch to be kept over the frontier between the Church and the world, and afforded adequate protection for costly grace? What had happened to all those warnings of Luther against preaching the gospel in such a manner as to make men rest secure in their ungodly living? Was there ever a more terrible or disastrous instance of the Christianizing of the world than this? What are those

three thousands Saxons put to death by Charlemagne compared with the millions of spiritual corpses in our country today? With us it has been abundantly proved that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. Cheap grace has turned out to be utterly merciless to our Evangelical Church.

The church had not done its duty in training its members with both the promises and demands of the Scriptures. Bonhoeffer believed that nothing but a return to faithful preaching and putting faith into practice could save Germany. He saw it as his duty, a duty which had not been met by the established church, to oppose Hitler with the Word of God and to bring him down.

On April 5, 1943, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was arrested by the Gestapo. During his time in prisons and concentration camps, Bonhoeffer not only was a tremendous spiritual support to other prisoners, but he also wrote movingly about his

trust and hope in the Lord. Bonhoeffer spent his final days at the concentration camp at Flossenberg. Just a few days before the liberation of this camp, on April 9, 1945, on the special orders of Himmler, the S.S. Black Guards executed Bonhoeffer by hanging. He was only thirty-nine years old. To the very end, Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw it as his duty and his privilege to offer his own life in order to proclaim the supremacy of God and His Word, thus pointing out Hitler as an egotistical tyrant opposed to God.

You are the salt of the earth

We thank God that there were men, women and children who risked their lives to oppose tyranny. We also thank God that in Germany itself there were people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who clearly taught that only through sub-

mission to the Word of God can a people stand up to and bring down a man like Adolf Hitler. We are reminded here of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5: *You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world.* There is no greater power or

. . . the following two propositions hold good and are equally true: only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.

control over the lawlessness of men than proclamation of the gospel. When the Word of God is proclaimed throughout our society and to the ends of the earth with its message of the sovereign grace of God and the call of a total surrender to the will of God, then people will be shown how to set aside their greed, their hostility and self-serving ways. This is not to suggest that as Christians we can bring an end to all war and hostility. All we can do is

humbly and gratefully be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We trust that God will use our work in the pursuit of his goals for the coming of the kingdom.

All of this has some very real and practical application for our lives today. We live in a time of terrible spiritual warfare. As we reflect on the wars of this century, we also need to realize that there is a war going on very close to home. In our society, unborn babies are being slaughtered for very self-serving reasons, without fear of reprisal. Euthanasia, while still outlawed, is being practised in our society. It appears that it may become even more common and might eventually be practised with impunity. What is the hope for our society and country except that the church speaks up loud and clear, and that Christians speak up loud and clear, showing from the Word of God that this is murder and therefore forbidden? Let us learn our lessons from history. Let us learn our duty as the salt and light of God in this dark and broken world. Only through faithfulness to the Word of God will people be led away from their self-seeking ways and brought to the true liberty and joy of living in obedience and gratitude to the Lord. 

What's inside?

In this issue you will find a few articles relating to General Synod Fergus. We held them back until the Acts were out so that you, the reader, could more easily follow the discussion.

Two articles focus on Remembrance Day, the editorial and the meditation. On November 11th we remember those who fell in the terrible wars of the past. Because of their sacrifice, we enjoy freedom. Let us not forget.

November 11th is an important commemorative day in our cities, towns and villages. In the church too we have our commemorative days. Several times per year, we commemorate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He died that we may live. He told us to remember his death at his table until He comes. He also told us to examine ourselves before we attend the table to eat the bread and the wine, the tokens of his body and blood. To help you to examine yourselves, we have begun a new column that will appear every other month. We thank the Rev. Leefink for allowing us to publish these gems and Mr. Tony Vanderven for his fine work of translating them from Dutch to English.

Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff contributes another perceptive article on C. S. Lewis.

Then you will find some articles reporting on various events here and there in the churches.

GvP



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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	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

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Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
 ISSN 0383-0438

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By A.J. Pol

Remembrance and Expectation

*He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation nor will they train for war anymore. Isaiah 2:4*

Remembrance Day

The Twentieth Century has seen an explosion in the development of education and technology. In the past, people thought that such developments would surely bring enlightenment and peace. But the opposite is the case. No century has ever seen bloodshed on such a wide scale. There have been two World Wars and innumerable smaller wars. Nations have risen up against nations. Nations have been divided by internal conflicts. In countless homes people have mourned the loss of loved ones. There are many historical documentaries of such events. Around Remembrance Day they attract renewed attention. But they have to compete with live reports of ongoing strife, death, and streams of refugees.

We live in a free country. Such events, therefore, do not loom as large in our lives as they do in the lives of those who know firsthand what it is to suffer the terrors and deprivations of war. Only the older people among us can recount such experiences. They can tell the younger generation something of what it means: the humiliating experience of an occupation, the loss of the freedom to come and go as you please, hunger, fear, hatred, sorrow, and despair. Hearing about this is important. It is hard to fathom such experiences if you have not gone through them.

Whether we have experienced such things or not, we should know that it is a privilege to live in a free country. Let us be thankful for that. We can live in peace and gather in worship as a church from week to week in freedom. Let us also hope and pray that we will never have to go through the turmoil and grief of a war.

Sin is the real enemy

Isaiah began his work in the second half of the Eighth Century before Christ. In those days Assyria was on its way to becoming a major power in the world. This country was not only after riches. It wanted to extend its territory and exercise power in a permanent way. Rebellious peoples were subjugated. If necessary, foreign populations were taken captive by Assyrian armies and deported

to other areas. In this way other countries were incorporated into the Assyrian empire. Nevertheless, the main threat for God's covenant people was not the Assyrian power. The greatest threat to their freedom and lives was *sin*. That is why God summoned them to repent.

Much of the second chapter of Isaiah is devoted to the theme of judgment and destruction because of sin. God himself will act, showing through his judgment how powerless sinners and their idols are. The images of the coming judgment and the Final Judgment on the Last Day fuse together and are painted in one perspective.

True peace

The text for our Scripture meditation gives us a prophecy of judgment and then peace. You can find a quotation from Isaiah 2:4 on the United Nations building in New York, in the U.S.A. Those words are used to express the universal desire for peace. Within the confines of that building, representatives of many nations engage in discussions. The purpose is that a spirit of peace and cooperation will prevail over the destructive forces of hatred and war.

The work done by the United Nations may be valuable in various respects. But our text, seen in its context, indicates that they will never achieve the goal of true peace. The reason for this is that the basis of the United Nations organization is not solid. The organization is founded on the acknowledgment of human rights instead of the rights of God. Human rights can never be made secure outside of God.

Through Jesus Christ, God restores unity and grants healing. Former enemies from all sorts of countries unite in the desire to serve the LORD. Where this peace reigns, personal interests are not subordinated to common interests and human rights, but to the Word of God. True peace can only be found where human beings unite in serving the God of the covenant.

World-wide Peace

World history is now still dominated by wars and rumours of wars. But one day

there will be true peace. It will not be a result of human efforts but a gift from God. Isaiah 2:4 first shows us the perspective of a final, divine judgment. Following that, there will be a worldwide peace that has never been known before. It will be all-embracing. It will last forever.

Isaiah is pointing forward to a future that is yet to come. If you consider the circumstances of his day, it seems absurd. Who among the Jews of his day could imagine that people from all nations would come to serve the only true God? Were the surrounding nations not enemies, caught in the snares of idolatry? Even God's own people no longer listened to his Word.

You can't believe there will be a true and lasting peace unless you believe in God, who forgives sins, and who promises that one day He will eliminate sin and all its consequences from this world. Driven by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Isaiah prophesies of this future. His words will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns in glory.

The picture

The promised peace is described in our text in an Old Testament way. Instruments of war are changed into tools for agriculture. Swords become plowshares. Spears become pruning hooks. Those are tools for farmers. And farming is a picture of a peaceful endeavour. Its results sustain life instead of destroying it. Life blossoms instead of being annihilated. This peace will be permanent. Why? Because there will be no more training for war.

This is a picture of a total change of heart and life. The change in basic attitude is so radical that war becomes unthinkable. The peace between individuals and nations is all embracing. Isn't that a future to look forward to? Following those words of peace, Isaiah summons the people of God with words that should also resonate in our hearts: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD" (Isa 2:5).

Rev. A. J. Pol is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Guelph, Ontario.



C. S. Lewis and his Times

By F.G. Oosterhoff

A few months ago I wrote an article on C. S. Lewis in connection with the centennial of his birth. I mentioned his work as a Christian apologist and said that in a follow-up I would give some samples of his religious writings. I may still do so at a future date – time, space, and opportunity permitting. For the present article, however, I have chosen a different topic. Rather than plunging into his actual work, I want to say something about the times in which he wrote and about the specific attacks upon the Christian faith that he attempted to counter. This has the two-fold advantage of making it easier to account for the enduring popularity of his work and to explain its strengths and weaknesses.

The quest for inwardness

Lewis began his career as a Christian writer in the period between the two World Wars. It was a time of political and economic turmoil, of intellectual soul-searching, and also of much religious doubt and uncertainty. The so-called higher Biblical criticism had been going on for more than a century, religious liberalism ruled supreme at universities and seminaries, and it was widely held that the scientific method alone was capable of providing objective truth. In this situation Biblical Christianity was very much on the defensive. Theologians who rejected the new wisdoms stood alone. Those who opposed liberalism, but were also impressed by the claims of science that it alone could lead to objective truth, looked for approaches that combined orthodoxy with an acceptance of Biblical criticism. What they felt they needed was a theology that stressed inward certainty, rather than objective, historical evidence.

They found a model for such a theology in existentialism. That philosophy was the brain child of a Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard, who lived from 1813 to 1855. The problem Kierkegaard wrestled with in his days



C.S. Lewis

was the rationalism and worldliness of the Lutheran state church. People assumed that church membership, acceptance of church doctrine, and an outwardly decent lifestyle were all that was needed to be called a Christian. Kierkegaard tried to counter this tendency by stressing the need for conversion and a personal faith that was founded on deep inner conviction. He also rebuked his contemporaries for forgetting Luther's teaching that salvation is by grace only; that from beginning to end it is God's work in Christ. And because the theologians of his day taught that faith and reason could easily be harmonized, he reminded them of the Biblical truth that finite human reason cannot climb up to the infinite God; that we can know Him only because it has pleased Him to reveal himself.

Kierkegaard's criticisms of the church of his day were to the point. Unfortunately, his fear of an externalized and rationalistic Christianity was so strong that he downplayed the role of the rational element in religion, as well as the importance of the historical evidence that the Bible gives. Philosophy,

he reasoned, had nothing to do with religion, and historical proofs could never convince anyone. Only God could do that. Historical evidence could therefore all but be ignored. And so the Bible lost its central place in Kierkegaard's system. Although he certainly cannot be called a religious liberal, he did question the historicity of certain doctrines (such as original sin). For him the fall into sin as recounted in Genesis 3 was merely a symbol of what happens in the life of every individual when he turns away from God.

It was this philosophy that was rediscovered after the first World War. It became popular among the so-called neo-orthodox or dialectical theologians. Karl Barth, the leader of this theological school and the first to be influenced by Kierkegaard, passed the message on to others. For Barth and his

Lewis's strength was that he concentrated on the specific heresies of his day and, defying learned opinion, defended both the rationality and the historical truth of Christianity.

followers, Kierkegaard's ideas seemed to provide the perfect solution to the problems they faced. By following him in his stress on inwardness rather than historical evidence, they believed, they would be able to make their peace with the higher criticism while holding on, as Kierkegaard had done, to most of the doctrine. But the attempt to reach a compromise failed. Although Barth's theology often retained orthodox

terminology, the work of his successors did not. For them God's acts of salvation, which the Bible proclaims as historical, became mere symbols. In short, although the old liberalism was left behind, unbelief was not. It had only put on a different dress.

The attack on religious language

Existentialism was strong on the European continent. In England and America another philosophy reigned, namely logical positivism, which was even less accommodating to historic Christianity. Although the movement originated in Vienna, it had been greatly influenced by English thinkers, and in Lewis's days its major stronghold was Oxford, his own university.

This philosophy, which modelled itself on the natural sciences, was concerned with language and taught that only statements which were capable of either scientific or logical proof were valid. All others were meaningless or nonsensical. One could say, for example, "You are stealing money," because that could be proven, but to say, "Stealing is wrong," was speaking nonsense. Someone else might have the opposite opinion, and neither could be scientifically proven. Moral judgments were a matter of personal feelings and preferences. The same verdict of meaninglessness applied to the assertion "God exists," and to practically every other religious and ethical statement.

The philosophy department at Oxford was prestigious and influential, and its verdict stood. Under its rule it was no longer possible to ask philosophy to support the faith, nor could one meaningfully assert that there was objective evidence for religion. As Ludwig Wittgenstein, the man who had helped inspire the movement, put it: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Those who wanted to belong to the establishment – philosophers and theologians both – obeyed. To retain at least a semblance of religion, some followed an approach similar to that of the dialectical theologians on the continent and taught that the Christian religion, rather than being based on facts and historical truth as the Bible teaches, had (again) symbolic significance only. Religious language could be meaningful, but its meaning was restricted to its usage. It could serve, for example, to encourage individual and social morality, or enable people to make sense of life, or

help them in their worship, but it could not refer to an underlying reality.

Lewis's mission and message

It was in this situation that Lewis began his work as a Christian apologist. The strength of his apologetic work was that he concentrated on the specific heresies of his day and, defying learned opinion, made it his business to defend both the rationality and the empirical, historical truth of Christianity. He continued doing so until his death and in spite of the scorn that was heaped on him by his colleagues, by the academic establishment as a whole, and even by a number of his fellow-believers. His courageous and unflinching defence of traditional Christianity was what the times needed and is a major reason why his work was so enthusiastically received by Christians of all stripes and backgrounds.

It is also a major reason why it continues to have a large, world-wide readership today. For although existential-

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ism and logical positivism are no longer around as formal philosophies, their spirit is still very much with us. Indeed, the situation is worse today than it was in Lewis's lifetime. In his day people still paid lip-service to the idea that scholars had the duty to pursue truth. Since then, postmodernism has arrived, and in the postmodern world it is the vogue to deny the very existence of truth. The battle that Lewis waged is therefore not over by any means, which explains why for many believers today his work is as relevant as it was for his contemporaries.

Lewis's relevance is not restricted to his struggle with the theology of his day. He battled the spirit of the age also in other areas. A traditionalist by character and breeding, he took pains to explain and defend traditional morality. A fine example of this aspect of his work can



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be found in his book *Mere Christianity*. Throughout his writings he opposed what he believed to be the mind- and soul-destroying tendencies in modern thought (and therefore also in modern education). He battled the prevailing "chronological snobbery" of his days, according to which the new is always better than the old, and urged a return to the forgotten wisdoms of the past. Blessed with a keen psychological insight, he was also able to explain (for example in *The Screwtape Letters*) the extent to which psychological, social, and cultural factors and assumptions can be an obstacle to faith. The fact that all this was done with great literary artistry only enhanced the appeal of his writings.

His rationalism

If Lewis's defence of the rationality and historical truth of Christianity was one of the great strengths of his work, it also accounts for its defects. Critics have accused him – in some instances on valid grounds – that he tried so hard to prove his point that he did less than justice to the position of his opponents. He also made use of traditional theistic arguments in support of the faith, the validity of which can, at least in some areas, be questioned on both Biblical and philosophical grounds. Indeed, his reliance on human reason was at times excessive. As I mentioned in the previous article, it led him even to question

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the inerrancy of Scripture and so to abandon his own philosophy.

That was not the only danger. An excessive reliance on reason also entails the risk of downplaying the supernatural character of Christianity. It can lead to a situation wherein one pushes the mysteries of the faith and the holiness of the God of the Bible – who has told us that He dwells in an unapproachable light and that his thoughts are higher than our thoughts – into the background. When this happens, faith becomes nearly synonymous with enlightened reason, and God’s acts of providence become predictable. Luther’s warning that we must let God be God (a warning that Kierkegaard well remembered!) is forgotten, and we become like Job’s friends, who had a rational explanation for all that God did, but whose certainties God shattered. Although Lewis often transcended his rationalism, I don’t believe that he always escaped the risk I described.

In defence of the gospel

Lewis has been called an “unorthodox champion of orthodoxy,” and that is an apt description. For his rationalist inclinations notwithstanding, he was a believer and stuck to his goal of defending Biblical Christianity. This ap-

proach has not only earned him the contempt of less orthodox critics and commentators, but also at times a measure of admiration. One of these commentators, who faults Lewis for ignoring

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the findings of Biblical critics, nevertheless commends his independence of mind. Whereas theological liberals, he writes, “are willing to make more concessions and measure theology by the Spirit of the Age. . . Lewis measures the Spirit of the Age by orthodox Christian theology,” even though “to many modern men” this seems “somewhat

bigoted, narrow-minded, and intolerant” (Richard B. Cunningham in *C.S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith*).

This same author provides a summary of Lewis’s message that is worth quoting. The gospel Lewis proclaims as the cure for mankind’s ills, he writes, is

the old story of creation, redemption, and consummation; of incarnation, cross, resurrection, and ascension; of faith, hope, and love; of angels and heaven and devils and hell; of the urgency of decision and the eternal finality of temporal choice. Here [Lewis says] is the good news, the gift that is absolute demand, the answer to the problems of existence. Accept it and live; reject it and die! There is no third way!

The author is right. This is the central message of Lewis’s writings, from the *Chronicles of Narnia* to the space trilogy, from books like *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* to his more conventional apologetic works, his essays, and his sermons. Had he been a rationalist tout court, he would have had few weapons to attack the wisdoms of his age. It was his faith in the historical gospel that enabled him to wage the battle.



UNDESERVED MERCY

By L.E. Leeftink



Preparing for the Lord's Supper Self-examination and Detesting Myself

From the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Self-examination is an important aspect of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper tells us that true self-examination consists of three parts. This meditation focuses on the first part.

First, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that He could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in His beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross.

Guilt and punishment

I have a difficult week ahead of me, a week in which I must prepare myself for the upcoming celebration of the Lord's Supper. The most difficult aspect of these coming days will probably be that those days will be just ordinary days. . . .

. . . days in which the same work needs to be done as always – be it housework or out-of-the-house work; be it routine or challenging activities

. . . days during which I will be occupied with my usual concerns and worries

. . . days during which I will not even think of the upcoming Lord's Supper celebration unless I really force myself.

Indeed, I will have to set time aside for this preparation.

. . . time to consider my sins

. . . time to consider that those sins cause God's wrath to come over me

. . . time to rediscover that I – enlightened by God's Word – ought to detest, ought to loathe myself because of those sins

. . . time to humble myself before God.

Sins.

God's wrath really deserved.

Detest myself.

Humble myself before God.

These are harsh, hard-hitting words. Actually, I am not so sure that I do have all that many sins. I rarely feel that I deserve God's wrath. Why should I want to detest myself? How often do I really feel guilty and lowly before God?

I have to think of Jesus Christ. His death on the cross was bitter and shameful. Next Sunday when I will eat his body and drink his blood, this eating and drinking must be a proclamation of that bitter and shameful death.

Sins!

God's wrath really deserved!

Detest myself!

Humble myself before God!

Hard-hitting words, indeed. Yet, when I – as if with my own eyes – see how shameful and bitter Jesus' death on the cross was, I am sharply reminded: these harsh words are true words. All this has to do with my sins. . . .

. . . my evil and corrupt nature; that's why I always have the urge to be disobedient to God.

. . . my daily sins; every day I go against God's will in so many different ways. That's why I have deserved God's wrath: my rebellion against God the most high King is treason. That's why I would have deserved the heaviest punishment which would last forever and which I should have borne in body and soul. But my Saviour carried the punishment which I have deserved. He suffered the wrath of God which should have destroyed me. He died on Golgotha also for my sins.

When I think of these things then I cannot but detest, loathe myself because so often do I give in to my sins. . . .

. . . so often do I live easily and superficially, without too much thought for God.

. . . so often I am negligent to do good, either consciously or subconsciously.

And yet the Lord sends me an invitation to meet Him at his table, next Sunday.

An invitation for me – even though I have grown old and wonder how many times I will yet be able to eat the bread and drink from the cup.

An invitation for me in the prime of my life – all too often I claim to be too busy to be honest even to myself.

An invitation for me – I have only celebrated the Lord's Supper two or three times.

An invitation for me – it will be the first time next Sunday.

I will start this week by going back to the cross. That's where I ought to stay throughout the coming week. There, at the cross, I will renew my confession once made: *Lord God, have mercy on me, wretched sinner.*

That's how I will humble myself before God. I feel myself a sinful, lowly person, yet placed in the full light of God's grace.

Undeserved mercy – that will occupy my thoughts forever.

Leeftink, L.E. (1998). *Tot versterking van ons geloof: ter voorbereiding op de viering van het Heilig Avondmaal*. Woord & Wereld #39. Translated by T.M.P. Vanderven. Rev. Leeftink is minister of the Reformed Church (Liberated) at Zaamslag, the Netherlands.

This meditation includes suggested Bible readings for each day during the week of preparation, a passage from the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper that forms the focus of the meditation, a written out Bible passage to focus attention on God's Word since sacrament and Word may never become isolated from each other, and an appropriate psalm or hymn to be sung.

When thinking about the Bible passages, consider these key questions: 1. How does this passage speak of God the Father, and / or God the Son, and / or God the Holy Spirit? 2. What warning is given in this passage, also for me? 3. What promise is given in this passage, also for me? 4. What phrase / sentence speaks most directly to me? 5. What part of this passage can I use in my prayer?

Readings for the week of preparation

Sunday:	Psalm 130
Monday:	Psalm 30
Tuesday:	Psalm 32
Wednesday:	Psalm 25:1-11
Thursday:	Psalm 25:12-22
Friday:	John 19:17-30
Saturday:	I Corinthians 11:23-29
Sunday:	Morning: Luke 22:14-20 Evening: 1 Corinthians 12:13-26

Singing: Psalm 32 verses 1, 2

1. Blest is the man whose trespass is forgiven,
Whose sins are covered in the sight of heaven.
Blest is the man against whom, Lord, Thou wilt
Not count all his iniquity and guilt.
How happy he, contrite of heart and lowly,
Who has confessed his sins, O LORD most holy;
Who does not secretly Thy laws transgress,
Whose spirit harbours no deceitfulness.
2. When I kept silent, sinful ways condoning,
I pined away through my incessant groaning.
Thy hand weighed down on me in my deceit;
My strength was sapped as by the summer's heat.
To Thee, O God of justice and compassion,
I then at last acknowledged my transgression.
I said, "I will confess my sins to Thee,"
And all my guilt Thou hast forgiven me.



From the Scriptures

Psalm 51:3-15

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.
Save me from blood guilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.



Merely Practices?

By W.W.J. Van Oene

In his reply to my "Letter to the Editor" published in the August 7 issue, the Rev. G. van Popta stated that "only different *practices* and *emphases*" keep us and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church apart. He wrote:

General Synod Fergus made a *practical* matter – how elders in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church admit guests to the Lord's Supper over which they have been charged with oversight – a final condition on whether or not we can enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. How another church admits guests – whether the table is fenced by way of a verbal warning from the Word of God, or by way of attestation – is a church order matter. It is not a confessional matter. It's a matter of practice, not confession. We have made a church order matter a final condition.

Several points in the above beg refuting and rebuttal.

Here false dilemmas are put up and with an easy stroke of the pen the whole struggle, also of our latest General Synod, to find the way that is according to the will of the Lord is declared to be just a difference in practice.

Here is an apparent identification of church order and practice. In other words: the church order is degraded to a document that contains only practical arrangements.

A church order matter, we hear here, is not a confessional matter. It is just a question of practice.

The character of our Church Order

Certainly, our Church Order is not on a level with our confessions. Our Church Order is not a document that contains "principles." For that we have to go to the Scriptures and to what the church has gathered from the Scriptures in her confessions.

On the other hand, however, we should not forget that what the churches have agreed upon in the

church order is the *practical application of what the Lord has revealed to us in His Word*. The churches have taken extreme care to make only such arrangements and to adopt only such stipulations as are in full harmony with God's Word, arrangements and stipulations that are the practical "working out" of Scriptural "principles."

Anyone who degrades the Church Order to a collection of mere practical arrangements denies its character and undermines the covenant that the churches have made on these conditions.

It would not be difficult at all to show with practically every article of our Church Order how here the Lord's revelation forms the basis, the ground for this specific stipulation.

Without doubt, there are stipulations for which no ground can be adduced from the Word of God. Let's mention a few of them.

There is, e.g. Art. 33, stating that "Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds."

Or take Art. 43, stating that "The consistories and the major assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives."

This does not mean, however, that what has been stipulated even in the above-mentioned articles is not in full harmony with God's Word or does not fit perfectly within the whole framework of our Church Order as a practical application of Scriptural "principles."

For all the other stipulations in our Church Order grounds can be adduced from the Word of God to show that we have far more in this agreement than a description of *practices*. We have a "working out" of what the Lord has told us in His Word.

It would lead us too far from the present case if we showed the correctness of the previous paragraph by describing the grounds for several articles. We just restrict ourselves to the point in question, namely the fencing of the Lord's table.

Is this a *confessional* matter or just a question of *practice*?

Most certainly, we do not have anything to do with the manner in which *others* admit people to that table. What others do is none of our business.

But we are speaking of a federation with which we have been having discussions about the possibility of recognizing them as a sister-church with the consequence that their ministers have access to our pulpits and that their members will be received into full membership upon showing a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct!

And that makes all the difference.¹

Our confessions speak

What do our confessions say about this?

We turn our attention to the Belgic Confession first.

In Art. 32 we confess that "we accept only what is proper to preserve and promote harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God. To that end, discipline and excommunication ought to be exercised in agreement with the Word of God."

Our Catechism speaks about this, too. When question 82 asks whether also those are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who by their confession and conduct show that they are unbelieving and ungodly, the answer is "No," and we confess that "according to the command of Christ and His apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such persons by the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

The very same is confessed in question and answer 85, where we read that those who do not heed the admonitions "are forbidden the use of the sacraments." If this is not done, Art. 82 says, "the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation."

In full accordance with this *confessional* declaration, the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons stipulates that "they shall exercise disci-

pline, according to the command of Christ, against those that show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent. They shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned.

Is it just *practice* when the churches have agreed in Art. 61 of the Church Order that "The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life?"

Is it not rather so that behind this stipulation is the *confessional truth* that the sacraments should not be profaned?

And is it a faithful execution of their office, when a stranger presents himself and when the elders, when the consistory says: "We warn you not to eat and drink judgment unto yourself, but we leave the decision to partake up to you?"

It would amount to a putting the whole congregation at risk, the risk expressed in question and answer 82 of our Heidelberg Catechism.

Thus we have to uphold that the fencing of the Lord's table is real only and is effective only when the consistory decides whether one can partake of it or not. *They are the ones who are responsible.*

Confessional membership

In connection with this we have to speak about "confessional membership," as this is closely connected with the above matter.

We already mentioned the stipulation of Art. 61 C.O. that only those shall be admitted to the Lord's table who "have made public profession of the Reformed faith."

What is "the Reformed faith?"

It is not that someone declares "I believe."

The Reformed faith is the faith of which Jude speaks in his letter: "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." This faith has been summarized by the Reformed churches in their confessions.

Thus one must have made profession of the Reformed faith before he may be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

In the past more than once a discussion was considered necessary about the question whether one makes profession of the faith as summarized in all the confessions or just in the Apostles' Creed. Some asserted that such a profession of faith was restricted to the Apostles' Creed and that the other confessional forms stayed out of the picture.

The older ones among us will remember that such a discussion took

place in our Netherlands sister-churches some forty years ago. It was claimed that one making public profession of faith bound himself only to the Apostles' Creed.

Hereby a false opposition was created: The Apostles' Creed versus other confessional forms, as if the other confessional forms added to what is confessed in the Twelve Articles, and as if it were possible that the church confesses in the other confessional forms conflicts with what she confesses in the Apostles' Creed.

Is this a confessional matter or just a question of practice?

From the Netherlands this wrong idea blew over into Canada as well. We ourselves also found members in our midst who maintained that one making profession of faith bound himself only to the Apostles' Creed.

One of the arguments was that in many, if not all, instances those presenting themselves for the public profession of faith had become acquainted with the Heidelberg Catechism only but who, like Hendrik de Cock even after having been a minister for several years, did not know the Canons of Dort.

It would be difficult to prove the correctness of such an allegation. Speaking from experience, I may declare such assumption incorrect.

In this connection I would also refer our readers to the pages 578-580 of our *Book of Praise*.

Even apart from this the question is to be faced and answered whether the Canons of Dort *add* anything to what the church already confesses in the other confessional forms. The answer is: No, they do not add anything but only elaborate on specific points.

Thus the whole argument falls flat and proves to be void.

A blessed mistake

As for the question whether "the Articles of the Christian Faith" mean the articles of the Apostles' Creed or also refer to the other confessional forms, this question was dealt with at the General Synod of 1983.

Our readers will remember that the second question the parents have to answer at the baptism of their infants used to read as follows: "Do you confess

that the doctrine which is contained in the Old and the New Testament and in the Articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian church is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?"

At the Synod of 1983 a letter was received with the request to state whether "the Articles of the Christian Faith" referred to the Apostles' Creed only or to all the confessions.

Synod made what I since have called "a blessed mistake." Assuming that synod should answer that question, I have become convinced that the answer ought to have been: "Sorry, brother, we are unable to answer your question, for a synod is not an assembly to give interpretations." I acknowledge my share in this mistake.

Synod replied about as follows: We have learned from the letter that the expression "which is contained in the Articles of the Christian Faith" is occasion for confusion. In order to prevent confusion we shall change that part of the question to "and summarized in the confessions."

Being aware of the background of the above question (namely, the Dutch discussion of this point and all things around it and connected with it) I was wholeheartedly in favour of that change, and I still am.

Basically nothing changed when synod changed the wording, for it said already in the question: "and which is taught here in this Christian Church." And where do we find what is taught here in this Christian Church? We do not find this in what the Rev. A. proclaims, or what the Rev. B. confesses, and so on. What is taught here in this Christian Church is found in the *Church's confessions*. Thus one might say that, to a certain extent, the question now contains a tautology.

It was therefore completely superfluous (to use this mild expression) when a couple in one of the churches had their baby baptized in a Dutch service, although otherwise they never attended the Dutch services. But in the Dutch service the Dutch form was used which still spoke of "the articles of the Christian Faith." How can one fool himself!

As our readers may know, it has been proposed to return to the old redaction of "and in the articles of the Christian faith." I would not object to that, although I do not see the need for that, and would agree to it only as long as it is as clear as the noonday sun that such would not mean at all that from

that moment on the parents as well as those presenting themselves for the public profession of faith are not bound to all the confessional forms.

Thus we do have “confessional membership,” and this is not a matter of *practice* but of *principle*.

Would it be necessary to make clear why we must insist on this as a condition for recognition as sister-churches? Apparently it is.

It is strange that the Rev. van Popta omitted this point raised in my letter and, instead, dragged in the point of Sunday observance. Neither did he mention the question of female office-bearers, a point of confession and not of practice. And so there are more things. However, back to the “confessional membership.”

If this had been a point of practice, we would have no right to insist on it as a condition for recognition as sister-churches. Now it is different.

I did mention already that a relation as sister-churches implies that min-

isters are freely admitted to our pulpits (upon invitation by the consistory, of course) and that upon submission of a good attestation, members are received without examination. They share in all the rights (and obligations) of those who were already members.

Yet, if they have not made “profession of the Reformed faith,” we would have two kinds of members: those who are bound to all the confessions and those who only have declared that they believe, without further specification of *what* they believe. There may be variations within the latter category, for we may trust that they have consented to some parts of the Scriptural doctrine, but basically that’s what the situation would be.

They could also be teachers at one of our schools and introduce ideas and doctrines that are contrary to what the church confesses, having been admitted as members without further examination. And let no one claim that this is an imaginary situation. Even with teachers

who have bound themselves to the confessions the parents have to keep a careful watch, let alone with those who have not expressed their agreement with all that the church confesses.

And what about possible introduction of wrong and deviating ideas and concepts at men’s and women’s societies?

Let no one say that I am dragging in all sorts of aspects that are of no or lesser importance. Such an attitude would amount to burying one’s head into the sand. We had better say things aloud and warn beforehand. Once the Rubicon has been crossed, there is no return. Let’s realize that!

These last few remarks might be relegated to the realm of “practices,” but they only underline the necessity of maintaining the requirement of confessional membership. 

Fencing

By G.Ph. van Popta

Rev. George van Popta, upon request of the editor, replies to the Rev. W. W. J. van Oene’s article found elsewhere in this issue. – CvD

Rev. Van Oene speaks of *our* Church Order. I am glad he did so, for that is what it is. Our Church Order is *our* Church Order. It is an internal document. By it we, as Canadian Reformed Churches, have agreed how we are going to live and function together as a federation of churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the matter at issue – the admission of guests to the Lord’s table – we have agreed to the following in Article 61:

Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

Hereby we have agreed that when a member of a sister church, even minutes before the worship service, presents himself to the elders with a good attestation from his elders, we will admit him to

the celebration of the Lord’s supper without any question or examination.

Living under this agreement, there is some variation within our federation of churches. Some churches will *only* admit members of sister churches *only* when they have a good attestation. Others will admit members of sister churches without an attestation. Some times a phone call will be made to the visitor’s elder(s) to confirm that he is a member in good standing. Yet other times a member of a sister church will be admitted on the ground of his own testimony that he is in good standing. In other situations, members of other churches (not a sister church) are admitted on the ground of an examination by the consistory or a delegation of elders.

Let us not pretend that there is absolute uniformity of practice within our churches. Let it be well understood that what we have agreed upon is that when a member of a sister church presents what we call a “travel attestation” to the elders, that member is, on the ground of the good testimony of his elders, admit-

ted to the table. No questions are asked, no examination conducted. That is what we have agreed upon. As local churches, living under that agreement, we have the freedom to work that out as we believe best in our respective situations. But let us be honest enough to say that there is some diversity within our churches in this respect.

The Word of God teaches that the elders of the church must supervise the table of the Lord. The table is a supervised table. The elders do not willy-nilly allow anyone to the table. The table must be fenced. The question is: Is there only one way for the elders to fence the table? There is some variety of practice within our own churches, and yet we say that the way the elders admit visitors to the Lord’s table in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) is not scriptural! I would not want to adopt the practice of fencing the table only by way of strong admonitions spoken on behalf of the elders before the celebration – a church can do more; however, it has yet to be

proven that this procedure is against the teachings of Scripture.

The Rev. Van Oene brings in Q&As 82 and 85 of the Catechism. I would ask the reader please to read these Q&As. Clearly, what is taught in Q&As 82 and 85 is that the elders are duty bound by Christ to bar from the table those who are living in sin. We do not confess in these Q&As *how* elders are to admit visitors to the Lord's table; rather, we confess that the elders must bar from the table, and even excommunicate, those who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly.

Next Rev. Van Oene brings in the whole matter of "confessional membership" and expresses some "mea culpa's" for what he calls "a blessed mistake." I have no problem with the present wording of the baptism questions or those asked at public profession of faith. When I teach people seeking membership in the church and take them through the Belgic Confession, I emphasize repeatedly that almost each article begins with "We believe" or "We confess." I point out that we are a confessional church, that this is what we believe on this or that point of doctrine, and that if they want to be a mem-

ber, they need to believe the same. There is no problem here. But what, pray tell, does this have to do with the admission of a guest to the Lord's table?

***The table must be fenced.
The question is: Is there
only one way for the
elders to fence
the table?***

Under the heading "A Blessed Mistake," the Rev. Van Oene insinuates that the OPC is not a confessional church. This is offensive in the highest degree and will, undoubtedly, anger the OPC brothers. Our Synods have repeatedly acknowledged the faithfulness of the OPC to their confessions.

Further, he raises the red flag that one of these unconfessional people might end up as a teacher at one of our schools and feel free to teach things not in harmony with our Reformed confessions. This is nonsense. Our schools are confessionally circumscribed. Since

our schools are based upon the Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (see any constitution) the necessary safeguards are in place.

More points raised by the Rev. Van Oene could be hooked into, but then the discussion would go into countless directions and be tediously prolonged. One man's careful distinction is another man's false dilemma. The point is, when it comes to how the elders admit guests to the Lord's table, we have our agreed upon way. And it may have some holes in it – some inconsistencies. But even with the holes, we know how to work with it. We function very well as a federation of true churches. The OPC has its way. And it undoubtedly has a few holes in it too. But they know how to work with their agreed upon way. They know how to be a true church, "holes" notwithstanding. The only question for us is in this matter touching the second mark of the church is this: From what we know about the OPC, can we say that it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them? And if we must say Yes (as we have said all along for over twenty years), may we add extra conditions? 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Frustrated

It is very frustrating to read the *Clarion* and find articles such as one featured in Press Review by Dr. DeJong on The Common Cup. It is my opinion (and that of others I am sure) that such arguments may be sensitive, but unnecessary. It appears to me that while all the arguing of individual cups versus the common cup is progressing, we are losing sight of the real meaning of the Lord's Supper; it is a celebration in remembrance of Christ, and what He did for us. Christ should be the center, not the cup, or the bread we break, or whether we sit around a table or in the pews. Let us remember this!

*John P. Van Amerongen
Guelph, ON*

"Where are we going?"

As I read the article, "Where are we going?," by Mr. W. Kanis in the Sept. 18th issue, many thoughts arose in my mind.

I first of all agreed with the majority of his article. We indeed are a country no longer Christian based. Often we are "not watchful," and are "pulled along with the back sliding world in which we live."

I think however that Mr. Kanis missed a grave detail in his article. Mr. Kanis writes about the first commandment, to love the Lord our God. He then proceeds to ask, "what is our first love?" He continues to explain that newspapers, and televisions have become "uncontrolled," and that "the first commandment is not listened to." But now my statement is this: Mr. Kanis

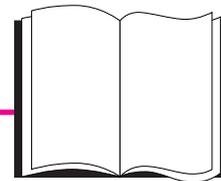
failed to mention that we must submit to Christ, and we are all filled with sin.

"What is the cause that this can happen in a country which . . . was a Christian country," he asks? Sin. Sin is the reason for which in our own Christian community there is sexual abuse, alcoholics, and breaking of all the commandments.

Yes, we must be watchful, but we must realize that sin is always present. Only through true repentance and fear of the Lord, will we be able to follow Him truthfully and be watchful.

Perhaps we should not ask, "Where are we going," but rather, "Where have we been, what have we done wrong, and through faith in Jesus Christ, where do we go from here?"

*Eleanor Smouter
Burlington, ON* 



Raising the bar too high?

By Wayne Pleiter

Are the Canadian Reformed Churches raising the bar too high? Are we elevating matters of church order to a confessional status? Are we making decisions that amount to nothing more than a conditional agreement to the OPC? These are the concerns that have been expressed within our churches as a result of the recent decisions of Synod Fergus 98, particularly as it relates to the OPC. It appears that the agreement adopted by Synod 98 on the two issues of confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table has caused Rev. G. Van Popta to claim that we 'are raising the bar too high'.

Practical?

Rev. G. van Popta defends this premise by stating that Synod has made a practical matter – the matter of how the Lord's Table is supervised – a confessional matter. In doing so he concludes that 'we have made a church order matter a final condition' which in his opinion is 'an unwarranted barrier.' To further support this claim Rev. van Popta refers to Rev. Mulder's article to demonstrate how Synod 98 raised the bar by making the offer for Ecclesiastical Fellowship to the OPC a conditional one. (*Clarion* Vol. 47 No.16 page 386.)

When we consider these comments we may surmise that the argument is of practical application over against the basis of the confessions or Church Order. This practical / theoretical argument is in some way a deceptive one, and one wonders whether such terminology simply creates a false dilemma. Is it not so that theory will provide the basis for practice but also the accountability for that particular practice? While it would indeed be unwise for a Synod to make judgements on the *apparent* practices of individual churches within a federation, it is equally unwise not to judge *common* practices within the church federation standards. In making this judgement, a Synod must

evaluate common practices as they relate to a federation's confessional standards, particularly if there are concerns that arise out of mutual discussions, committee reports or in the publications of the church federation in question.

Getting back to the point is the supervision of the Lord's table merely a matter of church order? It is true that the church order deals with the supervision of the Lord's table (see Art. 61 C.O.), but it is questionable whether these issues are purely practical. While this C.O. article may not spell out the practical details of how the Lord's table is to be administered, it does provide the criteria for those that may attend. These criteria, the need for a Reformed confession (doctrine) and godly lifestyle (conduct), are not just based on historical and traditional differences, but they are based on principles derived from the Scriptures and the confessions (i.e. both the Heidelberg Catechism and Westminster Catechism). This is clearly outlined in Synod 98 decision regarding the OPC. (Acts. Art. 129 Con.C.3.) While the assertions of Rev.'s Van Popta and Mulder is that these matters are merely of a church order nature, Synod 98 sufficiently established that they are of a scriptural and confessional nature. In its decision Synod outlines that this common OPC practice of fencing the Lord's Table is actually contrary to their own confessions that they maintain, i.e. the Westminster Catechism.

Is addition justified?

The subsequent argument that Rev. Mulder presents in his article is that Synod 98 made a decision in conflict with Synod 95. You may recall that this Synod stated that practices of the Lord's table supervision and confessional membership should be discussed but it "cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (Acts, Synod 1995, Art. 106 B.3.) Rev. Mulder is indeed correct when he made ref-

erence to this. However this does not undermine the fact Synod 95 did require that an agreement be reached with the OPC prior to formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Acts, Synod 1995, Art 106 Rec. D.1, page 75). When dealing with the proposed agreement as presented by the Committee for contact with the OPC (CCOPC), Synod 98 was confronted with the concerns from the various churches. The numerous letters from the churches expressed that the proposed agreement was too vague and did not sufficiently address these issues. (Acts. Art.129 Cons. C.2) With this in mind, Synod 98 decided to add the following sentence to the agreement:

"a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required"

However it is this addition that leads Rev. Mulder and others to conclude that Synod 98 undermined the considerations of Synod 95. They claim by altering the agreement Synod raised the bar too high, so that it became a conditional offer for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Yet the addition of this sentence was consistent with the previous decisions of Synod 92 and 95. In fact, this addition was the very guideline in which the CCOPC committee was mandated to work within in order to reach agreement with the OPC on these matters (cf Acts Synod Abbotford 1995, Art 106 Cons.D.1). Synod 98 did not make statements that conflicted with previous Synods, as Rev. Mulder claims. Synod 95 required that the committee formulate an agreement on these two matters with the OPC. There can be no argument that Synod 98 did not maintain this decision of Synod 95, as it was the very agreement that was proposed by the CCOPC to Synod 98 that was put to use. The only changes Synod 98 made to the agreement was the addition of one sentence for the Lord's Table supervision as mentioned above

and the addition of one word regarding Confessional Membership. Synod 98 believed that these modest but significant changes would provide an unmistakable and unambiguous understanding of the two issues in the agreement. Such clarity would not only be of benefit to the OPC, but also to the CanRC membership.

It is rather ironic that the addition of this sentence would cause such problems. One only need turn to the Theological Affirmation article in the 1993 ICRC proceedings to find practically the same wording of the agreement adopted by Synod 98 (Proceedings ICRC 1993, Report of the Committee on Theological Affirmation, 4.B.3, page 80,81). Furthermore, in the same ICRC

article there is agreement by the various authors that an attestation or certificate of good standing (i.e. concerning doctrine and conduct) is required to allow participation in the Lord's table. Why is it now, that the change to the proposed OPC agreement causes it to become a conditional offer, when it reflects the very sentiments expressed in the ICRC article which was authored by scholars who include members of CanRC and the OPC? Perhaps what we should really be concerned with, is why an agreement on the Lord's Table supervision *could* be formulated at the ICRC some 5 years before it was presented to Synod 98!

So, did Synod 98 raise the bar too high? That indeed will have to be de-

termined by church consistories and by the membership as they test the Synod 98 decisions on the standards of the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions. However during this process, it should be clear that Synod 98 worked consistently within the framework of the decisions of previous Synods, particularly as it related to the OPC (cf. Acts, Art 129 C.1). As we reflect upon the proceedings in the Acts of Synod 98 we would do well to study each decision within its entire context, before questioning whether or not we are *'raising the bar too high.'*

Mr. Pleiter lives in Chilliwack, B.C., and served as a delegate to General Synod Fergus, 1998.



PRESS RELEASE

Church Unity Discussions: Canadian Reformed, United Reformed

On Monday, September 21st, the Revs. R. Stienstra, P. Vellenga and J.A. Bouwers, representatives of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA, met for the next in the series of meetings with the Committee for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the CanRCs, Dr. J. DeJong, Rev. W. den Hollander, and br. F. Westrik, at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton.

Once again, a good spirit of brotherly appreciation was enjoyed and we could speak openly about our hopes and desires in light of our Saviour's command that we should be one. We were also able to continue to speak frankly about perceived differences that might stand in the way of any such developments. Further, we mutually agreed that while these matters and perceptions must be addressed, this discussion should take place within a context in which our focus is on all that unites us.

Together we agreed that for the way forward we would use as our agenda the (URCNA) proposed guidelines for pursuing Church Unity. These guidelines speak of pursuing unity in three phases, namely a corresponding Relations Phase, an Ecclesiastical Fellowship Phase, leading to the final

phase, the goal, Church Union. The URCNA committee will present to its Synod of June 1999 the recommendation officially to establish Corresponding Relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. That would bring us officially into a time of exploration, (even though a lot of the exploratory work is going on already now).

As committees we've already determined together that as federations we share the same commitment to the Scriptures, the Creeds and Confessions, as well as to the Form of Subscription. The actual faithful adherence to this commitment in our respective federations was one of the topics of discussion in this particular meeting. With thankfulness we could observe that we share the unity of faith on this solid basis not only in word but also in deed. More detailed consideration of our respective histories and church orders etc. will keep us busy for the next little while as committees. To facilitate a thorough discussion on matters of history, theology, and ecclesiology in our next meeting (the Lord willing, on November 16th) each of the committees has agreed to prepare papers on these matters.

As joint committees we've also spoken of our hopes that with everything going well we will try to recom-

mend entering into the next phase by the year 2001, so that we could, the Lord willing, work towards full union by the year 2004. To be sure, we can't prejudge how the Lord will work with us in His providence, however, with such a "plan of union" we not only protect ourselves from the danger of acting too hastily, but, at the same time, we also show one another that we are serious about our commitment to act in obedience to our Saviour's directives. In fact, it was the expectation of the Canadian Reformed brothers at our meeting that with such a commitment, some of the earlier hesitancy to opening the pulpits to one another could be removed at a much earlier point in the process. This kind of accommodation gives wonderful evidence of a cooperative spirit that we need to continue to pray for, that we might see continued progress to the glory of our common God and Saviour. Let us then pray and work to this end at the level of our local congregations as well as in our personal relationships.

For the meeting,
Revs. John A. Bouwers,
William den Hollander

By C. Van Dam

New Developments in Mexico

Mexican Synod makes important decisions

In August the Synod of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico (IPCM) adopted positions promoted by Juan Calvino Theological Seminary in three major areas.

1. Besides the traditional Westminster Standards which the IPCM has always subscribed to, the Synod has now also adopted the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, and the Belgic Confession as official confessions of the Mexican church.
2. The Lord's Supper, traditionally practiced in a loosely open fashion, has been circumscribed according to the doctrine and practice of the churches associated with the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).
3. The Synod also decided to join the ICRC. Furthermore, they will specifically seek fraternal relations with the United Reformed Churches, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Free Reformed Churches. Churches entering into fraternal relations will be asked to seek ways of promoting mutual mission programs (Hispanic ministries in North American churches supported by IPCM-trained pastors; Mexican ministries, geographically delimited, supported by North American churches).

These decisions are of great importance. It is clear that the IPCM is serious about wanting to be a church thoroughly committed to the Reformed faith and desirous of fellowship with like-minded churches. May the desire of the IPCM for a fruitful relationship with North American churches, including the CanRC, be realized for the well-being of Christ's church.

Since the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary is the official training for the ministry in the IPCM, this school is always on the agenda of Synod, just like our Theological College is regularly on the agenda of our General Synods. The IPCM synod reappointed the Faculty and appointed the Rev. Miscal Custodio to be the new Rector of the Seminary. A graduate of the Seminary, Prof. Custodio has taught Church Administration and Liturgics for a number of years. Other new auxiliary professors are Prof. Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra (who received his Ph.D., Stanford University

It is clear that the IPCM is serious about wanting to be a church thoroughly committed to the Reformed faith.

in California) to teach History of Ideas; Puritan expert Prof. Thomas Montgomery, with a B.D. from Missionary Bible Institute, to teach Puritan Thought and Prof. Jorge Alvarez, Th.D. candidate at Juan Calvino Seminary, to teach Van Tillian Apologetics.

Seminary starts 51st year of teaching and study

New students coming not only from Mexico but from Cuba to Argentina could be enrolled and the Seminary's 51st year could begin with great promise and joy. In a report entitled "Fulfil the Ministry which you have Received" (Col 4:17), out-going Rector Dr. Velazquez enumerated for the Synod some of the many blessings received in Mexico and Latin America through the fifty-year ministry of the Seminary: half a century of Reformed testimony in the

Spanish-speaking world; five decades of professorial fidelity to the doctrines of the Church; generations of pastors prepared for Mexican and Latin American congregations; the training of a spiritual army of Christian leaders for church and society which has impacted the nation and beyond. Begun with the idea of serving a small church, concluded Dr. Velazquez, it has pleased the Lord to bless an entire people through the faithful fulfilling of the unique Calvinist heritage it has faithfully passed on to those whom God will call to lead in the next millennium.

Special conference speaker Harry Antonides, of the Work Research Foundation of Mississauga, Canada, spoke of the historical moment as one full of challenges. A strong critic of Liberation Theology, Antonides offered a stirring defense against Marxist-influenced ideas both in labour and theology. With lively group participation, the speaker's first-hand experiences in promoting practical Christianity in the work-place captivated the students and visitors with a sense of what could be done to promote a work ethic in the nation based on Scriptural principles. In discussing the problems Mexico faces with an indigenous revolution in the southern state of Chiapas, the participants agreed that it is not a "Class-struggle" as framed by the Marxists, but a spiritual struggle for the hearts and minds of the people of this region.

Those wishing to support the work of the seminary, and in this way also the IPCM, can send tax deductible donations payable to:

Worldwide Christian Schools
(Mexico Project)
P.O. Box 81129
RPO Fiddlers Green
Ancaster, ON L9G 4X1

Source for this article: Juan Calvino Theological Seminary *Sem News* September 1998.





Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches held on September 10, 1998

Opening

Dr. J. Visscher opened the meeting with the reading of 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6 and led in prayer. All governors were present. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Principal of the College, was also present. Rev. J. Moesker, appointed by Synod Fergus as a governor, signed the Declaration Form for Governors. Dr. J. Visscher was reappointed as chairman of the board, Rev. D.G.J. Agema was reappointed as secretary, brother H.J. Sloots was reappointed as treasurer and Rev. R. Aasman was appointed as vice-chairman. Minutes of meetings during the past year were approved and a report was submitted regarding incoming and outgoing mail.

Finance and Property Committee

a. Fund Raising for Library Expansion

The following brothers were appointed to a committee for the fund raising project: Henk Berends, Martin Kampen, Gerry Kuik, Peter Lindhout, Dick Pot, Bill Smouter and Bert Veenendaal. These brothers represent eastern and western Canada, as well as Australia. They will work in their local regions with local church representatives to ensure that all members of our churches have an opportunity to support the library expansion project. The goal is to raise \$500,000. The Australian churches will assume \$60,000 of this. The committee demonstrated that it is well organized and is enthusiastically preparing to raise the necessary funds for the library expansion.

b. Building Committee

The building committee reported on its preparations for the library expansion. An architect has been authorized to work on the committee's behalf. Some preliminary work is being done regarding drawings and specifications for the expansion. With the Lord's blessing, building should commence next

summer and require four to six months time to complete.

c. Budget

The 1999 budget was approved. It was also decided to leave the tuition fees at the same level as the previous year.

Reports of visits to the lectures

Reports were submitted by Rev. C. VanSpronsen and Dr. J. Visscher who attended lectures on November 20 and 21, 1997, and by Rev. D.G.J. Agema and Rev. W. den Hollander who attended lectures on February 17 and 18, 1998. It was gratefully noted that these reports indicate that the lectures are of a high quality and that they are clearly rooted in the Scriptures and in keeping with the confessions of the churches. Rev. D.G.J. Agema and Rev. P.G. Feenstra were appointed to visit the fall lectures, and Rev. R. Aasman and Dr. J. Visscher were appointed to visit the winter/spring lectures.

Reports

A number of reports were submitted and gratefully received. These included the reports of the Senate, the Principal, the Librarian, the Faber-Holwerda Fund and visits by Dr. C. VanDam to the churches in British Columbia. A report was received from Prof. J. Geertsema who attended the "Pharisees Conference" at Queen's University in Kingston and the Bingham New Testament Colloquium at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton. A report was received from Dr. J. DeJong who attended the Melancthon Conference at Calvin College's Meeter Center. A report was received from Dr. J. Faber and Dr. N.H. Gootjes who attended the Seventh International Congress on Calvin Research in Seoul.

New students

The Board of Governors admitted the following students to the College: Walter Richard Geurts from the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, BC, Wade van Bostelen from Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton, AB, and Julius Marnix VanSpronsen from the Canadian Reformed Church at Surrey, BC. It was with great joy and thankfulness to the Lord that the College could receive new

students who would receive training for the ministry of the Word.

Tenure

Synod Fergus gave its approval for the College to grant tenure to Dr. J. DeJong and Dr. N.H. Gootjes. Accordingly and with thankfulness, the Board granted tenure to Dr. J. DeJong and Dr. N.H. Gootjes at this meeting.

Closing

The next meeting was scheduled for September 9, 1999. The meeting was closed in a Christian manner.

For the Board of Governors
R. Aasman

Press Release of Synod 1998 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia Launceston, Tasmania

On Tuesday September 8, Synod Launceston 1998 reconvened after a ten week recess. The chairman, Rev. C. Bouwman, welcomed the delegates, especially the delegates who were at Synod for the first time (br J. Everts of Launceston; br N. Louw of Legana; br F. Postmus of Launceston). The vice-chairman, Rev. C. Kleyn departed to Pretoria, South Africa. Rev. A. van Delden was appointed as vice-chairman in his place.

Rev. F.J. van Hulst was sadly missed as a delegate of this Synod. Synod was informed that the consistory of the church of Launceston had completed its study on the judgement of Synod with respect to the teachings of Rev. F.J. van Hulst. Consistory agreed with Synod and found that certain teachings of Rev. van Hulst are at variance with Scripture and our confessions. The church of Launceston has asked Rev. van Hulst to retract the writings that contain these erroneous teachings. These have been painful times for all concerned, and many prayers have been offered that the Word and Spirit may so guide Rev. van Hulst that he may continue to work fruitfully in Christ's church in Launceston.

During the course of Synod, we were privileged to welcome Rev. E. Viljoen, who is the successor of Rev. van Hulst as minister in the Free Reformed Church of Cape Town, South Africa. He came to encourage and assist us in the difficulties that we currently face in the

church. He also described certain notable events in the churches in South Africa. Over the past years, all the migrant ministers left South Africa. Yet the Lord provided for these vacancies with indigenous ministers who have left other churches in South Africa and joined with the Free Reformed Churches. The South African churches have recently established their own theological university. They are also very active in mission work in townships that are springing up in matters of months around the major cities. This gives them the opportunity to preach the gospel to many who have never heard it before. By way of his visit, Rev. Viljoen has brought what was a somewhat distant relationship very close. Synod expressed its appreciation for the fact that the South African Churches have sent a delegate, the first time in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

As far as the decisions which were made at Synod, we may mention the following:

Three churches corresponded with Synod regarding the fact that Synod 1996 did not answer the appeals submitted by two churches which asked Synod to discontinue membership in the ICRC on Scriptural grounds. Upon the appeal of West Albany, Synod decided that Synod 1996 did not complete its task as agreed upon in Art 31 of the Church Order when it did not answer the appeals of Bedfordale and Byford. The church of Byford informed Synod that it will lodge its appeal again if the Free Reformed Churches of Australia enter into the ICRC again.

Synod dealt with the Rules and Procedures of Synod which govern the way by which Synod is organized and conducts its business. Synod 1996 gave deputies the mandate to simplify the rules. Synod 1998 adopted these revised rules.

The Church Order (Art 44) stipulates that "some of the most experienced and capable ministers are to visit the churches each year." In order to assist these church visitors, past Synods formulated Guidelines for Church Visitation. Deputies appointed by Synod 1996 revised the Guidelines which Synod 1998 adopted.

The Free Reformed Churches Australia enjoy sister-church relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), the Canadian Reformed Churches, and with the Reformed Churches of Sumba / Savu / Timor. Synod decided to continue sister church relations with these churches. (Synod

also enjoys sister-church relations with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Synod will deal with our relations with this sister-church after we have dealt with our contacts with the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia.)

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia also have contacts with other Reformed Churches. Synod decided that the Reformed Churches of Timor/Savu (Musyafir) need to be stabilized before recommendations regarding sister relationships can progress.

Synod 1996 gave deputies the mandate to send a letter of appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia. Unfortunately, the appeal reached their Synod too late. Furthermore, the RCA require such submissions be channelled through the deputies they have appointed for this. Upon request from the RCA deputies, Synod decided to convey our appeal to the RCA through a few face-to-face meetings with their deputies.

The fourth week of Synod was a very busy one. Some important decisions were made with respect to relations with other churches. With thankfulness, these decisions could be made with much unanimity.

Synods reaffirmed its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Deputies were given the mandate to express our appreciation for the principled approach which they have shown in dealing with their sister church, the Reformed Churches of Australia. At the same time, deputies were given the mandate to explain to them that, as past synods have stated, "the relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia is an impediment for us to enter official relations with the Reformed Church of New Zealand." Synod also stated that "journey towards this goal for a mutually acceptable close relationship is going to be a long one where much patience and understanding is required."

Synod also came to a decision with respect to the areas of concern which thus far prevented us from offering sister church relations with the PCEA. Following the method which the Synod 1998 of the Canadian Reformed Churches implemented with respect to the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches, our deputies proposed and Synod adopted the idea of presenting the PCEA with three position papers regarding the fencing of the Lord's table, the supervision of the pulpit and children in the covenant. In these statements, our concerns were addressed. Synod decided to offer the PCEA sister church relations as a first step toward full unity

if they can agree to the above mentioned statements. This decision to enter into sister church relations is to be confirmed by a subsequent synod upon agreement and implementation of the above mentioned statements.

Earlier it was mentioned that we would deal with our sister church relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands after we came to a decision concerning our relations with the PCEA. Inasmuch as the Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, Synod decided to continue sister church relations according to the established rules. It was also decided to thank the RCN for being patient with us regarding the PCEA, and inform them of our decision with respect to the PCEA, asking them to stay in step with this decision, since a common approach towards the PCEA would be beneficial for both federations and prevent difficulties with third party relations.

The FRCA has temporary ecclesiastical relations with the Free Church of Scotland (whom the Canadian Reformed Churches now have sister church relations), and with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. We also have contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Deputies have been given the mandate to see how in a manageable way the FRCA can fulfil this obligation to these churches since they are geographically distant from us.

Synod also decided to initiate contact with the Free Reformed Churches in the Philippines, which our Dutch sister churches have recognized as a true church. These churches are young in the Reformed faith. Deputies are given the mandate to see whether we can be of spiritual assistance to them.

For many years the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have modified the Church Order of Dort as far as ecclesiastical assemblies is concerned.

Because of the small number of churches, we have not been able to form Classes. But over the years the churches have increased in number. Soon there will be ten congregations. Synod decided, therefore, that in the year 2000 a single classis or two classes will be established. Since Synod could not decide which is better (one classis or two), it has given deputies the mandate to provide the churches and next synod with all the pertinent information needed to come to a decision. Since it made the decision to form Classis or Classes in the year 2000, Synod did not grant the request of the church of Launceston to initiate yearly church conferences.

The church of Launceston requested Synod to decide in favour of allowing women to vote for office-bearers. They submitted an abbreviated report from the Dutch churches which decided in 1993 that the right to vote cannot be withheld from women. Synod did not grant Launceston's request. It decided that insufficient material and scriptural analysis was provided to decide on such a complex issue. Synod also took into consideration the fact that the matter of women's voting for office-bearers does not live in the churches, and would cause great concern and even division.

During the first session, Synod had made a judgement concerning some of Rev. van Hulst's teachings. Synod decided that there was one area with which the investigating committee did not deal adequately, namely, concerning Rev. van Hulst's teachings about the law. Therefore Synod appointed a committee to study Rev. van Hulst's teachings about the law, to be presented to the second session of Synod. During this second session, much time was given to this matter, and great care was taken to come to a well-founded decision. Synod came to the conclusion that Rev. van Hulst's teachings about regeneration and conversion distorted his teaching on the law so that they did not reflect the full biblical message. Synod's findings would be presented to both Rev. van Hulst and his consistory, so that they might work together with this material and correct the distortions, that Rev. van Hulst might be received at the next synod which is scheduled for West Albany, 2000.

Many other decisions were made on minor matters, which the interested reader will find back in the Acts of Synod Launceston, 1998.

It has been thirteen years since a synod was last convened in Tasmania. The many years and the thousands of kilometres that separate East from West do place a distance between the brotherhood. It was a good that we could become familiar with each other again. It was an added blessing of providence that Synod was hosted by the church that was experiencing heart-rending difficulties. Together we could pray to the King of the Church that He would preserve the churches in the unity of the holy, catholic faith. It was with this prayer that Synod was closed.

Press Release of Classis Ontario North, September 18, 1998

On behalf of the convening church of Grand Valley, Rev. P. Aasman opened the meeting. He asked the brothers to

sing Psalm 66:1,5, read from Luke 14:25-35, and led in prayer. He welcomed the brothers, and also br. Marc Jagt and his family, who were attending Classis for br. Jagt's examination. Rev. Aasman also welcomed Rev. A. Macleod and elder S. Findlayson, of the Free Church of Scotland, who were present as observers. The delegates of Flamborough examined the credentials. All the churches were duly represented.

Classis was constituted. The following officers were appointed to serve Classis: Rev. P. Aasman as chairman, Rev. G. Nederveen as clerk, and Rev. J.G. Slaa as vice-chairman.

Rev. Aasman thanked the convening church for the work done in preparation of Classis. He also took note of the following:

- The church of Fergus continues to extend calls and remains disappointed.
- The church of Ottawa remains vacant.
- The church of Flamborough continues to be vacant, however, it could be observed that on the present agenda, this church had a request for approval to extend a second call to Rev. J. deGelder of Smithville, ON.
- Rev. J.G. Slaa was called to Denver, CO, a call which he declined.
- The churches of Burlington South and Ancaster are cooperating in a home mission project, and that br. Richard Bultje was set aside for this task.
- The continued administration of the Word and Sacraments in the churches.

Following the remembrance of these events, the agenda was adopted.

Next, Classis proceeded to the examination of br. M. Jagt in order to be declared eligible for call within the churches. The documents were found to be in good order. The delegates moved to the auditorium to hear the sermon proposal of br. Jagt on Luke 14:25-35. In closed session Classis decided to proceed with the examination. Rev. P. Aasman examined br. Jagt's exegesis of the OT chapter, 1 Kings 17, after which Rev. G.H. Visscher examined his exegesis of the NT chapter, Luke 14. Following that, Rev. P.G. Feenstra examined him on doctrine and Creeds. Classis once again went into closed session to evaluate the examination. The result was that Classis could grant the request of br. Jagt and declare him eligible for call within the churches. Br. Jagt was informed of the decision and was asked to state his agreement to the subscription form which was read, asking him to promise not to teach anything that runs counter to God's Word as summarized in the Re-

formed Confessions. Br. Jagt made this promise. After singing and prayer, br. Jagt was congratulated.

The observers of the Free Church of Scotland had to leave and were unable to speak to the body of Classis because of this, to Classis' regret. They did however pass on their thankfulness and appreciation for the manner in which Classis had thus far been conducted.

The following reports were submitted to Classis:

- from the church for inspection of the archives (Burlington South).
- from the treasurer of Classis.
- from the church for auditing the books of the treasurer (Burlington Waterdown).
- from the church for financial aid to students for the ministry (Guelph). There is a student requesting support.
- from the church for auditing the books of committee for financial aid to students for the ministry (Fergus).
- from the committee for fund for needy churches. Assessment for 1999 was set at \$6.00 per communicant member.
- from the church for auditing the books of committee for fund for needy churches (Fergus).

Classis gratefully took note of these reports.

Question Period according to Art. 44 of the Church Order was held. Two churches asked for advice in matters of discipline.

The Church at Burlington East overtook Classis to decide that a classis contracta may not be called for giving approval for a second call as per article 4C CO. This overture was defeated.

Classis adopted an overture by the church at Grand Valley to add to the classical regulations: that the treasurer of classis be informed of the convening of Classis three weeks in advance, and to supply him with a copy of the provisional agenda, or advise him of its cancellation, whichever the case may be.

The church at Grand Valley proposed the following addition to the classical regulations: that classis invite observers from churches with whom we have or pursue ecclesiastical fellowship and which live in our classical region to each Classis three weeks prior to its convening, and enclose a provisional agenda without supporting documents. This overture was adopted.

Classis defeated a proposal by the church at Grand Valley that a copy of the Acts be sent to the classical treasurer.

The church at Owen Sound proposed that the ecclesiastical region called Classis ON North be restructured into two districts known as Classis

Central Ontario (consisting of the churches of Burlington South, Burlington East, Burlington-Waterdown, Flamborough, Ottawa and Toronto) and Classis Northern Ontario (consisting of the churches of Brampton, Elora, Fergus, Grand Valley, Guelph, Orangeville and Owen Sound). Further to the proposal was that this change be effective on Jan 1, 1999, and that for the time being support for needy churches in the two classical districts remain a joint responsibility. This proposal was adopted. Classis appointed a committee to help facilitate a smooth transition into these two classical regions.

The church at Flamborough requested Classis to approve a second call to Rev. J. deGelder of Smithville, ON (according to art 4C CO). Upon its satisfaction for the reasons given, Classis granted this request.

An overture was received from a brother of one of the churches regarding Article 61 CO. This overture was declared inadmissible since the matter was not finished at the minor assembly (see art 30 CO).

Classis heard an appeal from the church at Guelph regarding a decision of Classis ON North of June 19, 1998. Classis acceded to the request.

The church at Guelph was appointed convening church for the next

Classis. The suggested date was set for December 11, 1998. The suggested officers for next Classis: Chairman – Rev. B.J. Berends, Clerk – Rev. P. Aasman, Vice-chairman – Rev. Nederveen.

The following appointments were made for examinations: Rev. C. Bosch and Rev. W. den Hollander – coordinators; Rev. P. Aasman – exegesis Old Testament; Rev. G.H. Visscher – exegesis New Testament; Rev. P.G. Feenstra – doctrines and creeds; Rev. J.G. Slaa – knowledge of Scripture; Rev. B.J. Berends – church history; Rev. R.E. Pot – ethics; Rev. G. Nederveen – church polity; Rev. A.J. Pol – diaconology.

The following ministers were appointed as church visitors: Rev. Berends, Rev. den Hollander, Rev. Nederveen, Rev. Bosch; alternate: Rev. Pol.

Other appointments were made as follows:

- the church for taking care of the archives: Burlington East.
- the church for inspection of the archives: Burlington South.
- Treasurer of Classis: J.J. Poort, 1131 Fisher Avenue, Burlington L7P 2L2; alternate J. Dykstra.
- church to audit the books of the classical treasurer: Burlington/Waterdown.
- church for financial aid to students for the ministry: Guelph.

- church for auditing the books of committee for financial aid to students for ministry: Fergus.
- Committee for Needy churches: C. Lodder (Treasurer), Wm. Oostdyk, F. Westrik.
- church for auditing the books of the fund for Needy Churches: Fergus.
- Observer to the Free Church of Scotland: Rev. G. Nederveen.
- Classis Transition Committee: Rev. A.J. Pol and Rev. C. Bosch.

The following ministers were delegated to Regional Synod East November 11, 1997 in Attercliffe: Revs. W. den Hollander, P. Feenstra, G. Nederveen and A.J. Pol. As alternates: Revs. C. Bosch, B.J. Berends, P. Aasman and J.G. Slaa (in that order).

The following elders were delegated to Regional Synod: brs. P. Broekema, L. Kampen, C. Nobels and Wm. Oostdyk. As alternates: brs. K. Brouwer, K. Sikkema, A. Hordyk and J. Kamphuis (in that order).

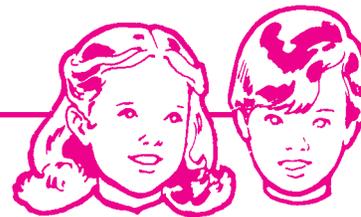
Question Period was held. Censure according to Article 34 CO was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. Classis was closed after singing and prayer.

J.G. Slaa

Vice-Chairman at that time 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

On October 31, we remembered Reformation Day. Many years ago, a man by the name of Martin Luther, who didn't really believe what the Roman Catholic Church was teaching the people, studied the Bible very carefully and found out that the ministers of the Roman Catholic Church were not preaching God's Word as they should be. The people were being taught many things which were against the Word of God. Martin Luther was one of the "Reformers" who realized how much of what was being taught was not really the truth.

That is why we celebrate Reformation Day. It reminds us of the grace of God, who, through Mr Luther, brought the Church back onto the right track, and helped them to continue as the true Church which taught the pure Gospel.

Glorify God, Who is willing to do this for us, wicked sinners!

Love from Aunt Betty

GIVE THE DIRECTION

1. The wise men said, "We have seen his star in the _____"
2. Out of the _____ comes the whirlwind, according to Job.
3. The angel told Philip to arise and go _____
4. Daniel tells of a goat that came up from the _____
5. He also says that he saw a ram pushing _____
6. The _____ wind drives away rain, according to the author of Proverbs.
7. The Great Sea is _____ of the river Jordan.
8. Mt Tabor is located in the _____ of Palestine.
9. Bethlehem is _____ of Jerusalem.
10. Elijah was instructed to go _____ to the brook of Cherith.