

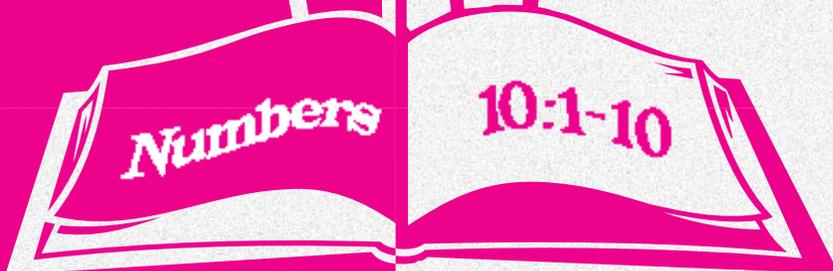
Clarion

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*Postmodernism and the
question of truth*

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche



By C. Van Dam

The glory of Christ crucified and resurrected

Every Lord's Day is a time of celebration! It is the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, an event especially celebrated also on Easter Sunday. However, the joy of Easter would be impossible without the darkness and death of Good Friday. That too forms part of the glad tidings in which redeemed sinners may rejoice. The two are closely related as can be seen in the testament of our Saviour.

The testament of our Saviour

If someone dies, then at some date after the funeral, the will or testament is read. This is an important and solemn occasion – an occasion no one involved wants to miss out on. The inheritance is being divided!

In a real way, our Sunday worship services are like that. After all, does the proclamation of the Word not tell us the riches that are ours because of the death of the great Testator (maker of the will) Jesus Christ. He has died! And his will and testament can therefore be read and his riches distributed! That is one of the reasons that makes our public worship an event we would not want to miss! Christ's riches, the riches of his will and testament, yes the riches of the new covenant which have superseded and displaced the old covenant, are proclaimed every Lord's Day in the worship services. As people of God, we want to be at this proclamation!

Christ Jesus – He has died and that is, in this context, *good* news. For as Hebrews 9:16-17 points out, before a will can take effect, the one who made the will has to die. Well, He has died and as a result we have a great inheritance coming our way! Yes, He laid down his life for He had to die – not only according to the normal rule governing wills and testaments – but, especially according to the rules governing the testament and will God made with man. According to the *old* covenant (or testament), blood had to be shed for the atonement of sin. And according to *new* covenant, it is the same: *the* blood of the covenant had to be poured out and it was poured out in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Scripture says, we may rejoice! For only Christ's blood and death is sufficient for the true and full forgiveness of sins. And therefore, Christ's death is so carefully documented in Scripture, for without that death, *the*

will cannot go into effect. Yes, without the death the covenant cannot be executed.

Celebrating his death

You sense that there is a very close relationship between "will" or "testament" and "covenant." Indeed, they are the same word in the Greek of Hebrews 9:16-18. So Christ's death means the riches of the new covenant are ours. The *new* covenant – for no longer is it the blood of animals that speaks of the death, but now it is the fulfillment of all these shadows! The Testator, the Maker of the will, has himself come down to die and to put his new testament/ covenant into effect!

Therefore although it may seem paradoxical, we may celebrate the death on Good Friday and at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Christ's death is glad tidings! It speaks of the inheritance Christ has laid up for us.

To be sure, Good Friday and the Lord's Supper is a sober remembering of solemn facts: the horror of Christ's agony and suffering and death – a *death* is remembered. Yet, it is also a joyous remembering! For the blood of the covenant has been poured out for forgiveness! Yes, but there is more. It is a celebration and not a subdued gathering as when an estate is being split up. For what is the key part of the inheritance?! Is it not, that we may have the greatest treasure of all, namely, the

living Saviour! For He who died, "was raised to life for our justification" (Rom 4:25). He lives to guide his sanctified people to himself! That too is part of his work of salvation.

After all, He only died to put the provisions of his testament regarding our redemption into effect. Therefore He laid down his life and therefore He took it up again (John 10:17-18). That is why remembering his death can be a celebration!

Persevere in celebrating

Our Saviour lives and He is himself a guarantee that those riches of the inheritance are ours. Now it could happen that we grow weary and tired in waiting for that inheritance to come from heaven in all its full splendour, where it is kept imperishable and undefiled for us (1 Pet 1:4). However, lest this happen, our Saviour has given us the

Before a will can take effect, the one who made the will has to die.

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regular preaching of the Word. Every Lord's Day is a time of hearing the details of the last testament of our Saviour who died to put it into effect and who rose from the dead according to that same testament. He lives to guide us on by his Word and Spirit. He lives, also to encourage us by the signs and seals of the sacraments. Our Saviour lives and He wants his people to know that the inheritance really does belong to them with all the riches of his covenant – the riches of the forgiveness of sins and therefore life in communion with God – life eternal.

What a joyous incentive to worship and listen to the preaching of the Word and to use the sacraments! Children of God are rich beyond compare – rich in Christ Jesus, crucified and resurrected! 

What's inside?

This is the time of year that we remember the bitter death of our Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious resurrection from the grave. Several articles in this issue pay attention to these great acts of God so central to the Christian religion.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper forms an important part of the church's worship. At the table, we remember the Lord's bitter death and the life we receive through his death and resurrection. A question some times asked is: How important are the outward ceremonies of the supper? One congregation celebrates it seated around a table; another remains standing, receiving first the bread and then the wine at the table; yet another remains seated in the pews while the bread and the wine are brought to them. Are these differences essential?

At the trial of Jesus of Nazareth, Pontius Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" The Lord taught us that He is the Truth. Dr. Oosterhoff continues the series on Postmodernism and the question of truth. In this issue, the author writes about Friedrich Nietzsche who had something to say about truth. He pronounced God to be dead. The consequence of God's death, according to Nietzsche, is that there is no truth. Postmodernism is a child of Nietzsche in this regard. We praise our God that He is not dead, that Jesus Christ is not dead, and there is truth in Him who is the Truth.

You will also find some reviews and releases. Enjoy the reading and may the Lord grant you and yours a joyous Easter.

GvP

By M. Jagt

The Saviour is alive

Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. (John 20:17)

The words seem strange, perhaps even cruel, at first glance. "Do not hold on to me." Why does the risen Saviour speak like this to Mary? Look at her. Her face is still streaked with the torrent of tears that blurred her sight. The pain of the crucifixion of Jesus surely has left its marks upon her as well. The empty tomb she has just discovered has only added insult to injury. And then to have her Saviour back! Not just a loved one, Jesus, but the Messiah! The one who had delivered her from no less than seven demons! Imagine her joy; imagine the passion of her embrace!

Yet Jesus rebukes her: "Do not hold on to me." What is so wrong with a little embrace on that Easter morning? Is the risen Saviour adverse to our touch? Has that glorious resurrection perhaps placed Him beyond our reach?

Not at all! In fact, the very opposite is true. "Do not hold on to me." Despite appearances, it is really a promise, not a denial. Mary is not losing something, but gaining it. Here in these words of rebuke we actually have a wonderful proclamation of the great blessings of Easter for Mary, and for you and me.

When we think of Easter, we often remember that death has now been conquered. The Saviour is the first fruit of the new mankind. Unlike Lazarus and others in the Bible who were raised from the dead, Jesus Christ went through the grave to the other side. And that gives us great hope.

But Easter is even more than this. It is more than a great event that plays a role at the beginning and the end of this age, at the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of Christians. Easter is more than opening the door of death and allowing passage to the

other side. It is about God working his greatest work in our lives, day by day, and eternally. And what is that? What is the great goal of your life? Where is the LORD bringing you? To heaven, to paradise, you might respond. Our eyes are set beyond this life, to the next one. That is our destination, you might say.

But there is even more to the riches of our faith. The goal of our lives as Christians is not so much a place, but a state. It is not so much about a changed world, but a changed people. Read Revelation 21 about the New Jerusalem, the climax of God's redemptive work. If you read it carefully, you will discover that the New Jerusalem is *not* just the new paradise, the new Garden of Eden, the new place we live. It is also *we*, the people of God! We are that great city! God's greatest work is to make us that city decked with fantastic jewels in which He lives.

And it all happens through the risen Saviour, through Jesus Christ. He does not just come to take away sins and conquer death. He comes to live in the hearts of the people of God. He comes to be their mediator, their link with God that allows his Spirit to dwell in their midst. He comes not just to bring us to heaven, but to bring heaven to us. He comes so that He himself might live in us so that we might know and enjoy the Triune God (Col 1:27).

That is what is promised to Mary in these words. That is what Easter is all about. "Do not hold on to me." Why? "For I have not yet returned to the Father." When the Saviour returns and ascends into heaven He receives the right to pour out the Spirit upon his people. And through that Spirit, He dwells not physically in the midst of the

disciples, but in their hearts, in a much richer way. Through his Holy Spirit, He himself becomes their life, so that the Apostle Paul can later say so beautifully "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

The Saviour knows how much we yearn for his physical presence. To hold Him, to hear his voice, even to see his flesh and blood, would be a great blessing. He can see how much that would benefit the weeping Mary. He can see how much that would help you and me.

But yet He wants to be present in our lives in a greater way. He wants an even greater blessing for us. He wants the fullness of Easter to be ours. Not just a Saviour who is alive, but a Saviour who is alive in us. Not just a Saviour who has risen, but a Saviour who lives in the hearts of his people. He wants to dwell in us and make us citizens of the New Jerusalem about which the Apostle John writes. And that means also that He must leave us for a time.

Look at Mary. She lets go of the Saviour and He leaves her. But 50 days later she receives Him back in a much greater way, in the power of the Holy Spirit. She receives his glorious presence in a far greater way than she had ever known when she walked with Him during his ministry on earth.

And that is true for us as well. The fullness of Easter will one day be ours as well. The Saviour has only left us so that He might one day be much closer to us. Let us wipe away our tears and wait with patient longing for that day when God's work in us through the presence of the risen Saviour will be brought to a glorious completion!

Rev. Marc Jagt is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Ottawa.



Postmodernism and the question of truth₂

By F.G. Oosterhoff

Friedrich Nietzsche

In the previous article we dealt with the shift from modernism to postmodernism. We gave attention to the role played in this regard by the wars and other disasters of the twentieth century, by the new technologies, the relativistic implications of social science teachings and of developments in mathematics and science, and the loss of faith in communism.

All these factors, we noted, *contributed* to the rise of postmodernism. They do not fully *explain* it, however. The first stirrings of postmodernism occur already in the late nineteenth century, when things were going as well in the western world – politically, economically, and socially – as they had ever been going, when people had never yet heard of quantum physics, relativity theory, or nuclear energy, and when the Czar still controlled Russia.

These early stirrings suggest that the *roots* of postmodernism are to be found in our culture's spiritual discontent. We notice this most clearly in the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, a philosopher who died in 1900 – that is, before the rise of the new physics, and a full fourteen years before the outbreak of World War I.

Nietzsche's message

Nietzsche is the man who, more than anyone else, prepared the stage for postmodernism, and who continues to influence it at practically every level. The son of a Lutheran minister, he turned against Christianity as a student and from then on dedicated his life to proclaiming that God is dead. He did not mean that God had actually died; only that all people everywhere had always believed in a god or gods, and that now, for the first time, a culture had arisen which was convinced that there is no God and that there never has been one.

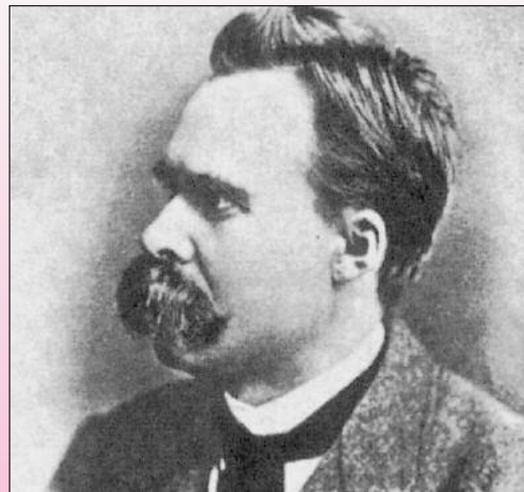
Nietzsche was aware of the traumatic implications of this disbelief in God, and he tried to make his contemporaries aware of them. In a well-known parable he spoke of the death of God as an unchaining of the earth from its sun and a closing in of darkness. (Some decades later, in 1922, the poet William Butler Yeats would give a similar message when he wrote, in his poem "The Second Coming," that, with our culture's loss of the faith that had so long sustained it, ". . . Things fall apart; The centre cannot hold.")

Nietzsche showed that disbelief in God and the rejection of Christianity meant the end of the 2000-year Christian age of innocence and the transformation of all values. Ending the period of Christian values such as humility, gentleness, and compassion, it would introduce a society of cruelty and of naked power, of a master- and a herd morality, of a minority of selected supermen who were "beyond good and evil" and a majority which had no other task in life than to serve these masters.

Nietzsche was no Nazi, but he did inspire Hitler and his henchmen.

There were, he showed, other implications of atheism – implications that are of particular importance for our understanding of postmodernism. I will therefore list them. For Nietzsche the "death of God" meant, among other things, that:

1. Darwin was right: man is not the creature of a benevolent and rational supernatural being, but the chance product of a non-rational, amoral, natural process. This means that he is no more than a beast, and that, if he is no longer restrained by the Christian moral code and is given half a chance, he will behave like a beast.
2. The motive power of the universe and of all things it contains, including the human being, is the will to power. Justice is the right of the stronger, in the physical universe and among men, just as it is in the animal world.



German
philosopher
Friedrich Nietzsche

3. Because there is no God, there is no universal, overarching truth. What we call truth is not *found* (it couldn't be, for it is non-existent) but *made*. People establish their own truths as they see fit. The same applies to moral codes. *Scepticism* (disbelief in universal truths) and *subjective relativism* (each person decides upon his or her own personal truth and moral code) are, Nietzsche showed, the inevitable consequences of atheism. Utter chaos is prevented only because the strong minority imposes its laws on the powerless majority. This means, incidentally, that democracy is out of the question, and Nietzsche himself rejected democracy. In that respect he was more consistent than are his modern-day followers. In any event, the universal moral code which Christianity provided, and which applied to both the powerful and the weak, had lost its legitimacy – for God, its supposed Author, was dead. Instead of having descended from above, the moral law had been imposed on society by the dominant minority.
4. Science is not a means to find truth (for again, there is no truth), but is inspired by the will to power. The same applies to all other human pursuits. All the so-called verities, such as universally valid laws of logic, universal moral truths, the uniformity and orderliness of the

cosmos, the unchanging laws of nature, all these verities are fictions – necessary ones, but fictions nevertheless.

5. People may think they are looking for truth, but they are deceiving themselves. They are wearing masks and are inherently hypocritical. The real motivation of all their endeavours, whether they know it or not, is the will to power.
6. A false judgment is not to be rejected because it is false, Nietzsche says. The important thing about any judgment is “. . . to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating.”
7. We are products and creatures of the earth, and to the earth we must turn for salvation (or at least such salvation as the earth makes available; Nietzsche does not really spell that out). Perhaps the greatest crime of Christianity was its otherworldliness.
8. Language, Nietzsche teaches, is central in our lives for a variety of reasons, two of which we will look at here.

The role of language

- a. Firstly, language is a prison. This is so, according to Nietzsche and his present-day followers, because our thinking is *determined* by our language, that is, by its vocabulary, grammar, and metaphors. Among the examples they use is that of the

so-called binary oppositions. Western languages abound in such oppositions. Examples are: God-man, Creator-creature, man-woman, subject-object, good-evil, and so on. Because of our language, Nietzsche and postmodernists say, we cannot but think in terms of such oppositions. There are also languages, however, that suggest the oneness of God and man, of God and nature, of male and female, of good and evil. Think of oriental languages which are built on the faith in pantheism, on the belief in androgynous gods (that is, gods that have both male and female characteristics), on the belief that good and evil are different sides of the same thing. The people using these languages see reality in an altogether different light than we do. In short, a person's language determines his view of God and man and nature, of reality as a whole. This is why Nietzsche could say, “We will never get rid of God because we still believe in grammar.” For western languages, including their use of binary oppositions, assume the existence of a transcendent God. And again, the same type of power is exerted by vocabulary and metaphors.

- b. But secondly, if language is a prison, it is also a power tool. Nietzsche knew his history and was aware of the fact that cultures are made and unmade by the power of ideas, of

Comparing modernism and postmodernism

Modernism

Science and technology are powers for good
 Faith in reason
 Optimism: Idea of Progress
 Humanism
 God does not exist, but we manage quite well
 Truth exists and we can find it
 The mind, reasoning, is all important
 Language is a means of communication and can be used to convey truth
 The West dominates the rest
 Patriarchism
 The nation state and nationalism

 Discovering the rest of the *world*
 Industrial
 Steam engine, electricity, oil
 Gunpowder
 Print
 Nature is a machine, can be exploited

Postmodernism

Fear of science and technology
 Irrationalism; a turn to the occult
 Pessimism, end of faith in progress
 Anti-humanism: the self is only a “chaos of desires”; “speciesism”
 God is dead, but we need gods; spirituality and the occult are in
 Relativism and scepticism; truth is made
 Feelings and experience are all-important
 Language is a prison and a power tool
 Other races, civilizations, and minorities claim their rights
 Feminism
 Cosmopolitanism; global village (but also nationalistic reactions);
 pluralism and multi-culturalism
 Exploring *space*
 Post-industrial (a service and information economy)
 Nuclear energy, electronics, computer
 Nuclear weaponry
 Image
 Nature is an organism, perhaps a goddess.

messages – that is, of language, of the word. He had delusions of divine grandeur and tried to imitate God, who had created the world by his Word of power, and who had redeemed it by the Incarnate Word. Nietzsche compared at least one of his books to the Bible and believed that, by means of his writings, he could do what God had done, that is, use language to create a new world. It meant that he had to begin by destroying the Christian society he hated and then proceed to create a new one, according to his own specifications.

Nietzsche's influence on postmodernism

So much for Nietzsche's ideas. Although incomplete, the list should give a good idea of the strong influence this German philosopher exerted on postmodernism. True, there are differences as well. Nietzsche said, for example, that the hidden agenda behind all we

say or do – no matter how idealistic it may appear – is the will to power. Postmodernists have learned from Marx and Freud, and say that the hidden agenda can also be formed by socio-economic rivalry, or by desire for the satisfaction of our instinctual desires, such as the sex drive. But they agree with Nietzsche that we wear masks, that we are inherently hypocritical, that our words can't be trusted. We don't mean what we say. Even our most pious words and acts we are driven by ulterior motives, that is, by the will to power, by class hatred, and/or by the desire for sexual satisfaction.

Another difference is that postmodernists are more humanitarian than Nietzsche was. They believe in empowering the weak. This may be in part (although only in part) a result of the fact that they have forged an alliance with feminists, gays, racial minorities, and other formerly "marginalized" groups. They have therefore qualified Nietzsche's idea about the cause of

western evils. Nietzsche said that it was the mixture of Christian theology and Greek philosophy which inspired the founders of our civilization and is at the root of our problems. Postmodernists say that the culprit is the white, heterosexual, European male, dead or alive.

But again, the difference is minor. Like Nietzsche, postmodernists also say that it was a clique of privileged power brokers which formed our society and kept it under their thumbs, and that they did and do so primarily by their creation and control of language. Therefore, for the new society to arise, our language – its grammar and vocabulary and metaphors and so on – must be changed, and our history and literary and religious heritage deconstructed. A different language must be introduced – one that takes power away from the white, heterosexual, western male and gives it to the marginalized.

Dr. Oosterhoff is a retired teacher of history living in Hamilton, Ontario. 

PSALM 103

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. O bless the LORD, my soul, bless your Preserver!
My inmost being, praise His name with fervour.
Do not forget His deeds of love and grace.
O bless the LORD, who pardons your transgressions,
Who heals your illnesses in His compassion,
And who redeems your life from death's abyss.</p> <p>2. O bless the LORD, who with His mercy crowns you,
Who with His love and faithfulness surrounds you,
Who grants His bounteous gifts your whole life through.
To Him who shows His righteousness, sing praises;
From their affliction He His people raises.
Your youth He, like the eagle's, will renew.</p> <p>3. To the oppressed His justice He discloses.
He long ago revealed His ways to Moses,
Made known His mighty deeds to Israel.
His love abounds; the LORD is slow to anger.
He will not let His wrath forever linger;
His chiding He'll not endlessly recall.</p> <p>4. The LORD has dealt with us in great compassion,
Not punished us according to transgression.
High as the vault of heaven, without end,
So great His mercy is to those who fear Him;
He sweeps the sins of all those who revere Him
As far away as east from west extends.</p> <p>5. In tender mercy, like that of a father
Who has compassion on his sons and daughters,
God looks on those who put in Him their trust.
To all who fear Him, He will show compassion,
For well He knows how we were formed and fashioned;
The LORD remembers we are only dust.</p> | <p>6. Life is like grass, so quick to fade and perish,
And like a flow'r that will but briefly flourish,
Only to sear and wither in the wind;
It soon is gone, not leaving any traces.
But God is ever merciful and gracious:
His love stands firm, abiding without end.</p> <p>7. God's mercy, everlasting and unfailing,
His righteousness, for evermore prevailing,
Will rest on those who fear Him all their days.
Our faithful God will grant the same salvation
To children's children, through the generations,
Who keep His covenant and His laws obey.</p> <p>8. His holy throne the LORD in heaven has founded;
From there He rules with sovereign power unbounded.
For all the universe is His domain.
Praise Him, you angels, great in might and splendour.
You loyal servants, in your awe and wonder
Shout forth the praise of His eternal reign!</p> <p>9. You hosts of angels, worship and adore Him.
All you who serve and minister before Him,
His justice and His majesty extol!
Let all created things in glad communion
Exalt His name throughout His vast dominion.
Come, praise the LORD and bless Him, O my soul!</p> |
|--|---|

William Helder – Revised, A.D. 2000

Melody: Psalm 103 of the *Genevan Psalter* Strasbourg, 1539 / Geneva 1551

Correction: In Psalm 1 and 121, previously published, the name "LORD" should have been in all caps. In the internal transfer of files, the proofreader's corrections were not taken over. We apologize to Dr. W. Helder for the transfer error.

The manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper then and now

By R. Faber

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the first Dutch Reformed churches were established beyond the borders of the Netherlands because believers there were being persecuted. The centers of Dutch-speaking Reformed life were Emden (Germany) to the east, and London (England) to the west. The churches in these cities provided both refuge to Protestants fleeing their native country and guidance to those who remained in the Lowlands. When the religious oppression was relaxed in the last decades of the century, many returned and helped establish Reformed churches on their native soil. Not only were the confessions, ordinances, and catechisms of the Dutch Reformed churches abroad adopted by the ones in the Netherlands, but so too the manner of administering the Word and the sacraments.

In this article I wish to describe the way in which the Lord's Supper was celebrated in these earliest Dutch Reformed churches. Fortunately, there is considerable evidence: minutes of relevant meetings, some treatises devoted to the topic, and a complete church order. There are several reasons why this evidence deserves consideration. First, the expatriate churches promoted a non-partisan, moderate position regarding the Supper celebration. Not wishing to be associated with the Lutheran teaching of consubstantiation, nor with the position of the Zwinglians who emphasized the commemorative function of the sacrament, church leaders championed the biblical and apostolic basis for the sacrament, and desired that all Reformed churches would celebrate the Lord's Supper *Sola Scriptura*. Second, as pastors seeking to unify the young, diverse congregations, and to provide leadership to believers living "under the cross," they formulated clear, unbiased teaching. In fact, they were among the first to develop a complete Reformed expression of the manner in which the

Lord's Supper may be celebrated. Third, these writings and the practices described in them became models for the Reformed churches later established in the Netherlands. The manner of celebration may be traced from that time to the present, including Reformed churches of Dutch background in Australia, North America, and elsewhere. An examination of the practice in the Reformation, then, will serve to explain some features of the rite as it is performed today.

The early Dutch Reformed churches focused more on the meaning of the sacrament than on the details of the ritual.

From the time he began his career as Superintendent of the Dutch Reformed churches in East-Friesland, and especially while he guided the refugee churches in London, John á Lasco wanted believers to understand the differences between the Romanist and Reformed teachings and practices of the Lord's Supper. He also viewed the differences of interpretation among some of the Reformers themselves as unfortunate hindrances to the unification of Protestants, and prayed that union would not be prevented by the undue emphases of individual teachers. Repeatedly he sought to bring the continental Reformers together in a colloquium to devise a general statement on the matter. Together with the other ministers serving the refugee congregations, he treated the subject in several writings, most notably the *Church Order (Forma ac Ratio, 1555)* and the *Brief but*

Clear Treatise on the Sacraments (1552). These works reveal the direct influence of John Calvin especially, and in turn became influential in Holland, after they were translated into Dutch by Marten Micronius and Jan Utenhove.

It is clear from these and other sources that the Supper celebrations in Emden and London focused more upon the meaning of the sacrament than upon the details of the ritual. They stressed especially the distinction between the visible, external signs and the invisible, internal mystery of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Contrary to the Romanist practice, in which the elements themselves are worshiped elaborately, the Reformed liturgy points simply to the ascended Lord Jesus Christ, who by his death has freed his people from condemnation and obtained for them eternal life. When the broken bread and poured wine are received, the mystery of the communion with the Lord is illustrated, for by the power of his Holy Spirit the Saviour imparts spiritual benefits to those who partake in faith. And, contrary to the Lutheran emphasis upon the physical presence of the Lord in the elements, the Reformed celebration draws attention not so much to the outward symbols of bread and wine, but to the participation in the body and blood of the Lord, that is, to the significance of the breaking, distributing, and consuming. And so, because the form of the celebration serves its meaning, no detailed commands are given concerning the bread, cups, table, etc. The Lord's Supper was to be used according to its institution by the Lord himself and as revealed further through his apostles.

The refugee churches in London (and presumably Emden) celebrated the Lord's Supper every two months, but marked several services in the preceding fortnight with words and deeds of anticipation. It started with the admonition

that members of the body be reconciled to one another, and the reminder that the meal expresses the unity that distinguishes the body of Christ from the world. Non-members who wished to join the church and submit to the oversight of the consistory were encouraged to undergo the public examination of forty-five questions. In another public worship service preceding the celebration, the minister exhorted the congregation in the meaning and benefits of the Supper. Only those who were present at this time were permitted to attend the celebration, and their names were duly recorded. And, on the Saturday immediately preceding the Lord's Supper Sunday, the congregation worshiped yet again. On this occasion, the London *Church Order* reveals, believers' self-examination was stressed, with the comforting reminder that although they are children of wrath, the elect have been redeemed by God through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Attention was drawn also to the hypocrisy of those who celebrate the sacrament without true faith. The names of those barred from the celebration were announced publicly, so that members could exhort one another at this time when corporate unity is manifested.

On the Sunday morning when the sacrament is to be used, the congregation gathers at the calling of the council. The minister first reads the names of those who have not professed the faith and submitted themselves to the discipline of the church, and of those who have despised the sacraments by absenting themselves from celebrations in recent months. Thereupon the minister leads the congregation in prayer, and then in reading the well-known passage in 1 Corinthians 11. He also admonishes the congregation of worthy participation in the Supper, and encourages it to focus upon the central mystery, namely the communion with the Lord Jesus. Then, with the words "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival . . ." (1 Cor 5:7), he invites eligible members to come forward to the table. The meal proper begins with the familiar words, "the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ." When the bread is broken, the communicants are encouraged "to take eat and remember that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was handed over to death for us upon the cross for the forgiveness of all our sins." The cup is blessed in a similar fashion.

As participants move to the table, the intervening time is spent reading selections from the gospel of John. Communion while seated at table differs markedly from the Romanist custom, in which the priest distributes the elements to people as they come forward individually and kneel before the host before receiving it from his hand. The London ministers prefer seated communion to standing, for hereby the exalted place of the priest is discarded, the adoration of the elements rejected, the sacrificial quality of the mass replaced with the expression of a communal meal, and the oneness of the flock is demonstrated. No special vestments are worn, and there are no gesticulations or magical pronouncements. As much as is possible within reason, the Supper is celebrated in the manner shown by the Lord in Matthew 26.

Those who exaggerate the importance of the ceremony's outer form "have wrongly understood wherein the true unity of Christians lies."

There was no insistence, however, upon a strict imitation of the first Supper among the earliest Dutch Reformed churches. In fact, as in the relevant section of Calvin's *Institutes* (4.17.43), so in most early Reformed treatises the liturgy is not described in detail. Those features of the Supper not depicted in the Bible, or not directly relevant, were considered of secondary importance, and therefore deemed subject to the norms established in each congregation. In London, for example, believers were not commanded to recline at table, as the Lord Jesus and his disciples evidently had done. In the Palatinate, from which early Dutch practices also derived, the apparent custom was for participants to file past the table and receive the elements from the hand of an office-bearer (cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, A. 75: ". . . receive from the hand of the minister"). When discussion about the outward aspects of the Supper arose at the Synod of Emden in 1571, it was declared that ". . . we consider it a matter of indifference whether the

Lord's Supper is taken standing or sitting." Synod also decided that "congregations should use the form which seems most apt to them. Churches are free to sing Psalms or to read from the Holy Scripture while the Lord's Supper is administered. Likewise, the churches are free to use the words of Christ or Paul during the distribution of the bread and wine. But care should be taken to avoid giving the impression that any consecration has occurred because these words are spoken (Art. 21)."¹ Calvin would have agreed, for when members of the French congregation in London complained to him in 1552 that they were expected to celebrate the Supper in the manner of the Dutch and not Genevan churches, he criticized them. Geneva should not be considered Jerusalem, he wrote, and those who exaggerate the importance of the ceremony's outer form "have wrongly understood wherein the true unity of Christians lies, and that each member should conform to the body of the church in which he is member."²

When the meal is completed, the minister encourages the communicants in the London refugee church to "believe and not doubt all of you who have participated in this Lord's Supper in memory of Christ's death . . . that you have a definite and saving union with Christ in his body and blood, to life eternal." Then, unlike the Zwinglian ceremony, which emphasizes the remembrance of Christ's death long past, the service also anticipates the immediate and future benefits of Christ's promises. The minister comforts communicants by saying that one day they will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And then, upon singing a Psalm, the congregation is dismissed. The unconsumed wine and bread are distributed to the poor in the congregation by deacons positioned at the doors; after all, contrary to Romanist belief, the elements themselves are not holy.

Contrary to the mass, the ceremony of the Lord's Supper in the earliest Dutch Reformed churches was subservient to the Gospel and not to the traditions of the church. The sacrament possessed no value apart from the Word. The reader will have noted that before celebrating the Supper, the London church dedicates several and extra services to the proclamation of the promises the Lord imparts with the sacrament. The elements do not take the place of the Word, but make it clear and so confirm the believers' faith in

God's promise of the remission of sins. While in the Roman mass the elements themselves are said to bring salvation, in the Lord's Supper God directs the faith of his children to the sacrifice of Christ once offered on the cross. The sacrament is added to the Word to represent better to the outward senses what God declares in his Word and works inwardly by the power of his Spirit. As Calvin puts it, ". . . whatever benefit may come to us from the Supper requires the Word: whether we are to be confirmed in faith, or exercised in confession, or aroused to duty, there is need of preaching."³ Anyone who ascribes too much value to the outward ceremony risks devaluing the Gospel. *The sacrament is an illustration of the Word, and not a replacement of it.*

While the Romanist mass mixes pomp and circumstance with the sacraments, the true celebration is done in modesty. For any addition to the ordinance as taught by Christ and his apostles desecrates the celebration. Obviously, the special garments, the magical incantation, and the ritual movements are human inventions which distract from the essential points. Over-emphasis upon the visible features tends also to diminish the role of faith, by which, "as the hand and mouth of the soul," the believer receives "the true body and blood of Christ" into his soul for his spiritual life (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 35). The real banquet is not a physical, but spiritual table. Surely the

table, the bread, and the cup do play an important role in illustrating the purpose of the sacrament; so too the breaking and sharing of the bread which nourishes, and the drinking of the wine which refreshes. But excessive attention to the manner in which the supper is celebrated may distract from its significance and be tantamount to idolatry. *The sacrament should be celebrated in simplicity and adherence to the institution by the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Excessive attention
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The elements of bread and wine are not meaningless and void, but apart from Jesus Christ they would be nothing. It is to represent the spiritual bread that He instituted earthly bread and wine as a sacrament of his body and blood. Á Lasco suggests that when the Lord Jesus instituted the new covenant in his blood, He changed the sign to show also that in themselves "the symbols and elements are the least important part" of the sacrament.⁴ By fixating

upon the external aspects, one risks falling into formalism and negating the deeper meaning of the sacrament. For this reason Calvin writes: ". . . as for the outward ceremony of the action – whether or not the believers take it in their hands, or divide it among themselves, or severally eat what has been given to each; whether they hand the cup back to the deacon or give it to the next person; whether the bread is leavened or unleavened; the wine red or white – it makes no difference. These things are indifferent, and left at the church's discretion (*Institutes* 4.17.43)." As was stated earlier, the *focus of the sacrament should be upon its meaning.* We must not cling to the outward symbols but lift our hearts on high in heaven where Christ is, to be nourished and refreshed in our souls with his true body and blood through the working of his Holy Spirit.

Dr. Riemer Faber is professor of classics at the University of Waterloo.

¹Quoted from A. Duke, G. Lewis, A. Pettegree, eds., *Calvinism in Europe*. 1540-1610. (Manchester, 1992), 160.

²Corpus Reformatorum 42:363.

³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.39 (tr. F.L. Battles, Philadelphia, 1960, p. 1416). Further citations derive from this edition.

⁴*Compendium of Doctrine* (1551), in A. Kuyper, *Joannis a Lasco Opera*. Vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1866), 298.



Passion Hymn

O Sacred Head, surrounded
By crown of piercing thorn!
O bleeding Head, so wounded,
Reviled, and put to scorn!
Death's pallid hue comes
o'er Thee,
The glow of life decays,
Yet angel-hosts adore Thee,
And tremble as they gaze.

I see Thy strength and vigor
All fading in the strife,
And death with cruel rigor
Bereaving Thee of life;
O agony and dying!
O love to sinners free!
Jesu, all grace supplying,
Oh, turn Thy face on me.

In this Thy bitter passion,
Good Shepherd, think of me,
With Thy most sweet
compassion,
Unworthy though I be:
Beneath Thy cross abiding,
Forever would I rest;
In Thy dear love confiding,
And with Thy presence blest.

Bernard of Clairvaux. Paul Gerhardt 1659. Translated by Sir H.W. Baker.

The glorious benefits of Christ's resurrection

By P.G. Feenstra

The significance of Christ's resurrection is a doctrine that is often taken for granted. We know that Jesus died and rose again but how does that touch our lives? Do we really pay attention to what we are saying when we confess every Lord's Day, "I believe in Jesus Christ . . . on the third day He rose from the dead?"

The most powerful statement that could be made about the importance of Christ's resurrection is found in 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, and especially in the verses 14 and 17-20. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

The fulfillment of prophecy

The apostles, as ambassadors of Christ, highlighted the centrality of Christ's resurrection. Peter proclaims to his audience on the day of Pentecost, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it"(Acts 2:23-24).

When the apostle Paul was given opportunity to preach the Word of God in the synagogue at Antioch he spoke in much the same way. The sinful actions of the people brought Christ to the cross. But God meant it for good. The evil intentions of the crucifixion prepared the way for his resurrection! Paul says, "And when they had fulfilled

all that was written of him, they took him from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus . . ." (Acts 13:29-33).

He lives and what He gave

The good news of the resurrection is that we know Jesus Christ has fulfilled what the Father required of Him. Through the resurrection we are assured that though our sins be like scarlet they are washed white as snow. We have forgiveness of sins through Christ's redeeming work. This is why Paul can state in the same sermon, "Let it be known therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39).

Christ's resurrection secures our justification before the Lord. In Romans 4:25 Paul explicitly connects these two when he writes, "He was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Christ's resurrection declares that we are not guilty but righteous before God. By raising his Son from the dead, God the Father was in effect saying that He approved of his work of suffering and dying for our sins. Christ no longer had any need to remain dead. There was no penalty left to pay for sin since the wrath of God had been appeased.

The resurrection is such a tremendous breakthrough. For if Christ had not been raised from the dead all that Christ obtained for us would have

been worthless. Christ gave his life to place us in the right relationship with the Father and on the morning of the resurrection that work is approved by the Father.

Through faith Christ and believers are made one. His righteousness becomes our righteousness. Our sins are not held against us since we have been given the white garments of his righteousness. Through faith in the resurrected Saviour we share in his righteousness and receive what we need most for life: forgiveness of sins.

He lives and what He gives us

Not only are we comforted by what Christ gave through his resurrection. Our comfort also lies in what He gives in the present. "We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). The resurrection allows us to live again for the Lord and for our neighbour. That life must grow and mature in the way of faith. Thus the goal of life is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection (Phil 3:10). Why do you go to church on the same day of the week Christ was raised from the dead? Is it not to be energized by the same power present at the resurrection of our Saviour? His resurrection gives new power for Christian service and obedience to God.

The apostle Paul connects the resurrection of Christ with the power of the Spirit at work within us when he tells the church at Ephesus that he was praying that they would know "what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:19-20).

Scripture is very clear: as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too ought to walk in the newness of life. As we read in Romans 6: "for if we have been raised with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." Knowing yourself to be a child of the resurrection you may no longer let sin reign in you. "For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your bodies to obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who

have been brought from death to life and your members as instruments of righteousness" (9-13).

Through the power that flows forth from Christ's resurrection and victory the guilt of sin is removed and the power of sin lies broken. This isn't a process that happens overnight. We are being raised to a new life. Each day must draw us closer to the Lord. Those who are being raised to a new life put to death whatever is earthly in them, for the works of darkness lose their appeal. They take great joy and delight in meditating upon the Word of the Lord.

He lives and what He will give

Christ's resurrection allows us to sing songs of victory. "I shall not die, but live, and praise Him." Our future is secure. We know a day is coming

when Christ will let us enjoy the full benefits of his redeeming work. Therefore we do not fear what the future will bring. Those who die in the Lord do not have to be afraid because they have the assurance that their bodies will be raised and made like the glorious body of Christ – free from corruption, hurt, troubles, aches and, most importantly, free from the corruption and bondage of sin.

Let not your hearts be troubled by sickness, distress, or trials. The Lord is faithful. He did not leave his Son in the realm of death, darkness and despair. Therefore be assured He will raise you to glory too. For through faith in Christ you partake in all the benefits of the resurrection. You share in all his riches, life eternal, righteousness and glory! **C**

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.

Earth(ly)?

It is not my intent to join either the "name-calling" or "name-dropping" side around the person of Prof. Dr. M. Luther (*Clarion* Vol. 49/2 and 6). However, when Sarah Vandergugten suggests that this Reformer was "... an earthly man, and not one to stand on ceremony," this venerable theologian might have been brought too low. 'Earthy' gives the sense of carnal, unspiritual and perhaps profane. It is therefore likely that Mrs. Vandergugten sought for the word 'earthy', which carries the meaning of common, plain and sometimes downright crude. Which Luther, if his Table Talk is even moderately accurate and verbatim, was by today's standards. But the man who loved that right Man on his side was not earthly. His tongue may have been coarse, but he had his eyes on the cross.

J.J. Kuntz
Hamilton, Ontario

Earthy!

I don't know who slipped the letter "l" into the word "earthy" (describing Martin Luther) but as far as I know, there are no other kind of men, besides earthly ones, on this earth. The point was the Great Reformer was an "earthy" (down-to-earth, no-nonsense, unaffected, unpretentious, rough and ready) man. Perhaps a case of an over-zealous proofreader?

Sarah Vandergugten
Cloverdale, BC

Oops! Sorry, Mrs. Vandergugten! – *Clarion*

The Length of the Days

I really felt I should speak (or write), on the subject that has taken up so much room in the "Letters to the Editor" lately. There should be no doubt whatsoever as to the length of the days. If we look at the celebration of the Jewish holidays we would realize that the day began in the evening, normally, when the sun went down. The morning was called the next day. God tells us in Genesis 1:5, "And God called the light day and the darkness He called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." There is no mention of the twenty four hours anywhere in the description of the creation. We are the ones that imposed the time limit on the day and the night. We are the ones who measure the day by a clock and place the end of the day in the middle of what God called the night. So if you want to impose the 24 hour rule on the creation, then you are wrong. If you want to say that the earth was created in six days and God rested on the seventh, then we must apply the biblical time keeping to the day and the night. When we do that, most people can and will agree that the setting and the rising of the sun have not changed since the beginning of time. And we can refer to the second verse in Genesis to see exactly how that time schedule came about. Let us listen to the Word of God and what it has been telling us for centuries.

Henry Brinkman
Chatham, Ontario



Special attractions

In his regular column in *The Banner*, Rev. Brian Bosscher, the executive director of Youth Unlimited, a youth agency in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) writes an article called "Our Mane Attraction", in which he tells about what happened to him at one of the CRC Youth Unlimited conventions. Since the sentiments he observes among his 'special lambs' are also found among Canadian Reformed young people of various ages and localities, I thought his remarks would be worthwhile to pass on:

At the Youth Unlimited convention in 1997 I received a haircut from Ken Medema that changed my life significantly.

Going from longer, curly hair to a buzz job was a real shock – not only for me but also for my wife. That same night Judy, who'd taken her contacts out, thought I was some stranger when I came into the dorm room. She jumped and let out a scream. Since then we've both gotten used to my short hair, though two years later people still ask me if this is all it's grown back since then. Yeah, right!

I keep debating about growing it out but don't know if I could handle the in-between look. It would probably stick up in weird places, and everyone would see how much grayer I've become.

My hair dilemma reminds me just how much my appearance matters to me. When I stop to analyze it, the whole thing seems kind of silly. After all, it's just hair. Why should what's on top of our heads have such a deep impact on how we view ourselves? What's the big deal?

But it is a big deal. I've seen how important hair is to people – teens in particular. It gets styled, coloured, and cut in a myriad of ways. Even in some of the messiest of living conditions (retreats, service projects), girls show up with meticulously styled hair. And guys can be

the same way. We want our "dos" to be cool. If someone came and messed up your hair, you'd probably be angrier that if he'd taken \$10 from your wallet.

Is it possible that we've attached an unhealthy amount of our self-worth to our hair? Certainly the North American culture promotes a cult of looking good. The desire to be "in" drives so much of the teen scene that it's downright depressing. It's an endless, no-win game of trying to please some vague group of nameless, faceless people. And just when you think you've arrived, the styles change.

We must not think that God doesn't care about our hair. In fact, God cares so much that he's numbered each one (Matt 10:30). When it falls out (just wait a few years!), God notices. Talk about attention to detail! But God's not impressed with how we style our hair. In fact, one of the few times Scripture mentions hair, it warns us not to go overboard in following worldly standards of outward beauty: "Don't depend on things like fancy hairdos or gold jewellery or expensive clothes to make you look beautiful. Be beautiful in your heart by being gentle and quiet. This kind of beauty will last, and God considers it very special" (1 Pet 3:3-4, CEV).

This is not an invitation to deliberate bad-hair days. It's godly wisdom regarding personal appearance: rather than being the picture itself, hair serves as a frame. It's obvious by the way some people style their hair that they disagree with this wisdom. Wild styles and colours are hard not to notice. But I would suggest that if your hair is the first thing people notice about you – either because of its unusual colour or style – it's gotten in the way of their seeing the real person. Rather than revealing a bit of your true personality, your hair serves as a mask.

We must be careful not to judge people by their outward appearance. But we who are followers of Christ would do well to make our outward appearance consistent with the inner message we want our lives to tell. I'm not advocating any particular hairstyle, of course. That kind of conformity is something cults and gangs strive for. Nonetheless, the following guidelines could help each of us discover what would be best to do with our hair:

- According to Jesus, the eye is the lamp of the body (Matt 6:22). Does your hairstyle allow your eyes to shine?
- The Lord is our maker – including the hair features we possess. Before we try to radically alter what we have, let's consider what our own natural style might be. Are you obsessed with your hair? Do you fear that you might not get what you want out of relationships because your hair is not quite right? That may be an indication of a deeper need for an understanding of God's unconditional love for you.

As for my own hair concerns, I'll be sure to keep Proverbs 16: 31 in mind as well!

All this is good food for thought. Young people growing up with Lord's Day 1 in their minds will also think about letting their hair and its style be subject to the interests of God's kingdom. If you confess that without the will of your heavenly Father not a hair can fall from your head – a metaphor with a long history! – why not also say: his will is first, also when I think about how I style my hair, not to mention my whole appearance as God's child. Then we will not be afraid to show that also in these things we are different from the world, since we follow a higher call.



A Reformed Confession in Russian translation

Cyrillus Lukaris, An Eastern Confession of Christian Belief. Translated into Russian.

Introduction and comments by Prof. Drs. J. A. Meijer of the Theological University, Kampen, The Netherlands. St. Petersburg: MIRT, 2000. 88 pages; ISBN 5-88869-083-X.

In the seventeenth century an Eastern Orthodox patriarch in Constantinople, Cyril Lucaris (1572-1638), wrote a Reformed confession! During the last number of years a translation of this confession has often been considered, because it could be useful to Russian and Ukrainian Evangelical/Reformed and Presbyterian churches in their contacts with Russian and Ukrainian Eastern Orthodox church members and congregations.

When asked by Dr. N. Vogelzang of "Christ for Russia" whether this confession could be adopted by the Reformed people in Russia and the Ukraine, Dr. N. H. Gootjes, dogmatician at the Theological College in Hamilton, Canada, answered in December 1992: "I do consider this a possibility. It is undoubtedly a Reformed confession. And it concerns the situation of the churches over there. The formulation of the Christology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is typically eastern. Also it deals with specific problems of the eastern church, such as icons, which the Eastern Orthodox Church protested against. This confession can play a valuable role in the shaping of a doctrinally sound, biblical church." Furthermore, Dr. Gootjes wrote to Dr. Vogelzang that such a text must, of course, first become familiar to the pastors of the Evangelical/Reformed and the Evangelical/Presbyterian churches and then could play a role in the contact with the "pravoslavonians," the Eastern Orthodox people.

Encouraged by these remarks and also by the wish of the Reformed people in Russia and the Ukraine for a con-

fession of "their own," the Ukrainian mission of the Dutch provinces of Gelderland and Flevoland decided to edit the text as published by Prof. J. A. Meijer of the Theological University in Kampen in his essay "De Oosterse Confessie van Cyrillus Lukaris," in the festschrift for Prof. J. Kamphuis entitled *Bezield Verband* (edited by M. J. Arntzen, 1984).

Prof. Meijer has taken another good look at this work and he has added a Preface with a strong appeal, which reads in part: "Thankful for all that I could learn from the Eastern Orthodox churches it was a pleasure for me to co-operate in having my text of Cyrillus' confession translated into Russian. And so, brothers in the east, I am pleased to offer you a faithful rendering of a confession which one of your own people wrote centuries ago as a personal profession of faith. Read this confession carefully. Compare it with Scripture and with the ancient teachings of the church. And do not adopt it if it should deviate from what the Word of God teaches you. Serve us, your brothers in the West with your criticism so that we may follow the path of the faith together and so that we together with all the saints learn to see how great Christ's love is."

Prof. Meijer also added a biography of Cyrillus, incorporated the latest literature, and – at the advice of the translator in Kiev, Prof. Dr. A. D. Dwoechzilov – completed it with a faithful reproduction of the Latin and Greek texts. In Russia and the Ukraine this kind of publication is supposed to

contain the original text. It is interesting for students and others who want to learn Greek or Latin.

The Ukrainian mission was pleased to find the publishing company, MIRT, in St. Petersburg, willing to publish the book. It has been included in the series "Christian Thinkers" and will hopefully be used at many colleges, universities and seminaries in Russia and elsewhere. But the interested "layman," too, will find much to his liking. Perhaps someone will react with the words: "Reformed thought is not that bad after all." That would be wonderful!

The literature committee of the Ukrainian mission in Gelderland and Flevoland is pleased with the publication of this booklet. In Kiev we intend to have a public presentation of John Calvin's *Institutes*, now completely translated into Russian, and of Cyril Lucaris' Eastern Confession. This presentation will be made together with the mission body of the Presbyterian Church of America / Mission to the World.

The book can be obtained in The Netherlands from the Ukrainian Mission in Hattem and from distributors in The Netherlands of Russian and Ukrainian literature.

For further information contact:

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Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario, March 24, 2000

1. On behalf of the convening church at Brampton, Rev. B.J. Berends called the meeting to order. He requested that the brothers sing Psalm 25:2,5,6, read Ephesians 1:1-14 and led in prayer. He then welcomed the delegates and Rev. P. Bédard who was present as a guest from the ERQ.
2. The delegates of the church at Owen Sound reported on the examination of the credentials. All was found to be in order. There was one with a request for advice according to Article 44 CO.
3. Classis was constituted. The following officers were appointed:
 - a. Chairman: Rev. R.E. Pot
 - b. Vice Chairman: Rev. A.J. Pol
 - c. Clerk: Rev. P.G. Feenstra
4. Memorabilia: The chairman thanked the convening church at Brampton for preparing the classis. The Revs. P.G. Feenstra and P. Aasman were called by the church at Houston, but both declined.
5. The agenda was adopted after several changes.
6. The church visitors reported on visits made to the churches of Orangeville, Grand Valley, Brampton, and Guelph. The visitors were thanked and it was concluded that all is being conducted in good order in these churches.
7. Rev. R. Stienstra, who came on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) was welcomed.
8. A letter from the Committee for Needy Churches was read and discussed. Its proposals were adopted.
9. Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held. The responses were positive. The church at Elora requested and received advice on a matter of discipline.
10. **Proposals:**
 - a. The church at Guelph proposed that all the ministers in the newly formed region of Classis Northern Ontario sign the new

- book containing the Form of Subscription. The proposal was adopted unanimously.
- b. The church at Orangeville proposed to adopt a Form of Subscription as revised by the church at Orangeville. The proposal was defeated.
 - c. An amended proposal from the church at Orangeville was adopted to request Regional Synod East to overture the upcoming General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches: "a) to establish a committee to propose standardized subscription forms for the minor and major assemblies, as well as for the professors of theology; or to mandate the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* to propose such forms in consultation with the churches for adoption by General Synod. b) to publish these forms in our *Book of Praise*."
11. After lunch, the meeting was reopened with the singing of Psalm 146:1,3. Following this, the existing Form of Subscription in the new book of Classis Northern Ontario was read and signed by the ministers.
 12. A proposal from the church of Owen Sound with a list of suggested "neighbouring churches" was declared inadmissible because it was not received in time by the churches.
 13. Rev. Stienstra was given the opportunity to address classis on behalf of the URCNA. He thanked the delegates for the invitation to be present. He quoted from Prof. Dr. K. Schilder concerning the "will to ecumenism" as a primary characteristic of the church. When two federations work toward unity there are steps that need to be undertaken. The willingness to accomplish that goal will be put to the test. The chairman responded by expressing the hope and prayer that the Lord will make unity on

the basis of His Word possible and that efforts in that direction will indeed bear fruit.

14. **Appointments:**
 - a. The convening church for the next classis is Elora.
 - b. The suggested officers for the next classis are:
 - i. Chairman: Rev. J.G. Slaa
 - ii. Vice Chairman: Rev. R.E. Pot
 - iii. Clerk: Rev. A.J. Pol
 - c. The date for the next classis is scheduled for June 23, 2000.
15. Question Period was held. The church at Elora offered to forward an updated version of the Regulations for Classis Northern Ontario to the churches.
16. No censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was necessary.
17. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release approved for publication.
18. The chairman requested that the brothers sing Hymn 40:1 and 2, and led in closing prayer.

For Classis Northern Ontario
March 24, 2000
A.J. Pol
Vice-chairman at that time



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By G.Ph. van Popta

Music of the Genevan Psalter

The H. Henry Meeter Center at Calvin College has produced a CD of Genevan Psalms. The recordings are of the Campus Choir and the *Capella* of Calvin College, the Sweelinck Singers, three church choirs and a congregation of several hundred. The songs sung are Psalms 23, 25, 33, 42, 100, 103, 116, 124, 134, 138, and 150. As well, the Song of Simeon, also of the Genevan Psalter, is sung. Cana-

dian Reformed listeners will be interested to know that the text for Psalm 23 is taken from the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches. A number of directors and organists from across North America were involved in producing this fine recording.

We thank the H. Henry Meeter Center for promoting this aspect of congregational worship that has been so central to Reformed life for

some 450 years. Anyone who loves the Genevan Psalms will love *Music of the Genevan Psalter*. This reviewer recommends it highly.

Available for US \$12.99 from the:

Calvin College Bookstore,
3201 Burton St. SE,
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546;
email: bookstore@calvin.edu;
phone (800) 748-0122

By Colin Van Delft

Making Magnificent Music!

Call me biased because my two boys sang on this CD. Call me a homer because the driving force behind this project, Heres Snijder, works at the same school as me. Call my opinion a subjective one because I know most of the people on this recording. You can say all these things and I won't be able to argue with you. But let me say anyway. . . this is a great CD!

There is something here for everyone. The CD has three selections from the *Book of Praise*. You can listen to the MMM choir of 1200 voices sing along to the virtuoso piano playing of Frank Ezinga with Psalms 92, 149 and 150. The three elementary schools of the Fraser Valley each treat the listener to two selections. There are three masterful violin solos. Each piece is wonderful in itself but also serve to show the listener how the players improve as they gain experience and practice. The listener gets a special treat as two of the tracks on the CD are by Pacific Salt from their *Northwind* celtic CD. They also accompany some of the selections from the elementary schools. *The Golden Age Singers*

show they can still sing for joy in their contribution to this project as well. Chilliwack's choir, *To the Praise of His Glory*, adds two numbers to the already growing list of songs. The Credo High School Bands round out the number of selections to 21. There is, however, barely room at the end for one last treat. The last song, the "Father's Footsteps," was especially commissioned for the Credo High School Bands 2000 Tour of Hope. It was written by Tim Johnson and is based on Hymn 10. So you see there are 22 songs with performers ranging from kindergarten to the golden age.

A variety of styles and genres and instruments certainly grip the listener's attention. The *Making Magnificent Music* project started with the practicing of the various contributors and culminated in a concert in Surrey on February 3rd, 2000. It was a magical evening. The CD is a combination of these live recordings as well as some studio versions. While the recording is not perfect and does contain the odd inadvertent cough or overzealous youngster missing his cue, this is certainly made up for in

the energy each contributor brings to their songs.

The *Making Magnificent Music* CD is also beautifully packaged. It is adorned on the front with an original painting by Hugo Vanderhoek (yes, another Credonian). It includes photos from the MMM concert and makes clever use of the internet (www.credochs.org) if the listener is interested in a copy of the lyrics or in viewing more information on the project.

The CD is a pleasure to listen to and shows that the praise of God through music is alive and well in all the age groups here in the Fraser Valley. I don't think we quite knew what we could all do until we came together and formed the MMM choir and witnessed this wonderful night. For those who attended the concert, the CD is a must buy to remember the evening. For those who were not there. . . buy it to find out what you missed. You won't be disappointed.

You can order *Making Magnificent Music* by e-mailing: snijder@uniserve.com or writing to:

Credo Christian High School
Box 3457, Langley, BC V3A 4R8
or phone: 1 (604) 530 5396