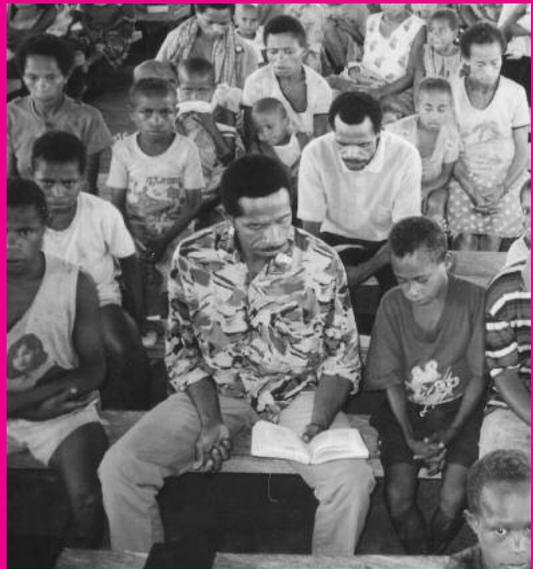


Clarion

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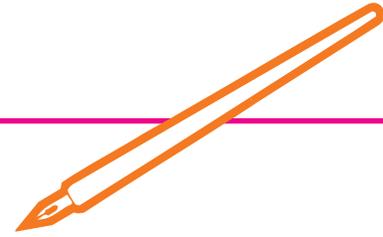


What is worship?

Numbers

10:1-10

By R. Aasman



Pentecost and the Gifts of the Spirit

I am sitting on a plane reading a book about Pentecost. My neighbour appears to be curious and keeps casting side-long glances at my book. Finally he starts up a conversation and asks, "So, do you have the gifts of the Holy Spirit?" I agree that I do. He reflects on that a moment and then asks, "So, do you speak in tongues?" I have to inform him that I do not. That appears to have him stumped. No doubt he is thinking: what do you do with a man who is reading a book about Pentecost, who says he has the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, but then claims he does not speak in tongues? Something does not ring true.

Confusion about the gifts of the Holy Spirit comes down to one's misunderstanding of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. It is even possible that some who are raised in the church would have difficulty explaining whether or not they have the Holy Spirit, and for that matter, whether they have the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Gift of the Spirit

One thing that should be crystal clear to us is that every believer has the gift of the Holy Spirit. To suggest that one is a Christian without having received the gift of the Spirit is a contradiction in terms. Think of what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." Every believer has been baptized by the Spirit and given the Spirit. This is the gift of Jesus Christ who as the second Adam is the life-giving spirit. To understand this we need to look at Peter's Pentecost sermon and particularly the pivotal passage in Acts 2:32-33, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." By virtue of Christ's absolute victory in his death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ received from the Father the Holy Spirit whom He at once poured out upon his church. Now Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together as one so that the blessings of salvation which Christ secured for his church might actually be distributed by Christ's Spirit to the church. The gift of the Holy Spirit is nothing less than the gift of Christ himself to his church.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word on a person's heart, creating and strengthening faith. Through the Word, the Holy Spirit penetrates to the very heart of man testifying to the truth of God's Word so that the words which come from the mouth of God are sealed and engraved upon the heart. That means the Holy Spirit seals the truth of what the Father has given in the suffering and exaltation of his Son so that as faith embraces Jesus Christ, his blessings of salvation

are given to us. Through Spirit-kindled faith we receive the forgiveness of our sins and the continual renewal of our lives as we live to the praise and glory of God.

It should be clear what we mean by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ gives us his Spirit which in turn is the gift of Christ himself and his blessings to his church. We could put it like this: without the Spirit we cannot have Christ, and, without Christ we cannot have the Spirit. Only through the Spirit does Christ dwell in us and we in him. It is a tremendous comfort to see and experience this wonder of God's grace in our lives: Christ and his blessing coming to us through his Holy Spirit. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit we understand and taste the fulfillment of what Christ promised at his ascension, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20).

The gift of the Spirit should also create in us a yearning to be filled with the Spirit and not to quench the Spirit. Where does the Holy Spirit work? He works through the Word. To sit under the preaching with eagerness and to consume and meditate upon the Scriptures in our daily devotions is to be in the workshop of the Holy Spirit. It is to experience the wonder of the Holy Spirit laying Jesus Christ on our hearts as we confess our sins,

flee to Christ for forgiveness and are empowered to consecrate our lives to the praise and glory of God.

Gifts of the Spirit

We can make a distinction between the gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is nothing less than the gift of Christ himself to us. The gifts of the Spirit are the spiritual gifts which the Holy Spirit distributes throughout the church. There are a variety of gifts which are apportioned to church members. Some of these gifts are temporal in nature and have ceased to be given by the Spirit. We can take as an example the gift of speaking in tongues. It was a wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift provided revelation and instruction during the time of the early church before the New Testament was completed. Once the inspired New Testament was being written and distributed, there was no more need for the gift of speaking in tongues and it ceased to be given. But there are other gifts of Christ distributed and worked by his Spirit in the church which will last until the return of Christ.

Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit in such passages as Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Let us look at Romans 12:6-8: "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." We see that every gift is

"A Christian without the Spirit is a contradiction in terms."

from the Holy Spirit and that they are distributed in such a way that church members have different gifts. This demonstrates a superb design by Christ and his Spirit which enhances the communion of saints. The church of Christ does not consist of individuals who have everything they need in themselves. By apportioning different gifts to the members, the Spirit of Christ creates an atmosphere where members need each other, appreciate each other and grow to love each other. This draws those who have the gift of the Spirit into a communion where they may share the gifts of the Spirit. For instance, a member may have the gift of patience and listening so that both young and old long to come to him for a good talk and advice that is both loving and wise. A member may have the gift of teaching young people and becomes involved in a teen club where the boys and girls of the church come together to learn God's Word and have good Christian fellowship. A member may have the gift of compassion and caring which leads him or her to visit members in nursing homes, in a hospital or those who are widows and widowers. This is just a small sample of the gifts of the Spirit.

Thus we come back to the original question asked by my fellow traveller, "So, do you have the gifts of the Holy Spirit?" This question should stir up in every believer a deep gratitude to God. How gracious God is to us! The Father has given His only Son to die for us; the Son willingly laid down his life for us; and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to dwell with the church and in our hearts so that truly Christ may dwell in us and we in Him. The same Spirit graciously works in us a variety of gifts by which we can praise God and build up the life of our neighbour. Let us use these gifts to his glory and for the up building of one another. 

What's inside?

Pentecost! One of the great festivals of the church. Our Lord did not leave us alone. He promised He would not, and He did not. He sent us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, with us, to comfort us and teach us. Around this time of the year we commemorate the great events of Pentecost. The Rev. Richard Aasman writes about Pentecost in the editorial while the Rev. Richard Eikelboom addresses the topic in the meditation.

The LORD God calls us to worship. Every day we serve Him in all we do. We have times of private and family worship. But there is nothing like our public corporate worship. In obedience to the call of God, we gather together every Lord's day to worship the Triune God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. There's nothing like it! Dr. Van Dam begins a three part series on worship. In this installment, he addresses the topic of Whom we worship and gives a definition of the activity. We hope these articles will help you to understand just a little bit better what it is you are doing on the Lord's day when you gather with your brothers in sisters in the local house of worship.

There is much bizarre religious programming available and many weird books on the shelves of the bookstores. Many of them present fantastic ideas about the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Much of what is spoken and written flows from a wrong understanding of Revelation 20. In his doctrine column, the Rev. Peter Feenstra presents the proper view on the return of Jesus Christ who is at present reigning over us from on high.

Besides these main items, you will find a press review, a news event, and an Observation Deck. Enjoy! GvP



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By R. Eikelboom

Baptism with the Spirit and with fire

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Luke 3:16)

One morning, about a year ago, I was sitting in my study when I felt a tremendous explosion. Moments later a column of smoke appeared on the horizon. Then I smelt fire. Evidently, something had gone seriously wrong in an oil-refinery about seven kilometers away. Numerous fire trucks and other emergency vehicles converged on the scene. Firefighters did what they could, but they could not quench the fire. Instead, it burned so hot that even a fire truck, parked some distance away from the blaze, was destroyed. The firemen however, did not get hurt, although they were working much closer to the fire. The reason is obvious. After all, a fire truck runs on gasoline. When it got hot, it exploded. Firemen, on the other hand, wear protective clothing; fire cannot harm them.

In Luke 3, John the Baptist told the people of Israel that Jesus would baptize them with fire. This fire, however, is not the gentle flames that will appear on the head of the disciples on Pentecost. Instead, says John, Jesus will go to heaven. There He will be seated at the right hand of his Father. From his royal throne, He will rule over all things. He will protect his apostles as they go out into the world, preaching in all the synagogues until all Israel has heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and has been called to repentance. When that has been done, the Lord will come down from heaven. Then He will baptize his people with fire. For just as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire because of their unfaithfulness, so the people of Israel will be baptized with fire as well. And we can look back. We can see that this prophecy was fulfilled in the year 70 AD, when the Roman army invaded Jerusalem

and set the city ablaze. The Romans did the dirty work, but in reality, it was Jesus Christ, the ruler of the kings of the earth, who destroyed his disobedient people through this baptism of fire.

In his second letter, Peter tells us that the world will be baptized with fire once again. For when the Gospel has been preached to all nations and the number of the elect is filled, the Son of God will come down from heaven once more. Then the heavens and the earth will all be destroyed by fire! So the prophecy of John the Baptist that the Lord Jesus Christ will baptize with fire will be fulfilled ultimately in the final judgment on the last day.

But the Lord Jesus Christ does not baptize only with fire! Instead, He also baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. In fact, our baptism with the Holy Spirit comes first. For when the Son of God went to the cross, He bore the wrath of God against our sins. His death laid the basis for the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation. Now King Jesus can give these blessings to whomever He pleases! And how does He give them to us? Well, on Pentecost He baptized his church with the Holy Spirit, and then He showered us with all his gifts! He gives us faith! Our sins are forgiven and we are righteous. We have eternal life! At Pentecost, King Jesus baptized us with the Holy Spirit. In this way, He gave all these gifts to us!

Now think back for a moment of the fire in Calgary that I mentioned earlier. That fire destroyed everything except the firefighters. It could not harm them because they wore protective clothing. In the same way, when

the Lord returns, He will send unquenchable fire to the earth. That fire will consume all people from all nations, except those people who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Their faith will save them. Their sins have been forgiven. And so they will be righteous. Because they are baptized with the Holy Spirit, the fire will not be able to touch them!

R. Eikelboom is the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta.



CHURCH NEWS



Change of mailing address for the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman West:

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Accepted the call to Carman West, Manitoba:

Rev A.J. Pol
of Guelph, Ontario.

What is worship?

Some biblical principles of public worship¹

(First of three articles)

By C. Van Dam

The subject for this evening is a vast one and we have to be very selective. Let us, therefore, reflect together on some of the important principles and themes that affect our public worship. The main issues can be put in the form of 5 questions. Whom do we worship? Where do we worship? When do we worship? Why and how do we worship? And within what perspective do we worship?

So let's begin with the question: "whom do we worship?"

Whom do we worship?

The One True God, the Holy One

the God who has revealed Himself

Did you know that most worship that has transpired and is taking place on this planet earth is, to put it bluntly, an exercise in self-deception (cf. Rom 1:18-23)? Take, for example, the ancient Egyptians. They made fancy images of their gods, which could take the form of a bull or a human, dressed them, washed them, took them out for boat rides along the Nile, and even took them hunting. But, when push came to shove, they had to admit that these gods were indeed only figments of their imagination. After all, there was always lots of food left over after the gods had supposedly taken their share and so the priests never went hungry! Also – another example of the self-deception – when they sought the guidance of the gods, it was always human beings that provided the answer, either through ventriloquism or by manipulating the statue to nod "yes" or "no" depending on what the desired answer was. Now what happened in Egypt also happened in slightly different ways in all the pagan cultures of the ancient Near East.

Of course, what happened in ancient pagan culture is still today, in principle, taking place with modern pa-

gan religions of whatever strip or colour. The basic characteristic of false worship is that man creates a god after his own image, models him or her according to the human needs present, and then proceeds to manipulate that god as the worshiper sees fit. That manipulation can take many forms. To move closer to home, not all that is called Christianity is *really* Christianity. To worship truly we have to know *whom* we worship.

"The basic characteristic of false worship is that man creates a god after his own image."

In the Old Testament, the church thought they knew whom they worshipped, but they were sometimes more influenced by their culture than they realized. For example, at a certain point while Israel was at the Sinai, they felt forsaken by Moses and really wanted to have God close by and so feel safe. They therefore made an image of Him. But how did they picture God? The best they could come up with was a golden calf because, according to their culture, that was a flattering form in which to be pictured! How they partied for joy to have God so close to them! In their self-deception they imagined that they were worshipping Yahweh (Ex 32:4-5). However, a moment's reflection on how God had revealed himself only days earlier on

the Sinai would have exposed their action not as worship, but simply as meeting in a sinful way their need for a tangible presence of God.

Such delusionary image substitutions for the true God are also possible today. For example, some people think they worship God whose name, in essence, is Santa Claus. Their God never gets angry, never punishes, and is always ready to hand out presents. They manipulate this god, whom they have made according to the image that suits them, to soothe their conscience and need for worship. Such people, too, do not fully realize that they are more influenced by their culture than by Scripture. But when push comes to shove, they will have to admit that they are involved in self-deception, but simply do not want to hear of a God who prepares hell for the ungodly.

And so our first task tonight then is to be clear about whom we worship. Simply put, we worship the one true God who has come to us in saving grace in Jesus Christ. We have not discovered Him or come up with Him, but He has revealed himself to us in the Scriptures, and worked faith in our hearts by his Word and Spirit. This is the same God who revealed himself to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, and to Israel. There is only one true God. The God we worship must be the One who has revealed himself, and who continues to speak to us in the Word and in the Word preached. Our object of worship is not to be the product of our imagination. We may only worship the God of Scripture who has come to us in saving grace!

God is sovereign and holy

There are two characteristics of God that I would like to mention briefly in regards to our topic. First, this God is

sovereign. He is king and supreme ruler of heaven and earth. He determines what is right and wrong. His Word is law, and he is not answerable to anyone. In the words of 1 Timothy 6:15, he is the “only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (cf. Ps 104:19; Rev 19:16). His is the kingdom and the power and the glory (cf. Matt 6:13). Clearly, this God, who is in full control as Lord and King and thus knows all things (cf. Ps 139; Heb 4:13), cannot be manipulated or fooled. To Him obedience, worship and praise must be given (cf. 1 Chron 29:10-13). He is *God*, the only one!

The other attribute of God that needs to be mentioned briefly is that God is holy. This sets God apart from all creation. He cannot be compared with anyone or anything else. He is “the Holy One” (Isa 40:25; cf. Hab 3:3), the transcendent one. God’s holiness thus testifies to the distinction between the Creator and creation, but it also speaks of his being separate from sin. God is absolutely free of all blemish of any kind (cf. Ps 89:36[35]; Isa 30:1). Both of these features of God’s holiness were demonstrated when God comes to his people at Sinai to renew the covenant with them. When God came down, then indeed *God* came down, the holy one, the transcendent one! God’s coming down was accompanied by thunder, lightning, and a very loud trumpet blast (cf. 1 Thess 4:16). God’s people, who

had been warned to consecrate themselves to God and not to touch the mountain, came forward to meet with God by going to the foot of the mountain. Then we read in Exodus 19:18-19a

Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder.

Awesome is God in his holy majesty! The people were warned again to respect God’s holiness lest God “break out against them” (Ex 19:24). Israel witnessed the holiness of God in a very obvious and physical way. This God is for real. He cannot be manipulated!

Another good example of God’s holiness is the occasion of Isaiah’s being commissioned by God. Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted.

Above him were two seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty,
The whole earth is full of his glory.”

At the sound of their voices the door posts and thresholds shook and the

temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!” (Isa 6:2-5)

Isaiah was assured that his guilt was taken away, but his response to God’s holiness is telling. It is no small thing to be in the presence of God!

What is worship?

If we know whom we are to worship, then we can also understand why those who worship Him must be consecrated and holy, separated from a world of sin and iniquity. Think again of the smoking Sinai and God’s warnings, and think of Isaiah’s call. To be able to worship God we must be claimed by God who has revealed himself to us. He claims us to be holy. And therefore, in order for us to worship God, we prepare ourselves. We must cleanse ourselves, consecrate ourselves. It is no small thing to come into God’s presence!

We are now ready to give a working definition of the public worship service for the purposes of our discussion tonight. What is public worship? For our purposes tonight:

Public worship is the communal attitude and activity of God’s people gathered together in holy assembly to pay homage to God, to serve Him and to praise Him, who has revealed himself to us in saving grace in Christ Jesus, and who still continues to speak to us in his Word and in the Word preached. In this way He works in us by his Holy Spirit.

That’s a mouthful. Put more briefly, one can say that public worship is an attitude and activity of homage, service, and praise directed to God in response to his revelation of himself in Christ and his ongoing work in our lives by his Word and Spirit.

Notice that public worship is only possible because God has revealed himself to us and still speaks to us through the Word. His Word must, therefore, set the content, tone, and direction of our worship.

(To be continued)

¹This series of three articles is an abridged version of what will appear in annotated form in a forthcoming publication of my lectures given in Australia (and partly New Zealand) in June and July of 1999, viz. *Perspectives on Worship, Law and Faith: The Old Testament Speaks Today*. (Kelmscott, WA: Pro Ecclesia Publishers). 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Personal opinions are not official positions

I am following with interest the discussion in *Clarion* about the length of days in Genesis 1. I take exception to the statement of Dr. John Byl in his article in Reader’s Forum, on p. 201, Vol. 49, no. 9, when he says, “As is well known, both the OPC and the URC tolerate non-literal views of Genesis 1.”

What is well known to Dr. Byl is not so well known to members of the URC. We tolerate non-literal views of Genesis 1 the way the Canadian and American Reformed Churches tolerate non-literal views of the days of Genesis 1. The reality is this: Personal opinions have been expressed. Some debate about these opinions has ensued. More will undoubtedly follow. However, no church body in the URC has endorsed them, nor has any made a decision to “tolerate” them. When “URC ‘leaders’” – who are the leaders of the URC but the elders of the churches? – “plead for the toleration of non-literal views of the days,” that does not yet constitute official toleration. For that matter, it doesn’t even necessarily mean that those who plead hold those views.

Dr. Byl should speak more carefully, and “do what he can to defend and promote his neighbour’s honour and reputation.”

Rev. R. Wynia
Wyoming, Ontario

The thousand year reign of Christ

By P.G. Feenstra

From time to time you will hear Christians talk about the thousand year reign of Christ. What exactly is meant by that term? The designation “thousand year reign” is taken from Revelation 20. In a vision John sees an angel coming down out of heaven to bind Satan for a thousand years. The devil is thrown into the bottomless pit in order that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years are over. While this is taking place, the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony of Jesus come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

The view of Dispensationalists

Many North American Christians believe this vision of the thousand year reign has nothing to do with Christ’s present position but refers to his future glory. The thousand year reign refers to a dispensation that is yet to come. Even within Reformed churches and among our young people there are those who are challenging what they have been taught in the church of Christ and are turning to what is called dispensationalism.

Dispensationalists believe that one day soon the Lord Jesus Christ will be coming again but not to judge the living and the dead as yet! Nor will he come all the way down to earth but he will meet his saints in the air for the rapture. Jesus will suddenly lift believers off the earth to take them to heaven. While these people are in heaven the world will suffer great tribulation and the nation of Israel will rise to prominence. There will be a mass conversion among the Jews. After seven years of tribulation Christ will come back to earth and at that time he will set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and reign for exactly one thousand years. At last a son of David will be back on the throne!

Seated on the throne of David in Jerusalem, Christ will rule the earth for ten centuries; and the believers will rule with Him. During this time the temple will be rebuilt, the nations, in subservience to Christ, will flock together to Jerusalem. Israel will be the focal point of world events.

Dispensationalism is not biblical

This doctrine must be refuted because it is not biblical and is contrary to our catholic, undoubted Christian faith. In fact, it belittles the significance of Christ’s church gathering work today. Although it may not be done intentionally, in reality this view is an attack on Christ’s office and his present position. Jesus Christ does not have to wait until the end of world history to receive the throne of his father David. He has that throne today! He rules from the Jerusalem that is above.

Christ is the ruler of the world and all the nations of the world are under his authority, whether they recognize it or not. Is that not the reason why He is seated at the right hand of God? The Apostles’ Creed, echoing the Bible, confesses “*from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*” The Bible does not predict a reign of Christ in present-day Jerusalem.

The thousand year reign is not something that is coming. We are presently living in the thousand year reign of Christ. The number “one thousand”, like all the other numbers in the book of Revelation, has symbolic meaning. It signifies godly fullness. Thus the thousand year reign is that period of time when Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.

A present reality

Revelation 20 does not speak of a thousand year reign with Christ physically on earth but, rather, in heaven.

Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, limits the power of Satan. The devil cannot match the power of Him who is seated on the throne. He cannot stop the progress of the gospel or the gathering of the catholic church of Christ. The deceiver of the nations has been bound by Christ. This is why missionaries can go out to the ends of the earth and claim territory after territory for Jesus Christ. God put a lid on Satan’s might so that Christ can gather his people unhindered. Jesus Christ is not seated at the right hand of the Father, waiting patiently for the right moment to come and help his people. He is in heaven for the sake of his church.

Christ reigns today!

The present position of Christ is not of a king at rest but at work. He is very busy in heaven – actively ruling on behalf of his church. The Lord Jesus delays his return until He, as head of the church, has gathered the very last person into his fold. Knowing that Christ reigns today encourages true believers even when they see disturbing trends across the globe. They know that Jesus Christ rules every situation, even though it may not always seem that way. From the time of Christ’s ascension to the present many children of the Lord have suffered severely and experienced persecution and great tribulation. Life on earth is a struggle for children of God. They have to fight against sin, the devil, and their own sinful flesh. Nevertheless, it all happens during the thousand year reign of Christ! The battle isn’t over yet, even though the war has been won and the victory is sure.

Believers know that their king will see them through all hardships. He defends and preserves his brothers and sisters from all enemies. The reality of Christ’s rule gives us strength when we face sickness, are tempted to sin or

when darkness enters our life. Struggling with many frailties we are comforted by the knowledge that Christ has triumphed over sickness, physical and mental weakness and even over death. Death too will be put under his feet. In fact the reign of Christ is to our benefit on both sides of the grave.

The end of the thousand year reign

The thousand year rule of Christ will come to an end. The apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians: *“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. . . . When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one”* (1

Cor 15:25-28). Christ’s last act as our King is his judgement of the living and the dead. Then He will give the golden scepter of authority back to the Father.

No one knows the exact day or moment when the thousand year reign will end. No one knows when Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Yet we have been given several signs indicating Jesus is coming back: wars and rumours of war, earthquakes, famine, persecutions, an increase in lawlessness, the spread of the gospel to all nations. These are all indications that the King is returning. On the day of Christ’s return all his enemies will be cast into everlasting condemnation. Revelation 20 says, *“And if any one’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into*

the lake of fire, which is the second death” – eternal death!

The end of the thousand year reign will be a day of great joy and comfort to the righteous and elect. They will be crowned with glory and honour. As we confess in Article 37 of the *Belgic Confession*, *“The Son of God will acknowledge their names before God his Father (Matt 10:32) and his elect angels. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev 21:4) . . . As a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as the heart of man could never conceive. Therefore we look forward to that great day with a great longing to enjoy the full the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:20).”* 

PRESS REVIEW

By J. De Jong



A Millennium Hymn

The Dutch daily *Nederlands Dagblad* reports that on January 2, 2000, a new millennium hymn composed by Hilary Jolly was sung for the first

time in St Paul’s Cathedral in London. The hymn is intended, according to Jolly, to counteract the pagan hype that was associated with the dawn of

the new millennium in England. It’s a simple confession of trust in the lordship of Jesus.

Here follows her hymn:

Through the Darkness of the Ages

Through the darkness of the ages
Through the sorrows of the days.
Strength of weary generations.
Lifting hearts in hope and praise.
Light in darkness, joy in sorrow.
Presence to allay all fears.
Jesus, you have kept your promise.
Faithful through two thousand years.

Bounty of two thousand harvests
Beauty of two thousand springs.
He who framed the times and seasons
Has vouchsafed us greater things.
Word of God who spoke creation
Speaks forgiveness, speaks to save
Gathers still his ransomed people
In the life he freely gave.

Countless flowers have bloomed and withered
Countless moons are sealed in night.
Shattered thrones and fallen empires,
Realms and riches lost from sight.
Christ your kingdom still increases
As the centuries unfold.
Grain that fell to earth and perished
Has brought forth ten thousandfold

Master, we shall sing your praises
Man of sorrows, God of power.
For the measured march of seasons
Shall at last bring in the hour
When, as lightning leaps the heaths.
You return to lead us home.
You have promised. “I am coming”.
Swiftly, our Lord Jesus, come.

While I cannot tell you anything about the melody of the hymn, I find the text to be a fitting text for the dawn of a new millennium, reflecting sentiments that we can echo and readily endorse. If a critical comment need be spoken, I would wonder why the hymn

is strictly directed to Christ, and not to the one Triune God. Although we praise and confess Christ’s lordship over the times and seasons, He does his work in accordance with the mandate given by his Father, completing it in the power of the Spirit He has sent. Would

not a trinitarian conclusion have added much to the hymn, linking it with the hymns of the early church?

However, on the whole I would commend Hillary Jolly for the tone of faith and trust reflected in the text of her hymn. A poem for our time! 

“Make a Joyful Noise” Choralfest 2000

By G. Ph. van Popta

The massed and regional choirs of the Canadian Reformed Christian Schools of Ontario held their bi-annual choralfest Friday evening, May 5th, at the Great Hall of Hamilton Place.

To an audience of almost 2,000 – family, friends and supporters of the schools – more than 600 young people representing eleven schools from Chatham to Toronto, and from Owen Sound to Smithville, sang sacred and secular songs. A small orchestra performed as well.

Falling on the 55th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian soldiers, special remembrance was made of the 7,500 Canadians who lost their lives on Dutch soil to set Holland free from the tyranny of Nazism.

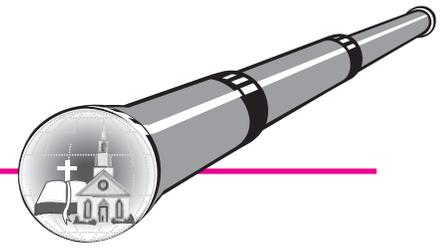
The children, young people and audience, most of whose roots are in the Netherlands, express profound thankfulness for this extreme sacrifice.

Proceeds of the evening and of the CD to be produced – which you will want to buy – will go to Anchor Home in Grimsby, and *Streetlight* Ministries, the evangelistic outreach of the Ancaster Church and *Fellowship* Church in Burlington.



Julie Ostermeier,
a very special
Timothy student.





Observation Deck

By G. Ph. van Popta

Courage in China

Chinese authorities released evangelist Li-Dexian from prison April 26. Li served 15 days, chained and in excruciating pain, for refusing to stop preaching the Gospel, *Voice of the Martyrs* said. Li is weak, but recovering and in good spirits.

The evangelist preaches every Tuesday at an unregistered house church in Hua Du, Guangdong province. Authorities arrested him for several weeks in a row in an attempt to force him to stop, but he continued. After the last arrest they sentenced him to two weeks in prison. "If you go to the meeting next Tuesday, we will come after you," agents of the Public Security Bureau, which regulates religion, told Li upon his release. They also visited the house church and told members that they should register or stop meeting.

"The Lord is with me, He is with us, not them. I will go" and preach at the meeting next Tuesday, Li told supporters. – *Religion Today*

Persecution in North Korea

North Korea has publicly executed 23 Christians by firing squad since October, a religious liberty group says. All of those killed were new converts, Terry Madison of Santa Ana, California-based Open Doors told Assist Communications. Most had fled to China, where they became Christians, then returned to North Korea to share the Gospel with their people, he said. New converts are more vulnerable than older Christians, who know how to survive in the hard-line communist country, he said.

A Christian falsely accused of selling North Korean girls to China was executed in March 1999 in Ham Buk province, Madison said. "In reality, he was simply shot because he was an active Christian, [nevertheless] he remained faithful to his Lord until the end." Two Christians were tortured and killed in Chung Jin prison in October and two women in Hae San city were shot in December for smuggling, Madison said. "In reality they were faithful Christians who ministered actively." Two others were shot in Ham Buk province the same month, he said.

That is "only the tip of the iceberg," Madison said. From May 1997 through July 1998, 11 North Korean Christians were starved or shot to death in a Ham Buk prison, he said.

There are an estimated 50,000 underground Christians in North Korea, Madison said. Religious freedom is officially permitted, but only two Protestant churches, controlled by the state, are allowed to meet. Underground believers meet at great risk, he said. – *Religion Today*

Young Christians in Mozambique

Teenage Christians stand tall in Mozambique. More than 50 teens take part in World Relief's teen evangelism pro-

gram, acting as witnesses to their families and friends, the Wheaton, Illinois-based ministry said.

Most of their parents aren't Christians. Sometimes their parents threaten to throw them out of the house for refusing to participate in pagan rituals related to ancestor worship, World Relief said. "Many children stand at odds with their families. Yet in some cases, the faith of the children is a witness to the parents," one worker said.

"My son brought me to Christ," one woman told the ministry. Her teenager, Raymon, began telling her about the Bible and the message of Christ after he became a Christian through the ministry. "I saw his life take on new meaning. God was making a difference," she said. The teens also organize prayer services and evangelistic outreaches in marketplaces. – *Religion Today*

Kazakh Christian sentenced to prison for witnessing

A Mongolian citizen, Marak Kojash, has been sentenced to 13 years in a prison camp in western Mongolia for "propagating the Christian faith." Police officials arrested Kojash, an ethnic Kazakh, in late summer. They arrested him for "the distribution of wrong religious propaganda." According to the Constitution of Mongolia, only the Buddhist and Islamic faiths may be "propagated." Since his arrest and trial in November 1999, Kazakh Christians have been warned against trying to contact Kojash or anyone else in Mongolia. Also, Christians have been instructed to not send any more Christian tapes or literature into Mongolia. (Compass Direct) – *REC News Exchange*

Update on East Timor

Nine months after the violence that destroyed most of East Timor and displaced nearly 300,000 East Timorese people, Rev. Robert Benn has returned to East Timor to see how the peace is currently being kept. In early September of 1999, violence erupted in East Timor. Villages were razed to the ground and families were displaced before peacekeeping forces entered the country. Currently, there are about 120 non-government aid organizations in the country and UNTAET (the UN transitional administration) is in control for the next three years.

Rev. Benn visited the remains of Hosanna, the largest Protestant congregation in Dili. Before the violence, the congregation boasted almost 7000 members with four services on Sunday. The church had three full time ministers, 186 elders and 120 home groups. Now, it has only one minister, seven elders, and only 300-400 attendees at one Sunday morning service.

Benn found that both moderators and church leaders are worn out dealing with issues of reconciliation and



The Vrouwekerk, much as it would have appeared in the 1500s. The church's history stretches from the 14th to the early 16th centuries. From 1584, the church was used by the Walloon Reformed Community.

interpersonal strife. A very tired moderator said, "Every day I pray for a renewed spirit."

The healing has only just begun. Approximately 136,000 refugees have returned to East Timor and about 150,000 remain in West Timor. (Australian Presbyterian) – *REC News Exchange*

The Vrouwekerk, Leiden

A church where the Pilgrims worshiped may be torn down. Historians and religious groups want to prevent demolition of the remains of Church of Our Lady, known as the Vrouwekerk, in Leiden, Holland.

The Pilgrims worshiped there after leaving their native England in 1608 to escape religious persecution. They sailed to North America on the Mayflower in 1620 and landed at Plymouth Rock in what is now Massachusetts. The Mayflower Compact, a document devised and signed by the Pilgrims, described their trust in God and became a foundation for the democratic society that became the United States.

The church is one of the last surviving symbols of Pilgrim history in Holland. A lawsuit brought by Dutch citizens and U.S. historian Jeremy Bangs is preventing the city of Leiden from demolishing the church until the Dutch Council of State considers the matter.

American denominations trying to preserve the church include the United Church of Christ and the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. The Pilgrims, along with other English dissenters called Puritans, founded the first Congregational churches in the United States. The UCC is collecting names for a petition protesting the demolition. – *Religion Today*

Law suits threatening Canadian churches with bankruptcy

Canadian Churches are facing a financially trying and difficult time in the next few years. The Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, and Presbyterian churches of Canada are facing numerous lawsuits by victims from the residential school era, which paired the efforts of the churches with the Canadian government.

Between the years of 1820 and 1969, European Canadians were making efforts to assimilate native aborigines into mainstream Canadian society. To make this transition as easy as possible, the government, in cooperation with the four major denominations, set up residential schools to train and "civilize" native children. The government provided the funds to run the schools and the churches provided the personnel to run them.

Seven thousand children whom they raised in these schools have pressed charges against the churches and the government and are seeking compensation for different abuses experienced during their time at the school. Although many of the cases cite cultural abuse, some cases involve both physical and sexual abuse.

These cases are threatening the existence of the different denominations involved. The Anglican Church of Canada is expected to be the most severely affected. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the United Church are expected to be affected at the local or regional level. The least affected is expected to be the Presbyterian Church in Canada because they ran the fewest residential schools during the 149-year period.

Archbishop David Crawley of the Anglican Church has charged that government lawyers, not native people, are most likely to force the churches into bankruptcy. In fact, he claims that the government is the only party against the church in seven out of the eight cases currently pending in court. Crawley indicated that church members support seeking reconciliation with the natives who are suing the government for various abuses. However, he laments the fact that the monies that would contribute toward those compensation funds are instead being diverted into accounts to pay for legal fees and lawyer costs.

"As a national body, with thousands of Aboriginal members, we have a significant capacity to contribute substantially to reconciliation between First Nations [children who were raised in residential homes] and other Canadians," says Bishop Crawley. "Instead we're heading for bankruptcy, fighting government claims against us." (Christian Courier) – *REC News Exchange*

Articles from *Religion Today*, <http://www.religiontoday.com> and *REC News Exchange* used by permission. 



Ruins of the Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk as they appear today.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Do you like visiting people who are much older than you, people like your Grandpa and Grandma, but are not your Grandpa and Grandma? Do you think if you went to visit them, they would like to see you or do you think they would just tell you to go away? Last week, I went to visit some old people in our church. They really liked to see someone much younger than them. They have lots and lots of stories to tell you about when they were your age. Yes, many of the older people still remember stories of when they were young. Maybe you should try it one day – ask Dad and Mom if you're allowed to go and visit someone, maybe your friends' Grandpa and Grandma and ask them for some stories about when they were about your own age. I'm sure they would love to have you over.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

There are eleven kinds of trees hidden in this puzzle. Can you find them?

By Busy Beaver Kristi Oosterhoff

CHERRY
ILDEEP

FELPPA
GPCAAH

Story

Grandad's New-Old Nursery Rhymes – continued

"Time to go to sleep now," said Louise's mother, tucking her in. "Oh, Mommy, ask Grandad to come up and tell me another rhyme." "All right, but only one mind." Grandad sat on the edge of the bed, and Louise held his hand. "Do you know another new-old one?" she asked. "Well, as it's bedtime, how about Wee Willie Winkie?" "Does he want to make sure that the children all go to bed by eight o'clock? I don't think much of that!" "Not in my rhyme, he doesn't; he makes them all get up." "How does he do that?" Grandad started,

"Wee Willie Winkie runs through the . . ."
He stopped. "Town?" suggested Louise. "No," said Grandad, "street, in my rhyme . . ."

*Wee Willie Winkie runs through the street,
In his old dressing-gown, slippers on his feet,
Rapping at the window, crying in a roar,
'Unless you all get up at once,
I'm breaking down the door!'"*

Louise laughed. "That must have shifted them!" she said.

To continue next time

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

By Busy Beaver Ashley Van Spronsen

OHJPSE	IDVAD	MYAR	BAOCJ
BAHMRAA	SUAE	VEE	HRTU
ULPA	HONA	HETS	ESUJS
ADMA	AIACS	AMH	HRETES

JOKES

By Busy Beaver Nicole Fennema

Why did the cookie go to the doctor?
Because he felt crummy!

Why can't you feed a teddybear?
Because it's stuffed.

Where do American Snakes live?
In the U.SSSSSSS.

How did the girl hurt herself when she was raking leaves?
She fell out of the tree.

What did the judge say when the skunk walked into the courtroom?
Odor in the court!



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Nicole Fennema. Thank you for your letter and jokes. I'll put them in with this Little Magazine. Do you play the piano and organ very well? Camping is good fun, isn't it.

You must go camping somewhere near a lake or the ocean if you go tubing behind your Dad's boat. Bye for now, Nicole.

Welcome also to Kristi Oosterhoff. What color is your puppy, Kristy? I can imagine you have lots of fun with Mitsy. Thank you for your puzzle too. Write again, won't you, Kristi.

Thanks to Julia Van Laar for your letter and puzzle. Why do you have some people from Sudan in your school, and even one in your class? Are they on an exchange program? It must be fun having a student from another country in your class. Are you learning lots about Sudan now, both in school and from your friend? Till next time.

Thank you also to Ashley Van Spronsen for your letter and puzzle. It must be exciting visiting your grandparents during the spring break. Did you have lots of fun with them? It must also be exciting that your uncle is getting married and you're even getting a new dress. You'll have to tell me what color it was. See-ya.

PENPALS WANTED:

Julia Van Laar is 10 years old. She likes sports, cooking, skipping and jumping on the trampoline. She would love to have someone of her own age to write to her. Her address is: 6785 Hayward Road, Agassiz BC V0M 1A0

Nicole Fennema is also 10 years old. She likes reading, playing the piano/organ, horses, dogs. Her favorite subjects in school are Math and PE. She is happy to have a boy or girl write to her. Her address is: Camp 20, Site 8, SS#1 Houston BC V0J 1Z0.

AUNT BETTY

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