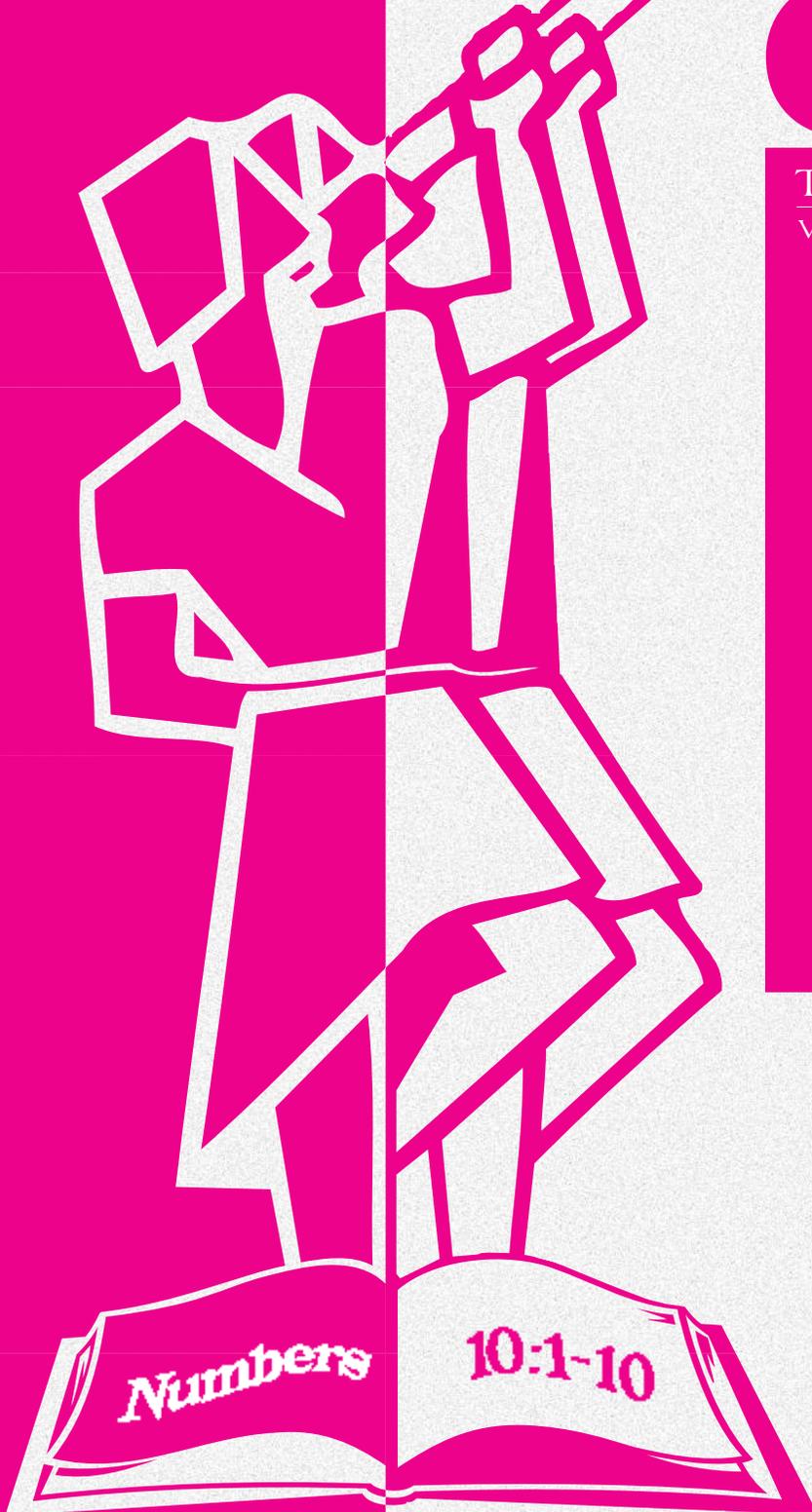


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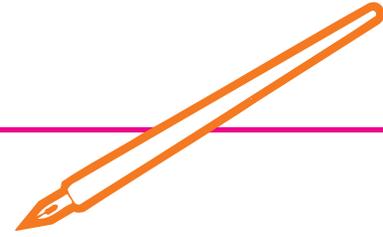
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*Redeemer
Canadian Reformed Church
in Winnipeg, Manitoba*



By N.H. Gootjes



Christian lifestyle

Not a new question

The question how Christians should live is not new. It has always been a concern in the church. Problems concerning Christian lifestyle have always been discussed, and have often led to conflicts. I vividly remember a debate about this between my high school friend and his father. On a Sunday, we were staying at his place but we thought we needed something at my house. Since I lived in another part of town, we wanted to bike over to my house to pick it up. His father, an honest and God-fearing man, did not want us to take the bike. When we asked what was wrong with that, his father said that going out on a bike on a Sunday was not in accordance with a Christian lifestyle. Everyone else uses the Sunday to enjoy a bike ride, but Christians should be different. My friend was frustrated and shot back: "We should go to church on wooden shoes, for everyone wears normal shoes!"

He should not have said this, of course. However, it was a perceptive remark. It uncovered unerringly the weak point in his father's argument. His father's view was old-fashioned rather than specifically Christian. As far as Sundays were concerned, he clung to olden times when bikes did not exist and everyone had to walk to church. He acted as if staying with old customs is the safe way to live, and as if a Christian lifestyle is characterized by living in the past.

Mennonite and Hutterite solution

That is the solution of certain Mennonite and Hutterite groups. Such a group often had a founder, who lived 200 or 300 years ago, and who instituted the rules for the community at that time. Those rules are still maintained today. They wear the clothes of a past period. Their means of transportation is horse and buggy, not because the Bible says so but because that was acceptable when the community was organized. They often work with old-fashioned agricultural methods instead of modern machinery. Actually, some do not use machinery at all, for they are not hooked up to electricity. They acted as if God had permanently bound his church to a certain period in the past, and as if He is not God of today.

In fact, however, God is the one who governs history. He allows the people on earth to discover the powers which He himself made available when He created the world. In

his providence, He allows people to discover how to harness these powers and put them to good use. The God of creation is also the God of providence who opens these possibilities in the world for his creatures to use. It is true, not every invention means progress, and there are developments which Christians have to reject. But the future of Christians is not simply to hang on to the past. God's people live in the present, and must develop a Christian lifestyle in the world they live in.

Christians do the same things

In many respects, the life of Christians looks very similar to that of their neighbours. They live in the world of the twenty-first century and show that. To give an example, the clothes they wear are basically not different from those everyone else wears. When everyone else wears blue jeans, Christians have them too. And when fashion shifts to cargo pants, you notice Christians shifting to these pants with useless pockets on the side of the legs. In crowds, as one might see them at Niagara Falls, Mennonites can easily be distinguished by their dress, but most Christians do not stand out in the crowd by the way they dress.

That applies to other aspects of life as well. We Christians eat much the same food everyone else eats. To summarize it simply, we eat pizza, pasta, potatoes and buns. That is remarkable when we consider, for instance, that this was not the traditional food of Dutch people. Potatoes and bread were staples in the Netherlands. But when the immigrants came here, the importance of bread diminished and Italian food was added to the diet. They even began to eat corn which went against the grain of Dutch people.

Corn

When my grandmother visited Canada for the first time, she complained when corn on the cob was put on the table. She did not want to eat chicken feed, because that is what corn was used for in the Netherlands. The Dutch immigrants, however, adapted to their new country with respect to the food they ate. In a similar way, Korean Christians eat a meal of rice and side-dishes, just as everyone else does in Korea. The kind of food that Christians eat is dependent on the agriculture of their country and the customs of the general population. Christians are not distinguished from others by what they eat.

"A Christian lifestyle is not an old-fashioned lifestyle."



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We can also mention the means of transportation. There is no reason why Christians should restrict themselves to the means of transportation mentioned in Scripture: horseback riding, driving carriages or sailing. Since that time, engines have been discovered and developed, and great distances can be covered in relatively short time by steamers, trains and air planes. The most convenient and popular way of transportation is by car which has totally changed the way we deal with distances. The freedom with which we can move around is truly astonishing. We think nothing of paying a visit to someone who is living a hundred kilometres away, because that distance can easily be bridged.

What's inside?

Dr. J. de Jong and Rev. W. den Hollander report on their recent visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in North America. Added to this is a short speech of Dr. J. de Jong which he delivered at this Synod. This should give our church members some valuable insight into what lives within the FRC. The next *Clarion* should have two reports in connection with meetings between our respective churches.

Dr. N. H. Gootjes presents an editorial on Christian lifestyle where he addresses a long-standing debate: are traditional manners of dress, transportation, food, etc., necessarily and inherently better than current ones? This article will get you thinking.

In this issue we receive the second part of a series of articles by Dr. C. Trimp. He makes clear that regeneration does not mean that we have “arrived” in our lives as Christians. It means we have only started. One of the great challenges of living as God’s regenerated children is not compromising what He demands of us in his Word.

The matter of church boundaries is a discussion from time to time among our churches. Dr. J. de Jong reviews an editorial from *Una Sancta* on this subject and presents his own analysis.

The meditation is by Rev. R. Eikelboom. He writes about what it really means to address God as our Father. This issue also contains the column, “Ray of Sunshine.” We are informed of several forthcoming birthdays of some special people in our churches.

RA

The possibilities for such inventions have been created by God because they all make use of some aspect of creation. And these inventions were made under the providence of God who allowed them to be discovered. We may thank God that He made these technological developments possible, and use them without feeling guilty. Riding a horse and buggy may be fun, but this does not distinguish Christian lifestyle from the way other people live. A Christian lifestyle is not an old-fashioned lifestyle.

Christians are different

This does not mean that a Christian lifestyle does not exist. God, in his Word, addresses us on every aspect of our lives. A Christian should follow that. Let us look at the same examples again.

Clothing

To begin with clothing, God himself gave the first clothes to Adam and Eve. After they had sinned, they discovered that they were naked. They were naked before, of course, but then it did not bother them. Now they felt a certain shame that had not been there before. That was the reason why God provided them with clothes. This is no longer the only purpose of clothing. It also serves as protection from the cold and the sun. It even serves for adornment of the human body. But the most fundamental function of clothing in a sinful world is still to cover human nakedness from prying glances. This is also emphasized by Paul, when he writes: "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety" (1 Tim 2:9).

Paul does not prescribe a certain style of clothing. He does not tell us to wear the kind of toga the Greek wore or the tunics which the Romans wore. The outer garment Peter put on to meet the Lord (John 21:7) is not described to us so we can imitate it. Christians can wear the kind of clothing that is fashionable in their own country and their own time. But it should be appropriate clothing, not provocative or indecent.

Food

Christians eat the same things the people around them eat, whether it is Dutch, Italian, or Korean cuisine. Christians

can live in any country and eat any kind of food. At the same time, they have to show their Christianity even in what they eat. Paul mentions among the acts of the sinful nature such things as drunkenness and orgies, and adds that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21). One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control (Gal 5:22). A Christian can eat any kind of food, but he does not get drunk, nor is he a glutton. Orgies, as they occurred in Rome, are out of bounds for Christians.

Transportation

Christians need not limit themselves to the kinds of transportation which the Lord Jesus and Paul used: by foot and by boat. They are free to use cars. We may be thankful for the technological advances which have made it much easier to travel and visit people. But they should be used in a Christian way, namely, according to government regulations. Paul wrote about the government in Romans 13. One thing he said was: "It is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience." In regards to driving, speeding is not just wrong because we might end up with a ticket. It is wrong because of conscience's sake – because the government is God's servant. There are no specific Christian means of transportation. It is the way in which we drive a car that should show we are Christians.

Christian lifestyle has always been different from that of other people. This was already clearly expressed in a letter written more than 1800 years ago. The quote from this letter will be added to this article.¹ There is much pressure on Christians to give up their lifestyle, but it is important to maintain it. A Christian lifestyle glorifies God, and it is the first way in which Christians can show to their neighbours that the gospel of salvation is a positive force.

¹*Epistle to Diognetus*, ch. 5. I quote the translation by M. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings* (Penguin Books: Hammondsworth, repr. 1975) 176; see on the subject of Christian lifestyle, J. Douma, *Christian Morals and Ethics* (tr. J.P. Elliot and A. Pol; Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1983) ch. 6.



The difference between Christians and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or customs. Christians do not live apart in separate cities of their own, speak any special dialect, nor practice any eccentric way of life. The doctrine they profess is not the invention of busy human minds and brains, nor are they, like some, adherents of this or that school of human thought. They pass their lives in whatever township – Greek or foreign – each man's lot has determined; and conform to ordinary local usage in their clothing, diet, and other habits. Nevertheless, the organization of their community does exhibit some features that are remarkable, and even surprising. For instance, though they are residents at home in their own countries, their behaviour is more like that of transients; they take their full part as citizens, but they also submit to anything and everything as if they were aliens. For them, any foreign country is a motherland, and any motherland is a foreign country. Like other men, they marry and beget children, though they do not expose their infants. Any Christian is free to share his neighbour's table, but never his marriage-bed. Though destiny has placed them here in the flesh, they do not live after the flesh; their days are passed on the earth, but their citizenship is above in the heavens. They obey the prescribed laws, but in their private lives they transcend the laws. They show love to all men – and all men persecute them.

Epistle to Diognetus, 5.

By R. Eikelboom

When you pray, say: “Father”

Luke 11:2

When my kids talk to me, they call me “dad.” When my nephews speak to me, they call me “uncle.” Most people, though, call me “Reverend Eikelboom,” although some call me “Richard.” And yesterday, when I was walking across the church parking lot, a toddler called out to me, “Hi, minister!” So I have at least five titles which different people use. But this does not make me five different people. Instead, people use a different title depending on the relationship that they have with me. And of course I also treat people differently, depending on the relationship that they have with me. I’m sure that you all do the same.

In the Bible, many titles are used to address God. In Genesis 2, He is called LORD. Melchizedek refers to Him as “God most high” and David refers to Him as “my Shepherd.” Isaiah speaks of Him as Israel’s Father and Hosea depicts Him as the church’s husband. The Psalmists also use various titles to depict particular relationships with God: He is “our Shield” and “our Tower” and “the Rock of our Salvation.”

When the Son of God teaches his disciples to pray, He chooses for them one of those many titles from the Old Testament. He commands them to say, “Father.” And the disciples who hear this instruction do not think of three thrones in heaven, with God the Father sitting on one throne, and with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit sitting on separate thrones. Jesus does not command them to say “Father” so that by this title they might attract the attention of one specific person of the Triune Godhead. Instead, Jesus wants his disciples to pray to God. And He commands them to say “Father” because He wants to draw their attention to the relationship that they have with God! He gave them life. He protects them and provides for them. And therefore they may ask Him for anything and trust

that He will look after them. After all, that’s what a father is supposed to do.

Therefore, it seems as if we begin our prayer with a confession of faith. We address God as “Father” and with this word we confess that we believe in Him: that we trust Him to hear our prayer and look after us. That’s what it seems like. But the reality is that this confession is often an empty word. That is because we find it so difficult to trust God. Our hidden sins make us ashamed to pray. They make us doubt whether God really will listen to people as bad as us! And we find it so difficult to bring all the struggles and difficulties that we face before God. We bring them to God. We ask Him for a solution. But we do not let go of them. Instead we continue to worry about them as if God doesn’t exist, and as if it still depends on us to solve them. All this belongs to the weakness of human nature, and it hinders our prayers! But the Son of God, who teaches his disciples to pray, shares our humanity. Therefore, He understands all our weaknesses, including the weakness of our faith and our prayer-life. And then, because He knows us and our struggles so well, and because He truly wants us to overcome these struggles, He commands us to address God as “Father!” Not as a triumphant profession of faith! Not as if we believe that God is our Father, and as if we believe that He will give us everything that we

need. But as a confession of sin and weakness. In recognition of our unbelief! The catechism explains this so very beautifully in Lord’s Day 46 where it says that we address God as Father, “*To awaken* in us at the very beginning of our prayer that childlike reverence and trust toward God which should be basic to our prayer.” We cry “Father!” at the beginning of our prayer, so that God might respond immediately by working in our hearts by his Spirit and giving us faith! This means that the first word of the Lord’s Prayer is already the first petition: Father. That is: You want us to pray believing that You will provide for us and give us what we need. But we find it so difficult to believe this! And so: help our unbelief. Give us that childlike reverence and trust toward You that should be basic to our prayer!

When we pray to God, we can address Him in various ways. And when Jesus commands us to address God as “Father” He does not forbid us to use other titles. But the promise that God will give us the faith that we need to pray is connected specifically to the word “Father.” So let us obey this command and experience his blessing in one place where we surely need it: in our prayer life.

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

Clarion

COMBINED ISSUE

To give our editorial staff a summer breather we have combined issue no. 15 and no. 16.

The next issue, no. 17, will appear in the middle of August.

Have a good and safe summer!

Regeneration and degeneration

By C. Trimp

In the previous issue we considered the fact that the church can fall victim to the process of degeneration. We did not focus so much on the progress and the consequences, but concentrated on the possible origin of this deterioration. We looked at our sinful nature, our attitude in reacting to degeneration, our unwillingness to bend our neck under the yoke of Christ, and the lovelessness of our heart. All of these, each on their own and all together, can obstruct God's work of love in our lives and community, or, expressing it in a biblical fashion: they can hinder the "completion of love" (see 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17). The "church visitation reports" of Christ Himself quickly come to mind (Rev 2 and 3). We would like to examine the same issue once more – this time with the Holy Scripture's words on regeneration (= rebirth) as the angle of approach.

Regeneration

The word "regeneration" indicates the miracle of a new beginning. God does not commit us to our origin, predisposition and heritage. He has destined us for a new life: life in a "new obedience" to use the words of the Form for Baptism.

In this context we clearly cannot give a thorough and dogmatic account on regeneration. In that case we would at least have to define article 24 of the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort III/IV, and Q&A 8, 43, 45, 64, 70, 73, 76, 86-91 and 114 of the Heidelberg Catechism, including the scriptural proof given with all these confessional texts. We will limit ourselves, however, to some biblical references.

"Regeneration" suggests that God gives us a new beginning and a new life. We become different people when compared to the life we received at birth. The necessity of this new beginning (the "being born of God," John 1:12, 13) was clearly indicated by our

Lord Jesus Christ in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:3-21).

It is remarkable that the Holy Scripture speaks not only of the *necessity* of regeneration, but also readily speaks of the *reality* of this new life (see 1 Peter 1:3, 18, 23 and Titus 3:5).

We are not told that we have "arrived" (as if we had achieved our goal) when we receive regeneration, but God's Word declares to us that – as newborn children – we've only just *started*.

Continuation

Regeneration, just as a natural birth, asks for a *continuation* (1 Peter 1:13-17, 22; 2:1-3, 11,12). The continuation is growing toward and striving for the "completion," the spiritual matureness. Slackening, however, constitutes a serious illness which hinders our wholesome growth (Heb 5:12-14; 6:1-3, 11, 12). The risks of such a relapse are not trivial according to Heb 6:6-8. When the process of the new life's continuation is inhibited, a new process will start in our heart and life: degeneration and falsification. This applies to everyone personally. And it also applies to our living together as a congregation, because the church is something that we are together.

Flourishing or deterioration of the church is not an autonomous process that unfolds itself somewhere beyond our lives. The church is a body. When the members languish, the body will fall ill.

Degeneration

Degeneration is the great enemy of regeneration. Degeneration is opposed to regeneration just as "the old nature" is to "the new nature" (Lord's Day 33). The first *has* to die for the second to be able to rise and grow in strength. This applies not only to our own personal pathway to God's salva-

tion. It also applies in full to our life as Christ's congregation.

In article 29 of the Belgic Confession we encounter the church members of whom it is said that they:

- continually fight against their own weaknesses by the strength of the Spirit;
- appeal to (the suffering and crucified) Christ so they may receive the cleansing of their lives;
- flee from sin, pursue righteousness and crucify their flesh and its works, and
- love the true God and their neighbours.

The church of Christ is populated by people who recognize and acknowledge their weaknesses and sins, and seek forgiveness of these sins in their Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they are people who fight against sin daily, all their life long, up to the point of "crucifying their flesh." They know about the pain of conversion and can feel this pain in their heart. To live as a member of the church is apparently a *painful* life as well. God's good law constantly brings our incompetence and guilt to light.

Compromise and conversion

We cannot silence the pain of conversion with a story about compromise. A compromise is an agreement between two parties, where both parties concede to part of their claims, rights or wishes and neither receives the full 100 percent. It is an important phenomenon in our complex society where all sorts of complications between opposing objectives never cease to emerge. Without compromises this society would soon become intolerable and would totally deteriorate into huge pandemonium. A compromise is, for this reason, a necessary and ethically well accepted phenomenon within our society. It is a tool that upholds society in the midst of a

broken world. In this context one can rightly speak of a “way of life” (*modus vivendi*). At the same time each compromise is an acknowledgement of the limitations of our capabilities and of our great incompetence with regards to each other. A compromise is likewise accompanied by its own pain.

The pain of conversion goes deeper: it demonstrates how man is totally torn apart. An “old nature” has to die, so that the “new nature” can rise before the face of God. This is the pain of the antithesis between Christ and Satan on the terrain of our own heart and life. God’s norm and our reality collide head-on. This abstract phrasing can be put in these concrete terms: our good God cannot live together in the same home as sin. For this reason God creates new people who will become like Christ. It is not a case of straightening out a complex society, but of renewing degenerated lives of people to the honour of God.

A compromise (in the best of cases) is a measure of human wisdom for the sake of upholding society. Conversion serves to create a new people – a people who will live with the Holy God. If someone takes this pain of the conversion which God asks of us and exchanges it for the disappointment of the sadly unavoidable compromise, he brings God’s commandments into the sphere of compromise and, in a way, makes peace with the power of sin.

Our tendency

We all have the tendency to incorporate our wish for compromise into our thoughts of the relationship between God’s commandments and our obedience to God’s will. We then focus on the “attainable” and will consequently expel the necessity and the drastic measure of conversion from our mind.

God’s norm we rephrase as “ideal,” and our “reality” (including our incompetence and limitations) plays the role of a large, legitimate deduction. And whoever will not respect this deduction will be labelled as an idealist or a utopian, a radical or a perfectionist. We concoct together a “way of life” which makes life bearable. We make an arrangement between God’s norm and our capability. Our sense of reality will get its own meaning in relation to God’s good will and will be a constant factor opposing God’s norm.

The pain of conversion

The result of all this can be no less than a life in which the pain of conversion is diminished to a weak, harmless lamentation about our human shortfall. This waning is a subtle form of degeneration which separates us from the battle of the new nature against the power of sin. It teaches us to settle for the *status quo* and is as such the enemy of humility and self-examination before God. This type of degeneration lets us, after all, make peace with what should be a hostile power in our lifelong relationship with the Lord.

This is the message of Romans 7 and 1 John 1 and 2. It is striking that we encounter these chapters in both Lord’s Day 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism and article 29 of the Belgic Confession. The refusal to make peace with what God calls sin, and the battle against our willingness to agree to such a peacemaking are exactly the marks of an honourable life before the Lord and a beginning of the new obedience.

“A small beginning”

We come to a last question. If the will of our God forbids us to compromise with the reality of our inadequate functioning in practical life, what is then left of the actual regeneration of our lives? What kind of space will be left to us? Won’t this preaching of the law drive us to a restless search for perfection or to desperation because of our continual failing? Won’t the notion of “having to” be reversed into “not wanting anything anymore?” It is the old question of the Heidelberg Catechism (Q 114). The answer to this question speaks not only of a “small beginning.” Our book of instruction also calls on Romans 7:22 (“For in my

inner being I delight in God’s law”): keeping God’s law perfectly is realized in the life of a regenerated Christian in such a way that he “with earnest purpose begins to live not only according to some but to all the commandments of God.”¹

Earnest purpose – that apparently is the root of the new nature in our life. It is the separation from degeneration and the first gleaming of regeneration. This means that we have to test ourselves to *that* in our personal and collective self-examination, also with regards to our role in God’s church here on earth. What – ultimately – do we *want* with our lives before the eye of the Lord? Do we actually *want* to *become* what we *are* in Christ through the Spirit? Do we really want to *receive* what we *have* in Christ? Is the unity of the church also part of the *salvation* that is to be *imparted* to us?

It is a question of devoutness in our awareness of the church. The question of our awareness of the church turns out to coincide with that of our devoutness – probably as a surprise to many.

¹The “earnest” purpose is called the “earnest and unfeigned” purpose in the Emden edition of the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563. The emphasis on this point is also striking in the Latin translation of the same year. Also compare *Schatboek* (Gorinchem 1736), II 471-474 and 477-480, with reference to 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 John 3:18, Philemon 3:13, 14 and Canons of Dort V, 1. The argument in *Schatboek* is aimed at the perfectionism of the Baptists. In the *Great Catechism* of Ursinus this “purpose” is a function of the Holy Spirit, as such manifesting God’s election (see answers 221, 222, or 222, 223 in the Bouwmeester edition). 



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Synod of the Free Reformed Churches

Hamilton, May 23-26, 2000

On Tuesday, May 23, the delegates to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches joined in a Prayer Service of the Hamilton FRC. This worship service was conducted by the Rev. C.A. Schouls, minister of the FRC in Chatham, Ontario. The text for his sermon was taken from Psalm 93. Following the service, a meeting of delegates was held in which the Rev. N. Pronk led the brothers in a devotional on Acts 15. He worked it out by expressing the desire that by the power of God (Ps 93) the brothers would work together in the same unity and love as portrayed in this passage. The executive was elected and synod constituted. The next morning, in the opening devotions, the Rev. L.W. Bilkes drew the attention of the delegates to the Word of God in 2 Corinthians 5:9 (KJV), "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." In this way the work of this synod was placed on the basis of God's Word, in the framework of God's preserving power, and with the intent desire of being well pleasing to Him. We may thankfully report that this spirit and objective prevailed throughout the proceedings!

Receiving a new congregation

One of the highlights on the agenda of this synod was the application for admission of the Bethel Reformed Church at Monarch, Alberta. This congregation used to belong to the federation of the Reformed Church of America (RCA). After their pastor left, other RCA ministers, whose preaching lacked the experiential emphasis that they had appreciated in their former pastor, served them. During the past two years they had invited ministers of the FRC into their pulpits, which led to a growing relationship with this federation. Through the counsel and advice of the Rev. L.W. Bilkes, minister of the "neighbouring" church at Abbotsford,

British Columbia, a process was started to come to a membership within the federation of the FRC. The congregation first voted to leave the RCA, with the RCA ensuring that the FRC would receive them. After everything was done to make the transition in a decent and orderly way, they now requested admission to the federation of the FRC. After discussing certain aspects in the process of transition, synod unanimously received this congregation into its federation. As the chairman of synod, the Rev. Schouls stated in his word of welcome: this was a first in the history of the FRC over the past thirty years. Upon the reading of Ephesians 4:1-6, singing and prayer, and the public agreement by the delegates with the Three Forms of Unity, the delegates of this congregation were seated as members of synod.

Matters of outreach

The agenda then required synod's attention for matters of Evangelism, Home Mission, and Foreign Mission. The work of the radio ministry of the Rev. N. Pronk was discussed, and the response to it in the various areas. The attention in this ministry will be focussed more and more on Africa, from where the response is overwhelming. The Committee is presently investigating possibilities also to make use of the Internet for outreach purposes. Another successful Home Mission project is pursued on Vancouver Island, in the Cowichan Valley (sixty kilometers north east of Victoria). Since there is no other faithful Reformed witness on the island, the group that is gathering here is composed of members of various Reformed backgrounds. Lately, especially the ministers of the FRC have been rendering services at this place. A retired minister, the Rev. H. VanEssen, worked here during a few winter months. The possibility is considered to call a home missionary for this house congregation,

in order to work toward the institution of a FRC.

Guatemala

For the purpose of discussing the affairs of the Foreign Mission, synod turned into a membership meeting of the Foreign Mission Inc. The secretary and treasurer of this Incorporation were present and the report on the work in Guatemala was discussed. The report presented the many blessings and progress the Lord is granting on the work of the Rev. K. Herfst and his helpers. The meeting accepted a recommendation that the Rev. Herfst and a Board member attend the ICRC conference in Brazil (October) of churches working in Latin America. This way they are seeking contacts, discovering good Spanish books, and making their missionary needs known. One of these needs will be the replacement of the Rev. Herfst in 2002 as missionary in Guatemala.

External relations

For Thursday the executive had set aside synod's discussion of the Report of the External Relations Committee. At this time the chairman welcomed especially the fraternal delegates invited by this Committee. These delegates received the floor to convey greetings on behalf of the federations of churches they represented. For the Canadian Reformed Churches Dr. J. De Jong addressed synod (see speech elsewhere), for the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches the Rev. M. Luimes spoke, the Rev. J. Fergusson of the London OPC represented the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, while the Rev. R. Stienstra spoke on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America. Each speaker received a response from one of the members of synod.

These presentations set the stage for a discussion on the work and contacts of the External Relations Committee.

Most of the addresses had noted the common heritage and confessional foundation among the Reformed churches present. The speakers had stressed the desire for more intense contact and cooperation, and the calling to pursue the scriptural mandate for ecclesiastical unity. In the context of the discussion on the Report and the presence of these fraternal delegates, a discussion then developed on the position and practices within the FRC regarding external relations. The question was raised whether the FRC should be seeking federative unity, or pursue the preservation of its own identity. Even if churches have the confessional standards in common with other federations, should the FRC not observe the existence of a “religion of the confession?” How does this “religion” function, for instance, in regard to the appropriation of salvation, experiential preaching, the struggle of faith, the way the preachers view the congregation, and other distinctives? In other words, is there among the FRC a “will for ecumenicity?” Hence the issue was raised concerning the FRC’s integrity and honesty in regard to the question

whether church unity should be pursued or not.

The last sessions of synod held on Friday, May 26 were witnessed by Dr. J. De Jong. During these sessions, the report of the External Relations Committee was adopted, with synod voting in favour of pursuing “Limited Contact” with the Canadian Reformed Churches. A similar proposal was passed with regard to the Heritage Netherlands Congregations as well as the United Reformed Churches. Various other ecumenical contacts were approved.

Candidate Shoeman examined

The “highlight” of the synod was the examination of Candidate Jack Shoeman, who had completed a course of study at the Puritan Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Candidate Shoeman, a former Guido De Bres High School student, preached a sermon on John 1:35, and was examined in the areas of Old and New Testament Exegesis, Doctrine, Homiletics and Church Government. This session was followed by an extensive personal examination concerning the candidate’s road to the gospel, and to the

gospel ministry in particular. For us, as fraternal delegates, it was interesting to observe this examination and to note how the FRC examiners bring out certain emphases while bypassing other matters. One particularly noticeable gap was the absence of an examination in several important areas of the ministry normally covered in our peremptory examinations.

Summing up

On the whole it was a rewarding experience to be witnesses to this synod and to establish further contacts with the delegates to synod. It was very clear in the discussions and meditations throughout the synodical sessions that the brothers are seeking to live in accordance with the Word of God. We therefore can be thankful for the initiative of the FRC in inviting us to their synod, and we hope that this may be reciprocated by our synod in 2001, and that these contacts may be intensified in the future.

*For the Committee,
Dr. J. De Jong,
Rev. W. Den Hollander*



A word of greeting to the Free Reformed Churches of North America Synod

By J. De Jong

Esteemed brothers!

We were very grateful for your initiative in inviting fraternal delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches to visit your General Synod. We take this invitation as a sign that you wish to further contact and discussion with other like minded bodies in order to promote the unity of the church of Christ in this country. Our hope and prayer is that the Lord may bless our efforts so that a real and tangible unity may be realized through his grace!

You may be assured of our desire to pursue unity negotiations with the Free Reformed Churches. We have a common background and a common

heritage! We live by the same confessional statements, the Three Forms of Unity. Over the years, local discussions have taken place in various localities. We have also cooperated in the area of the training for the ministry, and several of your ministers are graduates of our Theological College. From personal experience, I may say that it has been a pleasure to meet your students, to get to know them and work with them, and (to speak frankly) I was disappointed that our cooperation in this area was recently broken off.

Areas of interaction

In more recent years different areas of discussion and interaction have

been explored. In 1997 we published the pastoral letter of your synod to your membership, because we recognized in it your concern about the danger of adopting the style of the world. We need to warn against the same patterns among our own people. The Statement on the Appropriation of Salvation written by Drs. A. Baars was also published and discussed in one of our magazines. There has been growing cooperation in the magazine for the church’s officers called *Diakonia*. And since 1998, meetings have been held with representatives of our Unity Committee and your External Relations Committee in order to set the ground for more inten-

sive contact on the federative level. The interim reports that we have received concerning these meetings indicate that they have proceeded very well, with a renewed sense of willingness to clear away whatever misunderstandings may have arisen through the years. In all of these things we recognize that we are close with respect to living out our Christian task and calling in the world.

Closer ties in the Netherlands

You are aware no doubt that our counterparts in the Netherlands, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt have been engaged in discussions for the last twenty or so years, but in more recent years there has been a much closer alignment of both churches, a rapprochement stemming from both sides of the discussion. Much greater understanding has been achieved in the issues of the appropriation of salvation, and the way the congregation is viewed. Greater harmony of insight has also been uncovered in the view of the preaching and its applicatory aspects. And from an historical point of view, there is a willingness to acknowledge that the Lord continues to preserve his faithful children and gather his churches also among those who did

not consider it right at the time to join with the Union of 1892.

An incentive

The ever closer ties between our counterparts in the Netherlands should also form an added incentive for us, next to the command and obligation set upon us by the word of Christ himself! The outstanding issues between our federations should not form an obstacle for us in the pursuit of federative unity. We value your contribution to Reformed life in this country, we value your commitment to maintain God's infallible Word, and uphold the confessions of the church. Does not Christ call us to share our gifts and work together as one body? May He bless the efforts of our mutual committees entrusted with the task of discussing these matters, and the efforts of all our local churches involved! May He also bless your church life, both on a federative level, and in your local communities. May He also guide you in your deliberations in this assembly and so lead you by his Spirit and Word that this assembly, too, will stand as a contribution to the greater unity and solidarity of God's people across this great country, and around the world. 



On July 3, 2000, General Synod West-Albany 2000 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia will be convened.

On July 5, 2000, the churches in Brazil will gather at their first General Synod in Brazil, in order to begin a federation of Reformed churches in Brazil. The new federation will be known as Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (I.R.B.).

Change of address as of August 1st, 2000:

Rev. A.J. Pol

Box 2090

Carman, MB R0G 0J0
email: ajpol@canrc.org

Declined the call to Smithville, Ontario:

Rev. R.A. Schouten

of Abbotsford, British Columbia.

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Contracta Northern Ontario held in Elora on Thursday, June 22, 2000.

1. On behalf of the convening church at Elora, Rev. J. Slaa welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting in the Christian manner.
2. The credentials were examined and found to be in order.
3. Classis was constituted; J. Slaa was appointed chair, R. Faber clerk.
4. The agenda was adopted.
5. The church at Guelph requested that Rev. A.J. Pol be granted a certificate of release from his ministerial duties in Classis Northern Ontario,

as he has accepted a call extended to him by the church at Carman-West, MB. The necessary supporting documentation was received and found to be in order. Classis decided to release Rev. Pol from his ministerial duties in the classical district as of August 6, 2000, with the prayer that the Lord will cause Rev. Pol's ministry in the Manitoba classical district to be a blessing.

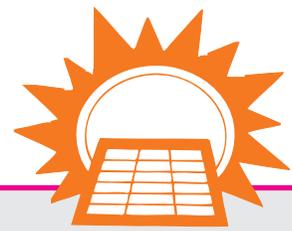
6. The church at Guelph requested that, due to the upcoming vacancy, Rev. J. Louwse (Fergus) be appointed counsellor to Guelph; classis granted the request. The church at Guelph further requested pulpit

supply; classis granted this request and determined an appropriate arrangement.

7. Classis appointed Rev. J. Slaa as delegate to the farewell service of Rev. Pol, on July 2.
8. The question period was employed briefly.
9. Censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not necessary.
10. The Acts and Press Release were adopted.
11. Rev. J. Louwse led in closing prayer.

For Classis Contracta Northern Ontario, June 22, 2000.

R. Faber 



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph 6:10,11).

Dear brothers and sisters:

“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.” In this sinful world that we live in, is this a part of your prayer to God? Every day we do wrong by showing hatred to others, by doing evil things – be it in our actions or in what we say to others. We even do wrong by what we may quietly have in our thoughts (Lord’s Day 44). Often enough it may seem to be such a struggle to fight daily against our sinful nature and all the temptations around us. In Genesis we can read about the fall into sin by Adam and Eve, in which we are also included. Through this fall, the perfectness of paradise was broken. Today we can still see how broken this world is. Sin is everywhere, and this greatly displeases our God.

Old Testament sacrifice

In the Old Testament the people of God had to sacrifice animals to God for all the sins that they committed. Different animals were sacrificed for the different kinds of sins. These sacrifices could not take away sins, they only provided a temporary way to deal with sin until Jesus came to deal with sin forever. How then were the people forgiven in the Old Testament times? God’s people were simply obeying His commands to offer sacrifices, and then He graciously forgave them, when by faith they made their sacrifices. But that practice of sacrificing looked forward to Christ’s perfect sacrifice. The death of Jesus Christ was the final sin offering in the Bible.

How are we then to live, when we are so full of sin? We must use the ten commandments which God gave to his people through Moses. Every Sunday when we are in church, we hear these commandments and how we are to obey them. Through them we are taught how we must live in relation to God, and also, what duties we owe to our neighbours (Matt 22:37-40). Here the Lord clearly shows all of us how we are to live before Him.

Falling away

When we read through the Old Testament, we see how the Israelites would fall away time and again. When everything seemed to be going well in their lives, then it would seem as if they would not need their Saviour in their lives. As New Testament people, do we differ so much? Should we look at the Israelites and think, why did they go their own way when they knew better? Let us first look in our own heart. For is it not so, that often when things go well in our own lives, that we too tend to think that we have everything in our own control? Indeed, we must readily admit, that we are no better than the Israelites of the Old Testament.

We may often question then, why in this life does God have the ten commandments preached so strictly? Let us look at what the catechism says in Answer 115: “so that throughout our life we may become more and more aware

of our sinful nature, and therefore seek more eagerly the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ. Second, so that, while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God’s image, until after this life we reach the goal of perfection.” Through all this we may be thankful that our God is a merciful God, who forgives us our many sins. God takes delight when we daily turn to Him in prayer and humbly ask Him for forgiveness. As it says in Micah 7:18-19, “You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us: you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” Therefore through the death of Jesus Christ we are set free from the law of sin and death because Christ has fully paid for all of our sins. In this life here on earth that is so filled with sin and temptation, we may still have to face physical hardships and maybe even death. When Christ returns again, our sinful bodies will be resurrected to be like his, that is, without sin, to live in glory forever.

*The Lord has dealt with us in great compassion,
Not punished us according to transgression.
High as the soaring heavens, without end,
So great His mercy is to those fear Him,
And He the sins of all those who revere Him
Removes as far as east from west extends.*

Psalm 103:4

Birthdays in September:

8th Marsha Moesker

PO Box 164, Carman, MB ROG OJO

11th Mary Vande Burt

c/o Fam. W. Togerez
32570 Rossland Place
Abbotsford, BC V2T 1T7

14th Jerry Bontekoe

c/o Anchor Home, 361 Thirty Road
RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B0

25th Greg Aikema

7118-192 Street RR 9, Surrey, BC V4N 3G6

29th Paul Dieleman

3 Northampton Street, Brampton, ON L6S 3Z5

Congratulations to you all on your birthday. Marsha will turn 23, Mary will turn 44, Jerry will turn 36, Greg will be 12, and Paul will be 31. We hope you all will have an enjoyable day with family and friends, with the blessing of the Lord in this new year. Till the next time:

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman

Mailing Correspondence:

Mrs. C. Gelms

548 Kemp Road East, RR 2

Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2

Tel.: (905) 563-0380



Borderlines . . . Yes or No?

Should churches chart out specific territories and draw boundaries around them? How should boundaries, if so placed, be enforced? These are recurring issues in our church life which repeatedly surface from place to place, especially in those areas where there are high concentrations of our people. In an editorial in the Australian church magazine *Una Sancta*, Rev. W. Van der Jagt presents the case for observing boundaries. His arguments are worth thinking about:

Is it necessary that the churches have geographical boundaries? Would it not be better that the members of the church make their own choice in finding a church where they feel comfortable and at home? In the Metro churches it would not be a real problem. The distances are not that big that you can't cover them. In the Albany and Tasmanian situation it would even be easier. The churches are that close together that for this reason the geographical boundaries are not really necessary.

And yet, the synod of 1936 pointed to "the rule that everyone should belong to that church, within the district in which he is civil resident." The synod of our Dutch sister churches held in 1990 has emphatically reaffirmed this agreement. The basic assumption of our Church Order is that each church has its own district. The Church Order doesn't say it in so many words, but it simply makes the assumption that there are boundaries. Many articles of the Church Order are based on this so-called "territorial system." Think, for instance, of our attestations [Art. 59 CO] and of the fact none of the ministers "shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church" [Art 4 CO]. Intrusion upon the office of another in another congregation is regarded as such a serious and gross sin, that it is one of the grounds

for the suspension or deposition of an office-bearer! [Art 77 CO].¹

The district of a local church can be one city or township. It can be a region with more than one town, or it can be a part of a city, for instance, one area of a city. It's important that the boundaries between the local churches are clear. The churches together and the classis have to take care that the boundaries are clear to all. In the last classis when I was a minister in the Netherlands, Classis Appingedam, the yearly church visitors even had to ask whether the geographical boundaries between the churches were clear to all. This is the basic assumption within the Reformed Churches: There are geographical church boundaries!

Stick to the boundaries

Now that our point of departure is that there are boundaries, the logical consequence is that we have to stick to the boundaries. This applies to consistories, office bearers, church-members and prospective members. This is also the silent assumption of the church order. Think, for instance, of the articles of the church order regarding church discipline. During the history of the church it became necessary to make this more clear. It is no longer obvious that it has to be like this. There are communities with a different system. The Dutch Reformed Church (De Nederlands Hervormde Kerk) and the (Synodical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (De Gereformeerde Kerken [synodaal]) have accepted, next to the "territorial system," a "categorical system" (i.e. the members of a congregation belong to one "category," e.g. students) and have the so-called "perforated church boundaries." This means that everyone is allowed to be mem-

ber of a congregation wherever the person likes to go. In practice even the more orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken) in the Netherlands tacitly adopted this system as well. Quite a few members of their congregations will travel on Sunday to visit a worship service where they feel more at ease. What can be the reason that we have to reject these systems?

There are quite a few reasons why we have to stick to the adopted Reformed "territorial system." I will mention the most important ones:

1. As a matter of course we will start with the Word of God. In the Old Testament there were not yet local churches next to each other, although even in that situation the elders of Israel fulfilled their calling in every city. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, "church" and "nation" were separated. We hear of local churches with geographical boundaries and we do not hear about "categorical" churches. In the congregation of Jerusalem the "deacons" had to take care of all the members (Acts 6:1). The New Testament always speaks about a church in a certain place. Remember the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev 2,3). Titus receives the mandate to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5), and not in a circle of friends, age group, social class or family.
2. The church is a communion of saints – not just on Sunday in attending the worship services, but the church is a communion seven days a week. For this reason it is important that you live as close as possible together. This is only possible in the "territorial system."
3. This goes together with another aspect. The oversight and care of the office bearers as stewards of the house of God is vital in the church of God (Acts 20:28). The best way to

exercise this supervision is within fixed geographical boundaries.

4. The Holy Spirit gives to the church a diversity of gifts (1 Cor 12:4-11). He composed the church in this way that through this diversity of gifts “the members should have the same care for one another,” so that when one “member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” The Apostle adds: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Cor 12: 12-31). The geographic boundaries are an important means to spread the gifts fairly and to prevent one-sided compound congregations.

5. The “territorial system” is very clear as well: everyone knows where he or she stands. If someone moves to a certain area, the member involved and the congregations as well know to which church they belong. This prevents an unworthy tug-of-war between congregations to keep or get certain families or members within their boundaries.

6. And, probably the most important argument, we believe that the Son of God gathers better his church (Lord’s Day 21). He does this by his Spirit according to the eternal counsel and providence of God the Father. The Triune God allocates a place and gives us a specific place. If you leave it to people and give them a free choice then the result will be that they come to a point that they see the church as a kind of club which one is free to join or not. It is a matter of a sound consciousness what the church really is. We are not choosing our brothers and sisters, the Lord has done this for us!

Dangers

On top of all this, strict maintenance of the territorial system is a powerful and sound weapon in the struggle against some very real dangers that threaten the church:

1. To start with, there is the danger of what I call a “consumer mentality” as well. The church can be degraded to a spiritual “fast food shop” and become a supplier of spiritual food and rites cut down to human size. What man likes becomes more important than what the Lord says. The church however is not a supplier of our own preferences. She is our Mother (Gal 4:24; 2 John 1).

In 2 Timothy 4:3,4 we find the warning that “. . .the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” The local church boundaries serve as a life buoy that prevents us from going astray. In the “territorial system” we are not tempted to look for a congregation where the minister and office bearers are more casual and where discipline is not exercised as it ought to be, or where the consistory loses track of the dealings of a previous consistory.

It is also important to point to the next generation. How do we teach our children the difference between the church where the Lord gives us what is really necessary and a fast food shop where we can get what we like?

2. Linked to this is the danger of “individualism.” It would be a bad thing if out of three neighbours A, B and C, one would go to church X, the other church Y and the third one would attend the worship services in Z. It would be bad for the church and our society; it would destroy the mutual care and commitment and it would take every sense of responsibility of the church members away. The Lord has said that we are called “. . . to walk worthy of the calling with which we are called, with all lowliness, and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:1ff).

3. A bigger distance in kilometres, while it is not necessary, threatens active involvement. On Sunday it will not be too bad, but during the week active involvement asks more energy. The parents have to attend meetings, children have to go to catechism instruction and clubs. We are not allowed to avoid the social activities of the communion of saints. The care for each other will certainly suffer.

4. If we do not stick to the “territorial system” the unity of the churches will inevitably break up and the churches will grow apart, as soon as we accept the system of “perforated” boundaries. We already have the sad examples of the

Dutch Reformed Church and the Christian Reformed Churches (in Holland, JDJ). Within these communities each group of believers has its own “branch” or “position.” This will severely damage the spiritual unity of the church and the spreading of the gospel.

5. As a result of all this, everything can end up in an unspiritual and unscriptural competition or rivalry. The youth will go to churches where the minister is a little bit more casual, does not wear a black suit, or talks more popularly. The people who have studied at university will go to a church where the minister challenges their intellectual capabilities. Other churches are ageing or will suffer from a lack of “executives.” “Church shopping” will increase and the weaker members of the congregations will suffer immensely.

6. And last but not least, if there are difficulties, the members are more easily inclined to avoid these difficulties by moving to or worshipping in another church instead of solving the problems in a spiritual way. The Lord however, has said that we have to be “. . . like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil 2:1ff). And therefore he adds, “Let nothing be done though selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest but also for the interests of others.” In the end, accepting the local boundaries is a matter of faith!

And of course, to a certain extent all these dangers can become a reality in our “territorial system” as well. As a member of a local church you can have a “consumer mentality” as well. It’s also possible to move for contestable reasons. Even the distance to the local church can be a hindrance to care for each other as it is desirable. But this does not alter the fact that if we do not stick to the geographical boundaries, it will soon get worse.

Exceptions

Rev. Van der Jagt also allows the possibility for exceptions to the rules:

Does this mean that it is really impossible to have exceptions to “the rule of 1936” that we have to stick to our boundaries? That is not the

way it is! The situation we live in is often more complicated than you can cover in one rule. However, in all these cases let it be clear that these are exceptions and nobody can use a previous decision in a particular case as an argument that the consistories involved in another situation have to make exactly the same decision. Let the consistories – considering everything involved – regulate these things in good harmony.

A reaction

I am sure the reader will sense that some of these arguments weigh more heavily than others. We should also remember that as a separate federation of churches, we are not bound by decisions of our sister churches in the Netherlands, or anywhere else. However, I believe Rev. Van der Jagt is correct in noting that the Church Order presupposes some sort of territorial division. I would rather say that the Church Order, reflecting Scripture, ordinarily ties the manifestation of the church to a specific geographical location.² Churches are normally described as local, or belonging to a specific re-

gion, province or country. Hence the Church Order thinks in terms of specific localities with a certain defined geographical extent.

However, Rev. Van der Jagt also highlights the need for caution in the way boundaries are applied. Using the arm of church discipline is rarely a wise way of solving or handling border line questions. So in general agreement with Rev. Van der Jagt I would offer a few suggestions:

Let the boundaries that are drawn as much as possible respect the natural and civil boundaries that have been set out. For example, members living in one city where there is a church should not be required to attend at a location in another city.

Churches within cities can form their own kinds of distinct cooperation (sharing the bulletin, and so on). While we may have our misgivings with the Presbyterian approach of putting a group of churches under one presbytery, and may also dispute the scriptural foundation for this, somehow the scriptural model of one church in one

city should speak to us in such a way that it conditions our way of dividing churches and their areas. I would suspect that closer forms of cooperation can be established between churches of one city than, say, churches of a whole classis. Recall that under the older (pre-war) Dutch system, large city churches were divided into wards. That had its own problems, but did acknowledge the special proximity people share living in one city.

Whatever forms of cooperation are developed, consistories should be encouraged to develop careful agreements and have these maintained in good understanding and harmony. There are always exceptions to any rule. Pastoral considerations can play a role. But let a fixed policy be maintained. Is this not a part of doing everything “decently and in good order” (1 Cor 14:40)?

¹ Note that the Australian Church Order has a slightly different numbering than our own, JDJ.

² See F.J.A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, (London, MacMillan and Co., 1908), 116-118, as quoted by H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht* Vol I, (Kampen Kok, 1928) 61. 

Official opening ceremonies of Redeemer church building in Winnipeg

Impressions from Allard Gunnink

First a new congregation, then a new minister, and finally a new church building or a meeting place, as some prefer to say. On June 9, 2000 at 7:10 p.m. the moment had come. The Lord withheld the rain until later that evening. Two members of the Redeemer congregation, Mr. and Mrs. Len Toet, belonged to the house congregation in Winnipeg many years ago. They were at hand to uncover the cornerstone. The sound of velcro was heard, the white cloth rolled down, and the words “This stone will be a witness.” (Joshua 24:27) appeared. (I hope that someone is going to ask why the words “against us” were not included. There is lots of space on the stone. . .)

The official program was continued inside and the some 450 in attendance enjoyed a very commemorative program. Two of the organists took turns in accompanying the singing on the new Allen organ. Pastor VanRaalte kept an eye on the proceedings. He explained the text on the cornerstone. If the stone could talk, may it tell that this building is used to the glory of God when the congregation comes together in worship and when other activities take place in it. He reminded us that the Lord holds us accountable in the use of this gift.

The ceremony was also Bills’ night. Mr. Bill Vanderlinde thanked the project managers and sub-trades. Mr. Bill

Nobel received the symbolic key from him, and he, in turn, thanked the Building Committee members for the numerous hours which were spent to complete the project. Mr. Nobel said that this building is not perfect; not everyone is satisfied. The perfect building will be on the new earth – the New Jerusalem.

Before Mr. Bill Gortemaker introduced honoured guests, he read article 36 of the Belgic Confession about the civil government. The first guest was Mr. Bill Blaikie, Honourable Member of Parliament. After he offered his congratulations, he noted that it is not easy for Christians to live in this secular world and that the



Sign in Transcona.



Mr. and Mrs. Toet unveiling the stone.



Redeemer church building from the outside.



... a look inside.

Gospel is relevant for the public square. Next was City Councillor Shirley Timm-Rudolph who noted that it is good to see that a place for worship is built in the community.

Rev. Jonker of the neighbouring church (about three km to the west) commented on the tasteful (according to his wife) colours and expressed the desire that the truth may be proclaimed every Sunday. Rev. Moesker of Carman East observed that the baptismal font, the pews, and the Lord's Supper table all face the front, which puts the Word, the pulpit central. Mr. Kees Brouwer passed on a message from Carman West: "That the Name of the Lord may be praised in this building." Rev. Folkerts of the Providence United Reformed Church spoke about the foundation which holds up the building and he expressed the desire for unity between the churches.

Finally, the builders spoke. After completing the project one must stand back in humility, one of the two brothers of GRG Construction said. He thanked the volunteers and commented on the commitment shown by all those involved in the project. They presented a beautiful, leather bound NIV Bible.

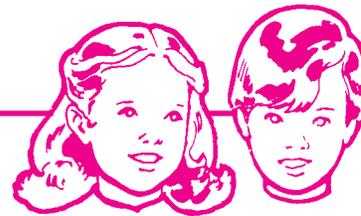
Mr. Ken Doerksen of the Winnipeg Organ Centre gave a short introduction of the organ. He used a variety of registrations and introduced the audience to a fraction of the organ's options. It was a pleasure to listen to the beautiful sound of the Renaissance organ. Mr. Doerksen made this remark: "This organ must lead the congregation in singing praises to God, but it can be used for different functions too."

What is a special feature of the building? For your reporter it is the brightness and the space. For others it may be the colour scheme or the organ or the shape of the building or may be even the padded pews which are so comfortable. When you travel through Winnipeg or visit this special city come and see for yourself. However, it is only a building. To attend services in a functional, attractive building is a gift, but to worship and to hear the Word of God being preached is the greatest gift. The words of Psalm 100:4 (*Book of Praise*), sung at the end of the ceremony, were fitting:

The LORD is good, and evermore
His love and mercy will endure.
All generations He will bless
In His unchanging faithfulness. **C**

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Ahh! Holidays!! Do you have many plans to do lots of things that you can do? Helping Dad and Mom, camping, fishing, boating, staying at home are just a few of the suggestions I can think of. In this edition, I have added some fun things you can do with painting and other things. I hope you really enjoy them.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

UNSCRAMBLE THE ANIMALS

by Busy Beaver Rhonda Wiersma

CWO	_____	KOYDEN	_____
ARBE	_____	SORHE	_____
IPG	_____	RMWO	_____
EBZAR	_____	LGSU	_____
EETANPHL	_____	GPIUENN	_____
ISFH	_____	EESPH	_____
OWS	_____	AKY	_____

Here's an activity that would be fun to do outside, where it doesn't matter if you make some mess.

BUBBLE PAINTING

HAVE READY

- Powder paint or dye
- Dishwashing liquid
- Bowls or plastic containers
- Drinking straws
- Paper



GET SET

Put some dishwashing liquid into a separate bowl for each colour. Mix enough paint with a small quantity of water and add to dishwashing liquid to make a strong colour.

GO

Put the liquid and keep blowing until bubbles rise higher than the sides of the bowl. You can make a fabulous print of your bubbles by placing a sheet of paper gently on top of the bubbles without breaking them. Repeat this last step for each colour. Dry painting flat.

You could also try painting a picture around your bubbles print with a paint brush and paint.

... more next time.

Countries of the world

Here's a puzzle for which you may have to use an atlas to find the different countries.

S P O S Z Y N A M R E G S K L
 Y N E E U D V L W A M N P D P
 A S C T I N D O N E S I A N Z
 W A N A P A J K X R Q G I A P
 R U A T I L U I X O T E N L O
 O D R S A L C B C K D R E N R
 N I F D E O A I N D I A G I T
 E A F E G H I R A N H S Y F U
 D R I T Q A R I T A L Y P J G
 E A A I S S U R K S L A T A A
 W B E N G L A N D M U L D F L
 S I N U M O N G O L I A O R P
 Q A D N A L I A H T N M R I S
 B R A Z I L T U Z A I R E C V
 L I B Y A N I H C H I L E A W

Find:

- | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| Canada | Australia | Holland | United States | |
| England | Africa | China | Saudi Arabia | |
| Japan | Malaysia | Indonesia | Russia | Niger |
| India | Italy | Spain | France | Libya |
| Germany | Portugal | Brazil | Chile | Mexico |
| Norway | Finland | Sweden | Thailand | Korea |
| Mongolia | Egypt | Iran | Iraq | Zaire |



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Jennifer Harink. Would you write to me again and tell me what your address is, because I don't think you put it on the envelope correctly. Having four brothers must be rather busy, I think. I can imagine you would like to have a sister sometimes. I hope you have a really fun holiday, Jennifer. Write again, won't you?

AUNT BETTY

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