

# Clarion

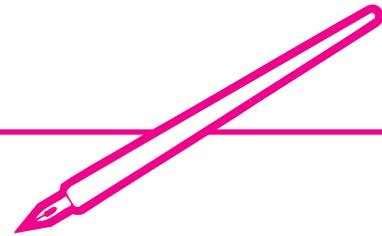
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
VOLUME 49, NO. 24 NOVEMBER 24, 2000



*Inauguration of the church  
in Edmonton, July 9, 1950*

Numbers

10:1-10



## Showing hospitality

### Hospitality

Has this ever happened to you? You are far away from home and the Lord's Day arrives, so you make plans to worship. You seek out an affiliated church, or failing that, a church that is doctrinally close to your own. You arrive on time, take part in worship, are edified, and then it is time to leave. As you exit the building, you expect that some of the regulars will introduce themselves to you. Perhaps someone will even invite you over for a coffee and a time of fellowship.

### The cold shoulder

Only it does not happen. As you leave the building no one greets you. All around you there are people standing in little groups talking to one another; nevertheless, no one approaches. You wait a little while in order to give them a chance. After all, you are a stranger among them and it may take them a moment to notice you. Alas, nothing happens. No one comes up to you. No one talks to you. Some even stare at you from a distance – you can just feel it. So what do you do? You go back to your hotel room, disappointed and lonely. Sometimes you are even left wondering about just what kind of a church was that anyway. Has this ever happened to you?

It has happened to me, and I know that it has happened to others. Why, the ironic thing is that at times such a church may even spend a lot of time and energy on evangelism. Obviously, what they need is someone to remind them to start with the most basic thing of all, namely hospitality.

*The matter of hospitality runs like a cord all through the Scriptures.*

### A minor matter?

Of course, you may be of the opinion that this is a matter that belongs to the minor and insignificant things of life. If that is how you think, however, then I would urge you to have another look at your Bible. For what is striking there is that the matter of hospitality runs like a cord all through the Scriptures.

Take, for example, the Old Testament. How often are the people of Israel not commanded to deal compassionately with the strangers and aliens among them? It is even an issue that you can find back in the law of the Ten Commandments. Among those who should benefit from the Sabbath are also the "alien(s) within your gates" (Exod 20:10).

When we turn to the New Testament, we see that this subject receives just as much press. The apostle Paul writing to Timothy about which widows should be put on the official list of widows gives certain qualifications and one of them is "showing hospitality" (1 Tim 5:10). Likewise, when he writes about candidates for the office of elder he cites "hospitable" as being one of the requirements (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). By the same token, the apostle Peter, writing to God's scattered people, tells them to "offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Pet 4:9). Then too, there is the apostle John who in speaking about "brothers, even though they are strangers to you," says "we ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth" (3 John 5, 8). Finally, and this may be the most interesting reference of all, the author of the letter to the Hebrews states "do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:2).

Need more be said? Surely, the biblical givens are quite clear. Hospitality is not an optional thing. It has to be an integral part of the life of the people, the elders and the church of God.

*Is your church cold and cliquish, or is it warm and welcoming?*

### A hospitable God

Yet, we may still be wondering why this is so. Why do the Scriptures make this into a theme and elevate it to a requirement? It would be my contention that our God wants a hospitable people because He himself is such a hospitable God. What do I mean by that? Well, consider his Word once again and what do you see? You see a God who does not wash his hands of mankind after the fall into sin. Rather He goes out of his way to seek man and to call him back to himself and to his service. You can see this especially in the sending of his very own Son Jesus Christ.

Why does the Father send Him? He does so in order to gather, defend and preserve a people for himself. Like the father in the Parable of the Lost Son, God the Father longs for the day when all of his children will come home (Luke 15:11-32). He wants nothing better than to show them his divine hospitality.

### Showing hospitality today

So much for the theology. Now what about the practice? Surely, if we want to be numbered among the obedient



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$39.00	\$52.00
International	\$60.00	\$90.00

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 Advertisements: \$11.75 per column inch

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Agreement No. 1377531  
 Publications Mail Registration No. 09907  
 ISSN 0383-0438

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children of God, we will not neglect this duty of showing hospitality. If you are an elder in the church, realize that it is one of the requirements of your office. If you are a child of God, examine your own life to assess your personal level of hospitality. If you belong to a local congregation of Jesus Christ (as we all do) determine how well the body functions also in this regard.

Indeed, if the former is the case, you have your work cut out for you as you try to raise the temperature and change bad habits. If the latter is the case, you also have work to do in order to keep the flames of hospitality burning.

Should a stranger happen to visit your church, how would he or she be received? Better yet, should an angel visit, how well would he be received? 

*What’s inside?*

During the past year, a number of Canadian Reformed congregations celebrated their fiftieth anniversary since their institution. Rev. W. B. Slomp reflects over the significance of our history during the past fifty years. Included in this issue are also reports of anniversary celebrations in Edmonton and Neerlandia.

Our church order states in article 52, “The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God’s Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed.” This same article speaks about worshipping twice per Sunday. Rev. G. H. Visscher writes about the importance of a second worship service and the blessing of catechism preaching.

The editorial is by Dr. J. Visscher. He deals with the down-to-earth matter of practicing hospitality in the church of Jesus Christ. It is something that we should all take to heart.

The column, “Education Matters,” is written by K. Sikkema. Securing and maintaining Reformed education has never been an easy struggle. But clearly it is something worth fighting for. With God’s blessing, the struggle brings unique privileges.

In this issue of *Clarion* we have a press release of Classis Pacific West and two letters to the editor.

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# Why Catechism preaching in a second worship service?

by G.H. Visscher

Recently Rev. G.H. Visscher participated in a forum in a local Christian Reformed Church where the second worship service was being discussed. He was asked to present the case for the historic practice of having a second service wherein the Catechism would be the guide for preaching. Here follows an adapted version of his address.

## Why a second worship service?

Why a second worship service? Why catechism preaching in this second worship service? Those are the two questions that need to be answered in all kinds of Reformed churches. From the outset it is good to realize that struggles in this regard are not just a specialty of some Christian Reformed Churches. While I have the pleasure of serving a congregation which attends almost as faithfully in the afternoon as in the morning, the problem exists in some of our congregations as well – especially, it seems, in the more urban areas. But what I mean is that when you study the history, you find that the phenomenon is not new. Even in the Reformation period it was a challenge. I read about one church which announced the catechism service three times only to find that no one showed up, and another church in which the only listener to the catechism sermon was the caretaker.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it has consistently been maintained by Reformed ecclesiastical assemblies that it is a good thing when alongside of services wherein a particular text of Scripture is proclaimed, there are also services wherein the catechism is used as a guide for the preaching. Why? A number of principles can be highlighted here.

## A longstanding Christian practice

The first is that catechism preaching is a longstanding Christian practice.

Due to a need to educate members of the Reformed churches in Reformed doctrine, the second service has always had somewhat more of an educational character and purpose. This is seen in the fact that in the early Reformation period, time was taken out for direct catechetical instruction of the youth with the recitation of answers and the like. Yet, it needs to be realized: preaching of the Word with the Catechism as a guide was not an afterthought. Catechism preaching was practiced from the beginning, and intended right from the time the Catechism was written.<sup>2</sup>

*Catechism preaching is a longstanding Christian practice.*

Rather than being merely a specialty of the Dutch Reformed churches, it was the practice of the Lutherans, Zwinglians, and the Calvinists.<sup>3</sup> The British churches even received the advice that ministers negligent in catechism preaching should be punished and members absent from the catechism preaching should be fined.<sup>4</sup> (How's that for a sure fund raiser!) Some have defended the idea that actually the practice predates the Reformation since preaching on the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments (three sizable parts of the catechism today!) was already known in the Middle Ages and the early church. Cyril of Jerusalem is known to have preached on the Apostles' Creed back in 350 AD. In principle, of course, that is the same as catechism preaching.

## Systematic presentation of Christian doctrine

The second principle is that this longstanding Christian practice of catechism preaching is beneficial because, when it is done well, it is a systematic presentation of Christian doctrine. This was obviously its first purpose. Members of the Reformed churches generally knew what they were against and reforming from. But they needed positive and systematic instruction in the full truth of the Scriptures and received this when the Catechism was used as a guide for the preaching. When Martin Luther was appalled at the lack of knowledge among the common people, he found the right answer in catechism preaching.<sup>5</sup>

If we want to have mature congregations that are not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, this kind of systematic preaching is ever so essential. The fact that very often in history it has been the Arminians who opposed catechism preaching, should tell us something, shouldn't it? In an age when we are being bombarded with all kinds of erroneous ideas, there is something very wholesome about receiving regular instruction in the Christian truth.

Can we really say that we know these doctrines so well that we do not need this instruction anymore? To be sure, it takes some creativity and hard work for ministers to come up with different approaches to the Lord's Days and keep it interesting time and again, but it's well worth the effort!

For this purpose, in my judgement, one does not need to stick just to the Heidelberg Catechism. While the other confessions are not designed for this purpose, they certainly can be beneficially used in this manner as well. Consider, for instance, the rampant

prevalence of Arminianism in so much of Christianity today. Would it not be beneficial then to use the Canons of Dort for the same purpose of systematically teaching biblical truth?

And what about the whole matter of ethics? Are we and our youth so aware of the biblical positions regarding a whole host of moral and ethical issues which arise today? Is there not a lot of value then in regular preaching on the Ten Words of the Covenant? Furthermore, is catechism preaching not a way to ensure that, as Paul put it, the "whole counsel of God" is proclaimed (Acts 20:27 RSV)? When a minister always gets to choose a text, it is easy to ride hobby horses and ignore less favourite subjects. But this one-sidedness is prevented when there is a system such as in the Catechism.

On this point, it is good to note as well, how wonderfully personal the catechism is. The words "doctrine" and "system" often suggest today that the material is cold and impersonal. But preaching does not need to be impersonal or apersonal when the Catechism is our guide. Think of the way the words "I," "me," and "my" are used here and you know that this material – these doctrinal truths – are meant to be brought home to the hearer and impressed upon their very hearts.

### Preaching of the Gospel

A third principle is that this long-standing Christian practice of catechism preaching is beneficial because it is after all *preaching of the Gospel*. It is not really just preaching on a human document; when it is done properly, the Catechism is used as a window into the Scriptures and as a means to expound the various themes of the Scriptures. Then it too is preaching of the Gospel. And – need I remind you? – there is nothing today more powerful than true and faithful proclamation of the Word. Think of Lord's Day 25 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "where does this faith come from? From the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel . . ." Here too the Catechism reflects the truth of Scripture. Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 1 that he is eager to preach the gospel precisely because he is convinced that "it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes . . ." (Rom 1:15,16; cf Rom 10:17). Paul does not say here that this gospel *can* be the power of God. He does not say that this gospel *has the potential* to

become the power of God. He says: it is the power of God. The gospel, you see, is not advice to people, suggesting to them how they can lift themselves up. It *is* power. And it is not too hard to imagine that it is *power* when we remember that it is the Word of God that is being proclaimed.

*It is good to note as well, how wonderfully personal the Catechism is.*

The Word that came forth from the mouth of God was the power that created the world in the first place, was it not? God spoke and light appeared out of darkness! God said let the dry land produce, and it brought forth trees. The whole universe derives its existence and reality from the speech of God. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth" (Ps 33). The word that comes from the mouth of God will not return to Him empty (Is 55:10-11). The Lord Jesus too is the divine Word become flesh . . . . When He says "Rise!", paralytics rise, take up their pallets and go home (Matt 9:6). When He says "Peace! Be still!" even the wind and the sea obey Him and become calm (Matt 8:26). When He *cries out* with a loud voice to a dead man who cannot hear, then there comes Lazarus . . . out of the tomb (John 11:43)!

*Genuine thanksgiving to God for his work of grace in our lives never leads us to worship Him less but always more.*

The true preaching of the Word of God is in one line with that; it is not the proclamation of a pipe-dream after the style of the politicians who come with their endless speeches about promises they seemingly have no way of keeping. Nor is it the proclamation of a doubt after the style of so many. The Word of God can call things into existence, change the old, undo what was, bring forth the new. It can bring light out of darkness and joy out of tears. It is this Word of God – evocative, dynamic, creative, saving, sin-annulling, death-

defeating, healing, life-giving – which the church proclaims. Today too the Spirit of God uses this means to change hardhearted stubborn sinners and make them soft and pliable beings that can be moulded in the hands of God?

How does it come about? Only when those in the pulpit and those in the pew realize that the holy place in the church of Christ is the pulpit; it is from there that God speaks and it is from there especially that He works in the midst of the congregation. And I would stress: the pulpit and the pew must realize this. Those in the pulpit must feed the flock a wholesome measure of God's Word, confident in its value, and those in the pew must hunger for that very Word; where one of these two are missing, there are serious problems in the church.

To be sure, if the pulpit is just another platform or lectern, if the pulpit is just another man's private stage, then we might just as well remove it and find something better. But churches are called to do things God's way, are they not? And preaching is the God-appointed way for our age!

### A worship service

Fourthly, *also the second service with its catechism preaching is a worship service. And the Lord is worthy of all worship*, is He not? If we are enthralled with the Lord God, will we not want to do more than just the bare minimum in terms of worshipping Him? When we make allowances for average sleeping times, we are left with about 119 hours in a week. Where do we ever get the notion that we can spend no more than one of those 119 hours in corporate worship? Every week begins with a Lord's Day, does it not, and not just a Lord's hour? If anything more than an hour a week is too much, it begs the question about the degree to which we desire to spend eternity in a place of worship such as the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 4:10; 7:11; 11:1; 15:4; 21).

The truth is: a genuine thanksgiving to God for his work of grace in our lives never leads us to worship him *less* but *always more*. What does it say about us then when we are seeking to get away with the bare minimum? What does it say about this generation when a football or a hockey game is never too long, but a worship service almost invariably is? Besides, we should not isolate the sermon from the act of worship;<sup>6</sup> the people of God do not come

together just to consume another sermon. They come to worship the Lord! Thus when the people of God are too complacent to do that for more than one hour a Lord's Day, some serious questions need to be asked and, probably, some serious admonitions administered. Those are the kind of arguments one would bring in here.

Nowadays it seems popular to bring in all kinds of other means in which growth in biblical knowledge and Christian fellowship can be attained. It does not make sense of course to argue against these when they have such laudable goals. But the overriding ques-

tion has to be then: *why do these things so often have to take the place of a second service in which the proclamation of the Word takes place?* If they are desirable, in accordance with God's Word, and bring honour to Him, can they not be added to that service or to some other occasion?

Reformed churches have always given the proclamation of the Word primacy of place. Worship must have priority. Churches that let go of this longstanding Christian tradition will discover in the long run that it has not been in the best interests of their dedication to the Lord our God.

<sup>1</sup>See N.H. Gootjes, "Catechism Preaching (Part 1)" *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches 1993*, 147; cf D. Sinnema, "The Second Sunday Service in the Early Dutch Reformed Tradition," *Calvin Theological Journal* 1997 321.

<sup>2</sup>This is evident from the preface to the first edition of the Catechism (January 19, 1563), and from a letter of Zacharias Ursinus (Gootjes, "Catechism Preaching I," 138; Sinnema, "The Second Sunday," 303).

<sup>3</sup>Gootjes, 140-143.

<sup>4</sup>Gootjes, 149.

<sup>5</sup>Gootjes, 140-1.

<sup>6</sup>See C. Trimp, "Preaching as the Public Means of Divine Redemption," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* Volume 10 1999 52-3. 

## *Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken*

Glorious things of thee are spoken  
Zion, city of our God;  
He, whose word cannot be broken,  
Formed thee for his own abode:  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,  
Springing from eternal love,  
Well supply thy sons and daughters,  
And all fear of want remove:  
Who can faint, while such a river  
Ever flows their thirst to assuage –  
Grace, which, like the Lord the giver,  
Never fails from age to age?

Blest inhabitants of Zion,  
Washed in the Redeemer's blood;  
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,  
Makes them kings and priest to God.  
'Tis his love his people raises  
Over self to reign as kings;  
And as priests, his solemn praises  
Each for a thank offering brings.

Saviour, if of Zion's city  
I, through grace, a member am,  
Let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in thy name:  
Fading is the worldlings pleasure,  
All his boasted pomp and show;  
Solid joys and lasting treasure  
None but Zion's children know.

*John Newton*

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# Fiftieth Anniversary of the Canadian Reformed churches

By W.B. Slomp

## First institutions

In April this year the Church at Coaldale (formerly Lethbridge) was the first to celebrate the fact that it was instituted fifty years ago. Edmonton, Neerlandia, and Orangeville (formerly Georgetown) did the same in July and August. The Canadian Reformed Churches as a federation came into existence on November 15, 1950 when the first Classis was held in Lethbridge. At that first Classis the request was also made that a church be instituted in New Westminster (later Surrey), which took place in the month of December of that same year.

Why celebrate these events? Do we not in this way pay undue attention to what man has done? Well, not if we use these opportunities to give thanks for all that the Lord has done and to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. For indeed, such a celebration has no significance if we do not first of all acknowledge that the Son of God, by his Spirit and his Word, gathers his church. The Lord wants us to remember his faithful dealings with us in the past, and how we have and must continue to respond to Him. And so, let us take a brief look at what took place, and see how those issues are still relevant today.

When immigrants from the liberated churches in the Netherlands came to Canada they were concerned about three things. In the first place, they saw the need to establish contact with each other; secondly, they had to deal with their relationship with other existing Reformed churches; and finally, they were concerned about their position in their newly adopted country.

## Mutual contact

Since the government expected immigrants after the Second World War to work on the farms, many of them came to the Lethbridge area where the farms and the work were plenty. They sought each other out, and by the time the group had grown to forty-eight members, a church was established. Five weeks after the institution two members were delegated to go into northern Alberta to initiate contact with brothers and sisters in Edmonton, Barrhead and Westlock. After a second visit in June, the church at Edmonton was instituted. The brothers and sisters from Barrhead and Neerlandia, who were initially members in Edmonton, established a church in Neerlandia within a few months. In the meantime, the brothers and sisters in the East also got together and instituted a church in Georgetown.

*The Lord wants us to remember his faithful dealings with us in the past.*

Even though the members were scattered far and wide, the means of transportation poor, and the roads often in bad condition, this did not stop them from seeking one another out and gathering together. It did not stop them from establishing a church federation either. For that meant that delegates from the East and the West would have to travel long distances in order to meet together. However, for the sake of the

unity of the faith it was deemed important enough to travel these distances.

## Contact with other churches

When that first Classis, consisting of eight delegates from the four instituted churches, was held in Lethbridge, several matters had their attention. In the first place they wanted to formalize their relationship with the liberated churches in the Netherlands. It had only been six years since the tie with the (synodical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands had been severed. The synodical churches had imposed the unscriptural doctrine of presumptive regeneration upon the office bearers. No difference of opinion was allowed. Those who refused to subscribe to that doctrinal statement were deposed. This was a hierarchical ruling which denied the integrity of the local church, and thus went against the Scriptures and against the Church Order. It clearly showed, as history has also shown, that the synodical churches in the Netherlands were on the wrong track.

It is quite understandable that those immigrants who had gone through the Liberation wanted to maintain their tie with the liberated churches. They recognized that their history could not be denied. Those who initially joined a Christian Reformed Church soon discovered that the Christian Reformed Church sided with the synodical churches in the Netherlands, and that they saw the Liberation as an act of disobedience. Anyone who spoke or did anything that showed agreement with the Liberation was denied the right to do so. Sermons from liberated ministers were not allowed to be read, their ministers

were not allowed on the pulpits, and the issues could not be discussed.

And so, contact was taken up with the liberated churches in the Netherlands, seeking correspondence with them. The eight office bearers in Lethbridge composed a letter to which they received a positive answer the following year in September. From now on there was full correspondence between the two federations.

At the same time these Canadian Reformed brothers also realized that they were not just an extension of the churches in the Netherlands. They indicated that by changing their name from *Free Reformed Churches* to *Canadian Reformed Churches*. Thereby they showed not only their independence from the Netherlands, but also their existence on Canadian soil.

Another thing that first Classis did was to write to the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. For there were also those who had been thinking about joining, or who had joined the Protestant Reformed Churches. These churches had been in existence since 1924 when the Christian Reformed Church made its errant view about "common grace" binding. The Canadian Reformed brothers felt an affinity with the Protestant Reformed Churches. However, the feeling was not mutual. The Protestant Reformed Churches did not accept the Canadian Reformed brothers and sisters with open arms. They believed that the liberated brothers had a wrong view of the covenant and election. Consequently, they wanted to bind the Canadian Reformed Churches to a "Declaration of Principles."

Classis in its letter made a plea not to implement their decision regarding the imposition of the "Declaration of Principles." These Canadian Reformed brothers, rightly so, did not want to be bound any further than the Scriptures as they are summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Their plea, however, fell on deaf ears. And so the Canadian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed went their separate ways.

### On Canadian soil

Already on that first Classis the use of the English language during the worship services was discussed. The brothers noted that they were now in an English-speaking country, and that soon there would be those whose mother tongue was no longer Dutch. Further-

more, they noted that the majority of the members of the church at Neerlandia who liberated themselves from the Christian Reformed Church, had lived in this country for some twenty to thirty years already, and therefore some had difficulty following the church services in the Dutch language. The need for the singing of Psalms in the English language was also discussed.

*They were not just an extension of the churches in the Netherlands.*

A second Classis was held on April 18, 1951. At that point there was still no minister in their midst. However, they were looking forward to the arrival of the Rev. J. T. van Popta who had accepted the call to Edmonton. On that Classis it was decided that during emergency situations an elder would be allowed to administer the sacraments, that the mission work in the Netherlands be supported by them, and that the Classis be split between East and West. Subsequently, also the issue of labour unions was discussed. Although the desire for better economic conditions was one of the motivations for immigration, it was recognized that economic gain should not be achieved at all costs. They knew themselves to be responsible to the Lord and that therefore they had also to submit themselves to those whom the Lord had put in authority over them and to conduct themselves over against them in a Christian manner. Greediness and rebellion are not Christian virtues. The Lord only blesses those who are obedient to Him.

*The Lord only blesses those who are obedient to Him.*

### Thankfulness

Indeed, the Lord has blessed us greatly. We are well integrated into Canadian society, and participate in just about every sector of society. Many have well-established farms, businesses, and careers. We come together in beautiful church buildings, sing our Psalms in the English language, have



Called by the church of Smithers, British Columbia.

**Rev. P.G. Feenstra**

of Owen Sound, Ontario.

\* \* \*

Declined the call to Smithville, Ontario:

**Rev. J. Visscher**

of Langley, British Columbia.

our children educated in parental Christian schools, and have our own Theological College. We also continue to seek contact with other Reformed Federations of churches.

Yet, struggles remain. How thankful are we? In spite of great economic gain, do we see God's hand in this? Or do we take it all for granted? Are we like unbelievers who expect such blessings? For they see it as their right.

What about our Reformed heritage? Do we continue to see the need for faithfulness to God's Word alone? Do we show our thankfulness to the Lord for keeping his church faithful by not wanting to add to or take away from his Word? What about our Christian schools? Do we now take them for granted? Do we now think that other alternatives are just as a viable? Where are we going?

An anniversary is a time for reflection and looking ahead. During this year, and the following years as more churches also celebrate, let us reflect on what the Lord has done, and where He wants to take us as his covenant people. As new immigrants fifty years ago we needed each other, not so much because of common interest and ancestry, but mainly because of a common Reformed heritage. And we still need each other today. We need one another's fellowship, one another's encouragement, and one another's warnings when we go down the wrong track. Oh yes, God gathers his church. But He also requires continued faithfulness. To Him alone be the glory. 

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# Fiftieth Anniversary celebration of the Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton

By D.S. Postma

## Opening

The celebration was started informally at 7:00 pm on July 7th, 2000 as we gathered in the foyer at Immanuel church building for a coffee social and to look at a pictorial history of the early years. At 8:00 pm sharp we opened the official part of the celebration. The church auditorium was full. Brother C. Veldkamp opened with the reading of Ephesians 4:1-14 followed by prayer and song (Hymn 40). Next a speech was given by Br. J. Werkman

on our church history in Holland, going all the way back to the days of John Calvin and Martin Luther. Multiple reformations have taken place in Holland. Many of us or our parents experienced one in 1944. Brother Werkman concluded, "We may celebrate our 50th anniversary as a church by the grace of God. We should not become complacent."

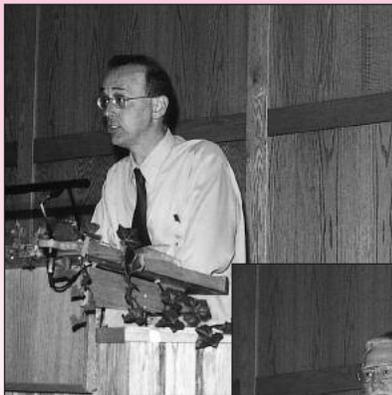
## Special guests

We then sang Hymn 60:1-5. After singing praise, br. Tako van Popta spoke

on behalf of his mother, who was also present. He gave some interesting tidbits of information that Mrs. van Popta remembers about those first years, when we had 3 seasons: mud, dust and snow! Rev. J.T. van Popta much enjoyed his pioneering work as the first minister of our churches in Canada, in spite of the 3 seasons.

Next, Rev. D. DeJong, who came all the way from Dordrecht, Holland with his wife, spoke about God's promise that there will always be a church of Jesus Christ, until He comes again. He reminisced about the days before and during his years as our pastor and teacher (1967-1977). He stated his wish that we should stay with Dort, i.e., our confessions. Rev. M. van Beveren, our emeritus minister, stated that we should not become proud of our achievement, but know it's only God's grace and nothing else. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. If it depended on us, we would have destroyed the church. The Lord has used us as his instruments, us and our fathers and grandfathers. Let us remember that we are only alive in Him and can do nothing good without relying on his guidance.

Rev. E. Kampen spoke next. Our church here was instituted by faith in the Lord, not by human might and power, or through a succession of men (ministers and others). The Lord has sustained his church here through the work of his Spirit. May He continue to bless his church here in Edmonton. Rev. K. Compton spoke on Canadian Reformed Christian Education and urged us to stay the course. He was impressed with our "reaching out" to his very small congregation of the Free Reformed Church of Scotland. Rev. W. Pols of the Orthodox Reformed Church gave thanks for our fifty years as a church in Edmonton. As in Ephesians



Br. Tako van Popta



Rev. D. DeJong



Rev. Van Beveren



*Rev. and Mrs. D. De Jong, Mrs. Van Popta, Sr. and her son Taco.*



*Most of the gathering.*



*The crowd outside on the school ground enjoying magic tricks.*



*Rev. M. van Beveren, Mrs. DeJong, Rev. D. DeJong, Mrs. K. Noot*

3:14-21, "I bow my knees before the Father." We then sang Hymn 41. Thereafter our choir, along with the school (PICS) choir, sang for us.

### **Early history and growth**

Br. J. P. Kuntz then gave us some history, especially the years 1950-1980. Approximately seventy-five people were present from around Alberta in 1950 at the institution. The first building rented was the Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church at 92 Street and Jasper Avenue. The church then contained a variety of people from all over Holland with different customs and dialects, which took some getting used to. The first classis was held Nov. 15, 1950 with the following churches present: Barrhead/Neerlandia, Georgetown, Lethbridge, and Edmonton. The first budget called for \$50 per week for the pastor and \$15 per week for the manse. The total budget in 1951 was \$6000.00. It was then decided on April 10, 1951 to call a minister. The call was extended and accepted by Rev. J. T. van Popta. He arrived June 26, 1951 with his wife and two daughters. Rev. van Popta was installed by elder A. W. de Leeuw.

The first years were difficult for the members as time and money were dearly needed. New meeting places constantly had to be found due to continued growth of the church. By April of 1954, one sermon every three weeks was in English. Many requests for mission support were received from Holland. Finances were very limited. Council meetings were often very long and late into the night. In the late 1950s, much growth was experienced. Property was acquired for our first church building in 1958. It was in use by January 1, 1961 but the main upstairs auditorium was not finished until 1963. The total cost for the land, the building and the labour was \$81,000.

### **Subsequent ministers**

Rev. J. T. van Popta received and accepted a call to Cloverdale, B.C. and moved there in 1966. Rev. D. DeJong then accepted the call to Edmonton in 1967 and came in August that year. During his ten years in Edmonton there was much growth in the congregation. In December of 1977 he moved to Calgary. Rev. S. DeBruin came to Edmonton in December of 1978. When Edmonton split into two congregations in 1981,

he became Immanuel's minister. At the time of the split the total membership in Edmonton was about 700. Providence then called Rev. M. van Beveren. Rev. DeBruin left Immanuel in early 1987 and Rev. E. Kampen accepted the call in May of 1988. He stayed until July of 1992. Rev. G. A. Snip came to Immanuel in August of 1995 and is still there today. Rev. M. Van Beveren became emeritus on September 1, 1988. However he still keeps active. He still enjoys teaching the young people of the congregation. Rev. R. Aasman came to Providence on August 1, 1990 and is still there today. The membership of the two congregations still stands at over 900, of which approximately 560 are confessing members. This growth is also a reason for thankfulness, solely to our heavenly Father.

### Congratulations

Congratulations were received from the churches of Carman West

and Taber via letter, and as well from the Mulder clan, one of the original families at the institution. After the letters were read Rev. G. A. Snip spoke. He stated that it is the task of the church to proclaim the mighty deeds of God, to praise Him because of his wonderful deeds. We are here now, not to honour man but God. We bow down before Him in thankfulness. Christ is in control though the evil one does try his utmost to eliminate Christ's churches. We must continue to use our gifts to his honour and glory, and be ever on guard. We can and may look forward to his great day. Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!

After Rev. Snip spoke, Br. H. Klaver spoke on behalf of our school society which grew through many struggles. Rev. E. J. Tiggelaar spoke on behalf of classis and the Church of Barrhead, Br. L. Terpsma spoke on behalf of Neerlandia, and Br. K. Leffers spoke on behalf of Coaldale. Br. Jeff Kuntz involved the audience in a game which investi-

gated who arrived when in our Edmonton churches. Sr. Pauline De Haas gave us a humorous recollection of how we got our first church organ. We collected bottles and her dad, br. Bert Koning, who was in charge, became known as the "bottle king." Bottles did indeed pay for this first organ. Sr. Sonja Van Bostelen spoke on behalf of the Women's Society.

A "thank you" was given to all who came and participated to make this evening enjoyable. Rev. R. Aasman closed the evening program with us with the words, "the Lord has been so good to us, our hearts are filled with joy!" He led in prayer, after which we sang Psalm 126.

Saturday was a day of fun-filled activities. In Sunday's sermons, the Lord's blessings were also remembered. Why do we exist as church for fifty years? In order to praise and glorify our God.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*



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## Fifty years of God's faithfulness

By W.B. Slomp

### An anniversary in Neerlandia

As the people began to file to their seats in the Fellowship Hall early in the evening of August 25, the mood was festive. Beautiful piano music filled the air, the stage was decorated with colourful flower arrangements, and the banner on the wall told us what we had come to celebrate: on August 6th, the Neerlandia church was fifty years old.

Promptly at 7:30, brother L. Terpsma opened the evening with the reading of Psalm 68 and we joined in the singing of stanzas 1 and 8 (the theme chosen for the evening). After a few opening remarks, he welcomed the special guests among us.

Brother John VanAssen was called upon to review the history of our church. He highlighted all the important events that marked the ongoing reformation of the church from the 16th century to the present. The latest of these was the Liberation from the CRC which led to the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church of Neerlandia. The ministers that served the Neerlandia congregation were H. Stel, G. Ph. Pieffers (minister emeritus of the church at Coaldale), C. Van Dam, A. De Jager, and G. Wieske. Rev. W. B. Slomp has been our pastor since 1994.

Brother Henry Stel shared some anecdotes with us about his family's stay in Neerlandia. Rev. Stel had ap-

proached his family's move here with a sense of adventure. Mrs. Stel, however, came with some apprehension. Henry's father, not at all a handyman, managed to build his own furniture and add a kitchen to the manse. His mother had a dislike for Neerlandia's mud, and the brother who had dared track it into the house found himself the recipient of a stern lecture! As brother Stel congratulated us on behalf of his family, he also urged us to remain faithful.

Rev. Wieske explained to us that a time-span of fifty years may seem like a long time to some, while to ninety-one year old brother Norman Terpsma it may seem short. Minutes turned to hours when the dear minister was

“volunteered” to lend a helping hand as a cow had trouble calving, and during a four-hour hike through dense underbrush in a quest to see some of Neerlandia’s “exotic” animals. We may rest assured, however, that the Lord will not let his people down (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. Tiggelaar of Barrhead reminded us that the churches of Barrhead and Neerlandia were one until 1961. Still today, co-operation exists between the two churches, as evidenced in pulpit exchanges, for example, and the operation of the Covenant School. Through his work as our counsellor in our years of vacancies, Rev. Tiggelaar has come to know us well. He urged us all to “stay the course.” Thank you, Rev. Tiggelaar, for all the work you have done in our midst over the years.

Rev. T. Hoekstra of the Emmanuel URC echoed the sentiment that tonight’s anniversary was a celebration of God’s faithfulness. He concluded his message with the words of the benediction found in Hebrews 13:20 and 21.

Yes, indeed, the growth we have experienced in these fifty years is all God’s doing, Rev. Slomp reminded us yet again. Members come in various shapes and sizes, but we have in common that we are all sinners in need of salvation. We have only a small beginning of the obedience required of us. The future may be filled with many uncertainties, yet this is sure: the Lord will always remain faithful.

Letters of congratulations were received from Dr. C. Van Dam and Rev. A. De Jager.



*Rev. W.B. Slomp*

The churches of Calgary, Coaldale, Edmonton Immanuel, Edmonton Providence, and Grand Rapids also congratulated us.

Members of three study clubs reminisced about past and present membership, activities, and venues of their respective societies. The Ladies’ Aid performed an enjoyable skit for us. The “Rejoicing Voices” choir added to the festive mood with a wonderful selection of songs, performed by members past and present. The Student Band and a male quartet provided more musical entertainment.

In his closing remarks, brother Terpsma thanked the many people who had contributed to the celebration.

Before we joined in the singing of Hymn 50 and Rev. Slomp closed with us in prayer, he drew our attention to the banner of the wall. It features the first two Greek letters of the name of Christ intertwined in a familiar symbol, the letters alpha and omega, referring to the Lord, who is the First and the Last, and a reference to Psalm 68:8 (rhymed). And so we were reminded one last time that it is the Lord, who:

Provides for us and day by day  
Upholds us by his power. C



By K. Sikkema

## Secession and Reformed education

After the Secession of 1834, our Dutch forebears fought an eighty year battle for freedom to have Reformed schools. Faced with unacceptable public schools, strong beliefs about the meaning of baptism for education, concerns regarding vaccinations, and an intolerant and unjust government, Seceders often opted for home-schooling – or endured jail terms and fines. We want to appreciate their struggle for unity between church, home, and school.

### Church, school, and state

The Dutch Secession of 1834 was the church's return to the truth of the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to the freedom to worship Him accordingly. Under the church order of 1816, Dutch Reformed ministers were free to deny, for instance, that Jesus was the divine Son of God who died to pay for our sins. Rather, people like Dr. Hofstede DeGroot emphasized how loving and enlightened the man Jesus was: he would even die to show how disgusting sin was. And they gloried in humanistic principles which the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619 had rejected. Meanwhile, ministers were not free to oppose modernism, necessitating the Secession.

Modernist ideas took root in schools also. The 1806 School Act, a product of French revolutionary rule, determined that schools should now train in "all Social and Christian Virtues," that denominations should each teach their own doctrines, and that teachers must be trained to promote (religious) tolerance. In the 1840s, Groen VanPrinsterer (a prominent Christian politician and historian) recognized that public schools could maintain a Christian character for some time. By then, however, even the presence of the Bible in a public school had

become intolerable and forbidden, as the revolutionary ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood increasingly determined its character. In 1834, a zealous school-inspector publicly reprimanded a teacher for having "offensive" Bibles in his classroom. In 1835, foreigners were skeptical that Dutch schools could teach "Social and Christian Virtues" without the Bible or a clearly Christian foundation, or be Christian without offending Jews. Around 1850, a teacher in Zaandam believed it was still acceptable to read the Bible with her class of only Protestant children. To save her job, she had to stop the practice. Tolerance only extended to modernists.

*It was a matter of principle that our forebears could not accept state education if the state church (Babylon) had to be rejected.*

### Hoksbergen, Kok, and Takken

Elder Hoksbergen published a letter about the nature of "neutral" education in 1835. In it, he wrote:

Where there are only apostate state schools, the parents are forced by the spirit of the age . . . to sacrifice their God-given children to that Molech; but may the Lord keep me and many of my countrymen from doing so. . . . The doctrine of Christ has been banned from these schools, and they get drunk on the fables of antichrist . . . and the spirit of lies, the old serpent, jinxes them into believing that the doctrine of

Christ is too hard for children to understand. The schools are just as depraved as the churches, and should we stay out of (the churches), but send our children to (the schools)?

Elder Kok of Dwingelo commented on a new picture Bible for children, which ignored the fall into sin and redemption in Christ:

Parents . . . can you ultimately expect that God will take your offspring into heaven, if you let them walk on the road to hell? . . . But especially, you parents, who . . . for Christ's sake have left Babylon, who publicly profess Christ, and who have taken up His cross . . . following the command that is holy, just and good – see to it that your children will not be taught any differently than what Paul wanted to know: Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

It was a matter of principle that our forebears could not accept state education if the state church (Babylon) had to be rejected. There had to be unity of home, church, and school.

Taking to heart what Hoksbergen, Kok, and other leaders had written, Grietje Takken taught some neighbourhood children in December, 1837. In January 1838, she was condemned to three days in jail and the costs of the court process.

### Smilde's struggle

Teacher Douwe VanderWerp of Houwerzijl was among those who worshipped with Rev. DeCock in nearby Ulrum when the Secession started – much to the chagrin of Mr. Pietersen, his principal. In the classroom, Douwe did not hide his Reformed faith, but taught on biblical grounds. Meanwhile, Dr. Hofstede DeGroot, Ulrum's former minister and now public school-inspector,

anonymously published a brochure to promote his modernist views in the schools. The brochure attracted Douwe's wrath, and, with a foreword of Rev. DeCock, he issued a scathing rebuttal of its "heresies, destructive to the soul" and its "recommendations of most honourable, scholarly, non-honourable and stupid attackers of the church and congregation of the Lord," challenging the author to a public polemic. Hofstede DeGroot didn't like this, and threatened Pietersen with dismissal if he didn't terminate Douwe. Pietersen complied.

Concerned parents in Smilde (some fifty kilometres to the south) now hired Douwe. He started on Monday, November 10, with twenty students in the hastily arranged classroom in a barn; on Tuesday, there were forty; and on Thursday, the mayor, the town clerk, and the policeman came for an investigation. On Friday, the mayor outlawed the school as a "rebellious act against the existing order," as it was started without legal permission. On November 21, thirty-six people petitioned him to grant permission to have their own school on the following grounds:

- a. When we brought our children to be baptized, we promised before God and the congregation, that we would teach them or have them taught in the true doctrine of salvation; and as we are convinced that in the schools of today the true doctrine is not impressed on the children, we cannot send them there without sinning against God; for God's command tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6).
- b. Of course it is inconceivable that we allow our children to grow up like savages who know nothing. To prepare children for their office is the calling of the parents, and only education that prepares them for the pure service of God is acceptable. For that service they also need to learn how to read, write, and cipher.
- c. We can't vaccinate our children without defiling our consciences before God, and we wish to obey God more than men. . . . give us therefore the necessary authorization, or show us the way to obtain that freedom (to have our own school); . . . in order that we can have our children taught as God

commands and as our consciences require, and that we may not violate our solemnly sworn oath before God and the congregation. ( Since 1823, cowpox vaccination was mandatory for schoolchildren. KS) Parents had to pay public school tuition for all children between ages five and twelve, regardless of attendance. This injustice particularly affected those whose consciences were bothered about the cowpox vaccination and the philosophy of the schools.

*Are we prepared to make the same sacrifices they did for the meaning of the covenant and baptism in Reformed education?*

The parents in Smilde petitioned the mayor; they approached the somewhat sympathetic provincial governor; they even asked the king, but the last word (on May 26, 1835) was that they would not receive freedom to have their own school, or be exempt from paying tuition. On December 10, 1834, Douwe had been sentenced to a fine of Dfl. 50 (or one month in jail), and Dfl. 2.39 for court costs. Two-thirds of the fine must be donated to the public school of Smilde!

### Struggle and freedom

Despite repercussions, several Reformed schools were established and subsequently vanished during this decade. Many were set up by consisto-

ries, as diaconal schools. Complying with the 1806 School Act, some of these would only teach doctrine, catechism, or Bible. In a clandestine fashion, others also taught different subjects. But even a suspicion of this (apart from utilizing often unqualified teachers) could lead to prosecution. In parliament, Groen VanPrinsterer spoke up for the injustices done to the Seceders and others. In 1840, he pleaded (unsuccessfully) that parents receive the freedom to teach their children according to their consciences, and not be forced to send them to unchristian state schools. In 1846 and later, the desire to have unity between home, church, and school motivated Rev. VanRaalte and many others to emigrate to North America. The Dutch constitution of 1848 officially gave freedom of education, in 1889 a new law stipulated some government support for Christian schools, and in 1920 all schools received equal funding.

Our forebears persevered to gain privileges unique in the world, and were blessed. Are we prepared to make the same sacrifices they did for the meaning of the covenant and baptism in Reformed education? Do we properly justify our ease with vaccinations? How are we a community that stands together on matters of bringing up the next generation of God's people? And if the government offers funding, should we accept it? When does a blessing turn into a curse?

Chief sources for this article were: H. Bouma, *Een vergeten hoofdstuk*. Enschede, 1959; J. Boersma and J. Kuiper, *Geschiedenis van het Christelijk Lager Onderwijs in Nederland*. Amsterdam, 1904. 

## BIBLES NOT WELCOME

Officials of Willis school district near Houston say it has no policy prohibiting the reading of Bibles during free reading time, or to seize Bibles from students. However, middle school students Angela and Amber Harbison were sent to the principal's office for bringing Bibles to school. Their teacher allegedly seized the Bibles and "trashed" them in the principal's waste basket. The principal had called the Bibles "not welcome" on school property. The girls are now being home-schooled, and have launched a lawsuit against the school-district. (*World Magazine*, June 17, 2000).

# Fraser Valley Annual League Day

## June 2000

Bright and early on Wednesday, June 21, 2000, more than 200 ladies met at the Canadian Reformed Church building in Abbotsford, for the 37th Annual Women's League Day. On behalf of the Chilliwack Women's Society, Mrs. Andrea Lengkeek welcomed us. She was looking forward to listening for a change in peace and quiet, with no distractions from little children, or did the ladies sitting beside us distract us even more? It was wonderful to be able to greet each other as sisters in the Lord, and spend a day together for the purpose of strengthening our faith, and the bonds of the communion of saints. This was to be a day dedicated to God's honour and glory as we listen to and talk about his word. The theme for this League Day is "Peace from the Enemy." The speaker for the morning session, Mrs. Fiona Jansen of Willoughby Heights, was introduced to us by Mrs. Jane DeGlint. Although she is a busy mother, expecting her fourth child in the near future, she volunteered to be the main speaker. Her speech was about Psalm 69 and titled, "Prayer for Deliverance in the Messianic Age."

Although the tune of Psalm 69 is familiar to us, its words are not. It is an imprecatory Psalm, in which David calls on God to destroy his enemies eternally. This Psalm is quoted often in the New Testament. Fiona went through the Psalm showing how David is Christ's mouthpiece, teaching us about his terrible suffering for our sake. The curses David uses are truly awful, and we may ask how we, in the year 2000 should view this Psalm. Some may ask how we can ask God to, "Blot Thou their names out of the book of life" when Christ told us to love our enemies? Should we distinguish between the Old and New Testaments and claim that those days are over? Not at all! The reason for this is that the New Testament revelation is not different but fuller. The Old Testament teaches us to do good also to our enemies and Christ cursed those who re-



Morning (left to right):  
Jane DeGlint, Fiona Jansen,  
Janey Van Seters, Andrea  
Lengkeek, Gertie VanLuik.



Enjoying a catered lunch.

jected Him. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we actually are praying for the destruction of God's enemies. Rejection of Christ is the key. Imprecatory prayers are powerful weapons so we must be careful before we pray them. They may only be used by covenant keepers, especially those in God-given places of authority who meet with rejection of this authority, or those who suffer from persecution. It must be done in a proper manner (not man-centred) with pure motives and the desire that God's will be done. The

*The goal of this prayer should be the enemies' repentance.*

goal of this prayer should be the enemies' repentance. Some might wonder if it would be wiser never to pray an imprecatory prayer, but Fiona showed that these prayers have a beneficial place. They can help to control our anger, and prevent us from taking vengeance ourselves. They show faith and trust in God. She reminded us that we are on a battlefield fighting against evil. One of our weapons is prayer, including imprecatory prayers. We were encouraged to take up these weapons of faith and pray, "Thy kingdom come."

During the introduction there were several breaks as we sang many of the verses of Psalm 69. After a lively discussion of imprecatory psalms and prayers, Janey Van Seters read "Meditations on Psalm 139," a poem she wrote that brought this Psalm close to our daily lives. Everyone enjoyed the lunch catered by Walter Togeretz. Lynnden chaired the afternoon session and Mrs. Debby Lodder introduced the afternoon speaker, Mrs. Joanne Berends, who spoke on Psalm 15, "Know your Enemy." It teaches us to do right, and turn away from evil. God is holy, and only those who habitually walk in integrity, righteousness and holiness may dwell in God's house. Joanne encouraged the mothers among us to sing Psalms every day at home with our families. In the Psalms we have been given much. They fit every occasion and should be read often. Let's sing and study them. Once again, we learned a lot from each other during the discussion that followed. We learned how special the Psalms are, and resolved to enjoy them more and more. Everyone involved in making the day so special was thanked, especially our organist, Mrs. Cheryl Fennema. We went on our way rejoicing at God's goodness.

For the Chilliwack Women's Society  
Marian VanLaar

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

## Dear Editor,

Studying the Word of God is a serious matter. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:13: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me." It was disappointing, therefore, to read in the September 1st *Clarion* on page 390 that Rev. J. Visscher would advise the reader, "If you want a free translation or paraphrase, make careful use of the New Living Translation." Are paraphrases of holy Scripture now considered the words of God to be used profitably by God's people?

Rev. Visscher also advises the use of the American Standard Version of 1901 if one wants closeness to the original text. However, this is the version which rendered 2 Timothy 3:16: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable" giving the notion that some Scriptures are not inspired. Is such a bible really trustworthy?

In the end people are left to use whatever they want. Obviously people living in a free society can do so, but how profitable is such advice? If Bible versions all have their pros and cons, then what is the church member to rely on? We are left to trust our own sense of correctness. And finally it should be mentioned that there is still an English Bible which is readily available in nearly any bookstore on the planet, and has been the standard worldwide for more than 300 years. I realize that the KJV is no longer an esteemed version in our midst; nevertheless I found it striking that such a faithful version would not even rate a mention.

Rick Duker,  
Edmonton

## Editor's Comment:

I thank br. Duker for his reaction; however, I do think that he should read what I wrote more carefully. If he does so, he will see that here and there I have qualified my words when it comes to

various translations and their uses. At the same time I am astounded how he can on the basis of one verse, which he in his wisdom thinks is wrongly translated, dismiss a whole Bible translation. If that same standard were applied to his favoured KJV, it would long ago have failed the test.)

## Dear Editor,

### Re. Experiential Meditations

Meditations seem to be in vogue these days. The article "In love with the World" by J. van Popta, in the September 1 issue was another example of this genre. The modern reader of the Bible receives psychological and ahistorical messages that are taken out of their time bound frame work. As such, van Popta writes, "Too many of us are like Demas: in love with this present world" (quoting 1 John 2:15). Without going into the context, van Popta feels free to create a moralistic lesson out of Demas's leaving the church. Suddenly we have to confront ourselves with Demas, as van Popta writes, "Ask yourself, 'Am I in love with this present age?'" However, now the word "age" has replaced "world" as an arbitrary connection is made between 1 John 2:15 and 2 Timothy 4. Are we justified to use these words interchangeably? Would it not be much more interesting to substitute these experiential meditations with some constructive research? Now we are simply left with vague notions about "loving the world." However, if we look at the context of 2 Timothy 4, we might rather say that Demas went back to the synagogue, and not the world at large. The "age" is the old covenantal age, the *olaam hatseh*, which ended in the year seventy with the fall of Jerusalem. We live in the messianic age, the *olaam habba* starting from Pentecost, and thus we can not draw a simple equal sign between Demas and us. Generally speaking, when

Paul refers to the *olaam hatseh* he uses the word *kosmos* and *aioon* (age). The same goes for John. The other word for world used is *oikoemene* (Col 1:6) which refers to the known Roman world and more specifically to the synagogues located there. (For a good explication of these terms, see *Liquidatie der Reformatie*, C. van der Waal, 69) Although these terms are confusing, the important thing to see is that in none of them do we find the Augustinian notion of the world that van Popta uses.

L.A. van Dijk, Abbotsford, BC

## Response from J. van Popta

I appreciate the opportunity to interact with this letter. Paul uses a very specific term in 2 Timothy 4:10: literally, *the now age*. This phrase is used only in two other places in Paul's writings: 1 Timothy 6:17 and Titus 2:12. It is within that context that I wrote my meditation. Let us for a moment also examine the other two passages.

This phrase is translated in the NIV in three ways: *this present world*; *this world*; and *this present age*. In 1 Timothy, Paul speaks of those who are rich in *this present world* (speaking of wealth) and how they are to live: not arrogantly, but rather they were to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous. In Titus 2:12 Paul speaks the appearing of God's grace which trains us to renounce irreligion and worldly passion, teaching us to live sober, upright and godly lives *in this present age*. In the passage in question, Demas has fallen in love with *this present world*. (Though the word *present* does not appear in the NIV, you can find this phrase translated thus in the RSV). When this phrase is compared and contrasted in the various places where it appears, it becomes clear that I have not made an arbitrary connection to 1 John 2:15 at all, as my critic alleges!

When we compare how Paul uses this phrase when speaking of Demas

with the other two occurrences, we can see that it refers to a life not affected by Christian morality and one that is focused on the transient things of this life. Demas obviously has abandoned Paul – left him in the lurch, so to say – and gone back to his old way of life. In the previous verses, Paul has spoken of those who will receive the crown of righteousness which will be awarded to those who “have loved the appearing” of the Lord Jesus. Demas on the other hand, “loved *this present world*.” He has traded in the life of hardship, which came with being a fellow worker of Paul, with the life of irreligion and worldly passion: a love for *this present world*. He has traded love for a holy anticipation of Christ’s return and the age to come, for love of *this present age*.

It is striking that in the context of the three occurrences of this phrase, *the now age*, we can find reference to the future appearing of the Lord Jesus

Christ (1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 4:8, Titus 2:13). Paul is setting a contrast of loving this present age and the transient things of this world, with the rich reward that will come to God’s people when the Lord Jesus appears.

It is clear then, that when Paul writes of *the now age* he is not referring to synagogues, as your letter writer suggests, nor to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Furthermore, (though this is not conclusive evidence) Demas is a Greek name, not a Jewish one. We would not make a first inference that he was Jewish Christian, but a Gentile one.

When we interpret Scripture, we must of course not present moralistic lessons at the expense of exegetical accuracy and constructive research. But this does not mean that when we make pointed application the reader is now “receiving psychological and ahistorical messages.” Moreover, Reformed hermeneutics denies that Scripture is

“time bound.” Rather we interpret the text within its historical framework (the indicative) and then move on to the imperative (how we shall then live). Application is not shoddy ahistorical moralism. Moreover, *experiential* is not flawed by definition. My critic suggests that there is a dilemma between experiential meditations and constructive research. I believe that to be a false dilemma. Good solid Reformed hermeneutics and exegesis should be the basis and groundwork of clear, timely meditations (and sermons) which engage the readers and challenge us to faithful covenantal response to the gospel. Meditations (and sermons) are not commentaries on the text.

Finally, if my critic is correct that I disagree with van der Waal’s interpretation of the pertinent terms and I am instead Augustinian, then I don’t mind having the great church father Augustine to back me up! 

## PRESS RELEASE



### Press Release for Classis Pacific West, held October 5 and 6, 2000 in the Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church, Langley, BC.

1. The meeting was called to order. Psalm 65 was read and Psalm 67 was sung. After words of welcome and memorabilia, the credentials were examined. All the churches were properly represented. Classis was constituted. The following served as officers: Rev. J. Visscher, chairman; Rev. E. Kampen, vice-chairman; Rev. J. Huijgen, clerk.

2. After adopting the agenda Classis proceeded to the examination of candidate W. Bredenhof, missionary elect for the work among the native population in the Bulkley Valley. Satisfied with the results of the examination and after reviewing the documents, Classis admitted br. Bredenhof to the ministry of the Word in the Canadian Reformed Churches and approbated his call from the church at Smithers. He signed the subscription form.

3. Classis also examined candidate D. Poppe, minister elect to the church

at Houston. Satisfied with the results of the examination and after reviewing the documents, Classis admitted br. Poppe to the ministry of the Word in the Canadian Reformed Churches and approbated his call from the church at Houston. He signed the subscription form.

4. Classis dealt with a proposed overture from the church at Langley to General Synod Neerlandia requesting a committee be appointed to study the matter of women’s voting. Classis decided not to support this overture. The church at Smithers requested and was granted pulpit supply one Sunday per month.

5. Reports of visits made according to article 46 of the Church Order to the churches at Houston, Langley, Smithers, Surrey-Maranatha and Willoughby Heights were read and received with gratitude as they indicated that the churches strive to live according to the Word of God. A report for the Auditing of the books of the Treasurer was received. It was decided that future audit reports should be submitted to the April Classis since at that time the Treasurer’s report is also to be submitted.

6. Question period according to article 44 of the Church Order was held. The church at Smithers requested and received advice in a matter of discipline.

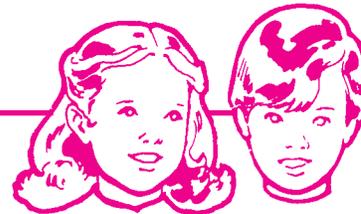
7. Classis appointed the church at Cloverdale as the convening church for the next classis, to be held in Cloverdale either on December 12, 2000 or April 3, 2001, and suggested that Rev. E. Kampen serve as chairman, Rev. J. Huijgen as vice-chairman and Rev. C. Van Spronsen as clerk. Classis appointed as delegates to Regional Synod West, scheduled for December 5, 2000, the Reverends J. Huijgen and E. Kampen, with J. Visscher and C. Van Spronsen as alternates, and elders P. DeBoer and B. Meerstra, with R.H. Mulder, H. Leyenhorst as alternates.

8. After question period and censure, the adoption of the Acts and the approval of the Press Release, those present sung Hymn 57:1,4. Rev. E. Kampen led in prayer. The meeting was closed.

On behalf of Classis Pacific West  
October 5 and 6, 2000  
Rev. E. Kampen 

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Have you thought about what you would like to be when you grow up? Do you want to be a farmer or a builder, a nurse or a teacher? Would you rather be a doctor or an engineer, a veterinary or a scientist? Are you going to do the same as what your Dad does, or are you going to study the same as what your Mom did?

Lots of love,  
Aunt Betty

## December Birthdays

9	Ashley Vanderploeg	17	Melissa Heemskerk
15	Kristen Schoon	22	Kim vanDyk

## Puzzles

### Riddles

- What do you get if you cross a chicken with a cow?  
*Roast Beef.*
- What do you get if you cross a cat with a dog?  
*An animal that chases itself.*
- What do you get if you cross a giraffe with a porcupine?  
*A seven meter hairbrush.*
- What shouldn't you wear on your feet if you hate falling over?  
*Slippers.*
- Why is your bed longer in the night than in the day?  
*Because when you get in it, you add two feet.*

### CAN YOU SAY?

- How many books are there in the Old Testament?
- How many books are there in the New Testament?
- What are the names of the first and last book of the Old Testament?
- What are the names of the first and last book of the New Testament?
- How many books in the Bible begin with the letter 'E'?
- How many psalms are there in the Book of Psalms?
- Which is the shortest Psalm?
- Which is the longest Psalm?
- Which of the Gospels has the most chapters and which the fewest?
- What is the book before and the book after Judges?

### ORGANIZERS

People who get things done are usually good organizers. In the Bible there are examples of people who organized. Match the person with what he organized.

- Jethro, Exodus 18:9-24
  - The twelve, Acts 6:1-7
  - Jesus, Luke 10:1
  - Jacob, Genesis 33:1-4
  - Joshua, Joshua 6:1-7
  - David, 2 Samuel 24:1-2
  - Moses, Exodus 13:17-20
  - Gideon, Judges 7:4-7
  - Nehemiah, Nehemiah 2:17-18
  - Paul, Acts 15:40
- a suggested Moses organize judges to help him  
b organized his family when he went to meet his brother  
c organized a census of the children of Israel  
d organized seventy followers in pairs  
e organized deacons to assist them  
f organized for the defeat of Jericho  
g organized soldier for battle by using water  
h organized a mission trip  
i organized the Israelites for a trip into the wilderness  
j organized the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall

### True or False

- "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" is the first verse of the first Psalm.
- There is no book in the New Testament beginning with a letter later in the alphabet than 'T'.
- Joseph had a dream about seven thin cattle eating up seven fat cattle.
- Moses led the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan.
- It was at Troas that Paul saw a vision of a man saying "Come over into Macedonia and help us."
- Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had had prepared for Mordecai.
- The widow whose son Jesus raised from the dead came from Zarephath.
- Elias was another name used for Elisha.
- A centurion was a man in charge of a hundred soldiers.
- Mary and Martha lived at Bethphage.

### AUNT BETTY

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