

Clarion

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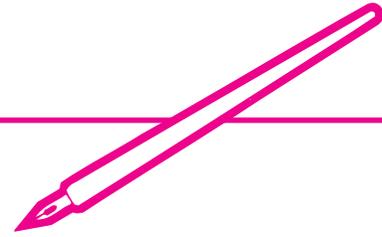


*Educating the Lord's
Special Children*

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. DeJong



Remembering Groen

The year 2001 marks a special anniversary of the life of one of Holland's most important leaders and statesmen: Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer. Born in 1801, Groen's life and work stood at the forefront of the issues and struggles making up the middle and later part of the nineteenth century in Holland and Europe. For the most part he was a man of the book, and retreated to the private life of study and letters. But as a scholar and historian, he wrestled with the issues that shaped the culture and life of his day, and in that sense he can be said to be leader of his age. Further, he belonged to the aristocracy, and spent many years as a member of the House of Parliament defending the Calvinist and scriptural values he had come to love so much through the course of his studies and lectures. He died in 1876, and so this year marks not only the 200th anniversary of his birth, but the 125th anniversary of his death.

Groen's central thesis

Groen is perhaps best known for his lectures on *Unbelief and Revolution* which he held privately to a small audience that regularly travelled to his spacious home in The Hague. Groen later published the lectures and they went through two editions in his lifetime, with many more following his death.¹ They reveal Groen as a thorough and



Groen van Prinsterer

well read scholar, who did not shrink back from tackling the leading issues and *philosophes* of the day, both French and German.

Groen reasoned that all human life with all its special gifts and treasures comes from God.

The lectures grew out of Groen's interaction with the fundamental principles that contributed to the founding of the Dutch national state. As secretary to the king and royal archivist, Groen immersed himself in Holland's constitutive documents, became fervently Calvinist in outlook, and pro-Orange in political persuasion. But underneath all this, ever since his so-called "conversion" to the faith in early 1832, Groen was one who sought to be guided by principles. In fact, the guiding motif of his work represents for him one central *principle*, the principle of ultimate loyalty and obedience to God that God requires from every human being.

Groen reasoned that all human life with all its special gifts and treasures comes from God. All authority and institutions of government are accountable to him. Therefore the whole duty of man is to honour justice and truth as embodied in divine law. The path to wholesome living in a social context begins with faith, which for Groen is uncompromising trust in the one God revealed in Scripture and the gospel promise He has promulgated in the world through his preachers.

From this principle comes Groen's so-called Christian principle of causality in history. Whenever a nation or national grouping turns to unbelief, revolution results. This has been termed Groen's covenantal causality: if one leaves the way of the covenant, he reaps the harvest of violence and revolution. The revolution destroys its own children. The sage said it long ago: "Where there is no guidance, a people falls" (Prov 11:14).

The anti-revolutionary alternative

Groen then set forth what he saw as the only political alternative supported by the gospel: the anti-revolutionary standpoint. That term brings us to the heartbeat of Groen's social and political testament. One who stands with a positive commitment to the gospel message *de facto* must have a negative or antithetical position against the revolution

and its essential spirit. For Groen, the revolution is fundamentally an alternative first spawned in the world of ideas. And although he traced the destructive trail of the outworking of this principle in human life through the nineteenth century, he always went back to what for him was the chief example of idea of revolution spawning widespread havoc and upheaval in the social order, the French Revolution of 1789. That revolution like no other concretely demonstrated how deceptive, how cruel and ruthless in essence those catchy phrases were: liberty! equality! fraternity! – in the end, all that came was a trial of blood that someone once called the natural result of the violent assault that broke such a horrifying wound in the heart of Protestant Paris on the night of the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572. The revolution *destroys* its own children.

The Christian – Historical alternative

Although Groen towers above his contemporaries in the nineteenth century as a committed anti-revolutionary, yet he sought at the same time to develop and promote what he saw as the positive Christian political alternative, which he termed the *Christian-Historical* alternative. What did it say? If I may paraphrase him somewhat, Groen's essential point is: although we are not conservative traditionalists, yet the Christian gospel along with its social, legal and cultural implications has embedded itself, through the special

What's inside?

When Reformed people speak about the political and social-economic realm of life, the name of Abraham Kuyper usually comes to mind. However, as Dr. J. DeJong demonstrates in his editorial, it was Groen van Prinsterer who devised and set forth the very essence of the anti-revolutionary principle, and that Kuyper built on this and brought it even further. It is a most helpful and relevant discussion also for our situation today.

Rev. P.G. Feenstra writes about the preaching as the means of grace. He shows that this lays a tremendous responsibility on both the preacher and the listener. We have a meditation by Rev. T.G. Van Raalte in which he deals with the topic of "chance." We also have another meditation by L.E. Leefink on the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

It is both a privilege and a challenge to educate the special children whom God has placed in our midst. Dr. C. Van Dam presents the first part of a speech on this very topic. We are grateful that we may all benefit from his insights on this important subject.

Rev. W.B. Slomp had a speech a short while ago on the involvement of office bearers in the area of professional counselling. Sarah Vandergugten took notes of this speech and presents us with a summary. Again, it is an insightful look at an important topic. It is not as easy or simple as it first appears.

This issue also contains a report on Rev. J. Slaa and his family leaving the Church at Elora for a new charge, as well as an update on mission work in the Ukraine, and a Press Release from Classis Pacific-East.

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providence of God, in the history of this world, and the mores and habits of a Christian social order must be built up out of and through the means of those principles as they have been realized in the historical continuity of human existence. In other words, although Groen did not opt for a slavish return to the political order of the late sixteenth century in Holland, he insisted that the reformational principles uncovered in that period must be revived and re-applied in a nineteenth century context. This involved the application of the principles of Scripture in the light of the unfolding of those principles in specific historical situations of past generations, specifically in the period of the great Reformation.

On this point Groen was a firm defender of Christian *isolation*. "In our isolation lies our strength," he claimed, and then confirmed his words by his dramatic departure from his ethical-irenic co-religionists in the evening of his life (1871!). Why would Groen, who normally was willing to work with other Christians, even Roman Catholics, and was often mild and tolerant in his outlook with regard to cooperative efforts with others, suddenly no longer work with the broader Christian conservative party? He began to feel encroached by the spirit of compromise which the conservatives were foisting on the Reformed party. For Groen, cooperation was limited by the *principle*. You could cooperate with anyone, but all in the context of the inviolable and unbending allegiance to the anti-revolutionary principle. On that point a Christian could not give in, not for a moment. The gospel stands diametrically opposed to the revolution, and only by consolidating thought and action around this principle could the Christian alternative have a place in the world. Hence his slogan: *in our isolation lies our strength*.

The revolution destroys its own children.

Groen today

The man most often hailed today, even in the American context, as holding the prospects for Christian revival and reform is Abraham Kuyper.² That in itself cannot be faulted! Kuyper was a great statesman, a brilliant strategist, next to being a principled and towering Christian leader in his era. But Kuyper cannot be understood in the essence of his program without going back to Groen. To be sure, Kuyper brought Groen further. As the strategist, Kuyper, more than Groen, knew how to capitalize even on what Groen saw as the regresses in political and social-economic systems and structures. For example, he knew how to exploit the emergence of humanistically based democratic principles for Christian ends. But it was Groen who devised and set forth to the western Europe of his day the very essence of the anti-revolutionary principle, as a political and cultural viable alternative. Groen was the builder, Kuyper the populist. Groen laid the foundations, Kuyper erected the Christian (i.e., Reformed) nineteenth century house, and so all-pervasive was the influence of that house that it simply could not be ignored in public life, and cannot be ignored even to this very day.

Religion in the public square

We now live in a day when the politicians have done their worst to remove religion from what Richard Neuhaus

has called "the public square." The Christian alternative has barely a voice, although, remarkably, it always resurfaces in the most unexpected channels and ways. The evangelical voice, especially that voice which along with the basic gospel tenets includes an integral communal component, will not be silenced. And the more people try to erase God and Scripture from the public square, the more God himself proves and demonstrates that this cannot be done.

Groen for his part defended the union or close proximity of church and state, that is, such an aggressive cooperation of the two spheres that the government would unvariably live and act in a Christian way, according to biblical principles. That ideal too has long faded from view. His prophesy has only proven to be so tellingly true: unbelief leads to revolution, and the revolution leads to the steady breakdown of all social relationships. In the end even the most violent predator not only gets his day in court (which he should) but he gets to live for the rest of his days in a "luxury hotel" at the state's expense – that is, if he is not released on parole at an earlier date for ostensibly good outward behaviour.

Unbelief leads to revolution, and the revolution leads to the steady breakdown of all social relationships.

We cannot revive Groen's ideals, tainted as they were by an idealism and romanticism that slightly tilted to the side of the Revéil movement so popular in his day. But we can do one thing in remembrance of Groen, and also of those who stood for the same ideal before and after him: we can defend the anti-revolutionary principle. Living as we do in the middle of a godless age, we can speak, act, pray, write *against* the revolution, and *so for* the gospel. Then religion – and here I mean especially *true* religion – may no longer be discussed or even be permitted to be discussed in the public square; but it will have its witnesses, even if they lie slain in the street, Revelation 11: 8. For those who uphold the testimony may die, just as, at God's time, Groen did. But the *principle* itself, the life and community principle for which he lived and stood, *that will never die*. That is the certainty and hope that drives us on.

¹The translator and editor of the English edition of these lectures is Prof. Harry Van Dyke (Redeemer College, Ancaster). In the detailed introduction to the lectures, Prof. Van Dyke has done much work to introduce Groen to the English speaking world, cf. H. Van Dyke, *Groen Van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*, (Wedge Publishing Foundation, Jordan Station, 1989).

²See for example Charles Colson and Nancy Percy, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999). They say: "Abraham Kuyper, a committed Calvinist, saw more clearly than any other modern figure that the battle of our times is worldview against worldview, principle against principle, and that in this battle against the forces of modernity Catholics and Protestants must stand side by side," 304. See also a new book by Prof. J. Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation; Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000).

By T.G. Van Raalte

Chance is Not

“As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.” (Ruth 2:3b)

Chance is hard to define. It is randomness, but it is more than that. Really, you can only define it by what it is not. It isn't predictable or controllable. It has no order, direction or purpose. Chance defies logic, and therefore, no principle governs its origin or existence; it has no control or goal. Chance also goes by the names of “luck” or “fortune” – but this does not define it any better; it only gives other names for the same thing. One last definition: Chance happens wherever God is not in control. I'll call that “pure chance.” But again, this merely defines chance by what it is not: It is where God is not in control.

So, just what is chance? Is there such a thing as pure chance? Do things happen outside God's control? Some people think so, even people who believe in God. But let's be clear about what they are saying! They are saying that there are areas where neither God nor anyone else has control. That is the only way to define chance. They are saying that under some circumstances you cannot rely on God's power because he doesn't control everything.

But then we have to ask if God doesn't have power everywhere all the time, is He still God? What if the only thing outside God's control is the key to salvation and hope?

But not even Satan is outside God's control. If he were, we are doomed, for then he would be greater than God! Satan does have some things in his control, but God's power still reigns over him. Think of how Satan needed permission to afflict Job. If even Satan is under God's complete control, then surely nothing is outside it. There is no pure chance. Chance is a product of man's imagination. And that is why it is so

hard to define chance: because pure chance does not exist.

With that in mind, look at the passage before us. “As it turned out, she found herself working.” The Hebrew word for “chance” is behind the word “as it turned out.” That's what “turned out.” It wasn't planned. She just ended up in Boaz' field – by chance. The way Boaz and Ruth first met was simply a coincidence.

Was it really God's hand, or was it just by chance? No doubt Ruth didn't plan it that way. Naomi never told her to go to those fields. Boaz did not invite her. It just happened. We can agree that no one on earth planned it. It just turned out that way, as the text says.

Now keep in mind the wider purpose of the book of Ruth. This little book shows us the unlikely origins of the great King David. In doing so it traces a development in the family line that led to Jesus Christ. Was that by pure chance?

In this book God constantly reveals that He is in control. We are driven to this conclusion verse after verse. The fact that the writer never says so directly makes the point all the more power-

fully. All the unusual coincidences and the unexpected results force us to that conclusion. We see judgment. We see blessing. Someone greater is in control of these situations.

This turns the whole matter around! The very phrase that speaks about chance in verse 3 was written to highlight the work of Almighty God. It is a way of saying that no human planning went into the meeting of Boaz and Ruth. Only in this sense might we use the word “chance.” No one on earth intended it to happen. Ruth was just looking for a field. It was the Lord who caused her to go to Boaz' field. The Lord had a plan to provide Ruth with blessings in his kingdom. That's why it happened. God was watching over Ruth the Moabitess long ago already, when she married an Israelite who had come to Moab, when she learned about the LORD and came to devote her life to Him when she entered his kingdom.

Sometimes God has a roundabout route for us. But let us trust Him and do what is right. Let us trust our all-powerful and loving Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are never outside of His control. C



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The Means of Grace: Preaching the gospel (Part 1)

By P.G. Feenstra

Since most of us have become accustomed to assembling for worship each Lord's Day, we tend to take for granted the total awesomeness of being in the presence of the Lord. This meeting of God with his people takes place by means of the preaching of the Word. Our covenant God is present with us, and we draw near to Him by his Spirit and Word. Through the preaching of the gospel the Lord reveals Himself to us as our faithful God and Father in Jesus Christ. Preaching must, therefore, be honoured and received as the voice of God speaking to us. It must move our hearts to see our only hope is in Christ.

The Great Reformation of the sixteenth century, which stressed the Scriptures to be the norm for all of life, also saw a revival in preaching. Men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin had a very high view of the ministry of reconciliation and demonstrated this by their great love and devotion to the task of preaching the gospel. With an incredible yearning to pass on the gems and treasures of Holy Scripture to the people, and to train them in the ways of the Lord, Calvin would regularly preach five sermons a week! Between the years 1510 and 1546 Luther preached approximately 3,000 sermons – obviously preaching many days a week and many times a day! Calvin referred to the pulpit as “the throne of God” and Luther once said in a sermon, “Therefore you better be far from the Word, if you believe it not. For when a man preaches his Word, God would have it as highly esteemed as if he himself had preached it” (*Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol II p. 363).

From the Scriptures

The power of preaching, however, does not lie in the passion of a preacher but in the Spirit and Word of God. The Lord uses the proclamation of his Word as the means whereby faith is worked in

our hearts and the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and closed to unbelievers. Thus the preaching of salvation in Christ is central to both Old and New Testament.

The prophets were preachers who proclaimed the promises of the Lord and reminded the people Israel of their covenant obligations. They spoke words of comfort, hope and peace but also of warning and judgement. The apostles also focussed on preaching. Paul relates to the Corinthian church, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel – not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Corinthians 1:17).

The power of preaching, however, does not lie in the passion of a preacher but in the Spirit and Word of God.

Preaching was the heart of Paul's ministry. Through the preaching of the Word, churches were instituted and established. Thus Paul encouraged a fellow minister, Timothy, to steadfastly fulfill his task. He wrote, “Preach the word; Be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). When Paul writes to the Thessalonians he expresses his thankfulness for the manner in which the Word of the Lord was received by them. They recognized the authority of preaching. He says in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

From the Scriptures we learn that it has pleased the Holy Spirit to use the instrument of preaching to work faith in our hearts. The grace of God in Christ is made known and applied to us through the means of preaching. “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). We must submit to the faithful administration of God's Word no matter our level of knowledge or what our contemporary situation may be.

The witness of the Reformed Confessions

Repeating and confirming what is taught in Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity frequently refer to the significance of preaching. The Belgic Confession states in Article 24, “We believe that this true faith, worked in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates him and makes him a new man.” With Article 29 we confess that a church can be recognized as true to its purpose and reason for existence if it “practises the pure preaching of the gospel.”

Speaking about the nature and character of true faith, the Heidelberg Catechism concludes in Lord's Day 7, “This faith the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel.” Lord's Day 25 takes it one step further and says faith comes from the Holy Spirit “who works it in our hearts by the *preaching* of the gospel . . .” The Heidelberg Catechism also refers to the preaching as a key of the kingdom of heaven (Lord's Day 31).

Every chapter of the Canons of Dort refer to the importance of preaching.

1. Chapter I, Article 3: “So that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom He wills and when He wills. By their ministry men are called to repentance and to faith in Christ crucified.”

2. Chapter II, Article 5: "The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe."
3. Chapter III/IV, Article 6: "What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God performs by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the gospel of the Messiah, by which it has pleased God to save men who believe, both under the old and new dispensation."

The grace of God in Christ is made known and applied to us through the means of preaching.

4. Chapter V, Article 14: "Just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so He maintains, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and by the use of the sacraments."

The Three Forms of Unity are not alone in stressing preaching as a means whereby the Lord applies to us his grace in Christ. The Second Helvetic Confession says explicitly, "Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful; and that neither any other Word of God is to be invented nor is to be expected from heaven: and that now the Word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that preaches; for even if he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the Word of God remains still true and good"(Chapter I).

The responsibility of the preacher

The primary task and duty of a minister of the Word is to preach, declaring the whole counsel of God to his congregation. He must proclaim to God's people the blessed gospel of salvation and redemption through Jesus

Christ. He is to open the Scriptures and feed the flock of Christ with words of life, grace, mercy and peace.

A good minister works hard to be faithful and loyal because the ministry of reconciliation has eternal implications. Paul addresses this matter in 1 Timothy 4:10 where he writes, "(and for this we labour and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe." This puts a tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of a minister. He must allow the Word to speak for itself and not clutter it with his own stories or anecdotes. He may not say less or more than what the Scripture permits nor may he bend to the will of the people. A minister is a servant of Christ and an instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit. Therefore He must preach Christ and Him crucified with confidence and conviction. The preaching is to be bold and clear just as the Word of God is unmistakably clear in its message and intent. It is remarkable how often we read in the book of Acts that the apostles spoke the Word of God with boldness. They were straightforward and unafraid.

Where the Word of the Lord is proclaimed and opened faithfully the effects are powerful. The Word of the Lord never returns empty. It is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Through the operation of the Holy Spirit the surgical knife of God's Word may have to cut deeply to remove the cancer that, if left untouched, will kill us. Only when we are cut to the heart can we be healed.

Preaching: the focus of a minister's work

Paul encourages Timothy to continue with what is central to his ministry. "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13). The focus of the ministry should be on instruction. The triple combination of reading, preaching and teaching are vital to the well-being of a congregation of Christ. A minister is a good shepherd by equipping the congregation with the Word of the Lord. To be involved in all sorts of social visiting and activities may be nice but this should never be at the cost of the most important task a minister has: to preach the gospel.

Being good listeners

The Lord God speaks to our hearts through the opening, exposition and exhortation of His Word. The Holy Spirit cultivates in us the desire to live according to the gospel and to begin doing those things which we by nature would neglect and reject. This does not happen through one sermon but through a constant submitting of our lives to the Word of the Lord. The Spirit works faith in our hearts through an ongoing, life-long process. Submitting ourselves to preaching brings change to our life. More and more we crucify our old nature and cling to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts through the preaching but He wants us to go to work with the Word by listening to it attentively. To keep our attention focussed on a sermon for a thirty to thirty-five minutes isn't always easy. We all need to find ways to avoid drowsiness or being distracted. For example, we should make sure we get enough sleep the night before. Saturday night is not the best night to come home late. The Old Testament Sabbath began at 6:00 p.m. the night before. Even though this no longer applies there is a valuable lesson to be learned: by Saturday evening we should be shutting down our regular activities to get ourselves ready for the meeting between God and his people. Taking notes of the sermons has many benefits as well. It helps keep our mind on the sermon much more effectively and off of our work or other things. We also have something to reflect on for a long time afterwards.

Preaching is not the work of man but God's way of working faith in our hearts and strengthening us in our faith.

Preaching is not the work of man but God's way of working faith in our hearts and strengthening us in our faith. We are to be open to the public preaching and teaching of God's Word. During the week we must be busy applying and multiplying what we have been taught. For the consequences of being under the influence of the Holy Spirit is not limited to one day of the week. What you hear every Lord's Day should stir fill you with unending thankfulness and a holy passion for the service of the Lord.

Working Together: the Elder and the Counsellor in the Christian Community

Reported by Sarah Vandergugten

Earlier this year (February 9) Eirana sponsored an evening where Rev. W. Slomp, pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Neerlandia addressed the topic of the working relationship between professional counsellor and office bearers in the church. Rev. Slomp retains a lively interest in counselling, having earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work before entering the Theological College in Hamilton.

Pastor Slomp began by noting that among Christians there has been sharp disagreement about the value of professional counselling for members of the church. Some consider it entirely useless, even dangerous (e.g., the Bobgans). Others, such as Larry Crabb, John MacArthur, Norman Wright and Dan Allender believe that professional counsellors can provide valuable assistance in the church. The Canadian Reformed churches have developed a handbook with regard to counselling. It proposes an integrationist approach, where, above all, God's Word is operative. Still, what should be the extent of involvement of office bearers when members under their care are receiving professional counselling? Pastor Slomp proposed to address this issue by looking at three areas: What is professional counselling? Common critiques of professional counselling. The office bearer as counsellor.

What is professional counselling?

Professional counselling falls into two main areas: psychology which is the science of the mind and of mental phenomena and psychiatry, which deals more with the medical aspects. Both are interested in the mental processes. What is a mind? Does it involve one's total emotional and intellectual responses to the environment? Is it a thing, or simply a process? It is simply activity of the brain cells? In any

event, both psychology and psychiatry are interested in dealing with and healing impairment of the mind.

The mind, the brain, is where our thoughts are processed. Sadly, we're all mind and brain-damaged because of sin. Our thinking processes are impaired, unless we are "transformed by the renewal of our mind" (Rom 12:2). This renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit. As Christians, are all our thinking processes in order? No, we are in constant need of daily renewal. We live with the consequences of sin. The Word and the Holy Spirit are what brings true healing. God is able to use other human beings to apply his word to the minds of those who need it. He has also given advances in medicine that can be helpful, if used within good parameters, within God's guidelines.

*Sadly, we're all mind
and brain-damaged because
of sin.*

Criticisms of professional counselling

Pastor Slomp highlighted three major areas of criticism of professional counselling: the use of labels, the use of drugs and dealing with the past. Those who are hesitant to make use of professional counsellors suggest that mental illness is a misnomer. To label impaired thought processes an illness takes away a person's responsibility, and will simply be a crippling excuse. (S)he now has an illness and can't help it.

It is true that since the early 1900s the number of identifiable mental disorders has increased. In 1917, there were fifty-nine distinct labels. In 1980, 292. It is also true that labels seem to

be rather selective. What was once considered a disorder – homosexuality – was in 1973 redefined as an alternative lifestyle. Some suggest that the best thing is to throw away all labels, since labels lead to permanent identification (alcoholic or sex addict). Others argue that labelling something as a disorder or illness may remove a person's motivation for change.

We don't need to shy away from labels. A label can make us aware of the need for change. It allows us to get a handle on the difficulty. It makes the comparison of notes easier. It allows for research in books and on the Internet. Labels do not necessarily lead to excusing behaviour, but can instead lead to greater accountability. It helps others to understand behaviours that otherwise might be inexplicable. Simply labelling any aberration as sin and nothing else, may not be the best way to help a person struggling with mental or psychological difficulties.

Drug use problematic?

Those under professional counselling care are more often than not prescribed drugs to help them overcome their difficulties. For some Christians, this is problematic. They argue that drugs simply numb a person. Drugs can be addictive, and may result in all sorts of side effects. Some simply regard the taking of any drugs as sinful.

Pastor Slomp suggests that prescribed drugs are not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes they can be helpful for the short term, and sometimes even for a longer period of time. He gave several examples. There was a young mother who kept hearing blasphemous voices saying awful things. She entertained thoughts of killing herself and her children. There was another young mother who suffered severe post partum depression. Her involuntary thoughts

led her to doubt her salvation. She seemed unable to stop the vicious circle of depressing thoughts. In both these instances, a well-regulated and limited prescription of drugs helped both these young women regain a more normal outlook on life.

Sometimes people will cut short a medication routine, either because they believe it to be sinful, or because once they note a small improvement they feel they can do without. A senior suffered from chronic severe depression, insisted on doing without medication and quickly sank deeper than before. A young man suffering from schizophrenia optimistically thought he could quit taking his medication the moment he started to note improvement. He was wrong.

Drugs are not the final answer in an emotional or spiritual struggle, but they may help alleviate severe distressing symptoms, so that the person can begin to function in a relatively normal manner.

Pastor Slomp warned that drugs should not be used to escape one's responsibilities. Drugs are not the final answer in an emotional or spiritual struggle, but they may help alleviate severe distressing symptoms, so that the person can begin to function in a relatively normal manner. This is especially important to consider in the cases of threatened suicide and severe depression. We have little difficulty in advising drugs and medicines for physical ailments, such as diabetes. Many mental conditions involve a physical aspect which can be helped with medication. True they can be abused, but this does not mean that we should rule out any sort of well-regulated and carefully monitored drug use. Here also the office bearers should be slow to condemn but be willing to stand alongside others as the fellow church member struggles to regain an even keel. Don't threaten with discipline. Remember Christ was quick to go to the downtrodden in Israel.

Dealing with the past?

Is it necessary to deal with the past in order to experience healing in the present? Men like Jay Adams say not. It is better to look to the future. Delving

into the past may only make one feel dirty. All the sordid details don't need to be dredged up. Some suggest that it is also possible to install or suggest false memories.

Pastor Slomp suggests that the Bible has a balanced approach. Men like Paul and David are not afraid to refer to their past sins and difficulties. Those who have dealt with the past in an appropriate manner will find it no longer has a hold on them. They can move on.

The office bearer as counsellor

Pastor Slomp spent the remainder of his presentation outlining his position on the role of the office bearer as counsellor, and the relationship that he has with a professional counsellor. He noted that some elders feel that consulting a professional counsellor is simply bypassing the offices in the church. Instead, it would be better to determine why such counselling is considered necessary. The elder need not be embarrassed if he feels a bit out of his depth. He should consider how he might help the brother or sister under his care. Self-examination may be in order. It may be that, without realizing it, the elder is placing obstacles in the way of an open relationship between himself and the struggling member. (As an aside, Pastor Slomp noted that the Fraser Valley is blessed with an organization such as Eirana – something that is lacking in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario).

In any event, it is best if the office bearer is closely involved in the process. He should, if at all possible, take up contact with the counsellor. It would be good to know the counsellor's position on the Christian faith, Scripture, prayer, and the church. Other topics such as his (her) view on marriage, abortion, divorce, homosexuality – to mention a few – could also be discussed.

The office bearer himself will be called upon to provide wise counsel. For some, such as Jay Adams, this means admonishing and instructing, and leading the troubled person to confession of his sins. This tends to be a more confrontational approach. Pastor Slomp favours Prof. C. Trimp's approach, which places more emphasis on standing alongside a brother or sister, exhorting and appealing to them in a compassionate manner.

Listening – a creative activity

Above all, the office bearer needs to learn to be a good listener. The Psalms provide helpful examples, describing

how the Lord listens to Israel, his people. He hears more than just words. He sees their distress, and hears their sighing and groaning. Listening is not a passive pastime, but a very active thing. This requires preparation. The elder should ask himself some pointed questions. Deep down, what kind of a person is (s)he? What sort of defences may this person be throwing up in order to cope with his problems? Might I be wrong in some of my presumptions about her? What might be the root cause of his difficulties? Think about the person. Pray! How can I show this person that I care? Ensure that your time of interaction takes place in a relaxed atmosphere.

Dr. A. Hendriks suggests that listening is a creative activity. The elder needs to listen to what is behind the words. Don't hear just the rational, logical content, but also the feelings and the emotions. Otherwise you'll end up on completely different wavelengths. Be quick to hear and slow to speak. Don't be in a hurry. There's lots of time. Think about Job. Sit quietly together and feel the pain. Paraphrase, repeat in different words what you're hearing the troubled person saying. Ask leading questions. Reflect the person's feelings. Learn how to summarize what the person is saying. But also learn to maintain a "professional" distance. Don't become part of the problem. Elders who listen this way become very effective instruments in the care of troubled brothers and sisters.

Above all, the office bearer needs to learn to be a good listener.

Pastor Slomp warned that despite the fact that elders may sometimes not feel adequate to the task of helping severely troubled members under their care, they may not simply abdicate their responsibility to the professionals. They are called upon to provide the necessary guidance and nurture. The Holy Spirit is their infinite resource. If, however, a church member makes a conscious choice to live a sinful life, then the authority of the church needs to be applied. In most instances, however, it is a matter of standing alongside, guiding, counselling, consoling, nurturing, listening and supporting. Such an office bearer is a wonderful gift of God's grace to offer hope to troubled fellow believers. All praise to Him! 

UNDESERVED MERCY

By L.E. Leeftink



Preparing for the Lord's Supper (6) Christ: Promised from the Beginning

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

The fourth section of the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper deals with the Remembrance of Christ (*Book of Praise*, p.596). This section begins by pointing to the promises which God made to the believers of the Old Testament and which have been fulfilled in Christ Jesus:

Let us now consider for what purpose the Lord has instituted his supper; namely, that we should use it in remembrance of Him. We are to remember Him in the following manner:

First of all, let us fully trust that the Lord Jesus Christ was sent by the Father into this world, according to the promises made from the beginning to the fathers in the Old Testament, and that he assumed our flesh and blood.

God's Promises Wonderfully Fulfilled!

Jesus has commanded me to celebrate his Supper to remember Him.

Remembering – that means more than just thinking about the death of Christ.

Remembering – that also includes that I consider the manner in which my Redeemer has come to me, the way in which He has come into this world.

The world had to wait a long time. But the Lord Jesus has come, at the time that God had determined. At God's time He came. This fact I must not forget: my Lord and Messiah was sent by the Father. I am able to discern God's merciful faithfulness and goodness behind the cross of Golgotha.

I see God's faithfulness towards his creation.

I see God's goodness towards sinful people.

And in these things we discern his grace and mercy.

From the beginning, already right after the fall into sin, these things were so. Adam and Eve hid themselves. They were sinful people and could no longer exist before God. "... when you eat of it you will surely die."

And yet, at that very moment, God showed his faithfulness and goodness. He said: "I will redeem my people." Adam and Eve were comforted that God would pardon fully.

Immediately after the fall into sin, God announced his plan for redemption. The Redeemer would come at God's time. Yet the Lord made his light shine already in paradise. The very first sinners, Eve and her husband, found shelter with Christ, and hid in his shadow. What a miracle of grace!

For Adam and Eve.

For all believers.

For me.

Why is it a miracle for me? Because since that time God has not changed at all. He continues with his plan of salvation, despite all the efforts of Satan to prevent it.

When the descendants of Cain gained the upper hand, God saved Noah by means of the waters of the flood. And when later the people again chose their own ways, God ordained that the road to salvation would go via Abraham and his descendants. And when the people of Israel were exiled, the Lord kept alive a faithful remnant.

God did all this because He is faithful and his plans cannot fail, certainly not his plan of salvation. Satan cannot stop Him.

Therefore, God's Son became Man. This happened at God's time: a long waiting period, yet He came. In God's way: conceived by the Holy Spirit and born from the virgin Mary. With one purpose: to reconcile people of flesh and blood with their God, people such as you and I.

Therefore Jesus also took upon himself my flesh and blood, took upon Himself my sins and carried them to the cross.

In paradise God Himself revealed this gospel.

Later He spoke of it through the holy patriarchs and the prophets.

And finally God gloriously fulfilled His promise in his only begotten Son.

At the table I do not think only of the death of Christ on the cross. I also think of God's gracious goodness and faithfulness. From the very beginning He already marked the road of salvation along which my Redeemer would come. From the very beginning He already thought of me!

Christ came into this world.

Christ also came into my life.

God included me in his covenant.

God granted me faith through his Holy Spirit.

In this way He continues to fulfill His age-old promises every day anew. This shows his goodness and faithfulness. This is grace as well. Therefore I may celebrate the Lord's Supper next Lord's day. I know with mind and heart: Christ has accomplished all things for me. His Spirit will strengthen my faith.

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

This meditation is comprised of four parts: suggested Bible readings for each day in the week of preparation; a passage from the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper that serves as the focus of the meditation; a Bible passage (NIV) to draw attention to God's Word, since sacrament and Word should never be separated; and an appropriate Psalm or Hymn from the *Book of Praise*.

When thinking about the Bible passages, consider key questions such as:

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PREPARATION

Sunday: Genesis 3 : 1 - 15
Monday: Genesis 12 : 1 - 9
Tuesday: 2 Samuel 23 : 1 - 7
Wednesday: Isaiah 9 : 1 - 6
Thursday: Isaiah 11 : 1 - 10
Friday: Micah 4 : 1 - 3 and 7 : 18 - 20
Saturday: Galatians 4 : 1 - 7
Sunday: Luke 1 : 5 - 25 – in the morning
 Luke 1 : 26 - 38 – in the evening

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
And you will strike his heel.”

Luke 1:67-79

- 67: [John the Baptist's] father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:
68. “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.
69. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David
70. (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
71. salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us –
72. to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,
73. the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
74. to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear
75. in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
76. And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
77. to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,
78. because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
79. to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

SINGING

Hymn 14:1, 2

1. Blest be the God of Israel
The Lord who visited his own;
Who by His gracious providence
Redemption unto us made known.
Within his servant David's tent
Has He to us, his people, sent
The horn of full salvation;
E'en as He spoke by holy men of old,
Who unto Israel foretold
How He to them his mercy would unfold.
2. He promised that He us would save
From all who for our ruin wait,
And from the hands of them that rave
Against us with a warring hate;
To show the mercy once foretold
Unto our fathers, and uphold
His holy cov'nant with us;
That He would still remember in his care
The oath which He to Abram sware,
To benefit his seed from heir to heir.



The Privilege and Challenge of Educating the Lord's Special Children¹ (Part 1 of 2)

By C. Van Dam

My qualifications for speaking on this topic tonight are not the life experiences the Lord has put on my path. From that perspective I am unqualified. And yet when the Board of Assistance to the Special Child Committee approached me in their very polite and hard to resist manner, I quickly acceded to their request to address you tonight because I firmly believe that the Word of our God has something to say about the privilege and challenge of educating the special children that the Lord has placed in our midst. And when the Lord speaks to us, He gives direction, encouragement and admonition. His Word is a light on our path, also when our path includes being a parent or teacher of such a special child or children. And so I speak to you as a student of the Word of God. My purpose is to remind ourselves tonight of some basic biblical truths as they impact on our topic tonight.

In Scripture, a teacher can be called a father.

I propose that we go about it as follows. First, let us consider the place and purpose of parent and teacher. Secondly, let us consider what specific goals flow forth from that purpose and how these goals can be reached. Finally, there will be a short conclusion.²

The place of the parent and teacher

There is, biblically speaking, an enormous area of commonality between being a parent and a teacher.

This is evident, e.g., from the fact that in Scripture a teacher can be called a father. Teachers are called fathers.³ The term "father" is a term of honour.⁴ Especially when the term "father" is used of a teacher (as Elisha calls Elijah), there are special overtones. If the teacher is the "father," the student is his "son."

Think, e.g., of how Paul, a student of Gamaliel of the Pharisees, calls himself "son of the Pharisees" (Acts 23:6). Also think of Psalm 34:11 where David speaks as teacher as he says: "Come, O sons, listen to me, and I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

This description of the relationship between teacher and student as that of father and son cannot but remind us of the primary place that the home has in the education of the youth of the covenant. For example, we read in Proverbs 1:8, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching." Here there is a clear reference to the home. But, elsewhere in Proverbs when the "son" is addressed, it is generally agreed that he is often addressed by his teacher-father, the wise man who instructs him, rather than by his natural father.⁵ The fact that some of the passages referred to are open to debate, whether it is indeed the natural father or the teacher-father who is speaking, indicates that in a sense the distinction between the two types of fathers is somewhat blurred in Proverbs. Indeed, the use of such "homely" terminology as "father-son" underlines the fact that the character of education in the home and outside the home was to be essentially the same. The home takes precedence. That is where the educa-

tion process starts and that is the place where any Christian education outside the home gets reinforced. And so we can be here together this evening as parents and teachers with a common task, also over against those with special needs.

What is that task? As you know, parents were exhorted to teach the covenant ways of the LORD to their children so that the LORD would bless them. This is a well-known biblical truth and we do not need to go into all that now.⁶

As parents and as teacher-parents we have an awesome, life-giving task.

What is of more immediate concern here is to see how relevant this task is to the very identity that we as parents and as teacher-parents have. The point is this. As parents we have given our children life – biological life. That is a tremendous thing. We were God's instruments to give the gift of life to a new person, our child – one person at a time. As parents, that is only the beginning for we live in a fallen world. We also have the task to give our children life in the fullest sense, the life that is more than biological existence, the life in fellowship with God! That is why parents (both father and mother) are exhorted to direct and mould their children in the ways of the LORD (Prov 1:8; 31:1) so that the children could live before God and live eternally under his blessing.

Life, however, lived in fullness before the LORD also implies very practically speaking to be able to make a living. The religious and the practical go together! The parents therefore also had to be very realistic and teach their offspring to make a living. So father and mother in the home were to see to it that their children could *live*, that is, make a living before God and receive the covenant blessing of a rich life, yes of eternal life.

If this general goal is the bottom line for the significance of being a parent, then the implications of a teacher who is the school parent of the children entrusted to him or her are considerable. The teacher-parents have to reinforce and support the work of the natural parents in imparting life to the children; that is, they were to help them to make a living before God and to receive the covenant blessing of the LORD so that they could live eternally.

There is in Scripture (specifically Proverbs) no contrast between the practical and the religious. Teachers are to be instruments for life, in its fullness. To ignore the instruction of a teacher therefore has devastating results. Proverbs 5:13-14 says: "I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I was on the point of utter ruin in the assembled congregation [i.e. Israel]."

As parents and as teacher-parents we have an awesome, life-giving task, with a view to equipping for life service in this world and with a view to eternal life. This life-giving aspect is really the bottom line, the parent's and the teacher's ultimate *raison d'être*.

With this as background, we can now better understand the nature of the goals and the way to these goals. This brings us to the second part of this introduction.

(To be continued).

¹An introduction given in various churches in Southern Ontario during the past year or two. The occasion for the speech was an invitation from the Board of ASC Committee (ASC = Assistance to the Special Child). The ASC Committee is a committee of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies and functions as a type of think-tank which also creates awareness for and functions in the interests of the handicapped child. This speech has benefited from the input of some members of this Board as well as from Henry and Analies Homan of Attercliffe.

²We will not deal with the biblical data on the handicapped. There is very little that directly speaks of this "modern" category of the handicapped. See, e.g., "What Scriptures say about Mental Retardation," the report of a (Christian Reformed Church) Synodical Committee on mental retardation with emphasis on the severely and profoundly retarded individuals, as circulated by Bethesda (about 1980). The report as I have it in my files is undated. The following can be noted: *God is concerned about and is protector of the handicapped and he wants his people to share this concern.* For example, God commands his people: "Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God, I am the LORD" (Lev 19:14; cf. Deut 27:18). The reference to the fear of God, reminds one that God does see and hear and he will come to the protection of those with disabilities who have been taken advantage of (cf. Ps 146:8; Zeph 3:19). Although handicapped individuals could not serve as priests (Lev 21:17-23), yet, the handicapped were not excluded from worship nor from fellowship with the community (cf. Lev 21:22-23; 2 Sam 9:1-8).

³Also see my "Wisdom, Knowledge and Teaching" in C. Van Dam, *Fathers and Mothers at Home and at School* (Reformed Guardian, New Series No. 8, 2000) on which the present speech is built and my "A School of Sons and Daughters," *Clarion*, 24:9 (1975) 2-4.

⁴It is used, e.g., of a Levite in Judges 17:10; 18:19, of Saul by David in 1 Samuel 24:11 and of Elijah by Elisha in 2 Kings 2:12.

⁵So, e.g., 1:2ff; 3:1,11,21; 4:10,20; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 19:27; 23:15; 24:21,23. See, e.g., W. H. Gispen, *Spreuken* (Korte Verklaring; 1952) I, 25 and H. Haag in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds., *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, II (1975), 152.

⁶For example, in Genesis 18:19 the LORD speaks of Abraham as follows: "... I have chosen him that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." In the well-known passage Deuteronomy 6:4-9, parents are exhorted to teach the will of the LORD to their children. Similarly, Psalm 78:5-7 tells us: He [the LORD] established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." (Cf. also the Form for the Baptism of Infants and the promises that the parents make.)



The Theological College will be
CLOSED

from July 23rd until August 13th,
2001.

* * *

Called by the church of Grand
Rapids, Michigan:

Candidate Carl Vermeulen

* * *

Called by Burlington-Waterdown,
Ontario:

Rev. J. Van Vliet

of Lincoln, Ontario.

* * *

Available for call:

The council of the church at
Vernon, BC, with the approbation of
Classis Pacific East of June 26, 2001
and concurring advice of the
deputies of Regional Synod West
has dismissed

Rev. D. Moes

from his service in the congregation,
effective July 1, 2001 (Church
Order, Article 11). Rev. D. Moes is
available for call.

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Rev. J. Slaa and the Church at Elora Bid Each Other “Farewell”

By William Reinink

The first weekend of June 2001 marked the end of a period of seven years and seven months – a number of completion – of Rev. Slaa’s ministry at Elora. In the summer of 1993 four graduates of our college had been declared eligible for call, and Elora’s call was accepted by brother James Slaa, a native of Winnipeg. Shortly after his marriage to Miriam den Hollander, J. Slaa was ordained to the ministry on October 10, 1993. Rev. Slaa’s first congregation had received her first minister.

On Saturday evening, June 2, 2001, the congregation got together in the school’s gym to say good-bye to the Slaa family. A variety of entertainment was enjoyed by all. Of note was a contribution by the women of the congregation, highlighting some memorable events of the years past. There was the time when the minister’s van was stolen (and later recovered), the minister’s “new look” when he grew a beard, and the complete “wipe-out” of the manse’s garden. As a farmer it is hard for me to fathom: the chemical 2-4-D, a broad-leaf weed control, was used to kill the weeds – and the vegetables. Neither the label nor a weed expert was consulted; sometimes it pays just to leave the tares among the veggies.

The congregation presented the Slaa family with a memento of the quaint village of Elora, a painting of the Irvine River as it nears the Grand River. The evening ended with words of response by Rev. Slaa. He reflected on the years gone by, and thanked the congregation for its support.

On the afternoon of Sunday June 3, the text of the sermon was 2 Corinthians 13:11: “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with



The Slaa family



Rev. and Mrs. Slaa display a gift: painting of the Irvine River in Salem.

you.” The text reaffirms our covenantal relationship with God. There is the command to excel in doing God’s will in love; then there is the word “and,” bursting with promise – the God of love and peace will be with you.

Thank you, Rev. Slaa, for your ministry among us. We thank our heavenly Father for *graciously providing our congregation with a faithful servant*. Indeed, we did grow in the faith and knowledge of our blessed Saviour.

Update from the Reformed Mission Work in the Ukraine

April 2001

By Jan Werkman¹

New developments in Tavriyske

On Sunday, April 1, eleven brothers and sisters publicly professed their faith and became members of the congregation. Their children also officially joined the congregation. About ten brothers and sisters were acknowledged as guest members. So the congregation of Tavriyske now has a more official organization. The first celebration of the Lord's Supper took place on the evening of that Sunday. It was a wonderful day. We hope that we will receive more members into the church in the future. The next profession of faith is planned, the Lord willing, for June 24.

A new aspect of my work in Tavriyske is guiding the congregation towards the election of elders. I will explain to the congregation how to do this in the biblical way and then train the elected brothers in fulfilling their holy calling.

The church visitors from the nearby village of Ridna Ukrainka were present during the public profession of faith. May the Lord bless their presence as a step towards their own commitment to the Reformed faith.

Membership

The synod of the Ukrainian Evangelical Reformed Church (UERC) has to define and make regulations for membership. An important question is where the membership of missionaries should be. The UERC works with missionaries from other churches with whom there will possibly be more cooperation in the future – missionaries from the Zakarpatian Churches (KRE) and the Dutch missionaries. So the UERC should formulate a flexible form of membership.

The solution, I think, will be something like this. A missionary is a mem-

ber of the church where he works and lives but he also remains a member of the church where he comes from. This is because the church council of the place where he works is not always ready to take on the responsibility of overseeing his work and life-style. The final responsibility for the missionary is with the sending church. When the church where the missionary works, grows and becomes able to take over the responsibility of oversight, this church will get in touch with the sending church and decide together how to proceed from there.

The UERC accepts adult members after public profession of faith in a worship service. The KRE have other rules for admittance to membership. When the KRE missionaries work in the UERC there are two possibilities:

1. These members receive a letter from the KRE churches in which is declared that they are a member with full rights according to the rules of the KRE. The UERC accepts that.
2. They publicly confess their faith, as is the practice in the UERC churches. This does not ignore the rules of the KRE, but could be considered as adapting their rules.

The last synod (held on April 7, 2001) did not yet deal with this issue, but it was placed on the agenda. The next synod will be held on the June 9. I hope that they will discuss this matter and make a decision.

Dnipropetrovsk

In Dnipropetrovsk we also received the blessing of new members: five brothers and sisters confessed their faith and became members of the church. We were present with our family and with brother Anatoliy who represented the Kievan congregation and

brought over the congratulations of the brothers and sisters there.

The congregation in Dnipropetrovsk is very small. There are six members now and no visitors. They are looking for a worker who will live and labour in their midst.

Kiyv

The congregation is slowly growing. We recently started a small study group: ten neighbours come together on Wednesday evenings to read the Bible and the Heidelberg Catechism. Gradually the contacts in the neighbourhood are growing. The church is becoming a part of the neighbourhood and is able to bring the Good News, not only in the form of preaching, but also in deeds of Christian charity. The congregation is awaiting the arrival of Sandor and Ibolya in October 2001. Because the work is growing, we really need these helpers.

Seminary

The seminary had a board meeting in which the budget was approved. The budget makes clear that sponsors are indispensable and appreciated. All supporters of the Reformed and Presbyterian missionaries should be aware that financial help is very important for the seminary. The seminary serves both denominations; it is also a cooperative effort of both the Reformed churches and the Presbyterian churches. If you would like to have more information, the president of the faculty, Clay Quarterman, will gladly provide that. In June, I will finish my term as president of the board of the seminary, because officially a Ukrainian should be president.

Literature

We continue to be busy with producing literature. The Heidelberg Catechism has our attention. The next lessons will deal with the history and the beliefs of the Reformed Church. When this work is done, we will make Russian translations of the Ukrainian lessons. We also hope to make a manual entitled: How to use these lessons in the evangelization and growth of the church.

Work in the vicinity of Tavriyske

Worship services continue to be held in the village of Ridna Ukrainka. There is a good atmosphere. We pray that the Lord will bless this work so that also here the visitors may be acknowledged as guest members.

In the village of Lubimifka we met a brother who knows the Bible very well.

His outlook seems to be Reformed. We are glad to be able to continue our conversations with him about the basic Reformed doctrines. He witnessed the first public professions of faith in Tavriyske.

The work in Simferopol continues. Frikkie Mulder, the South African missionary, is actively looking for Ukrainian Reformed or Presbyterian coworkers. The harvest is great, but the number of workers is small. He has not yet found a steady helper.

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Church of Kiyv

(via Rev. Jan Werkman)
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Ukraine Committee

Galenshoeve 2
8052 AW Hattem, The Netherlands
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If you have friends interested in the Ukrainian Reformed Churches, please tell them to write a letter or a post card to Rev. Jan Werkman and we will be glad to send them the next update.

'Rev. Jan Werkman is a missionary in the Ukraine for the Dutch Mission - Hattem, The Netherlands.



The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

The Thirty-second Anniversary Meeting
and the
Twenty-seventh Convocation of the Theological College will be held,
D.V., on

Friday, September 7, 2001 at 8:00 p.m.

in the auditorium of Redeemer College (777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario)

Prof. J. Geertsema will speak on the topic:
"Is Conversion after Apostacy Impossible? A look at Hebrews 6:6"

The Master of Divinity Degree

will be conferred on

Carl Antony Vermeulen

The Diploma of Missiology

will be conferred on

Rev. Wesley Bredenhof (in absentia)

* * * * *

A collection will be taken for student bursaries

(TAX RECEIPTS AVAILABLE)



Press Release of Classis Pacific-East June 26, 2001, held at Chilliwack, B.C.

On behalf of the convening Church at Chilliwack, Rev. M.H. VanLuik called the meeting to order, requested the singing of Psalm 33:1 and 6, read Colossians 1, and led in prayer. He noted that this was a special Classis to deal with Vernon's request for the approbation of Classis to dismiss Rev. D. Moes according to Article 11 of the Church Order.

The delegates from the Church at Aldergrove checked the credentials and found them to be in order. All churches were represented by "primi" delegates. There were no instructions from the churches. The Church at Vernon had delegated two elders. Rev. Moes was not delegated by the church at Vernon because Rev. Moes was personally involved in the matter before Classis.

Classis was constituted.

The executive consisted of: Rev. R. Schouten – chairman; Rev. C.J. VanderVelde – vice-chairman; Rev. W.M. Wielenga – clerk.

The chairman of Classis thanked the convening church for making the arrangements for Classis.

The agenda was established.

All the material received was declared admissible.

Classis gave the deputies of Regional Synod, Rev. R. Aasman and Rev. K. Jonker, full privileges of the floor so that they could participate freely in all parts of the discussion.

Classis went into restricted closed session.

Since Rev. J. Huijgen was the facilitator in Vernon after Classis Aldergrove February 15-17, 2001, Classis decided to ask Rev. Huijgen to make himself available to Classis in order to answer any questions Classis may have.

Classis decided to approbate the request of the Church at Vernon to dismiss Rev. D. Moes from his service within the congregation at Vernon in accordance with Article 11 of the Church Order. This decision was unanimous. The delegates from Vernon abstained from voting. The deputies of Regional Synod gave concurring advice.

The chairman, Rev. R. Schouten, led in prayer.

The deputies of Regional Synod then left the meeting.

Several appeals and letters were dealt with.

The church for the inspection of the archive reported that the archive was in good order.

Church visitation reports for the Churches at Abbotsford and Lynden were read.

The next Classis will be held, the LORD willing, in Lynden, on Thursday, September 20, 2001. Suggested officers: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde – chairman; Rev. W.M. Wielenga – vice-chairman; Rev. M.H. VanLuik – clerk.

Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The Church at Vernon requested pulpit supply.

The following appointments were made:

- Committee for Examinations: Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Rev. R. Schouten
- Examiners for the examination of candidates for the Ministry: exegesis OT: Rev. W.M. Wielenga; exegesis NT: Rev. M.H. VanLuik; knowledge of Scripture: Rev. W.M. Wielenga; doctrine and creeds: Rev. R. Schouten; church history: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde; ethics: Rev. R. Schouten; church

polity: Rev. P.H. Holtvluwer; diacology: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde

- Church visitors according to Article 46 of the Church Order: Rev. M.H. VanLuik (convener), Rev. R. Schouten, Rev. W.M. Wielenga; alternates: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde, Rev. P.H. Holtvluwer
- Church for taking care of the archive: Abbotsford
- Church for inspecting the archive: Yarrow
- Treasurer of Classis: br. R. Leyenhorst
- Church for auditing the books of the treasurer: Vernon
- Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry: br. K.F. Huttema, br. J. Schutte, Rev. M.H. VanLuik (convener)
- Committee for Needy Churches: br. G. Boeve, br. K. Louwerse (convener), br. B. Vane
- Deputy for preaching arrangements: Rev. P.H. Holtvluwer.

Question Period was held.

Censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was not necessary.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

The vice-chairman led in prayer.

The chairman declared Classis closed.

C.J. VanderVelde,
vice-chairman at that time



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

How did your paper trick work last time? Did you try it on your mom or dad? On your brothers or sisters?

SUMMER!!! What a wonderful time of the year. It's the time of the year when the weather is beautiful and warm, when you can play outside almost everyday, when you can go swimming. There are many other things you can do during summer. Don't you love it? It's also a time when there are lots of flowers, the trees are covered in leaves, and everything just looks beautiful.

Are you having a good time?

Don't forget to thank God for His wonderful gifts of warm weather, flowers, birds, insects and everything else that you see and can delight in.

Love from Aunt Betty

Puzzles

Books of the New Testament

by Busy Beaver Adrienne Teitsma

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

Find: Matthew Romans James
Mark Timothy Peter
Luke Titus John
John Hebrews Jude

Paul's Associates

The following people were associated with Paul.
Match the proper statement with the person.

- | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. Asked "What must I do to be saved?" | Acts 16:25-30 | a. Felix |
| 2. Said "You almost persuaded me to be a Christian" | Acts 26:28 | b. Julius |
| 3. Led the silversmiths in protest against Paul | Acts 19:24-25 | c. Barnabas |
| 4. Left Paul in prison in an effort to gain favour with the Jews | Acts 24:26-27 | d. Tertullus |
| 5. Sent Paul to Caesar | Acts 25:12 | e. a nephew |
| 6. Sent with Paul to settle a dispute in Jerusalem | Acts 15:2 | f. jailer |
| 7. Arrested for harbouring Paul | Acts 17:5 | g. Publius' father |
| 8. Guarded Paul on a trip to Jerusalem for trial | Acts 27:1 | h. Demetrius |
| 9. Told Paul of a plot to kill him | Acts 23:16 | i. Festus |
| 10. Paul healed him of a fever | Acts 28:8 | j. Jason |
| 11. An orator who accused Paul before Felix | Acts 24:1-3 | k. Agrippa |

August Birthdays

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----|--------------|
| 4 | Michelle DeBoer | 10 | Debbie Olson |
| 6 | Hannah Bergsma | 26 | Arnold Kanis |



Aunt Betty

c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
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Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

Who Am I?

by Busy Beaver Kaitlin Buitenwerf



- I crawl everywhere in an aquarium.
- I am furry and am usually brown, black and white.
- I am furry. Everyone likes me.
- I live in a cage. I am pretty.
- I float around in water all day.
- I chase cars when they go by.
- I am a big pest and chew everything apart.

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| Who am I? | Dog |
| Who am I? | Cat |
| Who am I? | Fish |
| Who am I? | Hamster |
| Who am I? | Crayfish |
| Who am I? | Mouse |
| Who am I? | Parrot |

