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*Mission Brazil:
We face an increasingly
complex situation*



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- The Role of the Husband in Marriage





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IPB

Perhaps it is best not to send missionaries to a land that does not really need them

The General Synod of our Dutch sister churches, meeting in Zwolle, decided on May 31, 2008 to offer a sister church relationship to the IPB, the *Ingrega Presbyteriana Do Brazil*. This decision is the logical conclusion of a process that started already in the late 1900s.

The mission church of Assen-Zuid, which for many years had sent missionaries to the south of Brazil, had pulled out their personnel, closed down their operations in the city of Curitiba, and was giving financial aid to the IPB evangelism effort in the south of Brazil. There was a small Reformed congregation in Curitiba, made up of members who refused to join the IPB, but it fell apart soon after the Dutch withdrawal.

I remember that I was quite dismayed to learn in 1991 that the Dutch were pulling out of Brazil, just when we in Hamilton were considering starting mission work there. There was really nothing we could do to prevent this pull-out. The die was cast. The new direction in Brazilian mission would be a partnership with the IPB.

Now, I do not have definitive information about the IPB. My purpose is not to criticize the IPB as such. I do feel, however, that the Dutch decision blind-sided us. Maybe the Dutch know many positive things about the IPB that we don't know. Based on information that we had received as (one of the) sending churches in Canada, there were many problems in the IPB. Reports that we received informed us, for example, about the influence of Scripture criticism, Masonry, and Pentecostalism in the IPB.

Impressive pedigree

For your information, the IPB is statistically quite an organization. It has around half a million members. There are 3600 local churches and 3800

ministers. The IPB apparently is very mission-oriented and has even sent missionaries to European countries such as Spain and Portugal. There is a mission-related ministry in Toronto, Ontario, with a full-time missionary that has contacts with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The IPB has an impressive pedigree. It is the result of American (PCA) mission work. The first IPB congregation was instituted in 1862 in Rio de Janeiro. And it has grown as a federation ever since. We are told that if at certain times the IPB did allow Scripture criticism, the situation has now changed. Current leaders are quite orthodox and reform-oriented. Not everyone agrees with that assessment.

In 1989 the IPB sent an observer-delegation to the ICRC in Langley. The chairman of that delegation made it quite clear that there are *no white spots* on the map of Brazil. All mission work in Brazil has to go via the IPB.

It seems to me that any church which is contemplating mission work in Brazil today needs to come to grips with the existence and functioning of the IPB. Perhaps, seeing the developments, it is best not to send missionaries anymore to a land that does not really need them.

Convincing grounds?

Because of the importance of the decision of the Synod of Zwolle, I diligently looked for a clear report that may have helped Synod and the grounds that were given by Synod for this decision. I could not find such a report, which doesn't mean that there isn't one. It's just a well-kept secret.

Via a former missionary in Brazil, I received a note that gave the grounds for the Dutch recognition of the IPB. The grounds are as follows. 1) The IPB has



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already been recognized as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. From the official and non-official contacts of more than ten years, it has become apparent that the IPB is forging ahead to become more and more a confessionally-Reformed church. 2) The IPB meets the criteria for a sister church relationship. 3) The IPB contact committee is very happy that the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands have decided to offer a sister-church relationship. Kudos to all around.

The first recognition of the IPB was probably given at a previous Synod. Subsequent contacts with the IPB convinced the Dutch that this recognition was proper and that a sister-church relationship should be offered. That has now been done.

It is my feeling that these grounds are rather meagre. Should the churches not know *what the positive developments are* which led to the offering of a sister church relationship? I am also concerned about the fact that the Dutch churches did not consult the IRB (Reformed Churches in Brazil) who have *also* been recognized by Dutch synods. At least, I have not read of such contacts.

This concern becomes all the more justified when we also note that the IRB churches (the Reformed Churches in Brazil, established by Canadian mission work) have decided to *suspend* contacts with the IPB. Within the IRB there is some dissension on this point. The Dutch decision makes ongoing mission work from out of Canada rather problematic. We may have to search for an honourable exit strategy.

The domino effect

The main point of my editorial is indeed that the Dutch decision to recognize the IPB will have effect on and consequences for our *Canadian* work in the north-east of Brazil. The Dutch went to Brazil in the late 1960s, while the Canadians followed in the 1970s and the 1990s. Since the Dutch have now pulled out of Brazil, should the Canadians follow suit?

It's almost like playing dominos. I mean, when they line up the stones to create a dazzling display. When one stone falls, the result is that all others fall as well. The expression "domino effect" means "a

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cumulative effect produced when one event initiates a succession or similar effects." Should we not *all* leave Brazil and seek other ways to serve the people in that country rather than through actual mission work?

IERB

To complicate matters, there is also another church federation in Brazil which merits some scrutiny. These are the *Igrejas Evangelicas Reformadas no Brazil* (IERB), the Evangelical Reformed Churches, located mostly in the affluent south of Brazil.

Their membership is around 2500. This church is made up out of descendents of Dutch immigrants who went to Brazil after the turn of the last century. They have ties with the Christian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches. In order to accommodate a Lutheran segment, these churches officially dropped the Canons of Dort from their confessional package, but still have the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.

We face an increasingly complex situation in Brazil

I met delegates from these churches at a Reformed mission conference in Brazil. So it seems that they are definitely also players on the scene. A Dutch missionary who had been sent out to plant Reformed Churches came to Brazil and joined up with the IERB. His reasoning was simple: why seek to establish a faithful church when there *already* is one in existence?

The plot thickens

All the above illustrates that we face an increasingly complex situation in Brazil. The plot thickens, as it were. It's hard to keep up with the developments and always to have a proper response.

Various churches in Ontario want to stop being supporting churches of Hamilton and perhaps start their own mission work. Let them be fully aware of the

complications. Many mission efforts have come to an abrupt stop in Papua, Kenya, and Congo. The old "colonialist" method of mission is making way for a new "partnership" model.

Mission work as we have known it may be coming to an end. Instead of sending out missionaries to a foreign land, we may now have to support existing churches in a foreign land with whatever they need. In this time of flux and change it is imperative that sending churches have much contact with each other and have a plan that is mutually acceptable.



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Have You Had Your Ear Pierced?



MATTHEW 13:52

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. . . I desire to do your will, O my God.”

Psalm 40:6-8

Have you had your ear pierced? This seems to be coming more into vogue again, for men and women alike. This meditation’s purpose is not to discuss the rights and wrongs of this practice. Rather, it’s to make sense of a phrase in Psalm 40:6, where David speaks about having his ears pierced. In this passage David confesses that the Lord isn’t interested merely in sacrifices from his people, but He wants them to do his will.

So what does David mean by speaking about having his ear pierced? The word translated “pierced” literally means “to dig, or excavate.” Scripture commonly uses this word for digging a well (e.g., Genesis 26:25), or for cutting out a tomb in the rock (e.g., 2 Chronicles 16:14). Thus “to dig through an ear” has been translated “to open” or “to pierce an ear.” To have your ear “opened” means you are receptive to instruction. That’s one commonly accepted interpretation of Psalm 40:6.

But there’s another meaning for “piercing the ear.” The practise of having one’s ear pierced is found in God’s law, specifically in Exodus 21:2-6. Here Moses relates the laws concerning Hebrew servants. When an Israelite faced bankruptcy, he could offer himself as a bondservant to his neighbour. He would sell his labour, but for a period of no more than six years because the law stipulated that in the Sabbath year he was to be set free.

Yet if a servant loved his master and wanted to continue in his service, he could do so. This

involved a ceremony of making a vow before the judges. The servant would say, “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out as a free man.” And to make this official the lobe of his ear was pierced with an awl, leaving a permanent scar. This was a mark of his permanent servant-hood.

We know from the New Testament that Psalm 40 is a Messianic Psalm, for in Hebrews 10:5-7 the words of Psalm 40:6-8 are quoted. These words are said to have been spoken by Christ when He came into this world. In verse 6 David says, “My ears you have pierced,” referring to Christ’s choice to become a servant. In verses 7-8 he speaks about how Christ would come to do the will of his heavenly Father, for ultimately He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Thus Hebrews 10 draws a direct link between the law of the Hebrew servant and Christ.

There are four things about the commitment offered by the Hebrew servant that are noteworthy. First, it was based on the servant’s love for his master. Second, it was voluntary; the servant had an opportunity for freedom and chose to be a servant. Third, it was permanent; once he committed himself, there was no way out. Fourth, it was total; he was committed to do the will of his master in all respects.

Christ came to render that kind of service for us! For Jesus’ sacrificial service was motivated by love for his heavenly Father. In John 14:31 Jesus says, “The world must

learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.” What’s more, his service was voluntary. Philippians 2:6-7 speaks about how Christ emptied Himself; He laid down his divine glory and honour and made Himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant. Also in John 14:15 Jesus expresses his willingness to give up his life for us; He said, “I lay down my life for the sheep.” And finally, Christ was committed to doing the will of his Father in heaven in all respects. Philippians 2:8 speaks about how our Lord humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Such service was not easy. Our Saviour struggled greatly in Gethsemane, praying that the cup of suffering might pass Him by. But in the end He added, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). As a servant, Jesus committed Himself whole-heartedly to our redemption.

So what is our response to our Saviour’s sacrificial servant-hood? It must be to give thanks and praise for the wondrous salvation that He has accomplished for us! And how do we do that? By having our ear pierced. Not physically, but figuratively: by committing our hearts and lives to God’s service. By loving and serving Him through the power of the Spirit. By doing the Father’s will in all areas of our lives. Our calling is to have open ears that heed the Father’s Word and willing hearts that obey his commands.





The Role of the Husband in Marriage

The following is an edited excerpt from Rev. C. Bouwman's latest book, A Vow to Love: a Biblical Explanation of the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage, published by Premier Printing.

As the Form draws out the significance of the profound mystery concerning Christ and the church, it describes the role of the husband in marriage.

The profound mystery: "As Christ is the Head of the Church, so the husband is the head of the wife. Christ loved His Church to the end, and gave Himself up for her, that she might be holy and without blemish; likewise the husband shall love his wife as his own body, take care of her, and cherish her."

The Duties of Marriage: "Bridegroom, know that God has set you to be the head of your wife. You shall love her as your own body, as Christ loved His Church and gave Himself up for her. Guide, protect, and comfort your wife. Live with her wisely and honour her, because she is an heir to eternal life together with you; then your prayers will not be hindered. Work faithfully in your daily calling, that you may support your family and also help those in need."

The emphasis in the Form on the husband's headship over his wife in marriage is out of step with today's western thinking.

To appreciate the force of these quotes, then, we shall need to listen first to God's revelation of the role He gave to Adam in the beginning. We shall need to come to grips with the effects of the fall into sin on marriage, as well as understand what Christ has done to restore marriage.

Respective roles

As mentioned repeatedly on earlier pages, both genders of the human race were created to image God, and both were created to rule over the other creatures. On this point the man and the woman have an equal position before God.

Similarly, the fall into sin touched both the man and the woman equally, so that both suffered the consequences of the fall (Gen 3:16-24). Again, in the Old Testament the gospel of redemption pertained to the man as much as it did to the woman (cf Leviticus 1-4). Jesus Christ proclaimed the gospel of forgiveness to men and women alike, and Paul could write pointedly that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" and together "heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:28,29). Man and woman are equally created to image God, equally sinful, equally redeemed, and equally heirs of life eternal.

Inequality in Paradise

Equality of position before God, however, does not mean that the man and the woman received from God an identical function in relation to each other. In his wisdom, the Lord God at creation arranged a hierarchy between the man and the woman wherein the one was appointed as leader over the other. It was the man – and not the woman – who received from God the mandate to work the garden and take care of it (Gen 2:15). To carry out his task in the Garden, the Lord made for the man "a helper suitable to him" (Gen 2:18). Responsibility for the work in the Garden fell, then, to the man; the man received from God the position of headship and leadership, while the woman received from the Creator the function to help. The apostle Paul worded this relationship between the man and woman of Paradise like this: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3). And later: "Man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor 11:8, 9). This matter has already received attention in chapter 3.

This reality is significant in relation to marriage as “a profound mystery. . . about Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). As Paul explained, “The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph 5:23). Or, to describe it in terms consistent with the reality before the fall into sin: as God was the head and leader in his covenant relation with mankind, so Adam was head and leader in his marital relation with Eve.

Role reversal

The fall into sin damaged much. For reasons we shall never understand, the fall itself happened through a role reversal of man and woman. The devil, we recall, approached the man indirectly, that is, through his helper, and challenged her to eat of the forbidden tree. Scripture relates what happened next: “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Gen 3:6). When she was challenged to defy God, the woman at a minimum *ought* to have sought leadership from the man God set over her, but she did not. Unilaterally she made a decision; “she took some and ate it.” Again, when he saw his helper transgressing unilaterally the man at a minimum *ought* to have forbidden her, but he did not. Though he “was with her” he let her eat – and so reneged on his responsibility as leader. In fact, “he ate” also, and so failed the more in his task as leader.

The Lord God after the fall confronted the human race with their transgression. Scripture’s formulation is striking: “The Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (Gen 3:9) God did not call to

the woman, nor did He call to the man and the woman, but He summoned “the man.” Herein God showed that He – despite the fall – continued to uphold the ordinance He established in Paradise, namely, that the man is the leader and hence carries the responsibility, and the woman is his helper. That’s why Paul can write that “sin entered the world through one *man*” (Rom 5:12) – not through “one woman” or through “two people, a man and a woman.”

The fall happened through a role reversal of man and woman

Later Paul mentions the transgressor by name, and does not mention Eve but Adam (Rom 5:14). In another place Paul can write, “As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22). Though Eve was the initial transgressor (as Paul well knows, see 1 Timothy 2:14), the responsibility for the fall belongs with Adam since he received from God the position of leadership and authority.

Penalty

It’s this same perspective that makes God’s penalty on the man and the woman so striking, as recorded in Genesis 3:15-19. Consider the following points.

1. In the hearing of the man and his wife, God announced to the serpent that God would “put enmity between you and the woman” (Gen 3:15). The warfare would not be between the serpent and the man, but between the serpent and the woman. Not the offspring of the man would crush the serpent, but the offspring of the woman. Make no mistake: God was as

mighty to bring His Son into the world through a man as through a woman. But in declaring an antithesis between the serpent and “the woman,” and adding that the ultimate victory over sin and Satan would occur through the seed of the woman, God deliberately passed the man by – and here was an implicit judgment on his failure to give the required leadership in the face of Satan’s temptation.

2. After His address to the serpent, the Lord God turned to speak to the woman. “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you’” (Gen 3:16). To be clear: the curse here is not in the role of motherhood, for receiving children was part of God’s ordinance on the day God created man and woman (Gen 1:27, 28). The curse here lies in the pain that will characterize pregnancy, birth, and child rearing.

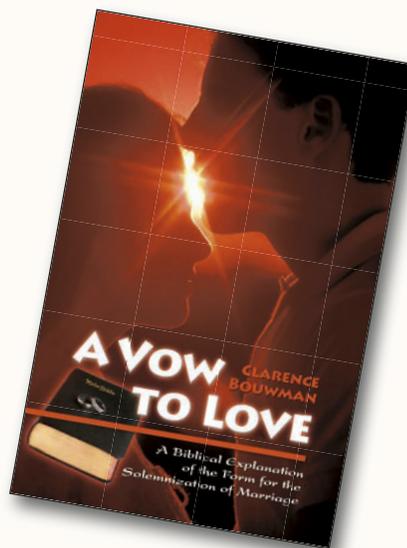
Of greater interest to our topic, however, is God’s closing words to the woman: “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Gen 3:16b). The reference to “desire” has led some readers to think that God speaks of the woman’s sexual appetite for her husband. That is incorrect. Neither before nor after the fall into sin is there anything wrong with sexual desire; this desire is not a curse. The point is what one does with that desire, and that’s a topic to which we need to return in a later chapter.

Others have wondered how to understand the word “will” in the closing words of this text. Does the word “will” reflect a command: the man will (=must)

rule over the woman? Or does the word “will” reflect a prophecy: in the brokenness of a fallen world, the man will (though he ought not to) rule over the woman? If it is the latter, it’s said, redemption in Christ will mean that the Christian husband will resist any temptation to “rule over” his wife, and the Christian woman will not quietly accept the man’s domination.

The significance of these words becomes evident when we lay them beside God’s words to Cain one chapter later. When Cain was angry because God did not look with favour on his offering, the Lord addressed Cain about the sin that was crouching at his door: “It [sin] desires to have you, but you must master it” (Gen 4:7b). The Hebrew of these two sentences (3:16b and 4:7b) is exactly the same, except for appropriate changes in person and gender. The significance of God’s words to Cain is clear: sin desires to have you, to control you, but you must not let it happen; you must rule over sin. That is: because of sin’s desire, Cain has an obligation to resist sin and to rule over sin.

This clarifies God’s words to the woman. The woman desires to control her husband,¹ but the husband is not to let it happen; he must rule over the woman – according to the position God had given in Paradise. God’s penalty on the fallen human race is that the role reversal that characterized the fall itself would trouble human life in the course of history; the woman would continue to seek to dominate, but the man must continue to resist her effort and be the leader. Because of his



By Clarence Bouwman

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depravity, however, the man’s leadership too often comes across as either weak or tyrannical – both of which in turn fills the woman with increased resentment against the man and more attempt to usurp his leadership. This struggle between the man and the woman has been the driving force of so much sorrow in the course of human history. Only through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit is the man made able to give good leadership to his wife, and so rule her in a God-pleasing fashion. Similarly, only through the renewing work of the Spirit is the woman made able to resist the urge to dominate her husband and accept his leadership.

3. After speaking to the woman, the Lord addressed the man. “To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree. . . cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. . . until you return to the ground’” (Gen 3:17-19). Notice: God faults Adam with two transgressions here. The second transgression is the one we typically think of when we recall the fall into sin,

namely, Adam’s eating from the forbidden tree. The one God mentions first, however, is Adam’s failure to act according to the leadership role God had assigned in relation to his wife; God faults him for listening to his wife. That God mentions this failure at all, let alone mentions it first, points up how much God insists that the *man* is the leader and so is ultimately responsible for the fall into sin. Similarly, the curse that God pronounces on the ground is “because of you,” and in the Hebrew the “you” distinctly refers to Adam alone and not to his wife; he is responsible for the sweat and tears that shall characterize all human labour. Again, it’s Adam, not Eve, who is told that “you [will] return to the ground,” that is, will die. Certainly, she will die too, of course, for as goes the head so goes the member, but the onus lies here on the man and his responsibility. He first of all must bear the penalty for his disobedience to God’s ordinance of being the leader to his wife.

Conclusion: in the way God responds to their fall, it is clear that God maintains the hierarchy

He established in the beginning. The man is the leader and ultimately responsible; the buck stops with him.

After Paradise

In the years of human history after the fall into sin, the Lord God has steadfastly maintained the ordinance of the beginning, namely, the man is the head and the woman is not. Consider the following sample of biblical data:

- Only masculine names are found in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 10. Obviously, women were involved in bringing forth the next generation, but the Holy Spirit does not mention them because the man is the leader – and to mention the leader is to mention at the same time those over whom he is responsible.
- God did not command the woman Sarai to come out of Ur, but the man Abram (Gen 12:1). Had God so wished, He could have addressed His command to Sarai, so that *she* take the initiative to lead her household (including Abram) out of Ur. That God addressed Abram was deliberate, and in full accord with His principle of male headship as expressed in Genesis 2.
- Amongst His people Israel God appointed only men to the priesthood and to be elders (Exod 28:1; Exod 18:21, 25). God was sovereign and therefore free to appoint to positions of leadership persons of either gender. His decision to appoint only men to positions of leadership flowed from the respective positions He gave to man and woman in the beginning.
- The formulation of God's directive about the jealous

husband is instructive. "Then the priest shall put the woman under oath and say to her, 'If no other man has slept with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you'" (Num 5:19). Here the NIV does not render the Hebrew accurately, for (as most other translations also have it) the Hebrew does not speak of being "married to your husband" but of being "under your husband's authority." It's a formulation fully in line with the lessons of Genesis 2.

God could have addressed His command to Sarai

- When the Lord God spoke of Israelites in general, whether male or female, He consistently used the pronoun "he" (see, for example, Leviticus 1:3). This was not discrimination against the female, nor was this a culturally conditioned manner of speaking, but it was a formulation that flowed directly from the structure God ordained in the beginning. In the eyes of the Creator, the masculine pronoun does not exclude women, but gives recognition to the fact that woman is part of man and therefore the masculine pronoun can stand for all people. Inasmuch as God's view on things remains the true measure of reality, today's people do well to recognize that intermingling the pronouns "he" and "she," or even using the phrase "he/she," does injustice to God's ordinance. Similarly, a gender-neutral translation of the

Bible does not do justice to God's revelation.

These and so many more examples point up that the norm God ordained in the beginning remains the standard for the human race, namely, that the man is the head and the woman is his helper. Though both man and woman are equal before God, their functions in life are different. "Leadership" characterizes the man; "helping" characterizes the woman.

Only in marriage?

A question arises. Was it God's intent that this hierarchy be true for marriage alone? Is the man to fill the role of leader only in marriage, but not in the world of business, education, politics, etc?

The division of life into various realms is ultimately a manmade division, not reflected in Scripture. When the Lord God put the man in the Garden with the mandate to "work it and care for it" (Gen 2:15), Adam was made the leader of every aspect of his existence. When God in His wisdom added a wife to his life, Adam's mandate to give leadership was not limited to their moments at home but also to their time working in the Garden. Eve's conversation with the devil and Adam's negligence in giving leadership was in that instance obviously not limited to marital matters, but extended also to matters of life and death, of economics and business, politics and education and the judiciary, etc. All of life is of one piece, and Adam's failure in relation to his wife in Genesis 3 affected every area of life dramatically.

¹ The NIV translates too loosely with its rendition: "your desire will be for your husband."



Vineyard Congregation Welcomes a New Minister

Installation

After nine attempts, the Lincoln congregation received as pastor Rev. D. Wynia from the Wyoming, Ontario URC. Rev. Wynia was installed by his father-in-law, Rev. R. Sikkema – URC-emeritus, on August 17 during the afternoon service. This being the holiday season for most ministers, the inaugural service was delayed until September 6. Rev. Sikkema based his sermon on John 1:35-39 having as theme: "Preaching Christ; what John sees, what Jesus sees, and what we will see."

Rev. Sikkema is no stranger to the church of Lincoln, having served her bi-weekly as minister for almost two years of the four and a half year vacancy. He leaves a profound memory and testimony with all of the members. During the inaugural service, on September 17, Rev. Wynia preached on 2 Corinthians 5:11-15, having as theme; "Paul reveals the motives for the Ministry of the Gospel," where Paul preaches the gospel because he knew the fear of the Lord, he was compelled by the love of the Lord, and because his listeners should live for the Lord. Rev. Wynia emphasized that the office of the ministry of the Word is the task of the minister; he has authority to carry out this ministry and must continued to preach in



defence of the gospel as a messenger proclaiming salvation to the people of God. Our lives will bring about a transformation when we no longer live for ourselves but when it is hidden in Christ.

Rev. Wynia successfully underwent a colloquium at Classis on August 13, which was also attended by several URC ministers from the area and members of several congregations. Following the installation service, letters of welcome were read from the Wainfleet-Dunnville, Attercliffe, and Smithville churches. Rev. J. Bouwers (Jordan-URC) read a passage from 1 Peter 2 and took the opportunity to welcoming him to the geographical area of Niagara. He also expressed a "loss" at seeing Rev. Wynia leave the URC

(Federation), but concluded that "our loss is your gain," reflecting on the steps which we hope will unify our churches. Sister churches Grassie and Spring Creek also extended their congratulations and well wishes to the congregation and minister. Rev. Cl. VanderVelde then welcomed Rev. Wynia into Classis Niagara.

Welcome

On the evening of September 19 the congregation gathered to officially welcome the Wynia family. Master of ceremony Br. N. Schuurman mentioned that this occasion would not only focus on welcoming the minister and his family but also to say farewell to Rev. Sikkema and his wife. He further stated that we may indeed

celebrate God's goodness experienced in the past but also for the future, as God has not left us on our own but continues to provide for his church. First on the agenda was the Anchor Band – our home town "musicians" – under the able leadership of Br. R. Heemsker. They played some lively pieces followed by Psalms and a Hymn for the benefit of the Wynias, who will undoubtedly miss their Psalter Hymnal. Several elementary school children took part in welcome songs composed of words for the new family. The retiring chairman, Br. G. VanIperen, officially welcomed the minister and his family on behalf of Council and congregation. He expressed the hope that as minister "your labour may be fruitful in God's house." Appreciation was also extended to Rev. Cl. VanderVelde for his assistance as councillor during our vacancy period. Br. N. Schuurman then thanked Rev. Sikkema for his work during the past two years and



Rev. and Mrs. Wynia

his wife, who is his indispensable help-mate. The Sikkemas and Wynias were presented with gifts and flowers which were gratefully acknowledged. The program continued with the presentation of a colourful mail-box for the Wynias, indicating that the last name is to be pronounced as a long

"Y" (wine-ee-ah). This was followed with singing from children of the VBS, a musical duet on piano and flute, a solo from a young member, and a poem highlighting the life and calling of the minister by several members of the YPS. The Men's Society put Rev. Wynia through a power point presentation titled "Colloquium Practicum," questioning his knowledge about various topics, whereby the correct answers would be the last name of ministers in our Federation. The women society presented the family with a scrapbook identifying the members followed by a quiz and the presentation of a GPS unit listing the whereabouts of the members and some nostalgia bringing the evening to a close. Rev. Wynia spoke words of appreciation also on behalf of his wife and family ending with the reading from Ephesians 3:14-21. In conclusion, Br. P. Sloots, clerk of consistory, requested the singing of Hymn 48:3 and 4 and led in thanksgiving and prayer, ending this festive evening.



John Calvin School students





Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Patricia Gelms

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him."

Romans 8:28a

What a blessing to be a child of the Lord. We have thought on this great blessing over the past month and came across a beautiful poem that expressed this idea in a clever way. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." It happens sometimes that a child of the Lord becomes discouraged about a time or an event in his or her life. If this happens to us, then, let us remember to be patient and wait . . . we do not know the whole story, but God does, because He has written it already. He has a marvelous plan for our lives and though we do not always know what the plan is, we can know that God will work all things together for our good.

Moses and Romans 8:28

"All things work together for good,"
The woman sighed with a shiver
As slowly she launched the little ark
In the heat on a sluggish river.
"All things. . ." she muttered when in the palace
Among alien scholars she saw him
And thought of his future. . . and all she could think of
Was Lot in a pitiless Sodom. . .
"Together for good..." In his fine attire
And she in her homespun dress?
Could he survive all the lures he'd meet. . .
Wealth. . . honor. . . sorceress
". . .for good. . .?" and sudden her son is gone,
And rumor speaks of murder,
And then, much later the grapevine says
He now is a mere sheep herder.

Year after year, "together for good"
Alone among rocks and mountains
In the cutting sand on a whistling wind
He remembers the opulent fountains,
The featherbeds and the gourmet food,
While tending his doltish sheep
And wonders how things work together for good
As he dines on his tasteless meat.
What "good" can come from this furnace-existence
Where Sinai grimly towers
While year after year his life dissolves
With all his virulent power?
What "good," this wandering hither and yon,

A shepherd who might have been prince,
His scepter only a rough hewn crook. . .?
The comparison makes him wince.
Like the back of his had he knows the sand:
After forty years, who wouldn't!
He doubts that "all thing work for good."
He doubts, though he knows he shouldn't.

Then a burning bush that doesn't burn
And a Voice that demands a heeding!
"I Am" is thundering from the smoke,
And a fateful path is leading
To an awesome task. The wiser now,
He shoulders his shepherd's rod,
Believing all things must work for good
For a person who loves his God.

Margaret Penner Toews

Hymn 27:1

*If God is on our side, against us shall be none.
He did not spare His own, His well-beloved Son,
But gave Him up for us that He might save us truly.
Will He with Him not give us all things free and fully?
Who then will yet accuse those whom He has elected?
'Tis God who justifies in Christ, the Resurrected.*

Birthdays in December:

- 1 SANDY SPYKSMA will be 27**
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 10 JAMES KAMMINGA will be 24**
Box 1125, Carman, MB ROG OJO
- 16 JULIE KAMMINGA will be 20**
Box 1125, Carman, MB ROG OJO

Congratulations with your birthdays. We extend to you our wishes for a wonderful day with your family and your friends. We also wish you the Lord's blessing in your "new" year and pray that our heavenly father will give you joy and strength and peace as you live from day to day, also remembering that you live for his glory. Till next month,

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Further Discussion

Responses to Editorial "Missionary Go Home"

In the September 12 issue of *Clarion* I wrote an editorial about the film "Missionary Go Home." I asked for and received some reactions to that editorial.

The first reaction was from Rev. C. van Spronsen who is involved with the ICRC and is quite up to date on recent developments. Thanks for your reply. It was printed, along with my response, in the last issue of *Clarion* (No. 23). Please note the information carefully. In that issue was also a letter from Jack deVos and my reply. I received another letter as follows:

Thanks for your "Missionary Go Home" article last month. You invite questions, so I thought I would take you up on it.

It seems to me that there is a more fundamental question that needs to be answered in relation to what happened in Papua. That is, what can we learn from an approach to missions which has as a result of over fifty years of involvement a group of churches which are financially dependant on foreign financial aid? There is something wrong with this picture. If there is "rice Christianity" as you suggest, the fault certainly also lies with those giving the rice. Perhaps

the solution to the problem is not who we send to "the field," but how we think about doing mission work in the first place.

Maybe if the Dutch churches had done the mission work differently this would all be a non-issue. What can we learn from this for our own mission activities?

Perhaps this is more just some out-loud thinking than a question. If you have any thoughts I'd be interested.

Cheers,
Winston Bosch

Thanks for your letter. Indeed, we need much thought regarding our method of mission work in this new, post-colonial era. That's why I wrote about the film "Missionary Go Home."

Finally, I quote a few lines from a longer letter which I submit anonymously.

I recently read with great interest your article entitled "Missionary Go Home!" I must say I really appreciate articles such as the one you wrote which highlight issues relevant to "foreign" mission. As I see it, informed discussions of issues in mission are important if our churches are to develop in maturity in this important task. I do not say this arrogantly as if I know more than others, but my practical experiences as a member of a Mission Board in

Australia and then as a mission worker in PNG for the last five years lead me to reflect on the fact that we need to be conscientious in the way we engage in the work of mission so as to avoid "amateurism," as Dr de Visser put it in the recent Mission conference.

In general I agree with one of your conclusions, rooted as it is in a major conference decision, that, "churches closest to a mission field should conduct mission there." However I do struggle somewhat in applying it to the situation that Toronto finds itself in. Toronto decided to enter the work in PNG in 1997/8. This is obviously after the 1989 ICRC meeting that you refer to. Should that decision have been adhered to, it is very possible that Toronto would have decided not to enter PNG. However putting that to the side, I do wonder at this "man made" rule when I observe how the Lord has allowed the work to progress in PNG. In conclusion, while I agree in principal with the ICRC decision I remain convinced that Canada's work, by God's grace, has progressed and flourished in a way that would likely not have occurred should they have left it to churches in that geographical area.

Having said all that, it is possible you also included Toronto's work in PNG in your statement that "existing projects can continue." Is this the case? I guess then my rejoining question would be: for how long? For my part I do understand that Canada's years in PNG are numbered. I do agree that having older seasoned men is a great advantage to the field. However, I am not convinced that older men, seasoned by ministry in a Western church, will be more adept and ready to deal with local church members and leaders. A missionary's "success" on the field is also and maybe more dependant on language and culture training, the person's character, and the

kind of mandate as well as the support provided by his mission board. Another question I would raise at this point is: how transferable are the skills of the pastorate to a mission context? On more than one occasion I have heard it said that the work of a missionary and that of a regular minister are dissimilar, calling on different sets of skills and abilities.

For the most part I readily agree with most of what you wrote. I'm not looking for this response to be published; it is more intended as a personal feedback to what you have written. Thank you again for writing this article. May it serve to stimulate the churches

in its obedience to the Great Commission.

Thanks for your letter. The situation of Toronto is rather unique because this church has always since the 1950s worked in Papua (in the area known as Irian). They are now sending a highly-qualified and seasoned husband and wife team to the same region. I also agree that older men are not by definition better suited for the mission field but some are.

I enjoyed this discussion. My purpose was not to discourage anyone but to give down-to-earth, sober advice. The mission field is not an easy place to live. Perhaps indeed in our time other ways must be found. At least we need to discuss the mission work together.

Cl. Stam



Press Release: Classis Niagara August 2008

Rev C.J. VanderVelde called the meeting to order on behalf of the convening church of Tintern and requested the delegates to sing from Hymn 40:1, 2. He also read from Revelation 1:9-20 and asked in prayer for a blessing over the meeting. He welcomed the brothers, including Rev. J. Huijgen, attending for the first time as a delegate, and Rev. R. Wynia, present for a colloquium. The guests were also welcomed.

The delegates of the Church of Tintern examined the credentials. All delegates were present with one being an alternate. None of the churches had provided any instructions. Classis was declared constituted. The suggested moderamen took their places: Rev. S. C. Van Dam as chair, Rev. K. Kok as clerk, and Rev. D. de Boer as vice chair. Rev. Van Dam thanked the church of Spring Creek for the preparations for Classis. Special circumstances were remembered. In particular the church of Smithville is now vacant after the departure of Rev. Souman. Rev. Huijgen was installed into his office in the church Attercliffe. Also, Br. Rolf den Hollander, examined at the previous Classis Niagara, accepted the call to Winnipeg Grace and will shortly need to undergo his peremptory examination by a Classis Manitoba.

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Rev. J. Huijgen was asked if he would sign the subscription form. The form was read, and Rev. Huijgen confirmed before the delegates his commitment to carry out his work faithfully in agreement with the Confessions

and the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The church of Lincoln requested a Colloquium for Rev. Wynia. The necessary documents were presented by the Church of Lincoln. Rev. Kok led the first part of the colloquium with a discussion on doctrine. Rev. VanderVelde led the next part of the colloquium, focusing on the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches. In closed session Classis decided that the Colloquium was satisfactory. In open session Rev. Van Dam congratulated Rev. Wynia and expressed thankfulness for the gifts and knowledge he has received and wished him the Lord's blessing in his work as the Lord's servant in Lincoln. The Church at Tintern was asked to represent Classis Niagara at the installation of Rev. Wynia.

Rev. Joel Dykstra expressed greetings to the assembly on behalf of Classis Southern Ontario of the United Reformed Churches of North America and wished the Lord's blessings to the Churches. Rev. Van Dam thanked Rev. Dykstra and expressed thankfulness for the growing unity and bond between the churches of the respective federations.

The chairman questioned the churches according to Article 44, C.O. The churches affirmed that they maintain the ministry of the offices and that they uphold the decisions of the major assemblies. There were no requests for the advice of Classis.

The Church of Tintern reported that the archives of Classis are complete and have been properly kept by the church of Attercliffe during the past year. The church of Grassie reported that the books of the treasurer have been audited and found to be complete and in

good order. The treasurer was discharged for the period covered by the audit and thanked (in absentia) for his work. A report was received from the classis treasurer. The assessment for Classis for the upcoming year will be \$1 per communicant member and \$2 per communicant member for Regional Synod.

The Church of Smithville had previously submitted its Report re: the Fund for Needy Churches to the churches. Classis decided to assess the churches an amount of \$35 per communicant member for the support of the Church at Bluebell.

The Church at Attercliffe was appointed to be convening church for the next Classis Niagara on December 17, 2008. Suggested officers: Rev. VanderVelde as chair, Rev. Kok as vice chair, and Rev. Van Dam as clerk. Br. D. VanAmerongon Sr. was reappointed as treasurer. Rev. Kok and Rev. Huijgen were appointed as church visitors, with Rev. VanderVelde as alternate. Rev. Huijgen and Rev. Kok were appointed to Regional Synod 2008 in Chatham with Rev. VanderVelde and Rev. Van Dam as alternates. Elders W. Oosterhoff and F. Stoffels were also delegated with elders H. Olij and J. Van Zanten as alternates. The church at Attercliffe was directed to invite fraternal delegates to the next Classis. Rev. Van Dam is appointed to represent Classis Niagara at the next Classis Southern Ontario of the URCNA.

Personal question period was used. The Acts of Classis were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and approved.

Rev. Van Dam led in prayer and asked the brothers to sing from Psalm 133:1, 2. The chairman then closed the meeting.

D. de Boer,
Clerk at the time
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