



# Clarion

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# Remembering with thankfulness and concern

By W.W.J. VanOene

Once again all who gave their lives in several wars fought since 1914 are remembered. Wreaths are laid at the cenotaphs which honour those fallen, speeches are given, and two minutes of silence are observed, at least by a very small percentage of the population. Life has to go on, does it not? And when the last sounds of "The Last Post" have faded away, everyone returns home or goes back to work. The progress of time has mitigated the pain suffered by the loss of dear ones. So many things have happened since the last war came to an end, and to many of the younger generation November 11 may ring a bell, but only in the far distance.

Several times in the past dark clouds hung over the Remembrance Day ceremonies. Now here, now there a conflict threatened to break out and to grow into a full-scale war.

Things are different today, are they not? Surely, the conflict in Nicaragua is still continuing, and El Salvador is not quiet yet either. Skirmishes continue here and there. But is there not a remarkable change of climate almost all over the world?

Communism as a system has proved itself to be a failure and is bankrupt. People are turning away from it more and more. Hungary no longer wants to be known as a communist state, Poland's government is non-communist, even though some of its members holding key posts still belong to that party. Erich Honecker has been forced out in East Germany, and an ultimate re-unification of the two Germanies is not entirely impossible. In Russia itself an astounding openness is displayed and facts are admitted which until recently were staunchly denied. What was considered impossible five years ago is at present almost the order of the day: strikes and demonstrations occur regularly in the U. S. S. R. The Baltic republics show stirrings of nationalism and strive towards regaining their autonomy and sovereignty.

Are all these things not very encouraging signs? And does this not show that those who died in all the wars since 1914 did not bring that "ultimate sacrifice" in vain? We can predict that at all the Remembrance Day ceremonies it will be proclaimed that, thanks to those who died, we live in a better, safer, and more harmonious world. Here and there a politician will also use the opportunity modestly to stress his own role in the elimination of the threats.

Will those who were born later and basically have never

known the horrors of bombs falling and bullets whistling, of screaming airplanes and maimed bodies, now propagate disarmament? What is the sense of keeping strong armed forces and spending untold billions of dollars on equipping them for a war which may never come and which seems more unlikely now than some years ago?

"With Mikhael Gorbachev's freedom march continuing, is the Soviet Union still a threat? This is a pressing question for North Atlantic Treaty organization leaders," one newspaper remarked.

We are thankful for the absence of large-scale and world-wide conflicts. Another war would be a global one, and chemical and atomic weaponry would lay large areas in ruin at the cost of no one knows how many millions of lives. There might not be a victor, only losers.

We, too, remember those who were instrumental in obtaining and securing our freedom from oppression. We are equally thankful for the apparent relaxation of international tensions and relations.

However, we should not forget that the greatest threat to true peace and harmony has never come from guns and bullets, from bombs and poison gas. It is for this reason that our gratitude is mixed with concern, and then most certainly not because we think

that we must cast a dark shadow and gloom upon the celebration and the gratitude.

When the Lord sent wars, many people became religious and crowded the church buildings. However, as soon as the wars were over, attendance dropped dramatically. Many so-called churches became the center of revolution, and the "sermons" turned more and more into political speeches and humanistic orations. In Poland as well as in East Germany the churches became the center of political agitation and reform. We hardly have to mention South Africa, where resistance and revolution against the government is propagated by one who even received the Nobel Peace Prize!

The wars did not bring the nations to the confession that it was more than deserved. Neither did they confess that it is the Lord who causes wars to cease. Nor do they acknowledge His hand when a massive earthquake causes buildings and roadways to collapse, crushing people to death. The only reaction is the question who was responsible for faulty design and

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***"... using the  
freedom we enjoy  
to fight the good  
fight of the faith."***

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how similar destruction can be prevented in the future.

Also on this year's Remembrance Day we shall remember those who fell in the various wars which took place in the past seventy-five years. Three quarters of a century have elapsed since the deadly shot was fired in Serajewo.

There won't be many among us who have any remembrance of that first world war. There are still many who remember vividly the terror and destruction caused in the second one. And what do they consider to be the most important aspect of today's celebration?

When the Lord gave freedom after the Second World War, we in the Western world were able again to come together in total freedom to serve the Lord, to have our societies function again, and to have our press free to appear and free from outside interference and control. Our schools were again safe from the threat of infiltration by satanic forces.

In many of the eastern countries no such freedom dawned, even though it seems that at present better conditions and more

possibilities are in the offing. For this we are grateful, thankful that our brotherhood in the still communist world receives some more breathing space.

We are concerned as well. The changes in Russia, Poland, Hungary, and other countries are no *fundamental* changes. The military threat may have diminished, the different face that is shown in many of the east-block countries hides the same basic convictions, and the danger is very present that people think that, since the military threat has lessened, the unbelieving theories are less dangerous as well.

Remembering those who fell in the armed clashes, we at the same time make sure that we put on the whole armour of God, using the freedom we enjoy to fight the good fight of the faith.

It is for the opportunity to do so that we are most grateful.

In this battle there are only victors over the one and only loser, the prince of darkness.

Through Him who with us sideth.



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# The elder as preserver and nurturer of life in the covenant: two questions<sup>1</sup>

By C. Van Dam

## The decline and recovery of the eldership

In spite of the long and illustrious history of the office of elder, the office was eventually taken up in the priesthood in what became the Roman Catholic church. It was not until the time of the Reformation that this office came into its own again.

The story of how the office of elder was rediscovered is an intriguing one, but lies outside the scope of this presentation. Suffice it to say that it was especially under Calvin (who could build on the work of Oecolampadius and Martin Bucer) that a true Biblical insight into the office could be had. However, it should also be mentioned that Calvin himself apparently never came to a fully consistent and clearly focused Scriptural exposition of the office of elder. This had consequences for the churches of the Reformation.

What should have our attention now is how we can learn from each other with a view to this office, keeping in mind the brief review of Biblical data that has earlier had our attention. There is much food for thought in discussing the eldership as Reformed and Presbyterian confessors. However, since this is but an introductory paper, let us start modestly and consider two very basic and probably related issues, namely, the preparation for the office and the length of service.

## Special training for the office?

In view of the high demands of the office, should elders receive some type of special training as preparation for the office? This matter is not a new one within the history of the Reformed churches. Already in the seventeenth century Jakobus

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**“ And let them also be tested first ... ”**

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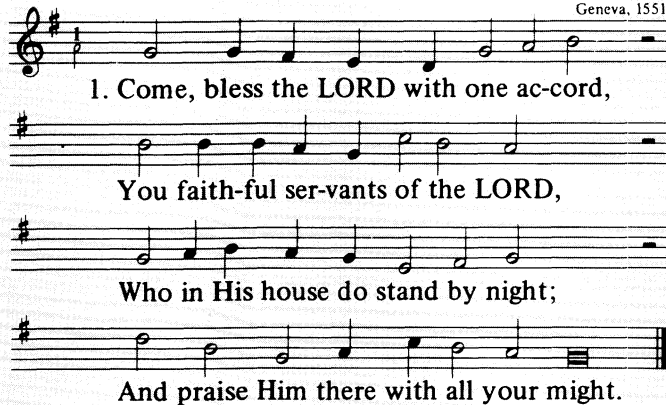
Koeleman argued for such a training on the ground of 1 Timothy 3:10 so that the churches would receive competent and knowledgeable elders. The Rev. Dr. A.C. van Raalte in 1839 gave lessons to elders and deacons. Also, in the Classis Apeldoorn it was for a long time the custom to make inquiries about the Bible knowledge of elders and deacons. In 1913 Prof. L. Lindeboom defended the necessity of a separate training for the elders. His reason was basically that the many duties required of the elder demanded it. Dr. H. Bouwman, however, opposed him.<sup>2</sup> As

reasons he adduced that, first, the Reformed character of the office would be threatened, for a new type of clergy could be the end result. Secondly, if elders are only chosen from people specially educated for the office, then many will be bypassed. Thirdly, not scientific instruction, but the practical training received in the catechism class, in the Bible study societies, and in their own investigation of the Scriptures is important. Fourthly, the more modest and better qualified would not participate. Fifthly, not all would support such an institution of training and it would thus be doomed to failure. Sixthly, it would promote life-long eldership. Seventhly, the admonition of Paul in 1 Timothy 3:10 that the deacons be tested in the first place refers to practical life experience, not to an academic examination.

Experience has taught many a pastor that these counter-arguments of Dr. Bouwman are not all to the point. It is the elders themselves who usually ask why there is not some sort of training (and training within an institute is usually not envisaged). Such questions are raised in the awareness of the burden and importance of the office of elder. Should not every effort be made to have elders who are as well prepared as possible? It has been suggested that although there is no explicit Scriptural demand for any special training for the elder, yet, the fact that

## PSALM 134

Geneva, 1551



1. Come, bless the LORD with one accord,  
You faithful servants of the LORD,  
Who in His house do stand by night;  
And praise Him there with all your might.

“teaching elders” (ministers) are given an extensive and detailed training does suggest that something is amiss when “ruling elders” receive none whatsoever. Their tasks, although differentiated, have much in common. They are both called elders in the Scripture (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17) and they both labour with the Word. Could such a training be implemented and at the same time take into account some of the concerns of Dr. Bouwman?

Let me pass on the suggestions of Lawrence R. Eyres, who as an Orthodox Presbyterian minister wrestled with this issue. First, there should be a return to the practice of encouraging and grooming young men for possible leadership. It is important that churches recognize gifted men. Secondly, these men need some sort of training. Of great importance is a good grasp of doctrine and how that arises out of Scripture. A knowledge of church government is also important. Thirdly, there should be training in ministering the Word. After all, an elder is a co-shepherd with the pastor. A good manual would go a long way here. Fourthly, elders-elect should be tested in the areas mentioned above before they are ordained.<sup>3</sup> The above list of suggestions is not an isolated phenomenon in the Presbyterian world and it has several attractive elements.

To be sure, not all Presbyterians have some form of training. The Free Church of Scotland, for example, does not appear to have anything in place. On the other hand, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church specifies in the 1980 edition of their *The Form of Government* that one is

normally eligible for election to the office only after he has

— received appropriate training under the direction of or with the approval of the session, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership. Men of ability and piety in the congregation shall be encouraged by the session to prepare themselves for the offices of ruling elder or deacon so that their study and opportunities for service may be provided for in a systematic and orderly way.<sup>4</sup>

A specific example may illustrate how such a preparation has been provided. An elder ordained in a Canadian Presbyterian church related to me how he initially was interviewed (in effect, examined) by his Session to determine his interest and desire in being ordained as a ruling elder (1 Timothy 3:1; 5:22). Only when the elders were satisfied and he understood the responsibilities of eldership and had the necessary qualifications for the office, was he told to prepare himself for a pre-ordination examination (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:2-7). Such preparation could involve being trained formally by the minister. The three-hour examination was open to the congregation and covered Bible knowledge, Old and New Testament exegesis, Reformed doctrine, Church History, and Pastoral Care. The only difference from an examination of a minister (“teaching elder”) was that Biblical languages were omitted and there was no sermon proposal. Also congregation members were able to ask questions if they so desired. After a successful examination

the congregation voted him as elder.<sup>5</sup> Such or similar procedures strike me as doing justice to the great importance of the office of elder and would go a long way to meeting some of the concerns that many new elders now voice. Furthermore, it avoids some of the concerns Bouwman raised over against a more institutionalized form of training. Should those who generally speaking have given little thought to the training of elders prior to their election and ordination (like the Canadian Reformed Churches<sup>6</sup>) not start thinking of how we could help in the equipping of men for this very important but demanding office that Christ has given His church? After all, the bottom line is that the life with God be nurtured as well as possible by the effective ministrations of the full covenant Word.

### Length of service

A second point is the length of service. Among those with both Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds, this matter can be discussed in the realization that our specific histories exhibit both possibilities, namely life service or term eldership. Calvin was apparently in favour of term eldership (of one year), but he did not exclude the possibility of a longer time period. In his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 Calvin wrote: “And at the end of the year after their election by the Council they [i.e. the elders] shall present themselves to the Seigneurie so that it may be decided whether they should be retained or replaced, though, so long as they are fulfilling their duties faithfully, it will be inexpedient to replace them frequently without good cause.” In Scotland, *The First Book of Discipline* [1560] reflects Calvin’s view. In the Eighth Head (Touching the Election of Elders and Deacons) we read: “The election of Elders and Deacons ought to be used every year once . . . lest of long continuance of such officers men presume upon the liberty of the kirk. It hurteth not that one be received in office more years than one, so that he be appointed yearly by common and free election.” Here we see one of the primary motives for a yearly election; namely, the fear that some by virtue of their office may “presume upon [i.e. usurp] the liberty of the kirk.” This was not an idle threat, for, somewhat like the way in Geneva elders were chosen from civil councils, in Scotland elders were initially taken from the Lords of the Congregation and the Burgh Councillors.

When the *Second Book of Discipline* was adopted in 1578, the office of elder was recognized as a permanent one (although all did not need to serve simultaneously or continuously) and thus, rather than being appointed annually, they now entered the office for life. This was re-

affirmed by the Act of the General Assembly of 1582. However, "it took some time for the impact of these acts of the Assembly to take effect, as there is evidence of annual elections of elders continuing to take place, while in 1656 it was still believed that 'the order and practice' of the Church was regular elections."<sup>7</sup> As late as 1705 an overture was presented to General Assembly asking that new elections for elders be for a four-year term. Other evidence suggests that "the eldership was regarded as an annual office till the beginning of the eighteenth century."<sup>8</sup> It is clear, however, that lifetime eldership was the official norm and as far as I know that is still the case in the Presbyterian churches associated with the ICRC.

In the Reformed Churches, life eldership was known; but, eventually all elders had a limited term of office. Elders were chosen for life in the Reformed congregations in sixteenth-century London and Cologne. Questions were raised about the practice among the Dutch refugee congregations in England. A conference held in 1560 dealt (among other items) also with this point. It was decided to maintain life eldership for the following reasons, given here in summarized form. First, there is an essential unity of the office of minister of the Word and elder. The ministers are called elders and the elders are called bishops or shepherds (1 Peter 5:1; Acts 20:28). Secondly, those who served faithfully as elders or deacons were not removed from their office but were placed in the ministry of the Word, as Stephen and Philip were (cf. Acts 6:8-14; 21:8). Only Nicolaus is removed from his office, but then due to unfaithfulness (Revelation 2:15). Thirdly, the office is not temporary, for Paul exhorts the elders of Ephesus to take heed to themselves and to the flock without indicating how long they should serve. They are told to persevere. Fourthly, on a more practical level, from the fact that some elders had to leave the office in order to be able to provide for their families does not follow that it is profitable to have term eldership. As apprentices in normal life are trained for a long period of work in which experience becomes an important asset, so also the congregation is not served by having constantly new office-bearers. On a more practical level, the influence of hierarchial tendencies in the Church of England have been seen as important factors in the maintaining of lifetime eldership in the Dutch churches there.<sup>9</sup>

Also in the Netherlands, the practice of life eldership was not unknown. In North Holland, it was known until 1587 (possibly due to a lack of candidates). Also, it is of interest to note that the "provinciale synode" of Utrecht declared in

1612 that it was desirable for elders to be chosen for life although it recognized that this was no longer possible and thus accepted the established practice of term eldership. However, in the province of Groningen elders were chosen for life until the end of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, already very early in the history of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, namely, at the meeting in Wezel in 1568 and three years later at a synod in Emden, the idea of term eldership was strongly supported for practical reasons and became the accepted norm within the churches. Thus the reason for a restricted period of service for elders, as given at Wezel already, is that it is too heavy a burden and thus impacts negatively on their normal employment or business. This reason must be seen in the context of the persecution of those days. The Synod of Dordrecht 1578 also gave this as the chief reason (and it allowed for exceptions). However, that practical consideration was not the only reason. In requested advice to the Synod of Middelburg 1581, Professor L. Danaeus of Leiden gave as reasons for term eldership the following: first, Scripture does not demand life eldership; secondly, lifetime eldership can lead to ecclesiastical tyranny; thirdly, with term eldership more people can have an opportunity to get involved in the government of the church; and, fourthly, term eldership is now a general practice although, if desired, one can deviate from it.

## Some recent discussion on length of service

The issue of whether the length of office should be for life or not has been discussed in recent decades in both Presbyterian and Reformed circles. In 1955 John Murray felt it necessary to publish a strong article in favour of lifetime eldership when the Form of Government in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was being revised and a proposal had been made contending for term eldership.<sup>10</sup> After making clear that an elder can still be removed from or relieved of the office for a number of reasons, Murray gives the following Scriptural arguments. First, "there is no overt warrant from the New Testament for what we call 'term eldership'" (p. 352). Murray goes on to argue that inferences drawn from the New Testament militate against the practice. "The permanency of the gifts which qualify for the office, and the judgments of the church that Christ is calling this man to the exercise of the office" (p. 354) are inconsistent with a limited term, all the more when one considers that the gifts increase in fruitfulness and effectiveness with their use in time. Finally, there is "the unity of the office of ruling. In respect of ruling in the church of God, the ruling elder and the teaching elder are on complete parity" (p. 354). If there is no term office for the one, why should there be for the other? Murray even goes on to say that "one cannot but feel that the practice of



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term eldership for ruling elders is but a hangover of an unwholesome clericalism which has failed to recognize the basic unity of the office of elder and, particularly, the complete parity of all elders in the matter of government" (p. 355). Over against the argument that the minister of the Word makes this calling his life work, whereas the ruling elder does not, Murray responds, first, that this does not invalidate the permanency of the call to the office of elder; second, with respect to 1 Timothy 5:17-18, that the ruling elder can be remunerated on a part-time as well as full-time basis, and, third, that also the ruling elder is worthy of his hire.

Coming now to a discussion held in Canadian Reformed circles in 1974, we note that the Rev. W. Huizinga was asked (presumably by an office-bearers' conference) "to evaluate Scriptural data concerning the periodic retirement of elders and deacons (ad art. 27, C.O.), keeping in mind the historical developments in the Reformed churches in this matter." He concluded on the basis of the Old Testament evidence that "whenever the LORD appointed or had someone appointed to an office the office-bearer *usually* served for life unless the character of the office itself required only a short-term office-bearer. Only unfaithfulness is found as a reason for dismissal from office, for example, in the case of Saul."<sup>11</sup> As far as the New Testament evidence is concerned, he concluded that "the New Testament evidence gives us the IMPRESSION that elders and deacons were installed for life" (p. 5). The evidence brought forward dealt, first, with the continuity of the Old and New Testament office bearers; secondly, with the seriousness of the office (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:22). Once in office, the elder would stay an elder. Thirdly, some passages clearly give the impression of a life-long calling. For example, does aspiring to the office (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1), imply life-long service or only a few years? Acts 20:28 indicates that the Holy Spirit made the elders overseers of the flock. "Would the Holy Spirit say, for example, after three years, now you are no longer needed? You may go and I will call you again if I need you? Would this not be like a licensed tradesman saying to his apprentice, whom he has trained at great costs to himself: all right, you can go back home now and do your regular old job full-time again? Is this appointment by the Holy Spirit not easier to explain if we presuppose long-term instead of short-term eldership?" (p. 4). Rev. Huizinga then reiterated the arguments of the London congregation at the 1560 conference. His final conclusion is, however, that it is still questionable and debatable whether we should be forced to abandon the Reformed custom of peri-

odically retiring and replacing elders and deacons (p. 5).

The well-known H. Bouwman, in his work *Gereformeerde kerkrecht*, vol. 1 (pp. 607-608), stated summarily that although the New Testament gives the impression of office for life, yet those Reformed

**"It would seem to me that the arguments from Scripture for life eldership significantly outweigh those of term eldership."**

churches that were influenced by Calvin have decided on term eldership in order to avoid hierarchy and to increase the influence of the congregation on the government of the church. Further, one should not forget that the distinction between the teaching and the ruling elder was just starting to take shape in the first century.

It would seem to me that the arguments from Scripture for life eldership significantly outweigh those of term eldership. Obviously, there has been no unanimity on this matter in the history of the church and it thus seems unlikely to come about now. Another factor important within the context of this introduction is what would serve the congregation best. It would be good if our Presbyterian broth-

ers could later address this matter from their own experience for our mutual edification.

### Conclusion

The eldership of course includes many more issues than have been raised here. However, with respect to what has been broached in this introduction, it would appear that the office of elder merits continued study and stimulation in the church. The importance of this office is difficult to overestimate. All through the history of God's people the elders were used by the Lord as His instruments to stimulate and work for the preservation of the life with God in covenant holiness and faithfulness. Meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches should never forget this gift of our Lord Jesus Christ to His church and so lose touch with the daily concerns of the local congregation. The differences that exist among us in precisely how this office functions in the church can serve as a positive stimulant to considering this office again for the mutual benefit of us all.

<sup>1</sup>The second and final part of a paper prepared for the meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches held in Langley, 1989. In keeping with the nature of *Clarion*, the text has been simplified in places, especially in omitting virtually all the footnote material. For the complete text, see the upcoming *Proceedings* of this Conference.

<sup>2</sup>For what follows see Bouwman, *Gereformeerde kerkrecht*, I, (Kampen: Kok, 1928), 538-539.

<sup>3</sup>L.E. Eyres, *The Elders of the Church* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed 1979), pp. 55-57.

<sup>4</sup>*The Standards of Government, Discipline and Worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 80.

<sup>5</sup>Personal correspondence from elder Henry Moes, dated March 8, 1989, and used here with his permission. The Scripture references are his.

<sup>6</sup>The Rev. G. Van Dooren has stressed the importance of training for the office of elder (both before and after their ordination) in his pastoral ministry and in his capacity as lecturer of the Diaconological disciplines at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. However, to my knowledge, virtually nothing is being done in the way of special training to prepare men for the office of elder in these churches.

<sup>7</sup>Torrance, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 37 (1984), 506.

<sup>8</sup>Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder*, p. 204.

<sup>9</sup>See on the above, Bouwman, *Gereformeerde kerkrecht*, I, 603-605.

<sup>10</sup>John Murray, "Arguments Against Term Eldership," *Presbyterian Guardian*, February 15, 1955, and reprinted in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 1977) 351-356, especially 354.

<sup>11</sup>W. Huizinga, "Periodic Retirement of Elders and Deacons?," *Clarion* 23:6 (1974), 3. The emphases in this and a subsequent quotation are his.

## OUR COVER

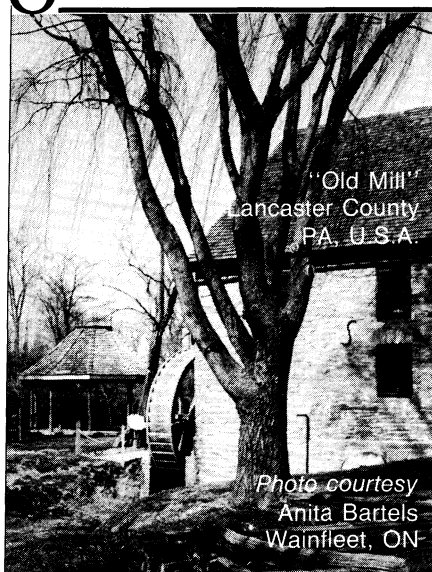


Photo courtesy Anita Bartels Wainfleet, ON

# Worthy of full acceptance<sup>1</sup>

By C. Trimp

A series of six articles by Prof. Dr. C. Trimp, published in "De Reformatie" (Nov. 14-Dec. 19, 1987). Authorized translation by R. Koat.

## Introduction and synopsis

In six articles we are going to reflect upon matters connected with the trustworthiness and credibility of the gospel of Christ. As we all know, this good news is experiencing much opposition, which hostility touches the heart of every child of God. As a matter of fact, one could go as far as to say that it strikes a responsive chord in that heart. (part I)

We are going to single out one complex component from the many views, and we shall concentrate on the questions that are being raised in this connection: namely, the incalculable *sufferings of mankind* in this world. Should this overwhelming reality not force the church into retreat? Or should the church, as a consequence, not be obliged to revise its message and confession radically? Does her confession of God's providence have sufficient scope to support the Christian faith on the frontlines of twentieth-century thinking? (part II)

In articles III, IV and V we are in four points going to give some commentary on these contending voices.

We aim to point out the significance of our confession regarding God the Father and our creation and God the Son and our salvation. (III)

Next we are going to deal with the reality of God's wrath on earth (IV) and are finally going to consider in this connection the stance of our confession with regard to God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification. From this position we shall try to answer the challenges that come our way (V).

In the concluding article (VI) we shall return to the beginning of this series and consider the question whether (and if so in what way) the gospel of Christ can be legitimized and certified in the twentieth century.

## The one gospel and its many opponents

Whenever the apostle Paul starts to speak about the reliability of the gospel

of Christ, he trumpets the message, as it were, like a fanfare. He himself was at a certain time in one single moment completely overpowered by the majesty of the living Christ.

From that day on he was willing to forego everything, provided only that he could keep the faith in his Saviour (cf. Phil. 3:7 et seq.). To him Christ had become everything (cf. Phil. 1:21, Gal. 2:20). As truly as this Christ is alive, so trustworthy is the Word which He causes to be preached to all nations. It is the only really liberating word for the world.

And so we can understand the exalted tone the apostle uses at certain moments, as for instance in his letters to Timothy and Titus: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. . ." (1 Tim. 1:15, cf. 3:1, 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8), or: "worthy of all acceptance" (K.J.V.). Whoever can say that of the message he must preach throughout his life, has a breadth of vision that enables him to get out into the world and has the right to knock on every door with it.

This expression of the apostle has a somewhat festive and triumphant ring. It makes one think of that expansion on the Day of Pentecost, when about three thousand souls were added to the congregation in one single day. It is reported of them that they were "convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said" (Acts 2:41) about the crucified and resurrected Christ. The Holy Spirit had convinced them deeply ("cut them to the heart") of the trustworthiness of the

apostolic message regarding the death and resurrection of Christ. In Paul's strident call about the absolute trustworthiness of the Word, we hear thus the resonance of the apostle's intense motivation for living. We can also find expressions having a similar meaning when we examine the evangelists (e.g. 2 Pet. 1:16-19; 1 John 1:1 et seq. In this context one may think about the motivation of the gospel writers, e.g. Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35; 20:30; 21:24).

It is just because of the impact of these and similar words from Scripture that the opposition against the gospel of Christ must hurt us deeply. The most beneficial and trustworthy message in the history of the world has right from the beginning been surrounded by all kinds of jamming stations. At times the message is barely able to cut through them. In the book of Acts we can read about this situation, and the apostle has to encourage Timothy and Titus before they start giving battle to their opponents; (cf. Acts 28:22; 1 Tim. 4:1 et seq.; 2 Tim. 2:14 et seq.; Titus 1:9). The Word is trustworthy "and worthy of full acceptance."

But the hard fact is, nonetheless, that an unspiritual person simply refuses to accept the gifts of the Spirit of God. To him they are folly "and he is not able to understand them." (1 Cor. 2:14).

This opposition has been there ever since the day man started to resist the Word of God. If we want to become informed about this opposition, we don't have to undertake long voyages to savage people and uncivilized pagans. Instead, by staying right at home we might in our own environment carefully listen to ourselves for a few moments. We will then get to hear those opposing voices sound off in our own hearts, too.

We can also get an earful in our own immediate surroundings. It's not just those self-confident atheists that contradict the Word. Even the voices of the Bible owners and Bible experts have a way with it. And those opposing voices always seem to find a spot in our hearts where a string starts to reverberate. This is because our own hearts are tuned in to it and we are inclined to speak that way: we, in ourselves, as covenant peo-

## CHURCH NEWS



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Edmonton, AB (Providence)  
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Rev. G.H. Visscher  
of Surrey, BC

ple are "a disobedient and contrary people" (Rom. 10:21), know-it-alls before God's countenance.

### Forms of opposition

You as reader would hardly be puzzled by the question in what way this opposition manifests itself. The trustworthiness of the gospel is undermined in various ways through the many questions man can ask. Let us point out a few typical examples.

1. Can a faith that is in conformity with the Scriptures survive when we consider the terrible suffering on this earth? Given the doctrine of God's providence ("all things come not by chance but by His fatherly hand"), man is not able to make sense of the meaningless, irrational suffering of countless people on this earth, is he? Diseases, famine, senseless accidents, cruel tyranny — who is to probe the human suffering caused by these adversities? How is the church coming to grips with the barbarism of Auschwitz? How does she propose to speak a wise word about the injustices and the poverty of the third world?

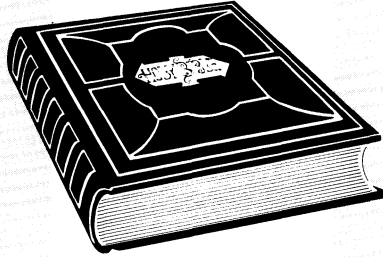
2. On what grounds could the church in this world assume any pretensions if we do pay attention to the history of Christianity? How many wretched conditions did it, in fact, generate or tolerate? What did the church do about the social injustices that the proletariat of all nations had to suffer? Has the church not always stood up for the ruling class; has she not, only too often, fallen victim herself to her own greed?

What did the church do about slave trade, racism, the humiliation of the working class, the exploitation of women? Did the church not incite witch hunts and persecute Jews? Did her religious zeal not drive away many nations into the dark misery of fanatical religious wars?

3. How can a church ever make an appeal to love, peace and mutual understanding when she herself is barely able to offer little more than a spectacle of discord, hate, envy, disputes and self-repeating schisms? Would it not be a wise thing to do if she started to silence her pretensions until further notice? It is preposterous that Christianity, divided as it is, could ever retain any recruiting-power in our society, does it not?

4. Why should exclusively the word of the Christian church be the only message worthy of faith? Where do those Christians get the nerve to hold forth their exclusive pretensions? Granted, a person can't live entirely devoid of any religion. Everybody in the course of his life needs a framework in which he can orient himself — a meaning which will allow him to combat his menacing feelings of purposelessness. But why would Christianity then

have an edge over other religions whether of an older or more recent period? Is it not high time that those Christians at long last stop their endless monologues and start practicing some dialogues with the other world-religions?



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**All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

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In fact, Christianity is an extraordinarily intolerant and discriminatory system which must be pushed back inside its own boundaries by anti-discrimination rules. This is the more obvious since statistics in the Netherlands prove that church affiliations are decreasing at the rate of one percent per annum. The volume of Christian broadcasting (let's call it "the broadcasting time") should, as a consequence, be proportionally reduced. After all, we're living in a pluralistic society, don't we? The prime minister [of the Netherlands] reiterated this recently. He was speaking on behalf of the V.V.D. as well as the C.D.A. political parties.

### The opposition presents a challenge

When the opposition thus opens fire upon church and Christianity, we are going to feel challenged and are, perhaps, even forced on the defensive. We are inclined to quickly pick out a few counter-arguments in an attempt to halt the attack and break the power of the opposition. Our hearts then long for some convincing countercharge which strikes both friend and foe speechless and proves to be incontestable.

Large religious movements try to find a solution, for instance, in spectacular miracle healings, speaking in tongues and immense revival meetings. Once a triumphant mood has captured the hearts in this manner, one is propelled of one's own accord into colossal projects and towards world-conquering ideals. These people want to display their scale model of the new world to all nations, with this earth as the huge exhibition grounds. Any problems one might like to bring up are simply melting away like snow before the sun. High technology is mobilized for this crusade against secularization. "This is our product; take it or leave it" is the rule applied in this situation. This is the language of the salesman who is sure of his business.

One can also approach this same objective with less noisy devices. We think of efforts of the World Council of Churches launching an attack on many fronts to humanize the battered lives of nations and endeavouring (within that wide framework) to re-establish the unity of the churches.

For our purpose, let these two examples suffice for the moment. They may convince us of the intense longing found within a Christian-fashioned culture to come up with the definitive counterargument that can stand up to any critical inspection: that is, the introduction of a universal world vision and style of living that ought to convince all right-minded people. Should this succeed, then one of the most important conditions for the great world peace would be fulfilled. The chorus of angels in the fields of Ephratah would finally receive worldwide acclaim and legitimation, and then the millennium could not be far off any more.

In a number of articles we intend to reflect upon the subject of trustworthiness: that is, the credibility of the Word of Christ in this world. This means at the same time the trustworthiness of the God and Father of Jesus Christ and of the Spirit He has sent into this world. Since we cannot deal with all issues at the same time, we shall limit ourselves to those questions that are connected with suffering in this world.





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# About visibility and invisibility

By G. VanDooren

If there is confusion among us about the aspects of visibility and invisibility of the church, then this is not the first time. In preparing a thesis for the M.Th. degree at Toronto's School of Theology, *Paul or Plato? A Search for the origin of the concept of 'The Invisible Church' as an already existing entity*; 1963) my search took me to the Puritan Theology as it had influenced the Westminster Standards, especially the Confession of Faith relating to the doctrine on the church.

It became a long and interesting trip. In the libraries of Toronto's University I found over forty different definitions related to the visibility and the invisibility of the church; or should I say with some dislike (because it is not exactly the same) 'the visible church' and 'the invisible church.'

A closer study revealed that these many definitions could be divided into two groups. The one got the name "harmless," the other "harmful."

Harmless would be thoroughly sound and biblical and helpful in the way Dr. K. Schilder put it in his Theses on the Church (freely translated):

"Until the moment in which Jesus Christ will present His Bride to His Father without spot and wrinkle no one can say: 'there is the Church!', because not until that moment is the work of Christ, started at the exit of the first paradise, completed. Till that moment we, at a certain place and a certain time, see no more than local and temporal activities of Christ's congregation and the coetus of those who are obedient and faithful to the Good Shepherd."

Here are some 'harmless' Puritan views from the 17th century, and later.

... "not that the Church is wholly invisible at any time, but some men's eyes are not clear enough and the Church is not always to be esteemed by outer appearances" (Bradford).

We could add from Confession Art. 27:

"... although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man ... as during the perilous reign of Ahab ..."

"... the true visible Church is a com-

pany of people called and separated from the world" (Woodhouse).

"We acknowledge one holy catholic church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their Head are one Body in Him ... Further we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood." (Intermediate Catechism. U.P.C.)

This is in harmony with John Calvin, Institutes IV, I. He taught that kind of in-

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**"... it is influenced by pagan philosophy and scholasticism."**

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visibility of the church which is a result of the fact that God's counsel is not yet completely revealed. Therefore we do not know whom God will gather into His church as she will be glorified on the Day of Christ.

Augustine put it this way:

"As long as Christ has not yet finished His church-gathering work, most of His Church is invisible, namely the part that already belongs to the Church Triumphant, the part that is yet to come between now and Judgment Day, and that part of the Church on earth which we here and now cannot see." (Calvin spoke about the Church as spread over towns and villages, just as the New Testament does).

Such speaking about visibility and invisibility of the church, is not only harmless, but fully biblical and also necessary. We confess: I believe the church as expressed in Lord's Day 7 and 21. That is,

first we believe what God in His Word reveals about God's church. Second, this faith is the "assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

Even the Orthodox Church, in her Catechism of 1839, spoke this way:

"The church is invisible in this sense, that we can only see a minor part of it; the generations before have disappeared from the earth, other generations are still to come."

How different becomes the atmosphere when we enter the wide field of a harmful use of the terms 'visible' and 'invisible'!

In my thesis of 1963 the words were added — "(The Invisible Church) as an already existing entity." I was quite surprised to notice the other day, that even a renowned scholar like J.J. Packer (in a Foreword to George Carey's *A Tale of Two Churches*, 1985) used the same term 'entity,' when he wrote:

"... they (i.e., "biblically oriented Christians," VD) see that the church of Christ, that vast supernatural entity of which local churches are outcrops, is in itself one and that it is central to all God's plans for this world."

What is this? The thesis came to the conclusion: "pagan philosophy," coming not from Paul but from Plato.

To believe that much of the church as defined in answer 54 of the Catechism, "of which I am and forever shall remain ...", is invisible for us, here and now, is totally different from the IDEA, that already now, but not here, there exists, high up on or above the stars, *The Invisible Church*, containing all the elect. No, they do not say: up there is God who in His counsel predestined all His elect to gather them into His church in due time (of Ephesians 1:3-14). They say that the church is already there, complete, as "an existing entity."

This is a glaring example of confusing predestination "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1) with the actual gathering of the elect "out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end." (H. Catechism). But no! The Invisible Church is here the ideal church (or ideal church?), high up as the

Greek philosopher Plato thought and taught. To him all things on earth are "forms," "outcrops" (Packer) of "Supernatural" ideas, residing on the stars.

In a similar way the various "denominations" are forms, manifestations, here on earth, of the one idea-church. They are the 'visible' churches. They may differ from each other. The one may have a 'calvinistic tradition,' closer to the invisible idea-church than a liberal church, where Bible-criticism is admitted and permitted. Yet, notwithstanding their substantial mutual differences they are essentially one, because they are all forms, manifestations of the one invisible "idea-church as existing entity." Thus: pluriformity of churches (Abraham Kuyper).

In an orchestra there are many different instruments: a flute, a violin, a bass, trumpets and timpani. Before the maestro enters and lifts his baton, there is the cacophony of tuning these instruments. We live in that period of "tuning." Some try to turn that into a symphony before the director has arrived, like the World Council of Churches. But we have to wait for the return of the Master. He lifts the baton, and then the sounds of all 'denominations' will play together most beautifully forever and ever: the timpani of the Salvation Army, the bass of the Romanist church, the trumpets of Evangelicalism and the piccolo of the Liberated Churches.

Don't take my word for it! Here is a selection from those "47 definitions." I call them harmful:

"While the visible church was the body of Christ, the body mystically was invisible, and was not coterminous (the same limits and time, VD) with the church visible or identical with her" (Hooker).

"... that there is a true Church which is invisible, but that the visible Church is not the Church of the elect, though containing professed christians." (Cramer)

"... the holy catholic church, as invisible, composed of those chosen and predestinate unto everlasting life, known only to God . . . The visible Church, containing both good and bad, is *not* the Church of Christ. (Hooper).  
"... grace is invisible, and can be no note of a member of a visible church, but only of a member of The Invisible Church." (McPherson).

"If the distinction of visible and invisible is to be maintained in the doctrine of the church, it must constantly be remembered that what is invisible is accidental to the one, and that what is visible is accidental to the other. Only invisible grace is essential to the one, and only visible profession is essential to the other." (Rutherford)

"No visible Church perfectly corresponds to its idea." (Litton)

"... the visible Church is glorious insofar as it resembles the invisible Church." (B.D. Kuiper)

One more, from the most prolific master of this philosophy:

"... The Invisible Church stands, with respect to its members, in an inward and spiritual relationship to Christ, whereas the visible Church stands to Him in an outward relationship only." (Bannerman)

as ridiculous someone who believes that at the end the Christians will be taken out of Canadian Reformed, Christian Reformed, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, "... and, there you have the Church," to use the words of K. Schilder. I have always believed that the Son will send out His angels at His return to do just that; to separate the wheat from the weeds.

In closing, it would have served us well in the confusion, discussions and differences of recent years if we had kept

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***"This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects."***

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Why is all this talk "harmful?" First, because it is influenced by pagan philosophy and scholasticism. Second, because it relativizes doctrinal differences, contrasts between truth and error, between true or faithful churches and false churches and/or sects. They all play a part in the one "orchestra!"

Third, it undermines the evangelical call of Art. 28 to "maintain the unity of the Church." Mind you, we should have the greatest respect for what the Puritans in general have done for maintaining and defending Biblical truth and Reformed doctrine.

But, when many of their publications were reprinted in recent years (like J. Bannerman's *The Church of Christ in 1960*), the confused and confusing doctrine on the Church was not rectified.

Puritan doctrine had an important voice in the "Westminster Assembly." Under this influence the distinctions of the "First Scots Confession" and the "Belgic Confession" were replaced by the whole range of "more or less pure churches," stretching from a true church to a synagogue of satan.

Now that we know where all this 'harmful' talk came from, we would be wrong in throwing the 'harmless' use of visibility and invisibility overboard by, for example, questioning our official Reformed position as expressed in the "Form for Adult Baptism": "do you confess that . . . by the power of the Holy Spirit you have become a member of Jesus Christ and His Church?" (B.o.P. p. 591) Another example is when we label

in mind 'the Covenant' in the doctrine on the Church. Rev. J. VanBruggen in his (Dutch) "Annotations on the Catechism, 1954", wrote in teaching the articles 27-29, and Lord's Day 21:

"The Word of God always speaks in promise and demand (or command), because in all Covenants there are two parts.

Thus it speaks also about the Church. The Church is 'promised' to us.

The Church is also 'commanded' of us.

The 'promise': He chose her, gave His Son to her and then His Holy Spirit. This promise we confess in H. Cat. Lord's Day 21 and Art. 27 of the Confession.

The command: That we maintain the unity of the Church and in word and walk serve her preservation and increase. This we confess in Art. 28 and 29 of the Confession."

Thus far the late Rev. J. VanBruggen, the father of the present Prof. VanBruggen in Kampen.

If "we" had spoken and written and formulated about the Church in these classic terms of the Covenant, we would not have needed such non-creedal expressions like "Church in a general way" and "Church in a more specific way." Such terminology is unwittingly related to Puritan double-talk on the Church.

Let's stay with the Reformed doctrine of the Covenant, also in the way we believe and confess the Church.

# Unsuitable melodies?

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

Many a business has grown from something which a person had to do for his own benefit and use. In many cases it even became a "success story."

This writer has no intention of praising what has grown out of personal need as a "success story." These lines are merely a bridge which is to enable him to reach the matter he wants to write about. It is about something he read in a book which he rebound for one of our organists.

You guessed it: it was the old faithful "Worp."

There was a time when many Reformed families had a pump organ in their living room. It took up much-needed space in their usually rather small homes, but they would not want to do without it. Especially on Sunday evenings their often numerous offspring, their number increased by the presence of friends and fiancée(s), gathered around the "buzz-saw of faith" which Rien Poortvliet portrayed so beautifully in his *Te Hooi en te Gras*. Then the walls reverberated with the singing and all gathered there had an enjoyable evening.

When walking to church on Sunday mornings, one could oftentimes hear the sound of the reed organ through the open windows. Here and there a father got up at the usual time and spent the period of waiting for the rest of the family to get ready for church by playing (and oftentimes singing) the Psalms of David.

This was much better than the blaring of speakers which nowadays comes wafting through open windows or from cars that are waiting beside you for the traffic light to turn green, then to be almost drowned out by the screeching of tires.

For the playing of the reed organ practically every family had its "Worp" and its "Johannes de Heer." The "Worp" was the well-known black book which contained the harmonization of the Psalm tunes with preludes, interludes, and postludes.

It was one of those well-used "Worps" that I had to re-bind for one of our organists. And what are you doing when leafing through a book? Right: you start reading. This time it was not the music I was reading but the Preface. While the book was in the clamp for the glue to set, I took our own "Worp" and continued my reading.

The printing we have is the 20th, and it is one revised by George Stam, in those days a well-known organist.

My music-technical knowledge is not all that great, and I was happy that I could improve on it. Although I do not understand various technical terms, such as "onderkwart" and "bovenkwint," one thing became clear to me: that with our singing we are wholly in the line of the ancient church.

I knew that we are one with and still belong to the old catholic church, the church of the early centuries, but I discovered that also in our singing this oneness is expressed and experienced.

I never believed that the Psalm tunes were taken from popular folk melodies or

## PSALM 96

Geneva. 1562

1. Sing to the LORD with ex-ul-ta-tion.

O sing a new song, all cre-a-tion.

Sing to the LORD and bless His Name;

Day af-ter day with joy pro-claim

The won-drous deeds of His sal-va-tion.

that John Calvin, Louis Bourgeois and Maître Pierre made a giant leap from the singing to which they had been used to the Moody and Sankey tunes of later ages.

Anyway, in his Introduction, Mr. J. Worp also wrote the following words: "Yet another remark about the origin of these scales. Four of the scales discussed above, namely the Authentic scales from D to D, from E to E, from F to F, and from G to G, were fixed for the singing in the church already in the 4th century by a certain bishop Ambrose in Milan. Towards the end of the 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great added to these the four "Plagale" (I could not find an English translation of this word, VO) scales of the same tones. These eight scales are the so-called church-tones in which the *Gregorian Chant* is written."

When I saw the name of Ambrose, I started to hum the Ambrosian Hymn, to the

tune of which as boys we added words with which the good old bishop would have been disgusted, but which is well-known and well-loved.

Scanning of our Psalm melodies revealed that of the 150 Psalms some 43 (not counting the doubles) are written in the scales which Pope Gregory the Great added. Among these are the favourite tunes of Psalms 25, 42, 43, 79, 89, 103, 139. I'll think of it when singing them, and will feel even more one with the ancient church.

It is realized, I hope, that the church in which Ambrose and Gregory served is the same church of which we still are members. The Romish Church came into existence in 1517/1521, when the church was placed before a choice and when those who refused to go along with the Reformation formed their own organization under the pope.

I was confirmed in my impression when in connection with this I read again the instructive articles which Dr. K. Deddens wrote in the 36th volume of *Clarion* under the title "The Origin of Our Psalm Melodies."

There I found the same thought, and even more. On page 126, Dr. Deddens wrote: "Haein discovered that there is a close connection between the Genevan Psalm melodies and what he called several "timbres" and "nômes" of Gregorian chant and medieval church hymns." There are therefore many "Gregorian elements" in our Psalmbook.

We may go back even further. Writing about the discoveries of a famous Dutch musicologist, Dr. Deddens tells us that "she also found out that the final form of Gregorian Chant was actually Frankish. About the year 900, Metz in France was the centre of it. But the origins of the Gregorian chants are to be sought in the beginning of our era, about two thousand years ago, in the Jewish synagogue. There were Jews from Yemen and also from other Asiatic countries who immigrated about sixty years ago to Israel. Their synagogal songs appeared to have exactly the same kind of Psalmody, the same music curves in their rises and falls as the Gregorian chants."

Do we stop at the synagogue? No, 'there is also a connection between the way of singing in the synagogues and the way of singing before that, namely, in the temple."

Now I felt really the catholicity of the church also in my singing: via Bourgeois and Pierre, via Gregory and Ambrose, I have links with and am one with synagogue and temple, with Paul and John, with Ezra and David.

### A shock

Can you visualize the shock I got when reading the Press Release of the Synod of Winnipeg 1989, and when seeing that a consistory stated regarding Hymn 1A "that the present melody is not suitable, for it contains Gregorian elements"?

In the first place I was amazed at the technical ability of a whole consistory which was knowledgeable enough to judge whether there are "Gregorian elements" in that melody. I would not be able to point out what these alleged elements are, and as soon as I see any member of that consistory, I will ask him to show me.

In the second place I was greatly disturbed. In my mind I saw many of our beautiful Psalm tunes go out of the window: 18, 23, 25, 30, 42, 43, and you name them. They all "contain Gregorian elements," and if containing Gregorian elements renders a tune unsuitable, what will be left of all our beautiful Genevan tunes? Plain nothing.

Gone is then the bond with the ancient church, with synagogue and temple. Then we are to turn to Moody and Sankey, to the Wesleys and others.

I wished that we were finally told what then those "Gregorian elements" are. I also wished that it was made clear to us why, even when it contains "Gregorian elements," this would render a tune unsuitable for use in the worship services. If this cannot be pointed out, I feel that this consistory made a very irresponsible statement. It is a statement which may impress some, but only the ignorant.

The fact that I love the tune of Hymn 1A — if only it is sung properly, as found in the present *Book of Praise* — is not decisive here. There are many other melodies that I love as well but which I definitely would not recommend for use in the worship services. A few times I tried to explain the tune to a congregation and think that I succeeded in showing some of its beauty. However, if someone does not like it, I will not take this ill of him. One should not argue about what taste someone has.

But I am sick and tired of the blah-blah about "Gregorian." It only displays ignorance, and I am thankful that — at least according to the press release — our

Synod of Winnipeg did not take this over.

What I did not understand is that Synod decided that the "new melody with the 'new text' by br. D. Zwart is to be made available to the churches," whereas the Standing Committee "found the proposed melody of D. Zwart unsuitable." Should Synod not have accepted that judgment of an appointed Standing Committee? It is my distinct impression that in this matter the "new text" was a more decisive consideration than the "new melody." When I heard this "new melody" I did not like it at all, but, again, this is not decisive. Besides, I have my doubts about the integrity of a melody which can be adapted when a text is adopted which differs from the one to which the melody was made in the first place.

One thing I hope is that the nonsense about "Gregorian" is finally and definitively laid to rest.

No one has to like what I like or to dislike what I dislike, but when one comes with arguments, they should be proper and true to fact. Otherwise the time and attention of the churches is wasted when ecclesiastical assemblies have to deal with them.



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## Boat people: an ongoing drama

By B. de Jong

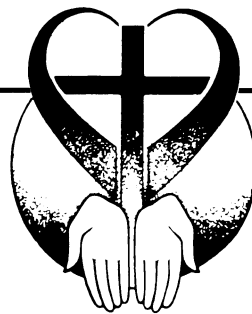
*The days of headlines on "boat people" are long over. The refugee situation in South-East Asia no longer makes news. Yet the exodus continues and the tragic irony is that for most, their daring escape to freedom ends in a prison-like existence devoid of all liberty.*

*Tens of thousands reach Hong Kong only to be confined to closed camps,*

*packed into huge warehouse-type structures which lock in misery, stifling the lives of those inside. One can sympathize with the government's dilemma when faced with a refugee population which now totals over 35,000 and which continues to rise. Yet surely people must be afforded some measure of human dignity. . . .*

*ZOA Refugee Care, whose work in*

*Thailand and Papua New Guinea has benefitted from our contributions, attempts to alleviate a little of the suffering of refugees in Hong Kong also — but so many need help. The following article, translated and reprinted with permission from ZOA Nieuws speaks of the deplorable situation in Hong Kong's closed refugee camps, and encourages us to pray. . . .*



CRWRF

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### Pirates kill Boat People

KOEALA LOEMPOER — Mid-April about 130 Vietnamese Boat People were killed by pirates in the Chinese Sea. One refugee succeeded in escaping by keeping himself floating holding on to a "human raft" for 29 hours. The survivor, 22 years old, floated in the sea for 29 hours.

Seven pirates, armed with guns and clubs, from two fishing boats, attacked

the boat with refugees two days after the departure from Vietnam.

The pirates locked the men in a room of the ship before raping the women and children, among whom a girl of 12. Then they set the boat on fire and beat or shot the refugees to death.

### 1988, a record year

In 1988 no fewer than 48,000 Vietnamese fled their country. An unknown

future awaited them. For many, the flight meant the end of their life's journey. Thousands perished at sea as a result of hunger, thirst, exhaustion or, as in the case mentioned above, as a result of piracy.

### More than 300 new refugees per day!

The survivors arrive in the surrounding countries, including Hong Kong. In

1988 records were also broken there. More than 600 boats with 18,500 people aboard arrived in this British colony last year. It looks as if these numbers will be exceeded this year. Up to May inclusive more than 10,000 new boat people have already come. And every day 300 more refugees arrive. . . .

### Measures

In order to slow down the enormous influx of refugees, the government of Hong Kong has taken a number of severe measures. Every refugee who now arrives in Hong Kong is considered and treated as an asylum seeker. An investigation has to prove if there were well-founded reasons for the person in question to flee from Vietnam. If this is not the case, then the refugee is considered an illegal immigrant and put up in closed refugee camps. There are negotiations with Vietnam about their return.

### Deterrence policy without humanity

But also in the existing camps there is continuous disorder as a result of the enormous influx of refugees. So the refugees in the camp Hei Ling Chau, where ZOA worked until recently, heard in the morning that on the same day they had to move to a camp on the mainland. It



*Will they survive?*

turned out to be Sham Shui Po, a camp consisting of old factory buildings, where more than 5,000 refugees were put up.

In the meantime, a few weeks ago they had to pack their belongings again. . . ! I cannot help thinking that they literally do whatever they like with these people. They are locked up in blocks of flats or old factory halls thousands at a time. Bars and metal doors turn it into a prison. For want of room they stay in bunk beds, three high. The atmosphere is chaotic and stifling. In some camps the refugees have nothing more than a little place to lie. For a little fresh air they have to put their face out of the half opened and barred windows. Pursuing a deterrence policy is comprehensible, but people are human beings and are to be treated as such.

### Not an easy task

In the midst of this misery and disorder four ZOA volunteers are working. In camp Sham Shui Po they provide education and recreation as far as possible. Together with many other relief workers they render humanity towards the refugees. In their work something of Christ's love shines forth. A beautiful but not an easy task. For the refugees, and so, also for these Dutch workers, every day is full of uncertainties. How long can we still work in this chaos? Will we have to move again? Will the work be made impossible for all of us? I can assure you that it is a situation in which it is not easy to work. These volunteers have a very hard job. Therefore, they urgently need your sympathy and prayers!



*What lies ahead?*

# Women's Savings Action

Since our last newsletter a lot has happened and it is time that we report on what has taken place. In the Library Committee meeting in March of this year it became clear to us that if we were to truly maintain the level of support that we had been giving the Theological College in the past, then a sum of \$20,000 would be needed to offset the continual increase in the costs of books and periodicals. Since we collected just over \$19,000 from June 1987 to May 1988 we thought that \$20,000 was a reasonable amount for us to commit ourselves to collecting for this important work. On behalf of all of us, Mrs. J. Mulder pledged this amount on the College Evening. Making such a promise would not have been possible without knowing that you are all committed to serving the Theological College as your past cooperation has shown, and we sincerely thank all of you.

Besides books and periodicals (\$15,000) we were also able to cover the purchase of video equipment (\$2,690.24) and software for the computer (\$500). The video has been of great help for the "preaching classes" and the software is being used with great profit in the computerization program of the library. This year we hope to fund the purchase of an overhead projector so that this teaching aid can also be used.

As you are undoubtedly aware, there has been a complete "changing of the guard" in the Women's Savings Action. We thankfully remember the dedication of Mrs. L. Selles for this work. Mrs. P. Lindhout together with her husband has also made a very valuable contribution. We will miss their experience and enthusiasm. The new committee now consists of Mrs. J. Mulder, Mrs. T. Zietsma (Hamilton) and Mrs. C. Van Dam (Burlington). We look forward to continuing this important work of serving the College community together with all of you. Without your faithful participation we would not be able to carry on. As women of the church we can be thankful that the Lord gives us the means and the opportunity in this unique way to support the training of the ministers of the gospel.

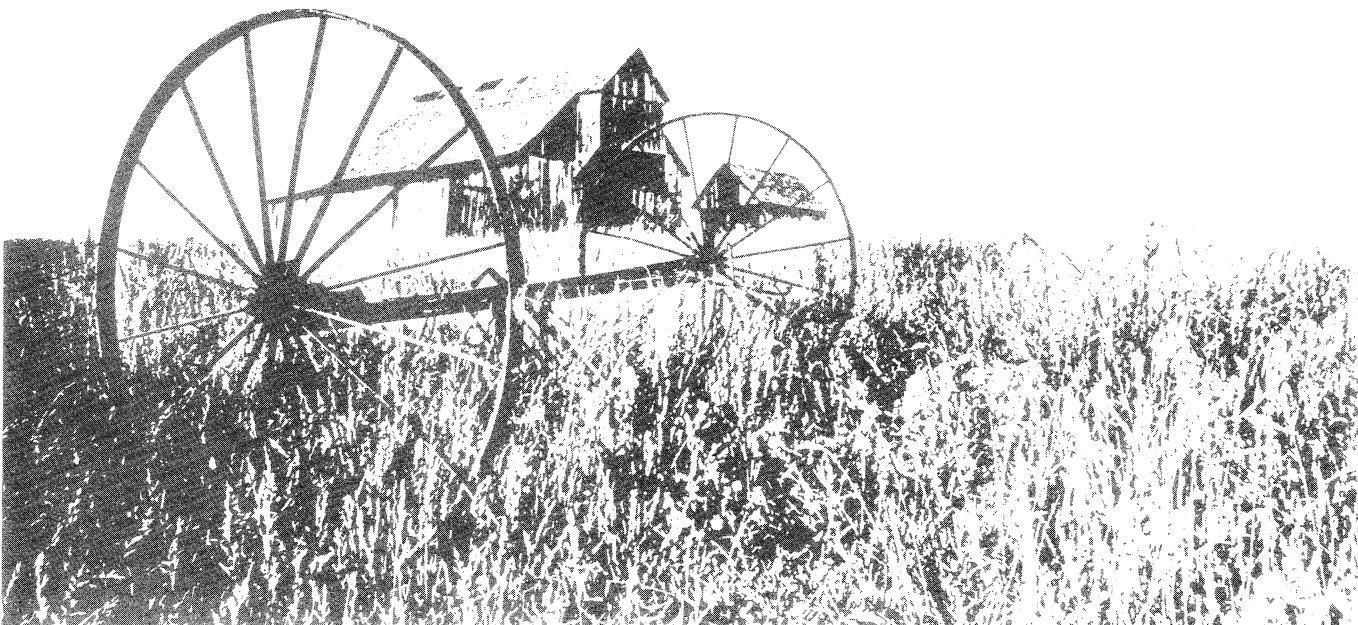
Chairman	Secretary
Mrs. J. Mulder	Mrs. C. Van Dam
1225 Hwy 5 RR 1	642 Ramsgate Road
Burlington, ON	Burlington, ON
L7R 3X4	L7N 2Y1

Treasurer  
Mrs. T. Zietsma  
54 Como Place  
Hamilton, ON  
L9B 1Y4

## Theological College Women's Savings Action Contributions

June 1, 1988 to May 31, 1989

Abbotsford	\$1,676.50
Ancaster	
Attercliffe	672.25
Barrhead	368.00
Brampton	123.00
Burlington East	1,098.36
Burlington South	631.50
Burlington West	1,145.00
Calgary	
Chatham	400.28
Chilliwack	583.48
Cloverdale	2,022.00
Coaldale	
Edmonton Imm.	939.46
Edmonton Prov.	1,237.05
Elora	65.95
Fergus	111.78
Grand Rapids	136.85
Guelph	207.15
Hamilton	913.12
Houston	106.50
Langley	1,611.00
Lincoln	192.24
London	43.74
Neerlandia	
Orangeville	125.00
Ottawa	20.00
Smithers	554.00
Smithville	393.20
Surrey	1,150.00
Toronto	145.00
Winnipeg	678.00
Total	\$17,350.51



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# Women's League Day — Alberta

By Y. VanLaar

June 7, 1989, the women societies of Alberta came together to enjoy a day of fellowship. Registration, coffee and social began at 9:30.

At 10:00 all the ladies present gathered together upstairs to begin the day officially. The Leader for the day was Mrs. O. Vogelzang. Before the program was started, it was discovered there was no key to open the piano. Prof. Deddens kindly offered to play the organ. Alas, no sound came forth from that worthy instrument either. The ladies would have to be satisfied to sing unattended.

The program began with the singing of Hy. 60:1 and 2, followed by prayer. Mrs. Vogelzang welcomed those present, 86 in all. Prof. and Mrs. Deddens were given a special welcome, after which each society was asked to rise when their name was called. The societies were well represented.

Col. 3:1-15 was read and Prof. Deddens gave his presentation on South Africa-Apartheid. Prof. Deddens had given various seminars in South Africa. He also is in contact with various denominations. After giving a short history about various churches as well as sister churches, Prof. Deddens showed slides. These proved to be quite informative. During question period Prof. Deddens answered many questions on apartheid and his view of how serious the problem is. The media has proven to be very sympathetic to the cause of Mandela, and therefore shows a distorted view of the problem. The discussion was closed with the singing of Ps. 87:1-5.

Lunch was enjoyed at the St. Albert Inn from 12:30 - 1:45. During this time the Ladies were asked to identify some pictures. These pictures represented either a place where a Can. Ref. Church is

found, or the name of a minister.

The second part was opened with the singing of the League Song. After this J. Barendregt introduced the afternoon Topic, "Evangelism — What does it mean for me?" The personal aspect was stressed, our calling in life is to show the regeneration of our spirits through lifestyle.

Mrs. Vogelzang asked us to sing Ps. 139:7,8,9. Some time was left for General Announcements. Next year's hosting society will be Calgary. The extra money collected will be given to the Women's Savings Action.

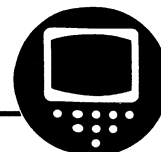
The hosting society was thanked for an enjoyable day and Mrs. Wieringa closed with prayer. We all sang *O Canada*.

Tea was enjoyed by all at the end of the day. See you all in Calgary in 1990, the Lord willing.

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## PRESS RELEASES



### of Classis Alberta/Manitoba held September 12 and 13, 1989 in the building of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton, AB.

1. Opening: At 8:00 p.m., on behalf of the convening church at Winnipeg, br. J. Kuik calls the meeting to order. He requests those present to sing Psalm 48:1, 4, after which he reads Romans 12, followed by prayer.

2. Credentials: The delegates of the convening church check the credentials. All churches are properly represented.

3. Constitution: The proposed officers for the classis are: Rev. E.J. Tigelaar - chairman; Rev. E. Kampen - vice-chairman; Rev. J.D. Wielenga - clerk. This is approved by the delegates. Classis is declared constituted. The officers take their place.

4. Memorabilia: Rev. Tigelaar commemorates that the church at Winnipeg

remains vacant, as the call extended to Rev. R. Aasman was declined. He expresses the wish that their desire for a new pastor will soon be fulfilled. He expresses the same wish for the still vacant Providence congregation in Edmonton. He welcomes Rev. G. Wieske to his first classis in this region and expresses the hope that the churches may also benefit from his input at the classical meetings.

5. Agenda: The various items received are sorted. The agenda is then proposed to the classis, and adopted.

6. Reports: a) Church Visits — in closed session, the church visitors report on visits made to the church at Barrhead and Edmonton-Immanuel on November 10, 1988.

b) Committee Aid to Needy Students — No report has been submitted. The committee will be instructed to submit a report to the next classis.

c) Committee Aid to Needy Churches — In a discussion on admissibility, it is proposed to change the Classical Regulations concerning this committee. Ac-

cording to the present regulations they should make their report, including the requests of needy churches, to the spring classis. Since this proves impractical, it is suggested to have them report to the fall classis. This proposal will be sent to the churches for approval. The report is then declared admissible.

The church at Calgary requests financial aid for 1990. Granted.

The church at Barrhead requests financial aid for 1990. Granted.

The rest of the report is accepted. Churches in need of financial assistance are urged to get their requests for aid to the committee with sufficient time for the committee to evaluate the requests. The committee will be urged to faithfully adhere to its mandate, especially with respect to advising classis concerning the requests for aid.

d) Observer OPC — Rev. R.A. Schouten reports that efforts to attend a meeting of the Presbytery of the Dakotas have proven unsuccessful, due to the lack of information available.

7. Adjournment: The chairman suggests the meeting be adjourned to 9:00 a.m. the next morning. He requests those assembled to sing Psalm 89:1, 7, after which he leads in prayer and then adjourns the meeting.

8. Reopening: At 9:00 a.m., Sept. 13, the chairman calls the meeting to order. He requests the singing of Psalm 93:1, 2, 3, after which he reads 1 Cor. 12 and leads in prayer. Roll call shows all members are present.

9. Signing of the Subscription Form: The chairman reads the Form for Subscription and requests Rev. Wieske to sign. Rev. Wieske willingly does so.

10. Instructions: a) The church at Winnipeg and the church at Edmonton-Providence request pulpit supply. Granted.

b) The church at Winnipeg requests Rev. P.K.A. de Boer to be appointed as counsellor according to C.O. 45. Granted.

11. Appeal: An appeal has been received from br. A. Barendregt of Winnipeg. This is declared admissible. It is dealt with in closed session.

12. Question Period (C.O. 44): The churches at Edmonton-Immanuel and Winnipeg request advice in matters of discipline. This is given in closed session.

13. Letters Rev. S.M. Allison: Letters have been received from a Rev. S.M. Allison, minister of the Hosmer Reformed Church (R.C.U.S.), Eureka, SD. in which he requests information as to what he must do to qualify as an acceptable ministerial candidate in the Canadian/American Reformed Churches. This letter is declared admissible. Classis decides to inform him (1) to become a member of a Canadian/American Reformed Church; (2) to follow the steps outlined in the Church Order, Art. 4B-2, which involve submitting to the equivalent of a peremptory examination.

14. Appointments:

a) Regional Synod Cloverdale, Nov. 8, 1989: Ministers: E. Kampen; E.J. Tigelaar; J.D. Wielenga; G. Wieske. Alternates: P.K.A. de Boer; R.A. Schouten. Elders: A. Van Abbema; N. Van Seters; A. Viersen; H. Veenendaal. Alternates: A. De Leeuw; M. Hooimeijer; C. Hoogerdyk; C. Meliefste.

b) Church Visitors: Rev. E.J. Tigelaar is appointed as church visitor to replace Rev. den Hollander. Rev. P.K.A. de Boer and Rev. J.D. Wielenga are re-appointed.

c) Next Classis: Convening church - Barrhead; date - Dec. 12, 1989 (alternate date March 13, 1990); place - Edmonton-Immanuel building; suggested officers: Rev. G. Wieske, chairman; Rev. E.J. Tigelaar, vice-chairman; Rev. E. Kampen, clerk.

d) Committee for Examinations: The list is updated as follows: Committee for Examination: Rev. J.D. Wielenga, Rev. E. Kampen; Sermon: Rev. J.D. Wielenga, Rev. E. Kampen; Exegesis OT: Rev. E. Kampen; Exegesis NT: Rev. R.A. Schouten; Knowledge of Scripture: Rev. R.A. Schouten; Doctrine and Creeds: Rev. J.D. Wielenga; Church History: Rev. E.J. Tigelaar; Ethics: Rev. P.K.A. de Boer; Church Polity: Rev. J.D. Wielenga; Diaconological subjects: Rev. G. Wieske.

e) All the other committees and appointees are reappointed.

15. Personal Question Period: Rev. Wieske gives thanks for the warm welcome and expresses the wish that he will be able to work fruitfully.

A request is made to hold the fall classis in October, in connection with harvest time. Efforts will be made to accommodate this request.

Rev. Tigelaar thanks the churches for the financial support given to the church at Barrhead.

16. Censure ad Art. 44, C.O.: The chairman expresses thanks that due to the harmonious tone of the meeting and the good cooperation of the brothers, censure is not needed.

17. Acts and Press Release: The Acts are read and adopted. The vice-chairman is instructed to prepare the press release.

18. Closing: The chairman thanks the receiving church and the ladies who faithfully served the members of classis with the necessary food and refreshments, for their efforts. He expresses thankfulness for the good spirit in which the meeting could be conducted. He also wishes all the brothers a safe trip home and a blessing over their work. After the singing of Psalm 133:1, 2, the vice-chairman is asked to lead in prayer. The chairman then closes the meeting.

Rev. E. KAMPEN, vice-chairman, e.t.

### **of Classis Ontario-South, held on September 13 and 14, 1989 in London, Ontario.**

On behalf of the convening church at Hamilton, Rev. Cl. Stam calls the meeting to order and requests that Psalm 46:1, 2 be sung. He reads Romans 12 and in prayer asks the Lord a blessing over the meeting. He then welcomes the delegates. He also welcomes the delegates of Regional Synod, as well as Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes and Candidate br. D. Moes. The delegates of the convening church examine the credentials and report that all churches are duly represented.

Classis is constituted with the following moderamen: chairman: Rev. P. King-

ma; clerk: Rev. B.R. Hofford; vice-chairman: Rev. D.G.J. Agema.

The agenda is adopted with some changes.

Colloquium Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes. All documents required for this colloquium are found to be in good order. Rev. Van Rietschoten leads in the colloquium. Rev. P. Kingma then asks some questions about the doctrine of the church, and Rev. Agema about Reformed Church Polity. The members of Classis receive opportunity to partake in the colloquium as well.

In closed session it is decided that this colloquium is satisfactory and that Dr. Gootjes be admitted as minister within the Federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. In open session Dr. Gootjes is informed of this decision. Upon approbation of the call extended to Dr. Gootjes by the church at Ancaster, Dr. Gootjes signs the Form for Subscription for ministers in the Classical Region of Ontario-South. Psalm 89:7 is sung and the members of Classis receive opportunity to congratulate Dr. Gootjes.

Peremptory Examination Candidate D. Moes. In closed session three submissions dealing with the calling of candidate Moes are read and discussed. It is decided to deal at this time with these appeals only with regard to the actions of the consistory in the matter of calling br. Moes. Classis decides to judge that the procedure followed by the consistory of Watford to call Candidate Moes cannot be termed as being contrary to the provisions of the Church Order.

The delegates of Watford do not vote according to Art. 32, C.O.

Candidate Moes is asked to present his sermon proposal on Genesis 4:1-16. In closed session it is decided that the proposal is sufficient to continue the examination. In open session br. Moes is informed of this. He is then examined in the following subjects: Exegesis O.T., Exegesis N.T., Doctrine of the Church, History of the Church, Knowledge of Scripture, Ethics, Diaconology and Church Polity.

In closed session the examination is discussed. On the basis of the examination Classis decides to admit Candidate D. Moes to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments within the Federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The deputies of Regional Synod concur with this decision.

In open session br. Moes is informed of this decision. He then signs the Form for Subscription for ministers in the Classical Region Ontario-South.

Upon examination of the necessary documents the call is approbated by Classis. A Declaration of Peremptory Examination is read, signed and given to br. Moes.



The chairman requests that Psalm 122:1, 2 be sung, and after having thanked the deputies of Regional Synod, leads in prayer. Classis is recessed till the next morning.

### Reopening on Thursday, September 14, 1989

The chairman reopens the meeting, reads Col. 1:15-23 and leads in prayer. He requests that Psalm 135:1, 2, 6, 10 be sung. Roll call shows that some delegates have been replaced by their alternates. There are no delegates from the church at Lincoln and the church at Smithville has only one delegate. All present are welcomed.

Question Period ad Art. 44, C.O. In all the churches represented the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of major assemblies are being honoured. The church at Grand Rapids asks advice in a matter of oversight. The church at London asks advice in a matter of discipline. Advice is given in closed session.

#### Correspondence.

a. Letters from the archive-keeping church at London. In answer the Classis refers the church at London to Art. 8C5 of the Classical Regulations.

b. Letter from the church at London re Art. 13 of the Acts Classis Ontario-South of June 14, 1989. London requests Classis to rescind the decisions re pulpit supply. Classis accedes to this request on the ground that the motion mentioned in Art. 13, Acts June 14, 1989 should have been ruled out of order.

c. Letter from the church at London notifying Classis of Regional Synod East, to be convened D.V. on October 18, 1989 at 10:00 a.m. in London.

#### Reports.

a. Fund for Needy Churches. The church at Ancaster recommends that the assessment for 1990 be \$14.00 per communicant member. This recommendation is accepted. All cheques should be mailed to the church at Ancaster and made payable to: Fund for Needy Churches, c/o Canadian Reformed Church at Ancaster.

b. Fund Needy Students. A new assessment of \$10.00 per communicant member is proposed by the church at Chatham. This proposal is adopted.

c. Reports of church visitations to the churches at Laurel and Blue Bell are read and received.

#### Appointments.

a. Next Classis: December 13, 1989. Convening church: Laurel; place of venue: Hamilton; suggested moderamen: chairman: Rev. K.A. Kok; clerk: Rev. P. Kingma; vice-chairman: Rev. B.R. Hofford.

b. Delegates to Regional Synod East 1989. The following brothers are delegated: ministers: R. Aasman, D.G.J. Agema, Cl. Stam, J. Van Rietschoten; alternates: P. Kingma; K.A. Kok and B.R. Hofford (in this order); elders: G. Hutten; H. Feenstra, J. Schutten, H. Wildeboer; alternates: H.T. VanderVelde, P. Engbers, L. Haan and G. Hart (in this order).

c. Examiners: Rev. Cl. Stam is appointed for Diaconology.

Question Period. Classis is informed of the ordination and installation of br. D. Moes on, D.V., October 15, 10:00 a.m. The church at London is appointed to be present at this occasion. Dr. Gootjes will be installed as minister of Ancaster, D.V., on October 1, 1989. The church at Hamilton is appointed to be present there.

Censure Art. 44, C.O. The chairman concludes that this censure is not necessary.

Closing. The chairman speaks some words of thanks. The vice-chairman then requests that Psalm 133:1, 2 be sung and leads in prayer. The meeting is closed.

For the Classis,  
D.G.J. AGEMA, vice-chairman, e.t.

### of Classis Pacific, held September 26, 1989.

1. *Opening.* On behalf of the convening church at Cloverdale, BC, Rev. J. Moesker opens the meeting. He reads from Romans 12, and leads in prayer. The delegates are welcomed by him, especially the Rev. M. Van Luik. Rev. Moesker expresses the wish that the Rev. Van Luik may work fruitfully in the congregation of Chilliwack. He extends congratulations to the Rev. A. van Delden with his call to the Free Reformed Church of Bedforddale, Australia and to Candidate D. Moes who on October 15, 1989 will be ordained as minister in the church at Watford, Ontario. He also makes mention of the fact that Rev. R.F. Boersema has returned to the mission field.

2. *Credentials.* The credentials are checked by the delegates of the church at Chilliwack and are reported to be in good order. All churches of Classis are lawfully represented.

3. *Classis is constituted.* The following officers are appointed: Rev. B.J. Berends, chairman; Rev. M. VanderWel, vice-chairman; Rev. A. van Delden, clerk.

4. *The agenda is adopted.* The chairman, Rev. B.J. Berends thanks the convening church for the preparations made for this Classis. To the congratulations which have been extended already he adds a congratulation to the Rev. G.H. Visscher who recently had received a call by the Providence Canadian Reformed Church of Edmonton.

5. *Subscription by the Rev. M. Van Luik.* Since this is the first Classis Pacific to which Rev. M. Van Luik is delegated, he signs the Form for Subscription, pledging thereby his allegiance to the Reformed Confessions and to the Church Order.

#### 6. *Correspondence received.*

a. A request from the church at Vernon, BC for financial aid for the year 1990. The request will be dealt with at point 8. *Reports*, no. c of the agenda.

b. A letter of a brother of the church at Cloverdale in which he complains about the approach which his consistory takes in exercising discipline, and in which he asks that it be granted to him to receive an attestation to a neighbouring church. Classis decides that it has no sufficient grounds to follow up on his complaints and that it is not in its province to grant him his request.

After a recess the verses 1 and 12 of Psalm 107 are sung.

7. *Instructions.* a. The church at Cloverdale asks advice in a matter of discipline. Advice is given.

b. The churches at Cloverdale and Langley inform Classis of the initiative which is found in both churches to come together to the institution of a third church in their area, north of the Fraser Highway. The aim is to have this church instituted, the Lord willing, on January 1, 1990. After some questions have been asked about the potential of such a church, Classis endorses the initiative.

8. *Reports.* a. The church at Vernon has audited the books of the classical treasurer and reports that they are in good order.

b. The Committee for Financial Aid to Students reports on its fund. Some churches are encouraged to as yet send in their contributions. The assessment is \$5.65 per communicant member per year.

c. The Committee for Needy Churches recommends Classis to grant to the church at Vernon financial aid in the amount of \$17,500.00 for the year 1990. Classis decides accordingly and sets the contribution for the Fund for Needy Churches at \$10.00 per communicant member for 1990, to be paid in four installments. The churches are urged to remit their obligations on or before the appointed times.

d. The Church Visitors who were appointed by Classis Pacific, April 4, 1989, to visit the church at Cloverdale with respect to a certain matter, submit their report on this visitation. After Classis has taken note of its contents the report is accepted.

#### 9. *Question Period ad Art. 44, C.O.*

a. The question, posed by the chairman, whether the ministry of the office-bearers

is continued, and the decisions of the major assemblies are honoured, is answered by the representatives of the churches in the affirmative.

b. In answer to the question whether there was any matter in which the consistories needed the judgment and help of Classis for their proper government of their church, the Maranatha Church of Surrey asked the advice of Classis in a disciplinary matter. This advice is given.

#### 10. Appointments.

a. Convening church for the next Classis: the church at Houston, BC. Dates for this Classis: December 5, 1989. In case there are no items for this Classis: April 3, 1990.

b. Suggested officers for the next Classis: Chairman: Rev. M. VanderWel; vice-chairman: Rev. A. van Delden; clerk: Rev. W. Slomp.

c. Delegates for Regional Synod to be held November 7, 1989: *Ministers*: Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. M. VanderWel, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. J. Visscher. *Alternates*: Rev. B.J. Berends, Rev. A. van Delden, Rev. M. Van Luik, Rev. G.H. Visscher (in that order). *Elders*: H.A. Berends, A.H. Lubbers, L. Stam, P. de Boer. *Alternates*: M. Vreugdenhil, J.F. DeLeeuw, G. Vane, T. Van Laar (in that order).

d. Liaison officer with the government of BC: br. M.C. Van Driel.

11. *Question Period*. No questions are asked.

12. *Censure ad Art. 44, C.O.* appears not to be necessary.

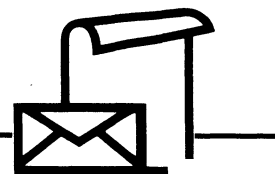
13. *Acts and Press Release*. The Acts are read and adopted. As the vice-chairman had to leave a little earlier, the approval of the press release is left to the moderamen.

14. *Closing*. The chairman requests to sing Hymn 24:6, 7, and leads in thanksgiving. Classis is closed.

For the Classis,  
M. VANDERWEL, vice-chairman, e.t.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



### Dear Editor,

The churches received a request from ARPA to contact Edmonton-Providence and Rehoboth-Burlington, the two churches appointed by General Synod to proclaim Days of Prayer according to art. 54 C.O. ARPA wants a Day of Prayer "for the protection of the life of the unborn," because "our government is in the process of drafting new legislation" regarding the abortion-issue.

About a year ago the above mentioned churches proclaimed a Day of Prayer for the same purpose, namely, when the then valid law on abortions was struck down by the Supreme Court. An additional reason was the general moral decline of the life of the nation.

Before it becomes a trend in the churches what we believe is a mis-application of art. 54 C.O. in last year's decision and in this present ARPA-request, we would like to bring the following remarks to the attention of the readership of your magazine.

The circumstances which might require a Day of Prayer are, according to art. 54, "war, general calamities, and other great afflictions, the presence of which is felt throughout the churches." Originally, the list was somewhat longer, like in art. 49 of the C.O. of 1586, namely: "times of war, pestilence, times of scarcity, severe persecutions of the church, and other public afflictions."

The concrete examples mentioned in the C.O. make clear how the C.O. wants the "general afflictions" to be understood: they must be of an acute nature, of extreme severity, and posing an immediate crisis for the life of the church and/or the nation. When the C.O. states that the presence of the afflictions must be felt

throughout the churches, it may be expected that those afflictions occupy the minds and the thoughts of the people and dominate their conversations at home and in public.

Furthermore, historically the Day of Prayer was at the same time a day of fasting. The C.O. of 1578 states in art. 74 that in prayer and fasting the churches are to confess before God penitance and contrition of heart. The afflictions for which a day of prayer was proclaimed, apparently were viewed and experienced as judgments of God on the sins of the church and/or the nation.

One must not too quickly proclaim a Day of Prayer. The Synod of Rotterdam in 1887 deemed it necessary to warn the churches, when proclaiming a Day of Prayer, to remain within the limits intended by the C.O. The nature of such a day ought not to be "to bring a prayer which attracts extra attention, next to the weekly prayers of the congregation," neither "to put before the Lord the chronic ills and needs in which land and church and nation abound." A Day of Prayer requires that the people "feel stricken in conscience by the majesty of God's judgments," and "together humble themselves before God in penitence." One must not too quickly proclaim a day of prayer, for this would "lead to undervaluation of the weekly prayers and to a weakening of the institution of the Day of Prayer by over-use."

In the light of the above, we believe that too many elements were absent from last year's and this year's circumstances to warrant the proclamation of a Day of Prayer. The abortion-issue is not an acute affliction which can be interpreted as a judgment of God on the sins of the na-

tion and/or the church. The abortion-issue rather belongs to what Synod 1887 calls the chronic ills besetting a Western civilisation which is in the process of gradually falling away from the values it inherited from its Christian past. It is a symptom, a very serious and outspoken symptom, to be sure, but nevertheless just a symptom of the general trend (chronic) of a Western world returning to its pre-Christian condition. Undoubtedly, there is urgent reason to bring this in prayer before the Lord, but its place is in the weekly prayers when the congregation is gathered together before God's throne.

It would be better if ARPA would write every now and then to the consistories to remind them of certain concrete needs in given political circumstances, deserving to be put to God in prayer.

Finally, to illustrate the position taken above concerning Days of Prayer, the following experience. In the very week before the Sunday which had been proclaimed a Day of Prayer for the churches, the churches in Alberta and Manitoba held classis. It struck me that neither in the opening-word of the chairman, nor in the conversations during the intermissions and at the meals, the abortion-issue was so much as even mentioned. Only in the closing-prayer the chairman touched briefly on it. This shows that the matter was not a "general affliction the presence of which was felt throughout the churches" in the historical sense of art. 54 C.O. The matter did not occupy the minds and thoughts of the delegates, and it did not dominate the conversations of the responsible leaders of the churches, let alone of the church-people. It was not a matter which had struck the consciences of the churches so that they felt pressed to hum-

ble themselves together before God in penitence and confession of guilt with the urgent prayer to turn away His wrath and remove the judgment from church and/or nation.

I believe it is not different at this time.

J.D. Wielenga

### Dear Editor,

I was simply amazed at the bizarre line of reasoning in Rev. Ralph Boersema's letter to the editor in the August 18, 1989 issue of *Clarion*.

Synod Winnipeg 1989 rejected Rev. Boersema's appeal, making no new statements concerning art. 184 and 185 of synod Burlington 1986. It (1989) only pointed out what Rev. Boersema could already know by reading the acts of synod 1986. However, now Rev. Boersema seems to claim that he and others such as Rev. D. DeJong were right after all.

As stated also in Rev. Boersema's letter, synod 1986 stressed the obedience to the norms of Christ. If Rev. Boersema and others would simply concentrate on teaching and preaching these norms as revealed to us by God, and concentrate on teaching man's responsibility in regard to these norms, and had not attempted to prove statements which seek to delve

into the invisible (to man) aspect of God's church-gathering work, the numerous hours spent by many assemblies leading up to synod 1986 would never have been necessary.

Rev. Boersema, being a minister in good standing, and an intelligent man, must realize that also the readers of *Clarion* are intelligent people who can see through the potentially misleading reasoning in his letter.

I share in Rev. Boersema's hope that our Canadian Reformed Churches may now move forward in unity on the matter of church doctrine. However, by now claiming that doctrinal statements defended by him and others were right after all, I am afraid that Rev. Boersema has not moved one iota closer to moving forward in unity.

Yours Sincerely,  
W. Oostdyk

### Three Letters to the Editor:

I received three letters in reaction to a remark at the end of the Letter-to-the-Editor of Rev. G.I. Williamson in the August 18, 1989 issue of *CLARION*, who denied that he had said what the Rev. K.A. Kok wrote. I summarize the three letters since all three declare the same. Rev.

Kok writes that he "probably would not have responded" had not "the editor of *Clarion* accepted Rev. Williamson's letter as a 'correction'." Rev. Kok writes

When I wrote my earlier letter, I relied not only on my memory, but I also talked to three men who had been present at the March, 1985 meeting. . . . Two of the men, Mr. S. Bogedain and Mr. J. Fluck, remembered both statements as quotes, or near quotes, from Rev. Williamson. The third, Mr. B. Davis, was less certain whether or not Rev. Williamson had used those precise words, but he also believed that both statements accurately reflected the positions Rev. Williamson took at that meeting.

Mr. S. Bogedain confirms the statements of the Rev. Kok as they appeared in *Clarion* of August 18, 1989 and writes further that from the side of the editor "a correction is now owed to Blue Bell and to Rev. Kok."

The third letter is from Mr. B.C. Davis, confirming again that what the Rev. Kok wrote earlier was true.

It would have been better had I kept my remark in the pen.

Let us consider the matter closed herewith.

J. Geertsema



## OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

### Hello Busy Beavers,

"Quickly, now! Through the back window!"

The young man scrambled down the wall.

He hurried through the streets and out the city gates of Paris.

How narrowly he had escaped the enemies at the front door!

And what was his crime?

He was being persecuted for writing the truth about the Saviour, about the Bible.

It was not the last time the young John Calvin had to flee for his beliefs.

For a year he was hunted from city to city.

Then he found rest in Switzerland.



Here began his most important work — the work he did best — writing clearly and carefully just exactly what the Bible teaches us.

In the picture you can see John Calvin's coat of arms. Do you see the hand holding out the heart to God?

This was Calvin's motto.

"My heart for Thy cause I offer Thee, Lord, promptly and sincerely."

He loved the Lord. And so he worked hard with all the talents the Lord gave him.

Even today Calvin's writings are important. Do you have some of his books at your house?

On *Reformation Day*, October 31, we may remember with thankfulness how the Lord cared for His church, also through the work of John Calvin.

### FOR YOU TO DO

John Calvin did *other* things, too, beside writing books.

Use a church history book to write a short list of what kept this Reformer very *busy*.

Yes, of course I will send you a reward.

And now it's time for *birthday wishes!*

We all join in wishing the Busy Beavers who celebrate in November a very happy birthday and many happy returns of the day.

Here's hoping you have a great time celebrating your special day with your family and friends.

Above all, may our heavenly Father guide and keep you all in the year ahead.

## NOVEMBER

Jennifer Stam	2	Ken Stam	12
Michelle Medemblik	5	Juanita Wildeboer	12
Robbie Blanken	6	Aimee Jagt	13
Randy Dijkstra	7	Michael Schouten	13
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Theresa Bredenhof	11	David De Bruin	14
Alex Meerstra	11	Kerri-Anne Wierenga	14
Julia Jonker	12	Sheryl Linde	15
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		Karen Heres	16
		Shawn Veenendaal	16
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		Gredina Jaspers	20
		Karen Vandergaag	21
		Rachel Pruijm	24
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		Joni Schulenberg	30

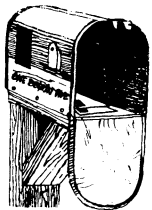


## ROCKS

God made lots of different things.  
He made the rocks for golden rings.  
Rocks can have colours,  
Rocks can be plain.  
Every rock has a certain name.



By Busy Beaver *Francine Vanwoudenberg*



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Tony Van Oene*. Of course you may join. We are happy to have you. Does your dove have a name, Tony? What do you do on the computer?

You are lucky to have an attic to play in, *Sarah Vanderzwaag*! I'm glad you like your new home and have made friends again. I can see you were happy to see your grandparents again. Bye for now, Sarah.

Hello, *Wendy Jansen*. It was good to hear from you again. Did you have a nice Indian summer? And are you planning to make something for the new baby, Wendy?

I see you have been very busy, *Kerri-Ann Spoelstra*. Keep up the good work!

Thank you for the riddles, *Leanne Beukema*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy them. Be sure to let us know, Leanne, when that new brother or sister arrives! Write again soon.

Hello, *Michelle Medemblik*. It's nice to hear from you again. I see you've been busy, too. Thank you for the wordsearch, Michelle. Bye for now.

## RIDDLE FUN

1. What happens when two stethoscopes get together?
2. What kind of bean is the smartest?
3. What is green on the outside and yellow on the inside?
4. How do roosters get up at dawn every day?
5. What sickness do you catch in a silo?
6. What goes "Zzub, zzub, zzub"?
7. What are the strongest days?
8. What month has 28 days?
9. How do you find a lost rabbit?

(Answers below)

# Quiz Time!

## REFORMATION DAY IN THE BIBLE

Also in the Bible we read how the Lord brings His people back to His Word and His true service. Fill in the blanks with the helps given.

1. Jacob told his family to put away all \_\_\_\_\_ before they went to Bethel to worship the Lord at a new \_\_\_\_\_. Gen. 35:2,3
2. Samuel gathered all Israel at \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord. 1 Sam. 7:5,6
3. David and all Israel brought the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord to \_\_\_\_\_ with joy and \_\_\_\_\_. 2 Sam. 6:15
4. At the contest on Mount Carmel the people acknowledged the Lord as \_\_\_\_\_ and destroyed the \_\_\_\_\_ of Baal. 1 Kings 18:39,40
5. Hezekiah and his people rejoiced at what \_\_\_\_\_ had done for His people in restoring the \_\_\_\_\_ of the house of the Lord. 2 Chron. 29:35,36
6. Josiah read the lost \_\_\_\_\_ to his people, destroyed the \_\_\_\_\_, and made all the people \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord all his days. 2 Chron. 34:30,33
7. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, with God's prophet's help began to rebuild the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. Ezra 5:2
8. Ezra stood on a wooden \_\_\_\_\_ to read the \_\_\_\_\_ to the people, while the Levites helped the people to \_\_\_\_\_ the law. Neh. 8:5,7,8

## NUMBER SEARCH

8	8	2	4	2	6	4	3	<b>Tricky, tricky!</b>		
8	2	4	5	5	2	9	2	by Busy Beaver		
9	2	3	5	6	6	6	9	<i>Anna DeVries</i>		
7	2	7	4	9	5	7	4	Look for:		
6	8	5	5	0	3	8	5	2650	1818	1236
6	4	1	1	3	3	2	1	3540	8234	1989
5	4	2	3	9	4	1	2	9678	4452	1990
8	9	1	9	4	8	7	3	3096	5987	1099
0	2	8	8	4	4	9	6	4980	6875	8919
9	8	6	7	5	9	6	1	8976	4932	6418
9	1	7	5	2	8	2	8	5492	1468	3562
1	0	0	7	0	0	1	9	4264	5987	6312
1	5	9	8	7	8	3	9			
3	5	4	0	1	7	6	0			
8	9	1	9	8	6	4	1			