



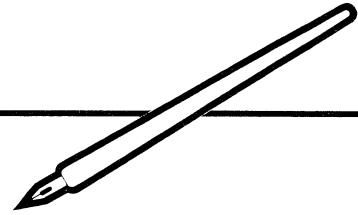
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 39, No. 5

March 2, 1990

By J. De Jong



The Only Spark

Unlikely spark?

The New Year's Day issue of *Time* magazine, commenting on the dramatic uprising in Romania, suggested that the minister in the Hungarian Reformed Church, Rev. Laszlo Tökes, seemed to be an unlikely figure to spark a revolution. And by all accounts this assessment appears correct. This minister apparently regularly spoke out against abuses in his native Timosoara, and also took up the cause of his fellow Hungarians who live in the region of Transsylvania. He never propagated violence, but attacked government programs which deprived the people of their freedoms. A Calvinist minister who spoke up for the concerns and needs of his countrymen: who can appear to be a more unlikely revolutionary?

Yet the words and actions of this minister is held by all accounts to be the catalyst that led to the downfall of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. Relations between Tökes and the government became strained after the minister had adversely criticized government housing programs in a television interview. The government took action immediately. Writes *Time*:

"Denied a ration book by the state after the broadcast, Tökes was unable to buy bread, meat or fuel. Parishioners who tried to bring him provisions were confronted by police. The pastor was barred from meeting relatives, and his telephone was shut off. In a surreal form of harassment, authorities occasionally turned on the phone to deliver threats to Tökes, then billed him for the calls at long-distance rates. To protect his four-year-old son, Tökes sent the boy to live with relatives."

Then followed beatings and direct attacks. Tökes was stabbed, his windows were broken, and he received numerous threats to his life. Added to that, he was ordered both by the state and corrupt church officials of the ruling bodies to take another church in southern Romania. When Tökes refused, a Bishop of the church obtained a court order for his eviction. That is when his congregation and many others formed a human chain around Tökes to protect him. It began with a group of about 200 people, but quickly developed into a mass demonstration as thousands of Romanians of all ethnic groups joined the protest. From there the flame spread to Bucharest, won over the army, and ousted the tyrant. It all happened in just ten days.

It is not our intention to judge the actions of Tökes or to measure his orthodoxy. We do know that our sister churches in Holland have contact with many ministers and congregations of the Hungarian Reformed Church, both in Hungary and Romania. Much of that work is not public. All reports have described Tökes as an ordinary Calvinist minister in the Hungarian Reformed Church. But we are concerned with the idea that the work of such a minister is considered to be an *unlikely* spark to an uprising against tyranny. Is the regular preaching of the gospel such an unlikely spark? Perhaps we should listen to Calvin on this point.

Calvin on the preaching

For Calvin, the preaching of the Word of God is not simply the message and instruction of Christ for His Church. It is also the means by which the Lord governed the history of the world. On the one hand, Christ established His rule in the hearts of His children through the proclamation of the gospel. On the other hand, the preaching is for Calvin a mighty instrument through which the Lord "in a hidden way directs the whole course of history and *creates the disturbance* among the nations that is to bring about the consummation of His eternal purpose."¹ Preaching is also the sceptre by which God brings judgment to the nations. Quoting Isaiah 11:4 ("He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked"), Calvin says that when believers limit themselves to their calling, God will work His vengeance on their enemies (commentary on Ps. 149:9). Through the preaching of the Word of God history is driven to its final consummation.

Calvin on resistance

Calvin never condoned violence or revolution. But that he allowed for resistance against tyranny is well-known. He even speaks of "open avengers" whom God raises up among the people in order to punish the wicked government and deliver His people from tyranny. Even though the deeds of these men are not to be judged as perfect, yet God accomplishes His work through them. And Calvin maintained that it was the duty of the popular or lower magistrates, elected officials of the people, to defend the freedom of the people against the "fierce licentiousness" of kings.²

The only spark!

Much more could be said. But this is enough to tell us that in the teaching of Calvin, the preaching of the Word is far from an unlikely spark. It may have the *appearance* of an unlikely spark. But in reality God governs the world through His Word as it is proclaimed weekly among His people. And occasionally He also shows this to all the world. Therein we find a vivid and convincing assurance of our faith. Who then can deny that He reigns on high, and He will fulfil His counsel in this world?

Here history again proves to us the rule of Paul: the minister may be bound, but the Word of God is *not bound*, 2 Timothy 2:9. Much as men try to drive true religion from the hearts of men, they will never succeed. For God accomplishes His transcendent purpose even there where human chains are the heaviest. He breaks through *all* the walls! Therefore we must all the more live to His honour!

¹R.S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1953, p. 86, emphasis added.

²See *Institutes*, IV, xx, 30; IV, xx, 31.



Pastor and teacher in the pulpit

By C.J. de Ruijter¹

This is the second of a series of five articles dealing with the sermon and what we may expect from it. It pays attention to two aspects of the character of the preaching: The sermon should be instructional and pastoral.

Teaching and instruction

Preaching is teaching; this has always been considered a most important element of the sermon. In fact, there have been times that the man in the pulpit was thought of first and foremost as a teacher. And it is true, you may expect to learn from a sermon; after all, that is the purpose of instruction.

It is remarkable how often the Bible itself speaks of teaching and instruction. Both the Old and New Testament point to teaching and instruction as *the way* to become familiar with the demands of a life before God. Particularly in His preaching, Christ, our LORD whom we acknowledge as our highest Prophet and Teacher, showed Himself the Master, and that in the real sense of Teacher.² This fact in itself provides sufficient reason to speak about the preaching in the church as teaching and instruction.

However, it will be obvious that we are speaking of a special type of instruction. Instruction may be thought of as merely a transfer of information. In this case the word *instruction* suggests that you wish to be informed about the important facts of a certain topic. We

are familiar with this type of instruction from our experience as students in school.

It is clear that we may expect something else in the church. We do not attend here a course of study, not even a course in Bible study; neither do we

“Being a shepherd means that the preacher lets the voice of the Good Shepherd be heard.”

receive here instruction in exegesis. In the church we hear how the God of our life speaks to us with His Word. Therefore we may and must expect something else from this type of instruction. The instruction received in the sermon never permits us to remain neutral listeners. We are fully, that is with our whole being, involved in the message which we hear. This also means that the instruction of the sermon must aim at the increase of the knowledge which is required for a life with the LORD.

Knowledge

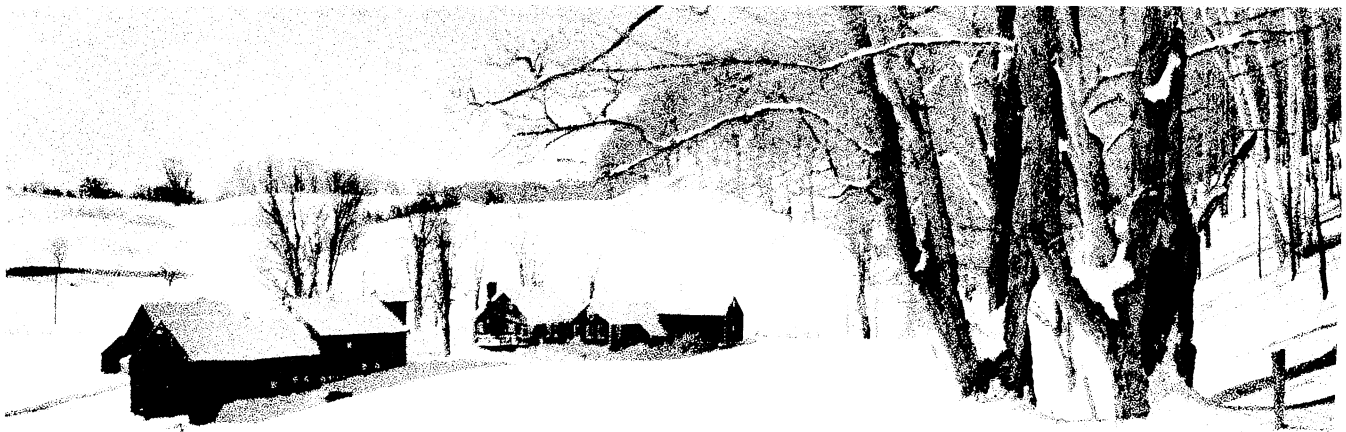
The instruction of the sermon aims at the increase of knowledge. Knowledge is essential for a true faith.³

The concept ‘knowledge’ can be

defined in a variety of ways. In one sense it emphasizes facts: you want to know, that is, you want information about names, events etc. It is also possible to think of knowledge as actively using your brains. In this case you expect the sermon to be intellectually stimulating. Both these elements may well be present in a sermon, but they do not touch the heart of the matter. Faith is not a matter of formal knowledge, neither is it a matter of merely being informed about certain things. Faith knowledge can only exist within the intimate bond with God, a bond which He Himself has established. To know Him is to trust in Him.

Growth

This has, of course, important consequences for what we may expect from a sermon. The point is not whether we hear something new and fresh, something we were not aware of before. No minister will be able to satisfy such an expectation. But more importantly, it ignores the fact that the core of the sermon is always known to us already, because we know Christ. Growth in the knowledge of Christ does not mean in the first place that we come to know more facts and information. It means that the bond between Christ and ourselves becomes closer. Therefore, we may expect from a sermon that it will not be a lecture or speech about an interesting text, a difficult Bible book, or a



disputed point from the confession. We may expect that the sermon aims at strengthening and deepening our relationship with Christ. The instruction of the sermon has only value and meaning when seen in this context.

Yet, this does not mean that the minister ought, in his sermons, to avoid as much as possible factual knowledge and difficult topics. What has been said so far is no plea for a minimizing of the content of the sermon. Indeed, the argument is often heard that the preaching in the church should be as simple as possible. But that would mean that the minister could select only those Bible passages which are easy to understand and which readily speak to the congregation. The Bible certainly does not suggest at all that difficult matters should be shunned.

Our discussion so far tried to show the context in which these questions should be raised. Within that context we are called upon to exert ourselves with all our might (and also with our intellect).

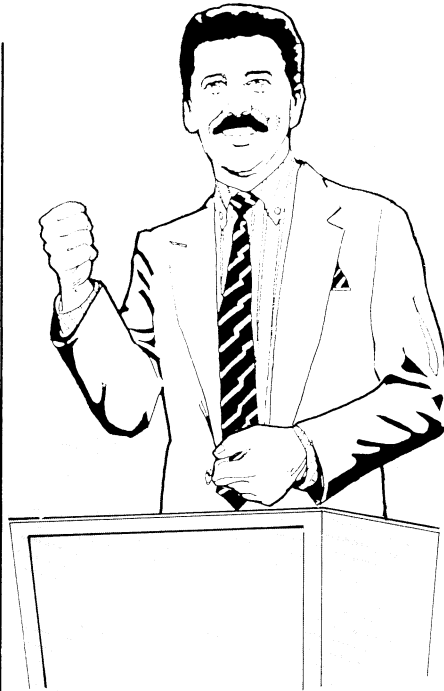
We may therefore expect from a sermon that also difficult matters will be included in its instruction. If not, our faith would remain at an elementary level. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of this very point.⁴ He wants to go into depth about Christ as high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (A careful reading of this letter gives the strong impression that the author is preaching!) Quite a few people find this letter rather difficult, something for the connoisseur. But if we truly love God, then we want to be busy also with this type of instruction, however difficult. This is certainly necessary in order to go on towards maturity. We should reject the false dilemma that true knowledge of faith has nothing to do with increasing our understanding of the instruction of the Bible.

The same applies to factual knowledge. When the sermon deals with, e.g., Genesis 14,⁵ the minister will have to include some geographical detail about the land of Canaan. Without such information the main idea of this chapter is difficult to grasp.

Yet such geographical knowledge is only meaningful within the context of our faith and trust in God. In summary, we may expect that the instruction of the sermon will make us wiser about everything that concerns our life before God.

Pastoral

Secondly, we may expect that a sermon is pastoral; the shepherd speaks. Often people have difficulty



“All this clearly shows that no division should be made between the pastoral and the instructional aspects of the sermon.”

understanding how a sermon can be instructional and pastoral at the same time. Some consider these two elements mutually exclusive. Such misunderstanding is promoted when we regard only the home visits of the minister as his pastoral activities. This is a wrong view of the work of the minister.

Being a shepherd means that the preacher lets the voice of the Good Shepherd be heard. That must take place on the pulpit! Separating the pastoral and the instructional element seems to suggest that we receive objective, non-personal instruction from the pulpit, while during the week the pastor attends to the personal needs of his sheep.

It will be clear from our discussion that such a division is not possible. We try to separate artificially what in fact are two inseparable elements of the one office. Both elements must work together in order to make the sermon into a real sermon, a ministering of God's Word.

A pastoral sermon seeks to win hearts while concretely addressing its message to the congregation. This can

only come about when instruction and pastoral care form a strong and true unity. The minister will need to know his congregation in order to be a true pastor. This knowledge will undoubtedly influence his sermons. Therefore instruction and pastoral care cannot be separated in a sermon.

Admonition and comfort

Further consideration of the pastoral element of the sermon suggests that the sermon must admonish as well as comfort. At first thought, this also seems a contradiction, but that is certainly not the case. (The Bible often uses the same word for these two ideas: admonish = comfort.) Admonition aims to prevent us from wandering away and losing sight of Christ. Comfort aims to ensure that we do not lose hold of Christ because of sorrow or other problems. Admonition and comfort aim to keep the congregation with Christ.

This means concretely that we may expect that the sermon arms us against the devil, warning us against dangers, equipping us so that we are able to fulfil our specific calling, encouraging us in real difficulties and temptations. The pastoral element of the sermon means also that we may expect to receive clear instruction which will help us to come to know ourselves and our relation with God and the world around us better.

All this clearly shows that no division should be made between the pastoral and the instructional aspects of the sermon. The sermon's instruction can be to the point only when it is pastorally directed at the congregation. The pastoral emphasis of the sermon can only serve the congregation well when it is truly instructional.


All this has far-reaching consequences for the content of the sermon. The focus of this article was on the character of the sermon. Only when we have understood this character can we fruitfully discuss the content of the sermon in further detail in a following article.

¹De Ruijter, C.J. Herder en leraar op de preekstoel. DE REFORMATIE 64/12, December 17, 1988. Translated with permission by T.M.P. VanderVen.

²Matthew 23:8: "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren."

³Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7, Q & A 21: "What is true faith? True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word. . ."

⁴Hebrews 6:1. "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity. . ."

⁵Abraham saves Lot, and meets Melchizedek. 

By C. Van Dam

A visitor from South Africa

On February 7 and 8, Dr. P.J. Rossouw, Professor of Diaconology at the University of Oranje-Vrijstaat in Bloemfontein, South Africa, visited the Theological College and delivered two guest lectures on preaching. We were not completely unknown to Dr. Rossouw prior to his arrival in our midst. He is familiar with our Dutch sister churches since he has studied in Kampen under Prof. C. Trimp in 1982-'83. (He received his doctor's degree in South Africa after writing a dissertation on the office in the contemporary Reformed pastorate.) Dr. K. Deddens has had frequent contact with Dr. Rossouw in connection with a writing project. When the opportunity presented itself, we were happy to have Dr. Rossouw present two lectures on "Reformed Prophetic Preaching, especially in the present South African context."

Although it is impossible to relay the contents of two lectures in this column, let me give some impressions. In his first lecture, Dr. Rossouw stressed the great importance of preaching. "If preaching is done correctly many problems disappear." "Preaching brings unbelief into a crisis." In order for preaching to be prophetic it has to be done with sensitivity for the specific moment and circumstance in which the Word goes forth. Dr. Rossouw related prophetic preaching to the proclamation done by the prophets in the Old Testament and then showed how we in turn should preach about their message today.

The church has a threefold task with respect to proclamation. The Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk), in which Dr. Rossouw is a minister, outlined this task as follows:

In its prophetic task the church proclaims the kingdom's message of salvation, calling all to repent and to believe the Gospel, and so become partakers of eternal life. At the same time the whole of life, in all its aspects and areas, must be critically evaluated in accordance with the norms of the Word of God.

In its priestly task by word and action, the church proclaims the love and compassion of God, the

reconciliation between God and man, the love and reconciliation between man and fellow man, especially among fellow believers because of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and the advent of the Holy Spirit.

In its kingly task, the church proclaims the call for the sanctification of our lives and for the justice of God, which must and will triumph over all injustice, evil forces, ideologies and systems (*Church and Society* [1986], p. 9).

The church must always be reforming. What is reformation? The definition which Dr. B. van der Walt gave is worth listening to, especially considering the South African context in which it comes.

Reformation is the deliberate, fearless, positive attempt of Christians to know and to live, with sincere repentance, confession of guilt and humility, and in deep dependence on God, in accordance with the original Biblical revelation of renewal in the image of God through

the Holy Spirit, the will of God and with creative consideration of the good from the past, without ceasing to fight evil in all its forms — that is individually and structurally, to strive for the radical, total, and integral renovation of the individual and community and to do so according to strategies that address the questions of the day most effectively.

The future is not clear in South Africa, but the gospel must be proclaimed fearlessly in its full power. One must not just cling to the past, but looking to the Word and Spirit for guidance apply the Word to our present situation. This leads to the continuous reformation of one's life as church and individually.

In the second lecture Dr. Rossouw continued the basic themes he started and developed them further, for example, prophetic preaching and change. A constantly reforming church and change do not exclude but complement each other. In the past the Dutch Reformed Church often neglected change

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Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, MB

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ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

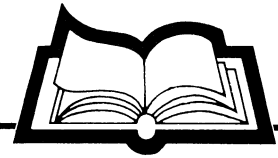
CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
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Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

SUBSCRIPTION RATES		Regular	Air
FOR 1990		Mail	Mail
Canada		\$26.00	\$47.00
U.S.A.	U.S. Funds	\$28.00	\$43.50
International		\$38.00	\$66.00

Advertisements: \$6.00 per column inch
Second class mail registration number 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

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By J. De Jong

"And leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was."

Mark 4:36a

More than Jonah!

Small words sometimes mean a lot. So it is with the observation in the gospel of Mark that the disciples took Jesus with them in the boat just *as He was*. Some maintain that we are not to see any special significance in these words, since Mark only wants to point out that Jesus was already in the boat when He gave the command to go to the other side, and that He simply stayed in the boat He was in as they set out to go. Literally the text says: "they took Him as He was in the boat," a formulation which can be read in various ways, but certainly does not demand special emphasis on Jesus' state or condition at the time. Others suggest that the term means that He went without delay, without care, or without any equipment.

The context does not force us to decide between these interpretations. But the words should not be treated as if they were not there! They indicate that Jesus did not get out into another boat or take a rest before His departure. He had been teaching for the whole day by the sea and we can assume that He was very tired, Mark 4:1. This gospel also stresses the relentless tempo of the coming of the kingdom of God. God does not leave His Son alone for a moment; Jesus goes *immediately* from one place to the next, cf. Mark 1:12, 21, 29. He is soon overwhelmed with crowds and with work. He never rests, not even on the sabbath. It is no wonder that He appears exhausted. In fact, this is the only time in the gospels we read of Him sleeping. Imagine the circumstances! He slept on what probably was one of the seats in a small boat, and even the raging waves did not awaken Him.

So He is portrayed here as the Man of weakness, a Man of a nature like ours. In this moment He is the model of stark humanity. He left just as He was, tired, and hungry, and without a break. And in such a state He is pursued by God's raging storm. Again God does not allow Him a moment's rest. The storm also illustrates Satan's attempt to block the progress of the gospel. As a man exhausted Jesus labours under the wrath of the Father, and under the onslaughts of Satan who tries to weaken and destroy the church.

Yet it is this Man who rebukes the wind and says to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And He rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith. His words make clear: someone greater than Jonah is here! Jonah had also been sound asleep in the boat at one point in his life, when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, Jonah 1:3. Then, too, the sea raged, and a great wind was hurled on the sea. Jonah knew why the terrible storm had come upon the

sea, and told the sailors that they would have to throw him overboard in order to have the sea calmed for them. Jonah knew that in some measure he had to suffer for his sin, and be punished for what he had done. He felt the force of *guilt* exposed in the relentless pounding of the waves, and in the terror of God which threatened to destroy everyone on board the ship.

Not so the Lord Jesus! He also lay asleep in the boat. But He did not need to be thrown overboard on being awakened. For He had no guilt! He did not need to pay for His own sin; indeed, He would give His life to pay for the sins of others! Therefore, under the same conditions He only needs to say: "Peace! Be still!" More than Jonah is here!

Here the disciples' faith was tested. For in His fatigue the Lord Jesus appeared as only too human. So they are impertinent in their attitude towards Him. But they should have known that He would lead them safely to the other side. And here they come to know the Man of weakness as the royal Son of power. They see how a Man on their side receives authority over all creation. They see creation restored to its paradise order in which man has dominion over all creation. And they see One who is at the same time true God, having power to dispose of all things in heaven and on earth.

The church may receive such a Saviour: one like us in all things, except without sin! He becomes Lord of a new creation! Here the gospel shows us the Lord of heaven and earth, who may rule because of His willingness to humble Himself and show perfect obedience in the form of human flesh under the curse. And in the measure that the Lord Jesus manifests His power, He indicates His willingness to humble Himself even more — indeed, even to the death on the cross.

For us who know that this has happened in history there is comfort indeed. More than Jonah is here! He was manifested in weakness, but raised in power! And He received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore we know that our lives are safe in His hands and He will also usher His church safely to the final shore.

"Have you no faith?" asked Jesus. Then He shows us who He is: the right Man on our side! The Son of glory and power! And yet a Man of weakness, who is thus able to sympathize with all our weaknesses, Hebrews 4:15. Therefore we may answer with the church of all ages: "I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, my Lord and Saviour." God be praised for His gift!



College Corner — continued

on the basis of the gospel proclamation because of mysticism and pietism. Then the church becomes silent and the gospel does not impact on the troubles of the current societal situation.

Prophetic preaching was also linked to the covenant. Such preaching is to be seen as covenant renewal. The covenant determines the address of such preaching. Those addressed are children of God who profess the acceptance and joy of the covenant, who obey the demands of the covenant, and who spread the message of the covenant. The covenant also forms the basis of the appeal of the gospel proclamation.


Prophetic preaching was also distinguished from so-called Liberation Theology and Black Theology as well as other un-Reformed theologies. In conclusion Dr. Rossouw said that prophetic preaching must be a witness from the Word to the inside (the local church) and to the outside (to all levels of society).

Both lectures were followed by extensive question and discussion periods which were well utilized. Some questions were critical of the speaker. For example, is all preaching by definition not prophetic? (In a sense yes, but

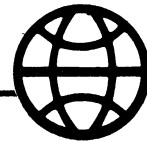
remember the South African situation!) Others sparked considerable discussion in which not only the speaker but also others vigorously participated. For example, does the church have a task to speak officially to society? A good Reformed rule is that churches in assembly deal only with ecclesiastical matters. On the other hand let us not forget that the Synod of Dordt spoke of correspondence with civil authorities! Should the Canadian Reformed Churches as churches not say more in one way or another to the civil authorities about questions like abortion? Other questions got answers that were surprising. Was our government right when they said that Prime Minister De Klerk's recent announcements show that our boycott is working? Answer, yes that is correct. The boycotts do hurt South Africa very much.

One question that received a very extensive answer concerned the position of church and state and the interrelationship of power blocks in South Africa. The Dutch Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches of South Africa ("Dopper") are closely related to the ruling party, The National Party, since the membership from the party comes by far mostly from these churches. To the

right are political parties that draw from the Hervormde Kerk and the Afrikaans Protestant Church. Members of these churches, generally speaking, like to keep the status quo and are influenced by pietism and mysticism. To the left of the National Party are mostly black, English and Indian churches (Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.) although one must be careful with generalizations since the National Party also draws some support from these churches. The blacks up to now do not have the franchise. Their involvement in the present political situation as a strong pressure group for change is understandable when one realizes that there are about 23 million blacks, 5.5 million whites, 4 million coloureds and 1.5 million Indians. South Africa faces an uncertain future but Dr. Rossouw is completely convinced of the need for fundamental change as we are beginning to witness it. His hope is that the Lord will use the Christian upbringing which most South Africans have received to provide some sort of a good basis for inter-racial cooperation towards a better South Africa.

Besides faculty, professors emeriti, and students, also some ministers from the area were present. 

INTERNATIONAL



By W.W.J. VanOene

CANADIAN SCENE

According to Statistics Canada, more than 98 percent of Canadian homes have telephones, and more than half of these have two or more phones. And they are not gathering dust.

In 1986, Canadians made almost 37 billion phone calls. That averages out to almost four calls per person per day.

To keep the system running, the major phone companies employed over 99,000 people full-time and pulled in revenues of almost 11 billion dollars. Most of that comes from the phone bills Canadians pay each month, which is the way things will stay. At least until someone invents a machine that will give us all we want for free.

WASHINGTON

President George Bush vetoed legislation Oct. 21 that would have provided federal money for abortions in cases of rape and incest. A later attempt to override the veto in Congress failed. (TI)

HARRISBURG, PA

The Pennsylvania Senate approved a set of restrictions on abortions November 15 by a vote of 143-58. The new regulations impose a 24-hour waiting period; require married women to notify their husbands; ban abortions after 24 weeks gestation; prohibit abortions on the basis of the baby's sex; and regulate the use of fetal tissue. (TI)

THE NETHERLANDS


To become a millionaire in the Netherlands appears less and less to be some exclusive achievement. In the years 1984 and 1985 the band of millionaires increased by eight thousand to a total of more than thirty-five thousand, an increase of more than thirty percent. The Central Bureau of Statistics ascribes this growth to the increase in the value of stocks. Stocks constitute approximately sixty percent of their investments. In 1985 about nine hundred civil servants were among this group, while seven hundred millionaires

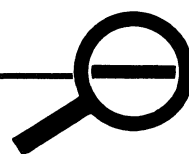
had been declared unfit for work. According to some, the total is three times as large as the figure given by the Bureau, since this Bureau includes only those who pay taxes over a million or more. (DNC)

THE HAGUE

(ANP) The population of the Netherlands increased five-fold to 14.8 million during the past 150 years. On the other hand, Belgium stopped at approximately 10 million, whereas this country had a population of 4 million over against the Netherlands of 2.8 million when the former seceded. During the past 150 years some 5.2 million people came in, while 4.9 million persons left. (ND)

WALSRODE

Only 29% of all church members in Germany believe the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, and a mere 32% believe that the Holy Spirit exists. This is the outcome of a recently conducted poll. (ND) 



By C. Van Dam

A debate on the health of the Christian Reformed Church

On December 11, 1989 a debate took place in Ancaster, Ontario, on "The State of the Health of the Christian Reformed Church" (CRC). It was organized by the Committee of Concerned Members of the Christian Reformed Church. Reports on this confrontation between Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, former editor of *The Banner*, and Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, professor of Church History at Westminster Seminary in California, were carried by *The Banner* (Jan. 22, 1990) and *Christian Renewal* (Jan. 22, 1990).

Genesis 1 and Fundamentalism

It would be beyond the scope of this Press Review to give a detailed account. The debate does not appear to have resolved any divisions in the CRC. Let me pass on some of the items that appeared to have a prominent place. One of the issues was the meaning of Genesis 1.

Kuyvenhoven said that he was never taught or believed that the six-day creation story had to be taken as a literal description of the way in which God created the world. And, when it comes to the how and "when of creation and the whole cosmology, when it comes to those questions, the church better be quiet and not dogmatic about it" (*Christian Renewal*, p. 5).

Of course it is irrelevant what one was taught. Crucial is the answer to the question: "What does the Bible say?" Kuyvenhoven's plea for caution is correct. We must be humble about our knowledge about the origin of the world. However, we must also not say any less than what God has been pleased to reveal to us.

Over against the charge of liberalism, Kuyvenhoven responded that he had found very few, if any, liberals in the CRC; but fundamentalism is rampant and so-called biblical inerrancy or literalism is often taught as if it were a Reformed dogma, and it is not. The Reformed have never been literalists (*Christian Renewal*, p. 5).

Already in 1958, J.I. Packer noted that the term fundamentalism "is prejudicial, ambiguous, explosive and in every way unhelpful to discussion. It does not clarify; it merely confuses" (in his *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, 40).

The same can be said about the term literalist. When all the rhetoric is put aside, the issue is whether we are to take God on His Word or not.¹ In the case of the days of creation, arguments must be based on Scripture. According to the plain meaning of Genesis 1 and passages like the Fourth Commandment there is nothing to suggest that these days were anything other than days as we also reckon them, days that include daytime and nighttime. (See further *Clarion*, March 3, 1989.) If someone wishes to take issue with this understanding of the text, the arguments must come from Scripture. Much ink has been spilt on the relationship of Genesis 1 and science. God has given man an inquiring mind. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that natural science is outside its field of competence when it speaks about origins. Dealing with such a subject is no longer empirically controlled science; but, this is scholarly speculation instead. Only God can reveal with absolute authority about what happened at the beginning. He was there and He is the One who made all things.

Ordination of Women

The issue of women's ordination also came up.

He [Godfrey] refuted the argument of those who say that although Christ would have wanted to exalt women to leadership positions at the time, He couldn't because of cultural restraints. Godfrey said that argument was not true because the surrounding cultures and religions already had women as leaders (*Christian Renewal*, 15).

Concerning women in office, Kuyvenhoven said:

We have discussed the question for 20 years... We have voted on the question for all these years. And you cannot by majority-vote decide what the Bible teaches.

I know of three prohibition texts in Paul. Upon careful reflection, I have concluded that these prohibitions for women to speak and teach were appropriate for the time and place, but not for all time and all places (*The Banner*, 21).

Godfrey responded by noting that Kuyvenhoven talks about 20 years of discussion in the CRC about women in office. But the church of Jesus Christ has had office-bearers

for nearly 2,000 years. We have to be very careful that we have not allowed ourselves to be caught up in the spirit of the age — a spirit in which feminism is an important element — and ... set aside the Scripture in the name of a modern, unbiblical philosophy (*The Banner*, 22).

Godfrey was asked about the role of the Holy Spirit, and if a woman who feels called to serve as a minister, is lying to herself. He said that the Spirit only works through and according to Scripture. The Spirit would not call a woman because it is opposed to Scripture (*Christian Renewal*, 15).

The authority of Scripture

Not surprisingly, Godfrey's central concern in the debate was whether the CRC still maintains its faithfulness to the Scriptures. As Godfrey put it, the Reformed tradition has been most faithful in its reading of the Word of God. He as an outsider and newcomer has treasured the Reformed faith highly. He is, however, troubled with what he called "a decline of Reformed character and commitment in the CRC." This is evident from the way the CRC's traditional understanding of Scripture is questioned and doubt is cast upon the reliability of God's Word. As Godfrey put it:

are we still holding up the Scriptures in the CRC as the standard by which we evaluate ourselves and judge ourselves (*Christian Renewal*, 5).

What I'm concerned about is, how are we using the Bible to judge our thinking? How are we striving humbly to submit to the teaching of God's Word? How are we labouring to confess to the world that God's Word is true and is understandable for us? We are not guaranteed by God that the CRC will remain faithful or that any institution will (*The Banner*, 22).

Those who simply want to continue in the normal Reformed way are having an increasingly difficult time in the CRC. May the Lord bless their testimony and may He grant them much wisdom.

¹For a positive evaluation on the notion of biblical inerrancy in the Reformed theology of A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck see R.B. Gaffin, "Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 44 (1982) 250-289 and 45 (1983) 219-272.



Church institution in the Fraser Valley

By Pete De Boer

On Sunday morning, Jan. 21, 1990 four elders and two deacons were installed and therewith the 41st church in the Canadian/American Reformed Church federation was instituted. The Canadian Reformed Church at Port Kells has its own unique beginning.

In 1986 the consistory of the Cloverdale Church initiated a study about growth and expansion. As much of the growth was in the direction of the Langley Church, that consistory was also involved. It was decided not to pursue the formation of an additional congregation at that time.

During the ensuing years both congregations continued to grow, and soon overtures were made to both consistories to consider the matter again. This time the initiative came from individual members.

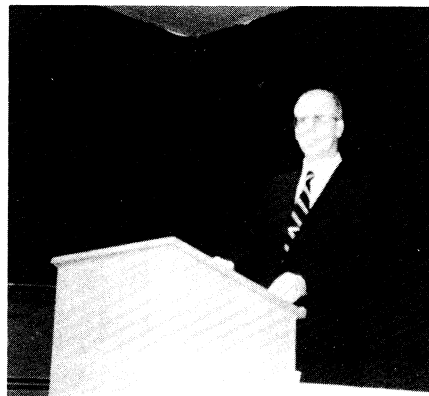
After a meeting between the two consistories a small committee of brothers was formed to determine the interest in forming a new church and where such a church could be formed.

Several further meetings took place and soon a plan began to unfold. In the fall of 1989 the consistories of both Langley and Cloverdale consented. Classis approval was also sought and received.

Under the auspices of both parent consistories a meeting was called on Jan. 5, 1990 to discuss the practical matters of instituting a new church and to elect office-bearers. This meeting was well attended and was conducted by the chairman of the interim committee, br. W. Vanderpol Jr. Br. C. Sikma presented the interim committee's report. He related the history of the developments that led to the need for a new church. In his words, the idea . . . "started to hatch in the poultry barns, it got tinkered on inside a truck body, it got hammered on at the construction site, and it got cracked and cackled about at the egg plant." He also mentioned this new church was a bit different from most new churches in that it did not leave a mother church but that it was leaving two parent churches.

After the report from the committee Rev. J. Moesker presided over the elec-

tion of office-bearers. It was gratifying to note that the LORD has blessed also this congregation with men who are



Rev. J. Moesker

able and willing to serve in His vineyard. After the voting, the discussion was focussed on such necessary items as study society formation, babysitting, worship-service times, and parking.

Leaving

As the date of institution drew near, the reality began to sink in that leaving would soon be at hand. Leaving the family that we had been members of for more or fewer years would now bring us face-to-face with stark sadness as well as promising challenges. After the P.M. service of Jan. 14, 1990 the congregation of Langley paid tribute to those of its members that were leaving to go to Port Kells. Rev. Visscher thanked the departing members for the work they had performed in Christ's service while members of Langley. Mrs. P. Jansen was especially thanked for her many years of service as organist. Afterward everyone was invited to have a cup of coffee and some tasty pastries.

On Friday Jan. 19, 1990 a pot-luck dinner was held in the Cloverdale annex



The congregation meets to discuss the new church and to elect elders and deacons

"in honour of those leaving." The MC, br. H.A. Berends spoke a word of farewell and wished the Lord's blessing on those leaving as well as on those who

After the service many letters of congratulations were read from the churches in the Classis Pacific region. Four churches had sent delegates.

with spiritual gifts." The trilogy of points were: 1) The Spirit supplies a variety of gifts 2) The Son supplies a variety of service 3) The Father supplies a variety of workings. In working out these points he compared the church to an orchestra (noting that all such comparisons are incomplete). The variety of gifts in the church could be compared to various instruments making beautiful music together. The work of the Spirit, which was already evident in the Old Testament, comes mightily to the believers in the last days. Everyone does not experience this in the same way, yet everyone does receive gift(s) from the Spirit. The congregation is urged to take inventory of its gifts. In verse 5 of the text we are shown that Christ came to serve. In the same way we ought to use the gifts we receive to serve, not for self-service or self-esteem but for others. The Spirit is going to demand an accounting of the use we made of His gifts. In the third part of the text we are comforted with the power we receive from the Father to perform the service which is our calling. In conclusion the church at Port Kells can flourish when the gifts of the Holy Spirit are recognized and employed depending on God's energy.

The short, but eventful, history of the formation of the Port Kells Church demonstrates once more the wonderful hand of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, gathering unto Himself His people. To Him be glory, praise, and dominion, forever.



The ladies cheerfully do their part in the kitchen

remained behind. He also had a special word for a departing organist. Br. R. Dykstra was thanked for providing many years of service as Cloverdale's organist.

You will notice that the Port Kells congregation will not be in want of organists, especially when you consider that Mrs. Jansen brings with her a daughter who is an accomplished organist in her own right. Consequently the early establishment on an "organ fund."

Institution

Rev. J. Moesker chose as text for the first service in Port Kells Psalm 122. His theme was "Joy in the Church." This was divided into two parts; first, The reason for this joy and second, The result of this joy. He pointed out that the joy of Ps. 122 stems from the fact that in Jerusalem the Word is worshipped and maintained. The joy that is felt at the time of institution can and must remain when the preaching of the Word, the use of the sacraments, and church discipline is maintained. Secondly he urged the members to pray for the joy and peace of the church. This was also Christ Jesus' prayer for the church, and in Him we may seek that peace here in Port Kells and so much more gloriously in the new Jerusalem.

These passed on congratulations orally.

In the afternoon the service was conducted by our other parent's minister, Rev. J. Visscher. His sermon was based on 1 Cor. 12:4-7. The theme was "The triune God enriches His churches

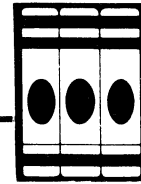
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HYMN 2

Te Deum Geneva, 1562

Du Seigneur

BOOK REVIEW



By T.M.P. VanderVen

H. Westerink

Twijfel: Over aanvechting van ons geloof.
Barneveld: Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak,
1989 (104 pages)

Available from Inheritance Publications,
Box 154, Neerlandia, AB, T0G 1R0
Approx. \$11.00 (In the Dutch language)

Ewoud Gosker

Avondmaalgangers

With drawings of Sybrand Steen
Barneveld: Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak,
1988 (38 pages)

Available from Inheritance Publications
Approx. \$11.00 (In the Dutch Language)

Two gems from De Vuurbaak in the Dutch language. The one book is a wholesome conversation about that difficult and often painful topic: *doubt*. The other gives us the combined efforts of a Christian poet and a Christian artist; an insightful record of their perceptions of the life and thought of Christians as they sit together at the Lord's table. It gives particular pleasure to be able to review the work of colleague Gosker who has left an artistic legacy in Canada as teacher (Smithers and Hamilton) and as contributor to *Reformed Perspective* (*The King's Way*).

TIWJFEL (Doubt)

Yes, I know from experience what doubt is. I also know what it means to flee with it to God, as with a sin, rooted deep in my heart. And I also know what it is to find with Him forgiveness, and peace. And I can assure you, that His peace can preserve our hearts in Christ. (p. 92).

A book about doubt — a book for Reformed people? The author of this booklet writes that the LORD demands from us a life in faith amidst a world in which doubt, scepticism, and unbelief have carved out an impossibly strong position. He speaks of the temptation of modern thought (Chapter 3), and modern life (Chapter 4).

Modern man doubts everything. We already mentioned that authority of the Scriptures is no longer accepted. Neither is the authority of the government. But that is not all. All of society, all of the existing order falls nowadays under the microscope of doubt. Sexual intercourse — why only when married? Educating children — why only in a family with a father and a mother? Why cannot a

single woman care for a child by herself? Why not a single man? Why not a homosexual couple? The care for the family and the home — why is this in the first place the task of the parents (Tit. 2:5)? (p. 17)

Westerink does not excuse doubt and scepticism on the basis of the prevailing modern attitudes, or on unfortunate circumstances. His chapter 6 speaks clearly and without hesitation of doubt as sin.

We often make it so easy for the enemy. How? Because we often do not watch and pray with as much perseverance as we should in order to withstand the temptations of the devil (Eph. 6:11, 18). And then sin can become very powerful in our lives, so that it becomes almost impossible to eradicate. Sins which we have hung on to for who knows how long already; sins which we still hang on to. Which we, consciously or subconsciously, have kept outside the light of God's face. Sins of carelessness and inattentiveness in our life before the LORD. Carelessness in listening to the Scriptures and to the preaching. Neglect of our prayers. Indifference in our church attendance. . . . (p. 25)

Is that it? A book that points the finger? Westerink does not stop here. He points the finger to the LORD God who is, and was, and is to come. Because the certainty of our faith cannot be found by our human ability to reason everything out.

. . . God is faithful and trustworthy; not only in His promises, but also in His rewards to those who seriously seek Him as He is. Therefore, in all doubt and temptations: Call upon Him! Call upon Him! (p. 63)¹

Westerink points to the way of the confession of our sin and guilt, and the way of prayer for forgiveness and acquittal. He also points to the means which the LORD has given us within the communion of saints: we are not alone. The chapters 19-22 provide an excellent example, showing how — with God's help and with His blessing — members of the congregation can be a hand and a foot to each other (1 Cor. 12:21), readily and cheerfully using their gifts for the benefit and well-being of the other (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21).

Westerink's *Twijfel* is an excellent companion to Knepper's *Het Heilzame*

Gesprek, reviewed some time ago.² A rich book; comforting and encouraging for old and young. The readers will not be humiliated. They will be humbled by the riches of God's care with which He surrounds all His children, also those who don't see those riches any more. . . .

God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. . . . (Ps. 46).

AVONDMAALGANGERS (Those who attend the Lord's table)

In poetic form Gosker captures the questions, the doubts, the concerns of Christians as they sit at the Lord's table. There is the minister and his concern for the sheep of his congregation, the widow, the quiet young man, the couple without children. . . . as they come together around the Lord's dish. There is the painter who finds it difficult to forget that the brothers and sisters across the table prefer to ignore his business and get the necessary jobs done by cheap moonlighters. There is a father and son, both struggling with secret thoughts and sins, both desperate for comfort and communication. There is the lonely wife whose husband is so heavily involved in church work and the consistory; the newcomers to the congregation. The poet allows us to hear thirteen Christians with their silent selves.

With sharp insight and keen discernment, Gosker's *Avondmaalgangers* provides the reader with glimpses of the life and thought of struggling Christians, their fears and their hopes.

The sketches of Sybrand Steen are much more than mere illustrations. He has taken his inspiration from Scripture, as indicated in an appendix, and has tried to capture with pencil what Gosker captured with words. The two artists complement each other well, and the booklet makes a powerful statement. Read the poems, ponder the artwork, and be enlightened by the perspective that these artists are able to give.

A slim volume (only 38 pages in all); but an enriching experience.

1. *Call Upon Me: About the practise of our prayer* is the title of another book of Westerink. An English translation is available from ILPB, Box 783, London, N6A 4Y8.

2. *CLARION*, 38(3), Feb. 3, 1989.



By *W.W.J. VanOene*

This whole theory leads to a loss of consciousness of the true character of the church and of the obligation to join oneself to it at whatever place God has established it. When any institute is a "manifestation of the body of Christ," however impure it may be, and when one can only be urged to "join himself to the purest manifestation of the body of Christ," the greatest incentive for people to join Christ's church has been removed and the sin of breaking with the church of Christ is minimized: the brother "only" went to a perhaps "less pure manifestation of the body of Christ," didn't he?

A Conflict Arises

It was a fruit of the above-described un-ecclesiastical reasoning that the churches saw a spirit of superficiality and false ecumenism more and more invading and permeating the thinking and actions of the membership.

If one is certain that the membership as a whole disapproves of a certain course or of a specific action, one is more unlikely to set out on that course or to take that particular action.

When, on the other hand, it is clear that one's ideas are shared by others, a person is more inclined to follow the deviating course or to execute the action which he planned, being encouraged by the support of those others.

Thus we may safely state that the action which led to the first major conflict after 1905 was rendered possible only because the underlying theory met with wider agreement among the membership.

A contemporary wrote the following.

More than ever, perhaps, the Church is the issue in our days. The enemy, whose permanent aim it is to destroy Christendom, turns at present especially against her.

He has a very keen eye for the spot which is most vulnerable in each and every period of time where he can hit her, as much as possible taking on the air as if only secondary points are at stake.

The Apostle Peter warns against false teachers who will *secretly* introduce *destructive heresies*. The Apostle Paul likewise warns every time with great emphasis against heresy which presents itself as Christian or even as High-Christian.

To reach out across the walls of the Church is of far more importance than the very existence of these walls. Free gatherings of Christians without taking any ecclesiastical difference into account have more spiritual value than official worship services. Further, to go and attend worship services in and especially to preach in another ecclesiastical institute than the one to which one belongs shows the unity among Christians in an excellent manner, a unity which means much more than all ecclesiastical life. Besides this, the church is to be there just for the edification of the soul.

Thus far a characterization given by a contemporary some seventy years ago.

Such an attitude as described above led to an effort to obliterate boundaries and to an ecclesiastical indifference.

This came to light in the case of the Rev. J. B. Netelenbos, minister of the Church at Middelburg.

His standpoint can be best described in his own words: "There are believers also in the Netherlands Reformed Church and when these believers come together, assemble together, then there is an 'assembly of believers,' and therefore: 'a Christian church.'"

On June 10, 1917, he conducted an official worship service in the Netherlands Reformed (Hervormde) Church in The Hague.

Immediately this deed was condemned left and right, and justly so. It was an official worship service under the auspices and authority of the consistory of the Netherlands Reformed Church there, and it was stated "that for him there should be only *one* consistory in The Hague, namely the one of the Reformed (Gereformeerde) Church, so that he could act in his capacity as a minister there only *by mandate and under supervision of that consistory.*"

Rev. Netelenbos wanted to manifest the unity of believers and claimed that "he was free to spend the Sunday as he wanted to."

Overagainst this it was stated that "if it is allowed for a minister of the Gospel in the Reformed Churches to conduct services on Sundays in another ecclesiastical institute, then also non-ministers are entitled to partake in worship services outside of the federation to which they belong. Thus it could have happened that the members of the Reformed Church in The Hague had followed the example of the Middelburg minister in great numbers, and that in this manner their own ministers had been preaching more or less uselessly."

According to Rev. Netelenbos there were good-Reformed ministers within the Netherlands Reformed institute whom the Reformed Churches could let conduct worship services in their midst.

It was declared that a truly Reformed minister – assuming for the sake of argument that he was permitted to conduct a service in the Netherlands Reformed Church – had the calling to point the people there "to their obligation to separate themselves from a consistory that was not zealous for the exclusive kingship of Jesus Christ in His church; that did not take heed of the doctrine, that let the wolves go for the sheep unhindered, and was not guarding the holiness of the sacraments."

"This, however, could hardly be done in a worship service of the Netherlands Reformed Church. Consequently one cannot proclaim there the full counsel of God as the Reformed confess it. But then such action is thereby already condemned."

It was Rev. Netelenbos' intention to bring the two closer together. "However, the answer to the question whether by this action Rev. Netelenbos contributed towards making an end to the existing division can hardly be affirmative. He rather was an instrument for the promotion of that remaining-ecclesiastically-divided of those who should be one (also) outwardly."

"Further it appears from the brochure of Rev. Netelenbos that the ecclesiastical institutes are of little value to him. Although he does not want to do away with them, they should be no obstacle for the church proper of all who are filled with love towards Christ."

As a result of Rev. Netelenbos' conducting a service in a

Netherlands Reformed Church, the consistory of Middelburg took the decision "to forbid all its ministers to preach in other than Reformed Churches in a place and at a time when a service is being held in the Reformed Church."

No further action was taken.

A Prelude to Further Development

In the course of the years it became clear that Rev. Netelenbos' decision to conduct a service in a Netherlands Reformed Church was not an incidental deviation or an isolated act. His whole line of thinking was such that he had to be deposed on November 19, 1919, a deposition which was confirmed at the Particular Synod of Zeeland on June 2 and 3, 1920, and at the General Synod of Leeuwarden in that same year.

The reason was not his above-mentioned preaching but his deviation from what the churches confess concerning the Word of God.

The whole case of Rev. Netelenbos was a prelude to what was to evolve some years later in the case of Dr. J.G. Geelkerken.

It appeared that the critical thinking and theories which affected the explanation of the Holy Scriptures did not bypass the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

Rev. Netelenbos' concept of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures was one of the main issues.

Also with a view to what is found in our days and the seemingly more modern and "newer" concepts regarding the Word of God it is good to dwell on the Netelenbos case a little longer. This will be helpful also for our understanding of what occurred a few years later.

In final instance the Synod of Leeuwarden 1920 had to deal with the deposition of the Rev. Netelenbos.

During the discussions with him it became evident that he had been justly deposed.

The church confesses in Art. 5 of the Belgic Confession that the Scriptures have evidence in themselves that they are of God. Rev. Netelenbos added mentally "only for such as believe." Thereby, it was stated, he basically denied that unbelievers who reject the Holy Scriptures cannot blame God for their unbelief but only themselves. Further, Rev. Netelenbos acknowledged that the "form" of Holy Scripture and the manner of describing things certainly were under God's providential care, but were not inspired as such, so that the *form in which* the revelation and the message comes to us is fallible.

Regarding the revelation in Genesis 2 and 3, Rev. Netelenbos differentiated between the form in which the revelation was given and the actual contents of this revelation. Paradise, the two trees that were mentioned, the serpent and its speaking and curse were no historical events but an Oriental way of presenting certain facts. He also denied that the speaking of Balaam's she-ass and of Jonah being in the belly of the great fish were actual historical happenings.

Since God gave the gift of language to man only, what is mentioned about the serpent and the donkey cannot have actually happened that way. What we find here is the Oriental way of describing history.

It is clear that here basically the divine character of Holy Scripture is denied. How could one ever determine what the divine message is if the form and the words in which it is brought are not inspired but human ways of presenting a certain truth?

A strange statement was also Rev. Netelenbos' thesis

that we "do not believe Jesus' death on the cross, His resurrection and ascension because the Bible tells us this, but because we have been crucified, died, were raised up again, and were set into heaven with Christ."

There were a few more points, but the above-mentioned deviation shows clearly not only that his preaching of 1917 was only a symptom but also that his suspension and deposition as such were fully justified.

A Testimony

The General Synod of Leeuwarden 1920 decided in its session of Friday, August 27, 1920, to issue a Testimony "which briefly points out the dangers to which in our present time the churches are exposed from all sides in confession as well as in walk of life, and which concludes with a firm word of exhortation to all local churches to acquit themselves faithfully of their duty and to labour diligently not only in preaching, catechetical instruction and family visiting but also in all the work of evangelizing. Synod also decides to send this Testimony by circular letter to all local churches."

Before we pay attention to the Testimony itself, we must state that here a dangerous tendency comes to the fore.

The brothers will have meant well, of course. Seeing the dangers posed by theories such as those adhered to by the Rev. Netelenbos, they wished to warn against them. That was good, excellent even.

But the manner in which they did it was wrong, totally wrong.

A general synod is no super-consistory which is to send testimonies to the local churches to remind them of their duty and their obligation towards the congregation, and to urge them to be diligent in every respect.

A general synod pointing consistories to their duty????

Here things are turned upside down. Here the roles are reversed.

Here we see the beginning of an hierarchical development in which general synods acted more and more as if they were endowed with authority and had to keep watch over the consistories, guiding them and – if deemed necessary – admonishing and disciplining them.

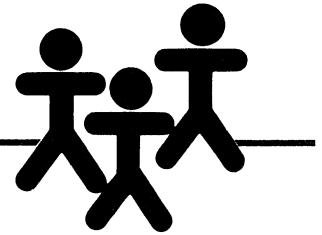
General Synods – like any major assembly – simply have to deal with the matters legitimately put before them and, when they have done so, are to dissolve, cease to exist, and go home. The churches do not need general synodical or even classical testimonies.

As for the *contents* of the Testimony, many good remarks were made in it.

There are many, it is stated, who are being carried along by the teachings of unbelief which boldly rejects the Word of God and puts into its place all sorts of human wisdom which is foolishness before God. The sad experience that sometimes children of the covenant, born and raised within the circle of our Reformed churches are found in the ranks of those who attack God's Word is to bring us to seriousness and watchfulness.

It appears that those movements of our times are even more appealing which, on the one hand, do not accept the firm and consequent unbelief but, on the other hand, refuse to seek their strength solely in the unconditional recognition of the Word of the Lord and the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ revealed therein.

– To be continued



By T.M.P. VanderVen

The "Kampen" Report

During the past few years, the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies in Ontario has concerned itself intensely with the teacher-shortage problem. In March 1987, it commissioned a study

to examine those factors which influence men and women to enter into and to remain in, the teaching profession in our schools.

The results of this extensive study were presented to the League of School Societies in its meeting of June, 1989.¹ The 87-page "Kampen" Report explains its mandate as follows,

This mandate evolved out of a growing concern within all local school societies that too many teachers were leaving the profession, and too few were entering it with a long-term commitment. This became increasingly evident in the annual hiring period as there were always more vacancies than candidates. The League recognized that the responsibility for taking action rested with itself and that some action was required if our Canadian Reformed School System was to continue providing an acceptable standard of Reformed education.

In other words, the on-going teacher shortage threatens the very existence of our schools. Certainly, reason enough to search for solutions. The League of Can. Ref. School Societies should be commended for commissioning this study, and in particular the author, Mr. Leo Kampen for the enormous amount of work done in preparing this report for publication. May this report serve the purposes for which it was written.

The recommendations of the "Kampen" Report are based on responses to questionnaires sent to all Canadian Reformed school societies across the country. There were separate questionnaires for teachers, board members, and students preparing to be teachers. A total of 45 questionnaires were returned by teachers, 28 by board members, and 4 by student teachers. However, student responses were not included in the report due to the small sample. The questionnaires aimed to solicit anecdotal responses, rather than

tabulated, quantifiable answers. The reason for this was the assumption that broader responses might provide a better picture of the situation in our schools. The drawback of this approach was the difficulty of analyzing these responses and to account for them in some statistically valid format.

"Our school boards and staff ... must carefully consider the findings of this report"

The report consists of four sections. The first section, pages 3-64 presents the data collected in 21 tables in a variety of useful ways. The second section of the report (pages 65-72) provides comment on and analysis of the information. The third section (pages 73-77) contains the "Suggestions." The questionnaires for teachers and the one for board members have been included with the report. I understand that the report is intended as a draft at this stage, and that individual school boards have been invited to submit comment

and criticism directly to Mr. Kampen in order to finalize it in the near future.

In the section *Comments*, Mr. Kampen attempts to summarize the results of this study. He starts with the following comment:

The overwhelming impression received from the teacher respondents is that almost all have a deep commitment to teaching in a Christian manner and setting, but that there are some major obstacles to having a true sense of satisfaction while performing this demanding task.

The following "obstacles", as perceived by teachers, are identified:

- Lack of adequate salaries, unprofessional attitudes displayed by some boards in salary discussions, and concerns about boards' administration of salary matters.
- Lack of job satisfaction and appreciation for the work of teachers. Teachers often receive negative comments only, and parents tend to interfere with their work. Boards and their committees are perceived to provide little if any support for their staff. The workload of teachers also turned out to be a major obstacle of job satisfaction.

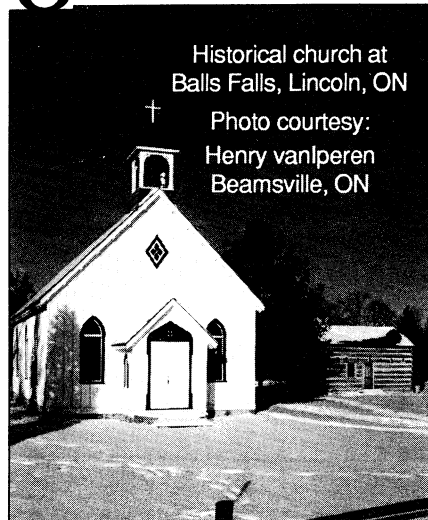
Suggestions are made to devise adequate and fair salary schedules for all teachers, including the more experienced ones. Concerning the lack of job satisfaction, the report notes that *this matter of appreciation was as stridently expressed as that of inadequate salaries.*

The discussion of the board responses is introduced as follows.

Board member respondents clearly conveyed a deep sense of appreciation for the dedication and commitment teachers bring to their tasks. Although circumstances frequently are difficult and finances restrictive, teachers willingly give of their time and energy to help a new generation grow and mature. Without fail, the general tone of each board member questionnaire was both supportive and appreciative.

Yet the concerns regarding job satisfac-

OUR COVER



Historical church at Balls Falls, Lincoln, ON

Photo courtesy:
Henry vanlperen
Beamsville, ON

tion and mutual appreciation were echoed in the responses of board members. Responses to the questionnaires urged a more open dialogue between staff and board, and more involvement of board members.

Boards know what contributes to contentment in the workplace. Do they know the level of frustration current staff experience in attaining that contentment? This difference in understanding the true situation may well be at the heart of many of the difficulties. . . .

These divergent views may indicate more than just a difference of perception of the real world. It may point to a lack of understanding of the opposite roles: teachers not understanding what it is to be a board member; board members not understanding what it is to be a classroom teacher. Perhaps this underscores the urgent request for more open dialogue and for more involvement of board members in day by day school activities.

For the board members, however, there seems to be a major obstacle to openness, namely, teacher arrogance. . . .

The report is particularly valuable in its discussion of the relationships between staff and boards, admonishing both parties to clarify their understanding of the respective roles of staff and boards. Two of the five sets of *Suggestions* deal with aspects of this relationship. Traditionally, our schools have not been strong in this regard, in part because of the periodic retirement of board members and the reluctance of many to serve our schools for more than one term.

A second area of concern identified by the report concerns teacher training. The report notes the strong appreciation expressed for the graduates of the 3-year Teachers' College programme, but suggests that an *undergraduate degree plus 2 years at the College* should be the goal. Therefore the Report suggests that the League *actively encourage changes to the Teachers' College programmes*, giving greater prominence to the need for an undergraduate degree. Suggestions are made to update the qualifications of teachers by means of in-service workshops. Guidelines for ongoing professional development should be devised, and courses for principals should be developed. Of interest are also the suggestions to develop training seminars for board members.

In order to cope with the present teacher shortage, the report suggests that

high school board and staff together

may also wish to address the question of retaining staff from outside the Canadian Reformed community. . . . Given that high schools typically have a large complement of staff, it would appear possible that persons from other Reformed communities could be (temporarily) retained for subject areas where the teaching of

largely because of genuine commitment to Reformed education for the children of the church. But some seem to leave the profession because of frustration of that commitment. The "*Kampen*" Report identifies two major obstacles: inadequate salaries and strained relationship between school boards and their staffs: irritated teachers and board members

HYMN 45

Song 13 Orlando Gibbons, 1623, alt

1. Lov-ing Shep-herd of Thy sheep,
All Thy lambs in safe-ty keep;
Noth-ing can Thy power with-stand,
None can pluck them from Thy hand.

3. Loving Shepherd, ever near,
Teach Thy lambs Thy voice to hear;
Suffer not their steps to stray
From the straight and narrow way.

the Reformed world and life view was less explicit.

The "*Kampen*" Report concludes its comments as follows.

The very fact that teachers wish to continue teaching despite some grave concerns, and that board members wish to create an environment within which this teaching can be carried on in a satisfactory manner, bodes well for the Canadian Reformed School network. There is an urgent requirement for open, professional, and respectful dialogue leading to concrete action and change. It is not enough just to listen and to hope that by that therapy all problems will be solved. Something must be done in respect of salaries, recognition, leadership, ongoing consultation and in this regard the boards must take the initiative. They are, after all, the "employer." Through such initiative, the attractiveness of the teaching career will be significantly enhanced and the prospect of attracting and retaining teaching staff significantly improved.

The original question was, what factors influence men and women to enter into and remain in the teaching profession. The "*Kampen*" Report answers, "Commitment, despite major obstacles." With this answer we seem to have identified both the strength and the weakness of the Canadian Reformed school system. Men and women enter the profession

who find teachers arrogant. Perhaps the relationship between teachers and their boards and community is the easier of the two problems to remedy, and Mr. Kampen's suggestions are of value in this regard. The matter of adequate salaries is considerably more difficult since many of our school boards struggle to make ends meet as it is. I wonder whether boards can realistically propose a substantial increase of teacher salaries, with the obvious result of a substantial increase of membership contributions. An additional percent or two will make little difference.

I regret it that the report does not include information from those who have left the profession. In view of the original question, this would certainly have been most appropriate. Neither does it address the matter of the periodic coming and going of teachers. I wonder whether the answers are as basic as: the teachers need more money and more community appreciation. Would these solutions really solve the teacher shortage in the long run? Do teachers leave because they are disgruntled for these reasons? Are we perhaps observing a normal flow of supply and demand following the rising and falling of the economy in general? Should not the question be raised whether indeed our community has the means and resources to respond effectively to the ever increasing demands of a growing and complex school system? Simply put, are

the demands of our schools outstripping the personnel resources of our community? Should this question be answered, as the Report suggests, by hiring staff (be it part time only) from outside the Canadian Reformed community?

The Report has been criticized in a number of ways, particularly because of apparent weaknesses in its statistical reliability. The suggestions are not always clearly based on the data collected. In the meantime, whether or not sufficient and complete, the "Kampen" Report has identified valid and major concerns, especially in the important area of school-community relationships, and has made a beginning to suggest possible answers. Our school boards and staff (but also the school societies, and parents and children) must carefully consider the findings of this report. Reformed schools do not operate in some miraculous way by themselves in a vacuum; their integrity and identity demand continuous work, study, prayer and support. All of us, parents and teachers, need to work together in word and deed to establish and to maintain these schools, thoughtfully and knowledgeably. *All of us*, indeed . . . after all, the Reformed education of the youth of the church is the concern of all members of Christ's church.



Announcement and Request

From Dr. J. Visscher we received the following information:

Attention: Translators!

From time to time it appears that there is duplication with respect to the translation of material from Dutch into English. In order to avoid this it would be appreciated if all translators would inform this magazine as to what is currently being prepared for publication.

For your information the newly established John Calvin Foundation (c/o Dr. J. Visscher, 5734-191A St., Surrey, BC V3S 4N9 (604) 576-2124) has commissioned the following translations:

J. Douma, Tien Geboden (3 volumes)

J. Douma, Echtscheiding

J. van Bruggen, Het Lezen van de Bijbel

J. van Bruggen, Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk

J. van Genderen, Verbond en Verkiezing

W. van't Spijker, Gereformeerden en Dopers

W.H. Velema, Geroepen tot Heilig Leven

Additional note: There is a need for keeping each other informed: The translation of articles and books is not only organized by the John Calvin Foundation, but also by Inheritance Publications in Neerlandia, and by the Inter-League Publication Board in London, here in Canada, while in Australia it is done by The Association for the Advancement of Christian Literature, and published by Pro Ecclesia in Kelmscott.

J. Geertsema

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



No confidence?

Dear Editor,

My sincere appreciation for many of the things that the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene writes in his article "ACT-ual gleanings." After two different proofreaders, who are well acquainted with the English language, have gone over the Acts, it is indeed too bad that "the church at..." / "the church of..." was overlooked. Regardless of this oversight a public word of gratitude is still in place for the proofreaders who helped make many consistencies which are not there when sixteen different men make up proposals in their own styles.

I would like to express my general agreement with most of Rev. VanOene's comments except the section entitled "A no-confidence motion." In this section Rev. VanOene objects that Synod decide(d) "to instruct the Board of Governors that in the event of future appointments to the Faculty at the Theological College, the Board of Governors will make available to the dele-

gates to General Synod the confidential report including curriculum vitae of proposed new professors for an available faculty vacancy one month before the convening of General Synod." He argues that this decision shows a lack of confidence in the Faculty and the Board of Governors who suggest names to a synod for new professors. He argues so strongly that synod must trust the proposal of the Faculty and the Board of Governors that one begins to wonder why the matter is brought to a synod at all. Need a synod only "rubber-stamp" the proposals brought on its table? To the best of my knowledge the final decision for who will be professor is made by a synod so that the Theological College does not become a "free" college but remains a college of the churches. Synod Winnipeg did not make this decision because it had no confidence in the Faculty and Board of Governors but because it wanted to serve the churches by not just "rubber-stamping" a proposal but by being convinced that the proposal would best serve the church-

es. Rev. VanOene's stress that synod must trust the Faculty and Board of Governors leave the (perhaps unintended) impression that he lacks confidence in the members of synods.

A similar impression is given in his section entitled "Simplicity, please" when he expresses amazement that synod is able to read and explain the meaning of Latin words. He writes "We cannot expect a general synod as a body to be able to judge these things either, and the safest course is to go by the committee's judgment...." It is indeed true that not everyone at synod can read Latin and perhaps it would be safer to stay away from it. However, is synod not supposed to judge the reports of its committees? The committees appointed by synods have no rights to make statements which the synods are not competent to judge.

My fear is that Rev. VanOene's suggestions bring us on the dangerous road of ecclesiastical decisions being made by experts in faculties, boards and synod committees. If we take this

route, general synods might become obsolete. I am sure that Rev. VanOene does not want that either. . . .

Sincerely yours
P.K.A. de Boer

Reply

Upon reading Rev. de Boer's letter I thought: "Have I been so unclear?" In order to clarify some points the following remarks.

1. Rev. de Boer did not touch upon a few questions I asked in connection with the decision that confidential information regarding persons proposed for appointment to the Faculty of our Seminary is to be sent to appointed delegates one month before the beginning of Synod. What, I asked, is the need for this one month? How are the delegates to prepare? Are they to launch an investigation of their own? Are two days at synod not sufficient to judge the information given by the Board of Governors? Did I not write that, if Synod is not satisfied with the information provided, there is always the possibility of asking the candidate to come over so that Synod itself can interview him? What is left then of the fear that I would advocate reducing Synod to a rubber-stamping robot? Do the brothers who have been appointed as delegates to synod need a whole month to study the confidential report? Or are they, upon receipt of the report, to go and ask left and right for information about the candidate so as to verify what the Faculty and the Board of Governors have written down in their recommendation? Such would be a motion of no confidence indeed. Proposals are not made to appointed delegates but to the delegates assembled in and being members of the broader assembly. My big question still stands unanswered: What are the appointed brothers to do with the particulars and the recommendation in the confidential report? If they are not expected to investigate on their own whether the candidate mentioned is truly Reformed and academically qualified, why would two or three days at synod not be sufficient to acquaint themselves with the particulars and to reach a conclusion?

2. Synod is definitely to judge the reports of its own committees as well as those of the committees appointed by the previous synod. But synods, as well as all other ecclesiastical assemblies should refrain from making statements beyond their capacity. It is my thesis that an ecclesiastical assembly should make only such statements which are understood and can be explained and backed up by all its members. If, as was the case at the National Synod of Dordrecht 1618-1619, all members under-

stand Latin, the Acts even may be published in Latin as far as I am concerned and all decisions may be in Latin as well. But how can a *synod*, that is *all sixteen brothers* of whom half may not know any Latin, judge whether a certain English word is a correct translation of a Latin original? Here is a point where they have to accept the judgment of a committee, but in their considerations and decisions they should refrain from giving the impression as if they all could judge whether the translation is correct or not. Each and every member of Synod or of a consistory, for that matter, must be able to judge each and every part of a decision and also be able to explain it, if asked to, to other church members.

When a translation of the Canons of Dort is presented, an advisory committee is to go over it and those of the committee members who know Latin are to use their knowledge to check the correctness of the proposed translation. When synod comes to a decision, it does go by the judgment of "experts," whether these are the committee that prepared the translation or the advisory committee members who know Latin. Half of the members have to go by the report of the one committee or the other without being able to judge whether of the two is right, if the translations differ, that is.

"The committees appointed by synods have no rights to make statements which the synods are not competent to judge," Rev. de Boer writes. Fine, but what about the above-mentioned translation of the Canons of Dort which half of the members are unable to judge as to its correctness? Making use of and going by the judgment of brothers who are experts in their field does not mean at all that now those brothers make the decisions and that broader assemblies, or consistories for that matter, become obsolete. It still is synod's responsibility to accept or reject it or to ask others for a second or third or fourth opinion.

If I go by the directions found on a package of garden spray, I trust that the experts who wrote those directions were right, but it is and remains my responsibility to use it as directed. I still can decide not to use it or to use something different, or to ask someone else whom I trust and of whom I know that he is knowledgeable to give me his judgment. Granted, it is a farfetched example, given only for the sake of argument and in the hope that it clarifies things.

And all this as a result of my remark that ecclesiastical assemblies should be simple in their decisions and include only such elements as can be understood by all. . . .

VO

Dear Sir:

Recent comments made in the "News Medley" could leave your readers with the impression that we, in Ottawa, are only thankful for large contributions made to our building fund.

We cannot insist strongly enough that this is not the case.

While the author of the comments in the Ottawa bulletin did, perhaps, err in singling out the large gift by making specific reference only to it, this was only because we, in Ottawa, were so thunderstruck by the large contribution given anonymously that Matthew 6:4 immediately sprang to mind.

If the author's words, taken over and commented upon by the columnist of the "News Medley," have led anyone to believe that his/her gift of \$50.00 or \$100.00 is not appreciated, he sincerely apologizes and pleads with them to believe that such is not the case. We are aware of what the Lord said in Mark 12:43, that the poor widow who put two copper coins in the temple treasury gave more than all who preceded her.

Every gift, large and small, all of which we know have been given in love, are deeply appreciated. We are thankful to those who are helping us and, above all, we are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us helpful and generous brothers and sisters.

As of January 30, we have received \$4500.00 via the advertisement in *Clarion*.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Fund Raising Committee
Church at Ottawa

Reply

It was farthest from me to even imply that the brothers and sisters in Ottawa were not thankful for any gift they received. Sorry if that conclusion could be drawn from what I wrote. For such a conclusion I do not want to be held responsible.

VO

Dear Editor,

Allow me to respond to a letter to the editor written by J.D. Wielenga and published in the Nov. 10, 1989 issue of *Clarion*. Let me make the following points:

1. The reference to "the churches received a request from ARPA . . ." may be somewhat misleading. There is (as yet) no national organization known as ARPA. The request came specifically from ARPA-Surrey. Other ARPA's may agree or disagree with the request.

2. Letters to the editor are usually written in response to items appearing in a previous issue. The writer could only have seen the letter as a member

(chairman?) of a consistory. We had not issued a press release of our intentions to make this request. Opinions on it should first have been directed to those making the request. As such, we feel the editors erred in publishing this letter at that particular time.

3. An article on the subject of the origin and use of the Day of Prayer would have been more appropriate. This would have prevented the need to be 'critical' and discouraging church members from taking initiatives which they deemed appropriate under the circumstances.

As to the substance of the letter itself, just a few remarks: 1. The writer stated that "the general afflictions" mentioned in the C.O. must be of such a nature that "it may be expected that those afflictions occupy the minds and thoughts of the people and dominate their conversations at home and in public." It's hard to imagine anyone living in Canada during the past couple of years (at least) who would not conclude that these matters did indeed occupy people's minds via all the publicity sur-

rounding the question of abortion.

2. The author later tries to illustrate the fact that these issues did not preoccupy people by saying that at a classis of the churches in Alberta/Manitoba held shortly before the last Day of Prayer "... it did not dominate the conversations of the responsible leaders of the churches, let alone of the church-people." This is really not a very strong argument; considering the matters at hand, they were no doubt more preoccupied by 'internal' problems. By the way, why make the distinction between "responsible leaders" and others?

3. To dismiss the abortion-issue as "... just a symptom of the general trend (chronic) of a Western world returning to its pre-Christian condition" is surprising (to say the least) coming as it does from one of the "responsible leaders" of the church.

Besides, our concern was very specifically the legislation before the House of Commons today.

4. Associations for Reformed Political Action need more than that to help encourage members of the church to

shake off their political lethargy.

In conclusion, we agree that the proclamation of a Day of Prayer is a serious matter, not to be lightly undertaken. So is the need to "pray for the federal government and for the protection of all life from conception to natural death," as our request to the churches reads. What issue *would* be serious enough to warrant a Day of Prayer if not the practice of abortion referred to by some as a modern-day holocaust? Would God be 'offended' if we, as members of His church and citizens of this country sharing in the responsibility for making the laws, called upon Him publicly for wisdom and guidance for all? Does Scripture not teach that the prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects?

Yours in His Service
H.J. Ludwig,
Chairman — ARPA-Surrey
P.O. Box 1008, Station A,
Surrey, BC V3S 4P5

C

With thankfulness to the Lord for bringing joy into our family we announce the birth of our third daughter

NATALIE

January 15, 1990

A sister for *Tony, Ryan, Daniel
Stephen, Justin, Gina, Marietta*

John and Marg Roukema
(nee Buitenbos)

2748-272B Street
Aldergrove, BC V0X 1A0

With great joy and thanks to God we announce the birth of our daughter. We named her

MARLEY FELICIA

Born January 13, 1990

A sister for *Lewis, Marita
Sebastian and Brian*

Ben and Fay Van Dyk

Box 879
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

With thankfulness to the Lord who made all things well, we wish to announce the birth of our daughter

KIMBERLEY ELIZABETH

Born January 24, 1990

A sister for *Scott, William, Jenny
Marija, Jeremy, Anthony
Elizabeth †*

Charles and Wilma Van Dam
(nee Visscher)

RR 1
Freelton, ON L0R 1K0

With joy and thankfulness to the Lord, the Giver of life we announce the birth of

NATHAN ANDREW

Born December 15 1989

A brother for *Reuben*

Jerold and Sharon Van Assen
(nee Viersen)

Box 170
Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

Thy hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments.

Psalm 119:73

The LORD has entrusted to us another covenant child

ANGELA BRENDA

John and Teresa Jongsma
(nee Bouwman)

Martin Calvin, Lydia Katrina

January 19, 1990
Box 3671
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

Lo, sons are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

Psalm 127:3

With great joy and thankfulness we announce that our heavenly Father has richly blessed us with the birth of our fifth son:

STEPHEN NATHANIEL

Born December 28, 1989

A brother for *Jonathan, Daniel
Christopher and Andrew*

Ed and Ann Versteeg
(nee Jeninga)

Box 836
Carman, Manitoba R0G 0J0

With thankfulness to the Lord for the precious gift of life we are pleased to announce the birth of our first child, a son,

MATTHEW WILLIAM

Born January 30, 1990

Frank and Karen Schuurman
(nee Buitenhuis)

3262 Miles Road
RR 3, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0