



**Clarion**

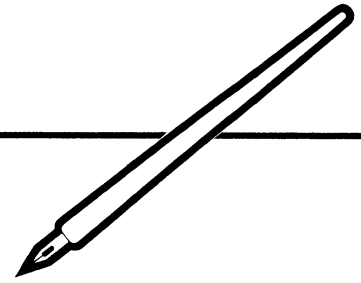
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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# EDITORIAL

By J. Geertsema



## War in the Middle East

There is again war in the Middle East. At the moment of writing these lines, it is not yet a war between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations, although Israel's involvement has come close. Perhaps, when you read this, such an involvement has become a fact. At this moment, Arab nations wage war against each other with the involvement of the United Nations. All warfare brings along suffering. This one is no exception. But there are differences, both in the means and in the people who use the means. The sophisticated weapons of our days can destroy and kill on a scale as never before. One can use such weapons to destroy military installations. One can also use them at random, annihilating whole civilian populations. One party can be intentionally cruel; the other can try to avoid cruelty. Just now the manner in which the Iraqi treated the first prisoners of war became known. The effect was that a number of Canadians in the Hamilton area showed, via a TV program, that they changed their mind: From being against this war they became in favor of it, one of them comparing the Iraqi despot with Hitler. These callers began to see this war as a just war.

The Saturday, January 19, 1991 *Globe and Mail* carried an article about the Iraqi leader's life. As a young child, he was sent out by his stepfather to steal chicken and sheep. At the age of ten (1947), he went to the school of an uncle who had been a strong supporter of Hitler and the Nazis and a hater of Britain and "imperialism." After about six years in school, the course of his life was one of involvement in revolutions and conspiracies against the existing governments in Iraq, until he himself had reached the top. This highest position was obtained in Mafia style, *The Godfather*, a book about a Mafia leader working himself to the top of the organization in a ruthless way, being his favorite guide.

From the enormous build-up of an awfully strong army and a horrible weapon arsenal, and from the occupation of neighboring Kuwait, the conclusion can be drawn that this man has a hunger for power accompanied by a desire to ruthlessly destroy those opposing him. Thus, he is a threat for peace in this world, and all the anti-war demonstrators, if heeded, would only serve the establishment of an absolutist totalitarian (Stalinian or Hitlerian) peace. The war of the United Nations against the Iraqi leader can be compared with the Second World War against the Nazis and against Japan. Therefore, we can call this war of the United Nations a just war.

This does not diminish the horrendous suffering, nor the destructive possibilities of "apocalyptic" proportion. The weapons which modern warfare employs are very sophisticated. So far they seem to have been used only against military goals, but they are able to wipe out large parts of the population, while the chemical weapons of the Iraqi despot are simply horrible.

When I use here the word "apocalyptic," it is not my intention to say that this war clearly shows that the end of the

world is near. However, I would like to connect it with the last book of the Scripture, the *Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* to the apostle John, and to related passages in the gospels.

Beginning with the latter, we are taught in Matthew 24: 6-8, by the Lord Jesus Christ, that we shall "hear of wars and rumours of wars," but that we must "not be alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs." Christ continued His instruction with speaking about affliction and apostasy, as well as about false prophets (vs. 9-11), and that through an increasing wickedness the love of many would grow cold, but also that "he who endures to the end will be saved," and that the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; then the end will come" (vs. 12-14).

In Rev. 6:1,2 we read about the opening of the first of the seven seals and the coming of a white horse and a rider with a bow, going out to conquer. This horse and its rider symbolize "the wild beasts of the earth (v.8). Such wild beasts are in Scripture (Rev. 13, cf Daniel 7) antichristian world-rulers, to which category Hitler also belonged. It appears that the man of Iraq has something similar in mind. Now this rider on the white horse is, together with the horses and their riders that follow, one of the forms of judgment which Christ brings upon an ungodly, unrepentant world.

In Rev. 9:7 and 9 we read about locusts like horses arrayed for, and rushing into, battle or war. They belong to the picture that came about when the fifth one of the seven angels with trumpets blew his trumpet. These seven trumpets present again a series of judgments which are connected with the prayers of the saints for the coming of the Lord (9:2-6). Ch. 16, speaking of "the seven bowls of the wrath of God," has a little phrase in v. 9 (cf also v. 11), namely: "and they did not repent." This shows clearly that the judgments call for repentance from sin and unbelief.

We concluded that the present war is just a war. In these texts, we learn about other aspects of this war. One aspect is that God continues to work toward His great Day. The other is an element of judgment, but still calling to repentance, since God is not pleased with the death of the sinner, but with his conversion from evil that he may live. God wants man to acknowledge and confess his sins and evil nature, and to seek his life, in humble faith, in the only true Saviour, Jesus Christ. The potentate in Iraq and those following him show in a clear way how depraved our human nature is.

The honourable Ms. Audrey McLaughlin, leader of the NDP, proclaimed in the House of Commons that she was against Canada's involvement in this war. It goes against "the new order." One can ask what is meant with this "new order." Whatever content is given to this term, it is obviously humanistic: the "new order" of people who are good by nature and work for

peace. In such an old "new order" there appears to be no place for the acceptance of the doctrine of the total depravity of man, and no need for the Saviour, given to us by God.

On the other hand, let us not idealize the other side either. In trying to stop evil in the Middle East is an element of self-interest. The United States and other countries depend on oil from that region. The Arab states, especially those in ruling positions, have gathered in tremendous amounts of revenue from the oil, and they would not like to lose this source of their wealth. The war in this oil-rich part of the world, shakes the foundations of these states and all the nations involved.

Besides, the war costs the nations involved, specifically the United States, enormous amounts of dollars, every day. Will the economies of many nations, and especially of the U.S.A., be able to absorb the cost, while their debts are already so huge? Whatever the outcome what will be the result? Will this war consume, not just armies, but also economies, whole nations?

There remains this message: God rules through His Son Christ Jesus. He has received all authority in heaven and on earth. He works with haste toward the coming of His, God's,

kingdom in glory. This coming means: the gospel must be proclaimed to all the nations; all the elect must be gathered. It means also: there will be judgments on earth in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Joel said it (2:30-32). Peter quoted it (Acts 2:19-20): "...wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the LORD comes."

Indeed, may God in His patient goodness, cause this horrible war to end soon. May the Iraqi despot show un-selfish care for his own and for other nations and give up his aspirations. May God's kingdom come, and a new heaven and earth in which His justice dwells. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'Come.' And let him who is thirsty [for God's salvation in Christ] come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.... He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:17,20).

The promise (Joel 2:32a and Acts 2:21) is sure: "And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."



## "Teach us to pray"<sup>1</sup>

By J.W. van der Jagt

*Speech presented to the Canadian Reformed Teachers Association on May 4, 1990. Edited and slightly revised for publication.*

Teaching children to lead in classroom prayer or just having them pray in class has lately become an important issue in the Canadian Reformed School system. This is not a new issue in and of itself but also pervaded the world in the 1970's. The reason that the topic has presented itself recently within our own Reformed circles is due to an apparent inability for a number of young people to pray at public meetings such as Young Peoples Societies. If young people are incapable of praying at this stage, how can they become prayerful adult church members and teach their own covenant children to pray? Is it their own duty to teach their children or is it part of the Canadian and American Reformed School System to actually teach children how and when to pray publicly? How about private prayers? Should the school system provide part of their curriculum or time for this also?

### Why do or don't we pray?

"Lord, thank you for the sucker  
It tasted so good.  
I loved the red and green colour  
But maybe I should

Have given a little bit to my friend.  
So, I'm sorry that it all did end  
Up in my mouth."  
Amen.

A little prayer. Wonderful, is it not? So cute to listen to when a little child prays. Won't that little child be an excellent Christian when he grows up? He already knows how to pray and even uses words that rhyme, just like I taught him. This is the natural way to teach children according to Hein who gives the advice to talk with your child about prayer." Tell him that he can talk at any time, about anything, at any place and for any reason. Help him by writing down the prayers on paper; help him find words that rhyme.<sup>1</sup>

In the pragmatic world of today, this prayer and advice fits right in. Nevertheless, the Holy Scriptures do not specifically mention that children prayed by themselves. This is corroborated by McFadyen who claims that although prayer is regarded as natural throughout the Bible, only *men* and *women* enjoyed the right to pray. The women in the Corinthian church prayed and also prophesied in public (1 Cor. 11:5). Prayer is natural as the existence of need and the sense of God as need exists and is universal.<sup>2</sup> From this we may derive that children also have the needs to pray.

Has the need diminished over the years since the Bible was written? According to Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 116 prayer is the chief part of our thankfulness to God and God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who constantly actually long for them. Elul says that the world no longer deems it necessary to pray since there are desecralizing and secularizing forces in the world. Now we are forced to really find out why we pray.<sup>3</sup> He continues analyzing the reasons of diminished Christian prayer by remarking:

"If a Christian no longer prays, that shows the degree in which the passion for the real has won out within him over the spirit of prayer. It is because he is completely imbued with the realism of the spirit of the times....Prayer then becomes a ritual, a custom, a meaningless speech...."<sup>4</sup>

(and)

"...prayer is made possible by a free decision of grace on the part of the one who is willing to listen...."<sup>5</sup>

This implies (as he also states) that people pray less because they have furthered themselves away from God instead of coming nearer to Him although they may be older and supposedly wiser.



Westerink thinks along the same lines when he says that although

"we must form habits and customs because our heart urges us to do so...routine and thoughtlessness are deadly enemies to our prayer life..."<sup>6</sup>

In summary, the thoughtlessness and custom of praying may have come as a consequence of the thanklessness of our times. It is unbelievable that thanklessness exists for we are rich! Although the riches vary according to the family and individual, we are living in a prosperous time. Many people who are older and have seen difficult times become rich in *thankfulness* but those who are growing up in these plentiful times, those who can receive everything their heart desires on a short term basis (even drugs to get their high) become rich in *thanklessness* and their life becomes death. Bloesch mentions that Christian prayer is born out of the realization that people are incapable of saving themselves from the forces of darkness around them.<sup>7</sup> This is so true when one considers the forces of darkness as light. The darkness of being able to do everything independently is a wonderful thing to achieve. Who needs God then?

Swindoll notes the importance of prayer. He says that prayer as an invaluable discipline refocuses our perspective. Without prayer we see only the visible but with prayer we see the hidden dimension of the invisible. It does so many more things for us. It quiets our fears and transfers any burdens we may have. It also upholds others in need. We are making a deliberate contact with God in word or thought. This discipline of the mind is always appropriate for our needs (Eph. 6:18). This does not mean it is easy to pray. Absolutely not! It involves great spiritual and emotional labour.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout history prayer has been a matter of imploration, praising and thanking God for suffering, joy, fear and admonishment. Whatever situation occurred, the people prayed. Thus, we ourselves become part of a great historical solidarity offering ourselves unconditionally to the Father.<sup>9</sup> Prayers have always shown an aliveness. Take a look at the prayers in the Old Testament and specifically the Psalms of David. How heartfelt they are.

Prayer is an assault on *apathy*.<sup>10</sup> Prayer can and must renew a living hope to continue our lives in the expectation of Christ's return.<sup>11</sup> It results in a growing conviction that God stays with us.<sup>12</sup> The life of the Jews could hardly have been conceived of living without prayer. It was meant for every Jew no matter what his status was. "It permeated all life, enriching it...and adding to its grandeur pro-

viding it with divine blessing and guidance."<sup>13</sup>

John Casteel states... "(prayer) commits us also to unremitting warfare against temptation and the forces of evil."<sup>14</sup> Are the young people afraid of committing themselves in the Canadian and American Reformed congregations? Don't they have any "guts"? As a teacher I have witnessed a number of students in elementary school having physical fights using their God-given muscles. It gives a sense of power to subdue another person. Some students speak as if they are better than anyone else in the class. When they become a bit older, however, they often show how really weak they are in themselves by succumbing to external peer pressures and may start to drink and smoke. Prayer is thrown out of the window or becomes the lowest of priorities. Why?

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***"Prayer can and must renew a living hope to continue our lives in the expectation of Christ's return."***

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It is because prayer reminds us of ourselves. The modern day progress has a damaging effect on our self-awareness since we spend much time on forgetting ourselves contrary to the fact that "Prayer is the oldest form of the human battle for subjectivity and identity against all odds."<sup>15</sup>

You may then say, "What about self-esteem? Don't schools work on that? Isn't that what part of self-awareness is, finding out about the things you can do?"

I would answer, "Yes! Teachers give praise wherever possible. If an individual is strong in most areas he desires and receives much praise."

"He doesn't forget himself then, does he?" you ask.

I answer, "Yes, he does. He forgets that he should also be humble for the Lord. He forgets that he can't do anything by himself and should remember that it has only been given to him by the Lord, through grace alone."

People who have to struggle with life often become the closest to God in their prayers and subsequent Christian lifestyle. Similarly, at the other extreme of the student spectrum are also students who have such a struggle to attain what little they can accomplish successfully,

they need double the amount of usual praise. Many of these may have a greater awareness of thankfulness although they may be envious of others who appear very intelligent. They also may be tempted to succumb to the external pressures of friends and the world around them but with strong guidance from their parents, they may be helped along the rough road to a smoother pavement. An essential ingredient of this guidance must be the wisdom received from the Lord and an understanding of the environmental experiences of life within and outside of the church. These struggling students (if they manage to reach the firmer pavement) may not possibly become the leaders in church but will be able to understand the struggles of others and be able to pray for them humbly and without apathy. They are the closest to themselves. They know how weak they are in and of themselves and that it is only through the grace of God that they may now pray expressing their love for God and their neighbour.

#### **How to pray**

It is interesting to note both the different physical positions of praying people and the content of their prayers. North Americans often pray standing or sitting informally with their hands holding onto something other than a Bible. Hands are often held over their eyes while their eyes are closed. There are also many who have their hands folded and eyes closed as is commonly done in Reformed circles. In the Bible, eyes were often open and hands raised to heaven.

When a person comes in front of a king and asks for forgiveness in a humble fashion yet giving praise to the king, he will not stand with his hands in his pockets or be taking out his pen from his shirt pocket. Nor will a lady fiddle in her purse while she is requesting pardoning of her sins. Humbleness implies submissiveness which would be shown by looking at the floor, with eyes downcast and speaking quietly at the same time. In the case of God it implies the making of oneself small and weak before Him since that is what we are. We are to come on bended knee. For this reason I consider that the prayer benches under the pews of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches are really based on a good principle.

Furthermore:

"You must not only pray with words but with the mind, and not only with the mind but with the heart, so that the mind understands and sees clearly what is said in words and the heart feels what the mind is thinking.

All these combined together constitute real prayer, and if any one of these is absent your prayer is either not perfect, or is not prayer at all."<sup>16</sup> Thus, prayer must be accomplished with your whole heart and mind. Thoughts should not stray to anything else for we must pray zealously for the Lord. Is the thought of the aforementioned sucker which has just been eaten, even seeing and describing its colours, a prayer in which God is the most important? The sucker remains the most important and not the Lord.

Torrey has a number of worthwhile pointers as to the procedure of prayer which are also implied from the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 117-118. We should constantly pray to God and have a lively awareness that God is listening to us.

The prayer that God will hear is the prayer in which we pour out our whole heart as it reaches out to God in burning and struggling longing. ("Het gebed dat op God invloed uitoeft, is het gebed waarin wij onze gansche ziel uitstorten als zij zich naar God in brandend en worstelend verlangen uitstrekt...")<sup>17</sup>

Prayer must be to the will of God. We only know the will of God through the promises of God as revealed in His Word requiring us to have a Biblical foundation of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> It is also of utmost importance to pray with a firm belief. Belief comes from hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Last but definitely not the least is Torrey's point:

Nothing can be more foolish in prayer than to hurry into God's presence and then to ask for the very first thing that happens to come up in our mind.

("Niets kan in het gebed dwazer zijn dan om gejaagd in God's tegenwoordigheid te gaan en dan vragen om de eerste zaak die ons in gedachten komt.")

It means that we must first be still or quiet before God.<sup>19</sup> We must be reverent so that our full concentration is on praising God.

"... To move the center of our life from life to God...."<sup>20</sup>

"Death and sin, which are all around us...are not its final terms. The alternative is to seek to yield...our interior life to God by confession to Him in the confidence that when we do so, he forgives us and we are made new by His spirit."<sup>21</sup>

Our prayers arise out of love and are made in confidence arising from God's Word and concern for His kingdom rather than exclusively from want, need or fear as primitive prayer used to be. Our prayer

is a striving with God just like Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord and Jesus wrestled alone in the Garden of Gethsemane asking to let the bitter cup pass if it was the will of His heavenly Father.<sup>22</sup> Nobody should use prayer for one's own ends but instead must try to find out the will of God for his life. Everything depends on God and He will use us as tools to further His kingdom.<sup>23</sup>

At what age level can an individual start seeing and feeling the actual striving that is necessary for prayers such as these? Even if a person may pray privately and personally, these prayers may lack this dimension regardless of age. Even more is involved than just teaching and practicing the proper use of prayer in Reformed schools.

Knowledge of the history of the living church is an extension of God's Word. Rev. H. Feenstra says we have to see the church in terms of its history starting in the Old Testament.

It would be irreverent over against God and His work to do as if God only today, now that we are here, has begun with His redeeming work in Jesus Christ....<sup>24</sup>

For living today and looking ahead to tomorrow knowing yesterday is indispensable.<sup>25</sup>

("Het zou gewoon oneerbiedig zijn tegenover God en zijn werk om te doen alsof God pas vandaag nu wij

er zijn, begonnen is met zijn reddings operatie in Jezus Christus."<sup>24</sup>

... Voor het leven van vandaag en voor het kijken naar morgen is het kennen van gisteren on-misbaar<sup>25</sup>)

This is a direct connection with the Lord's Prayer which He Himself has taught us, "Thy kingdom come." We ask the Lord to preserve and increase the church until the Lord Himself comes (Heid. Cat. Q.&A. 123).

A good understanding of the past and present-day church history also could make the baptismal and communicant members more alive in the Federation of Churches so that they may become more fruitful in surrounding areas. Third, it could also make the members of the congregations stronger and more supportive of each other in problems they may face in the outside community, being thankful to God for what little we may give in true humbleness to Him.

Rev. J.J. Arnold speaks about this when he writes,

"The older generation must reach the younger ones and make them enthusiastic. The younger ones must make the older ones tell and make them enthusiastic. The communal life must be such that the younger ones desire to ask questions. Parents have the first responsibility" (trans.).<sup>26</sup>



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Prayer life for brothers and sisters is also of utmost importance. Each week there is a church bulletin which mentions sicknesses and joys within the congregation occurring throughout the week. This news should also be a topic of discussion.

How many people consider the various committees and Boards in their prayers? These are for the work of the kingdom also. They should be mentioned in prayer, not once, but possibly a number of times per week depending on their occurrences. In order to pray more perceptively and purposely for others G. Swindoll states that specificity is important. Read "the kingdom" into the situation of others. We must look at what others are suffering as part of kingdom life. Depth of perception increases if one understands this. Also, one must reflect on the development of their faith beyond the pain that may be endured. Swindoll also emphasizes that the ultimate goal of prayer is to glorify God. This gives objectivity; there is a purpose for all things endured.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, we must pray in a reverent physical position indicating a reverent attitude so that our mind and heart can understand clearly what is said to the glory of God. Prayer must be according to the will of God based on our knowledge of His Word which enhances our faith. We must also be quiet at the beginning of our prayer to yield our interior life to God being renewed by His Spirit. In the content of our prayer we must include the church based on a sound knowledge of its past history and the present situation, to the point of specificity as to include the individual member and committee so that we may extend it toward the return of our Lord.

### Public prayer

If a person prays in a gathering of people, no matter how many and they are not just family, he is praying publicly. This also applies to the student when he is praying in the classroom. A good public prayer requires certain characteristics.

First, public prayer (or even saying a prayer) is not a prayer when it is said rapidly instead of being said with a reverent and befitting solemnity. Otherwise it is not likely to do much for the edification of the church. Second, public prayer is necessarily expressed in general terms but within its context should be his own life experiences such as asking the forgiveness of sins and the consolation of the sick he personally knows.<sup>28</sup>

As mentioned already, silence is required first. Thereafter the prayer itself creates the silence needed for prayer and also its required time.<sup>29</sup>

Williamson discusses additional required qualities of public prayer. It should

have fervour in it with freshness in thought and language. Concreteness is important with a confident assurance that God will hear it. People should be strengthened by the prayer. He further mentions that it must have dignity in its language, i.e., a grammatical accuracy. The language must also be stimulating so that the people will not daydream. Above all, it should have reverent language. There is such a thing as being too informal with God. Therefore, knowledge of the Scriptures is essential.<sup>30</sup>


Taking a quick look at the average student in elementary school we may note that he has many things on his mind. One of them is recess time. Sports such as soccer and hockey are of prime importance in contrast to sit-down styles of activity such as paperwork and abstract or concrete thought. At the end of lunch when they have gathered so much more energy from their food in the meantime and have also spoken about many and varied subjects which are important in their lives at that specific time, plus having the desire to be free from everything, they suddenly must become reverent and create a strengthening prayer for their co-students. It's difficult enough to keep your eyes shut for the short amount of time and sit respectfully when other students are already in the hallway going out to have a good time, let alone do this task with thoughtfulness. The one who is less adept at collecting his thought considers how nervous he is and how anxiously everyone is waiting for him. How can he pray when his own thoughts are more concerned with the class atmosphere and himself than with the Lord? Adults

themselves even have trouble with praying properly due to obligations that are required following the prayer.

The prayers then which would be best for students to pray would be at the beginning of the day or before lunch. The closing day prayer would have many of the same lack of qualities as the one after lunch. Students, no matter what grade they are in, will try to get out of the school and to the buses as quickly as possible, even running to them if they have a chance although they know that it is against the safety rules which were already taught in first grade. Patience is a virtue not to be disdained.

Public prayer, then, has certain requirements including reverence, quietness, dignified and stimulating language. The question is raised as to the ability of elementary students to possess these requirements at certain times since adults often do not even have them.

— To be continued

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<sup>1</sup>Hein, L.E. *I Can Make My Own Prayers*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, (1971), 7.

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<sup>3</sup>Ellul, J. *Prayer and Modern Man*. New York: Seabury Press (1970), 72.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 9.

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<sup>7</sup>Bloesch, D.G. *The Struggle of Prayer*. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, (1980), 15.

<sup>8</sup>Swindoll, C.R. *Steadfast Christianity - A Study of Second Thessalonians*. Fullerton, Ca.: Insight for Living, (1986), 15-16.

<sup>9</sup>Rahner, K. & M., J.B. *The Courage to Pray*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., (1981), 9, 15.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 26.

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<sup>12</sup>Pittenger, N. *Praying Today*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., (1974), 106-107.

<sup>13</sup>Dressner, S.H. *Prayer, Humility and Compassion*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, (1957), 66-67.

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<sup>15</sup>Rahner, 23.

<sup>16</sup>Chariton of Valamo, I. *The Art of Prayer, An Orthodox Anthology*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd., (1966), 67.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>20</sup>Casteel, 90.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>22</sup>Bloesch, 75-77.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>24</sup>Feenstra, H.J.J. *Was Abraham Gereformeerd? Ermelo: Woord en Wereld*, (1987), 30.


<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>26</sup>Arnold, J.J. *Wandelen Met God*. Ermelo: Woord en Wereld, (1985), 52.

<sup>27</sup>Swindoll, 19.

<sup>28</sup>MacFadyen, 225.

<sup>29</sup>Ellul, 68-69.

<sup>30</sup>Williamson, R.L. *Effective Public Prayer*. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, (1960), 18-29. 

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# The New Revised Standard Version: some first impressions

By C. Van Dam

After some years of preparation, the long awaited New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) became available this past summer. Having looked forward to its appearance for some time, I was naturally curious. Would the NRSV be an improvement over its predecessor, the Revised Standard Version (RSV)? In attempting a preliminary answer to that question I have read selectively from the NRSV over a short period of time. It must thus be stressed that what follows are only first impressions.

## A new mandate

The copyright of the RSV is held by the National Council of Churches (NCC). It is the NCC (through their Division of Education and Ministry) which gave the committee for the revision of the RSV the directives they had to follow. The preface to the NRSV informs us that they were to continue in the tradition of the King James Bible and be as literal as possible and as free as necessary. We are thus told that the NRSV "remains essentially a literal translation. Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language — lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun." It is this issue of "sexist language" that has occupied a high place on the agenda of the NCC and this concern is reflected in the mandate given to the translators.

According to the preface to the NRSV: During the almost half a century since the publication of the RSV, many in the churches have become sensitive to the danger of linguistic sexism arising from the inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text. The mandates from the Division specified that, in references to men and women, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the his-

torical situation of ancient patriarchal culture.... In the vast majority of cases...inclusiveness has been attained by simple rephrasing or by introducing plural forms when this does not distort the meaning of the passage."

Since the issue of inclusive language is by far the most far reaching change in the NRSV, let us pause at this point for a moment.

## Inclusive language

No one will have any difficulty if the NRSV avoids reference to a particular sex if such a reference is not found in the original. For example, both the King James Version (KJV) and the RSV render "if any man" in Mark 4:23 (if any man has ears to hear...) and in John 7:17 ("If any man will do his will..."). However, the Greek original does not specify gender and so the NRSV can accurately translate "anyone."

But, the NRSV goes further than this for the translators appear determined to avoid gender references wherever possible, even if it means changing the plain meaning of the original language text. The result is that this text is sometimes no longer recognizable. The RSV of Psalm 55:20 reads: "My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant." To avoid using a reference to a male, the NRSV renders: "My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me." The sole footnote (Hebrew lacks "with me") is misleading for it only registers one of the places where the NRSV for the sake of inclusive language differs from the Hebrew text. The three references in the Hebrew text to the masculine possessive pronoun are left unmentioned. Such a translation can no longer be called either literal or accurate. Revelation 3:20 is correctly rendered in the RSV by "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." The NRSV however reads: "Listen!

I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." What is noteworthy about examples such as these is that the translation is no longer determined by what the text says, but by what certain people like to hear. Apparently feminists no longer want to listen to language that they perceive as male dominated and so the Word has to be purged from what is considered a male bias.

If the radicals in the NCC had their way, the NRSV would also have done away with male language dominance with respect to God. This did not happen. However, the deletion of male references is quite pervasive and it can even hinder an accurate understanding of Christ's identity as Messiah. In the RSV we read in Daniel 7:13 of "one like a son of man" who comes on the clouds of heaven and to whom is given everlasting dominion over all nations. The NRSV renders "one like a human being" (with a footnote giving the literal translation). However, it is important to keep the literal rendering in the text of Daniel 7. The literal translation "son of man" is necessary in order to understand Christ's words to his accusers when our Saviour says "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and 'coming with the clouds of heaven'" (Mark 14:62 [NRSV]; also see, in a different context Luke 21:27). Furthermore the references to our exalted Lord in the NRSV as "one like the Son of Man" in Revelation (1:13; 14:14) can only be properly understood if the background of Daniel 7 is appreciated.

The overriding desire for inclusive language, sometimes at a significant cost to the meaning of the original text, is the greatest single disappointment in my first readings from the NRSV. Rather than Scripture influencing our way of thinking and speaking, a modern, individualistic culture seeks to impose its will on the Word of God. If the imposition of a current philosophy (like feminism) on the Bible's manner of expressing itself

becomes an acceptable practice in the translation of Scripture, then great damage will be done to making the unadulterated Word accessible for modern readers.

### Addressing God

Another significant change in policy was the decision to drop the use of the archaic "thee," "thou," and "thine" in prayers addressing God. Also the antiquated verb forms "art," "hast," and "hadst" are no longer used. Undoubtedly many will regret this change and will probably continue to pray using this type of language. That is fine. It must however be noted, that in none of the original language of Scripture is any linguistic distinction made between addressing a human being and addressing God. Since Biblical usage is our norm, one cannot have principle objections against this development. Undoubtedly some will argue that this policy reflects the increasing lack of respect for God in our society. Although there may be some truth in that observation, such an argument cannot be decisive in attempting to maintain archaic language which is generally becoming increasingly foreign to our vocabulary. Indeed, the fact that most Reformed young people already appear to address the Lord their God without archaic forms would seem to indicate that this feature of the NRSV will as such be welcomed by many. We should be careful not to create a special religious language separate from everyday language, as if religion has little to do with everyday life.

### An improved translation?

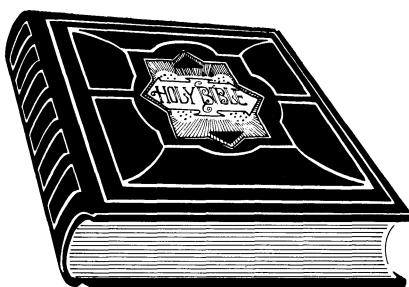
How must the NRSV be judged in its translating, apart from the inclusive language issue already mentioned? Sometimes one is grateful for changes made. By way of illustration let me mention two that struck me. In Genesis 12:3 (and 18:18), the RSV renders God's words to Abram in part with "by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." That has now been changed to "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." The NRSV thus brings this passage in agreement with Galatians 3:8 which quotes it.

The RSV of Psalm 45:6 spoke of "your divine throne," referring to the Davidic throne. Much better is NRSV's "Your throne O God." The Davidic throne was at bottom God's throne. Christ is the fulfilment of the royal line of David (cf. 2 Sam 7:16). The NRSV thus also brings Psalm 45:6 in agreement with Hebrews 1:8 where it is quoted.

Other times, I was greatly disappointed. Genesis 1:1 and 2a now read:

"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep...." By subordinating verse one to verse two, this text could be teaching that the earth was already in existence when God began to create. Such an idea contradicts the statement made in the fourth commandment that the Lord made heaven and earth and all that is in them in six days. In the beginning God called into existence what did not exist at that time (Psalm 33:6,9; 90:2; Hebrews 11:3; cf. Romans 4:17).

Genesis 1:2b which used to read: "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" now reads: "a wind



***"But the Word demands to be heard untarnished by modern philosophical intermediaries...."***

from God swept over the face of the waters." However, it is difficult to justify the translation "swept." The Hebrew word in question denotes the hovering of a bird over its young. This meaning is indicated in Deuteronomy 32:11, the only other place this particular verb occurs in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the Hebrew text gives no reason to exclude here the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the text (active participle) as well as the context suggests that the active working of God Himself is involved, and not a passive working by a wind.

Unfortunately Exodus 21:22 is essentially left unchanged from the RSV. It reads: "When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no further harm follows, the one responsible shall be fined what the husband's wife demands, paying as much as the judges determine." The phrase in question is "so that there is a miscarriage." The verb used here is often used to refer to a normal birth, but in no case does it refer to a miscarriage without specifically saying so

(as in Numbers 12:12). There is a special word for miscarriage, but it is not used here. Literally the passage in question reads: "and her children come out." Here it refers to a premature birth with no harm to the child or mother. It is deplorable that pro-abortion activists will continue to use the RSV and now the NRSV of Exodus 21:22 to argue that an unborn life is not as precious in God's sight as a child who has been born. After all according to their reading of Exodus 21:22, one provoking a miscarriage only pays a fine. His life is not required (cf. Exodus 21:12). The Hebrew text, however, does not support this belittling of unborn life. Nor do the Scriptures elsewhere. (Life in the womb before birth is described as "children" [Genesis 25:22; Luke 1:41] and one's personal identity starts with conception [cf. Psalm 139:13-15]).

A criticism that has been levelled against the RSV is that it uses that impersonal relative pronoun "which" when referring to the Holy Spirit, who is a person (Romans 5:5; 8:11; Ephesians 1:14; 1 John 3:24). In the NRSV, the "which" in these passages has been replaced by the ambiguous "that," a relative pronoun which can refer to both persons and things. The unambiguous "who" or "whom" is not used. In the case of Ephesians 1:14 the problem has been avoided by translating "this."

One final negative example. In Romans 3:30 the RSV translated that God "will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith." The NRSV is essentially the same (cf. also, e.g., Romans 4:16). However, the Greek does not say this and elsewhere the NRSV renders the words in question correctly with "by faith" (e.g. Romans 5:1; 9:30). Additionally, the Scriptures clearly teach that man is not saved on the ground of his faith, but only because of the free grace of God (cf., e.g., Romans 3:27-28; Ephesians 2:8).

### Conclusion

Although there are some improvements in the NRSV, my initial exposure to it has not left me with a generally positive appreciation. Especially the inclusive language issue has had a profound and largely negative impact. In many places the NRSV has become at best a paraphrase of what the original says. It is most disturbing to see a twentieth century philosophy like feminism so impose its will on the rendering of God's Word. But the Word demands to be heard untarnished by modern philosophical intermediaries whether that Word is considered objectionable by feminists or not.





# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

## Modern day speaking in tongues: Biblical or counterfeit?

A reader writes that she has worked with a lady who goes to a Pentecostal church where people “speak in tongues.” In light of discussions she has had with this lady she would like to know the following:

*What (in the Bible) exactly was speaking in tongues? When and why did speaking in tongues cease to occur?*

It is good that you, in your question, make an implied distinction between the speaking in tongues about which we read in the Bible and any other kind of speaking in tongues. For throughout history there have been many instances in which people of heathen religions have spoken in unknown tongues. Several examples of accounts of non-Christian tongue-speaking follow. (Speaking in tongues is also called “glossolalia” from the Greek words “tongue” and “to speak.”)

### “Tongues” in history

The Greek philosopher Plato (c. 429-348 B.C.) knew about the phenomenon of glossolalia. In his *Phaedrus* he mentions that there are certain people who become possessed by a divine madness and then begin to speak and pray in a frenzy. In *Timaeus* he suggests that God takes possession of the mind while man sleeps and inspires him with utterances and/or visions which he can neither understand nor interpret.

The Roman poet Virgil, who lived during the last century before Christ, described in *Aeneid* the ecstatic glossolalia of the Sybilline priestess on the Island of Delos. She would speak in tongues while meditating in a haunted cave.

The church father John Chrysostom (c. A.D. 344-407) in his *Homilies on First Corinthians* spoke of the Pythoness of Delphi who would begin to foam at the mouth and then, in a frenzy, utter the words of her madness.

As well, many of the mystery religions of the Graeco-Roman world, from Egypt to Persia to Syria to Greece, included glossolalia.

### “Tongues” in Acts

It was in this world of heathen worship, which included the frenzied speaking in ecstatic tongues by priests and priestesses, that the miracle of Pentecost happened. The Lord Jesus Christ had ascended to heaven. But before he left His disciples, He commissioned them to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. In order to equip them for this work, He would endow them with power from the Holy Spirit. This happened on the day of Pentecost. You can read about that in Acts 2:1ff. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues.

The words “other tongues” can also be translated “other languages.” And this is indeed what happened. The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in languages they had not previously learned. They did not speak gibberish. Their speaking was in no way similar to the frenzied utterances of the pagans described above. They spoke in clear, distinct languages. Acts 2:5-11 prove that. Jews, whose families had been living in the dispersion throughout the Roman empire for centuries and who had taken on the languages of the countries they lived in, and who were in Jerusalem for the Jewish Pentecost festival, could understand what the disciples were saying. The disciples were speaking in their languages.

The second occurrence of glossolalia is found in Acts 10:46. After Peter proclaimed the gospel to Cornelius and to other gentiles the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to praise God “in tongues” (the same word is used as in Acts 2:4). When Peter gave an account of this to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, he drew a parallel to what had happened to themselves on the day of Pentecost (see 11:15). This parallel would indicate that the Gentile believers “praised God” in intelligent languages and not in some frenzied unknown language.

The third example in the NT is found in Acts 19:6. As Paul baptized some Ephesians (again Gentile) men in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Once again, the same word is used — the Greek word for “tongues” which can also be translated “languages.”

In Acts we have three examples of a God-given ability to speak foreign languages. In three instances God gives this gift in order to show that the gospel is also for Gentiles and in order to equip the disciples for their task of bringing the good news of salvation to the nations of the world.

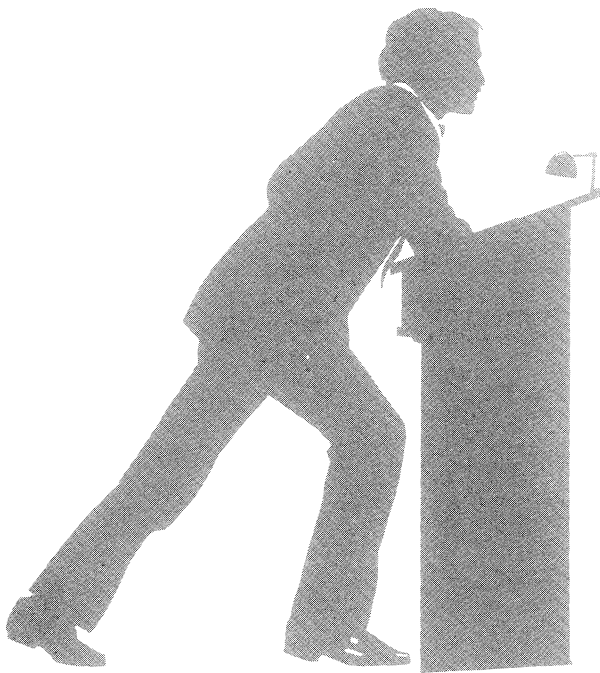
### “Tongues” in 1 Corinthians 12-14

Besides the three passages in Acts, one extended section of the NT deals with this spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12-14). In order to understand this passage well, we must understand something about Corinth.

Corinth was a large cosmopolitan city. Many trading routes intersected it. A large number of languages could be heard on the streets. It contained at least 12 temples, several of which were staffed by cult prostitutes ready and waiting to satisfy the lusts of the Corinthian citizens and the merchants passing through. Corinth was infamous throughout the world for its immorality.

To this city the apostle Paul brought the gospel — no small task. A church was established. After labouring there for eighteen months, Paul moved on. While he was in Philippi, he heard distressing news about the church in Corinth. The congregation was divided. Immorality was rife. Members were dragging each other to court. The Lord’s table was being profaned. False doctrine was tolerated. Special gifts of the Holy Spirit were being abused.

Paul writes a letter. In this letter he devotes a large amount of attention to the improper handling of the good gift of speaking in tongues. He does not forbid



*“...and then only if there is someone who can interpret what was said for the rest of the congregation.”*

1 Corinthians 14:27,28

speaking in tongues; rather he seeks to correct the abuse of it and to regulate it.

The question we must ask is whether the gift of speaking in tongues has undergone a change since the day of Pentecost. A careful reading of especially 1 Cor. 14 leads me to believe that no basic change had taken place. There is no indication that the speaking of tongues mentioned in 1 Cor. 14 was any different than that mentioned in Acts 2 (as well as Acts 10 and 19). It seems that God had given the believers in Corinth the gift to speak real other languages which they had not studied. Considering that the citizenry was made up of people from many different nations and that there was a constant influx of merchants, we should not be surprised that God would give such a gift to His church so that the gospel could spread to all the nations of the earth. As Paul said in 1 Cor. 14:22, “...tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers....”

What was the problem in the church at Corinth? In many ways the believers were falling back into paganism. The paganism from which they had been called prized the frenzied speaking in tongues. It seems that also in this regard, they were abusing the beautiful gift God had given them. And, much like contemporary Pentecostals, they saw glossolalia as the highest degree of spiritual maturity. They used the gift to show off rather than for the purpose God gave it: to evangelize the unbelievers.

Paul squares himself against the conceited spirituals in Corinth and deflates the importance they had placed on the gift. He does not forbid it. He him-

self had the gift (1 Cor. 14:18). But he soft-pedals its importance. Twice he lists the various spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30). Both times he mentions speaking in tongues last. This would have been shocking to the Corinthians. In the lists of spiritual gifts given in Rom. 12:3-8 and Eph. 4:7-11, speaking in tongues is not mentioned at all.

In 1 Cor. 14 Paul plays down the importance of the gift and insists that it be regulated. No more than two or three may speak in a tongue during a worship service, and then only if there is someone who can interpret what was said for the rest of the congregation (14:27,28).

As to the first question: What (in the Bible) exactly was speaking in tongues? We would say that all the evidence indicates that what we have in Acts 2, 10, 19 as well as in 1 Cor. 12-14 are examples of believers speaking in other real languages. I see no resemblance whatsoever to the unknown “languages” spoken in and prized so highly in Pentecostal circles. Furthermore, there is clearly no resemblance to the self-induced (or Satan-induced) hysterical glossolalia of the heathen described above. God gave members of Christ this wonderful gift of being able to speak in other languages for the specific purpose of having the gospel proclaimed to unbelievers in their mother tongues so that they, hearing and understanding the good news of salvation, could be saved.

#### **The cessation of “tongues”**

The second question was: When and why did speaking in tongues cease to occur? The God-given miraculous gift

of being able to speak in different languages ceased as it became less and less needed. In the beginning, the apostles needed the gift to reach people of other languages. God gave the gift to impel powerfully the gospel into the market places of the world. As converts took the gospel to their own people the need for the gift diminished for the language barrier had been surmounted.

We come across the gift in writings of the earlier church fathers. Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202) in *Against Heresies*, 5,6,1 says that in the Church there are brothers “...who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages.” Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) in *Against Marcion*, 5,8 shows that he is acquainted with the gift.

From these we can conclude that God, in his sovereignty, kept the gift of glossolalia active so long as the gospel had not reached the strategic locations of the world. Once this had happened, God withdrew the gift. For in the third century, scholars and historians begin to mention the cessation of this gift.

John Chrysostom (mentioned earlier) in his Homily XXIX (on 1 Cor. 12:1,2) writes, “This whole place [i.e. 1 Cor. 12:1,2 – GvP] is very obscure, but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer takes place.”

Augustine (A.D. 354-430) in his *Ten Homilies on 1 John*, Homily VI, section 10, says very clearly that the gift of speaking in tongues was a gift adapted to the times. It was given, says Augustine, to show that the gospel was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. This having happened, the gift passed away.

The evidence strongly suggests that this special gift of being able to speak real languages without having learned them (oh, how every seminary student covets this gift) disappeared when it was no longer needed.

What, then, do we say about “speaking in tongues” found in Pentecostal circles today? We would conclude that it is something completely different than the “speaking in tongues” mentioned in the Bible. I would also mention that a number of studies on modern day speaking in tongues present evidence that some people, desiring a new and a better religious experience, can speak in tongues on their own initiative. It seems to be a spiritual counterfeit more akin to the self-induced ecstatic utterances of pagan spiritists than to the true gift of tongues spoken of in the Scriptures. We do not doubt their sincerity; however, we question the source of their glossolalia. **C**

# NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



In this first newsmedley of the year of our Lord 1991 I wish to express my best wishes and prayers for the well-being of all our readers in this newly-begun year. I shall not add to the many laments heard on the occasion of the start of a new year, nor repeat the many concerns expressed in these days of international tension. These lines are written almost a day before the deadline set for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and it does not look like this deadline will be honoured by a withdrawal. In the meantime the "crackdown" in Lithuania demands the attention of the world. It is a strange thing that this happens under the authority of a man who was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. But there are more things in this world that are upside-down. Can a leopard change his spots? Only the power of the Holy Spirit can work genuine renewal and change.

But let us come to the purpose of our column. Before we start with news from the churches I want to express my gratitude to the brothers and sisters who, with the permission and authority of their consistories, send me the local or regional bulletins for use for our column. Some send them every week or every other week; some save them for several weeks or a few months before sending them "in bulk," but they do send them. Thank you consistories that gave permission and members who have taken upon themselves to realize this permission. As everyone understands, without their cooperation this column could not be written. I would never enlist the help of "undercover agents." Also for this new year I rely on your help which I experienced so richly in the past. We all have the upbuilding of Christ's Church in mind and at heart. Thank you also for the personal notes that the senders include at times; they are greatly appreciated.

And now to work.

The main event that took place since the previous medley was written is the institution of a church in Rockway, Ontario. Rev. Agema officiated in a service on December 30 in which office-bearers were ordained, whereby the institution became a fact. In due time we shall read a report of it in *Clarion*, I trust, and therefore we confine ourselves here to mentioning the fact with gratitude.

I had almost written "Rockham" instead of "Rockway," but this is caused by the developments in the West Australian coastal region. Our readers will recall that the Byford church has been discussing the development in Rockingham for some time. Now "after a further discussion on the request by the people in Rockingham to have separate church services as from early 1991, the consistory agrees to this request." It is the intention that these separate services will begin on February 3rd.

As in Canada, so in Australia the retired ministers sometimes come in handy. The Byford consistory decided that "the retired ministers will be asked if they will preach on a regular basis in Rockingham." And, also as in Canada, so in Australia the introduction of separate services as a preparation for institution has considerable effect on the sister churches. Armadale reported: "Byford requests, with the introduction of separate services in Rockingham, that our minister be allowed to lead one service there per month. This will be decided on in the new year. In any case, our participation could not begin any earlier than March of 1991."

In some regions of Canada there is a possibility for regular pulpit exchange. The same possibility exists in the Perth

metropolitan region, but with Albany it is a different story. I was therefore happy for my Albany colleague when reading in the Kelmscott consistory report: "The meeting is informed that a meeting with representatives of all four churches is to be convened tomorrow to discuss a preaching exchange roster for 1991 with the possibility to incorporate Rockingham as well as Albany." Pulpit exchange is beneficial for a minister as well as for the congregation. And especially for those serving in rather isolated areas it is a great help. Not only does an exchange free them for that week from the obligation to prepare two sermons, they also come into contact with other congregations and this can only be of benefit to all involved.

The news that comes from the Australian mission field in Papua New Guinea is not all that encouraging. It appears that the congregation is experiencing the ill effects of political aspirations of several members. A delegation from the Albany church reported about this aspect: "Rev. Knigge already reported in 1986 that the refugee status of the Port Moresby congregation would prove difficult for their position as Church in Port Moresby. Rev. Koelewijn's preaching has forced the congregation members to choose conclusively for either political aspirations or faithful church membership. Sadly, many are tending to choose for political aspirations and turn their backs on active church life."

We return to Canada, and visit northern Alberta. In many bulletins the treasurer or committee of administration or consistory had to inform the congregation that the budgeted amount was not received during the first ten or eleven months of the year. In some instances the shortfall was so large that it was very doubtful whether the voluntary contributions for December could wipe out the deficit. It was, therefore, the more gratifying when we read in the Barrhead bulletin: "A letter for classis was read stating with thankfulness to the Lord that the Church of Barrhead will not request financial help from the sister churches for the year to come, and also this year we will not need the moneys sent already. The money will be returned to classis." Also from Barrhead comes the following: "The building committee reported that at their last meeting they decided to suggest to the consistory that a building fund be set up to save money for a different church building. Upon their suggestion the consistory decided to have the collection held on the Sundays when the Lord's Supper is celebrated to go to the building fund."

A Neerlandia decision gave equal joy. "The consistory decided to increase the frequency of the Lord's Supper celebration from four times to six times a year. With this decision Neerlandia joins a growing number of Canadian Reformed Churches which have taken a similar decision during the past." In a comment on this decision, the Rev. Wieske remarked: "Celebrations are things to look forward to, aren't they? And the church of Christ should not live by 'minima' but maximize the means which Christ gave to His church." For the benefit of visitors we relay here that the celebrations are scheduled for "the second Sunday of September, November, January, May, July." I suspect that the month of March was skipped inadvertently, so you had better add it to the list.

Drifting (with the snow?) to Ottawa, we found some more information about the contact this church has with the "Regional Council (similar to our classis) of l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec. We received a quick response with an invitation to at-

tend their assembly. I was given the privilege of the floor and so could introduce to the pastors and elders (why not 'ministers and elders'? VO) of the ERQ the Canadian Reformed Churches. Over lunch I made some good contacts with several of their ministers. The ERQ consists of eight small congregations, seven in Quebec, one in Ottawa. They were instituted as a 'denomination' two years ago as a convergence of mission projects stemming from the CRC, PCA, and the PCC. They have a strong commitment to the Word of God as authoritative for faith and life. Thankfully I may report that I was well received. Several of their pastors expressed a desire to grow towards some sort of relationship with a consistently Reformed federation of churches." I am thankful for the contact taken up and express the heartfelt wish that it may be the first step towards union. Hopefully our readers know what all the above initials stand for.

In Hamilton's bulletin we read of "a letter sent to several Christian Reformed Churches in this area, informing them of our prayers for, and offering them assistance in arriving at the right decision in the difficulties which they face." I am certain that also in other places prayers are offered both privately and in the worship services for those in the Christian Reformed Church who are struggling to bring about a return to the absolute obedience to God's Word in all areas, so that finally the unity for which we have been longing ever since our first immigrants came to the North American continent may be achieved.

Of similar contact, be it in a somewhat different form, speaks what Rev. den Hollander wrote in the Orangeville bulletin. "I would like to give you a brief update on the developments in the Thornbury group. This past Wednesday a meeting was held in Tara ... in which fourteen people came together, namely four from Thornbury members ... and some members of the Christian Reformed Church (Canadian Reformed members-to-be) from the Owen Sound area, together with brother A. (Elora consistory) and myself. We had a very fruitful and constructive meeting resulting in the commitment of the members involved to work together from now on in united efforts to come to the relocation of the house congregation in this area. With great harmony we decided the many matters involved in this undertaking, considering also the development in the Christian Reformed Church. Unanimous-

ly we agreed to ask permission from the Orangeville council to assemble this group in Chatsworth if possible."

Cooperation in other areas sometimes proves to be still difficult. We are referring now to the combination of bulletins. In the Burlington area, as our readers may recall, there was, we thought, some progress when a committee proposed that each of the three congregations should continue issuing their own separate bulletin but that one sheet with general news should be prepared for all three together. Burlington South was in favour, but Burlington West did not accept the proposal for a combined "General News Sheet." And so we continue reading three times announcements from the Guido de Brès High School, from choirs, from John Calvin School, and from so many other activities and organizations. Sometimes efficiency is not one of our strongest points, is it?

The Elora consistory reported that "a discussion was held on the Greeting and the Benediction of the church liturgy in the worship services. It was decided to use the word 'you' instead of 'us' when elders are conducting the services."

Grand Valley, as we could read in *Clarion*, greatly rejoiced when they dedicated their church building. Another joyful piece of information is that "Project 90" could be completed seven thousand dollars below budget. To some extent this joy was offset by the sad message that "the mortgage company has not lent as much as expected." It appeared that the size of the mortgage remained some \$18,000 below the budgeted amount. If I am any good at arithmetic, this leaves them with \$11,000 that has to come from somewhere.

On the non-financial side, the deacons decided that they were going to visit each family in one year. After this initial series of visits the members will be visited by the brothers every other year. In this manner the deacons will learn to know the families, they will discover where there are gifts and where there is need, a need that most definitely is not confined to the financial field. Thus the bond is strengthened.

In the meantime I hope that the Chatham efforts to firmly "establish a boys' and girls' group for children of about ages nine to twelve" have proved successful.

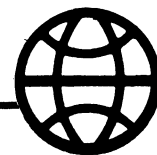
For this time we have to stop. We'll meet next time, the Lord willing, same wavelength: from home to home.

Yours very truly

VO 

## INTERNATIONAL

By W.W.J. VanOene



Ukrainian government officials have given church leaders permission to import unlimited amounts of religious literature with no restrictions. The Bible League reported that the church requested a permit for 350,000 items, to be supplied by the Bible League. The permit issued, however, made no restrictions on quantity and made no time restrictions.

The Council for Religious Affairs in the USSR estimates that more than 1,3 million Bibles, New Testaments and Scripture portions were imported in 1989. Total Scripture printings and imports may reach 45 million over the next five years. This contrasts with an estimate of 4 million copies available in the

country for the years 1917-1986. Another 4 million have entered the country since 1987. (REC NE)

### LENINGRAD

For the first time since 1917 one can buy a Bible in the bookstores of Leningrad. Although there is still a great need for Bibles within the Russian churches, this edition, which is a reprint of a 1867 translation, is available in bookstores to enable also outsiders to buy and read one. (ND)

### KATHMANDU

For the first time in the history of world's only Hindu kingdom Christians

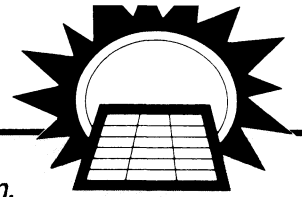
in Nepal sang Christmas songs in public. About 2,000 curious Nepalese assembled for this occasion in a park in Kathmandu.

In the new constitution, Nepal remains a Hindu state and it remains forbidden to achieve conversion by means of bribes or compulsion. Approximately ninety per cent of the mostly illiterate population is considered to be Hindu, while according to official figures the number of Christians is about five thousand. Christian organizations, however, are convinced that the number is closer to 40,000. (ND)





# RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. J. Mulder

The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him.

Psalm 25:14

## Dear brothers and sisters,

It is a wonderful thing to have a close friend with whom you can talk from heart to heart and with whom you can share your ups and downs, your sorrows and your joys.

How much greater and more beautiful is it to hear that the LORD extends His mighty and fatherly hand to us and grants His friendship to all who fear Him.

The word used here for "friendship" could be described as the confidential, intimate fellowship with the LORD in His covenant. It is not only for adults, also children are involved. God established His covenant with you and your seed! God wants you and them as His friends. No, He does not need you, but it pleases Him to share His secrets with you.

You may think of Abraham, often called in the Bible the "friend of God." Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23.

God teaches Abraham His ways. How He would make him and his seed a blessing for all the nations. Therefore the LORD also told him what He was going to do with Sodom and Gommarah, those sinful cities in the valley. God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" Was Abraham not God's friend? Sure he was! Therefore God "taught him His way" (v. 9). And Abraham could also speak up and respond to what God told him: "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou then destroy the place and not spare it?"

Abraham could not only have his input, but the LORD also listened to him and remembered Abraham's prayer when He executed His plans. "When God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered *Abraham*, and sent *Lot* out of the midst of the overthrow." Gen. 18:16-33; 19:29.

The LORD treated Abraham as His friend.

First the LORD introduced him to His plans. Then He let him have his input and listened patiently to what Abraham had to say. And when He executed His plans, the LORD took into account Abraham's pleading.

Now Abraham was indeed very special. The father of all believers. True! But through the grace of God in Christ we are called children of Abraham, the friend of the LORD. Through faith we may enjoy the friendship of the LORD. We may

walk with Him and talk to Him. In childlike fear and reverence.

And He listens. He opens His heart for us and "instructs sinners in the way," (v.9). We may have our input. He rules and reigns, He blesses and punishes. He does what pleases Him.

But not without you and your prayers! He hears our voice, our cry and supplication. Inclines His ear, gives strength and consolation, Psalm 116:1.

What the LORD gives us, must be used. Must be received and applied. That friendship with Him is for those who fear Him. To fear the LORD means to trust Him; to live and obey Him.

To walk with the LORD day by day. There are sins which must be confessed. Otherwise the friendship is broken up. If we would take His grace for granted and ignore His commands, the friendship will cool down and die.

Friends are sensitive to each other's needs and feelings. As friends of the LORD we are scared, no — not for Him, but we are afraid to hurt Him or make Him angry. We want to avoid everything which spoils the friendship with the LORD. We also realize that this friendship with Him, determines all other friendship and relations in our life.

Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ addressed us: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you *friends*, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you...that you should go and bear fruit." John 15:15,16.

By the grace of God through faith we are well-informed friends of the LORD. He makes known to us His plans and ways. We know what's up! Today and tomorrow, during our whole life, He instructs us through His Word and Spirit in the way we should go. He leads us "in what is right," (v. 9).

Let that be our trust in the days to come

Though the earth should change and mountains shake, we will not fear. For God is our Friend; our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble, Psalm 46:1,2.

Then we will by prayer and supplication make our requests known to God, our LORD.

"May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for Thee," (v. 21).

### From the mailbox

Wilma Van Drongelen from Abbotsford asked me to thank all brothers and sisters for the good wishes and cards she received. Thanks to you too, Wilma, for the card you sent me!

From the H. VanderLinde family, also from Abbotsford, I received some additional address changes.

Albert Dorgeloos' mother told me that his unit no. has changed. I have taken note of it.

Thanks to all three of you for expressing your sympathy in connection with Rev. Mulder's recent illness. We appreciate your concern. At the moment he is recuperating well. We are thankful to the LORD for hearing your and our prayers.

### Our birthday calendar for March:

#### RUTH VANDERPOL

19471-72nd Avenue  
Surrey, BC V3S 4P1

*Ruth hopes to celebrate her ninth birthday on March 3rd.*

#### TREVOR HOFKINK

1426 Bulkley Drive, Box 411  
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

*Trevor will be thirteen years old on March 3rd.*

### GERRY EELHART

14511-62 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5A 2A9

*Gerry celebrates his thirtieth birthday on March 12th.*

### JIM VANDERHEIDEN

St. Ann's, ON LOR 1Y0

*Jim will turn thirty-two on March 15th.*

### ROSELYN KUIK

Box 11, Graysville, MB ROG 0T0  
*Roselyn's sixteenth birthday is on March 18th.*

A very Happy Birthday to all of you!

To His people, who revere Him,  
Has the LORD His friendship shown,  
and He will to all who fear Him  
Make His steadfast covenant known.

Psalm 25:7a

Greetings,

### Mrs. J. Mulder,

1225 Highway 5, RR 1  
Burlington, ON  
L7R 3X4

## Alberta Women's Rally Calgary, Alberta, June 6, 1990

June 6, 1990 dawned bright and clear, a welcome break from the clouds and showers that had visited our fair city during the past few weeks.

The ladies of the church at Calgary had the privilege of hosting the Alberta ladies' rally. Welcoming smiles, coffee and baking greeted our guests as they arrived.

While registering, those individuals also interested in a "minor shopping excursion" were given the opportunity to purchase a plaque commemorating the 25th anniversary of the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church at Calgary or for those more culinary minded individuals, the cookbook, *Let's Go Dutch*.

At 10:00 a.m. we gathered together in the main hall of the church building and our chairwoman for the morning, Mrs. Barbara Van Bostelen, opened the morning session.

We sang Psalm 100:1,2 accompanied on the organ by Mrs. Van Dijk of

Coaldale. Our chairwoman opened in prayer and a warm welcome was extended to the fifty ladies and two gentlemen present. Roll call was held and it was evident many had travelled a good distance to participate in this day of study and fellowship. Scripture reading was from 1 John 4:1-6 and 2 Thess. 2:1-16.

Our speaker for the morning, Rev. Kampen, was introduced and prior to his speech distributed an outline entitled "New Age: Old Enemy in New Disguise," along with a recommended reading list on the subject.

Rev. Kampen began his speech by reciting the words of a popular song of the late 1960s, "The Age of Aquarius" from the musical "Hair." The song "Aquarius" sums up many of the New Age ideas and could be, as such, the anthem of the New Age movement.

New Age is defined as the age of harmony and understanding, of man coming to spiritual maturity.

As Christians, we must study new movements and sects. We must "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) and be engaged in the age-old spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12). We must be "battle ready," alert, and able to detect the enemy.

Rev. Kampen then elaborated on six typical New Age ideas. Briefly these ideas are:

1. All is one (Monism)
2. All is God (Pantheism)
3. Humanity is God
4. A change of consciousness
5. All religions are one (Syncretism)
6. Cosmic evolutionary optimism

He also expanded on other typical New Age ideas including reincarnation, combined conscious powers of people to bring in the new age, the concept, "you make your own reality," and revelations via mediums or crystals.

In examining these ideas we see there is nothing new under the sun. Many

of these same concepts are observed in Hinduism, the occult and pagan religions.

New Age ideas have affected various aspects of society. Rev. Kampen elaborated how New Age ideas have had their effect in education, business, health, politics, science, environmental issues and entertainment.

In evaluating New Age ideas we see there is no room for God as He is revealed through Scripture or for a Saviour to redeem man from sin and rebellion.

Rev. Kampen discussed ways in which we can recognize and be alert to New Age ideas. First of all there are those groups which openly profess to be New Agers. The also there are the more subtle evidences of the New Age movement, i.e. astrology, psychic healers and the usage of terminology such as self-realization, spiritual evolution, or our energy fields.

As Christians we are called to be aware and on guard. We need to be cautious that we are not inadvertently misled or involved in New Age practices or philosophies. If the opportunity arises, we are to let our light shine before men and show we belong to Christ. We look forward not to the "dawning of Aquarius" but to the coming of the kingdom of God where we shall live eternally with Him and to His glory.

Following Rev. Kampen's thorough and informative speech the floor was opened for questions and a thought-provoking discussion ensued.

Rev. Kampen was thanked for his time and effort. The morning session was closed with the singing of Psalm 135:1,2,7,8 and all present were invited for lunch in the downstairs hall.

Mrs. Nancy Boersema read Psalm 96 from Scripture and Rev. Kampen led in prayer. A delicious smorgasbord meal was enjoyed by all, after which Mrs. Audrey VandenHoven closed in prayer.

At 2:00 p.m. we re-assembled and sang the League song. Our speaker, Mr. Aize Smit from Calgary was introduced by our chairwoman for the afternoon, Mrs. Audrey VandenHoven. Mr. Smit began by stating that the topic of his presentation — The Environment — was an appropriate one seeing that it was also "Environment Week." He cautioned that the tendency today is to make nature into a god in itself. We must remember the Creator and be wise in dealing with the earth as God's handiwork.

To our surprise this was the end of his speech. Aize then demonstrated the brainstorming session which took place as he considered options and ideas for his presentation. There he sat at home with the letter from the organizing committee in hand... "Dear Mr. Smit...

please make your presentation interesting and try to involve everyone...." To meet this requirement a speech would be out of the question. Slides of a forest destroyed by piles of disposable diapers would probably be more interesting. Would a skit be more appropriate? Commercials?! That's it! Commercials are exciting and can involve everyone! Thereupon all present were divided into five groups and assigned various rooms in which to practice their commercials. After about 20 minutes, ready or not, commercials were to be performed.

During the first commercial a young mother of a doll clad in a disposable diaper was educated in the benefits of cloth diapering alternatives.

Commercial two demonstrated the superior quality of home-made organically grown whole wheat bread as opposed to doughy store-bought white bread.

The third presentation was a modern-day version of "Red Riding Hood." Red Riding Hood brought Granny a plastic bag full of processed, packaged and nitrified foods, carbohydrate beverages and disposable cups so poor asthmatic

Granny wouldn't have to wash dishes. Red Riding Hood walked through what was at one time a beautiful forest which has since been destroyed by acid rain.

Commercial four showed the different ways a campsite can be used by litter bugs and noise makers versus nature lovers and appreciators.

A lady in the next commercial threw out a garbage bag which to the delight of the neighbours contained all sorts of useful things. Soon all items had found new homes and uses, leaving only an empty and reusable garbage bag.

A short discussion followed and Mr. Smit was thanked for his presentation as were all who "performed."

Others including our organist, Mrs. Van Dijk were thanked for their efforts. Accompanied by Miss Elizabeth Teitsma we sang "O Canada." Words of thanks and appreciation for the hosting society were spoken and Edmonton Immanuel was appointed to be next year's host. We closed in prayer and refreshments were served.

Hilda Tiggelaar  
Janet Schouten



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## Annual Convention of the League of the Canadian Reformed Women Societies of Ontario

October 17, 1990, Fergus, Ontario

This League Day began the same way as many others before it: with coffee in the church basement. At 10:00 the meeting began. Mrs. Lynn VandenDelden asked us to sing Hymn 64 and then read Rev. 22:1-7 with us and led in prayer. She welcomed us with the theme "Ye servants of God." In this way she connected the topics for the day, noting that both we and the angels are servants of God.

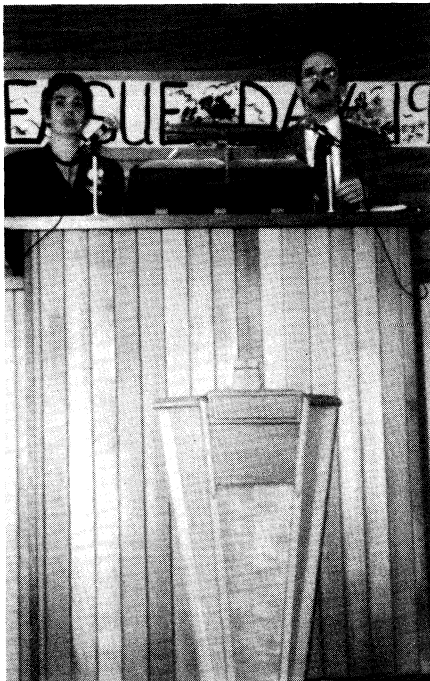
Letters of congratulation from our sisters in Australia and the Netherlands were read. As well we received personal congratulations from the League in Western Canada.

During roll call 373 ladies were counted, including three from the West, and four from Holland. The "business" part of our day was concluded with the singing of the League Song.

Mrs. Van Delden then introduced our essayist, Mrs. Annette Sikkema, whose topic was "Thy Will be Done," with

reference to Lord's Day 49. Mrs. Sikkema first read two Scripture passages with us: Eph. 5:1-21 and Rom. 12:1,2. Is God's will a mystery to us, impossible to fulfill? We know that nothing is done outside God's will; He destined us to be saved; He sent the Lord Jesus to be our Saviour. For this we must be thankful and must strive to unite our wills more and more with His will. We can do this if we study our Bible to find what God's will is. We must constantly work at it. This can be done by finding out about and not conforming to anti-Christian developments in the world. We can ask for His help by praying that He will make us faithful to His Word and will.

Should all talents be developed to their full potential? What should a Christian wife or mother do if she has been endowed with a special gift that can better be developed outside of the home? We must remember that we are not here to fulfil ourselves but to fulfil God's will. We



Mrs. L. VanDelden and Rev. P.G. Feenstra

must use our gifts to serve others in the best way possible.

Mrs. Sikkema stressed that we must study Scripture to discover what God says to us. We can also learn from our Reformed heritage, from older members of the congregation, and from each oth-

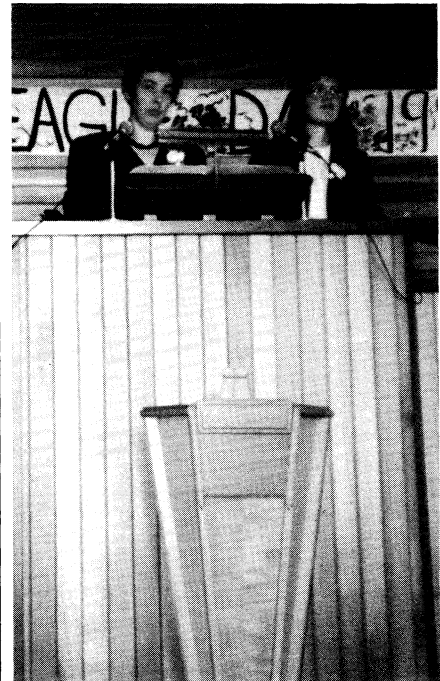
er. We can discuss together what we have heard on Sunday, or learned from our personal Bible study. We can use 'koffie kletsjes' to build up and edify each other.

The Lord is concerned with every part of our lives: where we work, where we live, how many children we shall have in our families, how they will be raised, what kind of houses we live in, how we use the modern conveniences available to us, etc. When we pray, "Thy will be done," we show that we want to obey God in all areas of life. From Scripture we know that He will "equip you with everything good that you may do His will" (Rom. 13:21).

After singing some verses of Psalm 119, a lively discussion ensued. A collection for "Anchor" Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped was held. (\$1,130 was collected.) Once again we sang, this time from Psalm 103, and then we departed to the Maranatha school for lunch. Near the end of our lunch we were entertained by the school choir. With clear, joyful voices they sang a variety of songs.

The meeting was reopened with the singing of the National Anthem. Mrs. Claire Hutten read her own poem about raising children: the joyous and not so joyous moments, concluding, though, that children truly are a blessing received from the Lord.

In connection with the afternoon's topic we read Hebrews 1 and then sang



Mrs. L. VanDelden and Mrs. A. Sikkema

Psalm 8. Mrs. VanDelden introduced Rev. Feenstra, minister at Guelph. His topic, "The Place of the Angels in the History of Redemption," discussed who the angels are, their office and task. The angels preserve the Church, protect and guard God's children, interpret God's revelation, and execute judgment. (As this speech is to appear in *Clarion* we will not go into detail here.) We sang from Psalm 89 and discussed the topic.

Before ending the day's meeting, Mrs. VanDelden thanked the Lord for the opportunity of having a meeting such as this. She thanked Mrs. Sikkema for her practical essay and Rev. Feenstra for his clear introduction. It is a comfort to know that God's army of angels is not small. Mrs. M. Weidenhammer (organist), the children's choir, and the ladies of Fergus and Elora were thanked. They all participated in making this day very enjoyable. Mrs. L. Schutten, Vice-all, in turn thanked Mrs. VanDelden for her part in making this meeting a success. Thanks was given to our heavenly Father for this day which we received by grace.

The meeting was closed with the singing of Psalm 68:1,2. Rev. Feenstra led in prayer.

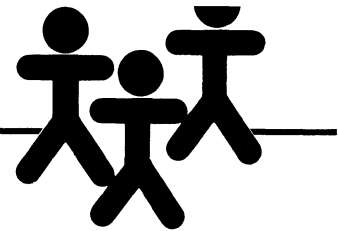
Refreshments were again available and good-byes were said to far-away friends. We returned to our homes enlightened and refreshed for our daily tasks.



Lunch in the Maranatha School

Mrs. A. Nobel 





## The Christian Character of a Reformed School

### Editor's note

The following contribution by Mr. G.M. Spyker, a foreword and translation of an article by Dr. J. van Bruggen, is taken over from the *Magazine of the Australian Free Reformed Teachers' Association*, September, 1990. (a.w.)

*Quite often I've heard the remark of younger colleagues that, although there is much literature about the Reformed Schools and Reformed education in the Dutch language, it is impossible for them to comprehend it properly because of their unfamiliarity with this language. This is a pity and something ought to be done about it.*

*One of the aims of our magazine was to translate articles, so that we can pass on to each other worthwhile thoughts which can help us in defining our Reformed principles in education.*

*A book which has impressed me greatly is entitled *Het Gereformeerde Onderwijs – Identiteits bezinning (Reformed Education – Reflections on its Identity)*. It was published in 1983 on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of our 'sister' Teachers' Association of the Netherlands, known by its acronym GVOLK. This book contains a series of interesting articles by different authors in the field of teaching – church or school. Some articles are strongly focused on the Dutch situation, others are of a more general nature.*

*I would like to start with an article written by Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen of the Theological University of Kampen. The title is "The Christian Character of a Reformed School." Please bear in mind the original date of publication. A few minor changes were necessary to accommodate our situation. My apologies for the liberties I took when translating.*

### Introduction

There ought to be no substantial difference between "Christian" and "Reformed." For a Christian who acts according to the Christian faith, as de-

scribed in Lord's Day 7 of our Catechism, shows that all his works have a Christian character. This character can be lost completely or partly when people, although they call themselves Christians, fall short in "accepting as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word" or when they lack "a firm confidence that not only to others but also to me, God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." In those situations a return to what is truly Christian is necessary by reforming what became deformed. Only a Christendom returned to its original form is truly Christian, Reformed-Christian. The 'Christian' is therefore a necessary addition. Actually, the word 'Reformed' is an abbreviated form for what should be 'Reformed-Christian' or 'authentically Christian.'

The word 'Reformed' has developed its own identity, especially in the Netherlands but also among many in some English-speaking countries. It is not only functional when it refers to the Reformed Christian doctrine, but also when referring to a specific group, 'the Reformed people.' Thus a plea for the Reformed identity of our education can evoke some unintentional connotations, which will not be the case when one speaks about the 'Christian identity.'

It is necessary that we time and again test our Reformed works on their Christian basis, so that no tension will develop between both characteristics. This tension could develop when the idea of us 'as Reformed people cozily together' (a group-identity is noted) would result in the conclusion that the 'Christian character' of our school is now safeguarded. During his lifetime every Christian must critically examine himself: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Corinthians 13:5) The works of a Christian in a school can never be excluded from self-

examination: a Reformed school needs to be Reformed continually in order to remain a Christian school.

From of old the Christian character is summarized in three essential elements: **Faith** as expressed in the words of the Apostle's Creed; **Conversion**, in conformity with the norm of God's law – the Ten Commandments; and **Prayer**, as taught in the Lord's Prayer.

Much can be said about the Christian character of a Reformed school. We will, however, concentrate upon a comparison of the essential characteristics of what is Christian on the one hand and the real life in a Reformed school on the other hand. These three elements will be discussed more thoroughly.

### Faith

For an outsider Reformed schools seem to be typically limited to one specific group. As a rule only Reformed children are admitted and the teachers have to be communicant members 'in full rights' of the Free Reformed Churches (necessary change, GMS). The aim to focus on the Free Reformed Churches is not to preserve a group which exudes self-confidence, but to keep the faith as worded in the confession of these churches. This substantial aim is given concrete form in the choice of church. This characteristic of church-choice is a means to reach the goal. It is of vital importance for a Reformed school to ask whether the Reformed faith is very much alive, both on personal and communal level. A confessing member is not by definition a confessor. He who subscribes to the three forms of unity is not automatically someone whose firm confidence is aimed at Christ's righteousness and God's grace. And yet faith is the pivot.

Although confidence and joy through faith are underlying characteristics of our Reformed teachers' colleges, they are not specifically taught there. And they are much rather denied than supported by secular colleges and universities. It is understandable that many a student has

had great problems in these secular surroundings.

Lack of confidence and joy through faith do not straightaway result in rowing against the current of the group by either the teacher or the Reformed parent. Yet deformations start to develop. This can become obvious in a somewhat neutral or aloof or even negative mentality of the teacher: he does work at a Reformed school, but he is totally incapable of positively stimulating the youth of the church. The young people soon notice it and they register both his aloof criticism of the church community in which he lives and his loveless conformity with those 'Free Reformed Churches.' Young people cannot be fobbed off. When the Christian faith does not show as a warm personal faith in the Reformed teacher, then weak students will emotionally turn their back to the church while the more willing ones will develop an excessive interest in 'evangelical' movements, such as the Youth for Christ.

The school, however, is not weaker or stronger in the faith than the church community as a whole. It can exert itself to strengthen the positive elements and to put the brakes on the degenerating ones. This means that there has to be permanent attention for real expression of faith. Appointments based on church membership are like an entrance to a dead-end road, if after the appointment it cannot be said anymore, "I have believed, therefore I sing."

What can the school do for the families? Apart from the individual parent visits by the teacher, not much. Yet that little is an instrument that ought to keep its importance. The teacher can use the parents' visit to show, in especially weaker families, the joy of faith when speaking about education and instruction and possibly individual difficulties. Do not underestimate the importance of the parents' reaction after the teacher has left, "What a joy that our child has a teacher who is a Christian."

The school can do much for and by the teachers. The teacher, as a human being, has great influence. It is of such great importance that later on the young people remember the Christian who guided them in class or in a certain subject area. This means that the teacher has to pay proper attention to maintaining his or her own faith. Daily contact with the same people and the same students can soon cause wear and tear. Therefore the following points are of great importance.

a. the personal prayer of the teacher before he or she starts work; without

prayer and preparation our faith is not strengthened;

- b. prevent derisive remarks about other people and other opinions, also when it concerns people, opinions of office bearers of your own church; love alone keeps joy;
- c. a positive attitude towards the Scriptures and the confessions;
- d. love for the student.

Boards of Reformed Schools should give high priority to the Christian stan-

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***"The school, however, is not weaker or stronger in the faith than the church community as a whole."***

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dards of the teaching staff. Board members are not elders, true, but that does not mean that they have to limit themselves to purely ecclesiastical criteria when appointing or dismissing staff. The big question is whether school boards pay enough attention in protecting and stimulating their teaching staff in their faithful labouring in the school. A Reformed board can take a large variety of initiatives. To mention a few:

1. Before a teacher is appointed, during a frank conversation, attention should be paid to the necessity of personal religious conviction. Then the board can form its own opinion about the motivation of the applicant.
2. At least once a year attention should be paid to the question whether the team as a whole or the various groups of subject teachers are functioning in a Christian manner. The board must actively oppose those groups who are working against the team and must help to solve these problems. Personal talks with teachers are of great value. Many teach-

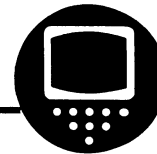
ers often have a much too impersonal attitude towards those who appointed them, while these board members are very motivated in protecting the Christian character of the school. With a large number of teachers the board could consider appointing one or two mentors, whose special task it is to represent the board amongst the staff. Those mentors ought to be well qualified in maintaining contact. They are not allowed to be in the way of these who are in charge of the daily running of the school, but they have to limit themselves to stimulating and correcting the Christian relationship between board and staff.

3. In certain situations the board and staff should meet at regular intervals to reflect upon how the Christian faith ought to permeate everything at school.
4. Meetings between board and teachers should be organized where not only technicalities will be dealt with but where there will be opportunity as well to exercise the communion of saints to strengthen the basis of school as education.

One could be of the opinion that these points could be promoted by those in charge of the school, via the principal, the deputy principal and senior teachers. We deem it impossible. It is the board's task to appoint teachers, not the principal's. Besides, those in charge have to maintain excellent and business-like contacts with all members of the team. It goes without saying that they must aim for Christian manners with the accent on the team as a whole and not first of all on the individual teacher. It is important that the principal in particular should ensure that the staff pray together and that a Christian companionship is maintained amongst the staff. This is perhaps easier at large schools where the distance between principal and other staff is somewhat larger than in the smaller primary schools. However, at those smaller schools, where contacts are more frequent, it may be advisable to limit more to the technical aspect of teaching.

It is impossible to present the same kind of practical advice for a large variety of school situations. However, whatever the school situation is, everyone, depending on his position or capabilities, is responsible for consciously keeping and activating a pure and emotional experience of faith and to be an example in the school which was really 'born in faith.'





## Classis Ontario North, December 14, 1990.

1. Opening:  
On behalf of the convening church at Grand Valley, the Rev. P. Aasman calls the meeting to order. He invites the delegates to sing Psalm 19:3,4. He reads Proverbs 8:1-21, and leads in prayer.
2. Examination of Credentials:  
The delegates from the church at Fergus examines the credentials and they are found to be in good order. The church at Orangeville has an instruction.
3. Constitution of Classis:  
Classis is constituted with the Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta as chairman; the Rev. G. Nederveen as clerk; and the Rev. J. Mulder as vice-chairman.  
The chairman welcomes the brothers. He mentions that the church at Fergus has its own minister now. The church at Burlington East was disappointed when the Rev. J.J. Schreuder declined the call extended to him. He notes that the Rev. J. Visscher of Langley has been called. Rev. P.G. Feenstra declined a call from Smithville. The chairman expresses gratitude that Rev. Feenstra may continue his work within the Classis.
4. Agenda:  
After several items are added, the agenda is adopted.
5. Reports:  
A church visitation report to the church at Ottawa is read and received.
6. Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. is held.  
The church at Fergus asks advice with regard to a request from one of the churches regarding financial support for the Middle East Reformed Fellowship. Advice is given.
7. Instructions:  
The consistory of the church at Orangeville requests classis to provide

\$5.55 per communicant member to assist them in supporting a minister's widow. Classis grants this request.

8. Appeal:  
A sister of the church at Toronto appeals a decision made by the consistory to allow, as part of the catechism instruction, the inclusion of several cassette tapes by teachers not belonging to the Canadian Reformed Churches. Three letters are received from members of the church at Toronto notifying Classis that they share the concerns of the appellant. Classis decides to sustain the appeal.
9. During Classis Rev. J. Mulder suffered a slight heart attack. Rev. Feenstra replaces him as vice-chairman.
10. Appointments:
  - a. The church at Guelph is appointed convening church for the next classis. The date is set for March 8, 1991 at 9:00 a.m. in the church at Burlington West.
  - b. Suggested officers: chairman, P. Aasman; clerk, G. Ph. Van Popta; vice-chairman, G. Nederveen.

11. Personal question Period is held.
12. Censure according to Art. 44 C.O.: is not exercised.
13. The Acts are adopted and the Press Release approved.
14. Closing: The chairman thanks the ladies for their hospitality. After singing Psalm 105:1,2 the meeting is closed with prayer.

On behalf of Classis December 14, 1990,

P.G. Feenstra,  
Vice-chairman.

## General Board meeting of the Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped, "ANCHOR", November 30, 1990, Burlington, ON.

The chairman opened the meeting with the reading of James 1 and prayer.

Minutes of the meeting of September 21 were read and adopted as presented.

The director gave a report concerning the Home. Everyone is looking forward to the holiday season. The staff attended the annual bazaar at Derek and Janine's school. The residents received an invitation to a potluck dinner to be given by the Young People's Society of Lincoln. The staff would like to thank everyone for their visits to the Home.

A lift will be installed as an emergency exit through a larger basement window. Summer Camp still needs a new Summer Camp Director.

We are all encouraged to more enthusiasm for Anchor, both financially and otherwise. The treasurer presents a budget which contains a \$75,000 deficit. New members would be greatly appreciated.

Because of the workload assumed by the treasurer, we now have a book-keeper and individual congregational treasurers to help.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

On behalf of the Board,  
Secretary, J. vanAmerongen

## OUR COVER



Confederation Park,  
Hamilton, ON

Photo courtesy:  
J. van der Jagt

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Hello Busy Beavers!

I think you will enjoy these three pet stories.

We have some pets at our house too. We have two salamanders, three turtles, some pheasants, pigeons and turkeys. We also had a pigeon hawk for a week. My brother saw her when he was biking. She seemed to have a sore wing and could not fly. He was afraid the cats would get her so he caught her and we put her in an empty run. We fed her and watched her grow stronger every day. By the end of one week she seemed to be alright again so my Dad let her go.

Busy Beaver Heather Muis

We once caught a little bird. It was a baby sparrow. He fell out of our tree in our front yard. We found him and put him in a box in the breezeway. Then one night we had a thunderstorm. In the morning we saw the bird was dead. He got shocked by the lightning.

Busy Beaver Esther Hordyk

I live on a hobby farm with lots of pets. We also have three horses. One horse is part work horse. She is grey with white splotches. Her name is Misty. Misty is twenty years old. Misty is so gentle you could go through her legs and she will not kick. You could also climb on her neck when she has it down, and she would lift you right onto her back! The other horse is white. He is a purebred Arabian gelding. He is eleven years old and his name is Toriano. Toriano is about as gentle as Misty, but he likes to run more. Misty's so stubborn you need a stick with you when you ride her, but she is good for beginners. The last horse is Chevy 4x4, but we call him Chevy for short. Chevy is brown with a white blaze and two white stockings (that's white only half way up their legs). Chevy is the only horse I can't ride out of the three because he is too spunky!

Busy Beaver Rachel Wierenga



## FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club Rachel Wierenga. Thank you for an interesting pet story. I know the Busy Beavers will enjoy it! Does it keep you busy looking after all those pets, Rachel?

Hello, Vickie Aikema. I see you are a very neat writer and a good puzzler, too. Keep up the good work, Vickie.

I see you had a very good holiday, Michelle Peters. Thank you for a very interesting letter! How are the clubs going at your school, Michelle?

Have you been bowling again, Peter Vanderzwaag? I see you had a very good time with your family at Christmas. Are you enjoying the winter too, Peter?

Hello, Esther Hordyk. It was good to hear from you again. I see you have been keeping busy! And that you are a good puzzler. Have you entered our new contest (last time's Clarion) Esther?

Thank you for your letter, Mary-Lynn DeBoer. It was good to hear from you. I'm glad you like your new school. Bye for now, Mary-Lynn.

Hello, Ivan Sikkema. I always enjoy hearing from the Busy Beavers. Thank you for an interesting-looking puzzle! I know the Busy Beavers will enjoy doing it. Have you entered our new contest, Ivan?

What have you made on your new sewing machine, Sarah Vanderzwaag? And how did you like your new book? I see you won't have any trouble keeping busy, Sarah!

Do you enjoy playing in the snow, Mary-Ann Moes? I'm glad you enjoy our puzzles. Are you good at writing stories? Did you give our contest a try? Bye for now, Mary-Ann. I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

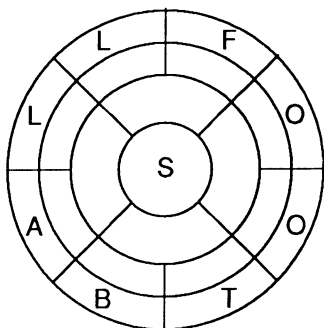
I'm glad to hear you have a pen pal, Gerard Van Woudenberg! He will like your letters on your fancy writing paper! Does the fan in your shed work fine, Gerard? Which of your goats do you like best?

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

## Quiz Time!



### "FOOTBALL" WORD PUZZLE

The outer ring of this puzzle spells the word "FOOTBALL." Insert letters in the empty spaces, so that you spell 8 common 4 letter words. Each word will start with a letter from the outer ring and end with the letter "s". The second ring contains only the vowels a, e, i, o, and u, with some used twice, but not more than twice. The third ring contains only consonants such as s, r, p, etc.

o, and u, with some used twice, but not more than twice. The third ring contains only consonants such as s, r, p, etc.

### "SINGING" CODE

By Busy Beaver "Janneh"

<del>1-T</del>	<del>9-F</del>	1	3	2	5	6	1	3	8	
<del>2-A</del>	<del>10-B</del>									
<del>3-H</del>	<del>11-L</del>	11	4	9	10		2	5	10	
<del>4-D</del>	<del>12-I</del>									
<del>5-N</del>	<del>13-P</del>	7	4	16	8		15	12	1	3
<del>6-K</del>	<del>14-S</del>									
<del>7-G</del>	<del>15-W</del>	13	9	2	12	14	8	!		
<del>8-E</del>	<del>16-M</del>									

(Answers next time)