



Clarion
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Pentecost

By J. Huijgen

Christ or Man?

And Peter said to them: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the LORD our God calls to Him." Acts 2:38, 39.

The Holy Spirit does not work in the world in order to put man in the centre. He puts Christ in the centre. The Spirit of Pentecost calls the church of Christ to glorify God, not man. The Spirit calls people to one place, for there He gives the salvation of Christ abundantly and without discrimination. This is what we see in our text. Peter's entire sermon comes to this conclusion.

Peter stands at the transition of the Old to the New Testament. This transition is marked by great signs. There is a sound like the rush of a mighty wind. There are tongues of fire, distributed and resting on each of them. There is the speak and hear miracle. These remarkable things mark the moment of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Many of those who came to investigate the signs and who heard the message were struck by it, and asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" The answer was, "Repent." However, the message of the text is more than a simple word of repentance.

Peter quoted from the prophecies of Joel, not only because Joel spoke of a prophesying by sons and daughters, but also because he spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the beginning of a new era. Now the time of the end has come. Here are the Last Days, this is the last stage of God's work in the history of this world. God has come to the completion: not only the work of creation, but also the work of obtaining redemption. Now, through Christ, God applies the redemption obtained by Christ by sanctifying for Himself His people, His church, which is to be gathered out of all the nations.

Therefore, Peter preached Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour and Lord, in both His completed and His on-going work. He said: The Christ who rose from the dead, having obtained salvation, and who ascended into heaven, did not leave His church alone. He came back in the Holy Spirit. For He received the Holy Spirit from the Father in order to give Him to His congregation. It is through the Spirit that Christ continues to gather, defend, and preserve His church.

This gathering work takes effect in the way of repentance from sin. Peter says: "Repent!" This is a radical call, just as radical as the call of John the Baptist and of Christ Himself. John urged the people to repent with the words about the axe lying at the foot of the tree. Christ spoke His "Woe" to the cities who refused to repent. Therefore, in the words of Peter the people must have heard something that was familiar to them. With John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ the message was clear. Now it becomes even more clear.

The kingdom of God is near. Christ, who obtained the kingship over heaven and earth, is coming as judge. Time is running out.

The people have to repent. This means concretely, at that moment, that they have to reverse their idea about Calvary. They must revoke their cry, "Crucify Him" and confess this cry as sin. Peter calls them to acknowledge that they rejected the Cornerstone laid by God.

Peter makes it very personal. "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." This is the message to those who are circumcised, who have the sign of the covenant. Peter tells them: Receive a new sign! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ! This is remarkable. For it means that the Jews have to let themselves be incorporated in Christ and, with it, in His body, His church, the people of the new covenant.

Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that they must now believe in Him as the only Saviour, and that His death at the cross was the great sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, also their sins. Confess this Jesus as the One in whom God justifies His church.

This being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is more than a formality. It means a complete break. They have to break radically with the service in the temple, with the offerings of animals by the priests and turn to Christ. He has put the temple with its sacrifices aside because He offered Himself once for all as the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. Christ is the true High Priest and with His coming the Levitical priesthood has come to an end.

Through the Spirit people give heed to the call of Peter and believe that they have the forgiveness of their sins in the blood of Christ, and that salvation is found in Him alone. Through the Spirit people who believe in Christ realize that they must be with Christ's church and nowhere else.

Although a great change has occurred with the coming of Christ, it was not a revolution, but the fulfillment of what was promised in the entire Old Testament. It was a change, but a change within the continuation of God's work. Christ is this fulfillment of God's Old Testament promises. In Him, God now gives His grace and salvation. Salvation is no longer given in the temple with the priests, but in the church with its apostolic preaching of Christ as Saviour. To this church the Spirit of God is sent.

A choice must be made. You have to turn to Christ; you have to turn to His church as it presents itself on the first Pentecostal Day under the direction of the Spirit. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit shows the works of Christ with greater clarity in the apostolic proclamation. The main message in Peter's sermon that Christ Jesus gave His life to buy His church, the people who congregate in Spirit and Truth, for Christ's sake, to the honour of God.

This is still the requirement of the Gospel. For the broad stream of the first Pentecostal Day did not divide itself up in all kinds of little streams. The one church did not develop into a great variety of churches and sects, but remained the one church of Christ for which He gave His blood. It is the church which is led by the Spirit of Pentecost, which has one God, one Saviour, one Spirit, one baptism, one Supper table.

There is more. Peter speaks also about a rich gift for those who come to Christ Jesus in faith and join His congregation. They will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a beautiful gift. But what does it mean? Several explanations are given. Especially in our days it is often said: You must have the Holy Spirit. One can get the impression that this judgment implies that the gift of the Spirit is no longer found in the church.

This "gift of the Spirit" is sometimes explained as "gifts [plural] of the Spirit. These gifts are then said to be regeneration, the renewal of life, and sanctification. It is, however, questionable whether this is the direct meaning here. Of course, this work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification is included, but in our text Peter speaks of a singular: "gift." Peter assures that those who believe in Christ will receive God's gift, which is the Holy Spirit Himself.

In the context of Acts 2 the gift of the Holy Spirit is specifically linked to the speak and hear miracle. In order to know the meaning of this miracle, we should look at what those filled with the Spirit talked about and what the gathering crowd heard. They said: "We hear them telling in our own tongues *the mighty works of God.*" That people praise God for His mighty acts of redemption is the work of the Spirit.


Moreover, it was not the odd one who praised God, but every one of them did. And the hearers heard this praise in their own native language. It was not a privileged one who spoke. The entire congregation became a priesthood of prophets before God's countenance. The Spirit did not discriminate. Peter said: the promise is for every one, without

exception. "The promise is for you and for your children." Those addressed were the seed of Abraham, the people of the promise. The Lord does not break the line with the Old Testament, but works in the line of the generations.

From then on God's work in Christ became world-wide. Peter continued by saying that the promise is also for those "who are far off." In these words we may have a reference to Isaiah 57:19, even though Isaiah speaks of the Israelites in captivity who lived far away. The expression can also be taken as referring to time: those who live far off in time. It is clear however, that in Acts 2 those "who are far off," in either place or time, are the Gentiles. In other words, we, believers from the Gentiles, are included; we and our children.

This is how the Spirit works: He calls the generations of Israel first, and then also the generations of the Gentiles. He does not discriminate. But He calls to that "place" where Christ gathers and where His church congregates in Spirit and in Truth. The Spirit takes it from Christ. He brings to Christ those whom the Father gave to His Son and for whom the Son died. Christ and Spirit and church, they belong together, for the Father put them together.

When Christ is in the centre, the church is being gathered and preserved, for then the Spirit of Christ is present. Then people will be attracted to become a royal priesthood in the service of God and prophets who praise His glory.

Peter's last words in our text in Acts underline that all this is purely by God's sovereign grace. Peter spoke of "every one whom the LORD our God calls to Him." These words are clearly a quotation of the end of Joel's prophecy in 2:32. Joel says there, "and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls." Coming to Christ and to His church depends on God's calling with saving effect, through His Spirit. God calls all those whom He has given to Christ in His electing good pleasure. All things are from Him and through Him and unto Him. *Soli Deo gloria*, to God alone be the glory. 

Reaching Out to Each Other

By C. Van Dam

In light of the growing number of independent Reformed churches which have come out of the CRC, it may be good to survey the situation for a moment and ask ourselves what is currently being done and what the future may hold.

Some background

Since the establishment of the Canadian Reformed Churches, there has been a serious desire to have true unity of faith with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Our relationship to the CRC was on the agenda of our first broader assembly, namely Classis Canada 1950. It was this ecumenical

desire that lay behind the Appeal of 1963 sent to all CRCs according to a decision of Synod Hamilton 1962 and it also lay behind the renewed appeal of 1977, as well as the activity of the deputies for contact with the CRC in the intervening years (1965-1972). From this last appeal it is clear that the crucial outstanding issue of contention with the CRC was the matter of the close relationship the CRC had with the Synodical Church in the Netherlands. The Canadian Reformed Churches warned of the leaven coming from the Synodical Church which already in the 1960s admitted women to the special offices in the church and tolerated the attacks

on the infallibility of Scripture by professors who were in official ecclesiastical positions. By now it is obvious that liberal positions, largely imported and stimulated from the Synodical Church, are winning the day.

The debate around Genesis and the women-in-office issue have acted as a catalyst to strengthen conservative resolve in the CRC. After decades of bemoaning the direction of the CRC, those seeking to be faithful to Scripture and the Reformed heritage organized themselves in the Christian Reformed Alliance and congregations started leaving the CRC. As a result the Christian Reformed Alliance became the Alliance

of Reformed Churches. There are now about 13 independent congregations, of which 11 are in Canada. Of course, it should also be noted that in some places those who left the CRC joined Canadian Reformed congregations and other churches.

Local initiatives

The existence of these churches has not been lost upon Canadian Reformed congregations. In several places letters of encouragement have been sent to congregations who have left the CRC and invitations for closer contact have been issued. Informal discussions have also been held. Other efforts took a different format.

In the Fraser Valley, Symposia of Reformed Understanding have been held in an attempt to work towards a better understanding of each other. These were the results of meetings ministers from different Reformed churches had with each other. Although these Symposia did not arise solely from a contact with concerned in the CRC, they are important in building bridges also with those who have left the CRC. In the first Symposium on November 3, 1990 representatives of the Orthodox Christian Reformed, Free Reformed, and Canadian Reformed Churches introduced their respective church bodies and Rev. L. Bilkes, minister in the Free Reformed Churches, spoke on "Regeneration." This spring, a second Symposium was held on March 28 where the Rev. J. Visscher spoke on "Reformed Preaching." These meetings were well attended.

Moving eastward, we can note that on May 1, Dr. J. Faber spoke in Calgary on the relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and churches which have left the CRC or who though still CRC are concerned about the direction their church is taking. The following morning Dr. Faber spoke again, this time at an officebearers conference in Calgary, on the concept of the pluriformity of the church. On May 5 Dr. Faber spoke in Edmonton, once more on the relationship between Canadian Reformed and (ex-) CRC churches. All meetings were well attended by a good mix of Canadian Reformed and CRC or ex-CRC members. Participants sometimes came from quite a distance. Among others, Rev. J. Tuininga, Rev. D. Wynia, Rev. D. Wielenga, and Rev. C. Tuininga partook in the discussions and the meetings were characterized by being open and frank.

Over the past year a number of unofficial meetings were held in Hamilton

involving Canadian Reformed and CRC ministers. An initial exploratory meeting took place on June 26, 1991, followed by one on August 28, 1991 in which differences either real or perceived were isolated and discussed. Especially the admission to the Lord's Supper and possible ramifications for one's view of the church figured prominently. At the August 28 meeting Dr. N.H. Gootjes introduced the topic of the church as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Since these frank and open meetings went well all ministers of the Canadian Reformed Churches within driving distance as well as a good number of CRC or ex-CRC ministers were invited to subsequent meetings. Because of the desire to build bridges also Orthodox Christian Reformed and Free Reformed ministers were invited. At the meeting held on February 28, 1992, Rev. R. Sikkema introduced his views on the church especially within the context of the current struggle in the CRC. On April 23, 1992 our fifth meeting was held with Dr. J. Faber introducing the concept of the pluriformity of the church. The next meeting is planned for June 4, 1992 with Rev. J. Gangar speaking on the biblical requirements for the unity of the church. All these meetings can be said to have been characterized by open and honest discussion and some misconceptions have been removed.

It may be of interest to note that the Burlington Reformed Study Centre is planning three public meetings for October 1992 on the theme: "Reformed Identity and Ecumenicity" (Oct. 1, "Is There a Lesson in the Union of 1892 for Today?"; Oct. 8: "Ex-CRC and Can. Ref. Churches.: How Close Are We?"; Oct. 15: "Ex-CRC and Can. Ref. Chs.: What Should Be Done?"). Those addressing the meetings will be drawn not only from the Canadian Reformed Churches, but will also include Free Reformed, as well as the concerned or former Christian Reformed speakers.

It is to be hoped that the contacts that are being made and the meetings that have been held may increase the mutual desire for ecclesiastical unity and lead to consistories meeting each other and discussing matters. In certain respects we have grown apart; but where there is a common desire to build on the confessional basis of the Three Forms of Unity progress can and must be made. As appropriate we should also not be afraid to admit to mistakes and we should be open and honest to each other in all things as befitting children of one Father.

The need for federative action

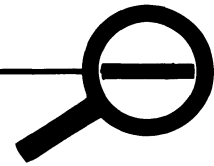
Besides the necessary local contacts and work, we will, as Canadian Reformed Churches, also need to get involved as a federation. It is to be hoped that the upcoming Synod will be able to appoint deputies for this purpose.

Sometimes the expectation is expressed in our circles that when a new independent congregation is formed it should not stall but immediately join the Canadian Reformed Churches. Under the circumstances this expectation is not realistic. Many churches have already seceded and more will likely come. It is understandable that these congregations will first seek each other for strength and encouragement before answering more long term questions about ecclesiastical affiliation. (See further on this point, the previous Press Release and *Clarion*, November 22, 1991, p. 515.) In view of the fact that some 13 congregations are already out of the CRC and not all are close to a Canadian Reformed congregation, it is necessary that deputies be appointed. We are not dealing with isolated congregations but with a body of churches of growing size that we as federation of churches would be remiss to ignore. Other factors also need to be considered. For those we turn briefly to a proposal of Burlington-West.

This church overtures Classis Ontario North of June 1992 to overture General Synod (Lincoln) 1992 to "appoint a committee with the mandate to promote ecclesiastical unity with Reformed Churches and/or Assemblies...which recently have withdrawn or are withdrawing themselves from the Christian Reformed Church...." Besides the biblical mandate for unity (e.g. John 17:20-21), this proposal also reminds us (among other things) that appointing deputies would be consistent with past decisions to name deputies for contact with the CRC and to issue appeals to the CRC. While unity with the CRC has never materialized, such unity should be possible with those who have seceded since they too have rejected errors that the Canadian Reformed Churches have warned the CRC about. Furthermore, these churches continue in the apostolic faith.

Christ desires His people to be one (again cf., e.g., John 17:20, 21). In an age of increasingly aggressive secularization and neo-paganism, this desire and ecumenical mandate of our Lord becomes increasingly relevant. As Reformed churches seeking to be faithful we need each other more and more. ©

By C. Van Dam



Canadian Developments Among Independent Reformed Churches

There are now about twelve independent Reformed churches in Canada which have separated from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Although the Alliance of Reformed Churches (a North America wide organization) provides a forum in which matters of mutual concern can be raised and discussed, a need is felt to form a Canadian Alliance of Reformed Churches (CARC), a type of loose federative relationship in which to support and help each other. John Van Dyk recently wrote an article about this development in *Christian Renewal* (April 13, 1992) under the title "Independent Churches Form 'Loose Alliance' in Canada." It is reprinted here in its entirety, followed by some comments by myself.

Loose alliance being formed

The councils of a number of independent Reformed churches in Ontario met here [Sheffield] for an evening in March and have agreed in principle to work together in a "loose alliance" for the purpose of mutual support.

The five churches involved in the organization of the alliance have recently separated from the Christian Reformed denomination. They, along with a number of observers from four other organizing churches expressed a desire to work together in the areas of youth activities, mission work, pulpit exchanges, ordination procedures and any other areas where the churches need advice or assistance.

Membership in what will be called the Canadian Alliance of Reformed Churches tentatively includes the following five churches: Trinity CRC (Ind.) of St. Catharines, Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church, Covenant Christian Church

of Wyoming, ON, Sheffield Independent Reformed Church, and Aylmer Independent CRC. Also expressing interest in the alliance were representatives from the Independent Reformed Church of Winnipeg and three emerging churches in St. Catharines, Dunnville and the Springdale/Newmarket areas north of Toronto. Three churches not represented at the meeting but which have expressed an interest in cooperating in such an alliance were the independent churches in Telkwa, BC, Edmonton, AB, and Lethbridge, AB.

Rev. Calvin Tuininga, pastor of the Trinity CRC (Ind.), whose church called the meeting, stressed the fact that the formation of the CARC was not meant to replace the Alliance of Reformed Churches already in existence, but was meant to meet the practical and immediate needs of the independent churches, something a majority of the delegates felt the ARC could not adequately do. The ARC includes churches both inside and outside of the CRC.

There was a dissenting voice. The delegation from Aylmer argued



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that the formation of yet another organization would look too much like the emergence of yet another denomination. Elder Harry Van Gorp said that all the areas of cooperation among the independent churches could be handled without the need for formal organization and could be achieved through the ARC. "By forming this new alliance, we're saying something to the other churches who are not included – we're being isolationists," said Van Gorp, who urged the assembled officebearers to wait until the next meeting of the ARC in November to discuss these matters.

But those who supported the alliance argued that it was not meant to be a new denomination, nor was it meant to replace the ARC. Rev. Joghinda Gangar, pastor of the Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church said the ARC "is fine in terms of a dialogue for the Reformed churches, but it is a very long term proposal in terms of the sifting of differences" among the churches. "But we have needs right now – we are independent right now and we ought to work together. We've held hands before and shouldn't be afraid to hold hands now, but no one is bound to it." Other church representatives expressed cautious agreement. Rev. Jerry Van Dyk, pastor of the Covenant Christian Church in Wyoming said his church wished to remain independent for a time but also desired to work in some type of "loose affiliation."

Rev. Tuininga stressed the need to organize in a loose alliance now for the benefit, not only of the Ontario churches, but for the three independent churches in Western Canada. Tuininga said the three churches, Telkwa, Lethbridge and Edmonton were isolated and they wanted some kind of formal contact with other Reformed churches "so that they know they are not alone."

The formation of the alliance was also an encouraging sign for a representative of a group in the process of organizing in the Springdale/Holland Marsh/Newmarket areas. A group of about 15 families are committed to organizing an independent church in that area. Mr. Harold Kampen, a former officebearer in the Newmarket CRC who resigned his office out of frustration with the situation in his church, ex-

pressed his appreciation for the organization of the CARC. "I am thankful to the Lord that we will stand together. It's good to know there are other churches to which we can go for help and fellowship."


Although unanimously accepted in principle by the churches represented, the councils will discuss the formation of the CARC back home and will give formal notice to the newly appointed secretary of the CARC, Rev. Gangar. Another meeting of the churches is scheduled for May 23 in St. Catharines.

Reaction

The plan to form a loose alliance of independent Reformed Churches in Canada is a good development. There are at least two basic reasons for this positive assessment. In the first place, these ex-CRC churches share common problems and need each other's help and support. The situation in Canada is different from that in the United States and a separate organization makes much sense. What better way is there to meet these needs and at the same time oppose the danger of independentism, that is, of each congregation going its own way? Furthermore, by working together they can also coordinate efforts to support the concerned who are still in the CRC and encourage as well as help them to leave. In the second place, it is probably too early for far reaching ecumenical decisions. The ex-CRC churches need time to consolidate and to get a clear view of their own identity as well as the direction they are going. Also time is needed for meaningful dialogue between the independent churches and Canadian Reformed Churches. It is to be hoped that such dialogue will take place both on the local as well as federative level. Much has happened in the past forty years, since our ecclesiastical ways parted (e.g., we have adopted a *Book of Praise*, new translations of our confessions, etc.). Although the situation will not be the same everywhere, in several cases, misunderstandings, wrong perceptions, and probably prejudice will need to be overcome before brothers and sisters who were of one house find each other again. We must give each other time for that and sort out any outstanding issues. At the same time we must never lose sight of the main goal, namely, that we find each other ecclesiastically on the basis of the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions, and together accept a Re-

formed Church Order in the line of Dordt.

While recognizing that the development towards a loose alliance of independent Reformed churches in Canada is justified and sound, one can also appreciate the hesitancy of some to embark on this new venture. So easily an arrangement like this could harden into a new federation of churches and a desire could develop to maintain the situation as it is. One could reason: Why strive for unity with others when we have a church federation already? Such a possibility is real and should not be minimized for denominationalism (and thinking in terms of denominations) is rampant in North America and also conservatives in the CRC need to combat this bad influence. Although there is thus a danger in forming a loose alliance, our common Dutch church history has shown that such a development need not derail true ecumenical endeavour. There were differences between the churches of the Secession (1834) and those of the Doleantie (1886) although both groups of churches had broken with the Hervormde Kerk. The Doleantie churches did not immediately join the churches of the Secession but formed their own federative relationship, starting even when there were only three churches. At the same time there was the mutual realization and desire to seek unity with each other. After a mere four years, this desire for unity culminated in the Union of 1892.

It is encouraging that at the meeting in Sheffield it was stressed that this new and loose alliance which is being formed is not meant to be a new denomination. It would be good if at the next meeting on May 23 this point could be reaffirmed and stressed. We must seek each other in the unity of the true faith. There is no valid argument from churches so closely related to go their separate ways. In light of this, it would also be good if the decision could be taken that the independent churches work concretely towards dialoguing with at least their closest ecclesiastical relatives, namely the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches to work concretely towards removing real or perceived difficulties to becoming one. Historically these churches are so closely related that all efforts must be made to eliminate possible barriers as soon as possible. 

History of the American Reformed Church, Denver

By M. Pollock

Introduction

Our recent request to be admitted as a congregation into the federation of Canadian and American Reformed Churches has brought a number of requests for more information and clarification about who we are, how we came into being and why we are seeking this affiliation. For these reasons we thought it best to set the whole story, albeit in abbreviated form, before you now.

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

Rev. M. Pollock, the present pastor of the congregation in Denver, was converted from Roman Catholicism as a teenager. While attending a local Presbyterian church he was encouraged by a number of elders and ministers to take up ministerial training. Both the church and the training were more broadly evangelical than Reformed, but the Standards were received. Rev. Pollock was called and ordained as a minister of the Word at Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Denver, where he remained until he was dismissed in September 1990. He is married with three children.

The PCA had its inception in 1973 in a separation from the Presbyterian Church in the United States, because of its modern liberalism and apostasy. There was a return to God's Word and the Westminster Standards were adopted as the doctrinal standards of the churches. However, from the beginning it was clear that the foundation had cracks. First of all, these doctrinal standards were applied only to officebearers. No confessional membership was required for the membership in a church beyond an acknowledgement of sin and a profession of trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour. The resulting theological diversity has led to a weak, untaught, and factional membership. Second, the subscription required of

officebearers was so general as to be practically no standard at all. Officebearers were required to "receive and adopt" the Westminster Standards "as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." This is fundamentally different than our subscription that we "heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the doctrinal standards...do fully agree with the Word of God" (Form of Subscription, CARC). The subscription to the "system of doctrine" does not bind the officebearers to all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession. It is often interpreted so broadly that whole chapters of the standards are denied by officebearers who still claim to believe in the "fundamentals." Needless to say, this foundation could not hold the structure being built on it.

In January 1991, Rev. Pollock and 28 members of Covenant Presbyterian

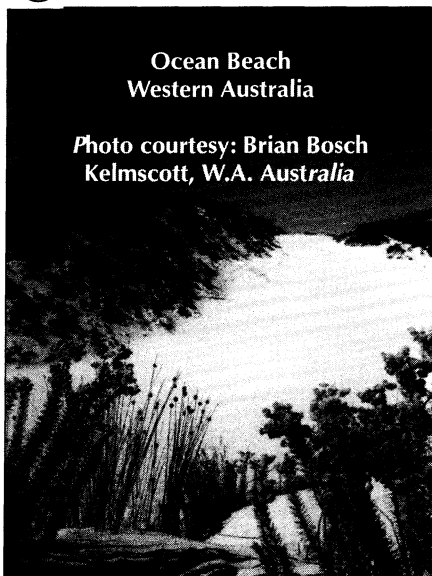
Church (15 adults and 13 children) were forced to secede from the PCA in obedience to Christ and His Word. There are biblical and confessional reasons that led to this secession.

Article 29 of the Belgic Confession tells us that the true church is to be recognized by the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them, and the exercising of church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. These marks are sadly deficient in the PCA at large at the present time.

The "broad" form of subscription accommodates all kinds of error, and consequently, various sorts of erroneous doctrines are preached from many PCA pulpits. These errors include Arminianism, dispensationalism, teachings that the Canon is not closed, continuation of charismatic gifts and that there is no requirement to keep the Lord's Day, amongst others (see for example, Judicial case #5, 16th General Assembly minutes p. 214).

There is no pure administration of the sacraments in that the vast majority of PCA churches practice "open communion," that is, the Lord's Table is open to all who in their own judgment are able to come. This is the accepted practice in spite of the insistence of their church order that only those "who are members in good standing of an evangelical church" may participate. A recent General Assembly has initiated the process for deleting this requirement from their church order. Church discipline is not exercised for the correcting and punishing of sins (see for example, Judicial Commission Report of 15th General Assembly minutes, pp. 129ff, and Judicial case #8 of 16th General Assembly minutes p. 199). It is not our purpose here to detail all the errors of the PCA, but simply to illustrate what the current situation is (for a more extensive treatment of this situation we recommend: "A Testimony Against

OUR COVER



Ocean Beach
Western Australia

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Prominent Errors of our Times” issued by Adullam Presbyterian Church. Copies are available on request).

Rev. Pollock and some other faithful members, witnessing the diminishing of these marks in the church, began to address this failure by calling the church to uphold their confessional standards. Specific issues that were brought up in the congregation were the neglect of church discipline and the profaning of the worship. However, the efforts by Rev. Pollock were not well received by a majority of the congregation. He was slandered and subsequently dismissed as minister of the congregation. Rev. Pollock then appealed to the broader assemblies but without effect. The broader assemblies steadfastly refused to correct sins or to even grant a fair hearing for them (see Minutes, Presbyterian of the Southwest, January 1991 and General Assembly, Judicial case #91-2). It was at this point that Rev. Pollock and a faithful remnant of God’s people seceded from the PCA to continue as a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The continuing congregation began immediately to seek affiliation with other true churches, recognizing the call by the Lord Jesus in John 17. Being Presbyterian in background and having never heard of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CARC), we quickly concluded that the OPC, being more orthodox than the PCA, was the church where the Lord was calling us. In March 1991, the congregation petitioned the Presbytery of the Dakotas to begin the process of receiving the members of the independent congregation into the OPC. This process involved a six-month period, during which members of the congregation would be interviewed for membership in the OPC and have the opportunity to settle any concerns they might have. The culmination of this process would have been the reception of the congregation into the OPC in September 1991. At the same time Rev. Pollock underwent examination as a candidate for ministry in the OPC and was approved to receive a call.

However, it was during this six-month period between application and reception of the congregation that serious questions began to arise. During this period one of the local OPC ministers was called to military service for a

few months and the members of his congregation during that time worshipped with us. We had the opportunity to see and experience first-hand the life of the OPC churches in Denver. We experienced a lack of unity and oneness of direction among both ministers and congregations. This can be related to either a more Reformed current or a more evangelical current in the OPC.

During this same time another concern developed regarding discipline and the administration of the sacraments in the OPC. We discovered that there was disunity on the point of exercising discipline, and that there are churches which have the practice of an open Lord’s Supper table. Although there is an ongoing struggle on the point of discipline, it was exactly these points which caused a dismissal from office in, and a separation from, the PCA.

As these concerns with the OPC grew, our congregation was introduced to the Canadian and American Reformed Churches by a family here for studies from South Africa (previous members of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk of Pretoria). They had attended another local OPC church but could no longer attend that church due to the above reasons and started to worship with our congregation. Many hours were spent as men of the congregation discussing the administration of the Lord’s Supper, church discipline, church membership, the doctrine of the church, etc. We became convinced that the deep problems we were seeing in the OPC in Denver were the result of defective, misapplied, or unbiblical doctrine in these areas. These issues were raised numerous times with OPC ministers, elders, and local sessions, but to no avail.

In July 1991 the congregation made the decision not to join the OPC. We came to the conclusion that we should not join a church that was divided on those points which caused us to secede from the PCA. The congregation subsequently informed the OPC Presbytery of the Dakotas that it no longer wanted to proceed with its request for membership with the OPC, citing these reasons. It must be stated clearly that nobody in our congregation was interviewed for membership or took vows of membership in the OPC. Rev. Pollock also informed the Presbytery that he would not be able to take ministerial vows in the OPC and therefore was no

longer seeking a call in the OPC and was withdrawing as a candidate.

We were agreed that this was the course the Lord demanded of us if we were to be faithful to Him and honour His work in liberating us from the PCA. The reasons why we could not unite with the OPC have to do with what we see as obedience to God’s Word and faithful adherence to the Confession. Both Scripture and Confession teach us that the “pure administration of the sacraments” means a proper fencing of the Lord’s Table. We have become convinced that the Lord requires this of us. The OPC practice, in as far as we observed this, allows the “open table.” We can also refer to the history of the churches at Laurel and Blue Bell in this regard. We feel that our differences with the OPC with respect to the Lord’s Supper are real, extensive, and serious! The Canadian and American Reformed Churches have also voiced concern about the matter of fencing the Lord’s Table in the OPC. General Synod 1986 spoke about a “serious confessional divergence which is a major issue of mutual concern” (Acts, Article 132).

Scripture and confession also teach us that the church must exercise discipline for correcting and punishing sins. The sins envisioned here are in doctrine and in life. Discipline must be used for correcting and punishing sins against both purity of doctrine and piety of conduct. Yet in the OPC church members are bound to no confessional standard of doctrine at all! The OPC form for the profession of faith (Directory for Worship V:5) makes no reference to the Reformed Confessions or the confessions of the church, and requires no adherence to them. The OPC requires of members only a belief in the “doctrine of salvation” taught in Scripture, that is, only a belief in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord. This “doctrine of salvation” refers specifically to the belief that Jesus Christ is the only way for sinful man to be reconciled to God. There is no requirement to believe anything beyond this! How could we adopt this standard as our own and remain faithful in the exercise of church discipline, keeping purity of doctrine among our members?! Further, the exercise of church discipline must also address sins of behaviour. The present situation in Denver among the OPC churches, their ministers and members is contrary to clear scriptural principles. The problem is not simply that this situation exists (members and ministers in any

church can sin and must repent) but that this situation is accepted as normal and nothing is done to identify it as wrong, much less to change it.

These are the reasons that we cannot join the OPC as matters stand now. There are serious scriptural, confessional and practical matters that have to be resolved before there can be a living together under one ecclesiastical roof. This stand has also been taken by the Canadian and American Reformed Churches as shown by their inability to establish a sister church relationship during the last 15 years. True oneness can only be found on the basis of God's Word as summarized in our confessions and no compromise can be made that undermines this basis. We continue to pray and work for unity with the OPC on the basis of God's Holy Word.

Affiliation with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CARC)

Although the congregation had since January 1991 acted as an independent church it had never officially organized itself with officebearers and confessional standards. This was subsequently done in August 1991 in a meeting of all the communicant members of the congregation. At this meeting the congregation adopted as its confessional standards the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, and as its rule for church government the Church Order of Dordt. Because the Canadian and American Reformed Churches had the same commitment to the Word of God, as found in the three Forms of Unity, contacts were subsequently sought with these churches. The initial contact went through the Ministry at Large of the church at Grand Rapids. Subsequent contacts went through the consistory of the church at Grand Rapids because it was the Address Church for contacts in the United States of America. The consistory of the church at Grand Rapids agreed with our request for affiliation and brought it to the September 1991 Classis of Ontario-South. Incidentally, the two closest churches to Denver are the Carman church in Manitoba and the Grand Rapids church with the Carman church being about 15 miles closer.

The September 1991 Classis Ontario-South decided to appoint a committee to evaluate our request and to contact the churches of Alberta/Manitoba regarding our request. In January

1992, a Classis Ontario-South advised us to take our request to the Churches in Alberta/Manitoba

The March 1992 Classis Alberta/Manitoba has denied our request for affiliation, advising us instead to affiliate with the OPC. This came as a great shock and disappointment to us. What we find strange is that the course we are committed to - a scriptural and confessional resolution of the matters that separate us and the OPC before there is a coming together - is the very same course your Federation is committed to! How then can we be advised to simply unite with the OPC as things stand? This is not the course the Canadian and American Reformed Churches have chosen for themselves. Will the other U.S. churches (Lynden, Grand Rapids, and especially Blue Bell and Laurel who were OPC churches) be exempted from unity with the OPC? On what grounds? This decision excludes us from the Lord's Supper tables in the CARC and allows no pulpit exchange. And if the other churches of the CARC federation in the U.S. have to become OPC, no one from these churches would then be allowed to the Lord's Supper in Canadian churches and neither would there be any pulpit exchanges. We do not understand this decision.

As the last 15 years have shown, the struggle to unite with the OPC is not an easy one nor is it quick. As the CARC and we continue this struggle, why must we do so apart from each other? We have come to the CARC with our request for affiliation on the basis of the Bible and confessions, seeking the unity of the true faith. We too confess the Three Forms of Unity, we too follow the Church Order of Dordt, we are of the same mind regarding the OPC - why does a classis then refuse the unity Christ requires of us?

Present situation

In spite of this, Christ continues to gather His people here in Denver. The congregation is united and continues to be built up by God's Word and the sacraments. We have grown to 33 members. Two other families of the Reformed ("Vrijgemaakte," Liberated Churches in the Netherlands and the Christian Reformed Church) background were recently admitted as members of the congregation. Recent and ongoing contacts with members of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the PCA have brought more visitors in

recent weeks, with attendance figures varying between 30 and 40 for each of the Sunday worship services. A few of these visitors have already expressed a desire to affiliate with us. We insist that they follow the scriptural path on their way to our congregation. It is our experience that due to the strong influence of American "Evangelicals" in most of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the U.S.A., a very shallow Christianity exists, lacking a firm doctrinal basis. As a result the churches see a large number of people going through them. People seem to move easily from one church to another whenever they are displeased with their original church.

However, we find that more and more people are seeking a firmer foundation. They recognize that the shallow Christianity that under-emphasizes doctrine and over-emphasizes the individual is not biblical. They long for the historic, biblically Reformed faith and discover that they belong with us, drawn by the true preaching of the Word of God. In this the Lord is laying a great task on our shoulders. We must convey the riches of the faith with which we have been blessed by the Lord. We want to conduct this task in humility before our Lord and in unity with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

The congregation now has its own church building which we were able to rent. In addition to this we started our own Reformed school in January, 1992. In God's providential kindness a teacher (from the Netherlands) has been provided. She started with four children, meeting three days a week. This fall, the Lord willing, we could have as many as ten full-time students. Our God and Saviour has truly done more than we could ask or imagine!

"To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

The Sunday Worship Services are at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the Mandalay School located at:

Corner of 103rd and
Old Wadsworth Boulevard
Westminster
Denver, Colorado

For further information contact:

Rev. M. Pollock,
Tel: (303) 421-5828
6544 Newland
Arvada, CO 80003



Answer to a Good Question

By J.D. Wielenga

Good question

Rev. VanOene lays a cautious question in the midst of the readers of his News Medley of Feb. 14, 1992 (*Clarion*, Vol. 41, No. 3): "Does the fact that we recognize a certain federation as a true church of the Lord, but with which we do not (yet) have a sister-church relation, *preclude* our accepting a group that *could* have affiliated with that federation, but prefers to be affiliated with "our" federation, and does it obligate us to deny any request to that effect? Something to be pondered." This question was put with reference to what I wrote in the Coaldale/Taber bulletin, about the request of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver, CO, to be admitted to the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. I guess that the burden of answering falls therefore not in the last place on me.

Right banner

Rev. VanOene admits that the Denver group *could* have affiliated with the OPC, an admission based on the fact that the OPC is a true church of the Lord. Coaldale/Taber however contend that if a group of Christians *could* join a true church, it *should* join that church "wherever God has established it." A confessional obligation must not be turned into an unconfessional preference. Introducing the idea of affiliating with a true church according to preference, is introducing the pluriformity concept of the church. We must not give the appearance of raising the banner of anti-pluriformity high at one time and then again hiding it behind our back the next time, all in the cause of consolidating and expanding our federation.

Welcome admission

It is good to read Rev. VanOene's admission that the Denver brothers and sisters at least *could* have joined the OPC. Fact is that there are individual consistories and ministers among us who advice against this possibility. This

negative advice cannot be based on the decisions of our synods since 1977. Our synods did stipulate that Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC does not include inter-communion and pulpit-exchange, but our synods based this stipulation on the consideration that there is not yet a sister church relationship, and not on the consideration that there is no unity of faith.

Necessary distinction

We must be careful not to confuse confessional categories with church political categories. Confessionally speaking the OPC is a sister church, church politically speaking it is not. The sisters do not live in the same house with the same house rules. We do not admire the stipulation of non-intercommunion and non-pulpit exchange. What is wrong with eating at our sister's place on occasion, and have her prepare a meal at our place, on occasion, provided she leaves out specific ingredients we find less savory? To me, this church political stipulation has more to do with politics than with church, or with the wrong notion that Holy Supper unity is essentially expression of church unity in the church political sense of the word. But at least we should have enough discretion not to confuse church political categories with confessional categories, and not derive from the synodical stipulation the rule that Christians should not join the OPC or have the right, not to say the duty, to withdraw from it. To do such, would ascribe to our synods inconsistency, not to say ambiguity and lack of integrity: calling the OPC a true church, but in the same breath not honouring the OPC as a true church. Not only is there not a shred of evidence that our synods would be guilty of that, but it would be in flagrant conflict with their loud warnings against undermining and nullifying the confessed obligation stated in Art. 28 of the Belgic Confession. We think higher of our synods than to assume that they would allow their church po-

litical stipulation to undermine and nullify the confessional obligation to join the true church and not to withdraw from it, wherever God has established it, thus maintaining the unity of the church. Maybe the time has come for our churches to do away at least with the stipulation not to have intercommunion with the OPC, in order to eliminate a cause of possible confusion and to be more scripturally and confessionally realistic. For once again: the Ecclesiastical Fellowship we have with the OPC is a fellowship with a sister church in the confessional sense of the word, whereas the OPC is not (yet) a sister church in the church political sense of the word.

Qualified request

Rev. VanOene asks if our churches are obligated to deny "any request" of a group which prefers to join our confederation while it could have joined a recognized true church in its area. If a matter of preference, yes, I believe we are obligated to deny such a request, as explained above. But we are not dealing with just any request, but with a concrete request. Rev. VanOene would not want to say that we are obligated to honour any request of that nature. A request to be affiliated is not an announcement to become affiliated. A request is to be weighed on its merits and can be granted or denied. If an individual member would request our consistory to be admitted to the congregation, we would not admit him just on the ground that he or she subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity. We would want to know where he or she comes from and what the reason is why he or she left the church to which he or she belonged. Was it a matter of discipline? Was it a matter of expecting generous support from our deacons? And as to entire churches who desire to belong to our confederation, we happen to have some experience in Classis Alberta/Manitoba. Not that long ago a church presented itself with im-

peccably Reformed credentials. Classis rightly examined the origin of that church, and it appeared that it had come into existence by withdrawal from the supervision of its lawful consistory while failing to follow the ecclesiastical way of dealing with grievances. No, we are not obligated to grant just any request for affiliation from a church that established itself on the Three Forms of Unity and adopted our Church Order, maybe even our name! And we at Coaldale/Taber judged that this particular request from Denver should not be granted, and we regretted that ministers of our churches had given the brothers and sisters at Denver the advice to institute themselves as a Reformed Church, although their numbers did not exceed 14 in total, among them four male communicant members, and we regretted that this church took upon itself the responsibility to call a minister which it could not afford financially, so that the request for affiliation comes with the condition of generous financial support, and we regretted that our ministers pushed that church on its way to affiliation with our confederation, to the extent that they were helping its minister prepare for his forthcoming examination by classis from whose examiners he apparently already had received his assignments, and there are many more matters which we at Coaldale/Taber regretted, but this most of all that the whole action was carried out in disregard of the fact that the OPC (to which the Denver people had requested admission and which had received and honoured their request) is a church of the Lord, as Rev. VanOene rightly calls the OPC, and if it is a church of the Lord, then it is a work of the Lord, "she is His own creation," and *one cannot ignore a creation of the Lord as not good enough to join or stay with, without insulting the Lord*. That is the real reason why we believe it is not good to grant this ill-advised request, not good for the brotherhood at Denver, and not good for the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Some Remarks

1) Let me first of all say that, in my opinion, the statement of the General Synod of Coaldale in 1977, in which our churches recognized the OPC as true churches (Acts, Art. 91, II, pp. 40, 41) must not be taken back or weak-

ened. The Synod of Coaldale did express concern with respect to the OPC membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. In the meantime the OPC left this organization. Our General Synod of Winnipeg in 1989 expressed concern of the OPC's continued relationship with the Christian Reformed Church (Acts, Art. 94, E, 5, c, p. 67). Proposals are coming to the General Assembly to reconsider this relationship, as can be read in *Christian Renewal* (May 11, 1992, p. 7). These decisions and proposals are not signs of a church that goes the way of unfaithfulness. The contact which the committees of our two church federations have is positive, too. There is much appreciation on the side of the OPC also for the discussions in this contact, even though the criticisms come mostly from our side, as can be clear from the decisions of our general synods.

2) In this respect, the Synod of Winnipeg, three years ago, continued the line of the preceding synods by giving to the committee for contact with the OPC as part of its mandate, "to continue the discussion on...the divergencies such as the doctrine of the covenant, visible and invisible church, the assurance of faith, the observance of the law, the fencing of the Lord's Table, confessional membership, church-political differences, and the contact with the CRC." From our side, these matters have been seen as important for continued discussions. Special attention was paid to the matter of the "open Table."

When we notice the will and struggle in the OPC to remain faithful, this must prevent us from placing weaknesses, which we also observe, in the framework of Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession, therewith implying that that OPC is not a true church. Such a weakness appears to be the matter of discipline. Let us be honest and humble: are all our churches always faithful in maintaining and applying discipline? Or are there also among us weaknesses? A defence of the request to become part of our federation must not lead to a diminishing of the recognition of 1977. We have no valid ground to do so. Weakness in a certain area, even if it is stubborn, differs from an absence of the marks of the true church in an apostate church. We should speak of weaknesses when such a church shows in other matters that it seeks to abide by the Word of God, and truly struggles to do so, even when there comes divi-


sion. It counts for individuals and for churches: we either grow in obedience or we mature in disobedience. With weaknesses we have to be patient. And we must not expect to be able to change in a few short years what has been a (wrong) custom or habit for many years or even centuries. This wisdom in pastoral care regarding a local church was taught us by Prof. J. Kamp-huis when I was a student, but it counts also for a whole federation.

3) Colleague Rev. Wielenga reasons that, by recognizing the OPC as a true church of Christ and by establishing the "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" relation with them, they are "confessionally speaking...a sister church." That this is not formal yet "in the church-political sense of the word" has, according to him, "more to do with politics than with church." In these last words I hear a rather sharp criticism with respect to the approach which our churches followed so far in the relationship with the OPC. The word "politics" has a very negative colour as something dirty. Thus, I get the impression that Rev. Wielenga has not much positive to say about our general synods in the way they deal with the OPC. This word colours also the contrast made between "confessional" and "church-political," and it determines the suggestion to the American Reformed Church in Denver.

4) However, Rev. Wielenga gives his own interpretation to the decision of the Synod of Coaldale. Acknowledging the OPC as a true church and establishing an "Ecclesiastical Fellowship"

C

HURCH NEWS



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Rev. E. Kampen

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with them did not mean for the delegates in Coaldale that the churches established a sister church relationship with the OPC. One can wish that it meant this. One can also interpret the decision in this way. But such an interpretation is not warranted. This can be clear already from the fact that the recommendation which was adopted in Coaldale reads: "Synod decide to offer to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church a temporary relationship called 'ecclesiastical contact'...." (Acts, Art. 91, III, Recommendation, p. 42). We should take note of the fact, first of all, that the relationship was a temporary one. It would be strange to establish a temporary sister church relation. In the second place, the recommendation does not use the term "ecclesiastical fellowship," but speaks of "ecclesiastical contact." The word "contact" is weaker, to say the least, than the word "fellowship." The word "contact" is used to express that the aim of this "temporary relationship" of "contact" is that it may lead to a sister church relation.

The Synod of Smithville of 1980 (Acts, Art. 152, C, 3, p. 199) speaks about "the willingness...to move toward full correspondence." It is understood that the term "full correspondence" is the name for the relation with sister churches. Therefore, the term "ecclesi-

astical contact" expresses that there is not this "full correspondence" or sister church relation yet. The same thing is found in the decision of the next General Synod, the one of Burlington 1986 (Acts, Art. 128, Recommendations 1, a, p. 58), speaking about the OPC's relation with the CRC and membership in the RES as "stumbling-blocks in reaching full correspondence."

5) Rev. Wielenga says that we have a sister church relationship with the OPC confessionally speaking, only not church-politically. Synod Cloverdale of 1983 (Acts, Art. 55, D, e, p. 41) gives as mandate to the committee "to pay special attention to the new developments in the OPC, with respect to...the 'fencing' of the Lord's Supper...." Under "Considerations 2, d (p. 40), this synod says, "The Church at Chatham rightly states that the matter of 'fencing' the Lord's Supper and the admission to the Lord's Supper concerns the Church discipline as well as the doctrine of the Church...." It follows that our churches have stated clearly that they view the matter of the fencing of the Lord's Supper not just a church-political matter, but one of discipline and doctrine, which means: of confession.

6) In my opinion, it follows from the above that the reasoning of Rev. Wielenga is not in agreement but in

conflict with the intentions and decisions, as well as with the way of speaking of our major assemblies. Recognizing the OPC as true churches does not imply a sister church relation. Once again, the "temporary relation of ecclesiastical contact" aims at a sister church relation and is meant to work towards it, both church politically and fully confessionally. This is why the complaint of the church at Denver is correct that the decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba uses a different measure than the churches in general. We are still in the interim situation of "contact." Therefore, as I see it, the statement that our recognition of the OPC means that we have to send the church at Denver back to the OPC, is simplistic and not correct.

7) Sending the church at Denver back to the OPC means also, in fact, denying this church the right to adopt the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dort as its doctrinal standards and church-political order. In my opinion, we do not have that right. I find it lording it over this church, specifically in the light of what is said above.

More could be said, but I leave it for now.

J. Geertsema **C**

The Calgary Study Weekend

Members of the church at Calgary, Alberta have for the past four years sponsored and organized the Calgary Study Weekend for young people from western Canada. It is generally held the last weekend in August just before classes resume. While each weekend has a different character, the structure is similar; mornings are devoted to study, and the afternoons and evenings to varied recreational activities.

The first Calgary Study Weekend was held August 26-29 at Camp Pocaterra in Kananaskis Provincial Park. Set in the beautiful Alberta Rockies, it attracted young people from all over western Canada. They were greeted Thursday evening by Rev. R. Schouten, John Hoogerdijk and a true

Alberta hailstorm. After that first night, the weather was marvellous; sunny skies and crystal clear nights dominated the weather. Tents provided shelter from the elements, and cooking was done the old-fashioned way; on a wood stove. Rev. Schouten presented speeches on evangelism and church history. Isaac Smit spoke on Man and Nature from a Christian perspective.

The participants probably won't forget that Sunday morning. Waking to temperatures below freezing, some started out as early as 4:30 a.m. to shower at a more luxurious camp about 20 minutes away.

Breakfast was also delayed because the night before some creative spirits stacked the tables in a pyramid outside

of the cook house and ice had to be chipped off of the tables before they could be used.

The following year, CSW '89 organizers acceded to the requests for more civilized accommodations and booked somewhat more comfortable surroundings at Camp Gardener just west of Calgary. Camp Gardener was a far cry from the rustic climes of Pocaterra.

Rev. E. Kampen gave an interesting talk on the New Age movement and the degree to which it pervades our society. Rev. Marren had also planned to speak at the weekend, but was unable to come; in his place a speech prepared by Rev. Wielenga on Christian courtship was read and well received by the young people.

Highlights of the weekend included a day hike in Kananaskis Country and a game of Capture the Flag.

Using the same facilities as the previous year, CSW '90 also included an optional multi-day hike for interested participants. The theme was "Christian Science." Speakers for this weekend were Dr. John Byl who spoke on the relationship between Science and Christianity and Dr. Margaret Helder who spoke about evolution.

On August 23, 1991 a lively group of young peoples from Alberta and Manitoba met together at the Lions' Youth Camp, the site of the 4th annual Calgary Study Weekend to discuss "Music in the Life of the Christian." Isaac Smit, one of the principal organizers, had moved somewhere to the east. He was sorely missed. But fortunately, Harry DeBoer stepped in to take his place.

The first item on the agenda was to acquire a bunk in one of the luxurious chalets situated in the woods at the camp. After setting up and unpacking, the young people clustered together around the campfire to sing a few songs.

Saturday morning started off with an early call for the breakfast crew. Summoned at 6:00 a.m., they laboured to produce pancakes and sausages. Following breakfast, a Bible study lead by Rev. R. Schouten set the stage for the study weekend. He introduced the idea of "excellence" as it pertained to activities of Young Peoples with reference to Philipians 4:8-20. A significant amount of discussion was generated around what activities Young People should and ought to be involved in, and supplanted with some concrete suggestions.

After the Bible study, Mr. W. Van Winkoop presented the first speech. He spoke on popular music in the life of



Saturday afternoon recreation: volleyball game (CSW '91)

young people, and provided alternatives to the popular commercial music.

After lunch, the young peoples settled down into an afternoon of volleyball and baseball.

Sunday morning was an early start, and the group left for church at 7:30. After the worship services, they headed back to the camp. That evening, Mr. S. Vanderploeg gave a talk on Music in the Church which challenged many preconceived ideas. His talk generated a great deal of discussion which carried on late into the evening and early morning.

Monday again started off early with rousting the breakfast crew again at 6:00 a.m. Bleary eyed, they stumbled about the kitchen preparing an excellent breakfast of bacon and eggs. After breakfast, one of the young people, Mark Hoogerdijk, led a Bible study on Psalms 146-150. He discussed impor-

ance of praise, how it relates to music and the place it has in our lives. The next item on the agenda was a video presentation called "Hells Bells." It examined popular rock music from a Christian perspective. Shocking in many ways, it demonstrated the real intent of rock music, and the effect it has on those who listen to it.

The afternoon's and early evening's activity consisted of a very arduous hike. By the time the hikers returned, it was cold and dark, and a roaring campfire was very much welcomed.

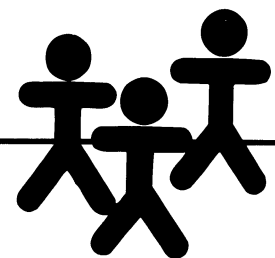
The breakfast crew was given a slight reprieve on Tuesday morning. After breakfast, everyone pitched in to clean the camp. Leaving was perhaps the most difficult part of the weekend. More than a few tears were shed as the young people exchanged addresses.

On the whole, it was a very enjoyable weekend for everyone involved, as all of the weekends have been. The organizing committee was very pleased with the turnout, both in number and in the spirit in which the young peoples participated. Planning is well underway for the 5th annual study weekend. The theme will be Evangelizing as Young People, and the date is set for August 21-25, 1992. The location will be the same as CSW '91, the Lions Youth Camp just east of Cremona. For more information, please contact John Hoogerdijk at (403) 272-9146 or Harry Deboer at (403) 285-7075. We hope to see you there!

For the CSW Organizing Committee,
John Hoogerdijk **C**



Group photo of participants and organizers (CSW '91)



About Discipline - Instruction and Punishment

1. Introduction

During the last few months much discussion in school bulletins and elsewhere about an old topic "discipline" has taken place. Throughout the discussion various opinions about what is discipline and what can be considered good or bad discipline practices are voiced. In order to contribute to the discussion a description of discipline is presented and the use of corporal punishment is considered.

2. Description of discipline

The biblical description of discipline suggests that discipline includes both instruction and punishment (correction, chastisement). Based upon Deuteronomy 4:36 "Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might discipline you" Ohmann (1981, pp. 288ff) highlighted the proper perspective on discipline. He gives direction for Canadian Reformed parents by noting that the Lord compares Himself to a Father who disciplines his son and suggests that the Hebrew word *musar*, instruction and punishment, embodies a meaning which is very well covered by the English word "discipline."

It is "not human wisdom but divine wisdom" which "shows us," according to Ohmann (1981, p. 310) "the way in cases when we are upset about our children." He then relates some of the wisdom of the Scriptures by quoting Proverbs 13:24 "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." Proverbs 22:15; "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him; and Proverbs 23:13: "Do not withhold dis-

cipline from a child. If you beat him with a rod, he will not die."

Any good disciplinarian, Ohmann (1981, p. 310) also acknowledges, first disciplines himself. In this context he suggests that self-discipline is a prerequisite to meet the demand of Proverbs 19:18 to "Discipline your son while there is hope; do not set your heart on his destruction," and Proverbs 29:17 "Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart."

The goal of punishment is summarized by Ohmann (1981, p. 310) to be for man to know wisdom and instruction. He arrives at that position after having accepted that the Hebrew word for punishment, *musar*, also means instruction.

From the perspective of an educator, classroom management through instruction and correction is a necessary prerequisite for learning. Teachers who have good discipline demonstrate an ability to keep order and control student behaviour. Students vary greatly in their behaviour however, and it is therefore important to evaluate classroom discipline in relationship to the self-discipline exhibited by the students. The purpose of discipline is, of course, to bring the child to the point where normative, that is biblically sound, self-discipline occurs. Meanwhile discipline has been consistently cited by the public as the most significant problem in public education in American Gallup polls of public attitudes towards education (Heitzman & Wiley, 1987, pp. 40-44). Again and again, national studies of education mention the need for student discipline as a major concern. On the one hand, it is felt that students need stricter discipline, and teachers must exert more control in classrooms

(Rubenstein, 1986, pp. 614-615), whilst teachers, on the other hand, in today's society want to know how to discipline students most effectively (Henley, 1987, pp. 36-39).

Discipline has become a subject that taxes the understanding of every teacher. In many unsuccessful schools, student misconduct is so pronounced that classroom order often displaces student learning as a goal for effective teaching (Rosenholtz, 1988, p. 429). Success in controlling students has become synonymous with teachers' sense of efficacy, and classroom activities are related to goals of control rather than to students learning (Blase, 1986, pp. 13-40).

Some forms of punishment used to maintain control, such as removal of rewards, allocation of students to isolation rooms, and in-house suspension, have been a part of the literature of various approaches for dealing with classroom discipline for many years (Johns & MacNaughton, 1990, p. 388). While non-physical punishment, rewards, assertive discipline, and other measures have been used more frequently lately, corporal punishment has not been eliminated. Certainly it has become one of the most controversial topics in the area of school discipline. Its continued use as a disciplinary practice in elementary schools have evoked much controversy that remains unresolved and is a motivation for careful examination.

3. Using corporal punishment

Educationally corporal punishment has generally been viewed as the act of striking a child, following some offence, with the hand, cane, strap, paddle, or whatever instrument (Hyman & Wise, 1979, p. 4). The legal (Criminal

Code) permissibility of corporal punishment in all but one Canadian province, British Columbia, and all but 19 American states provides dramatic evidence of the sanctioning of a controversial *school* practice. Even when corporal punishment has been officially banned by elected legislators, educators are allowed to use physical force to control unruly student by bodily removing an unruly student from the classroom (*Education Week*, 3-7-'90, p.15).

In the literature I have reviewed an explanation for the continued use of corporal punishments attributes its use to a variety of factors that have come to characterize much of the current scene: increasing violence in the cities and the city schools; concern with law and order; the need to maintain the use of the rod as a God given right to adults, pervasive doubts about the effectiveness of the school system; and gaps in the teacher's understanding of today's pupils (Chernow & Chernow, 1989, p. 47). Literalists, fundamentalists, and conservative Roman Catholics have, according to Hyman (1990, p. 39), supported the use of corporal punishment in schools. He suggests that children in church related education, in literalist oriented Christian schools, are most at risk for corporal punishment. Slate (1991, p. 362) suggests that the rationale for physical punishment comes from Calvinistic theology, as illustrated by the old adage, "spare the rod, spoil the child." This kind of "finding" in the secular literature on corporal punishment, whether correct or not, should alert us to carefully examine our school discipline policies and codes.

In the past the concept of IN LOCO PARENTIS (being in the place of parents) was used by those who advocate retention of corporal punishment, and they have the backing, in Canada, of Section 43 of the Criminal Code which states,

[it] is lawful for every parent or person in place of a parent, school master, or master, to use force by way of correction towards any child, pupil or apprentice under his care, providing such force is reasonable under the circumstances (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1981, p. 11).

In Canada and the United States, the courts of those provinces and states which at present allow corporal punishment still have as reference English Common Law which implied according to one observer "that the teacher may



not kill the child, nor permanently cripple him, but anything less than that, no matter how severe, is justified" (Maurer, 1981, p. 8). More recently although the Criminal Code legally allows for use of corporal punishment in elementary schools, child abuse legislation (first introduced in 1972) has resulted in schools establishing strict guidelines and restrictions, to be placed on existing disciplinary practices. Essentially, the current basis for the use of corporal punishment in the schools and the determination inherited by the enactment of the *British North America Act*, 1867 (Pritchard, 1988, p. 3). Authority for administering physical punishment to a student is of course God given but passed from parents to school officials through the common law doctrine of IN LOCO PARENTIS. In 1765, Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780) the English ju-

rist who wrote *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1679) defined this transfer of authority:

[The parent] may lawfully correct his child, being under age, in a reasonable manner, for this is for the benefit of his education....He may also delegate part of his parental authority, during his life, to the tutor or school master of his child; who is then in loco parentis and has such a portion of the power of the parent committed to his charge, viz. that of restraint and correction, as may be necessary to answer the purposes for which he is employed. (Blackstone, 1765, p. 136).

The fact that a parent "may" delegate part of his "parental authority" explains the continued use of corporal punishment. Educators should, however, realize that discipline (instruction and pun-

ishment) which includes corporal punishment of students in elementary school is not only controversial, but increasingly litigious as well. With the exception of James Dobson (1970, p. 118), the practice is not defended by any recognized, North American, authority on school management and discipline.

4. Factors determining the reasonableness of corporal punishment of elementary school students

In common law and in case law concerning school discipline and "punishment" one sees references to the term "reasonableness" and time and again, references to the term "reasonable under the circumstances" occur. Court decisions made in Canada, England and the United States seem to have been clarifying these terms for the past 150 years.

MacKay (1984, p. 87) capsulated the information regarding reasonableness very well when he with reference to Bergen (1961, p. 130) identified the following as factors determining what is reasonable punishment.

Punishment is reasonable when:

- a) It is for the purpose of correction and without malice.
- b) There is sufficient cause for punishment.
- c) It is not cruel or excessive and leaves no permanent mark or injury.
- d) It is suited to the age and sex of the pupil.
- e) It is not protracted beyond the child's power of endurance.
- f) The instrument used for punishment is suitable.
- g) It does not endanger life, limb, or health, or disfigure the child.
- h) It is administered to an appropriate part of the pupil's anatomy.

It is possible to support MacKay's factors by referring to previously contested cases.

5. Concluding comments about discipline

Much can be said about the various aspects associated with discipline. The above comments can be readily expanded but some tentative conclusions may be suggested.

The biblical concept MUSAR and the definition of discipline as presented in *Black's Law Dictionary* (1968, p. 550) and the historical and legal decisions pertaining to the use of corporal punishment do indicate that instruction and punishment have been enjoined. In a close home-school, parent-

teacher, relationship governed by a locally elected school board, with suitable (Board) discipline guidelines and (School) discipline codes in place, continuation of the enjoining of instruction and punishment can be achieved. Corporal punishment although perhaps used in the family by a kind, firm and judicious parent does, however, not need to be used in the school by a teacher. Elementary school teachers have other sound professional alternatives for punishment.

To totally replace the use of corporal punishment in Canadian Reformed schools as a form of punishment with other effective pedagogical strategies for punishment can be helped by the following:

- 1) Teacher training, inservice and preservice, which focus on techniques to motivate students and effectively handle discipline problems.
- 2) Early identification of potential problem children and follow-up activities aimed at preventing discipline problems.

Teachers, administrators and parents can learn positive techniques, alternatives to corporal punishment, for instruction and correction. A survey of (Ontario) Canadian Reformed (Grades 7 and 8) students, their parents and Canadian Reformed teachers, conducted in April 1991, indicated that factors responsible for misbehaviour such as boredom, being worried about something, and not understanding the lesson, could through teacher awareness and training be readily eliminated and thus remove the need for the "strap" being there as a means to prevent misbehaviour. More difficult for us to learn, however, is how to guide children through internal motivation toward self-discipline while resisting the urge to model control solely by authoritative means. Staff initiated suspensions and/or board decisions about student expulsions for chronic misbehaving students should be understood as a necessary alternative when present disciplinary efforts have been exhausted.

One point remains to be emphasized. For the Christian teacher biblical teaching has at its heart the concept of loving service to God and man. Central to this concept of love as practised in disciplinary practices is that discipline includes both instruction and punishment.

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OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Jerusalem was a very busy place!
 The temple was crowded.
 Streets were crowded.
 What was the occasion?
 It was the harvest feast, the Feast of Weeks.
 Many Jews from faraway lands were in town to celebrate this feast.
 It was a Pentecost they would never forget!
 Forget those awesome signs of God's wondrous power?
 Never!
 First of all that rushing wind that did no harm.
 Then that bright, glowing flame that gave only glorious light and warmth.
 And most of all, that wonderful speaking in tongues!
Everybody could understand the apostles and disciples in *their own language*.
 Wonderful words of grace that everyone could understand!
 Never before such a great Pentecost Feast in Jerusalem!
 God the Holy Spirit coming to live in the hearts of His people!
 It happened long ago.
 It happened far away.
 But we have the very *same* promise of the Spirit.
 He lives in *our* hearts, too, to comfort and guide us.
 That gives us joy on Pentecost Day...and every day!

Quiz Time!

CODE

by Busy Beaver *Michelle Hordyk*

A - 1	
B - 2	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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S - 19	19 1 12 22 1 20 9 15 14
T - 20	
V - 22	
Y - 25	

EARLY CHURCH WORKERS

Many people in the New Testament were known for something they did for or to the early church. Match the person with what he or she did.

1. Peter, Acts 2:14-41 ____
 2. Timothy, Acts 16:3 ____
 3. Rhoda, Acts 12:12-13 ____
 4. Dorcas, Acts 9:39 ____
 5. Lydia, Acts 16:13-14 ____
 6. Sapphira, Acts 5:1, 8-9 ____
 7. Matthias, Acts 1:26 ____
 8. Stephen, Acts 7:59 ____
 9. Paul, Acts 13:2-3 ____
 10. Ananias, Acts 9:17-18 ____
- a. Prayed with a group of women
 - b. Served as a missionary
 - c. Was chosen to replace Judas
 - d. Paul's helper
 - e. Lied to the church
 - f. Preached and about three thousand came to know Jesus
 - g. Recognized Peter's voice and forgot to open the gate
 - h. Restored Paul's sight
 - i. Died for his faithfulness
 - j. Made clothes for needy people

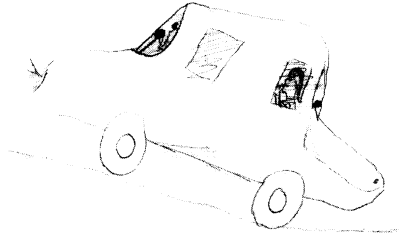
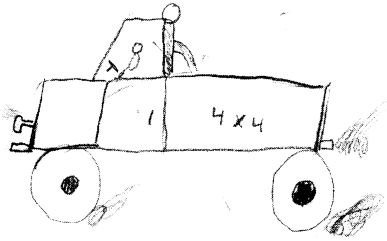
LADDERS

Go up or down changing one letter at a time. The first one is done for you.

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VEHICLES

by Busy Beavers *Jaclyn Bartels* and *Jason Linde*



Spring is green time
Planting and playing
Rain and wind
Irises growing
New buds are forming
Gone is the cold



by Busy Beaver *Gerald Bartels*



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Ryan Linde*. We are happy to have you join us. What do you play at school, Ryan, soccer or baseball? Do you have a dog? Will you write and tell us? Bye for now.

Welcome to the Club, *Jaclyn Bartels*. What a scare you must have had on your friend's driveway!

Thank you for the picture. Please write again soon, Jaclyn.

Welcome to the Club, *Monica Bartels*. I see you are good at making pictures. Keep up the good work! Will you write and tell me your birthday, Monica? Then I can put you on the birthday list.

I see you have been very busy *Michelle Hordyk*! Thank you for the colourful picture. Keep up the good work, Michelle.

Hello, *Nelena Bergsma*. It was good to hear from you again. Thank you for your letter and the jokes. Bye for now, Nelena.

Thank you for the Spring poem, *Gerald Bartels*. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy it! I see you are a good puzzler, too. Bye for now, Gerald. Write again soon.

Answers:

1. f 2. d 3. g 4. j 5. a 6. e 7. c 8. i 9. b 10. h
 Early Church Workers

How did you do on that quiz?

All right? Great!

Keep busy, Busy Beavers!

Bye for now.



Love to you all,
 Aunt Betty

Thou hast multiplied, O LORD my God, Thy wondrous deeds and Thy thoughts toward us; none can compare with Thee! Psalm 40:5a

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father for His precious gift of a firstborn child, a son

NATHAN JACOB

Born May 4, 1992

David and Heather Bosma
 (nee Kuik)

8149 English Church Road
 Mt. Hope, ON L0R 1W0

With thankfulness to the Lord we announce the birth of our seventh child, a son

SCOTT REMMIE

Born May 27, 1992

A brother for *Sacha, Shane, Dexter, Mirissa, Cayle* and *Lance*

Remie and Linda Vander Vegte
 (nee Toet)

11 Wendilene Street
 Winnipeg, MB R2C 4X7

Full of honour and majesty is His work. Psalm 111: 3a

The Lord in His goodness has entrusted into our care one of His precious gifts, a son

DALE ANDREW

Born May 24, 1992

Mike and Rose Boeve (nee Petter)

Eric, Allan, Lisa

6984 Mission View Street RR 1
 Matsqui, BC V0X 1S0