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“The Vitality of Reformed Theology”

By J. Geertsema

The Conference

“The Vitality of Reformed Theology” – this was the motto given to an international conference of Reformed theologians, professors and ministers. The conference was held June 20-24, in Noordwijkerhout, the Netherlands. It was organized by two theological universities, the one of our sister churches in Kampen and the other of the Christelijke Gereformeerde churches (in North America, the Free Reformed) in Apeldoorn, in co-operation also with the Reformed Scientific Society (Gereformeerd Wetenschappelijk Genootschap). Approximately one hundred and forty theologians attended the whole or part of the conference. They came from all five continents, quite a few from Africa, many white, some black; a few from North America, one from South America: Brazil; quite a few from Asia: India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea; one from Australia, many from Europe: Belgium, England, France, Germany, even from Russia, but most came from the Netherlands. It was thought proper that our College in Hamilton should also be represented at this conference.

The conference was opened by Prof. Dr. K. Veling of Kampen, lecturer in philosophy, who came up with the idea of this conference some eight years ago. He stressed that the term “Reformed theology” is determined by the Reformed confession and that this confession has not lost its importance for our modern day and age. The present international conference was organized to make this evident. The meetings consisted of four plenary sessions with a main speaker and a respondent, and of some twenty workshops held in three time slots. About these workshops I shall not elaborate even though many dealt with very interesting topics.

The four main speakers

The main speaker was Prof. Dr. R.B. Gaffin of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, U.S.A. In his speech, “The Vitality of Reformed Dogmatics,” he pointed out that Reformed Dogmatics has vitality because it is based on exegesis of Scripture. Scripture itself is not a dogmatic handbook presenting us with dogmatic truths, but it is a historic book that gives us God’s revelation in a redemptive historic framework. Gaffin is here in line with Gerardus Vos, who became professor at Princeton about a century ago. Dr. Gaffin views dogmatics as closely linked to a systematic exposition of the teachings of God’s Word, rather than being a systematic, scholarly exposition of the dogmas, the confessional statements, of the church. In the discussion Prof. H.M. Ohmann referred to the definition of Dr. K. Schilder who viewed dogmatics as “that branch of theology which deals with the dogmata of the church. Its task is to study these dogmata and the questions surrounding them in their historical development, and also put them in an ordered and unified (samenhangend) system.”¹ For Dr. Gaffin, dogmatics comes close to what is often called biblical theology, that

is, the reflection in the New Testament about the great works of God in Christ Jesus. By using the term “biblical theology,” he said, we can express the connection of our theologizing with the “theology” that we find in the New Testament. For instance, in the epistle to the Hebrews, we also have the result of a reflecting on God’s work in Christ Jesus. In my opinion, it is better to maintain the word “revelation” for what we have in the Scriptures, while using the words “theology” and “dogmatics” for our study of and reflection on the revelation of God. We can appreciate Dr. Gaffin’s purpose in stressing that Scripture is the basis for dogmatics or “systematic theology.” Scripture is not there to confirm our dogmatic statements, but it is the norm and must correct us in all our thinking, including our theological reasoning.

Prof. Dr. J.W. Maris of Apeldoorn stressed the necessity of faith for our dogmatic endeavors. In dogmatics we use our reasoning about the things God has revealed. Our human reasoning can only then remain on the right track when it is a reasoning in faith.

The second main speaker was Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen of Kampen. He spoke on “The authority of Scripture as a prerequisite for Reformed theology.” Scripture is the channel for our knowledge of God and is the norm for doctrine and life, also for theology. This authority can be undermined to the left by modern liberal Bible criticism. It can also become rigid to the right by a biblicistic reading of Scripture. In this respect Van Bruggen mentioned the old terms from dogmatics “*sola Scriptura*” (Scripture alone), “mechanic inspiration” (the human authors of the Bible wrote mechanically down what God dictated them, without their own active involvement) and “verbal inspiration” (every word is inspired and full of meaning). He said that these terms do not adequately express what we mean with inspiration. Scripture shows the activity of many human authors. They thought about things. They did their own investigating. A key word in a sentence has more weight than other words such as the conjunction “and.” And the term “*sola Scriptura*” (Scripture alone) is a weapon of defense used in the days of the Reformation against Rome, but it is not adequate as a weapon of attack. He also emphasized that it is absolutely necessary that the theologian must humbly bow before God’s Word and accept it in faith.

The respondent, Prof. Dr. P. Wells of Aix-en-Provence, in France, wanted to maintain the “*sola Scriptura*” as vital for our struggle to remain Reformed over against modern denial of both the authority of Scripture and of the godhead of Christ.

The third main speaker was Prof. Dr. W.D. Jonker of Stellenbosch in South Africa. His address dealt with “Reformed theology and the identity of the Christian congregation.” He emphasized the close connection between Reformed theology and the members of the congregation. Theology is not there for its own sake. It has to serve the church and aid it in understanding what God’s Word teaches. In this way it also helps the

church to understand its task and identity. Abandoning faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God leads to a chasm between theology and the congregation. Theology also has to maintain its link with the faith of the church, the community where the Holy Spirit works.

Prof. Dr. C. Graham of Edinburgh, Scotland responded with stating the intense need of faith for all theologians. There has to be their personal relation with Christ and faithful adherence to the confession of the church. He, too, referred to the past when every home contained a library and the general membership of the churches was familiar with the theological discussions and knew where to stand in those discussions.

Professor Dr. Son Bong-ho presented the fourth main address. He spoke on "The place of the Christian church in modern society." We live in a hedonistic (pleasure-seeking) world, he said, in which much suffering is no longer caused by calamities but by human injustice. As Christians, we should share our wealth with those who suffer. Our life should be characterized as an "inner-worldly ascetism" whereby we voluntarily abstain from the enjoyments of a prosperous life for ourselves but rather help those who are in need in order to show them the love of Christ who saved those who suffered.

The respondent, Rev. C.T. Rabali of Sibasa, Venda, in South Africa, spoke in line with this and developed twelve rules for a practical realization of this goal of sharing our wealth with those who suffer.

No general declaration

At the end of the conference an effort was made to come to a general declaration in which the unity in the Reformed faith of all those present was to be expressed. This effort failed. A draft of such a declaration was formulated by some of the organizers in four sections, according to the four main addresses. It was specifically in the discussions on the second section, the authority of the Scripture, that differences in view became evident. Can we use the word "inerrant" for Scripture? Must we reject modern critical exegetical methods? Are we really one in our views? Must not our oneness with this world in which we live be stressed much more? Over against some negative remarks others emphasized the positive value of the conference and the unity which was present in spite of differences of opinion.

Personal testimonies

What I enjoyed the most during this conference was the contact with the Reformed Christians from the so-called Third World and the personal testimonies given in public sessions and in private conversations. I shall mention a few. A young man from Russia told how he and others formed a small group to study the Bible. God blessed this with working faith in their hearts. This study brought them to the conclusion that their faith was the result of predestination, of God's sovereign, electing grace in Christ. The group came in contact with the Rev. M. Nap of our Dutch sister churches working in the Ukraine, who provided them with a copy of Calvin's *Institutes* in the Russian language. Reading this work of Calvin brought them to the conclusion that they fully agreed with this reformer.

A black minister from Africa told me what happens in the churches he belongs to. People hear and read modern liberation theologians. These liberal theologians proclaim as gospel the liberation of black people from the oppression by the white race; the liberation of women from male oppression, and so on. This liberation theology, thus proclaims a social gospel that speaks of deliverance for the socially oppressed



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from the sins of other people, but it does not preach the deliverance from one's own sins and guilt and lost condition before God through Christ's death at the cross. My black colleague from Africa said that the congregations hear such liberation theologians and conclude that their message is not in accordance with the teaching of God's Word. Therefore they reject these men and their message.

A minister from Indonesia, member of a Reformed church established years ago already through Dutch mission work, saw indifference and liberalism in his churches while charismatic churches were growing. With others he decided to preach again the doctrines of Scripture as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity both to the Reformed people and to those outside. Thus, they proclaimed also the doctrine of God's grace as expressed with the term "predestination." He formulated the question: Being so rich with our Reformed heritage, what do we do with it in the church and in the world? He was disappointed that this question received so little attention at the conference.


A minister from Germany said that for German Reformed Christians the religious climate has become very difficult. Testifying of one's faith that the Bible is God's Word and is the truth, is not accepted anymore in the broader Christian world. It is rejected as fundamentalism, a fanaticism, like that of Khomeini in Iran. This picture is quite common for the West.

Conclusion

Do these testimonies show that, in general, the gospel is well received the Third World but no longer accepted in the Western world? Will the church of the Lord grown and flourish in Africa and Asia but die out in western Europe and North America? Will God's grace build His church in the eastern world and will His anger rest on the western nations? More than once it went through my mind: are we as Reformed churches in Canada and the United States struggling hard to remain faithful and enthusiastic in the service of Christ according to his Word? Shall Christ, when He comes, find faith, true dedicated and committed faith, in our hearts and life? Do we know and live by the Scriptures as God's infallible Word in thankful love for Him and in order to show His light to the world around us?

Christ spoke a grave warning to the people of God's covenant, the church of the LORD, in the days He was on earth. He said, seeing the simple faith of a centurion, "With no one in Israel have I found such a great faith. I tell you, many from east and west will come and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Mat. 8:10-12).

Does Christ Jesus find the faith with us? It remains important to examine ourselves.

¹See J. De Jong, *Accommodatio Dei - a theme in K. Schilder's Theology of Revelation*, Kampen: Mondis, 1990, p. 65 

The Church: Union and Communion₁

By C. Trimp

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Our Belgic Confession of 1561 devotes six of its 37 articles to the church (arts. 27-32). This great deal of attention is the result of the radical reorientation to which the churches of the Reformation were called after their split from the papal system. The Reformed churches are still examining their own character, calling, and place in this world. This does not plead against, but rather for these churches. For obvious reasons, also the Belgic Confession plays an important role in this examination.

Sometimes one can hear the remark that the wording of the Belgic Confession is too obscure and insufficient for us, especially when considering the problems that we are confronted with in

today's day and age. Some advocate a replacement, others an expansion of the confessional language which has been handed down, and still others look for improvements by way of corrections and modernizations. Meanwhile, the impression is repeatedly given that the conversation gets entangled and stuck in "repetitious moves." It is against this background that the upcoming four articles are written. They ask our attention for issues surrounding the doctrine concerning the church. In due time, we hope to have an opportunity to publish a follow-up series. The following four articles have as their only intention to "read what it says."

The church is a congregation of "Believers"

The first two sentences of B.C. Article 27 give a description of the character and the essence of the church. Together they form a kind of "defini-

tion." The Heidelberg Catechism directs the attention of our faith in answer 54 to the continual activity of Christ in the gathering, defending and preserving of his church. The Belgic Confession, however, chooses a different angle. Both approaches have their own rightful place. Together they give us wonderful support in our reflection on and our confession of the "catholic" (or "universal") church. In this article we want to consider the contents of the second sentence of article 27.

Our confession emphatically calls attention to the fact that the church is a congregation of "believers" – people who have received the "true faith" from the Holy Spirit. The church is characterized by the presence of *these* people. The fact that there are office bearers is not the decisive mark of the church. Neither does the fact that there is preaching prove the presence of the church. Article 27 asks attention for

another fact: *faith* is found on earth. The Gospel of Christ is preached *and* believed. This is the message which Guido de Brès wants to pass on to us. Thus he summarizes the instruction which he has received from Scripture by means of Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin.¹

Earlier already, De Brès had written about the character of this (true) faith. After he had put into words the great work of Christ's sacrifice for us (atonement by means of satisfaction) in B.C. article 21, he wrote in article 22: "We believe that, in order that we may obtain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith." Kindling true faith for the sake of true knowledge – that is typically the work of the Holy Spirit. Reference is made to 1 Cor. 2:12: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God" (cf. also Eph. 1:17-18).

Where does this emphasis on "faith" come from? The answer is not difficult: "faith" is the bond of love with Christ. Article 22 words it as follows: "This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, makes Him our own, and does not seek anything besides Him." Beautiful language is spoken here: it is the language of love. It even says that a true believer is someone who possesses (has) Jesus Christ and who, in him, has complete salvation. For faith is the means by which we embrace Christ, our righteousness, and which keeps us with Him in communion of all His treasures and gifts. This true faith makes us into different, new people, and it makes us live a new life ("regeneration") – as the beginning of article 24 puts it.

With this language in mind, we listen to the beginning of article 27. It is the gospel of justification through the blood of Christ and of sanctification through the Spirit of Christ, which called the church members into being and which typifies their lives. Article 27 states this emphatically: believers "who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed in His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit." The life of the believers is determined completely by their communion with Christ. They expect their complete salvation from Him, because that complete salvation is in Him. The blood of Christ has purified them and has delivered them from the dominion of sin, and the Spirit of Christ makes their lives new. He grants them the assurance of faith and guarantees the crown in the

struggle of the Spirit against the "flesh" which remains in the believer.²

It is the language of *baptism* which echoes in all these beautiful words. No one becomes a member of the church without having this language passed on to him. Article 34 explains this by way of striking expressions. Anyone who pays careful attention to these descriptions of the believers – the members of the church – finds out now already what kind of preaching is the distinguishing mark of the church of Christ: that of complete salvation in Christ alone. Wherever this preaching is not found the Holy Spirit is resisted and grieved. For the Spirit of Christ wants to work faith in Christ, the only Redeemer, through the proclamation, and He wants to guarantee this preaching through baptism. Only in this way can the church be a matter of "union with Christ."

"True" believers

It is striking that our confession speaks distinctly about "true" knowledge, "true" faith, and "true" believers. In article 29 it places similar accents when dealing with the "true" church. Many have become somewhat allergic to this expression, "true" church. They hear in this the cry of a self-confident, self-sufficient Christian. "True" is then understood as "perfect." A "true" believer would consequently denote a "perfect" believer. However, the acknowledgement of the faultiness of the believer is part of the very contents of the true faith. We confess this, for example, in the Heidelberg Catechism (answers 114-115), in the form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and also in the Belgic Confession. One of the marks of the Christians who belong to the (true) church is that they fight against their great weakness by the Spirit all the days of their life. We confess this in article 29. "True" believers, therefore, does not mean "perfect" believers. Rather, it means that the people mentioned here may call themselves "believers," and when they indeed do call themselves "believers" they do not do this wrongly.

It is a good thing to thrash out the word "true" already in connection with article 27. The question cannot be avoided: why does it so emphatically refer to "true" believers? And why did article 22 speak of "true" knowledge and "true" faith? There is a simple reason for this: in this world one must take into account the reality of *forgery* and *appearance*. Apparently one also comes across pseudo-faith, which is sold as "true" faith. A

boundary line is drawn against heresy and apparent piety (*hypocrisy*). The Bible warns us extensively against this reality of lie and appearance. In this, the forging labors of the great adversary of the one Redeemer are manifested. There is true prophecy and pseudo-prophecy. There are true apostles and apparent apostles. There are true brothers and false brothers. In the same manner, there is also true religion and false religion, true repentance and apparent repentance, just as the reality of true Christians and false Christians. Someone who overlooks this does not know the real situation in the church and the world; and neither does he know himself.³

The confessions make remarkable use of this kind of terminology because they apparently want to accentuate the reality of falsification, of *forgery*.⁴ In B.C. article 9 we read about the doctrine of the Holy Trinity that it "has always been maintained and preserved in the true church since the time of the apostles to this very day, over against Jews, Muslims, and against false Christians and heretics . . ." And the catechism constantly speaks of "true faith" and "true repentance" (see answers 20, 21, 53, 54, 60, 64, 84, 91, and question 88; cf. also how the Canons of Dort speak of "true believers" in v.12 and 15).

The authors had in mind the terrible consequences of *forgery*, and they warn the church members against this. Church members must confess their faith in a world in which Satan wages his battle against God and his Anointed. That is the dangerous environment of the church according to Rev. 12 and 13, for instance. Our fathers in the sixteenth century knew only too well the power of imitation and the sly game of the devil. They would not let themselves be misled as naive children by fine sounding words and pious gestures. They were very impressed by the fact that God's enemy had sown weeds among the wheat. They also knew that wolves could penetrate into the sheepfold of Christ; yes, that they could come from their own midst (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet. 2:1).

When the phrase "*true* believers" is so emphatically used, this is by no means meant as a self-recommendation. On the contrary, it is an expression of a realistic estimation of the *miracle* of faith and of the *power* of *forgery*.

"Holy congregation"

The church of Christ is where "true believers" are found. But according to the old words of the Apostles' Creed

this church of Christ is a “communion”: the communion of saints. It is not a collection of believing individuals, but a body: every believer is a member of that body, and apart from it a member simply cannot exist.

We just saw that faith is a bond of love with Christ. “Faith” and “church” cannot be conceived of outside this communion with Christ. Believers have everything *in* him and expect everything *from* him. This “union” with Christ naturally involves the “communion” of the believers. A person would have to tear to pieces the work of the Holy Spirit if he wanted to accept the one thing but not the other. Also in this “congregation” or “communion” we are faced with the work of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is called a “holy congregation,” with reference to, for example, Eph. 4:3-6. This union and communion are presented most beautifully in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This is where all church activities – by office bearers and church members – find their origin and where they are purified and renewed.⁵

Thus, this one sentence of article 27 alludes to the preaching, to baptism, and to the Lord’s Supper of the church of Christ. This observation opens our eyes to the fullness of expression, of which the author of our confession appeared capable. In the Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century, the church is

described in all kinds of ways. Reformed people in our country may be thankful for *this* description in article 27. Would it be possible to come up with a clearer description than this one: the church of Christ is the holy communion of the true believers, who find and expect their complete salvation in and from Christ?

¹In the foundational Lutheran confession, the Augsburg Confession of 1530, it says in article 8: the church is properly the congregation of saints and true believers. Calvin writes: “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.” “For the Lord nowhere recognizes any temple as His save where His Word is heard and scrupulously observed” (*Institutes* IV.i.9; IV.ii.3).

²Also here, the author of the B.C. proves to be a good student of Calvin, as the following two quotations may illustrate:

“Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts” (*Inst.* III.ii.7).

“But all the elect are so united in Christ that as they are dependent on one Head, they also grow together into one body, being joined and knit together as are the limbs of a body. They are made truly one since they live together in one faith, hope, and love, and in the same Spirit of God. For they have been called not only into the same in-

heritance of eternal life but also to participate in one God and Christ” (*Inst.* IV.i.2).

³We must also look at the Biblical background of these words of the confession. In this connection (“true” and “false”), we mention the following texts:

brothers: Gal 2:4; 2 Cor 11:29;
apostles: 2 Cor 11:13; Rev 2:2;
teachers: 2 Pet 2:1; cf. also 1 Tim 4:2;
witnesses: 1 Cor 15:15; Matt 15:19; 26:59; Mark 14:56;

prophets: Matt 7:15; 24:11; Acts 13:6; 1 John 4:1; Rev 16:19; 19:20; 20:10;
Christ: Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22.

⁴Cf. B. Gassmann, *Ecclesia reformata: Die Kirche in den reformierten Bekenntnisschriften* (Freiburg, 1968), p. 409.

⁵We therefore do not accept the strong accents which K. Schilder has placed on “congregatio” and “coetus,” on the basis of the Latin translation of the BC. We agree with Schilder with regard to the matter itself (Christ’s activity in the “congregatio,” our responsibility in the “coetus”). But from the viewpoint of interpretation we have to notice an over-emphasis which is not borne out by word choice and denotation. In the writings of the sixteenth century, “congregatio” is synonymous with “communio.” Cf. J. Faber, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* (Netherlands: Inheritance, 1990), p. 107; E.A.W. Mouissie, “Het onderscheid tussen ‘coetus’ and ‘congregatio’ bij prof. dr. K. Schilder: Een symbolisch-dogmatisch onderzoek,” M.Th. Thesis Theologische Universiteit, Broederweg 15, Kampen, 1982; E. Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche* (Berlin, 1960), 2A, 80ff. **C**

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Designer Religion

Canadian are a very “religious” people. When the apostle Paul addressed the men of Athens after having seen the many idols, temples and altars throughout the city, he said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” If Paul were to go over the data found on a recent Canadian census, he would say: “People of Canada, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.”

This census reports that 88 percent of Canadians have ties to either the Roman Catholic church or to a Protestant church. When it comes to filling in census data, few Canadians want to say

that they are godless pagans. Almost 9 out of 10 Canadians claim to be Christians. Yet only 23 percent of Canadians attend religious services on a weekly basis. When it comes to the youth of Canada, the statistics are even more dismal. While 80 percent of teenagers continue to identify with the Roman Catholic or a Protestant church, only 18 percent are weekly attendees.

What’s wrong?

Although most Canadians claim a bond with some church, few attend weekly services. Why is that? Because

Canada has become a nation of people who live in sin against the second commandment. In the second commandment the LORD God taught us *how* we are to worship Him. We are not to worship God by way of a graven image of any sort. As we say in our catechism: The second commandment requires that we not make an image of God in any way, and that we not worship Him in any other manner than He has commanded in His Word (Lord’s Day 35). God has told us how He would have us obey the second commandment. We are to gather together on the day of rest



to submit to the preaching of the Word of God because God is not a silent God but a speaking God. People who claim to be Christians but have no use for attending Sunday services to be taught by the living preaching of God's Word have fashioned God into an image which cannot speak.

Reginald Bibby, in his book, *Teen Trends: A Nation in Motion* (1982), reports that although most Canadian youth have little use for organized religion, they have some interest in God (or gods) and things spiritual. He has interviewed teenagers who have said things like:

- I believe in God, but I don't think I have to go to church to prove it. – a grade 12 student from Toronto
- I am a non-practising Catholic, but I am interested in spirituality. – a 17-year old male from St. Georges, PQ
- I don't go to church, but I believe in God and pray. – a 16-year old female from Watson Lake, NWT
- My religion is an individual interest in spirituality, not really religion. – a 17-year old female from Montreal
- I have no belief in religion, but I enjoy studying all the varieties because spirituality is interesting, if not realistic. – a 17-year old male from Bedford, NS
- I have strong beliefs in God but nothing I believe in complies with any religious organization. – a grade 12 student from London (Bibby, p. 53)

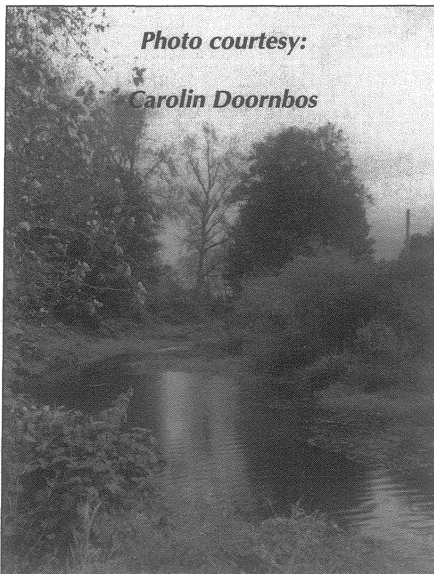
Canadians do not mind religion as long as they can have it on their own terms. The sins of the parents have come to haunt the children. Not only do the young people buy designer clothes; they have also bought into designer re-

ligion: "I believe in God and I pray, but I don't have to go to church."

I'll do it my way

Designer religion is nothing new. It's as old as Mt. Sinai. When Moses was taking rather long in meeting with God on Mt. Sinai, the people got impatient. They told Aaron to make gods who would go before them, because they did not know what had become of Moses. Aaron collected all the people's gold and made a golden calf. The people then began to worship it as the God who had brought them up out of Egypt. Aaron proclaimed a festival to the LORD. Neither Aaron nor the people intended to worship any god but the LORD God who had saved them, but they did it their way.

OUR COVER




Later, King Jeroboam institutionalized designer religion in Israel. There was a civil war in Israel. Rehoboam, Solomon's son was king in Jerusalem over the southern part; Jeroboam was king over the ten northern tribes. He did not want his subjects worshipping God at the temple in Jerusalem. He was scared that Rehoboam might win them over. So Jeroboam set up a golden calf in a sanctuary in Dan, and another in Bethel – one in the north of his kingdom and one in the south. This way his people would not need to go to Jerusalem to worship the LORD: "Attend the church of your choice; just don't go to Jerusalem." Jeroboam was not introducing the worship of other gods. He said that the people could worship the God of their fathers who had delivered

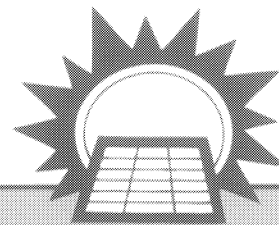
His people from Egypt at the feet of the golden calves. They could meet God in Dan or Bethel. That was more convenient than going all the way to Jerusalem, despite the fact that God had commanded Israel to bring their sacrifices to the temple in Jerusalem and to gather there for the festivals.

In both these instances, Israel began to worship God in a self-styled way. God is the speaking God who would have His people instructed by His Word. God wants us to worship Him by listening to His Word and responding with our words of praise. Israel shut God up by worshipping Him by way of deaf and mute image. We shut God up when we refuse to attend the church of God to be instructed by His Word. When we attend the services at our convenience, when it fits our schedule, then we have designed our own religion. We have recreated God into a deaf and mute image: He has nothing to say to us: we have nothing to say to Him."

Let's do it God's way

Since the Second World War church attendance in Canada has dropped dramatically from 70 percent to the current 23 percent. The youth imitate their parents and have even less use for attending. Let us be diligent about worshipping the LORD as He requires. He is the speaking and listening God. He is no deaf-mute God. Let us be faithful in attending to the true preaching of God's Word to hear what He would say to us. Let us be diligent and consistent in seeking out the assembly of God's worshipping people every Sunday to fill God's ears with our prayers and praise. 

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“... and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”
Romans 5:2b

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Did you ever run into people who are never excited about anything? They complain about their work, they don't have ways to enjoy themselves, they are never ready to help. What is worse, they skip church or complain that it is boring, and are never involved with anything that goes on in the congregation. Those people are never really happy.

What makes us do things? Why do we like work? How come we like to help? What makes drying dishes a pleasant thing to do? Why do we enjoy going to church?

Doing something may make us proud of what we did. We may like our work because we try to do it well and we like the people with whom we work. When we help with the dishes we may make our mom happy, and while we are doing them we may enjoy talking or singing together. We enjoy going to church because we love the Lord, we like the singing, the preaching, and being together with the other members of the congregation.

There are two different reasons why we can do and enjoy things. Some people will only do things if they get much praise for it, if it will make them look good in other people's eyes, and if they get paid for it. Those reasons usually do not last very long. They want to be paid more, they want to get more things all the time. Such people only want to satisfy themselves. They do not see that there are things that are much more important than money and prosperity. They do not let the Lord rule their lives.

But when we try to live with the Lord, His Spirit works the willingness into our hearts to do everything for Him. Then the reasons why we do our work are the same all the time. There is no striving for more and more. A person who is motivated from the heart is content. He or she enjoys his/her life, he/she is stimulated to be involved in many activities, and tries his/her very best to do a good job. Money is not the most important thing in his/her life, but to please the Lord.

Pleasing the Lord is to fear Him and to serve Him with all your heart. When you serve the Lord, you want to know Him. In order to know Him you read your Bible every day. You can also read books, go to study societies, and you can talk about the Lord when you go visiting. And on Sunday you go to church. All those things help us to learn more and more about the Lord. The better we know Him, the clearer it becomes that we live out of grace. We have nothing to offer Him for we were born in sin and daily increase our debt. If the Lord had not sent us His Son, our Saviour, we would be totally lost. Yet Jesus Christ came down to earth. He died on the cross for all our sins, and so reconciled us with the Father. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. He is with His Father and is our Mediator with Him. He also sent us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts. He makes us realize that we are very fortunate people. He

makes us aware of the thankfulness that we owe our Father. And that is what motivates us.

How can we think that we deserve to be paid more for everything we do, or that people owe us much respect? As God's children we know that we owe everything to the Lord. We lost everything, even our lives! Christ the Lord bought it back for us and promises us eternal life.

Therefore God's children are motivated from within to do a good job. We have very much reason to show to Him how thankful we are. Every morning we may thank the Lord for a new day in which we can praise Him, in which we can use our talents in His service, in which we can do our work to the best of our abilities. He motivates us to live our lives in obedience to Him. We may thank the Lord that our lives do not circle around our paycheques. Our lives are not senseless because we do not have a bank account. Even if we cannot do things that other people can do, because we are sick, or handicapped, or have other limitations, we still have much reason to get excited. For our Saviour died for our sins. He opened for us the gates of heaven. We know what we live for: we live for the Lord, and our future is with our Father in heaven. That is what motivates us, and nobody or no circumstances can take that away from us.

So we go on from day to day, each of us on our God-given task. No matter how difficult it is, He will help us to do it, happily and to His honour and glory.

*The wicked borrow much but don't restore it;
The righteous graciously give it away.
The promised land the blessed shall inherit;
Those cursed by God shall be cut off for aye.
The upright man is guided by His Spirit;
God gives him strength and watches o'er his way.
Ps 37:9 (B. of P.)*

Birthdays in August

- 5: **Philip Schuurman**, 156 St. Catharines St., Unit 12, Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0
It is Philip's 35th birthday
- 9: **Rose Malda**, Oakland Centre, 53 Bond St., Oakville, ON, L6J 5B4
It will be Rose's 37th birthday
- 18: **Fenny Kuik**, Box 35, Group 606, SS6, Winnipeg, MB, R2C 2Z3
Fenny hopes to be 42
- 23: **Jack Dieleman**, 307 Connaught Ave., Willowdale, ON, M2R 2M1
For Jack it will be his 22nd birthday

Happy Birthday to all of you.
Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen,
7462 Hwy. 20, RR1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Aspects of "Oncing"

By G. VanDooren

You know what "oncing" is: going to church only once a Sunday, although the church of God meets with Him twice on His Day. If you do this, you are a "oncer."

We are not going to discuss the childish question, "Where does the Bible say that I have to go to church twice a Sunday?" If you are a person who goes to church only because to "have to," you might in the long run become a hopeless case. At any rate, then there are several psalms which you simply cannot and should not sing (Psalm 1, 27, 84, 122, etc.). You should, then, also reconsider your allegiance to the Confession, which says, or rather in which you say, ". . . that I diligently attend the church of God. . ." (Cat. L.D. 38) because God says in His Word, "Do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:25).

Because that Day is drawing near and because some have the habit of neglecting the worship meetings, we are going to consider some aspects of "oncing."

Legitimate "oncing"

First, there is legitimate "oncing." We think of a family with young children, where either of the parents has to stay home with the baby. Or one has just recovered from illness or has some other physical weakness which makes it necessary to take a rest in the afternoon.

But even if it is legitimate, we should limit this kind of "oncing" to the utmost.

If a part of the family (father or mother plus baby and toddler) has to stay home, let that part be as small as possible. Children of school age can easily go to church twice! One should not underestimate the value of this, nor the danger if parents all too easily allow some of their children to stay home. Then the other start saying, why do I have to go? And, when older, they might "automatically" become "oncers" for good (do not ask where their grandchildren will be. . .).

In addition, we should consider extending the services of the nursery to the afternoon services. Every means available (including car-pools and the like) should be used to promote and improve church attendance.

Perhaps we are spoiled. We do not have to walk for hours anymore, to hear God's Word preached, nor do we have to meet in secret because of the hatred of the world (though such days must be expected to return). We are spoiled, we take it lightly to go to church and not to go to church. We would not do so if we really realized what it is to "attend the church of God." He takes the trouble to go there, with His Word and Spirit, His promises and grace. Once we have "seen" that again, we can sing Psalm 42 and all the other psalms: "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for Thee, O God." If this longing is lacking, we need repentance and conversion.

"The sermons are so poor"

Let us start with one "excuse" for "oncing" which we deem illegitimate. We heard it recently when exhorting a member to stop being a "oncer." The answer was, "The sermons are of such poor quality that it is not worth my while to take the trouble to go twice" (the wording is ours).

We had to think, right away of those deaf-mute members in Enschede who were always in church twice. Asked why, the answer was, because the Lord is there and because we want to be among His people.

Next, is going to church only for hearing a sermon? What about the other elements of the liturgy? Isn't singing together a wonderful thing? And praying together? Just being there? (Psalm 1, 42, 84, 122, etc.).

Is not such an answer also proof that for some going to church is not so much "sitting down *under* the pulpit" but taking our position *above* it?

We do not defend preaching and preachers. There will be poor, even bad sermons. Preachers will be the first to admit that: poor in content, in set-up, in delivery.

But, apart from the fact that others are richly blessed by sermons which you might call poor, we should consider the following:

1. A sermon, even a "poor" one, must be taken home, digested, meditated on, discussed with the family. To "hear a sermon" may be as difficult as to deliver one. If the hearer is faithful on

his part, the sermon might prove to be not that poor after all.

2. Preaching is not a one-sided, but a *two-sided* business. In Homiletics (the study of preaching) great attention is given to the "spark" that bridges the gap between pulpit and pew. There is a saying, "every nation receives the government it deserves." If people are not interested, do not take part in the nation's business, they will have a socialist, communist or other totalitarian government before they know it. This is, in a way, true for the church too. If there is not hunger for the Word; if the congregation is not busy and active in searching the Scriptures; if the hearts are not open and no claims are being made on the preacher, the preacher may become "paralyzed." Even of our Lord Jesus Christ we read (Matthew 13:58), "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

3. What about our prayers for the pulpit? No, not only our Sunday morning prayers, that we may receive a blessing in church. That's a bit late! Do we pray for the preacher during the week while he is searching the Scriptures and preparing himself for the Sunday. He needs the Holy Spirit. Do we "pray down" the Holy Spirit to the minister's study? You will see what may happen to you when your prayers pull out of the pastor's study "the living preaching of God's Word," Cat. L.D. 35.

In one word, if and when you have thus been praying, you long to go to church not once but twice, to find out what answer God has given to your prayers.

"I'm not in the right mood"

You know the pious excuse for not going to church twice (or sometimes not at all): "I am not in the right mood; do not feel the need, the desire. . . ." A young man asked a minister, "Do you think I ought to come to church when I don't feel like it? There are times when I want to come and really enjoy the service, but there are other times when I have no inclination at all. Wouldn't it be hypocritical to come then?" The minister's answer was, "Well, John, do you only pay the grocer's bill and the rent when you feel like it?" (in D. Walker's book, *The Enemy in the Pew*, p. 60).

Some psalms call going to the House of the LORD, "I will go and *pay my vow*."

Attending church is not only and exclusively to "hear a good message" or something like that. It is paying due honour to the LORD our God who chose to call us out of darkness to light. He is there; He wants to see us there. We do not in the first place go there to hear a good word for ourselves, but to praise and glorify His Name. The mentioned book continues, "Worship is a debt to the discharged independently of our feelings; it is giving unto the Lord the glory DUE unto His Name; hence it is obligatory on Christians. The primary purpose of worship is the glory of God, not the edification of man. God must come first, or man's edification will not follow."

"I was always forced to go"

Here is another "excuse," mostly of younger people. To quote the same book again (p. 58): "I never go to church now because I was forced to when I was young. . . ." "An excuse without validity. At best it is an oversimplification. At worst it represents a total misreading of

the facts. Many people stay away from church *because they were not taken of-ten enough as children* to develop a taste for it. Few stay away because they were given an overdose."

We agree wholeheartedly. We think of parents who either did not give the good example themselves (and will pick the bitter fruits of that!) or always try to excuse their children. They even sometimes do not hesitate to excuse them in their presence by criticizing the minister, the consistory, or the church as a whole.

Let's be careful! May we never have to blame ourselves in any way for seeing our children break with the church because they never learned at home to love the church and to put it in the center.

"Oncing" and witnessing

Our church-going is noticed by "the world." Church-going is an important part of our witnessing. The neighbours see us leaving in the morning, in the afternoon or in the evening. You may be sure they notice that, and sometimes talk about it amongst each other.

They will then also notice if we do *not* go to church. They see us then in the afternoon sitting in the backyard. They know (anyway, some of them do) that the "Dutch church" has two church services, as distinguished from several others which have only one.

They surely must wonder. . . .

Apart from that, as Christians we are concerned with witnessing. We feel that we must evangelize. That means, among other things, what Psalm 122 says, "Let us go to the House of the LORD." Suppose our witnessing is blessed with results, with conversion. New converts are, as a rule, radical. More, sometimes, than old converts. If they develop a taste for hearing God's Word and being assembled with God's people, they will have second thoughts about it all if they discover that the persons who said to them, "Come, let us go to the House of the LORD," are "oncers." They must, then, come to the conclusion that, after all, that church business is not as important as they were made to believe.

"Oncing" and witnessing cannot go together. **C**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Esteemed Editor:

Allow me to make some remarks about the article in the Year-end issue of *Clarion* written by Prof. Faber. We all will agree that Canadian Reformed people are just as vulnerable for the desires of the world as anyone else. With Art. 28 B.C. we confess that all and everyone are obliged to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church. They must submit themselves to its instruction and discipline. What are those brothers and sisters doing who spend 5 or 6 months in Florida? They do not withdraw from the home church, but is the home church able to exercise discipline? Unless the whole consistory of the home church is also in Florida, that is not possible. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper cannot be celebrated either. Discipline and sacraments are intrinsically related, for the 3 marks of the church cannot be separated. I will refer to Prof. Faber's book, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine*. I immensely have enjoyed reading it. On page 165, Prof. Faber says: To the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of

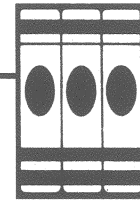
the truth, which is built on Christ's *petra*, the administration of the keys of the kingdom of heaven has been given. In accordance with the Word of His church, if that word is witness to His own gospel. God will judge both in this life and the life to come." What we in fact are seeing is that certain Canadian Reformed people are on a free will basis in dispersion. They all have promised to submit willingly to the admonition and discipline of the church, but the church where they are members is not able to take care of them. Prof. Faber hopes that there will come a little more flexibility. (In Dutch we would say; *de bakens verzetten*) He refers to the time that the J.V. Bond organized "zomercongressen." That was in fact the start, that the 3 churches he mentioned, organized worship services there. People could go there with a travel attestation so that Christian discipline still could be exercised. With a floating population, it is not possible to institute a church with elders and deacons. When it is summer again, people return to Canada and the (eventual) church ceases to exist.

The church should be where the people are, Prof. Faber says, in the book I mentioned; he emphasizes that believers have to join the church. I never heard that any investigation is done whether or not there are other places which are just as healthy, and which are in the vicinity of established sister churches. I am not judging anyone, but let us all be careful that we do not tie our needs "to our ability," or; if we are able to go there, then the need to go there becomes more urgent. "Especially on the day of rest, we shall attend diligently the church of God." I am not saying, that those who go there, are not, or will not be faithful. But there is more to a worship service than reading a sermon, how important it is. If the Christian discipline cannot be exercised in the proper way, then the church is in danger.

W. DeHaan
Wardsville, ON

Response: In an upcoming newsletter for *Clarion*, I will write a little more about this matter and the endeavours of the brothers and sisters in Florida.

J. Faber



How do we confess the true and false church?

G. van Rongen, "True" and "False." How do we Read Article 29 of the Belgic Confession?

The Reformed Guardian, no. 13, 1994, 82 pages. (Available for \$9.99 Can. through Inheritance Publications, Box 154, Neerlandia, Alberta T0G 1R0).

The topic of the church continues to command attention and as such this is understandable given its importance. In Australia, where this book was written (and in Canada?), there are renewed questions being raised about the point of time at which we can acknowledge other churches as faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. As there is more and more ecumenical contact in a shrinking world, such questions arise, particularly it seems when speaking of churches which are Presbyterian.

Rev. Van Rongen, a retired minister residing in Australia and author of study outlines like *The Words of the Divine Great King (Deuteronomy)*, has written a most helpful, timely, and clear study about how we are to read and apply Article 29 of the Belgic Confession in today's situation. Although the Australian context is noticeable in his work, it is at no time a hindrance for non-Australian readers since many of the issues are the same. Indeed, Rev. Van Rongen (who also served within our federation of churches at Grand Rapids) even mentions the ongoing discussions the Canadian Reformed churches have with the OPC (p.1).

Rev. Van Rongen's method in answering the question of the title of his book, is to read through the relevant parts of Articles 27-29 and illustrate from church history what the meaning of our confession is. He shows that Art.

29 about the marks of the true and the false church cannot be read in isolation of Art. 27 which deals with the attributes of the church; namely, that the church is one, holy, and catholic.

Rev. Van Rongen has some beautiful things to say about the unity and catholicity of the church. With our justifiable emphasis on the local church, we must nevertheless not forget that no local church is fully independent in view of the fact that the church of Jesus Christ is one. Rev. Van Rongen quotes Cyprian (died 258 AD) who like others in the so-called early church emphasized the oneness of the church. Cyprian wrote: "The Church is a unity; yet by her fruitful increase she is extended far and wide to form a plurality; even as the sun has many rays, but one light; and a tree many boughs but one trunk, whose foundation is the deep-seated root; and as when many streams flow down from one source, though a multitude seems to be poured out from the abundance of the copious supply, yet in the source itself unity is preserved" (p. 26). He then notes that while Cyprian taught a kind of "pluriformity" within what he considered the true church, Kuyper's pluriformity neglected the distinction between true and false (p. 26).

The early Christian church emphasized the catholicity of the church. There is only one church because the church is catholic, or world-wide and universal. The idea of belonging to such a widely-spread church was of great comfort for the persecuted church. The catholic church is the church that maintains the catholic faith, the faith confessed in the creeds. Important, therefore, in judging a church is whether this catholic faith is preached (think of the first mark of the true church) (pp.

27-30). When a church is faithful to "the catholic faith" (Athanasian Creed) it belongs to the catholic church (p. 78).

The church is holy, but this does not mean that the church is perfect. Augustine called it a mixed society, "God's threshing floor." There is still chaff among the wheat (p. 42). It is noteworthy that in the *Confessio Gallicana* of the French Churches (Art. 27) the true church is known in part by the faith and faithfulness of her members. Also in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession the marks of Christians are mentioned. Rev. Van Rongen notes that the administration of the Word, sacraments, and church discipline must have positive results which are visible in the lives of true Christians who flee from sin and to Christ for forgiveness and the indwelling Spirit. "Wherever the marks of the Christians' are not clearly seen, there is every reason to lay claim to the name 'true church' with modesty!" It is to be regretted that this important element is often overlooked and the church members' reaction to and the fruits of the pure administration of the Word, sacraments and discipline as essential for the true church are forgotten!" (his emphasis, p. 48).

Rev. Van Rongen correctly does not hesitate to endorse the use of the terms true and false with respect to the church. But he also pleads that it not be done in a superficial way, but in the light of the attributes of the church (pp. 57-58). Thus, the first mark of the true church, the pure preaching the gospel, means that the glad tidings of the work of the triune God are preached as related in Scripture and summarized in the Apostle's Creed and subsequent confessions. A church can have different customs and practices but unless it be proven

that those differences derive from a false teaching or heresy, they cannot be impediments to recognizing such a church or group of churches because it is clear that the catholic church manifests itself in them (pp. 59-61).

In Australia questions have arisen within our sister churches about their participation in the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Is there really a unity of the faith between Reformed and Presbyterian churches? Rev. Van Rongen notes: "Differences of opinion or insight in matters such as the way in which the fencing of the Lord's Table is managed, or the manner in which the contact with other

churches has been organized, or less strictly organized, cannot be covered by the term 'differences in what we believe, differences that hinder official recognition of unity of faith'. What the member churches really *believe*, that is: confess, is expressed in their respective confessional standards and these are commonly recognized as being truly Reformed! We are afraid that here again the catholic character of the church is ignored!" (his emphasis). These too are words that we can keep in mind on our continent.

The book ends with a sermon on Q.A. 54 and 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism which Rev. Van Rongen

preached in 1993. Because of the danger that all the talking about the church can lead to forgetting one's personal place and task in the church, this sermon focussed on the personal and had as theme "The confession regarding my place in the church." I won't mention the three points. This book should be bought and read!

In this review, I have of course only noted some items in the book of Rev. Van Rongen, especially those that struck me. This book is highly recommended for personal reading or group study! It will help prevent superficial application of Article 29 of our Confession. **C**

PRESS RELEASES



Classis Pacific, June 7, 1994

1. On behalf of the convening church at Lynden, Rev. W.M. Wielenga opened the meeting in the usual Christian manner. He welcomed the delegates, especially the delegates from the church at Aldergrove who are present for the first time. He also remembered that the call extended by the church at Abbotsford to Rev. A.P. Feijen was declined. The Rev. R.A. Schouten declined the call to the church at Aldergrove which has since called Rev. P. Aasman and are awaiting his decision. The Rev. J. Huijgen declined the call extended by the church at Smithers and Rev. W.B. Slomp declined the call for Home Mission in Smithers. Rev. W.B. Slomp has accepted the call extended to him by the church at Neerlandia, which means that there will be a vacancy in the church at Houston. The wish is expressed that the vacancies in the churches may soon be filled. It is noted that Rev. R.F. Boersema and his family are on furlough and have visited the co-operating churches.

2. The delegates from the church at Langley report that the credentials are all in good order. Classis is declared constituted and the following officers are appointed: Chairman, Rev. D. Moes; Vice-chairman, Rev. M.H. VanLuik; Clerk, Rev. C.J. Vandervelde. The

chairman thanks the convening church at Lynden for the work they have done in preparation for this Classis.

3. The agenda is adopted.

4. The church at Houston requests Classis to release Rev. W.B. Slomp from his duties in Classis Pacific. Classis found all the documents to be in good order and gave Rev. W.B. Slomp his honourable release.

The chairman on behalf of the churches in Classis Pacific thanks Rev. Slomp for the work that he has done in the churches and wishes him the Lord's blessing in the work he will begin in Neerlandia. Rev. Slomp responded with appropriate words of thanks, wishing the brothers and churches the Lord's blessing.

5. Reports:

a. Treasurer report for the Classical Fund and Needy Churches Fund are received.

b. The church at Houston reports on the inspection of the archives which were found to be in good order.

c. The deputies for examination of candidates for the ministry have not yet completed their report reviewing some matters concerning the examination procedures. It will be made available to the churches before next Classis.

6. Question Period ad. Art. 44 C.O.

The churches affirm that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of the major assemblies are being honored. None of the churches needed help of Classis for the proper government of their churches.

7. Appointments:

a. The church at Port Kells is appointed as the convening church for next Classis. Next Classis will be convened on October 4, in Langley. Suggested officers are: Chairman, Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Vice-chairman, Rev. C.J. Vandervelde; Clerk, Rev. J. Visscher.

b. Classis grants the request of the church at Houston for pulpit supply one Sunday a month. They request this supply on a different Sunday than that granted to Smithers so that pulpit supply can be received twice in Houston and once in Smithers and vice versa on the other Sunday when pulpit supply is granted to Smithers.

c. Classis grants the request of the church at Smithers to appoint Rev. C. Van Spronsen as counsellor.

d. Classis grants the request of the church at Houston to appoint Rev. M. Moesker as counsellor.

e. Appointment of Examiners:

Organizing Deputies:

Rev. C. Van Spronsen

Rev. J. Visscher

Exegesis Old Testament

Rev. E. Kampen
 Exegesis New Testament
 Rev. M.H. VanLuik
 Doctrine and Creeds
 Rev. J. Visscher
 Knowledge and Scriptures
 Rev. W.M. Wielenga
 Church History
 Rev. C.J. Vandervelde
 Ethics Rev. J. Moesker
 Diaconology
 Rev. C. Van Spronsen

f. Church Visitors:

Rev. C. Van Spronsen (organizer),
 Rev. E. Kampen, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev.
 M.H. VanLuik, Rev. J. Visscher
 Alternates: Rev. D. Moes, Rev.
 W.M. Wielenga

g. Church for Archives: Church at
 Smithers

h. Church for inspection of
 Archives: Church at Houston

i. Treasurer: A.H. Lubbers

j. Church for auditing the books of
 the treasurer: Church at Vernon

k. Committee for Financial Aid to
 Students for the Ministry: Br. K.F. Hut-
 tema, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. M.H. Van-
 Luik (convenor)

l. Committee for Needy Churches:
 Br. E.C. Baartman, Br. H.A. Berends
 (convenor), Br. G. Boeve

m. Deputies for Classical Preaching
 Arrangements: Rev. C. Van Spronsen,
 Rev. J. Visscher

8. Question Period:

A question is raised whether Clas-
 sis could not be convened via a tele-
 conference when there is very little for
 the agenda of Classis.

9. Censure ad. Art. 44 C.O.

The chairman thankfully takes note
 that it is not necessary.

10. The Acts are adopted and the
 Press Release approved.

11. The chairman closed the meet-
 ing after singing and prayer.

On behalf of Classis Pacific, June 7,
 1994.

Rev. M.H. VanLuik
 Vice-chairman

**Press Release of Classis Ontario
 North, June 10, 1994.**

On behalf of the convening church
 of Fergus, Rev. J. Huijgen opened the
 meeting. He asked the brothers to sing
 Ps. 108:1, read from 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1
 and led in prayer. He welcomed the
 guests and expressed a special word of
 welcome to P. Bedard of the Eglise Re-
 formee du Quebec, and Rev. K. Stuart
 and elder S. Finlayson as observers from
 the Free Church of Scotland.

The credentials were examined by
 the delegates of the church at Elora. All
 the churches were duly represented.
 Classis was constituted. The following
 officers were appointed to serve Classis
 – Chairman: Rev. J. Huijgen, Clerk: Rev.
 G. Nederveen, Vice-chairman: Rev.
 P.G. Feenstra.

Items for Memorabilia:

1. A special welcome to Rev. C. Bosch
 who attended Classis for the first
 time.
2. Congratulations to Rev. P. Aasman
 who was called to Aldergrove.
3. Congratulations to the church at
 Fergus whose minister remains with
 them after declining calls from Ed-
 monton Immanuel and Smithers.
4. Congratulations to the church at
 Guelph upon the acceptance of the
 call by Rev. A. Pol.

5. The ongoing vacancy at the church
 at Lower Sackville was remembered.
 After a few changes were made to the
 agenda, it was adopted. The first mat-
 ter for classis was the examination of
 Johan Plug who requested to speak an
 edifying word in the churches of the
 federation. The student presented a
 sermon proposal on 2 Corinthians 7:1,
 and was examined on his knowledge of
 the confessions. After a positive re-
 sult, Classis decided to allow Johan to
 speak an edifying word for the period of
 one year. A declaration stating Classis'
 decision was handed to the student.
 The form of subscription for students
 who wish to speak an edifying word
 was undersigned by Brother Plug.

The next matter on the agenda was
 the preparatory examination of John
 Louwerse. He presented a sermon pro-
 posal on 1 Samuel 15:22,23. Having
 heard the sermon Classis decided to
 continue with examination. After the
 student was examined on Genesis 28,
 1 Peter 3 and knowledge of doctrine &
 creeds, Classis decided to declare Br.
 Louwerse eligible for call in the
 churches for a period of one year. The
 form of subscription was read and
 Brother Louwerse confirmed his signa-
 ture given on an earlier date. A decla-
 ration stating the decision of Classis
 was handed to the candidate.

A letter of two brothers was de-
 clared inadmissible.

A financial report of the Treasurer
 was received for information.

Visitation reports to the churches at
 Toronto, Fergus, Ottawa, and Guelph
 were received.

Question period according to Arti-
 cle 44 C.O. was held.

CHURCH NEWS



RESIGNED as pastor of the Bethel
 Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto

Drs. R.N. Gleason

who accepted a call to the indepen-
 dent Covenant Presbyterian Church in
 Orange, California, U.S.A..

Synod 1995 to be held at Abbotsford,
 BC will commence, D.V., May 9,
 1995.

NEW ADDRESS:

Canadian Reformed Church
 of Ancaster
 575 Shaver Road
 Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9

The church at Ottawa asked for ad-
 vice on how to present an overture on
 contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Que-
 bec in order to establish full ecclesias-
 tical fellowship. Some suggestions were
 made for Ottawa to consider.

The church at Chatsworth requested
 advice on the question "Is it possible for
 the consistory to allow a member of an
 Independent Christian Reformed
 Church to attend the Lord's Supper."
 Advice was given.

The church at Chatsworth proposed
 a revision of the "Certificate of Admit-
 tance to the Ministry." This proposal
 was adopted.

The church at Chatsworth proposed
 that rather than appointing the chair-
 man of Classis to represent the churches
 at an ordination (installation) or other
 invitations by churches, a neighbouring
 church be delegated to extend greetings
 on behalf of Classis either in person or by
 letter. This proposal was adopted.

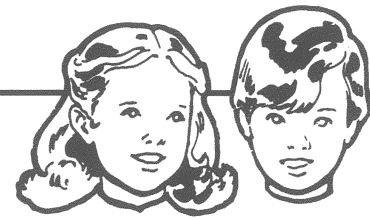
The following appointments were
 made: the convening church for the
 next Classis – Grand Valley. Suggested
 officers – Chairman: G. Nederveen,
 Clerk: J. Huijgen, Vice-chairman: R.N.
 Gleason. Date of next Classis: September
 16, 1994 at 9:00 a.m. at Burlington East.

Question Period was held. The Acts
 were adopted and the Press Release
 was approved. Censure according to
 Art 44 was not necessary.

Rev. Feenstra closed the meeting
 with prayer.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I hope you are all busy having fun doing the Super Summer Quiz Contest! Send me your answers as soon as you can. I know you are all probably pretty busy swimming and going camping, doing all kinds of fun summer activities. But remember to play safely! Remember swimming rules like: Don't go swimming by yourself! Don't dive into an area you don't know! If you play safely it will be more fun, too.

Enjoy the rest of the summer, Busy Beavers, and you can send me your answers at this address: Super Summer Quiz Contest c/o Aunt Betty, One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5.



JUST FOR LAUGHS!

Here are some riddles sent in by Busy Beavers.

From *Busy Beaver Rachelle VanVeen*

How do you shoot a blue elephant?
(With a blue elephant gun.)

How do you shoot a pink elephant with a blue elephant gun?
(Make the elephant hold its breath until it's blue and then shoot it.)

From *Busy Beaver Crystal Slaa*

How did the cat get his new toaster?
(From the cat-a-logue.)

From *Busy Beaver Marcia Rook*

"I am so glad I'm not a bird. Guess why?"
"I give up."
"I can't fly!"

Mother took a good look at Sam. "Oh, my!" she said. "What did you do?" "I fell in the mud," said Sam. "Oh, Sam," said Mother, "with your good pants on?" "Well," said Sam, "I didn't have time to take them off."

"What has one horn, runs up and down the street, and gives milk?"
"I give up."
"A milk truck!"

From *Busy Beaver Joel Jelsma*

Who is best at passing meatballs?
(A football player.)

How does a baker feel about flour and eggs?
(He just loafs them.)

Why was the fruit tree sad?
(He was always getting picked on.)

TONGUE TWISTERS

from *Busy Beaver Rienke Huijgen*.

A billion billion busy bees buzzed busily between Bobby Brown's barns.

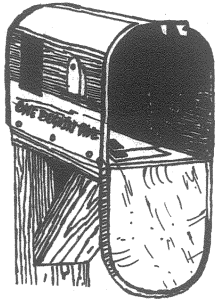
Silly Sandra sat upon some stinging stumps.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to all Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in August. We wish you a very enjoyable day with your family and friends, and also the LORD'S blessing on the year ahead.

Hannah Verhoeff	August 1	Neal Gelderman	16
Joshua Burger	5	Sharon Heemskerk	16
Jessica DeHaas	7	Alanna Jager	17
Laura Dalhuisen	7	Amanda Tamminga	19
Danielle Ostermeier	8	Trisha Van Woudenberg	20
Ryan Linde	9	Devon VanVeen	22
Tim Burger	10	Derek Bouwman	26
Felicia Teissen	10	Shelly Groen	26
Erinna Jansen	14	Aaron Hordyk	28
Tamara VanderBruggen	15	Katrina Meerveld	31





From the Mailbox

Hello, *Joshua Sietsma*. The picture of the bird you sent is sure colourful! Do you see birds like that flying around where you live? Thank you for the Spring story you sent, too. What is spring like in Brazil? Bye, Joshua.

Hi, *Virginia Jager*. I was sad to hear that your Grandpa and Grandma were sick. I hope they are feeling

better now. Your letter is written on such pretty paper! I'm glad to hear you liked your reward for the spring story. You must be happy to have holidays now. Bye, Virginia.

Hi, *Cheryl Jelsma*. Good to hear from you again. That was an interesting puzzle you made. Soon we'll share it with the other Busy Beavers. When other Busy Beavers send in puzzles or quizzes, I decide which ones to put in this magazine. Bye, Cheryl.

Hello, *Laura Rook*. It was good to hear from you again. Yes, I do like the bookmarks you made. You must enjoy drawing. You also like writing poems? Please do send me one! Bye, Laura.

Hi, *Rachelle VanVeen*. You've been busy making puzzles, I see. How are your summer holidays? Hope to hear from you soon. Bye, Rachelle.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Esther Snyder*. Yes, you get a membership card, but no, your letter came too late to put your birthday and puzzle in the June Clarion. What is your family like, Esther? Thanks for the code and I hope to hear from you soon. Bye.

Welcome to you too, *Rieneke Huijgen*. Thank you for your interesting letter. Do you often play in your treefort in the summer? After your holidays please write and tell me about them. When is your birthday, Rieneke? Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Joel Jelsma*. Where are you and your family going camping? How many brothers and sisters do you have, Joel? Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Crystal Slaa*. What is your favourite kind of sticker? What are you and your family doing for holidays this summer, Crystal? Bye for now.

Hi, *Marcia Rook*. What kinds of jobs do you have to do in the gardens? I hope that it doesn't get too hot there! Thanks for all the jokes. Bye, Marcia.

That's all for this time,

Love to all of you,
Aunt Betty



PEN PAL WANTED!

Busy Beaver *Virginia Jager*, age 8, would like to have a pen pal. If you would like to write her, here is the address.

Virginia Jager
General Delivery
Smithville ON
L0R 2A0



The Lord has again richly blessed our family with the birth of a daughter and sister

NICOLE SUSANNE

Joop and Janny Harthoorn

Nicole is a sister for:

*Martin, Peter, Adrian,
Robert, Quinton, Patrick and
Shawn*

Born July 3, 1994

Box 151
Neerlandia, AB
T0G 1R0

Psalm 128:3,4

God has once again richly blessed our family. We give thanks for the birth of our son. We named him

DOUGLAS MACKENZIE

born April 28, 1994

A little brother for:

Gwendolen
Mitchell
Joey
Samantha

Proud Parents

Albert and Marianne Bultena
(nee Tenhage)

RR 2 Belwood
Ontario N0B 1J0

God has blessed us; let all the ends of the earth fear Him! *Psalm 67:7*

We rejoice in the Lord that He has blessed our marriage and made us a family with the birth of our first child, a daughter. We have named her

MEAGHAN GLORIA

born June 29, 1994

Alan and Melanie Datema
(nee Kingma)

191 Bishop Avenue
North York, ON M2M 1Z7