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Giving thanks in the fall

By J. Geertsema

Glory before Death

The fall season brings us towards the end of the year. It does this with its marvellous colours. Many broadleaf trees impress us with their bright yellow and red, while the surviving green of needleleaf spruce and pine amazes us. Along the roads we see the old grasses with their different shades of brown. In it the deep purple of the wild asters seems to compete for space with the ripe yellow of the late flowering goldenrod. Fields with yellow bean plants light up in the sun beside large squares of maturing corn, both waiting to be harvested.

The fall season is also a time of harvesting. Before the year dies away, the fruits of field and garden, of bush and tree, are gathered in to provide food for man and for those animals that man has given a place in his home to serve him. The wild animals will either hibernate or continue to roam around, both being taken care of by the Creator and Upholder of all things.

The fall, it is clear, calls us to give thanks to this Creator and Upholder who is, in His Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. The fall season's colours and harvest are gifts from Him. After the flood in the days of Noah He promised that, as long as this "earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

This promise of God was given for the sake of the coming of Christ Jesus first into the world as a weak and humble servant but, in the future, also in glory with the clouds. God's Son had to appear and suffer in the flesh and die for sin in order to ransom the many sons and daughters of God whom He had chosen and given to His Son. He had to bring them to their glorious destination.

Thus, a fall season with its marvellous beauty that glorifies its Maker and with its harvest that sings the praise of His gracious faithfulness summons us to honour Him with thanksgiving and praise from heart and mouth, through Jesus Christ.

But then, every year this beautiful and abounding fall season ends in a winter time with cold darkness in which God's creation seems to slumber in the grip of death. In fact, the splendour of the fall colours is nothing but a sign of death. Those yellow and red leaves are dying. They have lost the link with life.

Death before Glory

The fall season shows us a passing glory. And the fruits of many days of labour which resulted in another harvest will soon be used up.

This earth is still subject to vanity. Nothing remains. It is the consequence of man's sin. In our hemisphere, the autumn is the year's old age. Soon the beautiful colours fade. The leaves which displayed such a colourful splendour drop to the ground, no longer receiving the life-giving sap from the trees. And on the ground they decay. It is all vanity. It reminds us of Paul's word in Romans 8. God's creation cries for deliverance from its subjection to futility, that is,

vanity. And God's children, too, long for this redemption of God's creation.

Yes, there was a new harvest. God did again provide food to sustain and uphold life on this earth cursed because of sin. The harvest, year after year, will keep mankind alive as long as this earth remains. But the individuals will follow the pattern of the year. They come on earth in the spring-time of their life. They grow and fulfil their task. Then, having gone through their fall season, they too will die. All the food in the world cannot keep them alive. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the eternal glory that was forfeited through sin. God's children know this. They acknowledge that their sin brought this terrible destruction upon God's good creation and in their own life. Their body too, their earthly life, is subject to vanity. So, crying for the redemption of creation, they cry for their own deliverance as well.

This crying is a longing in hope. God created the world, the visible and the invisible things, earth and heaven, through His eternal Son. Through this very same Son, now incarnate, He reconciled all things to Himself, the visible and the invisible. Christ Jesus made this peace through His blood, in His sacrifice at the cross as act of obedient love to God and to His people. Therefore, He was raised to a new life, He ascended to the throne at God's right hand in eternal glory.

This is the basis for the hope of God's children that also from them and from this still beautiful creation vanity, death, will be removed. Once, long ago, in their father Adam and mother Eve, God's children were appointed priestly kings over God's earth. When Christ returns, they will reign with Him over a new earth in glory like His.

The fall season makes us rejoice in the Creator. His creation is so beautiful. The fall season makes us thankful, too. Our gracious Father has provided food and clothing and whatever is needed for His world again. The fall season makes us also sad. All this glory and plenty still ends in death. But then again, as God's children through faith in Christ Jesus, we do not despair. We are comforted by God's promise in Christ for all those who believe in hope.

Also in the fall, with our joy and gratitude and sadness toward our God, we confess to belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, with body and soul, both in life and in death, because by paying for our sins with His precious blood, He set us free from all the power of the devil. Through springtime after springtime, with its sowing in tears, and through fall season after fall season, with its reaping in joyful gratitude, but also through sadness after sadness when confronted with death, we believe, He preserves us in the salvation obtained for us.

We confess not only this, but also that by His Holy Spirit He makes us heartily willing and ready to live for Him and to die for Him when our time comes. Yes, through His compassion only, through God's sovereign grace, we can and want to thank Him for all His mercies, also for labour and harvest this year, and in gratitude to seek to live and work with Him toward the coming glory. **C**

Evangelical – Roman Catholic Truce?

By R. Schouten

At Easter of this year, a prominent group of Roman Catholic and Evangelical leaders released a document entitled “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium.” Among the 40 signatories are various names perhaps not unknown to the readership of *Clarion*, for example, James Packer, Chuck Colson, Pat Robertson, Richard Mouw, Herman Schlossberg, Mark Noll, Os Guinness, and Richard Neuhaus.

The document immediately grabs the interest of those reared on the food of Reformed preaching and the Reformed confessions. The clear intent of the document is to encourage cooperation between evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the great task of bringing the Gospel to the world. Urgency is given to this desired cooperation by the obvious and growing secularization within western civilization. The writers fear that continuing division between Rome and the Evangelicals plays into the hands of the common enemy which is unbelief.

The statement is made that “As Evangelicals and Catholics, we dare not by needless and loveless conflict between ourselves give aid and comfort to the enemies of the cause of Christ.” Further, it is alleged that “In many parts of the world, the relationship between these communities (Evangelical and Roman) is marked by more conflict than cooperation, more by animosity than by love, more by suspicion than by trust, more by propaganda and ignorance than by respect for the truth.” The authors of this document want to confess their sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples.

The overall direction of the document is quickly apparent. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are being called to recognize each other as

brothers and sisters in Christ. Members of both groups are included in the body of Christ and are therefore called to work together to proclaim Christ as the answer to our myriad social ills.

A common basis?

The Reformed believer wants to know how it is possible for Roman Catholics and children of the Reformation to work together in the great cause of world mission. Do these two groups hold to the same Gospel? Do they confess and worship the same Christ?

After an introduction, the document continues with a section entitled “We Affirm Together.” We read that, “All who accept Christ as Lord and Saviour are brothers and sisters in Christ.” This minimal confession is supplemented by the Apostles’ Creed. All who adhere to these articles together constitute the one church of Christ.

On the basis of what is together affirmed, the writers want to bring the Gospel to the world. “Unity and love among Christians is an integral part of our missionary witness to the Lord whom we serve. . . .As Evangelicals and Catholics, we pray that our unity in the love of Christ will become ever more evident as a sign to the world of God’s reconciling power.”

The basic thrust here is quite clear. On the basis of common love for Christ, evangelicals and Catholics have to respect each other and work together to bear witness to the world. The underlying message is that so long as people together love Christ, their differences are not relevant to the task of mission. Questions about exactly who Christ is and what He has done for His people or inquiries about the meaning of a specific article of the Creed would be unwelcome intrusions in this environment of loving cooperation. What

unites the Evangelicals and Roman Catholics is seen as more significant than what divides. Doctrine divides, but love unites.

Differences relativized

A following section is entitled “We Search Together.” Here we find a candid admission of remaining differences between Rome and the Evangelicals. Among various differences mentioned are these: doctrine of the church, doctrine of the sacraments, doctrine of Scripture, and the place of Mary and the saints.

While this list is minimal (for example, no mention is made of differences in the doctrines of justification and sanctification), we are still reminded in this list of the language of our own confessions against the Roman communion. As Reformed people who believe that Rome is involved in a fatal and idolatrous conflict with Scripture, it is hard to understand how the above differences would allow for cooperation in mission. No attempt is made to resolve the differences. Instead, the writers attempt an endrun around the differences by means of a generic definition of Christian faith: “Again, we cannot resolve these disputes here. We can and do affirm together that the entirety of Christian faith, life, and mission finds its source, center, and end in the crucified and risen Lord.”

A common task

The fourth section of the agreement is entitled “We Contend Together.” It begins with the statement that “As we are bound together by Christ and his cause, so we are bound together in contending against all that opposes Christ and his cause.” First in priority for united action is preaching the Gospel. “To proclaim this Gospel

and to sustain the community of faith, worship and discipleship that is gathered by this Gospel is the first and chief responsibility of the church."

One cannot disagree with this nice summation of the task of the church. However, the question remains: how can the divergent messages of Rome and of the Reformation be used to gather and preserve the one church? Do they not proclaim different Gospels? Do we not confess that the true preaching of the Gospel is the first mark of the true church, and that we find this mark woefully lacking in the Roman fellowship?

In the further paragraphs of this fourth section we arrive at the heart of the document. Here we find an appeal to fight together for "moral truth" and against relativism. We must work together to preserve religious freedom in America. The document commits the signatories to fight together in order to protect human life against the encroachment of the culture of death. We need a common Evangelical-Roman front against abortion, euthanasia, pornography and for parental choice in education as well as a free, market economy.

Mutual respect

The last of the paper bears the heading, "We Witness Together." Here the problem of "sheep stealing" receives attention. It is found lamentable that "Evangelicals and Catholics attempt to win 'converts' from one another's folds." The point is that both groups must direct their missionary efforts not toward each other, but toward the unconverted. Mutual respect for each other as legitimate and equal manifestations of the body of Christ is a basic requirement. We read: "As is evident in the two thousand year history of the church, and in our contemporary experience, there are different ways of being Christian, and some of these ways are distinctively marked by communal patterns of worship, piety and catechesis."

Evaluation

Reformed readers will regret the apparent sell-out to Rome. The legitimacy and faithfulness of Rome to the Gospel is simply taken for granted. True, differences are recognized, but these are quickly declared irrelevant to the great task of reaching and keeping the world for Christ. Basically, the signatories are saying that Rome and the

Evangelical churches are together Church of Christ and working for the same goal. As Reformed people, we will have to take a different line. We will say that Rome lacks the marks of the true church of Christ. Members of the Romish faith must be called to forsake the false worship of God.

It is true that Rome maintains the ecumenical creeds together with the churches of the Reformation. The Reformers brought the church back to its truly catholic roots in the first centuries after Christ and called Rome to repent of heretical medieval developments. In this sense, we share a common foundation. We can also quote in this respect from the *Lectures on Calvinism* of Abraham Kuyper. In the sixth lecture which concerns "Calvinism and the Future," Kuyper describes the intellectual, spiritual and moral bankruptcy of his own times and rejects the idea that renewal for the West will come via the Roman Catholic Church.

Nonetheless, Kuyper doesn't want to deny common ground with Rome: "Though the history of Reformation has established a fundamental antithesis between Rome and ourselves, it would nevertheless be narrow-minded and short-sighted to underestimate the real power which even now is manifest in Rome's warfare against Atheism and Pantheism. . . . A so-called Protestant need only mark in his confession and catechism such doctrines of religion and morality as are not subject to controversy between Rome and ourselves, to perceive immediately that what we have in common with Rome concerns precisely those fundamentals of our Christian creed now most fiercely assaulted by the modern spirit."¹

Yet, it would be a grave error to suppose that the common basis of the ecumenical creeds means essential unity. Rome agrees with the Reformation and with all the Evangelicals with respect to the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. However, in the doctrines of salvation and Scripture and of the Church, there are fundamental divergences.

For example, Rome condemned the Biblical teaching of justification by faith only apart from works as rediscovered in the Reformation. Calvin calls this doctrine the main hinge on which religion hangs. Rome, however, places the same doctrine under its terrible anathemas. Listen to what the Counter Reformation Council of Trent stated in Canon 11: "If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the jus-

tice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which they were justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema." And again, to quote Trent: "If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in divine mercy which remits sin for Christ's sake alone. . . let him be anathema."

The decisions and statements of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), as confirmed by the First Vatican Council (1870) and the Second Vatican Council (1965) remain Roman Catholic dogma to this day. They constitute a basic denial of the Gospel of God's sovereign and free grace. They have not been rescinded and by definition cannot be taken back without the collapse of the whole Romish system.²

Underlying the present document is the assumption of the primacy of social ethics over doctrine. Society is falling apart and the Christians are unable to work effectively due to their ecclesiastical wars. The urgency of the moment compels us to lay aside differences and work for the preservation of the values of Western Civilization. In order to really affect the politics of our times, and to have impact in the abortion/euthanasia crisis, we must agree that we are one in Christ.

Charles Colson

Chuck Colson is one of the names at the end of the Evangelical-Catholic statement. In his recent book, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness*³, we find the same pragmatic urging of Christian cooperation in order to strive for social renewal in a time of crisis. In chapter nine, we read these words: "In the West, every area of life is being undermined by the dominate secularist world-view. Myriad moral issues confront our society – the dignity of life, medical ethics, religious liberty, justice – and God's people belong out the trenches together. This was the appeal of Solshenitsyn and Schaeffer and Kuyper. Nothing less will enable the Church to stand against the surging forces from the "Great Deep" as Calvin called it" (p. 114).

Colson's book contains many fascinating accounts of how Christians can make a difference in the ugly secular world. Although Colson is no theologian, he is a talented and inspirational story-teller and social commentator, which makes the book worth reading.

Reason for gladness is Colson's refreshing statement in this book that being a Christian is more than a private transaction with Jesus (p. 65). Colson knows that any resurgence of Christianity depends on a renewal not merely of Christians, but especially of the Church. For there is no such thing as Christianity apart from the Church (p. 32). And by Church he means the organized community of believers with preaching of the Word, sacraments and discipline. Colson chides evangelicals who forget the corporate and structured nature of the Church. He even quotes Calvin to the effect that whoever withdraws from the visible church is a traitor (p. 70) and he criticizes churches which cling to independence.

Troubling, however, in Colson's book, is his easy solution of the ecumenical problem. His idea is that while in the local church, there must be insistence on doctrinal unity, in the church universal, we must tolerate and accept doctrinal diversity (pp. 89 & 105). Examples of difference to be tolerated include views on baptism, free will, the spiritual gifts, church government, the millennium. Calvinists and Arminians will argue forever, so let them put aside their differences to work together for Christ (p. 105). Thus, whether a person is an Arminian, a Calvinist, a Baptist or a Roman Catholic makes little difference. Despite their differences, all can work together in evangelism and in social activism. That Mother Theresa belongs to an idolatrous church is of no account, since her work proves her love for Jesus. If she loves Jesus, then she is family, a sister in Christ (p. 87).

Throughout Colson's book, the leading thought is that when believers start working together in various types of outreach, denominational lines disappear and then Christians really begin to make an impact on society. Since making an impact on society is the real goal, we can forget about the doctrinal standards of our own so-called denominations. On Sundays we may go to a church which insists on certain doctrinal beliefs as mandatory for membership, but on Mondays we can work together with Christians from the various denominations of the universal church who contradict those same doctrines, because after all, we are still brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is hard to see how such an approach can fail to undermine the confession of the Church. We may not

have different standards of membership for the local church than for the church universal. After all, they are one and the same Church! If we say that we believe in salvation by grace apart from works, that children are included in God's covenant of grace, that the Lord's Supper is not a continuation of the sacrifice of Christ, that the spiritual gift of tongues has ceased, that we may not pray to saints, and that the doctrine of free will is a heresy, then it is impossible to affirm that other churches which contradict these doctrines are equally valid expressions of the body of Christ.


Working together?

Can we work together with other believers of different churches in various social causes? Undoubtedly, in some cases we can and we should. As long as we don't involve ourselves in doctrinal compromise, we may freely join hands with people who are working for the improvement of society and preservation of moral values. However, in the work of evangelism, we would find it impossible to work with Baptists, Arminians, Charismatic, Roman Catholics and social do-gooders of a more liberal bent. After all, the real hope of society is in the powerful

Gospel of Christ Jesus, the Christ who is proclaimed in the Gospel confessed in the Church.

The problem is that social action frequently involves evangelism. Suppose that a Roman Catholic lady and a Reformed lady are working side-by-side in a crisis pregnancy center. Or, imagine the Reformed lady side by side with an Alliance church member who is infatuated with the literature of premillennialism and can think of little else than the imminent rapture. A troubled girl enters and seeks help. She is frustrated and confused. The ladies bear witness to the girl of Christ and the help and salvation in Him. She believes. But now what? To what church will the new convert be directed? Shall the workers at the crisis center divide the spoils? One convert here and another there? Or, shall they leave the decision to the uninformed decision of the new convert? A Reformed Christian could never do otherwise than to warn a new convert against joining the Romish Church or for that matter the Alliance Church.

Whether we work for social causes with Baptists or Roman Catholics or adherents of the United Church of Canada, we cannot altogether avoid the ecumenical problem. Working together



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to fight for social causes while accepting denominationalism as a fact of life is only a short-term solution at best and tempts us to be content with confessional minimalism. In the end, only real unity of faith and real church unity can maintain a strong social witness. The world is adrift in a sea of relativism, leading to a host of social ills. We don't help the world a bit by relativizing the doctrines of the Church. 

¹Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 183.

²For a readable description of the basic and continuing errors of Rome, see C. VanDam, "Roman Catholicism" in *Test the Spirits* (Winnipeg: Premier, 1979), pp. 103-120. See also P.G. Schrottenboer, ed., *Roman Catholicism. A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988). The conclusion of this book is completely different than that of the docu-

ment under discussion. Schrottenboer writes: "Standing in that faith (the Reformed faith, R.S.) we have encountered obstacles in Roman Catholicism as it manifests itself today that seriously impede fellowship and cooperation between evangelicals and Roman Catholics and are unsurmountable as long as there is no fundamental reformation according to the Word of God in the church of Rome. It is our fervent prayer that such a reformation may take place" (p. 84).

³Charles Colson, *The Body. Being Light in Darkness* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992).

Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 1:6-14

"All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer . . ."

DEVOTED TO PRAYER

The ascended Lord had regathered His flock of scattered sheep. They were all together in the upper room in Jerusalem. What did they do? From a human point of view, what would have made sense?

One thing they could have done was give moving testimonies about their personal experiences with Jesus and especially about how He had gathered them in. Peter could have made them weep with his story about how he had denied the Lord three times and about how the Lord had restored him by asking him three times: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Matthew the tax collector would have had a wonderful story to tell about his conversion experience. Simon the Zealot could have given an interesting talk comparing and contrasting the Liberation Theology of the Zealots with the Liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ. Imagine the testimony Mary Magdalene could have given about how the Lord had cast seven demons out of her! And what about His brothers? James, Judas and Simon could have shared hundreds of stories about the childhood days of their special brother. And Mary! Oh, what stories she could have told about her eldest son.


That's one thing they could have done.

There was something else they could have done. They could have developed some church growth strategies and set some immediate and long range goals for reaching the unsaved – 100,000 converts by the year 50, and 1 million by the year 100.

They could have done things like that. But they did not. What did they do? They prayed. We read nothing about brief but moving testimonies. We read nothing about church growth networking strategies adopted from famous American soap companies. They prayed. Luke tells us that the believers, whom Christ had gathered together immediately after He had ascended into heaven, devoted themselves to prayer with one accord. They stayed at it. They persisted in their praying. They devoted themselves to prayer.

They prayed for strength and wisdom to carry out the work Christ had given them to do. They were to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. With one accord, with one heart and voice, they prayed for the strength to do this work.

Christ, through the Holy Spirit, gave them the strength. The book of Acts is proof of that. First the church preached the good news of Christ in Jerusalem. Then the believers went out into Judea and Samaria. From there they conducted missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor. The book of Acts ends with Paul preaching in Rome.

The church still has the task of preaching the gospel of the risen and ascended Lord at home and to the end of the earth. That's the church's job. With one accord, united in Christ, we must pray for strength to do that job. By the Holy Spirit He will strengthen us for this task. 

The Independent Christian Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches¹

By C. Van Dam

A. Historical Background¹

Without knowing our past, we cannot understand the present and without knowing the past, we will more easily repeat any mistakes that may have been made in the past. It is for that reason, that we should start off with a very quick historical overview. Especially for our young people, this may be a very important reminder of what they have already learned in school or catechism class.

Prior to 1944, we, our parents, grandparents or ancestors who were members of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands were sister churches of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). In the 1940s during World War II, these Reformed churches in the Netherlands were in a state of internal upheaval. In 1944 (fifty years ago) an ecclesiastical liberation took place due to doctrinal and church political matters. Unbiblical teachings about baptism and covenant were imposed on the churches, and the Synods of Sneek-Utrecht (1939-1943) and Utrecht (1943-45) acted in a hierarchical way. So these Reformed churches were rent asunder by controversy and when ministers who were unable to teach the decisions of Synod were deposed, an ecclesiastical liberation took place. When the immigrants from the Reformed churches who had liberated themselves from the Synodical Reformed Church in 1944 came to this country, they soon discovered that they were only welcome in the CRC if they agreed to keep silent about the struggle in the Netherlands. Through this and other actions, the CRC chose the side of the synodical churches and considered the Reformed Churches (Liberated) as a new church and not the faithful continuation of the Reformed churches. Because members of the Liberated churches

could not, therefore, in good conscience join the CRC, Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) were established, beginning in the early 1950s.²

It should, however, be stressed that the establishment of the Canadian Reformed churches was done with some reluctance and it was a last resort; for, there was a strong desire not to needlessly multiply the number of "denominations." The immigrants felt a duty to join the CRC. After all, we were so recently (as Dutch sister churches) brothers in one ecclesiastical home and Christ does not want His church divided. However, joining the CRC proved to be impossible without denying the ecclesiastical struggle the immigrants had just gone through in the Netherlands. Yet, and it is important to note this, the CRC was not lightly dismissed. Synod after Synod of the Canadian Reformed churches dealt with this church and our relation to it. Two appeals were issued, in 1963 and in 1977, warning our brothers and sisters in the CRC about the damage that their sister relationship with the synodical church in the Netherlands was having and would have on them.

In view of that long relationship and ongoing contact with the CRC right up to 1972 (when the CRC Synod officially broke it off), it is small wonder that CanRC people have been following developments in the CRC with great interest. Our roots are the same and there are even several broad similarities between what is happening now in the CRC and what happened in the Netherlands fifty and more years ago. For why are there difficulties in the CRC? Why are people leaving? To understand the present situation properly, we must briefly look at the answer to this question.

B. Secessions from the CRC

Two prominent personal testimonies have been published in *Christian Renewal*, the magazine for the concerned in the CRC and those who have left. In these testimonies, the main reasons for the unrest and the secessions from the CRC are summarized. The first was by Dr. P.Y. De Jong, former Professor of Practical Theology at Calvin Seminary, author of *The Church's Witness to the World* (1960, 1980), an explanation of the Belgic Confession, and now a retired minister living in Iowa and the second by Rev. E. Heerema, another prominent conservative in the CRC who has written two books on the history of the CRC, and was one of the founding editors of *Outlook*, a magazine of conservative opinion in the CRC.³ The trust of both of these testimonies is that the CRC is in the process of abandoning its Reformed character both in the way decisions are made by synods and by the way Church Orderly issues are dealt with. With respect to the first, the Scriptures are no longer the norm for ecclesiastical decisions on the issues of the day, such as those involving Bible and Science, women in office, and homosexuality. Concerning the second, classes lord it over churches by deposing office bearers and synod supports such actions.⁴ The CRC has clearly become hierarchical.

One who knows his history will recognize that for precisely the same general reasons for which secessions now take place from the CRC, the ecclesiastical liberation of 1944 took place. In issues confronting the church then, respecting baptism, the Scriptures were not the first and final authority and church orderly the synods of the day acted in a hierarchical manner. By maintaining a sister-church relation with

the synodical churches, the CRC had left themselves open to unholy influences in the synodical churches, influences which have made their mark on the CRC both church politically (hierarchical) and doctrinally (unreformed).⁵

C. Independent CRC and Canadian Reformed

In light of the above, small wonder that CanR people sympathize with those concerned in the CRC and those who have seceded from the CRC and contacts have been made, both on an individual grass roots level and also at the level of office bearers. With regard to Eastern Canada, since the summer of 1991, unofficial meetings have taken place in the Hamilton area in which representatives of the concerned in the Christian Reformed Church, the newly independent churches, and Canadian Reformed churches have held informal talks. By the spring of 1992 the circle was widened to include representatives of the Orthodox Christian Reformed churches and the Free Reformed churches. Since those attending these meetings were predominantly theologians, the average church member was not involved. Yet, these questions are also important to them.

In light of the situation, the Burlington Reformed Study Centre decided to organize a series of three evenings dealing with the question of Reformed identity and ecumenicity to bring the issues closer to the average church member. The second evening dealt with the concerned and former Christian Reformed and Canadian Reformed; and the third with what should be done between the latter two.

At the present time, to the best of my knowledge, the vast majority of Canadian Reformed churches that are close to an independent CRC have some form of contact or discussion with these churches. Such contact and discussion with the independent churches is completely in line with the appeals to the CRC in 1963 and 1977 and it demonstrates again the real concern for true ecumenicity that exists in our midst. Indeed, this sensitivity to ecumenical issues is one of the fruits of our own Reformed heritage. In a sense, one could say that the situation of today is somewhat parallel to what happened in the previous century. Then there was the Secession of 1834 and the Doleantie of 1886, both away from the Dutch Reformed (state) Church. They found each other in 1892 under the name the Re-

formed Churches of the Netherlands. In this century we had the liberation of 1944 from the Reformed churches (Synodical) and we are experiencing secessions from the CRC, the sister church of the Synodical churches. Will the Canadian Reformed and the independent CRC and those who left earlier, the Orthodox CRC, find each other in a unified church, as those who had seceded from the same body found each other over a hundred years ago?

In answering this question, let us briefly consider two issues that have dominated discussions so far. Next, let us see what the CanRCs as federation have done and how we should approach the future in this regard.

D. Issues

1. The Lord's Supper

Right from the beginning of contact with the independent CRC churches the matter of admission to the Table of the Lord has been and continues to be a point of discussion. The CanRC have as a general rule that the table is open to communicant members of the congregation and to guests who are communicant members in good standing of sister churches. Although this general rule does allow for some exceptions, for example, the admission of guests from non-sister churches under certain circumstances, the question is repeatedly raised whether our practice is not too strict and restrictive.

In discussions with the brothers on this issue, it has been pointed out that

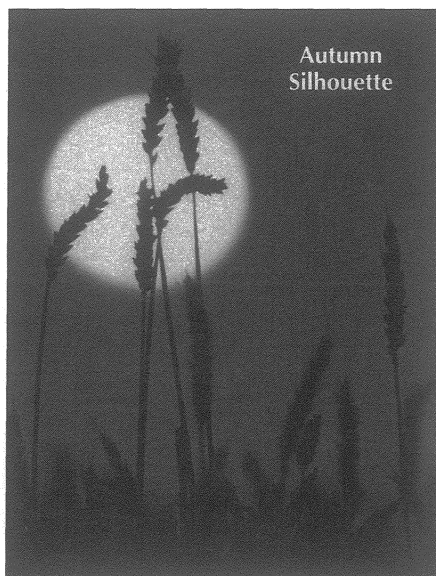
the practices found in the Canadian Reformed churches is in reality the practice of the churches of the Reformation and it is in line with the practice in the CRC until about 1975.⁶ Discussions on this issue continue, as readers of *Christian Renewal* are aware.⁷ If the facts of the matter, in particular the CRC's own historic stance and what the CanRC are saying about this issue are clear or cleared up,⁸ I do not see this issue as being a lasting stumbling block in discussions with the independent churches, unless some of them consciously opt for leaving the historic Reformed line on this matter and make a clear choice for a freer admission to the table. But, then it should also be recognized that this is not being true to their own heritage.

2. The true church

What the CanRC confess with respect to the true church seems to be a particularly sensitive issue for those in the independent churches. It is said that "the CanRCs think that they are the only true church." Recent discussions in *Christian Renewal* have shown that this caricature is alive and well, not always without reason.⁹ It is, however, a caricature which is exposed as such by past and recent actions of the CanRCs on the ecumenical front both at home and abroad. To refer to our recent past, one can think of our participation in the International Conference of Reformed Churches and the overt and implicit recognition given to churches participating therein as well as the appointment by Synod Lincoln, 1992, of Deputies for Ecumenicity with a view to promoting the unity of Reformed believers in this time of secessions from the CRC.

Something else needs to be mentioned here. The CanRCs have a rich heritage also respecting ecclesiology and we have learned to think confessionally about the church gathering work of our Lord. In a continent heavily influenced by the ideas of denominationalism, the pluriformity of the church and relativism, speaking confessionally about the church and also speaking about true and false churches and about churches which are en route to becoming false churches may sound harsh and unreasonable. Although such speaking must, of course, be done very carefully, at the same time a confessional church can be expected to make use of her confessions and try to apply them to the situation in which she finds herself in. The CanRCs want to be serious about her confessions,

OUR COVER



also when they speak about the unity of the church and do want to apply them to her life as church. Such a concern and attempt, if done in the right spirit, should be appreciated and cannot be held against the CanRC.¹⁰

3. Other issues

Other issues that have been raised in one form or another include the Book of Praise, Church Order and matters pertaining to liturgy. These are basically secondary issues that have rightly not dominated the discussion. At some future point, they will need to be discussed.

The Canadian Reformed churches have revised linguistically and otherwise our creeds and confessions and so have the CRC. We will need to sit down and sort out which is to be preferred. We also have a *Book of Praise* that was produced because we did not wish to adopt the *Psalter Hymnal* for use in our worship services. This matter too should be looked and carefully considered and a solution be proposed.¹¹

(to be continued)

¹⁰Text of a speech delivered in several Canadian Reformed congregations earlier this year.

²See, e.g., W.W. J. VanOene, *Inheritance Preserved* (rev. ed., 1991), 35-80; G.Ph. van Popta, "Our Dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church of North America: An historical perspective and some thoughts for the future," *Clarion*, May 24, 1991, pp. 256-259.

³The testimonies can be found in *Christian Renewal*, November 9, 1993 (P.Y. De Jong) and March 7, 21, and April 4, 1994 etc. (E. Heerema). Already in 1991 a classical committee of the CRC reported on withdrawing from that church. See C. Van Dam. "Leaving the CRC,," *Clarion*, Nov. 8 and 22, 1991. Also cf. E. Heerema, *Letter to My Mother* (1990).

⁴See summary in *Christian Renewal*, November 9, 1993, p.9.

⁵For the church political, see the Canadian Reformed Appeal of 1963, reprinted in T. Plantinga, ed., *Seeking Our Brothers in the Light*, esp. 92-83. For the doctrinal, see the Canadian Reformed Appeal of 1977, reprinted in T. Plantinga, ed., *Seeking Our Brothers in the Light*, esp. 105-108, 113-121 and e.g., P.Y. De Jong in *Christian Renewal*, November 9, 1993, p. 9.

⁶See respectively, C. Van Dam, "Fencing the Lord's Table [Press Review]," *Clarion*, May 8, 1992, pp. 182-183; G.Ph. van Popta, "Admission of Guests to the Lord's Table," *Clarion*, October 8, 1993, pp. 423-425.

⁷Rev. P.G. Feenstra wrote "Guarding the Lord's Supper is for Guests too," *Christian Renewal*, August 1993, p. 7 to which readers responded; e.g., N. Hegeman (Sept. 13, 1993), J. Tuininga (Sept. 27, 1993); R. Schouten (Dec. 13, 1993); J. Tuininga (Jan.

24, 1994); G. Wieske and G.Ph. van Popta (Feb. 21, 1994).

⁸Cf. the letter to the editor by Rev. B. Beuke-
ma in *Christian Renewal*, Feb. 21, 1994 who stresses the principles that can bring us together on this issue.

⁹As an illustration of its sensitivity let me only note the following. A member of a CanRC (R. Janssen) wrote in a letter to the editor in *Christian Renewal* (June 28, 1993, cf. also the issue of Oct. 25, 1993) stating that "as far as I can see all churches (except the Canadian Reformed Churches) have departed from the clear distinction of the confession about the church. Therefore, as far as I can see, all these churches exist in conflict with the confession." Although this writer did not want to call other churches like the independent CRCs and the Orthodox CRCs false churches, his statements are clearly untenable and his letter confirmed for some a caricature of the CanRC that we say that we are the only true church. A vigorous discussion ensued in the pages of *Christian Renewal*. Respondents to R. Janssen's letter and the discussion included W.H. Pols (Aug. 1993); T. Hoekstra (Nov. 22, 1993); R. Schouten (Dec. 13, 1993); J. Tuininga (Jan. 24, 1993); Joe Tuininga, Neerlandia (Feb. 7, 1994); B. Bikker (March 7, 1994); W. Reinink (Feb. 21, 1994).

¹⁰Cf. on this subject G.H. Visscher, Cl. Stam, C. Venema, B. Short and J. Faber in C. Van Dam, ed., *The Challenge of Church Union* (1993), 100-102; 107; 113; 135-136; 162-163; 166-167; 188-189 respectively.

¹¹Cf. J. Faber in C. Van Dam, ed., *The Chal-
lenge of Church Union*, 189-191. **C**

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Tell me no lies

"Cretans are always liars." Thus spoke the ancient philosopher Epimenides, a native of the island of Crete. It seems the Cretans were infamous liars. The word "Cretan" has even entered the English language as a synonym for liar. The Oxford Dictionary gives the following definitions. Creticism: Cretan behaviour, i.e., lying. Cretize: To play the Cretan, i.e., to lie; to outdo by lying.

Ancient Cretans may have been liars, but so are modern Canadians. If Canadians never lied, the courts would be empty. Instead, the courts are backlogged with cases to try. That people lie, evade the truth, colour the facts, and refuse to own up to what they have done, keeps the judges and the lawyers very busy.

The father of lies

The devil is the source of all lies. In John 8:44 the Lord Jesus said: . . . (The devil) has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." The devil is the father of lies in that he spoke the first lie. This first lie ever uttered is recorded in Gen. 3:4 where the devil said to Eve: "You will not die."

What does lying do? Lying breaks relationships. God has created us with the ability to speak and write. By way of speaking and writing, we communicate. When people begin to lie, communication breaks down and relation-

ships are destroyed. If a husband lies to his wife, their marriage is headed for the rocks. If a businessman is not truthful with his partner, they will not be in business together for very long. We all know people who have reputations for lying. We "doubt his word." We think he is "stretching the truth." We find such behaviour contemptible.

So did the apostles. Paul categorized liars and perjurers right down there with murderers, fornicators and sodomites (1 Tim. 1:10). John made a close association between liars and the Antichrist (1 John 2:22). Of course! All lying is anti-Christ who is the Truth. John saw in his vision that murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars will end up in the lake that burns

with fire and sulphur, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

The Oath

To counteract the lie, God gave the oath. He allowed men to swear by His Name. He gave His Name so that people could bind what they say to it to guarantee the truth. In Deut. 6:13 God said: "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve him and swear by his name." Israel was not to swear by the names of other gods which were mere idols. If they had to underline and guarantee the truth of their words, they could only do so by swearing by the Name of the only true God who alone knows the hearts. Because the LORD knows the heart, he can bear witness to the truth, and He punishes those who swear falsely.

God was very good to man in putting His Name at man's disposal. On the basis of God's testimony, we can build and rebuild relationships. Our speaking to one another is placed on the firm foundation of the Name of God. An oath sworn in the Name of God is a mighty strike against the father of lies.

We can be thankful that we have the oath, and yet the need for the oath gives reason for sadness. The only reason God gave the oath is because men and women are, by nature, liars – children of the father of lies. If we never lied, there would be no reason for the oath. However, in the world, the need for the oath remains. Witnesses have to be put under oath. Because the lie is alive and well, the courts of the land need to insist that

witnesses will ". . . speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help (them) God." Because the words of man are lighter than a breath, we need to "swear in" men and women who hold political or magisterial offices in the land. They need to swear before God that they will be faithful to the duties of their office.

In the world, we need to assume that people will lie. "The world" has recently produced a movie called True Lies. In the world, antithesis between the truth and the lie is gone. The lie prevails. We need to suppose that men and women will speak according to the nature they inherited from their father the devil. As we confess in Article 36 of our Confession, we believe that God has ordained civil officers because of the depravity of mankind and to restrain sin. Besides the sword, God has given the oath as a tool to bridle the effects of man's evil.

In the church

We know from the Word of God and our own experience that the lie reigns in the world. But it should not, it cannot, rule in the church. We are no longer children of the father of lies. We are children of God the Father through Christ who is the Truth. We are recreated in the image of Christ, are we not? We are prophets by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Prophets of God speak the truth. In the church, we do not need the oath anymore. In our Christian families, the oath is unnecessary. When we communicate with one another, we

do not need to call upon the Name of God once in awhile to guarantee the truthfulness of our words. Our Yes is always Yes; our No is always No. We know that we speak in the presence of God all the time. Every word we speak has the character of an oath. We always speak and act as people who've been "sworn in" and "put under oath."

When you were baptized, then your parents made promises. They were not put under oath. When you make a public profession faith, you will be asked to make a promise. You will say: "I do." No one will ask you to swear in the Name of God. In the church, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, the victory over the lie has begun. We know that every word we speak is spoken Coram Deo, in the presence of God.

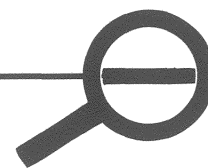
Let us speak to one another conscious of the presence of God. He hears us as we speak. He reads our hearts like open books. Tell no lies. A person who always speaks the truth never has to remember what he has said. It is the habitual liar who must always remember what he has said to whom. Sooner or later he paints himself into a corner, hemmed in by his Technicolor lies. And he will be found out – if not today, then on the day of judgement.

Let us speak the truth in love. Let us speak as those who have been saved from the father of lies by the One who Himself is the Truth. Let us talk and communicate as those who speak in the very presence of God. C

PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam

Assembly News



News about two Presbyterian assemblies that Canadian Reformed churches have a special interest in have been published recently. The Free Church of Scotland held their General Assembly in late May and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church had their 61st General Assembly in early June. What follows is a selection of items dealt with at these assemblies and as reported on

in the *The Monthly Record* and *New Horizons* respectively.

THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Training for the ministry

The Free Church has their own official training for the ministry in Edinburgh at the Free Church College where eighteen of their own students are en-

rolled in the three-year program along with "seven private students taking a full course; and five taking the one-year Post-Graduate Diploma – four of them from Korea, the fifth being . . . of the Free Church in Southern Africa." Also a Peruvian will be coming for the full three-year course of instruction.

It is of interest to note that matters pertaining to the training for the ministry

come to the General Assembly via a report of the committee for the training of the ministry. This committee presides over the selection and training of candidates, processes applications of ministers wishing to join the Free Church and conveys the College report to the Assembly.

Since the Free Church has an important Gaelic element in their church membership, it is not surprising to read that "the Senate has provided a class for Gaelic-speaking students, focussing on Gaelic theological terminology, Gaelic theological literature and 'terms distinctive of Gaelic liturgy'."

The Free Church is very thankful for their Free Church College. In a box elsewhere in *The Monthly Record* we read:

It is our conviction that we should as a church be profoundly thankful for the fact that we have our own theological training establishment. One of the plainest lessons of past years in some other denominations is that when churches give up their control over the appointment of their professors they virtually hand over the training of their future ministers to outsiders. When churches become indifferent to the importance of their theological institutions they run a risk of exposing themselves and their future ministers to dangers.

Their appreciation for their College is also evident in the report submitted by a Special College Committee which looked at the functioning of the College and in particular its curriculum and methods of assessment (i.e., exams). It is a sign of strength when a College is able to submit itself to rigorous self-examination from time to time.

Contact with the government

Among the several committees making presentations, there was one for contact with the government. It reported on their responding to discussion documents submitted to them by the government on a variety of ethical and other issues. The Committee was also represented on two organizations which try to influence social values in key areas, such as keeping stores closed on Sunday. The Committee is also in the process of producing practical leaflets addressing current issues such as the needs of the elderly or young people in the community.

Ecumenical relations

A positive report was delivered on the meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches held in Zwolle, the Netherlands last year. It was also noted that among others the Free Church in Central India was admitted.

In other action, the General Assembly accepted the offer of a "sister church" relationship with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands.

Missions

As is clear from reports made to the General Assembly, the Free Church is active in mission work. Positive reports were heard from South Africa, Peru (where Free Church missionaries are active in the Evangelical Seminary of Lima, and bookshops are run in northern Peru), and about Christian Witness to Israel, an organization devoted to bringing the gospel to the Jewish people, and a ministry in which the Free Church participates. There was also a report on church extension work among immigrant communities in Scotland.

THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (OPC)

Missions

Encouraging reports were received on new churches that no longer needed financial assistance and the ongoing work of in the local churches as well as new work in church planting. The membership of the OPC rose by 2.7% in 1993 to a total of 19,198.

With respect to foreign mission, the general secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions

spoke of the almost overwhelming opportunities which lie before the church in its worldwide harvest field. The Committee has received requests for aid (men, not money) from Belgium, Burundi, India, Mongolia, Nigeria, Peru, Thailand, Uganda and other areas.

Workers have been going out. Biran Wingard teaches in Kenya at the theological school of the Reformed Church of East Africa. Haulu Mekonnen and his family have settled in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he trains pastors and evangelists in the whole counsel of God. The Telfers have joined the Tawses to serve in Eritrea. . . . Don Poundstone reported on his

work at the Evangelical Study Center in Cyprus, which trains leaders in local Middle Eastern churches. Our missionaries also help the Reformed Church in Japan plant new churches in the Tohoku region, bring the good news of the Great Physician as medical treatment is provided in Kenya and proclaim the gospel in both English and Dutch in Suriname and witness to God's grace in Taiwan.

Reports were also received on work done in Korea.

Ecumenicity

The OPC recognizes that its initials do not stand for "Only Perfect Church!" The church also recognizes that the term *ecumenical* has often come to describe an effort at union that involves unbiblical compromise. However, Christ's prayer for his church, "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:22), needs to be carried out, not only within our church, but with other churches as well. We do communicate and seek to work together with those who share the Reformed faith. The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) gives advice on relationships between our church and other churches, both in this country and in other nations, and helps "maintain and nurture those relationships established by the General Assembly." Yet consideration of its report proved both exciting and frustrating for the Assembly. Debate over its recommendations certainly consumed a disproportionate amount of the Assembly's time.

Some churches, especially more distant ones, sent letters of greeting. At various points in the Assembly, fraternal delegates sent by other churches brought greetings and described the work they are doing.

The OPC has had fairly close contact with the Reformed Church in the United States for a number of years. This church, once known informally as the Eureka Classis, has its roots in the German Reformed Church. Like the OPC, this church was received into the International Council of Reformed Churches in 1993. Its Synod, meeting May 14-16 in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, instructed its Interchurch Relations Committee to request a

joint meeting with the OPC's committee "for the purpose of opening discussion which might lead to organic union." Before the Assembly passed a recommendation responding affirmatively, a few commissioners expressed surprise and joy at a church seeking to discuss union with us.

Fraternal delegates were present from the Free Church of Scotland and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. There apparently was no Canadian Reformed representation.

A historic event occurred at this General Assembly. In 1938, two years after the formation of the OPC, the OPC was split when a group left and formed the Bible Presbyterian Church. This year, the OPC General Assembly was informed that this church was now

seeking fraternal relations with the OPC. That must have been joyful news! May this be the first of more steps to come closer together.

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

The fraternal delegate from the CRC tried to allay concerns in the OPC about the developments in the CRC. Long discussions about how best to respond to the CRC situation took place. In the end,

the Assembly adopted a motion which instructed the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations "carefully to confront representatives of the CRC with our concerns about what we perceive to be their church's (corporate) sinful conduct" in several matters, including

its toleration of the ordination of women and "its toleration of unbiblical aspects of the CRC statements concerning homosexuality."

. . . The motion also placed on the docket of the 1996 General Assembly . . . the question of severing our fraternal with the CRC. The last several assemblies have seen some form of recommendation to end the relationship with the CRC supported by a minority. This year the minority seemed to have grown.

In conclusion

Reading through the General Assembly reports was a most encouraging exercise. It was again a reminder of God's faithfulness who keeps and guides His own by His Word and Spirit wherever He call them to serve Him. **C**

"... Agreed upon by a majority vote. . .", Art. 31 C.O.

By J.D. Wielenga

Of more than local interest

The Press Release of Classis AB/MB, May 17-18, 1994, in *Clarion* June 17, 1994, reported that Classis March 1994 had violated its own Classis Regulation Art. 7. C2 when it declared the motion to admit the Church at Denver carried, in spite of the fact that the motion was not supported by the majority of delegates entitled to vote.

No one was aware of the violation at the meeting. Classis, by force of habit, had simply deducted the one abstention from the total number from which to determine the majority. Instead of reaching a majority of delegates entitled to vote, it reached a majority of delegates who actually voted. This is common practice, and correct practice, when voting for instance for office-bearers at congregational meetings.

The question arises if Classis unwittingly did the right thing under a wrong

and luckily forgotten rule. In that case it is better to revise the rule to bring it in accordance with common and proper practice. Or does the rule have merit, so that the right thing to do is to revise the common practice accordingly?

We believe that this question deserves the attention of a wider circle than the churches of classis AB/MB alone. It is of common interest for the whole federation. It concerns the way we conduct our ecclesiastical business.

Responsibility to vote

Regulation Art. 7.C2 reads as follows:

"Any motion or election by ballot shall be considered adopted when it receives the support of more than half of the number of Classis members present and entitled to vote according to Art. 32 C.O."

Decisions can only be made with the favourable support of the majority of the delegates of the churches entitled to vote. (Art. 32 C.O. stipulates which delegates are not entitled to vote). Delegates entitled to vote but abstaining from voting, withhold their favourable support from a motion. They reduce the required majority needed for carrying the motion, just like a "no" vote does. An abstention has the same effect as a "no" vote. It counts as a vote against a proposal.

Is this proper? Does it make sense? I believe it does. For think about it: to abstain from voting is virtually leaving classis. One withdraws himself from the decision-making process. One leaves that to the other delegates. It has become our common practice to allow this, by deducting the abstentions from the total number from which to determine the required majority.

Art. 7.C2 of the Regulations is based on a condemnation of this practice. Rightly so, for delegates are sent to the assemblies with the mandate to make decisions on matters made known via the Provisional Agenda. They are not sent to withdraw themselves from making decisions by abstaining from voting, i.e. by “leaving classis,” by abdicating their responsibility, by leaving the responsibility for making decisions to a segment of the delegates, a romp-classis.

Rule 7.C2 reminds the delegates that it is not possible to withdraw from the decision-making process. To abstain from voting is to withhold support from a motion. It functions as a “no” vote. Rightly so. After all, to withhold support by abstaining is declaring that one is not in favour, or not sufficiently in favour to take responsibility for a proposed matter.

True, to abstain is equally declaring that one is not necessarily against a proposed matter. But that is not the point, for the fact remains that what is needed is a majority of those who are in favour, not of those who are not necessarily against.

Rule 7.C2 does not allow delegates to shirk their responsibility to make decisions. It reminds the delegates that their abstention from voting reduces the number of “yes” votes and therefore may well lead to the defeat of a motion. It tells the delegates that if they cannot vote in favour, the logical and responsible thing to do is to vote against. And if they are not against a motion, the responsible and logical thing to do is to vote in favour.

Not ready to vote

It can happen that a delegate does not know how to vote, and for that reason abstains. He does not know if he has to be in favour or against. In that case, his abstention is simply his statement that he is not ready to vote. But if delegates are not ready to vote, classis is not ready to make a decision. The deliberations must continue, if necessary at an extended or a next classis. It is absurd to allow the assembly to be reduced to a romp-assembly in order to come to decisions. Under the “accepted practice,” two delegates out of, say, 18 could make a valid and binding decision for the churches.

Reformed history: unanimous decisions

Competent commentaries on Reformed Church Polity mention that the

Reformed churches from the beginning (Emden 1571, Dordrecht 1578) sought to implement as rule that the assemblies make their decisions with one accord, unanimously. Jansen (Korte Verklaring-1923, page 146) is of the opinion that, in all likelihood, the fathers had the practice to vote twice on a matter: first a vote to learn the opinion of the majority of delegates (they were asked each individually about their opinion), and then a second vote to determine if all delegates could accept to turn the majority-opinion into a binding decision. Jansen writes that in later years the second vote was eliminated on the tacit assumption that the minority conformed to the majority-opinion. The principle of desired unanimity was maintained. The majority was not supposed to rule over the minority, and didn't.

Reformed history: patience and sensitivity

D. Nauta (Verklaring van de Kerkorde, 1971, Kok, p. 137) writes that it ought to be worth something to the churches to come to unanimous decisions. It may be necessary for that purpose to put off a decision until further orders and a better occasion. All within reason, of course, for practice teaches that total unanimity remains usually an ideal beyond reach. In order not to paralyze church-life, there comes a point where one has to make decisions by majority vote. But even so, as F. L. Bos writes, with reference to Arnhem 1902, (De Orde der Kerk, page 116), “When a minority has principal objections against the opinion of the majority and is unable to conform to it, it may be prudent for the sake of the well-being and peace of the churches, to refrain from making a decision or to refrain from implementing a majority-decision.”

Christian sensitivity would counsel not to force on the minority a decision which the minority has great difficulty to live with, but nevertheless would have to live with if it desires to maintain unity with the federation. It is doubtful, to say the least, if the Reformed fathers would have made or implemented a decision which would force a minority of churches either to cooperate in classis with a church which they on principal grounds consider a schismatic church, or otherwise to terminate classis cooperation altogether. Sister-churches should not force such dilemmas on one another. Christian patience and sensitivity as


pursued in the past and still recommended in the present, would not force the issue and would not want a majority to rule over a minority, let alone a majority which does not even constitute the majority of the delegates. Patience and sensitivity would rather continue deliberation and discussion, the more so when the ecclesiastical road is not exhausted, when there are still avenues open to come to unanimity, with the help of the wider federation, be it the unanimity of a majority decision, but then one to which the minority can conform in good conscience.

“. . . agreed upon by majority vote.” in Art. 31 C.O.

Art. 31 C.O. does not prescribe by what criterium the majority-vote must be determined. It is incorrect to state that Art. 31 C.O. would assume or even prescribe a majority of one half plus one of the votes cast, while deducting the abstentions from the total number of delegates entitled to vote. In the light of the sentiments of the time in which this article was adopted, the assumption that Art. 31 C.O. would allow for making binding decisions by a vote of 2 in favour, 1 against and 15 abstentions, seems to me making another farce of Art. 31 C.O. It simply flies in the face of the unanimity the fathers desired, and it tends to promote the thought that a majority, however conceived, may rule over a minority, a thought which they abhorred.

Regrettable regression

In my opinion, Classis Regulation Art. 7.2C is a good regulation. Revising it to bring it in accordance with “common practice” would, I believe, be another step back from sound Reformed principles. The regulation does not stipulate unanimity, the ideal, which is practically unattainable. But it stipulates at least that a majority of delegates must declare themselves in support of a proposal in order to become a decision. That is closer to the ideal than the possibility that a minority of delegates makes the decisions for the churches, by counting out the abstentions.

The church is not the world. It is the body of Christ. His opinion must be counted in the decision-making process of His churches in the line of Phil. 2:1-4. Could it be that the fathers understood the mind of Christ better than we their children? That would be the most regrettable regression of all. 

Neerlandia Rejoices!

By M. Hamoen

With great joy and thankfulness, the congregation at Neerlandia gathered on August 21, 1994 to witness the installation of its sixth minister of the Word. Rev. G. Wieske led the service and chose as text Ephesians 4:11a, c, 12: *"And his gifts were that some should be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."* From that text we can see that Christ blesses His church with the gift of pastors and teachers:

1. Their immediate task is to equip the believers in His service.
2. Their ultimate goal is that the church is built up.

Paul teaches us in his letter to the Ephesians that a minister of the Word is a gift from Christ, used by Him to equip the saints for a life of faith and holiness. In this way, the saints will be enabled to use the special gifts granted them to the benefit of the church. We can only humbly give thanks that Christ **wants** to equip each member for His service by the means of a pastor whose work is focused on the building up of the church.

However, the goal of the minister – to see Christ's body built up – won't succeed unless the congregation receives his teaching with a believing heart. This building up of the Body is to be done carefully and cautiously, for the Body is delicate – all its members are indispensable. But when its members forget the harmony between doctrine and life, the Body of Christ suffers. When all members work for the building up of the church, Christ as its Head is glorified. The only way the health of this Body can be maintained is if preaching and practice go hand in hand.

Rev. Wieske also spoke some personal words to Rev. Slomp and the congregation. He reminded Rev. Slomp not to forget that Christ sent him to the church at Neerlandia. Rev. Slomp was encouraged to use all his talents for one purpose, namely to equip the saints for the work of ministry. At the same time, the congregation was reminded to hold its new minister high because of his of-



Rev. and Mrs. Slomp enjoying their Welcome Evening

vice. We are to receive this pastor as a gift from Christ, and show thankfulness for this gift in our care for each other. In this way the Body of Christ will be built up.

After the service, our consistory chairman, Mr. L. Terpsma, officially welcomed Rev. Slomp to our congregation. Rev. E. Tiggelaar spoke some words of congratulations and welcome on behalf of the church at Barrhead and the *Alberta-Manitoba Classis*. Four letters received from churches within the classis were also shared with the congregation.

In the afternoon, we gathered to hear the Word proclaimed in Rev. Slomp's inaugural sermon. He chose as text Galatians 1: 8-10. *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ."* From that text

Paul instructs us not to receive any gospel contrary to the pure preaching of God's Word:

1. Such a Gospel is meant for the salvation of all believing men, but
2. Such a Gospel is not meant to please all men.

Paul is very upset with the Galatians. Unaware of what is happening, they have opened themselves to false teachers, putting the Gospel at stake. They have begun to believe that they can be righteous by keeping the law; a teaching which elevates man in his own eyes and appeals to his pride.

Such a teaching is exactly what Satan wants us to believe. But if we begin to believe we can keep the law, our very salvation is at stake. For only until we see our own depravity will we go to the throne of grace.

However, this does not mean that the law has no function. Christ came to fulfill the law, not abolish it. By His death, the curse of the law was removed. The doing of the law then becomes a fruit of the Spirit; a matter of grace.



Rev. Slomp & Mrs. Slomp presented with Neerlandia History Book "A Furrow Laid Bare"



Rev. Slomp presented with an album consisting of all families with brief histories and pictures.



Rev. Slomp Welcome Evening – choir singing

This teaching is not one that will appeal to human nature for it does not feed our pride. But, we have been bought with Christ's blood, and out of thankfulness, wish to serve Him. Since a minister is also a servant of God, he cannot be a pleaser of men, for his task is to preach what God has revealed. He cannot in any way com-

promise the Gospel to say what man wants to hear.

The church at Neerlandia has been greatly blessed. We have been granted salvation by grace alone through Christ's death. Now we have received a minister of the Word, who comes not with human wisdom, but the wisdom of God. May our Lord give Rev.

Slomp all he needs to remain faithful in his task, so that the church at Neerlandia is built up in the true faith.

Welcome evening

On August 22, 1994 the congregation at Neerlandia gathered to extend a formal welcome to Rev. Slomp and his family. The evening was full of good fun, many songs, and great thankfulness.

After the chairman opened the evening, our M.C., Mr. P. Groenwold, and many members of our congregation took to the stage to say "Welcome!" in their own way. This included songs from children of the congregation, a performance by the church choir, music played on mouth organs by Mr. and Mrs. N. Terpsma, and anecdotes about the past and present Neerlandia. A number of skits were also performed, one exploring a visit to the Theological College, another telling of the dangers involved when 3 ministers go golfing together.

The Slomps were also given a list of ways they could tell they were in Neerlandia. A number of them were:

- if you hit the ditch on the way to the store, the news of your trouble will get there before you do;
- you always arrive at 8:15 for an 8:00 meeting;
- if you call a wrong number, you will still end up talking for at least 15 minutes; and
- in spite of all its faults, all Neerlandians will agree that Neerlandia is the best place in the world!

Rev. and Mrs. Slomp were presented with a photo album of the congregation at Neerlandia, giving a brief history of each family. As well, they were given "A Furrow Laid Bare" – a book chronicling the history of Neerlandia since 1910. They were also warned to stay within the boundaries of the hamlet during hunting season, something which Rev. Slomp questioned in his closing remarks. He wondered what the hunters would mistake him for, a moose, a bear, a deer. . . ? (He hoped it would be the last one.)

All kidding aside, he expressed his thanks for the warm welcome he and his family had received since they arrived in Neerlandia. He indicated that he is looking forward to living in Neerlandia, and hopes that we may be a blessing to each other. Above all, he gave thanks to our Father who made it possible for him to move to Neerlandia. We at Neerlandia can see, with humble praise, how richly blessed we are with the gift Christ has granted to us. **C**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

In his "News Medley" of 16 July, A.D. 1993, the Rev. VanOene quoted from the Chatham bulletin regarding the use of individual cups for the Lord's Supper. In a previous "News Medley" mention was made of at least one church that has already adopted individual cups. It appears that the question of individual cups versus the common cup is a recurring with greater frequency, and I would like to offer my thoughts on this subject.

Scriptural basis

There is certainly no scriptural basis for the use of individual cups. On the contrary. Both the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke state that on the night of His betrayal, our Lord "took **the cup**." St. Paul, in writing to the Christians gathered at Corinth, also speaks of **the cup** (1 Cor. 10:16; 1 Cor. 11:25). These very words are quoted verbatim in the "Form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper" in the *Book of Praise*.

Spiritual basis

As if the scriptural basis were not enough, the use of individual cups is contrary to the whole spirit of communion. St. Paul employs the Eucharist as an paradigm of the Church's unity in 1 Corinthians 10:16. The Body of Christ, which we receive from **one** loaf, and likewise the drinking from **one** cup, reflect that we are **one** in Christ. Hymn 46, based on the *Didache*, speaks of the unity that the Lord's Supper demonstrates: "As grain, once scattered on the hillsides, was in the broken bread made one."

Historical basis

From the Apostolic Church until now, the unbroken tradition has been to follow the precedent established by our Lord Jesus Christ of using a common cup. It is worth noting that, even though at the ritual Passover meal there would have been more than one cup available, Jesus explicitly commands

His disciples "drink ye all of it" – not "drink ye all of *them*."¹

Justin Martyr (100-165) in his description of the Eucharist says: "Then bread and **a cup** containing wine and water are presented to the one presiding over the brothers." The Antiochene chalice, one of the oldest extant Eucharistic vessels,² is an amazingly large cup. Once again, demonstrative of the practice of the common cup. Moreover, the Reformers purged many abuses that had come into practice of the Roman Catholic Church, but neither Jean Calvin nor Dr. Martin Luther did away with the common cup.³

Origin of individual cups

The introduction of the individual cups is a recent phenomenon. At the beginning of the twentieth century, professors Friedrich Spitta and Julius Smend recommended the use of individual cups for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Europe, mainly on aesthetic and hygienic grounds. However, the desire for *real* table fellowship weighed more heavily than aesthetic and hygienic considerations, and the use of individual cups was rejected.⁴

On the North American continent, the introduction of individual cups originated in those churches that do not regard the mystery of this wonderful sacrament, which is so well expressed in article 35 of The *Belgic Confession*.⁵ This influence appears to be gaining foothold in the Canadian and American Reformed churches, almost entirely on the basis of the supposed hygienic advantages of individual cups over the common cup.

Cleanliness

The public health issue has gained more attention with the present-day concern over the acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Research has shown, however, that one does not get AIDS from the common cup. Moreover, the common cup is from a hygienic point of view of disease control

the cleanest means for Holy Communion – more sanitary, indeed, than individual cups; it is after all our hands which are most likely to transmit diseases, and each individual glass is handled probably right on the drinking rim, because of the small size.⁶ Indeed, it is almost sacrilegious to speak of sanitation in connection with the Lord's Supper and it is difficult to imagine the Apostles hesitating to receive the one cup from their Lord in fear of another's germs.⁷

Conclusion

The introduction of individual cups is a recent phenomenon, that differs from the scriptural practice of the church. No biblical rationale is provided for a deviation of the liturgical practice of the church, and the supposed hygienic concerns have been proven wrong. Moreover, individual cups are directly contrary to the meaning of communion. St. Paul, in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth (chapter 10, vv. 16-17) stresses the importance of the elements of the Eucharist as the symbol for Christian unity: just as we receive the Body of Christ from one loaf, and drink the Blood of Christ from one cup, so we are one body in Christ.⁸

Drs. Pfatteicher and Messerli comment:

The use of pre-filled individual glasses destroys the significance of the one cup, is excessively individualistic (which is contrary to the spirit of the sacrament), and is totally undesirable historically and theologically. The use of paper cups is distasteful aesthetically, liturgically, and theologically; and disposal cups of plastic or paper are the product of a garbage-producing, throw-away culture that respects neither the creation nor the sacramental element.⁹

The foregoing clearly demonstrates that the use of individual cups has no scriptural, spiritual, historical, and hygienical

basis. The common cup, on the other hand does.

Lest one think that this issue is a minor matter, consider the following notice which appeared in a recent issue of *Forum Letter*:

A Texas subscriber sent along an advertisement from Christian Concepts Company for "pre-packaged communion services." They look like little plastic cream containers, the sort poorer restaurants hand out by the handful with a cup of coffee. But these are each emblazoned with a cross on the handy-dandy peel-away lid. Just peel the top and kick it back. Amen.¹⁰

Receiving the Lord's Supper in this format would certainly be hygienical, and the availability of this "product" is only a logical extension of the use of individual cups. Yet, this *modus operandi* would undoubtedly be greeted with significant reservation if it were introduced in the Canadian Reformed churches.

May the above observations stimulate further thought, so that appropriate scriptural, historical, and spiritual consideration will be given to the issue of individual cups versus the common cup in the Lord's Supper.

Yours in Christ,
Dr. P. Janson

¹St. Matthew 26:27, St. Mark 14:23, St. Luke 22: 17,20

²It is held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

³*Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article XXIV:1

⁴*The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, s.v. "Communion."


⁵Some even suggest that individual cups "were introduced to prevent Christians from different races from the same cup, in the same way as Blacks in South Africa are prohibited from drinking from fountains reserved for Whites only. Individual glasses were introduced as a means of racial segregation (Apartheid)!"

⁶Rev. Dr. G. W. Lathrop, *AIDS and the Cup: Notes for Parish Use*, in *Parish Practice Notebook* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Theological Seminary), Fall 1987

⁷*Incarnate Word Tract Series*, Number 16: *One Cup*.

⁸It is, therefore, preferable that *one single loaf* is being used for the Eucharist; as the *Didache* prayer says: "many scattered grains from the hillsides gathered into one." See also Hymn 46 in the *Book of Praise*.

⁹P.H. Pfatteicher and C.R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), p. 244.

¹⁰*Forum Letter* (March 29, 1993), p. 6. 

Dear Mr. Editor:

May I make a few remarks about Rev. VanOene's News Medley in the May 6, 1994 issue of *Clarion*? He trusted to provide "sufficient material" for "serious thought."

Our respected friend writes: "the place of the woman (should he not have written mother) is in the house. . . ." Mom should be home when the children come home from school." Then he asks, "But what if both parents work?" I realize Rev. VanOene was not treating the subject of working mothers here in detail. He is simply offering here an example where it may be difficult for a consistory to discern whether or not it should involve itself. He concludes that if they do get involved in such a case, "that all sorts of consequences are drawn from that, including a "thick volume with all sorts of rules and regulations."

My problem is this; even though Rev. VanOene has stated the unwritten rule himself, is it such an insignificant one which, when broken, would not warrant a visit from an elder or deacon? The question - "What if both parents work?" to me does not form an end-all for discussion. When moms go to work it is on purpose. She has a reason for it. What is that reason?

Rev. VanOene gives an example: When school boards ask sisters to teach. This is a fairly safe example because in these cases mom has been requested to help out, usually on a temporary basis. It is not ideal and is avoided if possible, especially if she has children below school age at home.

I would like to have seen an example of a case where a mother actively pursues employment and accepts a position with hours that will require her children to return to an empty house or be sent off to Oma's or Aunt . . . to be babysat. Do we say, "Oh well, both parents work! What can you do?"

To reject working mothers outrightly is not what I am saying. But when it involves her work as mother being shifted to another, then it is not inconceivable to me that a ward elder desires a visit to find out why. The concern is for the maintenance of the family. Rev. VanOene agrees with this when he writes he "would not advocate that all mothers seek employment outside the house." What puzzles me is his fear of consequences if consistories should get involved. Well, this is 1994, and I know

this topic has been discussed at countless homevisits for many years now. Where are all the feared rules and regulations? Should we not rather fear the consequences of just letting things go in the churches? It is because of the constant warnings from articles, the pulpits, and home visits that more mothers have not left already the kitchen for the office. And are we ever thankful for that.

Finally, it seems to me that our friend comes down quite hard on consistories. If a person was not familiar with our churches, after reading the article, he could form a very low opinion of our esteemed brethren who "pass judgement, condemn and rebuke." A wrong impression! The article leads the reader immediately into siding with the working parents, while pitting them against and putting down the rather untamed-unreasonable consistory! This is a far cry from an elder who, out of love and concern, wants to make sure that if mom is going to work, it is not going to be at the cost of her children.

Rules and regulations do not help. But in an area as important as this one, the brothers can give, not "opinions," but leadership about what is right, and what is wrong in the practical questions.

Wayne Weidenhammer
Elora, ON 



League Day 1994 of the Women's Societies of Manitoba

The singing of our League Day song reflected both the anticipation and the purpose of the day as we, the Women's societies of Carman and Winnipeg gathered together at 10:00 on June 8th in Carman for our annual league day. Our president Joanne Termeer welcomed over 80 ladies including several members of the Independent Reformed Church – Winnipeg. Together we read Psalm 104 from the Word of God, then the president led us in prayer, asking for a blessing on this day. Minutes of the previous League Day were read by Corrie Leach. Before Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer gave his speech entitled "The Earth is the Lord's," we sang Psalm 24:1 and 3.

Rev. De Boer began with the statement that Psalm 24 confesses the greatness of the Lord. Because the earth belongs to the Lord we must take care of it. He then traced the rise of environmental concerns beginning with the 1930s when people were occupied with survival and when technology advanced with war materials, through the 50s when the machinery of war was changed to machinery for construction, the 70s when all the land of the world was claimed and attention was focussed on college, statistics, population growth, food and birth control. The 80s saw heightened activity by Planned Parenthood, wide acceptance of birth control and abortion. In the 90s there was a change in thinking about environmental care – it became a religion, tied in with the New Age Movement and earth worship.

Among Christians there have been two attitudes, one that there is no environmental problem, based on our increased life expectancy, the other that Christians must preserve resources and seek alternatives.

Dr. Douma was quoted (pilgrimage view) stating that our stay here is tem-

porary and what is here is given by the Lord for use; all things are subservient to the preaching of the gospel. According to Dr. Vanderwaal and Dr. Faber, the Lord gave us creation as a place for worship. The earth is our God-given home where all cultural activity must be done in obedience to the Lord.

How do we view our sojourn here? Max Weber, well-known sociologist, accused Calvinists of using the earth in a careless way and expecting renewal on the new earth. In Genesis 1, God tells us that He created man to subdue and have dominion, not destroy, the earth. Man is to act as steward, as keeper. Psalm 8 tells us about the glory of creation and the elevated position to which God created man.

Sin disrupts everything, the ground is cursed, creation groans in travail (Romans 8). Man is banned from the Garden of Eden. In this situation God provides for His children by giving them a land of their own with complete instructions for worship and for the use of this land. This possession was to be used to honor God.

Today also, we are stewards placed on this earth to worship God in all our activity. We may use this earth in the service of God and need not worry about the sinful misuse of this world by others. We believe that the Lord will indeed make all things new.

During the following question period the Greenpeace movement was discussed. The pilgrimage view of Dr. Douma and the use of this earth as the home given us as expressed by Dr. Schilder was further discussed. Emphasis was placed on our use of creation as stewards in the service of God.

On behalf of all present, Liz DeWit thanked Rev. DeBoer for his work and presented him with a gift certificate to the concert hall (Winnipeg Symphony

Orchestra). We then sang Psalm 8:1 and 5.

Lunch was a cold plate, buffet style, but, as we all agreed, much more elaborate than anything we would ever cook up at home. At Nap read a poem for our entertainment. Guests from out-of-the-way places were especially welcomed. Our appointed entertainment committee also devised a way of forcing the board members to provide the entertainment – all in good fun.

In preparation for the afternoon's speech we sang Psalm 119:40 and 49 and then read Ephesians Ch. 1.

Rev. J. VanRietschoten introduced his topic – How to Read the Bible – with as subtopic "Oh, those differing Bible translations." He reviewed the principles of Bible translation as done from the early church to the present day.

In the early church, translations occurred as the need for them arose. Jerome was the first official Bible translator. Because of copying errors which had occurred in previous translations, he deemed a new translation from the original languages necessary. He and Augustine emphasized the Bible as one unit – one covenant, one author.

The Holy Spirit interprets the Old Testament in the New Testament, hence they must be translated together, with reference to each other. Hugo de Groot followed the heresies of Socinius in the time of the Synod of Dort, denying the evangelical content of the Old Testament. He viewed it as natural law, and the New Testament as Christ's interpretation of the natural law. Therefore the translation of the Old Testament must be kept separate from the light of the New Testament. King James I saw the danger of Socinius' teaching and authorized a translation according to the principles of Augustine and Jerome. Philip Marix was given this work.

Rev. Van Rietschoten showed us the practical implications of these principles in our Revised Standard Version Bible as he explained the reasons and terms of the footnotes. He stressed text comparison and full use of text reference and concordance as a way in which we ourselves may determine the accuracy of Bible translation and as a #1 tool in Bible study.

Questions that arose were – How can you justify the choice of principles of Augustine/Jerome over Hugo deGroot? and What is the infallible word of God

when we look at all the Bible translations? The word of God is infallible but we must indeed be very careful in our choice of translations.

Rev. Van Rietschoten was thanked and presented with a Concert Hall gift certificate as a token of our appreciation by Liz DeWit. Our president, Joanne Termeer, then thanked the ladies for the excellent food and refreshment throughout the day, also everyone else who had a part in the organization. The ladies were reminded to sign greeting cards for Brazil. The

ladies from Winnipeg Canadian Reformed Church and the Independent Reformed Church thanked us for a wonderful day.

Together we sang Hymn 10:1,9, and 10 whereafter Rev. Van Rietschoten led us in prayer thanking our heavenly Father for the countless blessings bestowed on us. A final social period followed before we left for home, richly blessed by this day.

for the Women's Society
"Rejoice in the Lord"
Liz DeWit – vice-president **C**

SCHOOL CROSSING

By T.M.P. Vanderven



Another Beginning

1. *School Crossing* has been absent from the pages of our family magazine for some time now. Our apologies for this; we intend to again become one of the "regulars." After all, education is and remains a major interest for all of us. Our oldest school, William of Orange Christian School in Cloverdale, hopes to open its doors for a new season of teaching and learning for the thirty-ninth time (since 1955). Our youngest schools in Denver and Chatsworth, hope to receive their students in September for the very first time. All in all, in the 1994-95 season, more than 3,500 students will be attending 24 American or Canadian Reformed schools, taught by approximately 200 teachers.

Consider these scant statistics for a moment, and contemplate the blessings from the Lord hidden in them.

2. Not only the public school, but also the Christian schools at times receive more criticism than thanks, and it is, therefore, easily forgotten that these schools are symbols of God's grace rather than of our achievement. At the beginning of a new school year, it is good to remind each other of this. To-

gether, parents and teachers, we are committed to serving the Lord when we educate our children. The home-school bond is vitally important to the well-being of the schools. It was, therefore, disappointing to read in a recent school bulletin that this bond had been loosened somewhat: *The high school teachers, like the elementary teachers, no longer visit parents at home as a matter of course. Visits will be made where teachers, in consultation with the principal, deem this necessary and/or beneficial!* (The exclamation mark is in the original!). In the same issue, the principal reports on a meeting held with parents to discuss part of the curriculum, in this case the health education program. He writes, *It is of paramount importance that home and school work closely together in this area of preparing God's covenant children for the task they have received from Him.*

Three comments: first, I recognize that there is a difference between the elementary and the high school when it comes to home-school contact. Particularly when the high school is a regional school, it becomes very diffi-

cult, often impracticable, to maintain a close bond between home and school. Further, as the children grow older, they will also take increasing responsibility for their own learning, and the contact will then shift from teacher-parent more to teacher-student. (Of course, we are not suggesting a diminishing responsibility for the parents; we point to the importance of young people learning to accept responsibility as part of growing into an independent personality, as Dr. Waterink has phrased it.) However, as our schools are growing and becoming more formally "institutionalized," it becomes increasingly important that *personal* contact between home and school is maintained. As a general rule, the larger the institution, the less personal the contact tends to be. All too often, a ten-minute interview is not sufficient to enable teachers to match their efforts with those of the parents. However, all this does not mean that our smaller schools have no worries simply because they are smaller. Also in those schools a personal contact between teacher, parent and student should have high priority.

Second, the quotation seems to suggest that the elementary school took the lead in changing the home-school contact. I wished we would retain the custom of teachers visiting the homes of their students as a matter of course, particularly at the elementary school level. No, I am not advocating regular *home visits* as if teachers have the same responsibilities as office bearers. But the simple fact remains that in order to ensure that school education indeed assists home education, there must be solid communication between the two.

Third, do I first have to determine the benefits *in consultation with the principal* in order to visit the parents of my students? Communicating is already difficult enough, so let us not build additional hurdles where none are needed. Keep things simple and natural in formal as well as informal communications such as a phone call, a comment in the parking lot after a meeting, perhaps a short note.

The relationship between home and school is important not only to us. If we can accept the facts presented on an almost weekly basis by *The Globe and Mail* columnist Andrew Nikiforuk, then there is great deal of tension between the public school system and the parents of the children it is supposed to serve. In today's edition (Friday, August 19, 1994), *The Globe* also features a *Guide to Education* which contains an interesting tidbit under the heading *Dealing with frustration*. It asks: *Frustrated with how schools and schoolboards deal with your complaints? One answer may be to set up a local parent council. Such councils allow parents to take part in decision-making, either at the school or the school board level.* The article gives examples of this from Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia.

I am glad to point out that our reformed schools are well ahead of their public counterparts in this regard. From the beginning reformed schools have been established to assist parents with the education of their children, an education which includes all aspects of life. Reformed schools are, therefore, rightly conceived as parent-controlled schools in which the bond between home and school is greatly valued. Now that our schools reach the age of maturity (most of them have seen today's parents as their students), it behooves us to maintain that bond and to

create procedures which promote that bond. One such procedure is the contact – formal, but also informal – between the teacher and the parents of his/her students. After all, our schools are parent-controlled school.

How well do we do in maintaining that contact?

3. This summer has been a busy one for the CARE Committee. This is a standing committee of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies with as mandate the promotion and development of curriculum materials for our schools. This year its efforts concentrated on church history, a rather neglected subject as was pointed out in a recent survey conducted by CARE. More than ten years ago, a church history curriculum had been developed, but over the years teachers found this document not as helpful as it ought to be. Thus, the scene was set for a revision of this part of the elementary school's program.

During perhaps the hottest week of July, more than 30 teachers met to listen to various speakers. These "heavy" sessions were balanced by sample church history stories told by a number of teachers, the obvious discussion sessions in which thoughts and ideas could be exchanged, a display of a wide range of reading material about church history and the gallons (sorry, litres) of coffee without which a reformed teacher's activity just cannot proceed.

Dr. J. Faber addressed the group on the topic *Church History as a field of study*. He sketched out a framework for the study of church history by considering the relationship between church and history. He described the twofold theme which runs through all of church history: the theme of faith and order, or phrased differently: doctrine and government. Finally, he provided the participants with a useful division for church history in which he followed the recommendation of his own teacher, Rev. S.G. de Graaf. In the discussion, the participants managed to get Dr. Faber to tell some church history stories. After the ignored apologies that he was not a storyteller, he proceeded to do so with enthusiasm to the delight of all present.

Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff showed how church history relates to world history. Her presentation examined the question how to interpret history. She illus-

trated her instruction with numerous historical examples, showing how history deals with real people living in real times. Perhaps the following statement sums up the point she wanted to get across: *I said that we have to be careful in passing judgment on our ancestors, but that we also have to test the spirits.* She also spoke of the issue of divine providence in history, and illustrated her view on the basis of examples drawn from history.

Dr. J. de Jong made an important contribution to help us develop a proper understanding of the idea of *the hand of God in history*. This is a topic which is certainly not without controversy. Drawing on the work of Groen van Prinsterer, he sketched boundaries for our thinking about the providence of God in church history, and he illustrated his discussion with reference to a number of current issues in church relations. This latter aspect received much attention in the ensuing discussion.

Mr. T. Vanderven discussed principles of a methodology for church history. He pointed out that it was not sufficient to add a number of "teaching tricks" to our repertoire, but pointed out that careful thought ought to be given to the underlying principles on which we base our teaching. He argued that the biblical notion of *telling the next generation* is fundamental to a reformed methodology, and that storytelling ought to be the method of preference for church history.

In order to make these speeches available to a wider audience and in this manner generate an even broader interest in church history, CARE decided to publish them in booklet form. Copies should be available in the fall. Interested persons may wish to contact Mrs. C. van Halen-Faber to obtain a copy at cost. Her address:

Mrs. C. van Halen-Faber
Convener CARE Committee
Covenant Canadian Reformed
Teachers' College
856 Upper James Street
Box 20179
Hamilton, ON, L9C 7M5

Work has already begun to revise the old church history curriculum and it is anticipated that another church history workshop will be organized for the summer of 1995. Please make time free to attend. **C**



The Classis Ontario South, London, September 14, 1994

– The churches of the classical area known as Ontario South met on September 14, 1994, in London, ON. On behalf of the convening church (Attercliffe) the Rev. D.G.J. Agema called the meeting to order. He asked the delegates to sing Hymn 11. He then read 2 Peter 3 and led in prayer.

– The Rev. Agema welcomed the delegates and visitors, particularly Br. J. Poppe who was present to be examined for permission to speak an edifying word. He also noted the birth of a son to Rev. and Sr. Kok, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Theological College, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation.

– The delegates of the convening church examined the credentials of the delegates and found them to be in good order. The church at Laurel was not represented at this classis.

– The Rev. Agema declared the classis constituted. The officers took their places: The Rev. G. Wieske as Chair, the Rev. H. M. Van Essen as Vice Chair, the Rev. J. VanWoudenberg as Clerk. The Chair thanked the church at Attercliffe for their preparations.

– After the agenda was established, the classis proceeded with the examination of Br. J. Poppe for permission to speak an edifying word. With thankfulness the classis had no objection to granting this permission. Br. Poppe promised not to speak anything contrary to the Word of God and the confessions. The classis sang Psalm 84, stanza 4 and the

Rev. J. De Gelder gave thanks to God for the good result of the examination. The classis recessed for lunch.

– After lunch the Chair called the roll and the classis resumed by singing Psalm 103, stanzas 1 and 7.

– Question Period Ad. Art. 44, C.O. was made use of. The classis gave advice on several matters.

– The classis amended its classical regulations regarding the payment of funds and assessments to the classical treasurer and the churches for the administration of the funds for needy students and churches.

– The classis dealt with correspondence from one of the churches regarding classical assessments under the present economic situation.

– The classis dealt with a number of appeals in closed session.

– After supper the classis sang Psalm 25, stanzas 2 and 4. The Chair called the roll.

– The delegates of the church at Ancaster (the church for the administration of the fund for needy churches) presented a report setting out the proposed assessments for 1995.

– The delegates of the church at Chatham (the church for the administration of the fund for needy students) presented a report setting out the proposed assessments for 1995.

– The classis appointed the church at Blue Bell to be the convening church of the next classis. The proposed officers of the next classis are the Rev. D. G. J. Agema as Chair, the Rev. J. VanWoudenberg as Vice-Chair and the Rev. G. Wieske as Clerk. The date of the next

classis is December 7, 1994, and it will be held in Smithville.

– The classis delegated the following Brs. to the Regional Synod East of November 16, 1994, in London:

Rev. D. G. J. Agema
Rev. G. Wieske
Rev. J. De Gelder
Rev. J. VanWoudenberg
Br. A. Rugi
Br. G. VanWoudenberg
Br. A. Koster
Br. H. Reinink

(As alternates, in the following order)

Rev. B. Hofford (1)
Rev. K. Kok (2)
Rev. G. Snip (3)
Rev. H. M. Van Essen (4)
Br. R. Jager (1)
Br. A. Oosterhoff (2)
Br. C. Feenstra (3)
Br. P. Engbers (4)


– While the votes for the delegates to the upcoming regional synod were being counted, the acts of the classis were read. Final adoption of the acts came at the end of the classis.

– The Chair gave opportunity to the delegates for “personal” questions. He also noted with thankfulness that Christian censure Ad. Art. 34, C.O. was not needed.

– The classis adopted the press release after hearing it read.

– The Chair noted with thankfulness the loving work of the women who provided sustenance through the day.

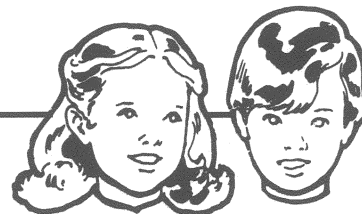
– The Chair asked the classis to sing Psalm 26, stanzas 2 and 5.

– The Chair closed the classis with prayer. 



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

How many times in your life do you think you have said the words "Thank-you?"

To your Mom and Dad for giving you things, Grandpa and Grandma, your friends, your teacher. Probably more times than you can count!

Who else do you thank many times? After every meal and at bedtimes, too?

The LORD, of course!

"LORD, thank you for this food, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Maybe you are so used to saying this prayer that you don't even think about it.

That's why it's so good that we have the holiday called, "Thanksgiving." Long ago people came to what is now the United States. After they gathered in the harvest, they had a big party and GAVE THANKS to the LORD for taking care of them and giving them enough food to eat. This celebration we now call THANKSGIVING.

But these people weren't the first ones to celebrate harvest with a Thanksgiving feast. In the Old Testament the Israelites were told by the LORD to give Him the First Fruits of the harvest, and then they could also have a feast, and thank the LORD for giving them food and clothing and all the blessings He had given them in that year.

So we also now have a feast on Thanksgiving Day. Probably we'll have a big dinner with lots of good food. But Thanksgiving Day is more than just eating a lot. Especially on this day we can think about all the good things the LORD has given us.

He gives us food every day, clothing, a place to live, a family, and friends. All these blessings are very important to us, but we can be even more thankful for other gifts He has given us. He has given us His own Son to die for our sins, He has given us His Word to live by, and He has given us eternal life. Let's think about those wonderful blessings as we celebrate Thanksgiving Day!



By Busy Beaver *Rebecca Scholten*, Age 12

Quiz Time!

POPCORN PUZZLER!

Popcorn makes a great snack. It's fun to make, and fun to eat, and best of all, it's not "junk food." If you've popped popcorn, you've probably noticed that some batches turn out fluffier and softer than others do. Why does this happen? The secret's inside the kernel. If you cut open a kernel of popping corn, you will see that it's full of soft, moist material. The kernel, as you might know, is the seed of a new corn plant, and the moisture (water) inside helps it to stay alive until it's time for the seed to sprout. This moisture makes the kernel pop. When the kernel gets heated up, the water inside it also heats up, until it's so hot, that it bursts open the skin, and presto, you have popped corn!

TRY THIS!

You'll need:

About 1/2 cup fresh popping corn.

A cookie sheet

A ruler

1. Measure out 1/4 cup of kernels of corn and count them. Count out another batch with the same number of kernels.
2. (Ask Mom's permission first!) Preheat the oven to 200* F. Spread one batch of corn kernels on the cookie sheet and bake them in the oven about 90 minutes.
3. While they are in the oven, pop the other batch of kernels. Count the number of kernels that don't pop, then measure the length of ten of the popped ones. Choose the ten at random – just stick your hand in the bowl and grab a bunch. Add up the measurements and divide by ten to find the average size. Write down both the numbers carefully.
4. Keep your notes and eat the popcorn.
5. After 90 minutes, take the kernels out of the oven and let them cool. Then pop them the same way as the first batch. Again, count the unpopped kernels and write down the number. Measure ten of the ones that did pop. Eat a kernel or two and compare them with the first batch. Try to figure out what caused the difference between the two batches of popcorn.

(There's a hint at the end of the column if you really get stuck.)

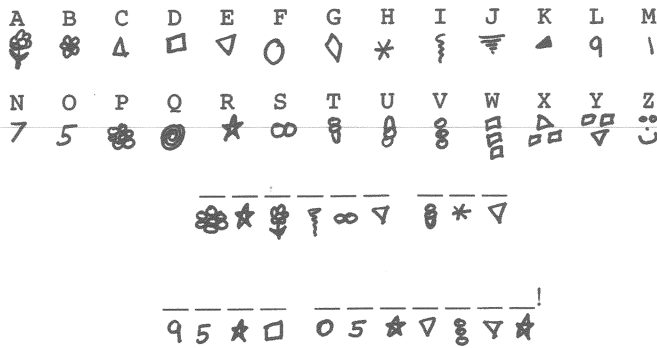
TESTING YOUR MATH SKILLS

by Busy Beaver *Sarah Nobel*

1. $326 - 10 + 3 \times 2 - 143 =$
2. $6 \times 5 + 146 - 61 \div 5 =$
3. $56 \div 8 - 5 \times 191 + 468 =$

FIND THE MESSAGE!

by Busy Beaver *Esther Snyder*

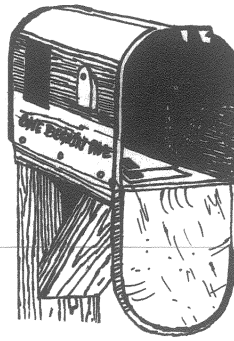


WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Cindy Beijes*

G	E	N	E	S	I	S
A	T	H	D	E	C	D
J	L	G	E	X	E	F
K	E	B	U	O	X	N
I	V	J	T	D	J	U
M	I	O	E	U	U	M
N	T	S	R	S	D	B
O	I	H	O	R	G	E
P	C	U	N	U	E	R
Q	U	A	O	T	S	S
R	S	V	M	H	W	Y
S	T	U	Y	C	A	Z

Find:
 Genesis
 Exodus
 Leviticus
 Numbers
 Deuteronomy
 Joshua
 Judges
 Ruth



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Barbara Bultena*. Of course you can join our Club, even if you're not too good at making cross-words or word-searches. We'd love to see some of your pictures and read your poems! Hope to hear from you soon, Barbara. Bye!

Hi, *Rebecca Scholten*. It was nice to hear from you again. Well, how do you like junior high, now

that you've been in school for a while? All the best in your studies, Rebecca! Bye!

Hello, *Miranda Barendregt*. So your Mom is your teacher now, eh? How do you like that? I guess it's nice to be able to stay home and study. Do you miss seeing kids from other families? I'm glad your trip was so interesting. Bye, Miranda.

Hello, *Ben Bartels*. I hope you learn a lot in the 4-H club, and that you enjoy doing the activities. All the best in your schoolwork, too.

Hi, *Virginia Jager*. Thank you for the interesting puzzles you made! Do you have a penpal yet? Bye, Virginia.

Hello, *Tanya Meints*. Are you glad your busy summer is over? Why don't you write to Virginia Jager and ask her if she would like to be your penpal? All the best! Bye, Tanya.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Rebecca Kelly*. Wow, you must be busy helping your Mom at home, seeing as you are the oldest girl in the family. I guess your older brothers help your Dad on the farm, right? There's always lots to do! Hope to hear from you soon, Rebecca.

Popcorn Puzzle Hint: Water evaporates in heat.

Love to you all,
 Aunt Betty **C**



With thanks to the Giver and Sustainer of life, we announce the birth of our seventh child

ALYSSA HENRIETTE

A sister for: *Reuben, Warren, Colin, Scott, Gerard and Carla*

Clarence and Yvonne Winkelaar (nee Driegen)

708 Marion Road, RR 2
 Abbotsford, BC
 V3G 1S7

With joy and thankfulness to the Lord, who has blessed us with our first child, we proudly announce the birth of our son

TODD JAMIE

Born September 8, 1994

George and Elaine Brinks (nee Toet)

906 Day Street
 Winnipeg, MB
 R2C 1C1

*Glory in His holy name;
 let the hearts of those
 who seek the LORD rejoice!*

Psalm 105:3

God, in His love, has blessed our family with the birth of His child,

JACOB GARETT PHILIP

A brother for: *Rachel, Erica, Justin, John-Matthew, Michael*

Paul & Shirley Broekema
 September 19, 1994
 RR 5, Guelph, ON N1H 6J2