



Martin Luther and the German New Testament

By R. Faber

Introduction

By the time that he posted the ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Martin Luther (1483-1546) was convinced that the Word of God should be heard and read by all. The Bible, Luther believed, should be at the centre of the preaching. This conviction he expressed in theses 53 and 54 of the famous declaration of October 31, 1517: "They are the enemies of Christ and of the pope who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others;" and, "the Word of God suffers injury when, in the same sermon, an equal or longer time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word." In the course of the years which followed that first Reformation Day, Luther became increasingly convinced that every German citizen should read the Bible for himself and not through the eyes of the Romanist church. The pope is not the only person permitted to interpret Scripture, but every Christian, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, is able to understand clearly the message of the Gospel. Therefore, Luther realized, the Bible ought to be translated into German.

German translations of the Bible did exist; according to one count, no less than 18 High and Low German translations predate Luther's version. But these translations were inadequate, since they were translations not of the original Greek and Hebrew texts, but of the Latin Vulgate translation. The famous Gutenberg Bible was unintelligible to most people because it, too, was a Latin version. By November 1521, Luther had stated publicly his wish that all Germans might read the Bible for themselves in the mother tongue and without the aid of commentaries. The desire to return to the original source, "the clear pure Word of God itself," grew not only in the hearts of other reform-minded scholars, but also in the heart of Dr. Luther, "professor of Bible" at the University in Wittenberg.

1521 proved to be an exciting year for Luther. The papal bull of 1520, which had declared Luther a heretic and enemy of the church, had provided the defiant reformer with a greater zeal than ever before. And still flush with the excitement of the Diet of Worms (1521), Luther knew that he had passed the point of no return. All Germany was in a state of unrest, and waited to see what leadership Luther would provide. But the edict of Charles V after the Diet had called for the capture of Luther, and "brother Martin" was a wanted man. Thus it came about that in the spring of 1521 Luther was abducted by his own supporters and taken to Wartburg castle near Eisenach. There, assuming the name Junker Georg ("Knight" George), Luther spent almost a year away from his beloved Wittenberg.

In Wartburg Castle

Imprisonment in the Wartburg was an important phase in Luther's life, because he was able to work in relative peace on a project he knew was important to the growing Reformation. When Luther interrupted the voluntary exile in Wartburg castle with a brief visit to Wittenberg, his friend, Philip Melancthon, strongly encouraged him to forge ahead with the translation of the Bible. Back in the castle, Luther maintained a public profile through his published treatises; yet he was permitted to make the most of the time. The privacy of the castle provided an opportunity for full concentration upon the New Testament. And the result of his labours was the so-called Luther-Bible, a German edition of the New Testament which would become the basis for reform throughout Germany and the rest of Europe. It is indeed remarkable that Luther produced the first draft of the German New Testament in the span of only eleven weeks.

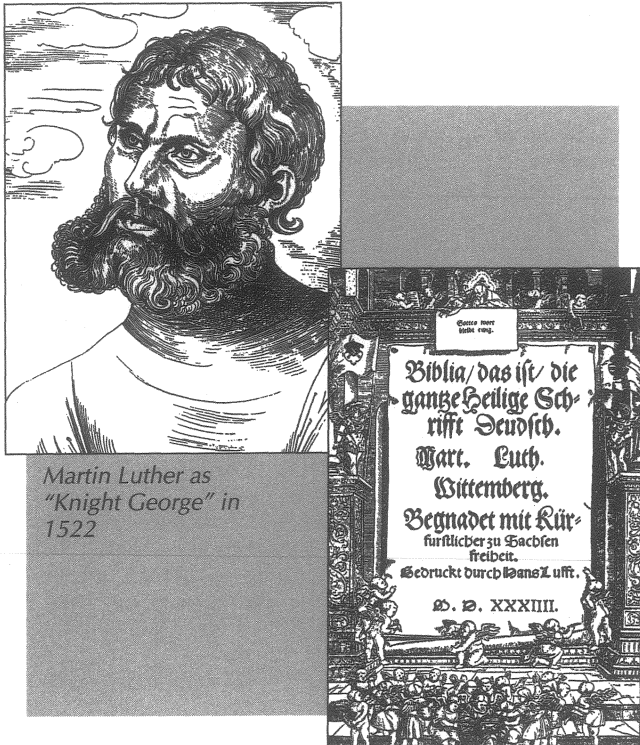
Fortunately for Luther, much of the groundwork for a good translation of the New Testament had been completed. In 1519 Erasmus had published his second, revised edition of the Greek New Testament; Luther used this text for his translation. He also compared the Latin translation, annotations, and comments which Erasmus had appended to his text with the standard Vulgate.¹ Luther's aim was to provide a simple, direct rendering of the Greek in modern German. Since he considered the Word of God to be first the spoken Word, Luther paid much attention to the sound which an audible reading of the text would produce. Accordingly, the rhythm and cadence of the German text are superb. Moreover, as was his style, Luther employed graphic and vivid diction where the text permitted. Several turns of phrase became proverbial sayings: "throwing your pearls before swine" (Matt.7:6) and "shaking off the dust from your feet" (Matt.10:14) are but two examples. In the matter of linguistics, the translation was a major achievement.

The greatest significance of the translation, however, was not its language or style; it was the simple fact that the *Gospel* was expressed *in German*. In the preface Luther stated that the New Testament brings the good news of salvation in Christ. The New Testament is the "evangel" which surpasses the Old Testament and the law; it is "a book in which are written the Gospel and the promises of God." And the "real nature of the Gospel," Luther explains, is the gladdening that "faith in Christ overcomes sin, death and hell, and gives life, righteousness and salvation." The purpose of the translation was, quite simply, to make available to all Germany the good news of eternal life in Christ Jesus. The brief marginal notes which accompanied the text highlight the good news which the Roman church had kept secret for ages: justification by faith alone. This theme, and the many

others which became part of the Reformation, is clearly expressed in the German edition of 1522.

Only by faith

An illustration of Luther's idiomatic yet accurate rendering of the original Greek text is Romans 3:28. A literal translation of Luther's German wording is: "Therefore we hold that man is justified without the works of the law, *only by faith*."² Jerome Emser and other critics charged Luther with inserting the word "only" into the text, and noted that the word does not appear in the Greek original. Luther defended his use of the word in Romans 3:28, by publishing an open letter, "On Translating." Therein Luther showed that there were philo-



Martin Luther as "Knight George" in 1522

Title page of the Wittenberg Bible, 1534

logical and theological grounds for his translation.

First Luther asserts one of the philological principles of his translation: clarity. He writes, "I have constantly tried, in translating, to produce a pure and clear German. . . . Here, in Romans 3, I know right well that the word *solum* [only] was not in the Greek or Latin text. . . . Yet the *sense* of [it] is there and the word belongs there if the translation is to be clear and strong."³ Readers will understand what the text means, Luther states, because it is in keeping with contemporary German grammar that "only" be placed with a positive statement to oppose it more clearly to the negative phrase. "It is the nature of our German language that in speaking of two things, one of which is admitted, and the other denied, we use the word 'only' along with the word 'not'." As the goal of translating is to make the meaning of a foreign text understood, one must employ the rules of the language into which the text is being translated. Luther expresses this principle in simple terms: first we listen to the speech of "the mother in the home, the children on the

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IN THIS ISSUE

Martin Luther and the German New Testament — R. Faber	490
The Independent Christian Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches — C. Van Dam	493
Meditation — G.Ph. van Popta	495
Remember Your Creator – "Paris is well worth a mass" — G.Ph. van Popta	496
Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. R. Ravensbergen	497
Press Review – Independent Churches Organize Ontario Fellowship — C. Van Dam	498
League Day June '94 — Jane DeGlint.....	499
Tyndale Christian School — R. Schouten	500
A New School in Vernon — Elsinä Moes	501
Letters to the Editor	503
Church News	504
Book Review – Tongues and Prophecy Today — C. Van Dam	506
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	507

street, the common man in the marketplace," and "afterwards [we] do our translating."

As for the theological reasons, Luther writes that "the text itself and the *sense* of St. Paul demanded" that the translator insert "only." Paul "is dealing, in that passage, with the main point of the Christian doctrine, that is, that we are justified by faith in Christ, without any works of the law, and he cuts away all works so completely, as even to say that he was justified entirely without works. . . . The *matter itself*, and not the nature of the language only, compels this translation." In other words, the context of Romans 3:28, dealing as it does with the doctrine of justification by faith and the rejection of good works as grounds for salvation, gives the translator ample reason for opposing faith to works. For Luther, the theological principle underlying this translation is simple: an interpretation which exalts the promises of God and the benefits of Christ is the right one. To support this reading of Romans 3:28, Luther adduces the Letter to the Galatians; there, "and in many other places," Paul teaches that salvation comes "not by the works of the law." And Romans 4, Luther goes on to argue, shows that "only Christ's death and resurrection make us free from sin, and righteous." It is in keeping with the teaching of other Scriptures that the word "only" be part of the translation of Romans 3:28. And if the reader demands still more proof, Luther concludes, let him turn to the church fathers Ambrose and Augustine, who had shown long ago that Scripture teaches justification by faith alone.

By the time Luther ended his stay at Wartburg castle, he had completed the translation of the New Testament. The spring of 1522 was dedicated to revisions and corrections, and when the summer was over, the New Testament was ready for the press, which produced a complete New Testament shortly before September 25. It is estimated that three thousand copies of *Das Neue Testament Deutzsch* were printed in Wittenberg; an unbound copy sold for a half *gulden*. The sales were so strong that by December a second, new edition was printed. Evidently people ignored the pope's ban of Luther's writings. And the order that Duke George of Saxony gave in 1522 to surrender the translation with its "heretical" notes and glosses fell upon deaf ears.

It goes without saying that "Luther's Bible" contributed greatly to the Reformation in Germany. Now all German-speaking people could read the Gospel in their own language. Luther had taken pains to provide a translation which might be read easily by people throughout the country. At least eighty percent of the expressions could be understood in both North and South Germany, despite the widely differing dialects in these regions. It falls outside the scope of this article to discuss the contribution which Luther's translation made to the formation of new High German; suffice it to say that "die Luther-Bibel" is deemed by many to be the most influential work in the German tongue. Of greater importance is that Luther's translation was invaluable for the reformation of the church. No longer were lay people dependent upon the interpretation and exegesis of Roman Catholic clergy. Now each person could read the Bible for himself in his native tongue. Very quickly the translation became the basis for the reform of the church throughout Germany.

And not Germany alone, but all Europe was affected by the appearance of the Bible in a common tongue. Luther's translation was widely used outside his native country, and it became the bench-mark for all Protestant versions in the Germanic languages. Also the English Bible which we use today shows signs of Luther's work, for William Tyndale, and later Miles Coverdale, who contributed much to the English Authorized Version (1611), were heavily influenced by

Lutheran formulations.⁴ For example, in his English edition of 1534, Tyndale notes in the margin at Romans 3:28: "Faith justifies." At this point Coverdale's edition notes a thinly-veiled reference to Luther's famous translation: "Some read [i.e. Luther] 'by faith only'." Clearly the echo of Luther's words is heard in the English editions.

Conclusion

Soon after the appearance of the German New Testament in September 1522, Luther began to translate the Old Testament. Despite some modern claims to the contrary, it may be said that Luther championed the unity of the Old and New Testament, and therefore was eager to complete the edition. For several reasons, however, the Old Testament did not appear in its entirety in German until 1534. Luther's illness, the Peasant War, and the demands of ecclesiastical and political developments, prevented the reformer from working on the Old Testament with that peaceful concentration he had enjoyed while in the Wartburg. Also, the length and comparative difficulty of the Old Testament books demanded more time. To aid him, Luther enlisted Philip Melancthon, and probably also the Hebrew scholar Matthew Aurogallus. The works of the Hebraist Reuchlin stood them in good stead as they struggled with the difficult passages in Job and the books of the prophets. Luther's experience as "professor of Bible" at the University in Wittenberg now paid off; the lectures on the Old Testament books served as groundwork for the translation.

Luther spent the remainder of his life improving and correcting the text of the German, Greek, and Hebrew Bibles. He frequently stated that his translations could be even "closer to the German and farther removed" from the original languages. On this matter, some modern scholars have criticized Luther for rendering the original text too freely. In some passages the German translation seems far removed from the literal sense. On the other hand, since Luther's translation strove to combine the *sense* and the *letter* of the original text, the German Bible was remarkably contemporary. The ancient text was translated with a view to life in the sixteenth century. How relevant Luther's Bible was to real life is shown by the number of copies which were purchased during Luther's lifetime. By the time of Luther's death in 1546, 430 complete or partial editions of the German Bible existed, and some 500,000 copies were in circulation! It is no wonder that Luther considered the German Bible the most important contribution to the European Reformation. In an autographed inscription to one copy of the Bible Luther wrote, after citing Proverbs 30:5, "It is a blessing above all blessings to be in awe and humbly read and hear God's Word."

¹For a treatment of Erasmus' edition of the New Testament, see R. Faber, "Erasmus and the Authority of Scripture," *Clarion* 41.14 (July 17, 1992), 303-305.

²"So halten wyrs nu, das der mensch gerechtfertiget werde, on zuthun der werck des gesetzes, *alleyn durch den glawben*" (1522 edition). The RSV reads "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law."

³M. Luther, "On Translating: An Open Letter" (September 1530), in H. Jacobs, *The Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, 1931-32), V, 10ff.

⁴For the influence of the German New Testament upon the English version see H. Bluhm, "Martin Luther and the English Bible: Tyndale and Coverdale," in G. Dünnhaupt, ed., *The Martin Luther Quincentennial* (Detroit, 1985), 112-125. For an account of Tyndale's life and his translation of the Bible into English, see R. Faber, "Martyr for the English Reformation," *Reformed Perspective* 13.6 (April 1994), 12-16.



The Independent Christian Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches²

By C. Van Dam

E. The Attitude and Position of the Canadian Reformed Churches

It has already been mentioned that the vast majority of CanRCs which are in proximity to an Independent church have some kind of a contact or discussion with these independent CRC churches. It was, therefore, not surprising that Synod Lincoln had to deal with three overtures and a letter concerning these independent churches (*Acts*, Art. 36). In their decision on these overtures, Synod recognized the need for local contact and also appointed

“Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, consisting of an equal number of committee members from the two Regional Synods districts, to promote the unity of Reformed believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church with the mandate:

1. to make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation;

2. to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of coming to ecclesiastical unity;

3. to report on its activities to the churches and the next General Synod.”

Before deputies were actually appointed, Synod Lincoln had also decided to appoint temporary deputies to speak on behalf of the CanRCs at the 1992 meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting in the Chicago area (*Acts*, Art. 80). Prior to that, the CanRCs at Burlington East and West had made possible unofficial CanR representation in 1990 (Christian Reformed Alliance) and 1991 (then renamed into Alliance of Reformed churches).¹² Official deputies were able to attend the 1993 meetings.¹³

The number of seceded churches has been steadily growing. If liberal trends continue in the CRC, more

churches will secede. Different churches are at different stages. Some genuinely concerned churches are still in the CRC. Some are still smarting from the trauma of leaving a church they had always regarded as home; others who have left years ago, are now ready and eager to move on to other concerns that need to be addressed. I mention these things here for they are important for us to realize as we deal with the question how we should respond to those who are seceding or those who have seceded from the CRC.

Let me start with the most obvious. Let us remember these churches in our prayers, also in the public worship services. A work of church reformation is going on and it cannot leave us unaffected. If there is no nearby independent church which we can write to encourage or seek contact with, the very least we can do is to pray for them. It is an ecclesiastical matter of great importance that needs to be brought to the throne of grace.¹⁴ Without prayer for the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in the hearts of those who have left the CRC, no unity will take place. We as human beings do not have the capacity for that! We must pray that the *Lord* gathers His church, also through us, as His instruments.¹⁵

The question is sometimes raised whether it is right for the concerned who leave the CRC to remain on their own and form an independent church. If there is a faithful church of the Lord in the area, should they not immediately seek union with such a church, for example, a CanRC, and should we, therefore, not pray for that? In answering this question, we need to note a number of factors. In the first place, CanRCs and indeed any church of Christ, would of course gladly receive seceded brothers and sisters from the CRC with open arms. This has happened in various locations. Simply joining a faithful church

is a most responsible way to act, especially where a relatively small number have left the CRC. In the second place, this is often not the situation. Often an entire church or a large part of a church and consistory secedes and they continue to call the congregation to worship together. They can argue that they in effect continue the true CRC! That is the top item on their agenda. To remain faithful where the “denomination” has gone wrong. In the grief of separation and the need to organize all kinds of things, ecumenicity in terms of seeking new relations is not the most urgent need. The independent churches through the Christian Reformed Alliance have decided to move into the direction of federating together in order to help each other in the present circumstance. At the same time these churches have always indicated that they have no desire to start a new “denomination.” They have also shown this when they decided in the 1993 ARC meeting to establish a committee to contact the CanRC, Free Reformed churches, OCRC, Protestant Reformed churches, RCUS and others with a view to working towards a federative unity.¹⁶

Personally, I think that the present strategy of helping each other and federating together was and is justified. The process of withdrawal is a long and difficult one which could still take quite some time before it has been fully completed. Under such circumstances it seems wise to do one thing at a time. It is difficult enough to make people see their obligation to leave a church that has meant much to them. It is not necessary to complicate this process by also making final decisions about future ecclesiastical affiliation. Furthermore, there is also historical precedent for what is taking place now.

As mentioned earlier, what has been developing is, in broad outline, analogous to the events subsequent to the

Doleantie of 1886 when a second secession took place from the liberal Reformed state church. Those churches who left under Kuyper and others did not, however, immediately seek to join those of the Secession who had already seceded in 1834 from the same apostate church. Our forefathers did not in general pass a harsh judgment on their organizing themselves temporarily. It is also of interest to note that Dr. K. Schilder in his lectures on the church raised the question whether it was right that the churches of the Doleantie organized themselves separately in spite of the existence of the faithful church of the Secession. Schilder's response was that he thought this was possible in the first period as long as this was seen as a temporary solution and that the need to seek out others was not lost sight of.¹⁷

The CanRCs have shown by their appeals to the CRC and their appointment of Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity that they wish to have unity with those with whom we were at one time in the same church or in sister churches. Does the Lord not desire His people to be one? (Cf. John 17, Gal. 5 and Eph. 4). How should such a unity be achieved? One realizes, of course, that I am speaking from our human responsibility. Clearly it is the Lord who gathers His church, but He has given us our task. History can teach us some things here. In general, we may follow the pattern of the previous century when two church bodies came together to form a united church with a new name. It is in that spirit of working together towards a united expression of our Reformed faith that we should approach on the local level the seceded brothers and sisters from the CRC. We should also approach them in the humbling realization that the church is the work and creation of our triune God. There is nothing good that we as churches may have that we have not received of grace alone from Him.¹⁸

On the other hand we must also realize that we as CanRCs have been led by the Lord in a way of renewal and reformation which those who have left the CRC have not experienced. We may regret this, but it would be unhistorical to demand of the independent churches that they must somehow play catchup theologically on all kinds of riches we have discovered in the last 50 years before we can become one. The Lord does not require this of them or of us. What the Lord requires is faithfulness according to His Word as we also confess it in our Three Forms of Unity.

We must also be sensitive to the fact that our relative isolation as CanRCs has led to our adopting our own distinctive liturgy and *Book of Praise*. Others may have liturgies and rhymed Psalms and hymns that are equally defensible on the basis of Scripture and the confessions. Both of these areas can be discussed in such a way that a strong Reformed consensus emerges. But, these are not issues that should hold up an eventual union. After a union, let each continue his present tradition and discuss the issues in an edifying way so that a mutually accepted solution can be found within a specified and realistic time frame. Such discussions in the context of reformation can work in a stimulating manner and renew interest in the rationale of Reformed liturgy and worship, including the Genevan heritage.¹⁹ But the union itself should be on the basis of the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity, no more and no less, just as the Union of 1892 was achieved on that basis.²⁰ After all the church is not an assembly of those who have similar customs and traditions, but it is "a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by his blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit" (Art. 27, Bel. Conf.). The church is not our project, but the work of Christ who gathers it together.

Within the general framework of the above, contact and discussion should be sought where there is a neighbouring independent CRC or Orthodox CRC. The preliminary discussions should work towards mutual recognition as churches of our Lord. This would include sharing and explaining each other's history, practices, and commitment to the Scriptures and Reformed Confessions. It is clear from what has been said that we will approach such an independent church in the spirit of joy and gratitude for we see in them the work of the Lord who works reformation in our day in the CRC. We will not approach them with suspicion or with a spirit of fault-finding.²¹

According to the discussion paper "Pursuing Ecclesiastical Unity," from the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

- i. If talks progress to the point that both churches recognize each other as Reformed, both churches should declare of one another that they are true churches of the Lord which ought to see ecclesiastical unity. This includes that both churches will advise the churches with which they

live in one or another form of fellowship to seek unity on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and a Reformed Church Order, possibly to be negotiated to mutual agreement.

- ii. Both churches may then consider drawing up an accord which provides for pulpit exchange and admission of their members to one another's Holy Supper and recognizing one another's attestations (discipline). Such an accord should be subject to regular renewal by both churches involved. It shall not be implemented without the advice of Classis.

- iii. Good order requires that Classis be informed regularly about the initiation and progress of the contact. . . . It goes without saying that the local congregation is also kept fully informed of the developments.

F. The Challenge of Faith

When the Lord works renewal and reformation in the independent churches, then also we who are His children as well become involved, if only by prayer and supplication for the progress of His work. We live in exciting times ecclesiastically. In such a time we too will go back to a renewed studying the issues and becoming familiar again with our own history, or with the way the Lord has led us in the generations preceding. We will also study why we do the things we do the way we do. Where possible we will get in contact with concerned or seceded CRC members. Grass roots involvement is very important for a church is not composed of synods, but of the local congregations who seek to live in obedience to the head of the church.

Who knows whether the work which the Lord has started in the CRC may not lead to a reunion of those who have sought each other since the fifties in this country? Who knows if our long separation from the Free Reformed may not also take place if a united Reformed church (of former CRCs and CanRCs) by whatever name emerges. What a blessing of God, if in this age of renewed paganism, a revival of the true religion may also take place in the manifestation of Biblical ecumenical action. May He find us willing instruments in His hand!

¹²See for reports *Clarion*, Jan. 15 and 29, 1993, Year End Issues 1990 and 1991.

¹³See report in *Clarion*, January 14, 1994.

¹⁴See for this and what follows C. Van Dam, "Leaving the Christian Reformed

Church {Press Review}," *Clarion*, Nov. 22, 1992, p. 515.

¹⁵Cf. M. te Velde, "Samen op weg in 1892," *De Reformatie*, 68:3 (1992) 59.

¹⁶See report in *Clarion*, Jan. 14, 1994, p. 6.

¹⁷K. Schilder, *De Kerk {Dictaten}*, (published without Schilder's taking responsibility for the, 1942), 100.

¹⁸Cf. M. te Velde, "Samen op weg in 1892," *De Reformatie*, 68:3 (1992) 57-59.

¹⁹Cf. on the above, the principles enunciated in "Pursuing Ecclesiastical Unity: A discussion-paper on the mandate given by Synod Lincoln to Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity," *Clarion*, Feb. 11, 1994.

²⁰Cf. M. te Velde, "Samen op weg in 1892," *De Reformatie*, 68:3 (1992) 58.

He notes that as long as they tried to reach agreement on every issue, it did not work. The turning point came when

they said let us unite on the basis of the Reformed confession and church polity.

²¹Cf. also N.H. Gootjes, "A Remark of K. Schilder on Discussions for Ecclesiastical Unity," *Clarion*, Feb. 11, 1994, pp.60-62 in which Dr. Gootjes notes that Schilder argued that there is no need to pass judgement on the sins of the fathers. What is needed is the action of sons to work towards unity.



Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 1:15-26

"... one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection."

REPAIRING THE APOSTOLIC FOUNDATION

To build a house you need a good foundation. You pour concrete in a form or you place concrete blocks firmly in the ground. Only then can you build your house. You cannot build anything upon a faulty foundation.

When Judas defected he damaged the foundation of the church.

The foundation had to be repaired. The church had to fill the vacancy. The apostle Peter said that this "must" happen (v. 22).

Out of the large group who followed Him, the Lord Jesus had chosen twelve men whom He named apostles (Luke 6:13). These He sent out to preach the gospel of the kingdom. They were to bear witness to all that Jesus Christ had said and done from the time John had baptized Him to the moment He ascended into heaven. Christ chose these twelve men to serve as the foundation blocks of the church of the New Testament.

The apostle Paul spoke about how the church is built upon this foundation. In Ephesians 2:20 he said that we are built upon the foundation of the apostles of which Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Paul did not include himself as part of this foundation. He was not an apostle in the restricted sense of the word like the twelve were. He was not an eye witness of the baptism, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. He was speaking about the twelve.

Christ is the cornerstone of the church. The twelve foundation stones are laid square with the cornerstone. Christ, then, proceeds to build His church.

The apostle Peter spoke of this as well, in 1 Peter 2:4ff. He calls us to be living stones built into the spiritu-

al house which is founded upon Christ, the precious stone, and the apostolic proclamation about Him.

The apostles are important to the church. They are the foundation of the church. We come to faith in Christ the only Saviour through the apostolic proclamation of Him, the risen Lord.

Because the apostles are so important to the church, Judas' defection was a terrible thing. Satan was behind this. He was trying to frustrate the work of Christ by forcibly removing one of the twelve foundation stones. Destroy the foundation, and the future of the church is precarious. How can Christ build a church upon a crumbling foundation? Before Christ can pour the Holy Spirit out upon His church, the foundation must be repaired. Before the apostles can begin fulfilling their mandate of bringing the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth, the foundation must be made sound.

Two men were put forward – Joseph and Matthias. After prayer they cast the lot which fell to Matthias whom they then enrolled as an apostle.

In this way, the Lord Jesus Christ repaired the foundation. Now He could go on. A few days later, He poured the Spirit of God out upon the church. The twelve apostles went out to bear witness to the risen Lord and to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

We have the written record of the apostolic proclamation – the New Testament. Let us pay attention to it. Through it Christ builds us into His spiritual house. We become citizens of the beautiful city which has twelve foundations upon which are written the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14).

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

“Paris is well worth a mass”

The economy is a little better now than it has been in the past couple of years, but it's still hard to get a real good job. For a young person like you to get a job you enjoy and that pays well is not easy. As you look through the newspaper or check out what is available at the Manpower office, you might see jobs that look pretty inviting. You can make big bucks working on an oil rig or as a logger, although you will be away from home and church for months at a time. Or maybe it's a job that will keep you close to home, but it involves Sunday work. Sunday has become just another day of commerce in Canada. More and more jobs demand that one work on Sunday. More and more Christians are compromising. More and more believers are taking the good job with the nice pay at the expense of diligently attending the church of God on the day of rest.

Henry's opinion

It reminds me of King Henry IV of France (1553-1610) who has been immortalized for declaring: “Paris is well worth a mass.” Henry was raised as a Calvinist. The twists and turns of French history led to Henry being heir to the throne of France. There was one catch: He was a Protestant. It would never do to have a Protestant king ruling over Roman Catholic France. Then Henry uttered those famous words: “*Paris vaut bien une messe!*” He joined the Roman Catholic Church. He thought it well worth it to compromise obedience to God to gain the Parisian throne.

Our natural tendency is to compromise in all areas of life, worship included. However, it seems that we are less concerned about breaking commandments of the first table of the law than the second. We would sooner skip church than steal or murder. Why is that? I guess it is because God does not strike Sabbath breakers dead on the spot while murderers can expect a hefty jail term. We know that if we get caught shop-lifting, we will be in deep trouble; however, we can cut the afternoon worship service to watch the football game with impunity. Nothing happens.

The minister or an elder might say something; but other than that, nothing happens. And so we conclude that a good paying job is well worth it, even if it means being able to attend the worship services only sporadically.

No check list

I am not going to give you a list of does and don'ts on what you may or may not do on Sunday. Neither am I going to discuss the whole question of the change from Sabbath to Sunday or whether the Sabbath command is a creation ordinance of a Mt. Sinai ordinance.* I am only going to remind you of what we, as Reformed believers, confess the fourth commandment to be about. Lord's Day 38 asks:

Q. What does God require in the fourth commandment? A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained and that, especially on the day of rest, I diligently attend the church of God to hear God's Word, to use the sacraments, to call publicly upon the LORD, and to give Christian offerings for the poor. . . .

As Reformed believers, we accept the Sunday as a day of rest. We lay aside our regular weekly activities in order to attend church. An older colleague of mine once said: “You are never so close to heaven as when you are in church.” Of course! The Word of the King is proclaimed there! We are gathered together with the citizens of the kingdom! Where would you rather be on the Lord's day?

Works of necessity and mercy

The Reformed churches have always said that believers ought not to work on Sunday except to do what mercy or necessity demands. This is reflected in the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 117:

Q. How is the Sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified? A. The Sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by a holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employ-

ments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship; and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of the day.

As “works of necessity and mercy” the Reformed churches have usually understood the labour of those involved in health care, emergency relief, maintaining law and order, and tending to livestock. As well, Reformed churches have always been patient with new members who already had jobs which entailed Sunday work before they joined the church. But the church has rightfully taken a dim view of those who were raised in the church, were taught by the church since their youth, and yet take a job which includes Sunday work on account of its financial or other rewards.

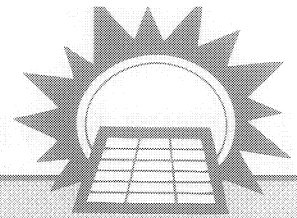
Henry was wrong

Seventh Day Adventists are rigorous about maintaining the Sabbath (Saturday). In our culture, which still has the vestiges of Christianity clinging to it, it is harder to refrain from Saturday work than Sunday work. I would encourage you young people not to compromise when it comes to attending the church of God on the day of rest. Don't cash in regular church attendance for a well-paying job. It's not worth it. Henry was wrong. Paris is *not* worth a mass.

“Let us . . . not neglect . . . to meet together, as is the habit of some. . . . (Heb. 20:23,25). Remember your Creator and the day of rest He gave you.

*For some interesting articles on these and related questions, see: J. Geertsema, “Sunday and Sabbath,” *Clarion* 36 (1987): 2-4; John L. Mackay, “The New Testament Sabbath,” *Clarion* 36 (1987): 8-10, 28-30; J. Helder, “Observing the Sunday,” *Clarion* 36 (1987): 10-11. C

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love."

Psalm 147:11

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

October is the month in which we are celebrating "Thanksgivings Day." It is a very old tradition in our country to have a special thanksgivings day every year. It is a good tradition if we know to Whom we give thanks. We do not give thanks to the farmers who worked so hard, or to ourselves for everything we did, or to the people who make inventions to yield better crops and to become more productive. There is only One to Whom thanks are due, and He is our Lord God and Father in heaven.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord. Not because we had a good crop, and we could fill our freezer in preparation for the winter. Of course that gives us much reason to thank Him. But most important of all: He is and was and will be with us; His caring love for us is always there.

So giving thanks means giving thanks to the Lord for His ongoing care. A song of thanksgiving becomes automatically a song of praise to the Lord. For how can we give thanks to Him without mentioning all His great and wonderful deeds? Psalm 147 is such a song of Praise. It tells us about God's creation: God Almighty upholds and governs it all. He rules the clouds, the rain, the ice. The Lord controls the weather, dry or wet, hot or cold. He decides what is best for us. He makes the crops grow. He gives us good crops, or sometimes not so very good. Sometimes we may not like the way the weather goes, and the ways the crops grow, yet the Lord is behind it. He takes care of us in His infinite wisdom in ways that we cannot even try to understand. The people become smarter all the time. The machinery that is used at the farms or in the factories becomes more and more complicated. With the computer we can do almost anything. Yet the Lord is in control. Nobody can make rain than God alone. He can withhold rain or send heavy thunderstorms. The Lord may send an earthquake or a tornado and destroy what we have been working on for months and years. Nobody can change that or stop it. All we can do is to stand in awe for God's almighty power.

At times of disaster and disappointment we, as God's children, can witness to the world that God is truly there. We can witness to the people around us that He is our caring Father. Even in very difficult times He still surrounds us with His love and care. He will help us so much that even in difficult times we can still sing our songs of praise to Him. People who live without the Lord may curse and grumble; they can complain about the weather and about other things that they do not want to accept in their lives. But God's children receive strength and encouragement out of God's Word, and out of the beautiful songs of praise and comfort which the Lord has given to His Church. They find comfort in the knowledge that God takes care of them and that He meets all their needs.

God's care for us is His faithfulness to us. Our comfort is that our life here on earth is not at stake. What we are

and do here on earth is not of lasting importance. To the Lord it is important that we praise and thank Him with all our might. For not this life here is what we live for. We live in dependence of the Lord towards a future that He prepared for us. Therefore we expect everything from Him alone. We know that everything He gives us, whether it is prosperity or poverty, health or a handicap or illness, helps us to come closer to that wonderful future. Everyday we may put our own helplessness into the caring hands of our Father, and ask Him to decide what is best for us. When we try to trust in our own strength and possibilities we will soon find out that it won't work. Maybe there are people who seem to be able to depend upon their own resources. Maybe they seem to be doing very well now, but what will be their future? God's care is guaranteed to be going on forever. Our future has been established for us through the redeeming work of God's Son, who became our Saviour, Jesus Christ. His strength and care carries us on, from day to day, and step by step.

So we give thanks, not only on Thanksgiving Day, but every day of our life. We give thanks for the food we received and for the work we were able to do. But crops, food, work, and health are not the most important reasons for our thanksgiving. For even with an abundance of food our lives would still be in danger if we did not put all our trust in the Lord. Therefore we give thanks most of all for Christ's love for us. Out of grace we are allowed to be His children. Through His work of Salvation we are certain of our future in eternal, perfect happiness.

*With clouds He covers all the heavens;
Rain for the earth by Him is given.
The LORD makes grass on hillsides flourish;
All beasts and ravens He will nourish.
His joy could never have its sources
In warriors' legs or strength of horses:
In those who fear Him He takes pleasure,
Who makes His steadfast love their treasure.*

Psalm 147:3

Birthdays in November:

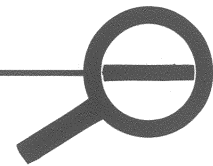
3: Wilma Van Drongelen,
306-33375 Mayfair Ave., Abbotsford, BC
V2S 2M7
Wilma hopes to celebrate her 37th birthday.

27: Adrian DeJong,
RR 1, Site 6, Box 9, Barrhead, AB, T0G 0E0
Adrian is allowed to celebrate his 10th birthday
this year.

To both of you: a very happy birthday
Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen
7462 Hwy 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0

By C. Van Dam



Independent Churches Organize Ontario Fellowship

In the *Christian Renewal* of August 1994, John Van Dyk reported on a meeting held on June 18, 1994 to which representative of 15 independent Reformed churches came together "to discuss the possibility of more cooperation among churches" which had become independent after breaking from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

Place and purpose of the fellowship

The first focus of business for the meeting was the question of the place and purpose of a Regional Fellowship.

At the November 1993 Alliance meeting in Lynwood, Illinois, at the request of a few churches, the ARC voted to encourage "its member churches to cooperate in the formation of Regions or Regional Fellowships as is suitable and feasible for the purpose of enhancing church life for the glory of God and the coming of His kingdom." The grounds given were that "the needs of the local churches are more fully met in cooperation with neighboring churches;" the Alliance Statement of Purpose includes among its purposes, "to assist the member churches in promoting ecclesiastical unity and biblical obedience among the people of God;" and, "The history of the New Testament churches suggests some form of bonding which facilitated assistance, accountability and ecclesiastical fellowship."

Based on that recommendation, three churches decided to call a meeting of Ontario churches for the purpose of initiating the process.

Although the discussion showed that there was initially some opposition to the idea of a fellowship, the motion "to form a fellowship of churches" passed unanimously after the matter had been discussed.

The stated purpose of this "fellowship" was to:

- assist emerging and needy churches in their lack of resources and pulpit supply;
- provide counsel and advice in church disciplinary matters, serving when requested as a forum to hear cases of appeal and protest;
- assist member churches in the examination of candidates for ordination to the office of Minister of the Word and Sacraments;
- co-operate together in matters of youth work, evangelism, missions, diaconal concerns and training of officebearers.
- encourage member churches in their ministry by means of regular church visiting to the end that God's people are being edified and all things are being done decently and in good order.
- enhance communication and spiritual fellowship between member churches.
- that this is an interim measure until a church order is formulated by the Alliance of Reformed churches.

This is a positive development.

Other matters

There are presently two independent churches in Ontario that have ongoing disputes with former members of their congregations over church property issues. The Sheffield church communicated to the meeting its concern about churches becoming involved in the civil courts in order to resolve disputes between believers. Sheffield raised this concern as a general reminder and did not direct it to any specific church. The Fellowship decided "to send the communication back to the church council with the advice that if it does have a concern with a specific church, they should contact that council, keeping Matthew 18 in mind."

The well-being of the youth also had the attention of the meeting. The Orthodox Reformed Church of Simcoe county asked for the organization of youth and young adult conferences, with the formation of a board to facilitate the matter. "In the end it was decided that the Simcoe church would initiate the process of organizing a board with the help of Hamilton Independent CRC with representation from each church."

Missions was also on the agenda. The Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church at St. Catharines has called a missionary couple to serve in the Honduras. (The Langedoens, the couple called, served the CRC there for a number of years.) The calling church requested the support of the other churches. It was suggested that supporting churches be represented on the mission board of the calling church.

The Aylmer Independent CRC asked that some structure be placed in the procedure of organizing elder conferences to prevent duplication, but the meeting decided to stay with the status quo. The suggestion by the Aylmer church to request Redeemer College for a representative from the independent churches on the College board was adopted by the Fellowship.

The meeting also decided to set the next meeting for June 17, 1995. **C**

OUR COVER

Luther explains the writings of Elector Johan

(Drawing by Gustav König).



League Day June '94

Hosted by Langley Canadian Reformed Church

BE JOYFUL AND SING

For those who never have attended an Annual Women's League Day it might be difficult to understand why 270 women made time to drive to Langley to attend this day of fellowship. According to the morning's chairlady, Mrs. Ginny Vanderhorst, some think we come together to exchange recipes, or to just have a good time away from it all (with an elaborate lunch), or to hold some sort of union meeting. But those who attended will long treasure the feeling of encouragement and edification enjoyed on this yearly highlight in a Reformed woman's life.

This year's theme was "Rejoice in the Lord." In the morning Mrs. Ena Bontkes of Langley explained to us how Christian joy should dominate our

lives. The book of Philippians teaches us that not circumstances, but our attitude determines our outlook on life. Knowing we are redeemed in Christ, we can suffer all things, and still maintain the joy which passes all understanding. In the question period the relation between the attitude we choose and the working of the Holy Spirit was further explored, as well as the connection between different types of depression and the joy in Christ.

The afternoon session opened with a delightful skit about a Sunday at the Vandersnores. Who does not recognize a Sunday morning rush, misplaced shoes, teenagers taking their time making lunch for rather formal guests?

Mrs. Gertie VanLuik of Chilliwack picked up the theme of rejoicing with a very instructive walk through the history lane of music (singing) in liturgy. Keeping in mind that liturgical singing is prayer, we understand that a congregation singing psalms in unison is as pleasing to the Lord as 4000 musicians making music in the days of David. Whether we use an organ or not during a church service, the emphasis should be on worship, not on entertainment.

All those who attended this 31st League day left recharged and encouraged by this day of studying God's word and enjoying each other's company as sisters in the Lord.

Jane DeGlint 



This year's theme "Rejoice in the Lord" was presented by Ena Bontkes (left). Chairlady Ginny VanderHorst (right) keeps a fruitful discussion flowing.



Gertie VanLuik (left) spoke on "singing and music" while Marion VanLaar kept the (discussion going) or, tune on track.

Tyndale Christian School

Calgary, Alberta

By R. Schouten

The Lord is good and the overflowing fountain of all good. This was the leading thought in the minds of many people on Tuesday morning, Sept. 06th, 1994, as they gathered for a ceremony to mark the opening of Tyndale Christian School in Calgary.

This day was the culmination of years of preparation. In June, 1985, a School Society was established by members of the congregation. Initially, due to the small size of the organization, there was no real possibility to operate a full day school. "Saturday School," however, played an important role for the children of the congregation. The Society was occupied in planning and in saving money for the future.

As time went by, the need for a Reformed School became more intense and obvious. Dissatisfaction with existing Christian schools became more pronounced, due to the growing encroachment of non-Reformed concepts in the life and teaching of those institutions.

For the last year, under the gracious hand of the Lord, the work of the Society has progressed rapidly. The obstacles were many. The task was intimidating for so small a group. Nonetheless, in the conviction that the Lord had laid this task on us, we were able to move ahead in faith. The Lord has also blessed the congregation and school society with slow but steady growth. The Board, together with several committees, was able to get the job done.

A major breakthrough came in early 1994 with the appointment of Mr. O. Bouwman to be the teacher of the as yet unnamed school. The School Society is very appreciative of his willingness to leave a job he enjoyed very much to take on this challenging and somewhat less predictable position.

Another important step in the journey toward the opening of the school came with the Lord's provision of a fa-

cility. After several promising situations proved in the end to be unworkable, the brothers of the board were able to find modern and affordable accommodation in the empty portable classrooms of an existing private School (Rundle College) located in the heart of Calgary. The Executive of this school has been most gracious and cooperative in helping to get us started.


On Sept. 06th, Mr. E. vanderVeen, chairman of the Board, led us in prayer and praise, after which he briefly recounted the history of the society and the Biblical motivations which led to its formation. He expressed thanks to God and the hope that we would continue to work in dependence on Him.

Mr. Bouwman then took the lectern to say a few words. He knew that his task was challenging and intimidating, but added that from the perspective of trusting God's providence, "the challenge changes from a great burden to a marvelous opportunity." He welcomed the students to their new school. He pointed out that while Tyndale Christian School won't be able to offer everything that other schools can in terms of sports programs and special activities, it will be a unique school, because it will bring an education in harmony with the Word of God. As such the students can be thankful and proud of the school they attend. Mr. Bouwman also encouraged the members of the School Society to continue their intense involvement in the life of the school so that it remains always a community endeavor.

After the singing of the national anthem, Rev. Schouten led in thanksgiving. Afterwards, everyone took a few moments to view the facilities and then school began. There are presently 15 students in grades 1-10 housed in two classrooms. Projections for the future include larger classes, as there are presently many pre-school children amongst the membership. Each day, at

least one volunteer is present to assist the teacher. In addition, Mrs. Marion DeBoer helps out on a daily basis. The grade ten students use video instruction for several of their courses. So far, both students and teacher report much joy in their labours. The Lord has made their work doable!

The name, "Tyndale Christian School," was chosen because of the place William Tyndale has been given in the English Reformation. The year 1994 marks the 500th anniversary of his birth. He is known to some historians as the "Father of the English Bible," since he was the first to work on a translation of Scripture from Hebrew and Greek into English. At one point, Tyndale is reported to have said to a Romish clergyman, "If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that drieveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest." Tyndale was able to complete the New Testament and portions of the Old, including the first five books. Some 90% of his words passed into the King James Version and about 75% into the Revised Standard Version. In October of 1536, he was strangled and burnt for the crime of having made God's Word available to the English people (For more information about Tyndale, see R. Faber, "Martyr for the English Reformation," *Reformed Perspective*, vol. 13, #6 as well as R. Faber, "William Tyndale's Concept of the Church," *Clarion*, vol. 43, #8 & 9).

We Reformed believers in Calgary are full of gratitude for the Lord's work in our midst. It is our hope that Tyndale Christian School will always be a Reformed School with an open Bible, so that through the light of God's Word, His creation may be for our treasured children and young people, a compelling and wondrous thing to study. 

A New School in Vernon

On September 6th most schools opened their doors again for the 1994/95 school year. Many parents were encouraging children who had "butterflies" and stomach aches. In Vernon, there may have been a few extra "butterflies" as it was the official opening of the Canadian Reformed school. Present for this historic moment were, parents, students grandparents, congregation members, the Mayor of our town, the MLA and his wife, and the MP. What would they think of our small beginnings? We gathered in one of the two rented classrooms in the Pleasant Valley Seventh-day Adventist school.

We sang our praises to God acknowledging God as Helper, putting our trust in Him with the words of Psalm 146:1,2 and 3. Psalm 78:1-8 was read, telling of the power and won-



*Three gentlemen in the center –
Mayor McGrath, Lyall Hanson, MLA, Daryll Stinson, MP*



*Mr. H.
Vandermolen
and Mrs. Y.
DeBoersap*

ders of the Lord to our children and the generations to come.

Mr. Veenendaal, chairman of the Board, asked who were the most important people present this morning. Of course, a student impressed with the presence of the three dignitaries answered, "Those people," and others answered "the minister" or "the parents." The answer he was looking for did come, the students, 23 of them. The Lord has blessed the efforts to start a day school where the children could be taught in a way that is in complete harmony with what they are taught at home and in church, in order that they become responsible citizens of our country and at the same time obedient citizens of the Kingdom of God. A special welcome was extended to the government dignitaries and it was a good opportunity to ask them to defend the freedom we have in this country to open our own day school. A special welcome was also extended to our two teachers, Mr. H. VanderMolen and Mrs. Y. DeBoersap.

The new principal, Mr. H. VanderMolen, quizzed the students as to what



bag of combs, brushes, gel and hair-spray in the washroom that morning, or the Vanderleest twins who wear matching pajamas.

Congratulations were expressed by the Hon. Daryll Stinson who also presented the school with a Canadian flag. Mr. Lyall Hanson, the MLA, recognized the importance of independent schools and assured us he would assist us in any way.

Psalms 84:1 and 2 were sung. We sang of our longing to see God's holy courts. How fitting to close our opening assembly with singing of O Canada, especially the second verse. For as we go forward "from strength to strength," we may ask "Help us to find, O God in Thee a lasting rich reward. As waiting for a better day, we ever stand on guard."

Elsina Moes **C**

they hated most about school: math, homework, report cards? Of course, the answer was tests. Today, he even felt he was being tested by the students. Is he going to be OK? He explained that we are all being tested every day? We can study for these tests by studying the Bible, and for our tests in the subjects at school we must study the work that has been taught. We may ask the Lord for help and try to do our best everytime.

Mrs. DeBoersap felt that since Mr. VanderMolen was new in Vernon she should introduce the students. She had carefully written their names on bright pink paper in alphabetical order, not an easy task with so many Vander . . . s, and suggested he put this under his pillow. To acquaint him even more with the students she introduced them with something uniquely applicable to each one. I'm sure he'll not forget the neatly coiffed Van Delft boys who had left a



A CORRECTING EXPLANATION:

In the June 17, 1994 issue, the name of the author of the article "The Unofficial Version" was given as S. Vandergugten-Van Popta. The addition "Van Popta" did not come from the author herself but was added by me as editor who intended to make clear to readers outside the Fraser Valley (B.C.) who the author was. Therefore, if anyone is of the opinion that, on the basis of the name under the article, he can conclude to feministic aspirations with the author, his or her opinion has no valid ground whatsoever. If anyone would be to blame for feministic inclinations on the basis of the name as it was presented, it is your editor.

J. Geertsema

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Rev. De Boer, in his letter in *Clarion*, August 26, 1994, makes a different ecclesiology the criterion for judging a church true or false, to be joined or to be separated from acc. to Art. 28 BC. K. Schilder warned against confusing the statements of the Confession with the views of the theologians. The published "discussion paper" of the deputies for eccl. unity refers to Schilder's conviction that he could have church-unity with men who propagated the concept of the pluriformity of the church, although he would fight their dogmatic views in this respect wherever he could. The cause of the Liberation was exactly that theological views on controversial points of the Confession were imposed as binding on the churches.

Rev. De Boer accuses our synods of having spoken out of two sides of the mouth, by on the one hand saying that the OPC is a true church, and on the other hand saying that we do not practice this recognition. I would rather call this an unfortunate and untenable inconsistency than lack of integrity. A true church is a lawful church where Christ is present and gathers his people. Art. 28 BC says that we have to maintain the unity with such a church and therefore have to have Holy Supper communion there. If Christ is there, I cannot shun that Table. If our synods would have meant that our members cannot partake of Holy Supper in the OPC without sinning against the Lord, our synods would have been in conflict with Art. 28 BC. The point is that our synods never defined the confessional ramifications of their inconsistency to practice an official church-politically organized sister church relationship with the OPC. It seems to me unlawful to use an undefined inconsistency of our synods as an argument to nullify the consistently affirmed recognition of the OPC as a true church in the Confessional sense of the word. This officially maintained recognition of the OPC ought to be honoured in the official ecclesiastical dealings of

our churches, f.i. when admitting or refusing a church to the federation.

If Rev. De Boer is serious in what he writes, which we must assume, it is puzzling why he did not oppose the decision of classis AB/MB to admit Denver on the ground of the consideration, a.o. "that it appears necessary to temporarily acquiesce in the side-by-side existence of at least two true churches in Denver, one Reformed, the other Presbyterian," "although this seems to be in conflict with the Confession." (Acts Classis Oct. 12-14, Art. VI B. IV.

1). In other words: *classis acknowledged that it had to practice church-pluriformity in order to admit Denver*, and classis judged that Classis March 1992 erred when it rejected Denver "on the basis of the Reformed Confessions," that is on the basis that the Reformed Confessions condemn church-pluriformity. Amazing that such could happen in classis AB/MB where actions were taken in the past against the alleged pluriformity teachings of Rev. De Jong and Rev. De Bruin! Subscription vows were even thought to have been violated.

Likewise, if Denver is serious, and broke with the OPC on the ground of the practice of church-pluriformity, as Rev. De Boer states, then it remains puzzling that Denver did not refuse to join the federation when it noticed that classis acknowledged that it could only admit Denver *by practicing church-pluriformity*. Is that serious, or reject the OPC on the ground of the practice of pluriformity, and to enter the CaRC by way of the practice of pluriformity?

Going by his letter, it seems to me that Rev. De Boer should have moved at Classis to judge that the OPC is not a true church to which the ordinances of Art. 28 BC apply, and to request classis to appeal the decision of 1977 at next General Synod. In that case classis could have accepted Denver on *confessional* grounds. A dangerous move of course, for rejection of such a far-reaching motion would have implied rejection of the admission of Denver on the same confessional grounds. But at least

classis would have done what it was supposed to do and what the delegates had promised to do, namely make judgments in accordance with the Confession and the Church Order.

For the rest: I believe that no one would doubt that it is high time for our next General Synod to remove the confusing inconsistency of not practicing sister church relationship with a church it so consistently has declared a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or else to humbly confess persistent blindness by failing to judge rightly and rescind 1977.

J. D. Wielenga

Dear Editor,

I read the articles by Rev. Aasman about theonomy in the *Clarion*, March 11, '94, March 25, '94, and April 8, '94. I would like to address his statement that the death penalty of the Old Testament has been replaced by excommunication in the New Testament.

In installment 3, the middle column of page 163, Reverend Aasman states: "There is no parallel between Israel as a state in the Old Testament and the civil government today . . . Therefore to transfer the penal sanctions from Old Testament Israel to the hands of the state today also does not follow . . . Whereas the punishment for a number of sins in the Old Testament is the death penalty, in the New Testament it is excommunication from the church. . . ."

Is this truly what the Bible says, and what we confess about church discipline and about the role of the civil government?

1. The catechism teaches in L.D. 31 that the goal of church discipline is to draw the sinner back. The word in the original means pulling, drawing. This can be seen from the way scripture says we should deal with the wayward brother. We are to respect his name, not gossip about him, meet him face-to-face, and if possible, restore him to a right relationship with God. We

keep the matter secret. Going through the different steps, including the ultimate cutting off, we love the brother, and show our concern. The whole aim is restoration, not punishment. But that is exactly what happens if we accept as true what Reverend Aasman states.

2. Those outside the church cannot be excommunicated, for they already live separate from God. Do they remain unpunished? The Bible says in Romans 13 that the civil magistrate has the mandate to bring criminals to justice.

3. According to the Bible the church is to excommunicate for unrepentance of ANY sin, not only for those sins which were capital crimes in Israel.

4. Repentance ends church discipline, but repentance did not remove the civil penalty for a criminal in the Old Testament.

5. Let's think of the alternative to God's law and see where it has brought us today. We live in a society where God's justice is not kept in view when administering punishments. Martin Luther once said: "Without justice, what are governments but great bands of robbers?" William Penn said: "If a nation is not willing to be governed by God's law, it condemns itself to be ruled by tyrants." We can see the truth of these statements around us in society. Murder, adultery, homosexual behavior, abortion are the order of the day. The alternative to God's law is not no law at all, but man's autonomous law. Is that what we want?

6. Let me try to explain what I believe the Bible says about the relationship between church and state. Church and state are two separate institutions. Both are ordained by God, both are responsible to God. The church and the state each have their own jurisdiction. The church is there to disclose the way of salvation by means of the preaching, the sacraments and the exercise of discipline. The state has the mandate to restrain evil and to promote the good. When a church member has committed a crime (those sins for which there is an earthly, here-and-now punishment in the Bible) then the church's task is to admonish and exhort him, so that he will repent and turn back to God. At the same time the state has the obligation to bring this person to justice. God ordained temporal punishments because He operates on the basis of retribution, restitution, and compensation, Ezek. 18:4,20; Gal 6:7; Deut 24:17-22.

We can see the disastrous results of a justice system that does not take God's justice seriously. Because there is no deterrent, criminals laugh at the sentences. Crime is rampant. Repeat offenders roam the streets. To restore some measure of public safety we need to go back to God's justice. Separation of church and state? Definitely! But not separation of God and state!

In Christian love
Sip Hofstede, Smithers, B.C.

Dear Editor:

Relative to your editorial in the August 26, 1994 editorial, "Speaking about the need of a personal relationship with Christ," I offer some observations.

Use or the importation of the expression "a personal relationship" is like dragging a (small) Trojan Horse into the Church. Not only may this easily show "an unbiblical individualism," it is that and more. In effect, it is a "strange fire."

Referring to Billy Graham's *A Biblical Standard for Evangelists*, I mention two quotations. (1) "... we need to emphasize what a person must do in response to God's word in Christ. God in His grace offers us the gift of eternal life – but like any gift, it becomes ours only when we reach out and take it." (p.51) (2) "... saving faith is a *commitment* to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. It is a personal and individual decision." (p. 55) This gives in short the substance of a personal decision.

The use of an innocent-sounding expression as "a personal relationship" drags in the whole Arminian or Evangelistic world with all its anthropocentrism. There is behind and in and with this expression the direct refusal to acknowledge the covenant of grace and the doctrine of predestination, in fact, the offices of Christ Jesus. Because of their commitment to the freedom of the will, they have no grasp on the biblical teachings concerning sin and total depravity. In every way it goes against the Reformed Confessions. Why should Christians by using this terminology try to be world-friendly and give off wrong impressions? (Cf. Gal. 1:6ff.)

Therefore, instead of mildly concluding "faith" is a better word (one not frequent in the Arminian/Evangelical world because it defeats their religion),



CORRECTION

Inadvertently we published that Rev. W. den Hollander received a call to Abbotsford, BC. This information is incorrect. We apologize for any inconvenience this misinformation may have caused.

The Publisher

it would have been better had you ended the editorial saying that Christians do not use expressions like this. Coming from you, this carries great weight.

Faternally,
T. Hoogsteen

Dear Editor:

In his review of Rev. Van Rongen's new book about the church, Professor Van Dam asks, "Is there really a unity of the faith between Reformed and Presbyterian churches?" He answers with the following quote from Rev. Van Rongen, "Differences of opinion or insight in matters such as the way in which the fencing of the Lord's Table is managed, . . . cannot be covered by the term 'differences in what we believe, differences that hinder official recognition of unity of faith.' What the member churches really *believe*, that is: confess, is expressed in their respective confessional standards and these are commonly recognized as being truly Reformed! We are afraid that here again the catholic character of the church is ignored!" Professor Van Dam concludes: "These too are words that we can keep in mind on our continent."

I beg to differ with both Rev. Van Rongen's assertions, and Professor Van Dam's approval of those assertions. My experience in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, a church with the Westminster Standards, made clear that opinions or insights regarding the fencing of the Lord's Supper were decidedly matters of *belief* rooted in their confessions. The OPC admits visitors to

the Lord's Table from a variety of denominations, not all of which have what are considered Reformed confessions. How is this practice a matter of belief rooted in their confessions?

Chapters 25 and 26 of the Westminster Confession speak about the church and the communion of saints. I found that primarily from these sections, the OPC develops and works with the following two interconnected syllogisms:

First syllogism

- a. The holy catholic church is the assembly of all the elect and regenerated.
- b. Belief is a fruit of election.
- c. Therefore all believers, even if they have not yet joined a true church, are members of the holy catholic church.

Second syllogism

- a. The communion of saints is as broad as the holy catholic church.
- b. All believers are members of the holy catholic church.
- c. Therefore all believers share in the communion of saints.

A consistent application of this logic would force admission of guests to the Lord's Table who were not members of any local church. Although this does occur in the OPC, I believe many in the OPC would shrink from such a position because they also recognize that the Westminster Confession speaks about particular visible churches. Thus, when you begin with the logic of the syllogisms and seek to apply them within the framework of the visible church, you end up with current OPC practice regarding the admission of guests to the Supper. This election/regeneration perspective of the church provides the basis for their practice. According to this view, regenerated people reside in various churches or church groups (denominations), and they may have varying confessions with differing beliefs. Nevertheless, the OPC believes these people must be admitted to the Lord's Table. If they do not admit such people, the OPC believes that they risk a denominational exclusivism that compromises their witness to the Table as the Lord's. This view of the *pluriformity* of the church, growing out of their use of the Westminster Standards, thus has a profound effect on the practices of the OPC.

In contrast to the practice and belief of the OPC, the Canadian Reformed churches admit guests to the Lord's Supper only from sister-churches (cf. Art. 61, C.O.). These sister-churches must all have Reformed confessions. This view of the *uniformity* of the church grows out of our beliefs as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, especially Arts. 27-29 of the Belgic Confession, about the church. Rather than beginning with an election/regeneration perspective of the church, we begin with local, true churches, and work with the norms of Scripture (cf. Arts. 28, 29 B.C.) for membership in such churches. Thus we do not conclude from our confession that the holy catholic church (Art. 27, B.C.) is some nebulous concept of all the regenerated and the elect, a church which is contrasted with the local, true churches.

If the OPC believes their view of admitting guests to the Lord's Table avoids what they perceive as the danger of denominational exclusivism, then must they not conclude that our practice makes us sectarian? These are serious matters of belief and not mere opinion and insight which can be glossed over lightly. Indeed, the Canadian Reformed General Synod of 1986 decided that views of the church which I believe are virtually identical to the ones held by the OPC are not in harmony with the Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, and are therefore to be rejected (cf. Art. 184, p. 93-104).

It may be true that the Westminster Standards are commonly recognized as being truly Reformed. However, the important issue is neither what is commonly thought, nor whether the Westminster Standards arose during the time of the great Reformation. Rather the important questions are, first, do the Westminster Standards accurately express what the Bible teaches? And second, how do Presbyterian churches hold and use these standards?

Professor Van Dam points out that questions have arisen in our sister-churches in Australia about their participation in the ICRC because of such concerns about Presbyterian bodies. Should it not also raise questions among us about that same participation, and perhaps even more pointedly about our official ecclesiastical relationships with Presbyterian bodies?

Rev. B.R. Hofford

Response

1. In inter-church relations one cannot go by opinions or syllogisms (and their conclusions) which function with some people in the church under discussion. We could have syllogisms functioning in our churches which we as churches together would never accept. For example:

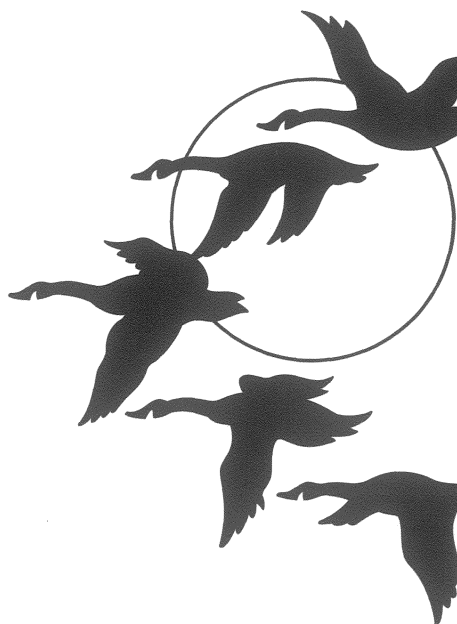
- a. *the one holy catholic church is the true church*
- b. *the Canadian Reformed churches are the true church*

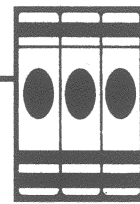
Conclusion: all the others are false.

As it would be unfair to judge the Canadian Reformed churches on the basis of such constructions, so likewise it is unfair to judge the OPC on the basis of syllogisms that may be found in her.

2. The Westminster Standards and polity have never formed an impediment to recognizing a church to be true, also not in Australia which had (and continues to have) sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, Kosin, long before the Canadian Reformed churches did. Cf. also the study report in *Acts New Westminster 1971*, pp. 64-71.

C. Van Dam 





Tongues and Prophecy Today

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Final Word. A Biblical Response to the Case for Tongues and Prophecy Today*.

Carlisle, PA: *Banner of Truth*, 1993. (150 pages, \$ 7.95 US).

This is a helpful book on the question whether tongues and prophecy can still be expected in the church today. The author first lays the groundwork by examining the Old Testament on this topic as well as some New Testament data. His discussion of the OT material is not always clear, probably because his terms are not adequately defined. Robertson says, for example, that "Experiencing the revelation of God through the Son means being one with God himself" (p. 5) and the context makes clear that this was not the case in the OT. But was there not unity with God in the revelation of the Word of God in the old dispensation? Was the righteousness of God not also given to His OT people (cf. Rom. 4:3)?

At the end of the first chapter, three conclusions are drawn. Firstly, throughout the old and new covenant eras, God remains as the originator of the truly prophetic word. Secondly, the warning concerning the dangers of false prophecy must be remembered. Thirdly,

the biblical testimony concerning prophecy has a critical effect on the question of the role of women in the church. The primary text supporting the speaking of women in worship refers to their 'prophesying' (1 Cor. 11:5). If 'to prophesy' means to speak revelationally, then the role of women in the church today is clarified. Only so long as the revelational gift of prophecy remained alive in the church could women serve as instruments of the divine word. But if the prophetic word of God has found its perfection with the completion of the new covenant Scriptures, then the role of women as instruments of divine revelation has now ceased. (p. 20).

In the following chapter, Robertson concludes four basic points on the basis of his study of the New Testament. First of all, NT tongues are revelational; that is through them revelation from God was passed on (pp. 23-33). Secondly, the NT tongues were foreign languages. This conclusion (which is similar to that of R. Gaffin in his *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 81-82) is largely based on the fact that on the day of Pentecost the speaking with other tongues was the speaking of foreign languages (Acts 2:6), coupled with an examination of especially 1 Cor. 14 (pp. 33-37). There does not appear to be widespread agreement on this point of the precise identity of the tongues, probably because we do not have enough information to be sure when all the Scriptural data are taken into account. His third conclusion is that NT tongues were to be for the benefit of the church and were thus to function publicly (pp. 37-41). Fourthly, NT tongues were a sign indicating a radical change in the direction of redemptive history. "God was indicating that He no longer would speak a single language to a single people" (p. 47). Thus the sign of tongues "marked the transition to a truly world-wide gospel" (p. 48).

In chapter 4 Robertson shows that special revelation has ceased with the completion of the NT. He summarizes the meaning of this cessation thus:

It is not that God is dead and no longer communicates with people. The heavens still declare the glory of God, and the firmament displays his handiwork. The Holy Spirit who lives in every believer illumines the truth of God as found in Scripture, and applies it constantly to life and conscience. The Bible embodies God's personal selection of the special revelations he determined that the church would need through all the ages. In this written revelation from God is contained all that is needed for life and godliness. No further words, ideas, or supposed visions and prophecies shall supplement the completed revelation of


Scripture. It is not just that the written canon is closed, meaning that no more words are to be added to the Bible. The end of revelation means that all those former ways of God's making his will known to his church have now ceased (p. 60).

After showing the cessation of prophecy from Scripture, Robertson interacts with Wayne Grudem, who denies that the gift of prophecy has ceased. This interaction with Grudem is valuable for his book *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (1988) has received endorsements from prominent thinkers such as J.I. Packer and the book is influential. In Robertson's words, it "offers to unite the vitality and insight of modern-day Pentecostalism with the doctrinal stability inherent in the churches that came out of the Reformation" (p. 86).

Robertson's treatment of Grudem is fair and compelling and he goes into his arguments in detail and shows from the Scriptures where they are lacking. Robertson is also moved by pastoral concern at the confusion and havoc that could be created by Grudem's ideas of prophecy (in the congregation) which is less than reliable. This prophecy needs to be less than God's Word for Grudem still wants to assert *sola scriptura*.

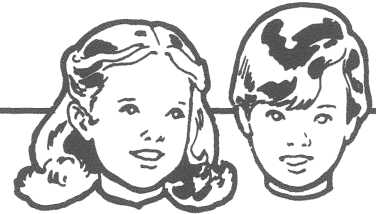
In a concluding chapter Robertson pulls the main points together and shows the rich blessings associated with accepting the cessation of prophecy with the completion of the canon of Scripture.

This book lends itself well for use in study societies and is heartily recommended.

One final note, if societies want to study the issue of prophecy today and the ideas of Grudem, besides this book, do not forget to make use of Prof. Norris Wilson's speech "Prophecy Today?" as well. It is found in the *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches* (1993) and should be available in your church library. It can also be purchased for a modest price. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Whenever you go to the store these days, all you'll see is spiders, witches and even light-up ghosts in some stores. Candy, costumes, even scary music on tapes are there. Your neighbours may ask you, "Are you going out for Halloween?"

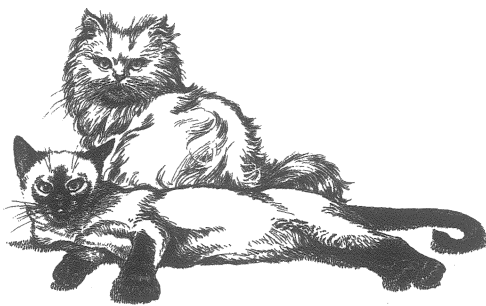
Let's think about it for a minute. Halloween actually means "hallowed" (or holy) evening. But who is it holy for? Especially when we see all those scary witches and ghouls! It can't be for the LORD! And if it's not for Him, then it must be His great enemy, Satan. Do you think we should do things for God's enemy?

On a night long ago, a monk in Germany nailed some papers with writing on them on the church door. He chose a special day, so lots of people could see what he wrote. The day he chose was then called "All Saints Day," November 1.

He had been reading the Bible very carefully and had found out that the Church was teaching very wrong things! Things the Bible never said. Like, you could give money to the Church so your mother could go to heaven! Or, that no matter what, you had to listen to the Pope!

So he wrote true things that the Bible said, so that people would know the Church was telling them lies.

Today we call October 31, not Halloween, but Reformation Day because we remember how the LORD showed His People that they had to listen only to His Word, the Bible.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAY WISHES!

We all join in wishing God's Blessing for all the Busy Beavers celebrating a November birthday. Here's hoping you have one excellent day with family and friends!

Carin Meliefste	1	Joshua Sietsma	18
Anna Kampen	2	Dan VanderVeen	19
Peter Vanderzwaag	8	Doug VanderVeen	19
Teri Oosterhoff	10	Jaclyn Hulst	20
Josh Roza	10	Richard Oosterhoff	20
Melissa Bremer	12	Terry VanAndel	21
Cheryl Jelsma	14	James Aasman	28
Heidi DeHaan	15	Pauline Boeve	29
Ashlea Jagt	15	Joni Schulenberg	30
Jeremy Linde	18	Dorothy Gunnink	30

Quiz Time!

WORD SEARCH PLACES IN ONTARIO

By Busy Beaver Sharalee VandenBos

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