

Clarion

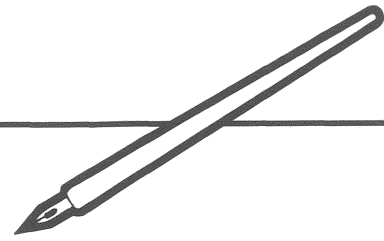
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Numbers

10:1-10



Not All of the Right are Righteous

Evidence is growing everyday of a conservative renewal in Canada and the U.S. Nobody can accurately measure the depth of this trend nor predict its eventual impact on politics and society. However, that change is in the air cannot be denied. Over the airwaves and in various print media, right wing ideas are presented and conservative words are used which even just a few years ago would have been unable to find a place in public discussion.

One can think of the enormous popularity of Rush Limbaugh with his scathing attacks on all things liberal, whether it be the welfare state or homosexual rights or liberal divorce laws. One might also contemplate the astonishing success of *The Book of Virtue*, a collection of moralistic stories, fables and poems gathered by William Bennet, former secretary of education in the U.S., and sold in all major book retailers. Magazines ranging from *Reader's Digest* to *Newsweek* as well as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Time*, have all featured articles in the last year defending politically incorrect viewpoints about the permanence of marriage and illustrating the disaster of divorce. Other evidence might include the wide readership for "The Gospel of Life," the last encyclical letter of John Paul II about abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty.

Locally, a person can tune into one of the largest radio stations in Alberta to find prime time open-line hosts boldly defending old-time values like family, parental rights, stricter discipline of children, promoting small government over against the nanny state, as well as attacking liberal villains such as the educational bureaucracy. Dr. Laura Schlesinger, a popular California psychotherapist, has a daily program available in Alberta as well, in which one senses a growing intolerance for the concept of victimhood. Old ideas of psychotherapy which allowed many clients to deflect responsibility for their attitudes and actions are being strongly challenged by even older notions of personal accountability. Dr. Laura is consciously anti-liberal and yet is very well received. Her solutions to the many family problems put on her agenda usually include frequent reference to ideas like fidelity, commitment, self-denial and personal responsibility. Every day you can listen as she holds forth about the need to stick with marital partners through thick and thin, about the serious responsibility of parents to inculcate good morals in their children and so forth. It would appear that a similar stress on individual answerability is also beginning to have an impact on the courts of both Canada and the U.S., for example, in the treatment of young offenders.

Suddenly, then, it is OK to speak in public about virtue. Yes, this is possible even in *The Globe and Mail*. Words such as "values" or "morals" as well as "commitment" and "restraint" are making a comeback. The pendulum of public life may be swinging from the left to the right. As believers, we feel the need to evaluate this trend. Many of us have a sense of relief that some liberal idols are falling. Maybe we feel vindicated as politicians, journalists, educationists and

many others call for a return to values. These people have seen that liberal distaste for what are called "traditional values" has had disastrous results, including the break-up of families, teenage revolutions against all authority, increasing violence, growing incidence of sexual assault, more depression, a poor work ethic and so forth. In many circles, a sense of panic prevails concerning the present state of our society, combined with an urgent appeal for traditional morals.

A Christian renewal?

As we listen to these earnest voices of renewal, we may feel we are on the edge of a Christian awakening in our society. Although such a turn-about is a thing devoutly to be wished, a large measure of caution would seem to be in order. After all, conservative morals are not the exclusive property of Christian nations and peoples. Not all of the right are necessarily righteous. Committed conservatism is no sign and seal of conversion. The mere presence of more traditional values does not always bear witness to the presence of Christ.

A more sober assessment of the conservative trend would indicate that it reflects the pendulum swing of a purely natural cycle. Society goes through phases which emphasize freedom and personal liberty to other phases which stress personal restraint and responsibility. In the sixties a great phase began with a powerful urge to throw off the shackles of religion and morality. The right of the individual to do whatever he wanted whenever he wanted without any feeling of guilt was the dominating impulse. Today, it would seem that, due to threatening anarchy, the movement which started in the sixties is slowing down and coming to a natural conclusion. People are realizing that a narcissistic and self-indulgent culture simply cannot survive for long. It lacks cohesion and drive and creates dangerous living conditions for millions.

We would be fools to confuse a purely this-worldly transition with a genuine restoration of Christian values. It may well be true that a conservative reaction to liberal excess will be helpful for the prospects of the church in America. A society with a greater emphasis on self-denial cannot be a bad thing for us and our children. It would be a dangerous delusion, however, to suppose that we stand on common ground with unbelievers in waging moral warfare.

Between a Christian and a mere social and cultural conservative stands a huge chasm. It is the chasm between the flesh and the Spirit and that between death and life. What is needed for sinful human beings, whether in the first century A.D. or in the post-Christian era of the 1990s is not simply moral improvement. What is needed is a resurrection – of dead sinners to life. The move to conservatism remains a move from below; it reflects a purely human solution to the present dilemma of society. Conservatism doesn't get anyone out of the grave.

Not conservatism but conversion

Instead of conservatism we need conversion. Instead of "traditional values," we and our country need Christ with His blood and Spirit. We need the dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new. As we reflect upon the trends of the day, we need to remember what Scripture teaches about the human condition apart from Christ. Whether conservative or liberal in their lifestyle and attitudes, all human beings are consigned by Scripture to the sphere of death, "dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh," and "darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Col. 2:13 & Eph. 4:18).

It's true, of course, that conservative vices and sins may be a little tidier than those of a debauched liberal. However, underneath the more dignified exterior lies a still unregenerated heart, a heart that does not love God and His commandments, but a heart that remains hostile to the living Lord. As we digest the wisdom of the merely conservative, we should realize that since they lack repentance and faith in Christ, their answers are necessarily "of the flesh." Conservative solutions cannot lead to genuine righteousness for our country.

It is also true that conservative backlashes against liberalism lack any consistency. Their moral regimes are highly arbitrary. For example, the above-mentioned Dr. Laura, while on the one hand advocating commitment and fidelity in relationships, while rejecting pre-marital sexual relationships, while rejecting abortion, and while promoting toughness in parenting, on the other hand sees no problem with homosexual relationships (as long as there is fidelity) or with pornography (as long as men don't act on what they see). What we have in Dr. Laura is a kind of common sense reaction to the brokenness of life in the modern world. Clearly, however, common-sense reactions fall far short of Scriptural righteousness. They lack an absolute foundation. Ultimately, they will fail because they do not have the power to declare, "Thus says the Lord" and because they have no power to change the human heart.

In contrast to the superficial conservative solution to threatening anarchy in society, the Christian response is genuinely radical. It really goes to the root. It attacks the problem of society at the level of the individual heart of the sinner. The Gospel calls all people everywhere to repent of their sins, to put away their wicked rebellion against God and His Word. It promises forgiveness to all

"Between a Christian and a mere social and cultural conservative stands a huge chasm. It is the chasm between the flesh and the Spirit and that between death and life."

who look outside of themselves to Christ for the answer to their misery and guilt. The Gospel further declares that in this way people are truly born again. They receive new natures. God makes them alive by His Almighty power.

In opposition to the merely natural solutions of conservatism, the Gospel proclaims the exclusive supernatural solution of God's grace. God's grace is the only "fix" for a fallen world. Does the mere conservative praise God? Does he sing songs of joy to the Lord? Does he grieve about sin? Could a mere conservative pen the words of Psalm 119 in praise of God's law? Does a mere conservative have joy in God? Is such a person zealous for good works? Does he hate sin, grieve about it and flee from it?

Far from it. He is still in the flesh. The leopard cannot change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin (Jer. 13:23). As the merely conservative sows to his own flesh, he will continue to reap corrup-

tion. His stricter rules and regulations avail him not. They may have an appearance of wisdom in checking the indulgence of the flesh, but cannot bring real godliness (compare Col. 2:23).

What brings about real godliness is faith in Christ. By faith in Christ, we are united to Him in His death and resurrection. By faith in Christ, we are delivered from guilt and we receive the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. By His blood we are justified and by His Spirit we are sanctified. By the Spirit we learn to put to death the deeds of the flesh. The Holy Spirit writes God's law upon our hearts so that we learn to deny ourselves and live a God-pleasing life. Apart from the grace of the Holy Spirit, there is no genuine virtue. The power of the Holy Spirit is far greater than the power of conservatism, far greater than any revival of humanly devised morals and ethics.

Let our Pentecost prayer then be for a mighty work of the Spirit of God in our country, working through the Word to bring many more people to the first resurrection, the resurrection to faith and hope and love. As people of Christ, indwelt by His Spirit, let's be zealous for good works so that the feeble and futile efforts of the merely conservative to bring reformation might by outshone by our radical living for the Lord. **C**

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Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 9:1-22:

"... he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name. . . ."

PAUL, A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT

Saul of Tarsus, the leading Jewish Inquisitor, was not content with the persecution he had orchestrated in Jerusalem. He had been there at the execution of deacon Stephen. He had ravaged the church in Jerusalem. He had entered house after house, dragged off men and women, and committed them to prison. He had even helped put some to death (Acts 22:4; 26:10). He was instrumental in scattering the Jerusalem Christians throughout Judea and Samaria.

You would think that he would be content with having purged the holy city of these miserable Christians. No, Paul had zeal. He had heard that there were members of the synagogues in Damascus converting to the Christian faith. That would never do. He had asked the high priest for letters authorizing him to round up these criminals and bring them bound to Jerusalem.

But the Lord had something else in mind. He met Saul on the way to Damascus. In Acts 26:12ff Paul himself said that at midday he saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around him. He fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice say: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" It was the Lord Jesus! Persecuting the church is persecuting the Lord Jesus. He and His body are one.

The Lord told him to enter the city and await instruction. Saul found that he was blind. His companions brought him into the city.

Three days later the Lord told a disciple called Ananias to go to Saul of Tarsus, lay hands on him, and restore his sight. Understandably, Ananias was not eager. The name of Saul of Tarsus struck terror in the hearts of Christians.

But the Lord told Ananias to go. He said: "... he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel."

So Ananias went, laid his hands on Saul, and baptized him. Saul received back his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Lord had chosen Saul, known better as the apostle Paul, to serve as a special instrument in His hand. Paul brought the gospel to many throughout Asia Minor, Greece and Italy. Twelve out of twenty-seven books of the New Testament come from the hand of the apostle Paul. The writings of Paul contain both the deepest doctrinal and the most practical instruction of the New Testament.

Today, in many circles, Paul is unpopular. Especially feminists dislike Paul because of what he wrote about the role of women in the church of Christ. Paul is accused of having hated women. Some speculate that he was sexually frustrated. Paul is a stumbling block. His outdated views have, supposedly, led to untold misery for women, to oppression and all sorts of abuse.

And so Paul is rejected. But those who reject Paul should understand that they reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus told Ananias that Paul was His chosen instrument. You hold an instrument in your hand to do a specific job. The one who holds the instrument is responsible for what the instrument does.

Let us read the letters of Paul with humility. Let us accept everything that he writes. Let us obey the commands which come to us from Christ through the apostle Paul, His chosen instrument.

What's inside?

June 4 is Pentecost. We remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, exalted at the right hand of God the Father, poured out the Holy Spirit upon men, women and young people. Lately we have heard a lot about the "Toronto Blessing." We are told that the Holy Spirit is really shaking things up at a church in Toronto – the Airport Vineyard Church. The Holy Spirit is supposedly filling people with holy laughter. People fall to the ground roaring with laughter and giggling themselves into apoplexy. And the world laughs just as hard. *"That's Christianity?"* We include in this issue an article by the Rev. G.H. Visscher about the "Toronto Blessing." He reminds us of what the Word of God teaches about the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives. As well, under "Remember your Creator," you will find an article about baptism in the Holy Spirit.

An important event is underway in Abbotsford, BC – a General Synod. You will find a report on what has transpired during Week One. May the Lord richly bless this assembly. May all the decisions be approved by the King and serve the building up of His church.

GvP

Toronto Blessing or Temples of the Holy Spirit?

By G.H. Visscher

The following is a slightly revised version of a speech delivered at the recent Easter Young People's Study Weekend in Burlington.

Not too far from here, in the vicinity of the Toronto International Airport, a certain church of about 350 people has drawn no fewer than about 200,000 visitors from many countries and denominations. For a while this Airport Vineyard Christian Fellowship had services six nights a week, and you would line up for two hours in order to get in. What was the attraction? About a year ago, it is said, the congregation began to experience bizarre manifestations of the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit." People were "slain in the Spirit" and thus unable to continue standing. There are pictures of people laying on the ground, laughing uncontrollably, shaking, bouncing and roaring. And it is all believed to be a renewing encounter with God.¹

Now as skeptical as I am, it's not my intention to critique at length this particular church or what it's promoting. Rather, the point that interests us is this: what is it that draws the people? The answer seems to be found in the conviction that if the Spirit of God is living and working among the people of God, *the evidence should be visible and obvious and evident*. This conviction draws the crowds, and leads to the line ups and the traffic jams.

Thus, when our topic is about being "Temples of the Holy Spirit," perhaps it is good to highlight exactly this question: *is the fact that you and I are temples of the Holy Spirit making a sufficient difference in your life and my life?* The questions are many: why should the presence of the Spirit make a difference? What should the differences be? Are they dramatic? Do we all have to be "slain in the Spirit"? Are they less dramatic? What are they?

Temple

Obviously, one cannot talk about "temples of the Holy Spirit" without having some knowledge about the rich Old Testament background of those words.

It begins with a *tent*. Back in the days of Moses when the people of Israel traveled to the promised land, they were in the habit of pitching a certain tent in the midst of their camp. This tent had two inner rooms with some furnishings as well as an outside yard with a kind of a stove where meat could be roasted. What made this tent special was the awareness that the Lord God of Israel dwelt there. It was here that they could meet Him from time to time (Ex. 25:8,22). Therefore, the tent was also covered with gold and blue, symbolizing that the one who lived there was majestic and beautiful. The tent in the midst of the people of God was a beautiful symbol of the solidarity between God and His people. This God would not simply remain in heaven and let Israel go its way through the wilderness. No, He went with them. If they would live in tents, He would live in tents. When they picked up theirs, they picked up His. They were going to the promised land. He, too, would travel to the promised land. The reminder of His presence was also seen in the cloud that came over the tent – the cloud which would go before them by day with the fire which was in it by night (Ex. 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-23).

We need to realize, too, that God's dwelling among His people had to make a *difference!* For this God was a holy God! Think of the book of Leviticus. What does this book deal with other than the fact that God dwells in the midst of His people? Well, now that the tabernacle was among the people of God, sacrifices had to be instituted so that the people of God could have access to His presence (Leviticus 1-5).

Priests had to be given instructions as to their role (Lev. 6-10, 21-22). The people as a whole had to keep separate from uncleanness in order to approach the tabernacle (11-16). They were warned that gross indecencies would meet with severe penalties (17-20). In addition, special care had to be taken for holy days and holy seasons and holy things (23-27). The point is: *the presence of God must make a difference*. The people of God are not to presume that they can have this holy God dwelling in their midst without this presence affecting their ways and their lives. Leviticus sums up the matter with the words: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (19:2; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16).² The simple fact is that the people of God cannot survive alongside the tabernacle unless they respect the holiness of God and maintain holiness among themselves.

It would be interesting to trace this theme throughout the Old Testament. Time prevents us from saying much about it. It is clear, however, that when the people of God live in the awareness that it is truly a great blessing to have the holy God living among them, then they are strong and blessed. Later the people reach the promised land and they exchange their temporary tents for more permanent homes. It is fitting that the makeshift tent of the Lord also be exchanged for the more stable edifice of a temple. Solomon does what David desired, making for God a permanent temple in which to dwell (2 Sam. 7). One thing becomes clear from the rest of the Old Testament, namely that *how the people relate to that temple and the God who dwells there determines the rise and fall of Israel*. Thus, already in the Old Testament, we see our theme that the presence of the Lord *must* make a difference. If a holy God dwells in the midst of a people, holiness must characterize those people. If it does,

blessings result. If it doesn't, fearful consequences follow.

Christ tabernacles among us

Before we move on to that New Testament expression "temples of the Holy Spirit," we must take one more brief stop in order to reflect on the fact that *the tabernacle and the temple find their fulfillment in our Lord Jesus Christ*. The clearest expression of this truth is found in John 1:14, where John says: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory. . . ." When John says "and dwelt among us," he deliberately uses a word for "dwelling" that alludes to the Old Testament tabernacle. We could write: "the word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us. . . ."

Less clear perhaps but with the same basic point, Matthew calls Jesus "Immanuel" – God with us! So too, in John's Gospel, as our Lord stands in the temple building, we hear our Lord saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." When the Jews then take offense because they think he is speaking about the building of the temple, John adds: "he spoke of the temple of his body." The clear meaning of these passages is that just as God dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, so now Christ is *the dwelling place of God*. In Christ, God is present in Israel. Again, this dwelling of God among His people must have consequences. Lives must change. *Holiness must become the result*. Again it will be either blessing or curse for the people of God.

Temple of the Holy Spirit

What happens when our Lord Jesus ascends into heaven? Is that the end of God dwelling among His people? Certainly not. The clear teaching of Scripture is that at Pentecost, our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). The result is that the people of God now become the dwelling place of God. Pentecost is a climax in Biblical history. God no longer dwells in the midst of the people of God by means of a tent or a building. God does not even dwell among them in one single person. Instead, God dwells right there in the very people of God themselves. The coming of the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers makes them temples in a full and rich sense.

When we look at the Biblical data, it is clear that *the church of Jesus Christ is the temple of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit*. 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 17 is a reference not to the individual believer but to the church. This is evident

from that fact that in the original the "you" is plural: "Do you not know that *you are God's temple* and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are." Similarly in Ephesians 2:21,22, Paul speaks about the people of God growing into "a *holy temple* in the Lord; in whom you also are built into . . . for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Likewise 1 Peter 2:5 urges us "like living stones be yourselves built into a *spiritual house*. . . ." Another text is 2 Corinthians 6:16: ". . . for we are the *temple* of the living God. . . ." Yet another is Hebrews 3:6: "*we are [God's] house* if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope."

What is true of the church is also true of the individual member of the church. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:16, using the singular and referring to the body of the believer: "Do you not know that *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?*" Likewise, Galatians 4:6: "*God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. . . .*"

That Christians are temples of the Holy Spirit is an indisputable fact. Anyone who truly professes the Son has the Spirit of God living in him or her. Pentecost is a climax in redemptive history. Better than having God dwell in a building close by, better than having God dwell in one person, we have God dwelling in each one of us! What a high honour! God has come that near to us in Christ Jesus our Lord!!

Consequences

And so *the* question really becomes this: if God dwelling among His people had consequences for the people of Israel, if it had consequences in Jesus' day, should it not have *consequences* among us, the New Testament people of God? What difference should this make among us today?

Let us try to outline several principles in this regard.

More fit for life in God's world

First, we need to be aware *that the goal of the work of the Holy Spirit is to make us more and not less fit for life in God's world*. When you take a look at the Toronto blessing and similar phenomena, you might think that it is desirable for God's Spirit to produce in us some kind of intoxication and confusion. In Toronto, the Spirit is said to make people lose their inhibitions and self-control to such an extent that the result is shaking, groaning, shrieking, clapping, stamping of feet, uncontrollable laugh-

ter, rolling on the floor, and even mindless imitation of bird and animals sounds.³ Of what benefit might this kind of madness be? Is it not rather peculiar that the Spirit of God who is involved in the work of creation (Gen. 1:2) and who comes to put the finishing touches on the work of the Father and the Son, would now produce this madness? Is this madness really the finishing touch? Is this really the summit of spirituality? Our Lord Jesus Christ once said about false prophets: "*You will know them by their fruits*" (Mt. 7:15). Later he said: ". . . *false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*" It's not my desire to condemn anyone. All I want to show is that these fruits leave great and serious questions.

Do the Scriptures not say that the Spirit of God directs us in a way exactly opposite to this madness? One of the fruits of the Spirit, says Paul, is precisely ". . . *self-control. . .*" (Gal. 5:22). The Spirit does not make us *less fit* for life in this world, but *more fit*. Drunkenness and the filling of the Spirit are opposites. Peter says on the day of Pentecost: "*these men are not drunk. . . .*" (Acts 2:15). Paul says: "*do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18). Rather than over-riding men's capabilities, the filling of the Spirit sharpens our minds, strengthens our self-control and disciplines our emotions.⁴ The effect of the Spirit within us is not the reduction or elimination of the quality of our minds, but rather the "*renewal of our minds*" (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23).

After Paul speaks in Ephesians 5 about being "filled with the Spirit," he goes on to describe what some of the results of that might be: "*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.*" Does that sound like less self-control or more? The Greek construction of the next verses even suggests that another result of being filled with the Spirit is that in the Christian family, husbands, wives, children, fathers, slaves and masters begin to subject themselves to each other. When the Spirit comes, the result is harmony in the home. Again, the point is that the Spirit makes us *more fit* for life in this world and not less.

More fit for life as God's children

In this regard, it is good to be reminded *that the Spirit who dwells*

within us is “the Spirit of sonship.”

Along the lines of our first principle, the point is that God gives us His Spirit not only to make us more fit for life in this world, but precisely more fit as *sons and daughters of God*. Paul uses the phrase “Spirit of sonship” in Romans 8 and it is no accident that it is there. This phrase may very well be the point of that great chapter of Holy Scripture. We become sons and daughters of God, but how will we live as such sons and daughters? Through thick and thin, through the persecutions and trials, will the children of God just continue on the path of sonship on which God has placed them? Certainly not. The whole Old Testament era and its repeated failure is a testimony to the fact that it won’t happen that way.

However, what is new in the era in which we now live is that the Spirit of God has come to live in the hearts and lives of people. And what is He doing there? Why does He make our bodies His temple? The answer is that *one of His greatest purposes is to make us better sons and daughters of God*. Romans 8 tells us that the Spirit helps us to fight the flesh so that we are obedient sons and daughters eager to do the will of God, free from the dominance of sin (1-14). Further, we learn that the Spirit comes alongside of us, drives away the doubt, and assures us that we are indeed sons and daughters of God (15-17). When there is suffering, He points us to the great hope of the glorious liberty of the children of God (17-25). The Spirit is also busy in maintaining the conversation between the children of God and the Father; when we do not know how to pray, He himself intercedes for us (26-27). God is using Him to conform us to the image of His Son and bring us all to the goal of an eternity in the presence of the Triune God (28-39). This is the work of the Spirit – to prepare us for that great goal and help us reach it!

More glory to Christ

Along these same lines, it is good to remember as well that besides being the spirit of our sonship, ***the Spirit is always the Spirit of the Son***. Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks in John’s Gospel about how He is the One who sends His Spirit to us. And what is the goal of the Spirit? His goal is not to serve Himself, but to point to the Lord Jesus and to direct people in a deep and effective way to Christ. “He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak . . . He will take what is mine and declare it to you . . .” “He will bring to your

remembrance all that *I* have said to you” (14:26). Nor is it so that the Spirit will be after His own glory and His own power. For Jesus says, “He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you” (16:14).

There is, therefore, a sense in which longing for all kinds of outward signs and wonders – along the lines of the Toronto blessing – is really quite misguided. For the focus of the Spirit’s work is not to glorify me or you. The goal is not even the various gifts that He gives, nor to produce in us some kind of new “high.” Rather, the goal of His presence in us and His work in us is: *Jesus Christ*. His intention is to bring us to Christ and to make us more *Christ-like*. It has often been said that the Holy Spirit is the more shy and faceless of the three persons of the Trinity. He does not call attention to Himself. Instead, He calls attention to the Son that people might know the Father. His mission is to make us call God “Father” and Jesus “Lord.” Most of the time we don’t even notice His presence. He works quietly in us, trying to get us to glorify Christ more and more with our lives.

James Packer speaks about the Spirit as having a *floodlight ministry*.⁵ This is a good illustration. When the floodlighting of a building is done carefully, you will not even notice where the light comes from. It will be hidden in the grass or in the bushes. The accent is on the building with all its beautiful aspects and fine features against the background of the darkness. So it goes too with the Spirit of Christ. You hardly even notice Him. The Spirit’s message to us is never, “Look at me, listen to me, come to me, get to know me.” The floodlight is not even directed on us as believers or on the gifts we might have received. Rather, the Spirit’s message is always: “Look at Christ, and see His glory; listen to Him, and hear His word; go to Him and have life; get to know Him and taste His gift of joy and peace.”

Already at the beginning of the New Testament Church, you can see the Christocentric work of the Spirit. At Pentecost, Peter is full of the Spirit and is going to preach. What does he preach about? The Spirit? No, the Spirit leads him so that from beginning to end that Pentecost sermon is a sermon about Christ. So it always is. The Spirit focuses all the attention not on you nor on me nor on Himself but upon *Christ*, in all His greatness and beauty, power and majesty. And so the thing to ask when others make bold claims about the gifts they have and the wonders they perform

is this: *who* is being glorified here? Man? People? Human experience? Or the person and the work of Christ? On whom is the spotlight shining?

More holiness among the people of God

And so there is a fourth principle here, and that is that ***the presence of the Holy Spirit within us calls us to holiness***. This is so, no doubt, for a number of reasons.

It is so *because the Spirit is a holy Spirit*. Therefore, if we are temples of the holy Spirit but meanwhile engage in acts of unholiness and ungodliness, there will be disastrous consequences.

This is true *because the Holy Spirit is a person*. We will benefit, no doubt, from the awareness that the Spirit is a person with a whole breadth of emotions and feelings. The Scripture says that He is a person whom we can grieve (Eph. 4:30), outrage (Heb. 10:29), and sin against to our own destruction (Mt. 12:32). He has a mind (1 Cor. 2:10,11), and a will (1 Cor. 12:11). Because the Holy Spirit is a person, there is nothing automatic in our life with Him. It is possible for Him to be so disgusted with us that He departs from our presence. The need for us to be *filled* with Him is on-going (Eph. 5:18); the filling needs to be often repeated in the Christian life (cf. re Peter, Acts 4:8; 4:31; re Paul, Acts 9:17; 13:9). Our relationship is a dynamic one. Nothing is to be taken for granted. Hebrews even warns covenant children that it is possible for them to have been “partakers of the Holy Spirit” and yet to commit apostasy and fall away (6:4-6; cf. 10:29).

But at bottom, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us calls us to holiness *because the significance of His presence is that God Himself is living in us*. What do you think? If the presence of God dwelling in a tent in the Israelite camp had to make a difference, must not the presence of God in our hearts? Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6: “we are the *temple* of the living God.” Thereafter, he quotes from Leviticus 26: “I will live in them and move among them. . . .” He also quotes from Isaiah 52: “therefore come out . . . be separate . . . touch nothing unclean. . . .” And then Paul draws more consequences: “*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.*” (2 Cor. 7:1, 2)

What we desperately need is the kind of response Isaiah had when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne sur-

rounded by the seraphim crying out "holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." Then Isaiah's response was a sense of awe, a realization of unworthiness, and a deep understanding that the presence of God called for holiness. If that is true of Isaiah who saw God with his eyes, how much more true is it not for you and me in whom Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell!? If God dwells in us, then there must be results far more *supernatural* and far more *wondrous* and far more *sweeping* than those few bizarre signs experienced in Toronto. If the holy God has not just talked to us, exposing Himself to our eyes and ears, but *even dwells within us*, then our lives, our speech, our walk – everything surely must change

Think about it. How would you speak and act if you were in the presence of Prime Minister of Canada, or the Queen or whoever? Pick your most respected person. Would being in his or her presence not affect your speech, your attitude, and anything else? Well, we are not just in the presence of the holy God. *The presence of the holy God is in us; should it not affect how we think, relate, talk, walk?* Before Him nothing is hidden; our lives are open and bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

The presence of God has more effects than we can possibly enumerate. Let us attempt to describe a few of them.

The presence of the Holy Spirit within us should affect our *lifestyle*, should it not? A pertinent question about the *music* we listen to may very well be: does this music assist us to live to the praise and the glory of God? Does this music reflect the work of the Spirit who makes us *more fit* for life in His kingdom and His world, or is it more characteristic of the evil one who wants to turn order into chaos and who desires to turn us against holiness and every good thing? There is an approach to life out there which is basically atheistic and nihilistic. It says that life is crazy, void of all meaning and significance. This attitude to life is then reflected in music, in clothing, and in the use of mind-altering drugs. In contrast, the child of God, indwelt by the Spirit, knows that life is not crazy. It makes sense in Christ. It is livable through the Spirit. It has its purpose in God. And so this child of God makes different choices in music, in clothing, in everything.

The presence of the Holy Spirit within us should affect the whole area of *sexuality*, should it not? Paul makes that connection in 1 Corinthians 6. If

my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, he says, if my body is for the Lord, and even has an eternal purpose in the resurrection, then I must be careful not to use it for purposes of immorality. Instead, I must use it for the purpose of glorifying God. The number one reason why the child of God will stay away from premarital sex and all illicit forms of sexuality is not because young ladies get pregnant. It is not even because of Aids or other communicable diseases. It is not even because this is no way to start a wholesome relationship. The number one reason is: *communicable unholiness*. Our bodies are lifted up to a great status in Christ; they are members of Christ. They are temples of the Holy Spirit. As in the old covenant, however, so also in the new covenant it is a disastrous thing to defile a temple.

Even areas of *health* are affected by the presence of the Holy Spirit. If this body of mine has been elevated in such a way that it is much more than just some carcass in which I live; if, in fact, my body is a limb of Christ's body, a dwelling place of God, if it has a purpose in creation, in redemption, and even in the final recreation, then surely I must take care of it. Issues regarding drinking, smoking, recreation and the like must be dealt with in this light. It must therefore be a Christian thing to be health conscious. Not that sports must become a god, of course. For God is god, and sports must remain what he has made it to be – one of his gifts to be enjoyed for His glory. However, given all we know today about *smoking*, for example, and about the effects it has on our bodies, it surely is not wrong to say that smoking is contrary to the will of the Lord. It disregards the significance God has given to our bodies. It is an obvious way in which we flagrantly dare to thumb our noses at the sixth commandment.

At bottom, the issues have to do with *spirituality*. If God has revealed Himself so wondrously in His Son through His Spirit, it goes without saying that you and I must continue to cultivate our relationships with Him. This means that my life must know moments of silence and solitude wherein God speaks to me in His Word and I converse with Him in prayer. If the great privilege of a relationship has been established with God through Christ, then surely, as with all relationships, there must be communication and conversation. Searching the Word in corporate, family, and private worship must never be merely for the acquisition of factual knowledge. In-

stead, it must be for the purpose of continued growth in godliness and holiness. It must lead to deepening fellowship with the God who even dwells within us. Through "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," I must come to "know him better" (Eph. 1:17, NIV).

To put it popularly, we must come to the realization that life cannot be lived Peter-Pan style. Many will know what my kids have reminded me about, that Peter Pan is the boy in the fairy tales who never grows up. He lives in "never-never land" where no one grows and nothing changes. In another of his books, James Packer speaks about "the Peter Pan culture" that is developing in our age. He says: "Today's world is full of people with adult bodies housing a juvenile, even infantile, emotional make-up – people, in other words, who just always want to be little boys or girls and to have fun."⁶

But real Christians don't live Peter Pan style. They grow up. They mature in Christ, reaching "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). They are aware of the fact that they, who are temples of the Holy Spirit, are on a journey – a journey to the city which is holy even though it has no temple, for "its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22). The greatest joy of that place will not be enjoying the pleasures of the new heaven and the new earth. It will not be the new opportunities for us to "have fun." The supreme joy will be to enjoy the *God* who will dwell with them for ever and ever.

In the expectation of that eternal fellowship, the child of God grows in fellowship day by day. Longing for that fellowship then, he enjoys it already now. For now already he is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that must change everything.

Rev. G.H. Visscher is minister of Re-hoboth Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington, ON.


¹See the March/April 1995 issue of *Faith Today: Canada's Evangelical News/Feature Magazine*.

²Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991) 41-2, 11-12.

³Richard D. Holliday, "Spiritual Mediocrity," *Faith Today*, 27.

⁴Donald MacLeod, *The Spirit of Promise* (Christian Focus Publications, 1986), 87.

⁵*Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1984) 65-6.

⁶*Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1992), 198-9. 

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Baptized in the Holy Spirit

Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Perhaps someone has asked you that. It could be that you have had contact with a Pentecostal in your neighbourhood, at college or university, and he has asked you that question: "Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?"

What do the Pentecostals mean when they speak about "baptism in the Holy Spirit?" Pentecostals mean a spiritual experience that is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth. After you have converted and been born again, you must eagerly yearn for a special and dramatic experience of the Holy Spirit. The evidence that you have received baptism in the Holy Spirit is the gift of tongues. This baptism gives the believer a permanent, personal and full indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Once the believer has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, he has arrived.

Perhaps someone has asked you this question in the past, and you did not know what to answer. It's an impressive question, especially when the question comes from someone who claims to have had a miraculous spiritual experience. Maybe you felt a little inferior. The person asking you the question seemed to have had an encounter you haven't had.

Listen, if ever someone asks you whether you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, you ought to answer: "Yes. I have been baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit when my parents brought me to church for baptism shortly after I was born."

The last words of the Gospel according to Matthew recount the Great Commission that the Lord Jesus Christ laid upon the Church of all ages. The Lord said to the eleven disciples representing the Church of all times and places:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matt. 28:18-20).

When you were baptized, either as an infant or an adult, the Triune God took possession of you. You came under new management. You were transferred into new company – into the fellowship of God and those who worship Him. You became a full-fledged member of God's family, of the Church.

We can be so glad that the Lord instructed the Church to baptize us into the names of each individual member of the Trinity – that He did not just say: Baptize into the Name of God. We can be glad about that because it proves the Pentecostals wrong on their doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience that comes after you have come to faith. By definition – the definition of the Great Commissioner – Christian baptism is also baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism into the Name of the Triune God is as much the instrument of God the Father and God the Son as it is the instrument of God the Holy Spirit.

It will not do for Pentecostals to tell you that you still need to experience something they like to call "the baptism in the Holy Spirit." If the Lord Jesus said, as He did in the Great Commission, that baptism brings us into fellowship with the Triune God, then what God has joined together, let not man tear asunder. Those who say that Spirit baptism is some great experience that makes one a Christian of a higher standing than the rest, tear the Triune God asunder. Do not let well-meaning but misleading enthusiasts steal your comfort and joy in the Holy Spirit by saying that you still need a Spirit baptism.¹


Someone will ask: "What about the experiences the Pentecostals speak of? What about speaking in tongues and being slain in the Holy Spirit?" I do not need to know. I don't need to be able to explain it. And I don't particularly care. What I do know and care about is that I have been baptized into the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This God has taken ownership of me. He has given me faith – faith by which I have taken ownership of my baptism and its promises. I have everything I need. I don't need some other experience.

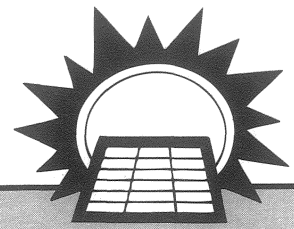
There is only one baptism, that of water and the Spirit. In John 3:5 the Lord said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The apostle Paul also wrote about the unity between baptism and the Holy Spirit: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). To the Ephesians he wrote: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

When people separate baptism in the Holy Spirit from baptism in the Father and the Son, they pull apart the one baptism Christ commanded the Church to perform. Worse yet: They pull apart the Triune God.

This does not mean that as long as you have been baptized, you've got it made in the shade. You must take ownership of your baptism. You must embrace the promises of your baptism – the promises of the Holy Spirit as well. If you don't, your baptism will testify against you on the day of Judgment. When you were baptized, the Holy Spirit promised you that He would dwell in you and make you a living member of Christ, imparting to you what you have in Christ, namely, the cleansing from your sins and the daily renewal of your life (Form for Baptism, *Book of Praise*, p. 584). If you do not seize His promises and make them your own, they will not help you; they will condemn you. Baptized unbelievers, and there are millions of them, end up in hell.

Rejoice in your baptism. Be glad in the knowledge that the Triune God has laid claim of you. The promise of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to graft us into Christ, to bestow upon us the forgiveness we have in Christ, to renew us day by day – that's a promise worthy of celebration. Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Yes!

¹This point is made very effectively by Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew (Volume 2): The Churchbook* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 1099-1102. 



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When we see many sad things happen around us, when we see other people suffer, or when we experience difficulties ourselves, we sometimes want to know why everything has to go that way. We know that the Lord is in control, but why does He make some people suffer so much, and why does He not prevent certain things from happening? We also know that we are not allowed to ask why the Lord does certain things. We have to show trust and faith in Him Whose Son died for us on the cross. But how can you show trust and hope when everything looks hopeless?

Yes, sometimes we may reason that way. But when we do, we actually try to figure things out for ourselves. At such a time we forget that the Lord is waiting for us to come to Him. For when we ask the Lord for help, nothing will look hopeless.

When we were baptized, the congregation prayed for us with the prayer that is a part of the baptism form as follows, "We pray that he/she, following Him day by day, may joyfully bear his/her cross and cleave to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love." So there you can read it: the congregation prayed to the Lord that we would bear our cross joyfully. Not only in the form for baptism, but in many places in the Bible we read about us being joyful. The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord *always*; again I will say, rejoice!" The happiness, the joy that is meant in these examples is not just a happiness that is caused by the things that happen in our lives, or in the world around us. If that were the case, then indeed we could not live up to that expectation. But the happiness of which the Bible speaks is happiness in the Lord. That joy is there for all who have fellowship with God in His covenant.

Every day we are tempted by "the devil, the world, and our own flesh." We have to fight those temptations. We are always involved in the battle against our temptations. In that battle we are to rejoice, for the Lord is at our right hand. We may experience that He is the one Who takes care of us, always. He enables us to overcome the temptations, and that gives joy. This true joy makes it possible for us to bear our cross or our suffering cheerfully. So we can rejoice all day, be cheerful at all times in the God of our salvation. We rejoice in Him, who for our sakes humbled Himself and died on the cross.

We suffer pain, we mourn, we worry. But thanks to Christ, we are not defeated. He won the battle against the devil and sin, so that with His help we can win our daily battle against despair and the feeling of hopelessness. The congregation prayed for us when we were baptized that we would bear our cross joyfully. And we are able to do that by clinging to the Lord in "true faith, firm hope, and ardent love."

When we as God's children have learned that we may rejoice in the Lord, always, we will taste the beginning of eternal happiness. Even the creation knows that there will be a deliverance of all the consequences of sin. It "waits with a deep longing for the revelation of the sons of God." In the same way we should long for the moment when all things are made new. While we are waiting for that day, we should prepare our-

selves for the wedding feast of the Lamb. Under all our personal circumstances we should be proclaiming God's great deeds. We should talk about the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ has saved us from all our sins, and that in Him there is eternal life. It is not a small thing that God has chosen us to be members of His world-wide Church, which He chose to be His Bride. We do not stand on our own, but we are united in Him. In the Church of Jesus Christ we all belong together as members of one body in the communion of saints.

The Church, being Christ's bride, looks forward with deep desire to His coming. We make that desire known to the Lord through our prayers, which the Holy Spirit works into our hearts. Our praying, and our living, and our rejoicing should all be mixed together in our thankfulness to the Lord. Our lives should be full of it. When we do so much praying and rejoicing together as members of Christ's Church, there is no room in our hearts anymore for despair, or the feeling of hopelessness. When the Holy Spirit works those prayers into our hearts, we can be sure that they will be heard.

Christ will return on the clouds of heaven. All prayers will be answered on that day. The creation will be made perfect again. There will be no sadness, no pain, no reason whatsoever to make us unhappy in anyway possible. We cannot even try to image how beautiful and how perfect everything will be.

Now we will just be longing and praying for that day. And when all our longings and desires are directed to our Father in heaven, then He will give us now already the peace of mind and the ability to rejoice in Him, always, no matter what our circumstances are.

(Much of the contents of this piece has been taken out of "Thou Holdest My Right Hand" by D. Los, chapter 12.)

*O bless the LORD, my soul, bless your Preserver;
Let all within me praise His Name with fervour.
My soul, forget not all His benefits;
O bless the LORD, who pardons your transgression,
Who heals your illnesses in His compassion,
Who saves you and redeems you from the Pit.*

Psalm 103:1

Birthdays in July:

- 4: James Buikema**
c/o N. VanderHeiden, 7162 Canboro Rd. RR#1,
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1
- 20: Charlie Beintema**
29 Wilson Ave., Chatham, ON N7L 1K8
- 28: Jim Wanders**
538 Wedgewood Dr., Burlington, ON L7L 4J2
- 29: Tom Vander Zwaag**
"ANCHOR HOME", 361 30 Rd., RR#2 Beamsville,
ON L0R 1B0

Happy Birthday to all of you!
Until next month,

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

Synod Abbotsford 1995 News Clips

Days One - Eight

This news report of General Synod Abbotsford, 1995, was assembled with the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Vandergugten (PvdG & SvdG) and Mr. Pete de Boer (PdB) who have kindly forwarded daily reports. An official press release will be issued by the General Synod. Clarion assumes any and all responsibility for inaccuracies in this unofficial report.

GvP

Tuesday, May 9 - Day One

The Rev. M. VanderWel, minister-emeritus of Abbotsford church, welcomed everyone. He read Micah 6:1-8 and made some opening remarks highlighting v. 8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

All first delegates were present.¹ The following officers (moderamen) were chosen by election: Chairman: J. de Gelder; Vice-chairman: R. Aasman; 1st Clerk: D.G.J. Agema; 2nd Clerk: J. Visscher. Rev. VanderWel then declared Synod constituted.

The moderamen spent the afternoon drawing up the final agenda while delegates used the time to read late-coming submissions. The delegates had arrived at Synod with a 4 inch binder full of material; there was another 4 inch binder with new material awaiting them. The final agenda consisted of 3 1/2 pages, single spaced. (PvdG)

Wednesday, May 10 - Day Two

The sixteen brothers were divided into four synodical advisory committees. Each committee received its assignments and went to work.²

Thursday, May 11 - Day Three

Speech of the Rev. A. de Jager, representative of the GKN

The Rev. A. de Jager of the Netherlands (formerly minister in Neerlandia), who, along with the Rev. H. van Veen, had been delegated by our Dutch

sister churches to visit our Synod, addressed the assembly. They had been at Synod since Monday and had joined in some of the discussions at the advisory committee level. They left Friday for Nebraska to visit the synod of the Reformed Churches in the US (RCUS). In his speech Rev. de Jager remembered the Liberation of 1944 (the church) and 1945 (the nation) and noted that both had affected and involved Canada.

He mentioned that the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad in Holland had a broader mandate than the Canadian one. Often the Dutch churches receive pleas for help from churches in India, Brazil, Zaire and other places. This, in part, explains why they are so involved with churches around the globe. He gave some information about the International Reformed Training Centre (IRTC), a training centre in Holland for reformed ministers from around the world. The mission work from Holland is also changing in that they often send workers and professors to help people in other countries to help themselves.

Contact with the RCUS, a sister church, is flourishing. The RCUS was the first sister church to point a warning but loving finger at the Dutch move to allow the sisters to vote. Contact with the OPC is growing, especially on the mission fields, but they are dragging their heels a bit because of the discussions our churches are having with the OPC. They are interested in what Synod Abbotsford will decide as it will have an affect on the contact they have with the OPC. He expressed the hope that cooperation between the theological colleges in Belfast, Edinburgh, Hamilton and Kampen would increase. (PdB)

In talking about life in the churches in the Netherlands, Rev. de Jager said that while in the past the emphasis has been on the sound doctrine, there is now a growing understanding that the sound doctrine needs to be translated into godly living. He made the point that focusing on the creeds and accent-

ing theology may lead to blind spots. It may be warranted to emphasize rational doctrine, but have we, he asked, also learned to devote our daily living to God? We have learned to speak about prayer, but have we learned to pray? We have learned a lot about sin, but have we learned to confess our sin to God and to our neighbour? We have learned a lot of truths about the Scripture, but have we learned to meditate on Scripture. There is always the necessary dimension of fruits. Perhaps, said Rev. de Jager, the thinking in Holland has been somewhat one-sided in the past. There needs to be a better balance between doctrine and life in order to remain really Reformed. This holds true especially for the sake of the young people who face an increasing secularization in their world. Through Scripture and Confession we must seek the way the Lord points out. There may be no introverted conservatism in the churches in Holland. They are called to be salt and light. Rev. de Jager closed with wishing the delegates the Lord's blessing on the important work of Synod. Rev. J. de Gelder responded with appropriate words. (SvdG)

Decisions:

Some decisions were also made during this session. Synod decided not to adopt a proposal to change the format of the Acts of Synod to: *Material, Decision, Grounds but to stay with Observations, Considerations, Recommendations.*

The sister church relationships with the churches in Holland, South Africa and Australia have been maintained. Some concern was expressed that the last Dutch Synod allowed the "reading" elder to raise his hands during the blessing. The question was asked whether this blurs the distinction between the offices.

The Church at Toronto and br. C. Lindhout had sent in overtures regarding the matter of the delegates attending a Regional Synod also being delegated to General Synod. These overtures were

declared inadmissible since they had not been dealt with yet at the minor assemblies. (PvdG)

Friday, May 12 - Day Four

Book of Praise:

In addition to dealing with personal appeals in closed session, Synod dealt with some *Book of Praise* matters. Among the proposals on Synod's table was one from the Grade 4a Class (Teacher: Mr. John Siebenga) at John Calvin Elementary in Yarrow, BC, to revise Hymn 46:2 by replacing the word "it" when referring to the church with the word "her." Some reasons given were as follows: Hy. 40, *The Church's One Foundation*, speaks of the church as the bride of Christ, and therefore as "she" and "her." Ephesians 5:21-27 also portrays the church as the bride of Christ. Ps. 46:4,5 says that "God dwells within her. . . ." Synod advised the students to send their concerns to the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*. (SvdG)

It is great to see young people taking a real interest in the life of the churches.

Monday, May 15 - Day Five

Book of Praise:

The Report from the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* was adopted for the most part. The Committee's proposal to insert "in" into the Nicene Creed, i.e., "And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church" was defeated. In other words "in" is not in.

Women Voting:

Synod went into its first round of discussion on women voting. Some overtures had been submitted asking Synod to set up a committee to look at the issue of whether the sisters ought to participate in voting for office bearers. Several members of Synod argued that previous Synods had addressed this issue and have given a decisive "No" to the proposal that women should be granted the vote. These members argued that no new grounds have been given to warrant even proposing a committee to examine the issue once again. Others argued that there are indeed new grounds. Synod Ommen 1994, of our sister churches in Holland, rescinded a previous Synod decision saying that it was wrong, and gave Scriptural grounds for granting women the vote. (SvdG)

Tuesday, May 16 - Day Six

The chairman welcomed the Rev. Stewart, fraternal delegate from the Free

Church of Scotland (Pastor of the FCS in Toronto) and the Rev. J. Peterson of the OPC (San Antonio, Texas).

Women Voting:

The discussion on women voting was continued. The recommendation was to appoint a committee to study the matter of women participation in voting and election in the church with the mandate to:

1. Make use of previous reports of study committees on women voting;

2. Evaluate the decision of Synod Ommen in the Netherlands on this matter;

3. Serve the next General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to Synod.

After the matter was debated, the proposal to appoint a committee was defeated.

Free Reformed Churches:

The churches in Langley and Aldergrove requested Synod to initiate contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America. The requests were declared inadmissible on the ground that this was a new matter which had not gone the way of the minor assemblies.

Presence of Deputies of Regional Synod needed?

The church at Winnipeg requested Synod to rescind the decision of Synod 1986, Art. 85, which says that a Classis needs to receive concurring advice of the Deputies of Regional Synod when admitting churches to the Federation. Winnipeg's request was denied. (PvdG)

Wednesday, May 17 - Day Seven

There was a good-sized audience this evening, no doubt because of the topics: Addresses by the Rev. J. Peterson of the OPC and the Rev. Stewart of the FCS, and Bible Translations.

Speech of the Rev. J. Peterson of the OPC:

This is Rev. Peterson's third visit to one of our Synods (1983, 1989, and 1995). He noted that the OPC will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in 1996. In a brief historical overview he reminded his audience that both the OPC and the Cdn Refd Chs came into being following a period of strife in their respective churches. In the 30s and 40s the OPC had few friends on the North American continent. It was only the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) that sent a letter of encouragement to the General Assembly at that time. Because of this history, the OPC continues to feel

an obligation to address forthrightly the CRC on many issues which cause the OPC grave concern. Rev. Peterson asked our churches to understand this.

The OPC is involved in mission work in many countries around the world: Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Bulgaria, China, N. Korea, Moscow, Outer Mongolia, the Philippines, Burma, Peru, and others. They rejoice in their contact with other Reformed churches in the ICRC. The OPC believes that expression needs to be given of the unity of the church. It is a gift *and* a mandate. They feel compelled to give expression to that unity by actively seeking it. He expressed thankfulness that there has been a willingness to continue talking for the past 25 years, and is happy that there seem to be only three "divergencies" left. He noted their appreciation for the important things the OPC has learned from our churches: the redemptive-historical approach to preaching, the Schilder Trilogy – which many OPC people already had, and *Promise and Deliverance* – which is becoming a well-used study and teaching tool. He acknowledged the concerns but maintained, "You know us, and we know you – it's time to make a decision."

In addressing the matter of "the divergencies," he explained that as a home-mission oriented church, the OPC often has people who want to join who are coming out of Baptist churches or who are converted from a pagan way of life. These people rejoice at finding a place in the OPC. They rejoice in the preaching. "We work with them," said Rev. Peterson. They are taught and fed the Word. Do we say, "Well we need to work with you for one, or two or five years before you may participate in the sacraments?" Rev. Peterson reminded the audience of Philip the Eunuch and the Philippian jailer. They believed and were baptized, and all were filled with joy. With these new converts, the smell of the world and the smell of the Baptists still clings to their clothes. Do we wish they'd go away, or do we rejoice? We rejoice and teach and preach, convinced that the Holy Spirit effectually does His work through the Word. The OPC feels that they cannot exclude them from the body and the sacraments.

In closing Rev. Peterson emphasized that they love the Cdn Refd Chs. They love our covenantal and our redemptive-historical approach. They want to enter into full unity with us.

Response:

Br. G. Nordeman, responding on behalf of Synod, noted that since

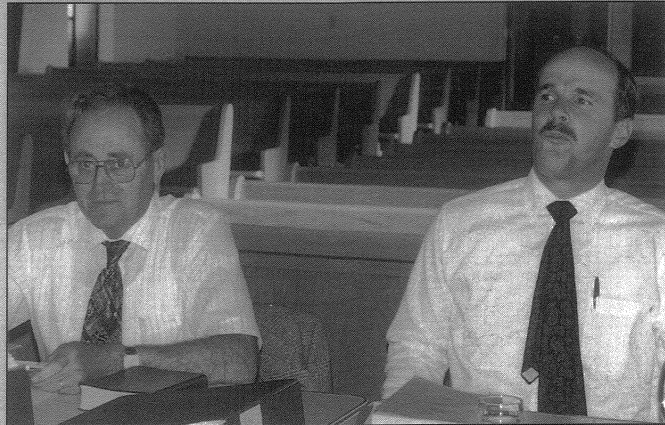
continued on page 262



*Moderamen:
Left to right:
Rev. R. Aasman, Vice-chairman
Rev. J. de Gelder, Chairman
Rev. D.G.J. Agema, 1st Clerk
Dr. J. Visscher, 2nd Clerk*



Left to right: Rev. J.D. Wielenga, Mr. T. van Popta



Left to right: Mr. G. van Woudenberg, Rev. P. Feenstra



*Left to right:
Rev. W. den Hollander
Mr. J. Boot
Rev. E. Kampen*



Left to right: Mr. L. Stam, Mr. F. Ruggi



*Left to right:
Mr. I. Veurink
Mr. G. Nordeman
Mr. H. Berends*

Rev. Peterson had attended three Synods, he was probably the most experienced member in attendance. Br. Nordeman said that he appreciated the personal contacts, and the opportunity to attend the General Assemblies of the OPC. He also referred to the difficult beginnings of both the OPC and the Cdn Refd Chs and noted the irony that while the CRC helped the OPC, it had no room for the Liberated church members who came from Holland. In their report to Synod, the OPC committee noted once again that the OPC continues to be committed to Scripture and to the defense of the Reformed heritage. Past Synods have continued to confirm this assessment. Synod is faced with coming to a decision. The OPC is the agenda item that has engendered the most reaction from the churches. There is a wide range of opinion in the churches, and Synod is aware that its decision may well-affect the unity within our own churches. He asked the OPC to be patient and understanding. He ended by expressing the wish that the Lord may continue to bless the OPC.

Speech of the Rev. Stewart of the FCS:

Rev. Stewart thought it a significant day that he could address Synod for the first time as representative of a sister church. He gave a brief historical overview of the FCS: how it had removed itself from State control in 1843; how it was forced to meet on the moors and on floating "wooden islands" because the members were forbidden to meet; how higher criticism and liberalism (early 1900s) convinced some – a small group – that they could not stay. They became the FCS, or, as Rev. Stewart stated, the Church of Scotland-Free, since they consider themselves the true continuation of the Church of Scotland.

They have 5,000 communicant members and 20,000 non-communicant members. The reason for the 1:4 ratio is that many members live under the conviction that they are not worthy of partaking in the Lord's Supper. There are 160 congregations and 150 ministers. The church-controlled theological college in Edinburgh has five full-time professors and usually about 30 students. Their emphases are covenantal and personal holiness, family worship, honouring the Lord's day, and unity among Reformed churches. They are involved in mission work in Africa, India (in running a hospital), Peru (in operating a school) and run 25 summer camps for about 700 children. Catechism instruction is rigorous. Students

are expected to memorize the catechism from beginning to end.

He spoke briefly about three differences between our respective churches: The FCS holds to exclusive psalm singing, no musical accompaniment and life-long elder terms. Rev. Stewart said that although all three of these issues are important to the FCS our ecclesiastical fellowship may not be hindered by them. He also spoke about a difference in admission to the Lord's Supper table. In the FCS, the elders supervise and admit. While they do not work with attestations, every single visitor is examined. There is no laxity.

The greetings he brought, said he, were no empty ritual. Traditionally, contact has been maintained with the Netherlands. They now appreciate contact with the churches in Canada.

Response:

Br. H.A. Berends (long-time member of the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad) noted this was indeed an historic occasion since it was the first time that Synod welcomed a delegate from the FCS as a sister church. Despite the differences, there are many similarities. We have much in common. We confess the same Word and belong to the same Lord. Br. Berends expressed the hope that contact with the churches in Ontario North will allow the bonds to grow and mature. He asked Rev. Stewart to pass on greetings to the General Assembly in Edinburgh. (SvdG)

The matter of Bible Translations was tabled. After one round of discussion, Synod was adjourned for the night.

Thursday, May 18 - Day Eight

Bible Translations:

The Recommendations were:

1. To thank the committee for its work and the Report submitted to Synod.
2. To recommend the NIV for use within the Churches.
3. To leave it in the freedom of the Churches if they feel compelled to use another translation.
4. To continue the committee on Bible Translations which would invite comments from churches and/or members re: improvements in the NIV; to study and pass on concerns to the NIV Translation Center. Also to use past reports and letters sent to Synod expressing concern about some Bible passages should also be sent to the committee on Bible Translations.
5. To send a copy of the Report of the Committee on Bible Translations



ADDRESS CHANGE:

Canadian Reformed Church – Ancaster

575 Shaver Road
RR 1
Ancaster, ON
L9G 3K9

Canadian Reformed Church of Taber

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
5621 - 51 Street
Taber, AB
T1G 1K6

CALLLED for a second time and
ACCEPTED to Smithers, BC:

Rev. J. Huijgen
of the Church at Fergus

and Synods decision to our sister churches in Australia.

This was adopted.

L'Église Réformée du Québec

Synod appointed deputies to take up contact with these Reformed Churches in Quebec. (PvdG) **C**

¹From Regional Synod East: the Rev. Messrs. D.G.J. Agema, J. de Gelder, W. den Hollander, P.G. Feenstra and Elders J. Boot, G.J. Nordeman, F. Ruggi, G. Vanwoudenberg. From Regional Synod West: the Rev. Messrs. R. Aasman, E. Kampen, J. Visscher, J.D. Wielenga and Elders H. Berends, L. Stam, I. Veurink, T.J. van Popta.

²The committees are as follows:

Committee 1:

Agenda Items: OPC, Finances, Misc. E. Kampen, Convenor, J. de Gelder, L. Stam, G. Vanwoudenberg.

Committee 2:

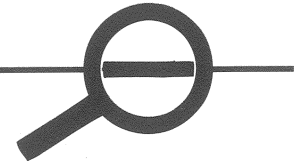
Agenda Items: Bible Translations, Free Reformed Churches, Women's voting, Theological College J.D. Wielenga (C), R. Aasman, G.J. Nordeman, I. Veurink.

Committee 3:

Agenda Items: Cttee. for Relations Abroad, Denver, ICRC, a personal appeal. W. den Hollander (C), D. Agema, F. Ruggi, T.J. vanPopta.

Committee 4:

Agenda Items: Procedures for admitting new churches (R.S. deputies at Classis), Deputies for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity, ERQ, Book of Praise, personal appeals. P. Feenstra (C), J. Visscher, H. Berends, J. Boot.



Building seminaries in the Ukraine, Zaire and Korea

The Ukraine

The work of strengthening and spreading the Reformed faith in the Ukraine continues unabated through the efforts of Christ for Russia and our Dutch sister churches. As the March 1995 Newsletter of Christ for Russia reports:

Christ for Russia's central strategy for spreading Reformed Christianity in the former Soviet Union is to build seminaries. Two are already in process. The nine-student seminary, Tivadarfalva near the Ukrainian city of Beregova (close to the Hungarian border), opened in September 1994 in cooperation with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Liberated) . . . The second is in Donetsk, city of one and quarter million people in Eastern Ukraine (close to the Russian border).

Both institutions receive financial help from Christ for Russia, but it takes more than money to keep seminaries running. Reformed teachers are also needed. The seminary at Tivadarfalva which serves the Hungarian Reformed Churches in the Carpatho-Ukraine has received help from our Dutch sister churches in the form of Drs. J. Colijn and Mr. W. Vander Lugt who teach at this school. Dr. Claire Davis and Dr. Paul Schrottenboer hope to help out as well.

The school in Donetsk, far to the east, is actually a Baptist Bible School but they are most eager to receive Reformed teaching. Rev. W. Ribbens has worked there and has returned again along with Rev. J. Bultman, both retired CRC ministers. Ribbens is teaching Louis Berkhof's *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Introduction to the Old Testament and Introduction to the New Testament while Bultman gives instruction in the Heidelberg Catechism and the book of Genesis. Others are also planning to assist with the teaching. There is an incredible hunger for solid Biblical teaching. The students have begged



Rev. and Mrs. W. Ribbens

their teachers to give more hours of teaching and they have obliged, also giving courses in the evening on the gospel of John.

Zaire

According to *Tot aan de einde der aarde* (Jan. 1995), last September saw the beginning of theological training for ministers for the Église Réformée Confessante au Zaïre (ERCZ). This Reformed church had its beginnings in the French Back to God radio broadcasts of Rev. A. R. Kayayan which were first beamed over Zaire in 1976. Reformed Christians came together in Lubumbashi (formerly Elisabethville) in the south east of the country and the first Reformed congregation of the ERCZ was instituted there in 1984. From the beginning, the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) has stood by these churches and helped them. In 1988 these churches also asked our Dutch sister churches for assistance. This was granted.

At the moment, the ERCZ are sister churches of the Dutch churches and as mentioned a Reformed seminary has been started. Our Dutch sister churches initially sent two missionary teachers to Zaire (Rev. H. ten Brinke and Rev. G. J. Bruijn). The 1993 Synod of the ERCZ (which made the decision to start the training for the ministry) appointed

these brothers to teach at this institution. Since then a third missionary, Rev. W. F. Wisselink, has been sent to Zaire as well. Besides teaching at the school, these missionaries have also travelled through Zaire, visiting the widely scattered churches for teaching, building up the congregations and training elders.

The needs of the ERCZ are great. There are only two ministers for about 250 congregations! At the moment there are thirteen students who have started their studies at the new seminary. These men are already leaders in their congregations. Because they are all married and it is impossible to take their wives and children to Lubumbashi, the study is spread over five to six years allowing them to return home to their families and to minister to their congregations at regular intervals. They will also return to these congregations once they have finished their theological training.

Korea

Also in Korea a seminary is being built, but in a somewhat different way from what is taking place in the Ukraine and Zaire. *Nederlands Dagblad* reported that our Korean sister churches are scheduled to finish the process of moving their seminary from Pusan in the south-east of South Korea to Chonan just outside the capital Seoul in the north of the country by September 1996 at the latest. This date reflects a government decision which allowed the Kosin church to relocate near the capital. This has been a long held desire for a variety of reasons. Indeed, for some time classes have already been held in the Seoul area with professors commuting by plane to teach classes both there and in Pusan.

When all the students are together and the professors no longer have to commute by air, the seminary will have about 480 students with eleven fulltime professors, as well as adjunct instructors. **C**

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

It will soon be Pentecost. That is the feast day when we remember that the LORD Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the earth to live in the hearts of all people who believed in Him. The Bible tells us how it happened.

The apostles were together in a house in Jerusalem. They were waiting there for the promised Holy Spirit their LORD Jesus had told them about. All of a sudden the sound of a strong wind could be heard. It filled the house. Then little tongues of fire came to rest on each person's head. Then they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke about God's mighty works in many different languages.

Many people were in Jerusalem who came from many different places. They heard the apostles talking in their languages, and they were amazed. Some made fun of them, but Peter stood up and told them what had happened. He also preached about Jesus and many believed and joined the Church that day.

This is wonderful for us to know today, also, because the Holy Spirit is still on earth. He promises to live in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to all Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in June. Have a great day! Mothers

Tanya Meints	1	Jennifer VanderVelde	18
Esther Snyder	5	Jocelyn Schoon	22
Sarah Kampen	5	Twyla VanLeeuwen	25
Sharon Bartels	6	Natasha VanVeen	27
Rebecca Kruisselbrink	6	Bonita Feenstra	27
Felicia Oosterhoff	8	Reuel Feenstra	27
Kayla Koopmans	9	Tracy Lynn Malda	29
Lee-Anne VanderWoerd	9	Renee Kruisselbrink	29
Eric VanderGriendt	12	Melissa DeBoersap	30
Jason VanderHorst	16	Lori Oosterhoff	30

Quiz Time!

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in the missing letters or words to make well-known saying about animals.

- Let _____ p_____ g _____ g _____ l _____.
- A b _____ n the h _____ s
w _____ t _____ two in _____ h _____ b _____ h.
- C _____ g _____ _____ r to _____ u _____?
- Fish _____ t o _____ e _____.

MOTHERS

Mothers have always played an important role in their children's lives. Match each mother with the proper sentence.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Mother of all living | a. Rachel, Jeremiah 31:15 |
| 2. Helped son deceive his father | b. Mary, Luke 1:30 |
| 3. Was paid to care for her son | c. Eve, Genesis 3:20 |
| 4. Was commended by Paul | d. Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:11, 2:11. |
| 5. Sought best for her sons | e. Rebekah, Genesis 27:6-10 |
| 6. Wept for her children | f. Athaliah, 2 Kings 11:1 |
| 7. Became mother to a daughter in law | g. Jochebed. Exodus 2:8-10, 6:20 |
| 8. Caused the death of John the Baptist | h. Herodias, Mark 6:22-25 |
| 9. Killed her grandsons | i. Eunice, 2 Timothy 1:5 |
| 10. Gave her son to ministry | j. Naomi, Ruth 1:16 |
| 11. Highly favoured by God | k. Salome, Matthew 20:20, Mark 16:1 |

BIBLE NAME WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver Lydia Penninga

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

Find these names:

Rebekah ✓	Abraham ✓	Mary	Joseph
Jesus ✓	Matthew	Peter	John ✓
Paul ✓	Mark ✓	Jeremiah ✓	

That's all for this time, Busy Beavers!

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

