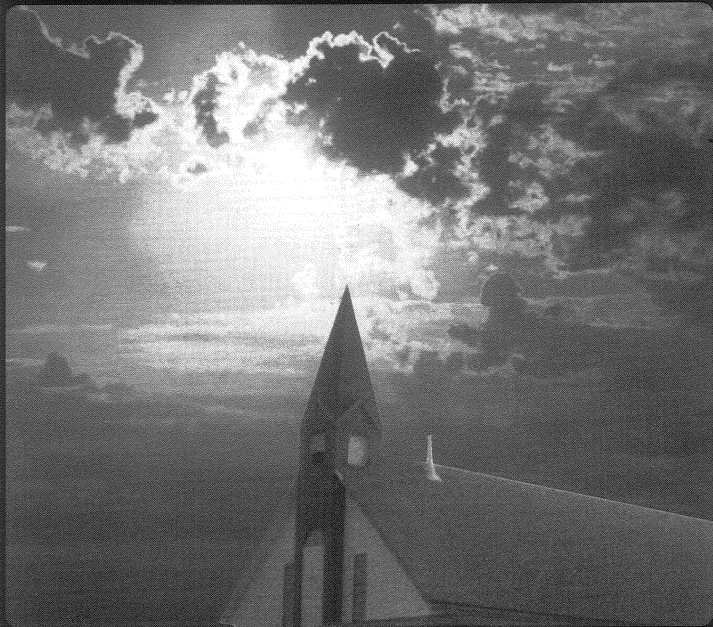


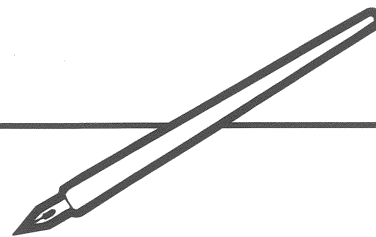


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 44, NO. 14 JULY 14, 1995



*Spirituality
and the Church*



Which Version Now?

Although the Acts of Synod 1995 have not yet appeared, it is common knowledge that the recent Synod recommended the New International Version for use in our churches. Given the choices with which the Synod (and Committee) had to work, this is an understandable choice, since the version chosen is considerably superior to the others suggested. However, it is also well-known that the NIV has drawbacks of its own, and therefore should not be adopted for public use without careful consideration. In this editorial I would like to offer some reasons why for now consistories should strive to maintain the current version, the second edition of the RSV, as long as possible.

It is not my intention to deal with the Report of the Committee on Bible Translations as such, or to discuss any specific passage. Rather, I would like to look at the subject from a broader point of view and touch on areas which I feel were somewhat neglected in the Report of the Committee to General Synod 1995. Specifically I would like to approach the matter from the perspective of the pulpit, the pew, and the relationship of the pulpit and pew to the life of the church as a whole.

The interests of the pulpit . . .

Although there are extensive references to the work of previous synods in the Committee Report, one aspect of the matter was in my view overlooked. The Synod of Smithville 1980, which first dealt with the NIV, recommended the use of the RSV above that of the NIV specifically because of the character of the RSV translation. In its considerations it noted that the majority report of the Committee reporting to Synod said that the RSV is a "scholarly word for word translation" and that the English of the RSV is "dignified and best suited for liturgical use."¹ The majority report also stated: "Compared with the colloquial character of modern speech, the translators of the RSV preserved *dignity of language*. It makes the version suitable for *pulpit reading* and qualifies it as worthy successor of the KJV."²

The majority report of the Committee reporting to Synod 1980 clearly considered the RSV to be more suited for pulpit use than the NIV. The NIV was seen by all committee members as "too free" or "too interpretative." The majority Committee also stated that ". . . the so-called dynamic equivalent manner of translation makes the version *too free* for use in the pulpit."³ Hence the Synod 1980 decided to adopt the RSV in the confessions and liturgical forms. Since this time the RSV has become more or less the commonly used pul-

pit Bible in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Some churches still use the Authorized Version, but besides these I know of no other version currently in use in the federation of churches.

Now this is only some fifteen years ago – not a long time in the course of the church's history. To be sure, we are confronted with new developments with regard the RSV. From being the most accepted version, it has been eclipsed by other versions. And it has now appeared in a new (third) edition, which, as the Committee pointed out to Synod 1992, should not be used in the churches because its excessive use of inclusive language.

However, while the version presently being used is fading from general use on our continent, the statements made in 1980 in regard to the NIV still apply. At any rate, I certainly have not seen them adequately refuted. This version is less suited for the pulpit especially because of its free and interpretative character. In this version the link to the Authorized Version and the classical English of the Reformation era has been completely severed. The idiom is generally *familiar* rather than *dignified*. To my mind this makes the NIV a poorer choice than the current version from the perspective of the *pulpit*.

The pulpit should retain the dignity of language as much as possible. This applies not only to the translation of the Bible used in public worship, but to the sermon as well. The language used should be clear and understandable, but not mundane or colloquial. The gospel must not only address people in the language of the day, but also function as a healing salt with regard to their use of language. The gospel redeems and renews, also in the area of language usage and word choice. So there is every reason for consistories to think carefully before switching to a modern version of Scripture. As the Committee of 1980 said: "...continuity in the use of Bible translation is a good thing and ...for that reason there must be strong arguments to switch over to another version."⁴

The interests of the pew . . .

From the concerns of the pulpit, it is only a small step to the concerns of the pew! Indeed, these should always go hand in hand! It was only as recently as 1989 that the Synod of Winnipeg adopted the definitive version of our *Book of Praise*.⁵ Synod 1980 recommended that our church book use the RSV in all Scripture references, and also retain the tenor and flavour of the RSV in all the rhymed versions of the

psalms and hymns.⁶ All this was, as Synod 1980 stated, "in order to come to uniformity of practice."⁷ Our synods have argued that there should be uniformity between the pulpit and the pew. There should also be uniformity between the idiom of the Bible translation, and the idiom of the liturgical forms and prayers. And there should be uniformity of usage in the whole worship service. Is that not an essential prerequisite of good order in the service of God? Should we not strive to maintain *consistency* in our usage, rather than create a wedge between the voice of the church book and the voice of the preacher? Or the voice of the church book, and the voice of the Bible translation used?

The interests of the church in the world . . .

From this flows a final consideration dealing with the life of the church in the world. As Reformed people, we have not only stressed the need for uniformity in worship, but also uniformity in all of life. There should be a unity between worship practices in church, in the home and at school. Everything that is done in the home and in the school should also foster the assimilation of the doctrine of the church as it is verbalized in the creeds and confessions of the church. Is not the aim of catechism preaching to help the young people to grow in the knowledge and appropriation of the words of the Catechism? Should parents in the home not strive to help their children become familiar with the creeds and confessions, and the doctrine of the church? If now already we have agreed that the language of the church book is *archaic*, we might as well stop trying to get our children and young people to learn it.

Given the wide range of variables as stake in this matter, I would think consistories should be careful before pursuing a transition to the modern versions. If availability of the RSV as we currently use it becomes an insurmountable problem, a change becomes unavoidable. However, I doubt whether we have come to that point. Let us not be hasty in making changes which can damage the uniformity of liturgy and worship, and create increased barriers in appropriating the language of the church and the confessions.

Considering how long the Authorized Version held sway, there should be no reason for us to be caught up in a state of permanent revision. Should we not strive to continue working with what has only recently been adopted?

¹Acts of Synod Smithville 1980, Art. 111, B 4, p. 78.

²Acts 1980, p. 231 (emphasis added).

³Acts 1980, p. 232 (emphasis added).

⁴Acts 1980, p. 232-3.

⁵Acts of the General Synod of Winnipeg, 1989, Art. 145 D, p. 108.

⁶I refer here in particular to the use of "Thee" and "Thou" for the three Persons of the Trinity, as it occurs in our psalms and hymns, liturgical forms and prayers.

⁷Acts 1980, Art. 111 C 2 b, p. 79.



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema

Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,

C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION

5621 - 51 Street

Taber, AB T1G 1K6

Fax: (403) 223-0149

E-Mail: 74124.1377@CompuServe.COM

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

SUBSCRIPTION RATES		Regular	Air
FOR 1995		Mail	Mail
Canada*		\$33.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A.	U.S. Funds	\$37.00	\$50.00
International		\$50.00	\$80.00

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055

Advertisements: \$7.00 per column inch

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Publications Mail Registration No. 1025

ISSN 0383-0438

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Which Version Now?	
— J. De Jong	322
Meditation — G.Ph. van Popta	324
Spirituality and the Church ¹	
— J. Boersma	325
Press Review – Expelled from the Reformed Church of America — C. Van Dam	328
Press Review – The Divided CRC Synod 1995 — C. Van Dam	329
Reader's Forum – Confessional membership: a new terminology? — Sarah Vandergugten	330
Church News	331
Dr. Venema in Calgary ¹	
— Roelof and Theresa Janssen	332
Letters to the Editor	333
Press Release	334
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	336



Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 12:

"But the Word of God grew and multiplied."

WORMS AND THE WORD

King Herod hated the church. He killed James ben Zebedee. He arrested Peter and put him in prison under maximum security – sixteen soldiers. Better give Peter lots of guards, Herod! He has escaped from prison before (Acts 5:19). After the Passover feast Herod was going to execute Peter too.

There was one problem with Herod's plan. He did not take into account that the church was praying fervently for Peter. By means of this prayer, God delivered Peter. This does not mean that the church did not pray fervently enough for James. God answered their prayer for James' life with a "No." He answered their prayer for Peter's life with a "Yes."

The night before Herod was going to bring Peter out, an angel appeared in Peter's cell. Peter was sleeping chained to two soldiers. The angel woke Peter by hitting him. The chains fell off Peter's hands. The angel told him to get up, get dressed, and follow him. They left the cell, passed the first guard, the second guard, and ended up out on the street. The ministering spirit sent forth to serve Peter (Heb. 1:14) disappeared. At that point Peter came to himself.

He went to the house where the fervently praying church was gathered and knocked on the locked door. The servant girl Rhoda went to answer it. She recognized Peter's voice, but, in her excitement, neglected to open the door for him. Leaving him standing in front of the locked door, she ran back to the praying believers and told them that Peter was standing outside. They did not believe her. "You're crazy," they said. When she insisted, they said: "It must be Peter's angel."

The answer to their prayer was literally knocking at the door, and they did not see it. Do we have our eyes and

ears open for God's answer to our prayers? He always answers them. Often we are so nearsighted that we do not see the answer when it is staring us in the face.

Peter kept knocking. Finally they opened the door and were amazed to see Peter. Peter entered, told them the whole story, and went into hiding.

The next day the soldiers awoke to find that their chains were holding air. What a commotion! Where was Peter? They could not find him in Jerusalem, so Herod had them put to death.

Herod left Judea for his palace at Caesarea. One day Herod put on his royal robes. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived at that time, tells us that these robes were woven from silver thread and brilliantly reflected the sun. Herod sat upon his throne and began to speak. The heated crowds shouted that he was a god. Herod accepted that praise. As punishment, God sent an angel to smite him with a sickness. He was eaten by worms and died. Josephus tells us that Herod died after five days of excruciating pain. With his belly and intestines full of worms, he was eaten inside out.

Herod was eaten by worms, but the Word of God grew and multiplied (v. 24). The church's prayer had a double effect. As it often does in the Psalms (Psalms 69, 101, 137), rescue for God's people meant ruin for the church's enemies. God delivered Peter and destroyed Herod. The slaying of him who would stop the Word of God meant the advancement of the Word.

Let us continue to pray for the destruction of every power that raises itself against God and for the coming of the kingdom of God (Lord's day 48).

What's Inside

The church is the people of God the Father, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. In "Spirituality and the Church," Dr. J. Boersma emphasizes the third aspect.

Our recent Synod recommended the NIV for use in the churches. In the lead editorial, Dr. J. De Jong makes a few cautionary remarks about what the churches ought now to do.

This issue also contains a Press Review of some happenings at assemblies of two other churches – the Reformed Church of America and the Christian Reformed Church.

Besides these contributions, you will find a few submissions from readers.

Happy reading, and have a great summer.

GvP

Spirituality and the Church¹

By J. Boersma

When thinking about the church, different associations may come to mind. Some of the more prominent ones may be church building, sermons, office bearers, discussions about the true church, and the like. An important question, however, is whether anyone would first of all think of the Holy Spirit when talking about the church?² It seems clear that, even though we will not deny the close connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the church, this connection is not first and foremost on our minds. When we think about the church, spirituality is not immediately in focus as sort of a twin concept. What I would like to do tonight, therefore, is to look at the connection between these two things, spirituality and the church. For I am convinced that you cannot look at the church without also looking at the work of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality and church are, really, twin concepts.

You see something of that with Anna. Anna did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day (Luke 2:37). When you let these words sink into you, you cannot but look at them as revolutionary. These words challenge our thinking. They revolutionize our attitudes, our behavior, our thought patterns, our entire outlook on the church. Anna did not depart from the temple. She worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day.

Now if you look at this sentence from the Gospel of Luke, you could distinguish two elements. One is the temple, and the other one is worship. Or, if you allow me to switch to some more contemporary language, and to the language of tonight's topic, you could say that one element is the church, and the other spirituality. The church and spirituality, spirituality and the church: Luke ties them closely together. Before we jump to any conclusions, linking these two concepts

without any further warrant, someone may well ask the question whether it is justified to join the ideas of spirituality and the church. After all, the one idea, spirituality, speaks of individuals; the other idea, the church, speaks of a community. Spirituality leads to individualism. The doctrine of the church leads to the opposite, to uniformity.

This is indeed a spirituality that leads to individualism. There is also a doctrine of the church that leads to uniformity. So, if I want to talk about spirituality *and* the church, how am I going to combine these two concepts? Should I try to steer a middle way? Should I try to avoid the extremes, both when it comes to spirituality and when it comes to the church? What I want to do is to show that spirituality and the church are not two extremes that have little or nothing in common. They are not two extremes between which we have to find a middle way. Instead, these two are linked together. Spirituality and the church belong together. How are they linked? To answer this I propose that we look at the church in four circles. Please keep in mind that I don't mean to suggest that this is the only way of looking at it. After all, the church is redeemed by the blood of Christ. He brings his people to faith through the working of the Spirit. The Spirit is always the Spirit of the exalted Christ. Nevertheless, in what follows we will look at the church not so much as the "body of Christ," but as the "temple of the Holy Spirit."

Holy Spirit

We will think of of four concentric circles. The inner circle is that of the Holy Spirit himself. This may sound strange. When you think of the Holy Spirit, you think of his work in your heart. You think of his work of regeneration and of the good works that you do because of the Spirit's work in your heart. On the other hand, we already

noticed that when it comes to the church, not many of us immediately think of the Holy Spirit. I am suggesting to you that this neglect is where we come into danger. In his book, *The Body* – which is a book that deals with the church – Chuck Colson tells the story of John Conway and Emily Perry. John and Emily come from two different church backgrounds. This leads to a number of discussions. Emily has to deal with all kinds of questions. How do her parents react to her questions? What is their response to her questions and her ideals? This is what Emily says: "[W]hen I came home and started talking about Jesus, it made them nervous. Religion was great. Faith had its place. Being a Christian was like being a Republican. We just were. But when I talked about Jesus and what He meant to every aspect of my life and my plans to the future, that kind of freaked them out for a while. They were worried about my joining a cult" (Colson, 15). According to Colson, this story is illustrative for the way North Americans generally deal with religion. Pointing to a Gallup poll, he states that as North Americans we are religious, we have our churches, but the "hard truth is that we have substituted an institutionalized religion for the life-changing dynamic of a living faith" (Colson, 31).

The question with which I started tonight has basically to do with the same kind of thing. Do we institutionalize religion? Do we place all our cards, so to speak, on certain forms, certain ways of doing things, while losing sight of the life-changing dynamic of a living faith? If that danger exists, I would suggest that we go back to the very basics, namely, the Apostles' Creed (cf. Exalto, 338). We all know that the Apostles' Creed has three sections, dealing with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. We often forget, however, that what we say about the Church, "I believe a holy catholic

Christian church," follows right after we have said, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." What is more, my confession of the church belongs to that third part of the Creed which is about the Holy Spirit. The church is a creation of the Spirit. The same Spirit who lives in my heart, the Spirit who makes me say, "I believe," is the same Spirit who gathers a whole community of believers, a church. Spirituality and the church are not opposed to each other. They cannot be opposed to each other. For the Spirit belongs both to the individual and to the community.

This connection between the Spirit and the Church lays dynamite under any kind of cozy view of the church that you or I might have. Once you see that the Holy Spirit Himself is the first circle, once you see that the church is the community of the Spirit, and that therefore the Spirit comes before the church, then there are certain implications, certain things that must follow. This understanding affects how you look at the church. I want to mention two things that follow when you take the work of the Holy Spirit seriously as a primary element:

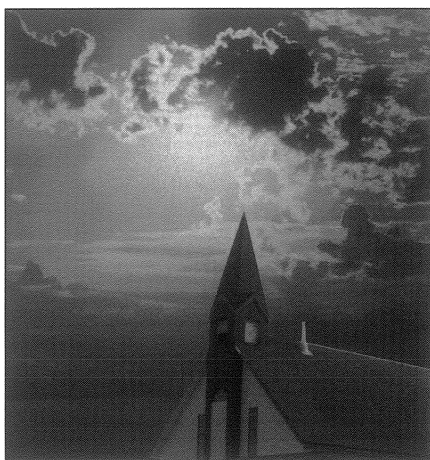
1. There is no tension between our personal faith and the faith of the church (Exalto, 338). Concretely, this means that you can never say that your personal experience is unimportant. It is impossible to retreat behind the church and set up the church as a smoke screen. Sometimes it happens that people ask: what do "we" believe about this? That is a good question. One possible way of answering such a question is by saying, "I don't know, but what do *you* believe?" If the belief of the church is not really your belief, or if your belief is yours simply because it is the church's belief, you have a problem. Your problem is that you have not really come to a personal appropriation, a personal evaluation of whatever issue happens to be at stake.

2. The church is not something static, something that is finished. The Holy Spirit, with His Word, keeps working on getting together a church. This means that you can never identify a particular denomination with "the" church, as if it were something finished. The Spirit, with his dynamic power, keeps working. The church is always flexible. It has a temporary character. You could compare the church to a building, a building that is still not finished. The Holy Spirit is still working on it. The church is still under construction, and it is not fin-

ished until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Trimp, 194-96).

Prayer

So we have looked now at the inner circle, that of the Holy Spirit. We have already noticed that looking at the church in this way has some really profound implications. However, we still have to get to the other three circles. The gift of the Holy Spirit has implications for at least three different aspects. The first of these is prayer. Prayer is the second circle. The church is a praying church. What I want to suggest to you is that you cannot have true, Scriptural piety in the church, you cannot have true, biblical spirituality if you and I who make up that church don't pray.



I want to illustrate the importance of prayer with Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This letter is often called the letter about the church. There is good reason for that description. The letter speaks about election, about the Jews and the gentiles both being part of the church, about the unity of the church, about moral behavior of Christians, and also about the spiritual warfare of the church. Now in all of this talk about the church, there is one recurring theme, which has really struck me. In the midst of dealing with all these theological issues, Paul comes back three times to the place of prayer. Let's just have a brief look at those three occasions. First, he mentions prayer after he has spoken about election. Then he says in 1:13 that the Ephesians are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Notice that he starts off with the Holy Spirit. That is his starting point, the first circle, so to speak. Then he says, in verse 15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the

Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not stop giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." Paul just can't stop giving thanks and praying. What does he mention in his prayers? Well, says verse 17, Paul asks that the believers of the Church at Ephesus may have wisdom and knowledge.

In chapter 3 we have something similar. Paul has just spoken at length about how, since Christ's coming, Jews and gentiles both belong to the church. So Paul says to the Ephesians: you, as gentiles, also belong to the church and I pray for you. In chapter 3:14 he says: I bow my knees before the Father. What does he pray for? He prays that the Holy Spirit may strengthen the Ephesians (v. 16). He especially prays for love, that his readers may be rooted and grounded in love. He asks that they may know the love of Christ, how wide and long and high and deep that love is.

Finally, we look at chapter 6. Here Paul dresses the Ephesians in their military uniforms. He says they must have the belt of truth around their waist, and they need the breastplate of righteousness on (v. 14). Their feet must be ready (v. 15). They must have the shield of faith in their hands (v. 16), the helmet of salvation on their heads, and finally, their sword is God's Word (v. 17). Now notice what Paul calls this sword here. It is the sword of the Spirit. What does this imply? It implies prayer. He says in verse 18: pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. We must pray in the Spirit. Who is this prayer for? First of all, for all the saints, for all Christians (v. 18). Secondly, the prayer is also for Paul, that he may know what to speak when he preaches the Gospel.

What kind of conclusion can we draw from this brief look at Ephesians? First of all, I would suggest that prayer is extremely important. It pops up in Paul's short letter to the Ephesians in three different places, in chapter 1, in chapter 3, and in chapter 6. Second, you notice that there is a close relation between theology and prayer. When it comes to election, when it comes to the unity of the church, when it comes to our spiritual warfare, in all of these things, prayer is important. Thus, when you study the Bible, when you make an essay, when you discuss doctrine, discuss theological matters, prayer immediately comes into the picture. Recently, Bruce Waltke, who

is Old Testament professor here in Vancouver at Regent College, said that there is what he calls a “symbiotic relationship” between Scripture and the spiritual life (Waltke, 35). What he means is that a spiritual life leads to a better understanding of the Scriptures, while a better understanding of the Scriptures leads, in turn, to greater spiritual maturity.

This idea of a symbiotic relationship is also applicable to the church. Remember that Ephesians is the letter dealing with the church, and that it is in this letter that you notice how important prayer is. To use Waltke’s phrase, there is also a “symbiotic relation” between prayer and the church. They need each other. The church cannot blossom, the church cannot grow spiritually, if we don’t pray for each other. We need to pray for each other. Once you do that, once prayer changes the church, once prayer has an impact on the spiritual life of the church, you will notice that the love and the fellowship of the church in turn also influences your personal relation with the Lord. So again, spirituality and the church, the individual and the community, are not in competition. Instead, they have a symbiotic relation. They depend on each other. They need each other.

Fellowship

So far we have looked at the Spirit as the inner circle, as our starting point for our discussion on the church. We noticed that this has implications for our prayer life. I would say that you should look at yourself to see if there is something lacking in your own prayer life. Is there perhaps in your prayer life a possible reason why your church doesn’t always function the way it should? However, we need to go on beyond personal prayer. If you take your starting point in the Holy Spirit, and if, from there, you go to prayer, then you will notice that both of these circles also influence the relations within the church, the fellowship among the church members.

Prayer leads to fellowship. Fellowship is our third circle. If you think about it, this is quite logical. Suppose that your girlfriend or boyfriend is on holidays in Europe. You get a phone call one day that he or she has had a serious car accident. What do you do? Well, you pray, right? Continuously, you pray. You

pray for healing. You pray that you may see each other again in good health. If indeed you see each other again after some time, and all is well, then you are just so excited, so happy, so thankful, that together you give thanks to the Lord. What is more, you are so happy to see each other that you just cannot stop looking at the other person. The whole episode has strengthened your relation. Because of the involvement of prayer, your relation has also been strengthened spiritually.

You can see the same kind of connection between prayer and fellowship in the next letter of Paul in the Bible, his letter to the Philippians. Again, first of all notice the importance of prayer. In 2:3, Paul says: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy.” Paul is overjoyed with the Philippians, and they have a prime place in his prayers and so in his heart. In verse 19, he says that although he is in prison, he rejoices, for “I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.” Just as Paul is praying for the Philippians, so he knows they are praying for him.³ The apostle urges the Philippians to keep praying. In chapter 4:6 he says, “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Prayer is the foundation of true fellowship. And you can tell, for “fellowship” is a key word in Paul’s letter to the Philippians (1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 4:15). Prayer feeds fellowship. What that means is that you start caring for each other. Paul says he holds the Philippians in his heart (1:7). He “yearns” for them with the affection of Christ (1:8).

You see, prayer for each other has all kinds of implications. The fellowship that comes with prayer deals with all kinds of shortcomings in the church (cf. Frame, 124-27). It deals with pride and arrogance; it deals with discord and strife; it deals with envy and jealousy; it deals with harshness, with snobbery; it deals with a party spirit, with superficiality; it deals with anger and bitterness; it deals with ambition, and with a lack of honesty, of openness. All of these things that eat away at the church are dealt with if you start at the root, if you look at the church as a place of the Spirit, as a place of prayer. It is only in this way that you get true Christian fellowship.

Unity of the church

Finally, I want to say something about the unity of the church. Please keep in mind that we are not talking about the unity of the church as such, but as it relates to the other three circles. How do these three circles of the Spirit, of prayer, and of fellowship touch on the unity of the church? First of all, I would suggest that what we have seen so far, makes clear that unity is something that we don’t establish or set up ourselves. Unity comes from the Spirit and from prayer. When we think of unity, for example unity with the Free Reformed Churches, we tend to look at the practical questions. We say: how do we go about this? What do we do? Now I don’t want to downplay such questions. They are important. However, these are not the most important type of questions. Unity is first of all a gift of the Spirit. Christians are one in Christ, through the working of the Spirit (first circle). This is a spiritual matter. Therefore, in dealing with it, you must deal with it spiritually, with prayer (second circle).

I want to read to you what Prof. Faber writes about the place of prayer in connection with the unity of the church. He says: “Reformed people are possessed by an unclean spirit of disunity. The word of the Lord Jesus is valid also with respect to this demon; ‘This kind cannot be driven out by any thing but by prayer’ (cf. Mark. 9:29)” (Faber, 146). Faber is saying that unity is a spiritual matter. Since we are possessed by an unclean spirit, the spirit of disunity, we have to pray. You have to pray for that evil spirit to be thrown out. The one-ness, the unity of the church is a spiritual matter. It is a fellowship that we have through the working of the Spirit. Therefore, when we are talking institutional unity, we have to start with prayer.

When we see unity as the outer ring, we also realize that formal, institutional unity between two congregations or two federations does not create unity. The unity was there already before this formal getting together. Unity is in the first place unity in the Spirit. Formal or institutional unity is always a result of a spiritual unity that you already have. Once the Spirit does His work, once there is prayer for each other, once there is a spiritual fellowship, then the spiritual basis for unity has already been laid. We find a similar approach in a document entitled, “A Call for Ecclesiastical Unity.” This paper which has been

adopted by several churches in our neighborhood, is an attempt to come to unity between the Free Reformed and the Canadian Reformed Churches. This statement starts off like this: "We believe that the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in North America are *united* in a common commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 1; emphasis added). They are united. Then the statement continues by stating that on the basis of this common commitment, these churches now also "should unite and become one federation of churches." These churches are one and should therefore become one. Spiritual unity leads to formal unity. So you see, Anna was right. Prayer and fasting go with the Church. Spirituality and the church do belong together. They cannot be separated. Then again, Anna was a prophetess.

Rev. J. Boersma is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove.

Literature referred to

"A Call for Ecclesiastical Unity Between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in North America." An agreement for the Canadian and the Free Reformed Churches of Aldergrove, Chilliwack, and Langley, 1994.

Colson, Charles, with Ellen Santilli Vaughn. *The Body: Being Light in Darkness*. Dallas: Word, 1992.

Exalto, K. "Kerk en vroomheid." In W. van 't Spijker, et al., eds. *Spiritualiteit*. Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1993, pp. 330-41.

Faber, J. "What Should Be Done?" In Cornelis Van Dam, *The Challenge of Church Union: Speeches and Discussions on Reformed Identity and Ecumenicity*. Winnipeg: Premier, 1993, pp. 144-56.

Frame, John M. *Evangelical Reunion: Denominations and the Body of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

Hard, Ted. "Fellowship at a Distance or under Duress," *New Horizons in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, 15 (Dec, 1994), pp. 5-6.

Trimp, C. "De kerk bij A. Kuyper en K. Schilder." In W. Van 't Spijker, et al., eds. *De kerk: Wezen, weg en werk van de kerk naar reformatorische opvatting*. Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1990, pp. 187-201.

Waltke, Bruce. "Exegesis and the Spiritual Life: Theology as Spiritual Formation." In *Crux* 30:3 (1994), pp. 28-35.

¹Slightly revised speech held at a Ring Kring meeting in Langley, BC on January 15, 1995.

²During this presentation, only one person in the audience mentioned the Holy Spirit when asked what to associate the church with.

³Note the comment of Ted Hard: "Prayer plays an important role in this fellowship. For it is in the context of Paul's repeated explanation of fellowship that he asks prayer for himself and his deliverance (v. 19)" (Hard, 5). C

PRESS REVIEWS

By C. Van Dam

Expelled from the Reformed Church of America

Over the past number of years we have given some attention in *Clarion* to developments within and outside the Christian Reformed Church. Many have seceded because of liberalizing trends in the CRC. To my knowledge, no conservative congregation has ever been evicted from the CRC. That is however what has recently happened in the Reformed Church in America (RCA), a church which dates back to 1628 when the first congregation was established in the Dutch colony in what is now New York.

Darrell Todd Maurina describes the surrounding events in *Christian Renewal*, April 24, 1995.

In an unprecedented decision, the Reformed Church in America's Classis of North Grand Rapids held a special closed-door session on March 7 and voted by a 47-15 margin to expel its second-largest congregation, the over 1,000-member

Seventh Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, because the church refused to pay a total of \$6,502 in assessments for the denominational periodical and seminaries.

The total denominational assessment amount owed by Seventh Reformed was \$13,501, but the church chose to pay its assessments for most denominational line items other than the *Church Herald* and the Board of Theological Education. The reason for Seventh Reformed's refusal to pay up was their opposition to theological liberalism evident in the RCA magazine and seminary training.

Last year, this refusal had consequences for the entire classis. Because of outstanding monies owing, the 1994 RCA Synod decided not to seat delegates from the Classis of North Grand Rapids. This action was in accord with the RCA Book of Church Order which stipulates that each classis must be cur-

rent in its payment of assessments if its delegates are to be seated at General Synod. It appears that to ensure being seated at the next RCA synod, the Classis of Grand Rapids North decided to expel Seventh Reformed. All factors considered this expulsion was done relatively moderately.

The consequences of continued nonpayment could have been quite high: in the RCA, as in most Presbyterian denominations, local churches do not own their buildings. However, the motion formally proposed to classis stated only that "Seventh Reformed Church, with its property, assets and ministers, be removed from the Classis of North Grand Rapids." In a further show of moderation, the classis adopted a motion to strike the words "and ministers," which would have allowed Seventh Reformed's pastoral staff to remain members of the RCA despite their

service in an independent church. However, Seventh Reformed's pastor, Dr. John R. De Witt, indicated that he would also be leaving the RCA.

Where Seventh Reformed and De Witt will go is not at all clear. The congregation is a member of the Alliance of Reformed Churches

and has attended its meetings for the last few years, but De Witt is a strong opponent of independency and has written a number of books and articles attacking independency as un-Reformed.

As an outside observer, I can only respect the actions of Dr. De Witt and his congregation and would hope that they

continue their involvement in the Alliance of Reformed Churches. There they can contribute to the ongoing discussion for a Reformed Church Order. I also hope that at the end of the day all those who love the Reformed faith can find ourselves in a Biblically justified united Reformed church.

C

By C. Van Dam

The Divided CRC Synod 1995

The 1995 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) has come and gone (June 13-21, 1995) and it would appear that the CRC has been left as divided as ever. There were especially two issues that showed the profound rift in this fellowship, namely the issue of the ordination of women and the question of retaining the relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN or "Synodical Churches"). The information in this article comes from Press Releases from *CRC Voices* and *United Reformed News Service* (URNS).¹

Keeping Fraternal Relations with the GKN

Hours before a scheduled vote on whether to continue the fraternal relations with the GKN, the CRC synod heard a speech from Rev. R. Vissinga, synod president of the GKN. According to URNS, the Dutch representative told the synod that

"where believers are true to each other in love, and are committed to the edification of Christ's church, the apostle's words become true that in Christ there is neither male or female, slave nor freeman, Jew or Greek – and, I might add, neither hetero nor homo."...Vissinga said that in his church, the Open Hof Gemeente in the Dutch city of Kampen, homosexual men or women participate in task forces, committees, and consistory." "When they live with a partner under one roof, they are faithful to each other in love. In faith we accept one another

as a gift of God," said Vissinga. "Homosexuals experience the room which the church has come to respect as theirs as a boon and a gift. Unfortunately, this room is not found everywhere among us."

The speech met considerable resistance on the floor of Synod.

That same day a choice had to be made between two reports,

a majority report arguing that relations should not be broken but that the CRC's Interchurch Relations Committee be mandated to discuss "the issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that are of deep concern to the CRC and trouble our ecclesiastical relations," and a minority report signed by two of the committee's seventeen members advocating termination of the ecclesiastical relationship.

The advisory committee minority quoted statements in the CRC's own official report on the GKN that "several historical-critical hypotheses and conclusions have found general acceptance among GKN biblical scholars and theologians that would generally be thought among us to involve Scripture criticism and would undoubtedly be incompatible with the CRC report on "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority." The minority report also noted the CRC's own official report that "the GKN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973."

Other items cited in the minority report included statements that "continued ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN may jeopardize our ecclesiastical fellowship with other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations" . . . and that "termination of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN is consistent with the ecumenical charter, which mandates the Interchurch Relations Committee to assure that continued fellowship with other denominations is warranted, based not only on their formal standards, but also on their actual practice."

Those who wished to retain fellowship with the GKN stressed that they have a responsibility to them and that you cannot cut ties with your family, the GKN being the parent church.

When the vote was called, Synod voted 89 to 80 (with a number abstaining) not to break fraternal relations with the GKN. Efforts to reconsider the matter the next day were unsuccessful.

The ordination of women

The issue of ordaining women has been on the synodical agenda for over twenty years. In what was seen as a compromise, Synod decided (according to *CRC Voices*)

to permit classes (regional groups of churches) to make an exception to the existing church order and ordain women as elders, ministers, and evangelists. In order to ordain women, the classis must declare that the word male is inoperative in

response to local needs and circumstances.

The compromise is apparently in the fact that the church order was not changed permanently. However, this action also means that the decision does not require ratification next year (as is normal for church order changes) and is effective immediately. As part of the "compromise," Synod also made further decisions on this issue, including:

Classes shall not delegate women to synod or assign them synodical functions;

Classes that do not approve of women's ordination shall acknowledge the right of the congregations within their jurisdiction to ordain women as elders (not ministers) in response to local needs;

In the process of declaring women as candidates for ministry, board members and synodical delegates who cannot support such action may abstain from voting;

Synodical agencies shall not appoint women as ministers of the Word to any field of labour within their jurisdiction, nor seek to have them installed by a local church.

In an effort to keep this issue off the synod agenda for the next five years, synod also decided that this arrangement shall be in effect until the year 2000. The liberals got their wish and

the conservatives had to be satisfied with some "face-saving" decisions about restricting the participation of women in classes and elsewhere.

In further action on related matters, synod decided that Synod 1992's decision to allow women to "expound the Word of God" does mean that a woman may bring a message that she has prepared in official worship services. Furthermore, by defeating a motion to the opposite effect, synod declared the 1992 decision that women may expound to remain in effect. Thus a woman may expound under the authority of the elders of a congregation with or without approval by a classis.

Again efforts to reconsider the matter failed to garner adequate support at synod.

The future?

This synod was clearly under the control of the liberal wing of the CRC. This was especially clear when the meeting voted to continue the fraternal relations with the GKN in spite of the fact that the representative of the GKN hours before blatantly defended not only the toleration but also full participation of active homosexuals in the life and offices of the church. As Dr. W. Robert Godfrey put it, "Is there nothing clear in the Bible? . . . this

position on homosexuality is very unbiblical and very unrighteous." Yet synod voted to continue fraternal relations with them, in spite of the fact that years of warning have gone unheeded. In making this decision, the CRC officially leaves itself open to all what is unbiblical and unrighteous in the GKN and the GKN will continue to have a very detrimental influence on the CRC.

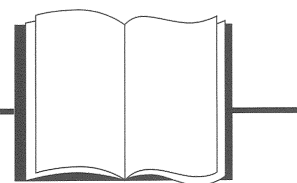
Also in the issue of the ordination of women, the liberals in the CRC clearly gained by far the most with the "compromise" decision, especially considering that the new arrangement would be in effect until the year 2000. After the years of wrangling on this issue it would appear to be extremely difficult to get this point on the agenda of next year's synod in any meaningful way.

To this observer, the battle for a Biblical direction of the CRC has now been lost. If that analysis is correct, the many churches and many individual believers who want to be true to Scripture and confession have hard choices to make. May the Lord be merciful to them and show them the way.

¹My thanks to co-editor, Rev. G. Ph. van Popta and Miss Margaret VanderVelde, Librarian at the Theological College, for providing me with this material off the Internet.



READER'S FORUM



Confessional membership: a new terminology?

I do not profess to know all the ins and outs of the issues concerning our ongoing contact with the OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church), but somewhere along the line a new terminology seems to have evolved. I do not remember hearing the phrase confessional membership before this time. What does the term actually mean? Is it an accurate term to use? I have always

been taught that I have been a member of the church since I was born [HC # 74]. Was I a second class member until I did public profession of my faith? Even then I was only seventeen at the time. True enough I had been to catechism for a number of years, had faithfully memorized the beloved old Heidelberg every week – sometimes on the bus on the way to the dark and dreary I.O.O.F.

hall in downtown Edmonton. (Oh, why did I not realize the value of truly learning-by-heart?!) We also studied the Belgic Confession, but I do not remember whether we made a thorough study of the Canons of Dort. (I do remember studying them later at Women's Society in Cloverdale. I also remember sometimes thinking, Oh, this sounds pretty good, until I realized I was reading the

error section – it was not so clearly marked in the old *Book of Praise!*)

Yet I answered with heartfelt honesty to the question, Do you believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the articles of the Christian faith (that's how it read back in 1967) and taught here in this Christian church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation? and all the serious weighty questions that followed. Is this what gave me the status of confessional member? I don't think so. It made me a communicant member with new privileges and responsibilities. I had been a confessing member well before that time, every time that I confessed that I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and that I wanted to walk according to his will; every time I told my peers at school to watch their language; every time I explained that I could not visit for the weekend, because I did not want to miss going to church on Sunday.

Is it perhaps because the wording of the question asked at public profession of faith has changed, that a new terminology also has evolved? The question used to say "... summarized in the articles of the Christian faith." Now it reads "... summarized in the confessions." Has this perhaps changed the meaning of the question in the eyes – and ears – of some of our church members? Our Synods maintain that the resulting change from articles to confessions was a linguistic revision. It was only "... a linguistic change and not one in meaning" (Art. 121, 122 Synod Lincoln 1992). Do we church members hear what Synod has judged, or do we give our own preferred nuances to the terms articles and confessions? You might be thinking: So what? Let me digress a little bit.

I just graduated last year (finally) from Trinity Western, a local evangelical university. I attended classes for 10+ years with many enthusiastic, Christ-confessing young people. I learned a lot from them. I also saw how they put much emphasis on their baptism as young adults, once they had confessed that Christ was their Savior. That is when they actually became church members. Do we want to head in that direction? I surely hope not! We do not become members of the church by confession. That is an Anabaptist position. We do not have a church made up of confessing believers. That would exclude our children. That is not a covenantal view. That is individualistic. It is anti-covenantal and anti-true

church. Are we adopting a pure church, that is, a Believers church doctrine?

Pure church and true church are not the same thing! From our Belgic Confession we learn that a Reformed 'true church' doctrine describes the church 1) by faithful and pure preaching which conforms to scripture and confessions; 2) by faithful and pure administration of two sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant as Christ has instituted them; and 3) by faithful exercise of Church discipline for correcting and punishing church members who live in sin. An Anabaptist 'pure church' doctrine defines church 1) by the personal confession of believers; 2) by the use of the sacraments as a sign of the individual believer's confession; and 3) in order to keep the church pure, by the banning and shunning of sinners who have given themselves to the Lord and yet who slip sometimes and inadvertently fall into error or sin (cf the *Schleitheim Confession*, an Anabaptist confession of 1527).* Surely it is Anabaptistic teaching to promote an ecclesiology based on confessional membership!

Public profession of faith is a serious, important step in the lives of young church members. But we should not shift its focus. It does not mark an entrance into or acceptance by the church. Young people make public profession because they are already church members who, by the grace of God, are ready for the privileges and responsibilities that come with this profession. Our form for baptism says that infants are baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant even though they do not understand this. At public profession of faith young adults say, Yes, I now understand and believe this. I accept as true all that God has revealed in His Word and I believe that the promises and blessings of the covenant are not just for others but also for me. Our young people say, Amen! to the promises of God. They say, Yes, I do believe that as an infant I already belonged to God's covenant and congregation (Q&A 74). That is a world of apart from confessional membership.

*The Schleitheim Confession is often called the first Baptist confession of faith, adopted by a Swiss Brethren Conference at Schleitheim. (Clyde L. Manschreck, ed. *A History of Christianity*, Baker, 1981)

Sarah Vandergugten
Cloverdale, B.C. 

The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.



CALLED to Calgary, AB and West Albany, Australia

Candidate J. Poppe
of Hamilton, ON

CALLED and DECLINED to Fergus, ON

Rev. D.G.J. Agema
of Attercliffe, ON

CALLED and DECLINED to Lincoln, ON

Rev. W. den Hollander
of Orangeville, ON

Classis Ontario South of June 14, 1995 has decided to declare

Br. Johan Plug, and
Br. Joe Poppe
eligible for call within the Canadian/American Reformed Churches for the period of one year.
Phone br. Plug: (905) 388-5916
Phone br. Poppe: (905) 388-7398

Classis has also granted

Br. Theo Lodder
permission to speak an edifying word within the Canadian/American Reformed Churches for the period one year. Phone: (905) 648-9018

ADDRESS CHANGE:

Rev. R. Schouten
2050 Joshua Place
Abbotsford, BC V3G 1L4
Telephone/Fax: 604-852-6820

Dr. Venema in Calgary¹

By Roelof and Theresa Janssen

While the world made preparations for the pagan practices of Hallowe'en we had the opportunity to meet with fellow believers to speak about God's reformational work. Dr. Venema asked, "How many Can. Reformed people, ten years ago, even imagined that God would draw so many of His children out of the C.R.C.?!?" Yes, God is still at work, and at this time of reflecting on the events of the year 1517, we also ask for wisdom and guidance in the years ahead, so that we do not hinder or deny God's work.

The conference was held in Calgary and organized by the independent churches of Calgary and Lethbridge. Although the conference was called an elders and deacons conference, it was well-attended by men and women, old and young. And so about one hundred people of various reformed churches gathered together in good harmony to hear what the Head of the Church demands of His people. Dr. Venema, from Mid America Reformed Seminary, was the keynote speaker, delivering three speeches and allowing time for questions and comments.

The first speech was heard Friday evening and was entitled "The Future of the Independent Churches." Dr. Venema presented various challenges and emphasized that each person is called to be faithful in whatever circumstances he finds himself. One must cherish one's history but also test all things against God's word. Dr. Venema warned against building the house from the ground up. Instead, we should make use of the exciting and rich traditions of creeds, church orders, and church life. Also emphasized was the need to "seek out aggressively a relationship with other Reformed Churches." It is very important that this first be done locally. For a complete summary of this speech see the article by Rev. Schouten in the December 1994 issue of *Clarion*.

On Saturday morning we began at 9:05 a.m. with opening devotions, after which Dr. Venema was promptly invited to deliver his second speech entitled, "Biblical and Confessional Foundations for the Offices of the Church." The three points were

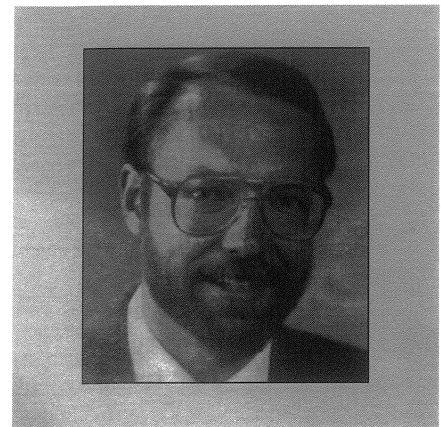
1. Foundational Principles of Church Government
2. What are the Respective Offices of Minister, Elder, and Deacon
3. Officebearer Training in the Local Church

Dr. Venema emphasized that each church is governed by elders and not by broader assemblies, or even by a minister. Christ governs through the elders and since Christ governs we may know that we ARE church and don't have to strive to become one. Since we ARE church we may know that we have the fullness and richness to fulfil our proper calling.

Dr. Venema asserted that Christ teaches that there are three offices in the church, no more, no less. He confirmed that the Presbyterian church also believes this even though they use only two terms, elder and deacon. For Presbyterians, the elder category is divided into two groups giving essentially three offices. Dr. Venema spoke about elders as being pastors since their second function is to shepherd God's flock. Elders must govern as shepherds. The task of the deacons does not only involve dealing with the collection money, but also has the goal of stimulating individual church members to faithfulness in the use of their resources in daily life.

With regard to officebearer training Dr. Venema strongly emphasized that men must first be trained and then nominated and elected. If men are unwilling to come to training sessions they should be excluded from the nomination list.

After coffee and cake we gathered together for the final speech entitled



"Tasks of Officebearers" with the subpoints

1. Conduct of Family Visits
2. Practice of Discipline
3. Work of Evangelism

Dr. Venema gave family visiting the following definition: "an official means of concretely applying God's Word as shepherd." This work can be done most effectively when an elder has a very defined district in which to work. He must also establish a system of record keeping and very importantly he must always prepare properly for every visit. It was suggested that an elder not allow a sole passage of Scripture to govern the entire visit, but to be prepared to learn more about the family through meaningful conversations and well-phrased questions (which need more than "yes" and "no" answers). An important aspect of family visiting is to deal pastorally with the children. They must be included as part of the family and therefore also be drawn into the discussion. Elders were encouraged to stick to their schedule. If problems occur, schedule another visit but do not break the next scheduled appointment. In conclusion to this section Dr. Venema stated that "we need to diligently maintain and perfect the practice of family visiting."

In regards to discipline Dr. Venema emphasized the necessity for the proper

preaching of the Word and mutual discipline. Without these the task of the elders becomes very difficult. We must remember that a lack of discipline dishonours God's name. Righteousness and peace are produced through discipline since through such a means the sinner is restored to God. If sin is not removed it will leaven the whole lump. He also recalled the fact that the lack of discipline in the C.R.C. has been a major cause for the deformation in it. We must encourage each other in our Christian walk but also hold each other accountable.

Dr. Venema stated that we need to "rediscover a Reformed manner of evangelism." Again the proper preaching of the Word stands in the forefront. The minister and the elders must show the congregation by word and deed how to evangelize. They must provide hospitality and welcome strangers within the community first of all. The work of the church is to gather and all of the congregation must be involved with this work of Christ.

Saturday afternoon Rev. Wynia led us in a Reformation service after which the conference was closed. It was an

encouraging and uplifting time and we hope to be able to experience many more such gatherings. We also hope and pray that they may lead to a visible unity of the faith.

¹In the Christmas Issue of *Clarion* Rev. R. Schouten wrote about *The Future of the Independent Churches* – the title of a speech by Dr. C. Venema of Mid America Reformed Seminary given on Oct. 28, 1994. The next day Dr. Venema delivered some speeches for an Elders Conference. This report deals mainly with the latter meeting. **C**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Dear Editor:

In the article "Return to Babel via the Computer?" (*Clarion*, June 16), the author makes an interesting point about how man is using computer technology as a modern day Babel.

The conclusion that silicon chips might be implanted in babies at birth, however, is rather far fetched and raises people's anxiety about technology unnecessarily. To present technology in terms of "a scary thought for God's people" is not helpful or enlightening for your readers living "in the last days."

As the article indicates, computer technology is a part of God's wonderful creation. The computer is an incredible tool that we, as Christians, need not fear. Instead we need to understand and master it, in response to our mandate to subdue the earth. Just like the printing press, the radio, or television that came before, we must use technology to benefit God's people.

At the same time, we know that technology is being used for evil. Yes, "there is nothing new under the sun." We can see man's evil heart in magazines on the newsstand, in music on the radio, in videos, and movies on television, and also on the Internet. Our duty, of course, is to exercise discretion and self-control, to be wise and avoid evil, regardless of the source.

So what about God's people living in the last days? We do not need to fear

computer technology, but rather fear an increasing tolerance for evil by society and the authorities set over us. The threat to Christians is not in the future when "the merger of silicon chips to brain tissue" might happen, but it is here, now, all around us. As our Lord Jesus said, "Watch therefore." (Matt. 24:42)

Ron Bremer
Carlisle, ON

Dear Mr. Editor:

One a (well-remembered) remark was made in (y)our magazine that it would be better for our readers, especially the younger ones, not to reach for books written by "outsiders." Although the term "outsider" was not further defined, it was generally understood as "non Canadian Reformed."

CLARION itself, however, does not set an example for this. I am time and again struck by the multitude of references to publications of such "outsiders" made by you and other contributors.

Taking only the most recent issue as an example, the readers are referred to (by 'see...') to *Faith Today*, *Recovering Holiness*, and authors like *Vern Poythress*, *Richard D. Holliday*, *Donald McLeod*, *Fleming U. Revell* and *Fredrick D. Bruner*. From back issues many more may be added.

I myself am of course hopelessly behind the times, having grown up and

lived in such "insiders" (!) like Kuyper and Bavinck, Ridderbos, Bouwman, T. Hoekstra, S. Greydanus, B. Holwerda and of course K. Schilder. Then there were the younger ones like J. Kamphuis, C. Trimp and our "own" Dr. J. Faber. They in their turn built upon the rich past of older Reformed authors, among them of course John Calvin foremost, and thus, via the "church fathers" back to the Source of all: the Word of God itself.

I am of course happy to discover that our present theologians have been enabled by their churches to be up to date in their libraries. There is no doubt in me that, when they refer to names like the above mentioned, they consider these as faithfully Reformed worthy of our trust.

But are the former generations forgotten? (I hesitate to add the products of our "own" Canadian Reformed writers).

Convinced that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles. 1), the former champions for the Reformed Faith are still up to date.

Would it, so I ask, not be good, even necessary that our present-day writers introduce us, their readers, into this whole world of for us mostly unknown authors? Let us know more about their background, the theological milieu they live in and their positions in today's wider Reformed world. Notwithstanding the above quoted warning against "outsiders," many of our number reads books by men like

R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, Jr., J.I. Packer (one finds their names now and then in local bulletins). A growing number is attending conferences by Ligonier spokesmen and others (as you see, I am not completely out of touch).

No one would adhere to the old Latin rule of *quod licet Iovi non licet bovi*. Nor would anyone promote tunnel-vision. We rather stick with Paul's "all are yours." Well then, do not only "refer" to strangers, but introduce us more clearly to what obviously must be God's gifts that may enrich us – be it then in addition to our own rich Reformed past and heritage!

Respectfully,

G. VanDooren,
Burlington, ON

Dear Editor,

Re: On confessional Membership and Binding. A. Sikkema, May 19, 1995.

There is nothing new under the sun, one way or other, when this issue is raised. There is nothing new either with members of the church who entangle themselves in false dilemmas. Brother Sikkema could greatly benefit from reading up on the history of the Secession of 1834 as well as the Dutch schism of the late 1960s. Similar issues were at stake then. The pre-1944 history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) also includes a series of public struggles for confessional faithfulness.

About 80 years ago, the churches dealt with the issue of membership in the so-called Christian Students Union. This organization lacked a confessional basis, and had a broadly based membership which included dozens of theological students in both Amsterdam and Kampen, as well as a few professors. Although consistories received advice on the matter, it was never solved in a confessionally satisfactory manner. As a matter of fact, the defenders of CSU-membership later turned out to be leaders in the dump-Schilder faction.

The Netelenbos (he saw nothing wrong with preaching in the same NHK-pulpit normally occupied by a preacher who taught very unreformed views) and the Geelkerken-cases could not be resolved on the basis of Scripture and Confessions. Both ministers wanted "freedom" to express themselves and separated themselves from the Reformed Churches.

By the 1930s, synods were requested to provide advice what to do with church members who had joined the Dutch Nazi-party (N.S.B.). Some of these people were even in leadership positions in the Nazi-movement. (I trust that nothing needs to be added about the Nazi ideology).


Successive synods dealt with the NSB-issue, and one may conclude from the advice given to consistories that membership in such a party was ruled to be incompatible with that of the church. Synod added that on an indi-

vidual basis, those members were to be admonished and disciplined.

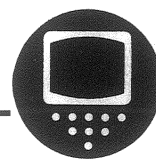
Schilder's struggle for the unity of the church (re: John 17) centered around the very issue of "confessional membership." In Schilder's time – and is this happening again? – many in the Reformed churches had taken the Solomonic line and were contributing to the deformation of the churches. The fact that the CSU had such a following among students, emphasizes this; in effect, the student's attitude was that the confessions were only for ecclesiastical matters (if that). That this deformation caused disunity in the churches became painfully evident in the cases involving the CSU, NSB and, ultimately, in the deposition of Schilder and many other office bearers in 1944 and 1945.

Why is it that some act as if they are on a short leash with our confessional standards?

Should brother Sikkema have a specific problem with any of the Confessions, the proper way for him is to approach his consistory for help. If the problem merits further attention the Consistory may wish to put it to a broader assembly for consideration. As it stands now, the brother is involving everyone in his dilemma which more study on his part could easily solve.

Albert van der Heide,
Surrey, BC 

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Ontario-South held on June 14, 1995 in Ancaster.

1. On behalf of the convening church at Chatham, Rev. G. Wieske opens the meeting at 9 a.m. by requesting to sing Hymn 64:1 and 4. He reads 2 Tim. 2:1-13 and leads in prayer.

2. He welcomes all present, especially br. J. Plug and family. Br. J. Plug who will be examined at this classis. He mentioned that Rev. G. Snip accepted the call to Edmonton-Immanuel

and that the church at Lincoln called the Rev. W. DenHollander. He further congratulates Rev. Agema with his recent call from the church at Fergus.

3. The delegates from Chatham check the credentials. All churches are represented by their primi delegates. The church at Blue Bell only sent one delegate.

4. Rev. Wieske invites the officers of classis to take their seats. Classis is constituted with Rev. Agema as chairman, Rev. De Gelder as clerk and Rev. Wieske as vice-chairman.

5. The chairman asked the meeting to adopt the agenda as received.

Preparatory examination of br. J. Plug. The documents are in order and br. Plug delivers his sermon proposal on 1 Samuel 10:9-13. In closed session the deputies' report is read by Rev. De Gelder, followed by a general discussion. After voting it is decided to proceed with the examination.

Rev. Agema examines him in O.T. exegesis (Isaiah 65); Rev. Hofford on N.T. exegesis (Ephesians 3) and Rev. Stam on doctrine and creeds (ecclesi-

ology), each for 25 minutes. The other delegates are given 10 minutes to ask questions after each subject. The meeting goes into closed session to evaluate the examination. Classis decides there are no objections to declare br. J. Plug eligible for call within our churches.

He is informed of this decision by the chairman who congratulates him and his family and asks br. Plug not to teach anything against God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Br. Plug makes this promise verbally. After singing Ps. 24:1 and 4, Rev. Wieske leads in thanksgiving prayer and the chairman adjourns the meeting for lunch and gives the delegates the opportunity to congratulate br. Plug and his wife.

6. At 1:45 p.m. classis is reopened. Roll call is held. All the brothers are present.

Preparatory examination of br. J. Poppe. The documents are in order. Br. Poppe delivers his sermon proposal on 1 Peter 2:11 and 12 in the auditorium. In closed session it is discussed and after voting classis decides to proceed with the examination.

Rev. Agema examines him on exegesis of Ezek. 3:1-27; Rev. Hofford on exegesis of Luke 12:1-21 and Rev. Stam on doctrine and creeds (focussing on the doctrine about God). Again the other delegates are invited to participate as well. Classis then goes into closed session to discuss the examination. After voting, classis declares br. Poppe eligible for call and in open session this news is conveyed to br. Poppe and his wife by the chairman.

After promising not to teach anything that conflicts with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, the chairman hands him the declaration of eligibility as well as a Letter of Call, received from the church at Calgary.

After singing Hymn 28:1-4 and thanksgiving prayer by Rev. De Gelder, classis breaks for 15 minutes to congratulate br. Poppe and his wife.

7. At 5 p.m. classis resume with roll call. All brothers are present.

Question Period ad. article 44 C.O. is held. one church seeks advice in a matter of discipline. Advice is given.

8. Correspondence: It was noted that the presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is going to appeal to Regional Synod-East 1995 the March decision of Classis Ontario-South.

The church at Lincoln asks for the release of Rev. G. Snip who accepted the call to Immanuel Church in Edmonton. The necessary documents are read and in order. Classis most honourably releases Rev. Snip from his ministerial duties in this classical region and a certificate noting the same is given to him.

The chairman thanks Rev. Snip for his work in this classis and wishes him and his family the blessing of the Lord for the future. Rev. De Gelder is appointed as Lincoln's counsellor at their request and he is also delegated to represent classis at Rev. Snip's farewell service on June 25.

The church at Lincoln also invites classis to its 25th church anniversary this summer. Classis appoints Rev. Wieske to represent her. Classis breaks for supper.

9. The meeting resumes at 7 o'clock. Roll call is held. All delegates are present.

The chairman welcomes student Th. Lodder who will be examined with a view to receive permission to speak an edifying word within the churches. The documents are found to be in order. Classis goes to the auditorium to listen to br. Lodder's sermon proposal on John 3:3-8. In closed session this proposal is discussed. Classis decides to proceed with the examination.

In open session Rev. Stam examines him with regards to doctrine and creeds. Classis again goes into closed session to evaluate the examination. It is found to be satisfactory and br. Lodder is informed that he receives the right to speak an edifying Word for a period of twelve months, provided he promises not to teach anything against God's Word as confessed the Three Forms of Unity. Br. Lodder readily gives this promise.

We sing Ps. 63:1 and 2, after which the chairman leads in thanksgiving. Classis breaks for 10 minutes to give the

delegates the opportunity to congratulate student Lodder.

10. Correspondence: Letter from the church of Watford asking classis for advice because of its contacts with the Independent Christian Reformed church at Wyoming. Watford asks: how must we as Can. Ref. churches proceed in working towards unity with other churches which we acknowledge to be faithful to Jesus Christ? Watford feels that it would be beneficial to have a common general strategy.

Classis advises the church at Watford to contact the deputies for ecclesiastical unity as appointed by General Synod 1995 in view of their mandate.

11. Reports: The following reports were received with thankfulness.

a. Annual financial report from the classical treasurer.

b. Auditors report of the treasurer's books.

c. Inspection report of classical archives.

d. Financial report of needy students fund.

e. Church visitation reports to the churches of Chatham, Blue Bell, Hamilton, Grand Rapids, Ancaster and Attercliffe.

12. Appointments; Convening church for next classis: Grand Rapids. Suggested officers: Rev. Hofford, chairman; Rev. Agema, clerk and Rev. De Gelder, vice chairman.

Date and place: Sept. 13, 1995 in Attercliffe.

The appointment of church visitors and examiners is postponed till Sept. classis.

13. Personal Question Period.

Rev. Agema speaks some words of appreciation to Rev. Snip who is present for the last time. Rev. Snip replies to these words by wishing the brothers the blessing of the Lord.

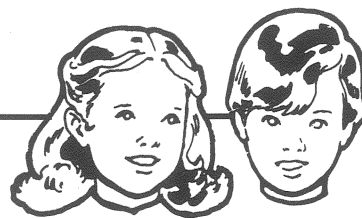
14. Censure ad art 34 C.O. is not necessary. The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved. We sing Hymn 58:1 and 2 and after prayer by the chairman, classis is closed at 11:45 p.m.

For classis Ont. South, June 14, 1995,

G. Wieske, vice chairman 



By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I hope you are enjoying your summer holidays. Here are lots of puzzles to help keep you busy.

Quiz Time!

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

This is a good puzzle for the summertime, when many crops are ready. Do you have any of these in your garden?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Pomegranate,
1 Kings 7:18-21 | a. Used to make something clean. |
| 2. Lentils,
Genesis 25:34 | b. Jesus used to teach that God is merciful in giving time for sinners to repent. |
| 3. Wild grapes,
Isaiah 5:1-2,7 | c. Jesus used to teach about faith. |
| 4. Hyssop,
Psalm 51:7 | d. Used to make a holy ointment |
| 5. Fig, Luke 13:6-7 | e. Decorated pillars in the Temple |
| 6. Cucumbers,
Number 11:5 | f. Compared to the house of Israel. |
| 7. Olive oil,
Exodus 30:24-25 | g. Jacob used in his stew. |
| 8. Mustard seed,
Luke 17:6 | h. Vegetables Hebrews longed for in the wilderness. |
| 9. Mandrakes,
Genesis 30:14-16 | i. Amos gathered this fruit. |
| 10. Sycamore fruit,
Amos 7:14 | j. Rachel bargained with Leah to have them. |

SAYS WHO!

Here are a few well-known sayings from the Bible. Can you fill in the blanks with the name of the person who said each?

- _____ 1. "The Lord is my Shepherd."
- _____ 2. "Here am I, send me."
- _____ 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- _____ 4. "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."
- _____ 5. "But the greatest of these is love."
- _____ 6. "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me."
- _____ 7. "Create in me a clean heart, O God."
- _____ 8. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- _____ 9. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."
- _____ 10. "Silver and gold I have none, but what I do have I give you."

(Clues at the end!)

WATER!

Without water no living thing can exist. Fill in each blank with the name of the person.

1. _____ and _____ turned water to blood.
Exodus 7:20
2. _____ baptized with water. Matthew 3:11
3. _____ moved upon the face of the waters. Gen 1:2
4. _____ said to "let judgment run down as waters."
Amos 5:24
5. _____ commanded his chariot to stop so he could be baptized in water. Acts 8:36
6. _____ said one had to be born of water and the Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God. John 3:5
7. _____ drew water from a rock. Exodus 17:5-6
8. _____ lay beside a pool waiting for the moving of the water. John 5:7
9. _____ had water poured over his sacrifice until it filled the trench around the altar. 1 Kings 18:30,35
10. _____ lived on a boat many months because of a flood. Genesis 7:1,24

ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

by Busy beaver *Nicole Alderliesten*

```

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

Can you find these words?

bear	cat	chick	calves
cow	dog	foal	fox
hippo	horse	kitten	monkey
puppy	seal	whale	

Clues to Says Who?

1. Ps. 23:1, 2. Isaiah 6:8, 3. John 3:3, 4. Acts 16:31, 5. 1 Corinthians 13:13, 6. John 14:1, 7. Ps. 51:10, 8. Joshua 24:1,15, 9. John 1:29, 10. Acts 3:6

That's all for this time, Busy Beavers! Enjoy your summer!

Love, Aunt Betty