

Clarion

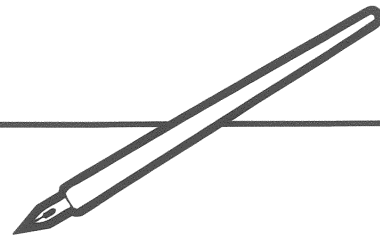
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 44, NO. 15/16 JULY 28, 1995



*The Ecclesiastical Liberation
in the Netherlands –
Fifty years later*

Numbers

10:1-10



The Bible Our Only Creed?

Recently, a writer expressed his views under *Reader's Forum* about the issue of creedal binding. It was stated that while creeds are helpful and important in pointing out basic Biblical doctrines in a systematic way, members of the church should never be bound to them. Behind this aversion to creedal binding was an expressed love for Scripture as the authoritative, inerrant and relevant word of God.¹

Given the central place of the creeds and confessions in the life of the Can. Ref. churches, it is somewhat surprising to discover this distaste for creedal commitment. On the other hand, this is not a new aversion. Resistance to the authority of creeds has always been present under the surface of Reformed church life. We also know that Anabaptists of the 16th century, Arminians of the seventeenth, liberals of the nineteenth and student movements of the twentieth century were one in voicing strenuous objections to creedal Christianity and any form of confessional binding.

Various reasons have been given historically in objection to creedal binding. Some wanted to maintain the right of free interpretation of the Bible. For them, the imposition of creeds was a violation of a basic Christian right to personal understanding of God's Word. It also happened that some critics saw the imposition of creeds as a violation of the sola scriptura of the Reformation. Others were more blatant in their assaults and revealed more sinister motives. For them, the whole concept of objective truth was anathema. Christianity was for them only an experience beyond words – totally personal and subjective.

In most cases, then, those who object to creedal binding do so as defenders of the supreme place of the Bible in the life of the Church. We can honour the motives of those who want to protect the unique place of Scripture in the Church, even if, in the case of some heretics, expressed love for Scripture is only a guise to fool the faithful. Ironically, however, history teaches that opposition to creedal binding will inevitably undermine the authority of Scripture in the Church and open the door for a storm of error and worse. Loosening of creedal bonds in the Church is connected to a loosening of the bonds with Scripture itself. After all, creeds and confessions were written and made the rule of doctrine in the Church precisely in order to defend the Bible against its enemies. Binding to creeds is no dishonouring of Scripture, but is rather a practice flowing from a deep love for Scripture. Scripture-loving opponents of creedal binding need to rethink their position. Does their view really help to safeguard the position of the Bible or does it actually do the opposite?

Rationale for creeds

The rationale for a creed is found in the character of God's Word itself. If Scripture is infallible and perspicuous,

then we as believers should be able to say what it is that Scripture infallibly and clearly teaches. It is strange that many people who are willing to confess that the Bible is inerrant and infallible, are not willing to say just what it is that the Bible inerrantly and infallibly teaches. Doesn't the confession of inerrancy seem hollow if we cannot summarize in creedal form the content of Scripture?

In the face of error and heresy, systematic statement of the content of the infallible Bible is not only possible, but also necessary. Being the pillar and bulwark of the truth, the Church has to contend for the faith. True and sound doctrine has to be firmly defended and energetically propagated. When the Scriptures are twisted by ignorant or evil and unstable people, the catholic church must respond by stating the content of true doctrine. Herman Bavinck writes:

Against such heresies, whether to the right or to the left, the church is obliged to speak out resolutely and clearly, and to state what is the truth vouchsafed to it by God Himself in His Word. The church does this by its lesser and greater assemblies, in which it establishes what according to its conviction must be held as divine truth and thus as a teaching of the church on some particular point or other. Thus the truth laid down in Scripture leads, on the part of all those who believe and embrace it, to a confession, a creed. . . . And as the errors and heresies grew subtler and subtler, the church is the more compelled to take careful account of the truth it confesses and to state its creed in defined and unambiguous terms. Naturally, the oral confession by force of circumstance becomes also a written confession.²

To say "The Bible is our only creed," will join you willy-nilly to a multitude of cults, sects and false churches who all maintain this same creed. In other words, the problem with this very limited creed is that it does not sufficiently establish the identity of the holy catholic church. This very limited creed does not separate the lie from the truth. Nearly everyone of any sort of vague spirituality can say, "The Bible is my only creed." This confession, however, is only the starting point. We need to go on to establish what it is that the Bible teaches. We do this in our creeds and confessions.

In reality, then, the confessions do not supplant Scripture, but rather defend it from dangerous and seditious men. From history, we learn that attacks on the confessions usually lead to attacks on Scripture itself. Opponents of creeds are sometimes honest (and honestly wrong), but in other cases, they are opposed to binding because they love the fuzzy-minded and woolly-brained comfort of their own personal interpretation of Scripture.

The following citation from Herman Bavinck might be helpful at this point:

The function of the confessions or creeds is not to push the Scriptures into the background, but rather to maintain them and to protect them from individual caprice. So far from violating the freedom of conscience, they support it over against all sorts of heretical spirits who seek to lead weak and uninformed souls astray. And, finally, the confessions do not impede a growth in knowledge but keep it in the right course of development, and they are themselves to be checked and revised against the Holy Scriptures as the only norm of faith. Such examination and review can take place at any time, though it must be done in warranted and legitimate ways.³

When I as a Christian declare in the church's confession what it is that the Bible teaches, how can this be interpreted as attacking the centrality of the Bible? If the Church states clearly the content of the truth entrusted to it by God, is this dishonour to the Bible? For example, when the Church, over against a multitude of cults which also claim the Bible as their source, declares in her creed that Jesus Christ is the eternal, only-begotten Son of God, who would hesitate to bind himself to that creedal statement? Such binding would not show dishonour for Scripture, but rather would be an act of submission to the supreme authority of Scripture. It is because we love Scripture that we are gladly bound to the confessions of the Church.

Scripture as starting point

In the above-mentioned contribution to *Reader's Forum*, the writer ended by saying, "His Word should be the starting point in all our discussions." Amen to that! If the writer is trying to say that Can. Ref. people often simply refer to the confessions and creeds without understanding their Scriptural foundation, I agree with him that this is regrettable and dangerous. All members of the Church should be able to show that their confessions are firmly anchored in Scripture.

However, it may be said that the Church of Christ does not remain at the starting point forever. Nor is the Church always discussing things – always learning and yet never arriving at the truth. The Church is not a debating club in which positions can be endlessly "discussed." Indeed, the Church is not primarily a place where discussion happens, but where authoritative preaching takes place and where firm confessions are made and out of which a faithful testimony sounds forth. Discussions have their place, too, but the point comes of settled conviction and firm knowledge. From discussions of Scripture, we move to conclusions and decisions and judgments which we express in the creeds and confessions.

It may also be said that as believers together, we don't always need to rehash every issue. In our discussions together, we don't always start again at the beginning, with the elementary doctrines. Instead, as fellow believers, we can make certain confessional assumptions about each other. In this way, the creeds and confessions can promote the bond of peace among believers and powerfully unify their testimony to the world.

¹A. Sikkema, "On Confessional Membership and Binding," *Clarion*, vol. 44, no. 10, May 19, 1995.

²H. Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, translated from the Dutch edition, *Magnalia Dei* by Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), pages 118-119.

³Bavinck, pg. 119.



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
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 – The Bible Our Only Creed? — R. Schouten	346
Meditation — G.Ph. van Popta	348
The Liberation – After 50 Years — J. Douma and translated by A.J. Hordyk	349
Press Reviews — C. Van Dam – "Prehistoric" Pines Discovered	354
– Who Remembers the Armenians?	355
Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. R. Ravensbergen	356
The Hi-Liter — C. Van Spronsen	357
Farewell to Rev. R.A. Schouten and family — David De Boer and John Hoogerdijsk	359
Reader's Forum – Rocking the Boat — Ralph Winkel	361
Press Release	362
Book Reviews — C. Van Dam and P. Aasman	363
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	365

Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 13:42-52

"... and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE

Acts 13 and 14 tell us about Paul's first missionary journey. One of the cities to which he and Barnabas brought the gospel was Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath day, they went to the Jewish synagogue. The leader asked if they had a word of exhortation for the people.

Paul seized the opportunity and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. He summarized the history of what God had done throughout the time of the Old Testament and showed how God's actions had come to fulfilment in the Lord Jesus (vv. 16-41). He proclaimed that all who believe in Jesus Christ have life in His name.

Many of the Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism liked what they heard. They begged the missionaries to come back next Sabbath. After the service was over, many of the worshipers followed Paul and Barnabas. They had not yet heard enough of the wonderful things these men were saying about Jesus Christ and salvation through faith in Him.

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the Word of God. The Jews became jealous when they saw the crowds that these newcomers could attract. Oh, that deadly jealousy! They began to speak abusively against Paul and Barnabas and against the Word of God.

Paul told them that they were obliged to speak the Word of God to the Jews first; however, since they shoved the Word of God away from themselves and so judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, they would turn to the Gentiles. After all, God had said in Isaiah 49:6 that Israel was a light to the Gentiles. Salvation would go out from the Jews to the nations of the world.

The Gentiles were glad when they heard this. They glorified the Word of God. *"And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"* (v. 48).

The united testimony of Scripture is that election unto life precedes faith. God is sovereign in giving people

eternal life. All of mankind is joined in a common misery through the sin of Adam. God in His free grace chooses unto life those whom He will. Those whom He chooses He also gives saving faith (Eph. 2:8).

Some flip this around. They say that faith comes before election. Back in eternity, according to this wrong conception, God looked down the hallways of time and determined who was going to believe and who was not. Those whom He foresaw were going to believe He then decided to elect to eternal life. Faith, then, becomes the one good work we have to do in order to earn salvation. This is the Arminian heresy.

The Bible generally and Acts 13:48 specifically teach otherwise. In time God gives faith to those whom He has already in eternity elected to salvation.

That is a good thing. If, when push came to shove, our salvation rested on our faith rather than on God's gracious election, we would constantly be worried whether our faith was strong enough, consistent enough, intense enough.

This does not mean that God kicks us into heaven like you kick a block of wood. He calls us to faith. When we hear the gospel, we must believe. And the promise of the gospel is that whoever hears, repents and believes will be saved.

On the final day, those who rejected the gospel will be condemned on the basis of their unbelief. God will condemn them for having pushed the Word of God away from themselves and for already having judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. They will only have themselves to blame, for eternity.

However, those who will receive eternal life with Christ will only have God to thank. For eternal life is the free gift of God. We receive that free gift through the gift of faith.

What's Inside

You have in your hands our annual combined summer issue. We, at *Clarion*, go into vacation mode for awhile. That means that you will not spot the next issue in your mailbox until a month from now rather than in the regular two weeks - Canada Post cooperating.

We hope you enjoy this issue. The feature article is a lengthy but, mostly, easily read article in which Dr. J. Douma reflects upon the history of the fifty years of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Liberated, our Dutch sister churches. It was originally published last year about this time in a Dutch magazine. It contains a lot of local colour, all of which was left in. We thank Mr. Arie Hordyk for translating it.

In the lead editorial, Rev. Schouten addresses the matter of creedal binding and the relationship between the Scriptures and the confessions.

Happy reading!

GvP

The Liberation – After 50 Years

By J. Douma

Translated by A.J. Hordyk

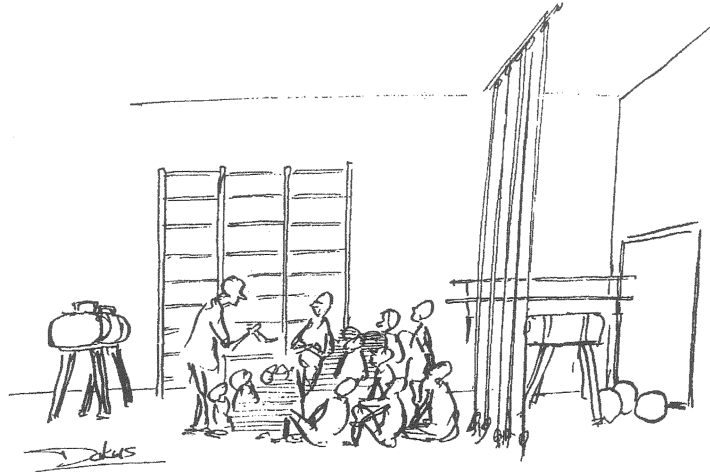
This article by Dr. J. Douma was published in the Dutch periodical Bij de Tijd in the June/July 1994 issue under the title "Vijftig jaar Vrijmaking." It is presented here in a freely translated form because of the parallel between our churches in Canada and our sister churches in the Netherlands.

The Liberation of 1944 was an intense experience for me. Our country was at war and the German occupation was with us every day. Our radio was tuned to London, and we were anxious to get our hands on any underground newspapers. In our home, however, we talked about other things as well. It was rather tense in our reformed churches. Professors Schilder and Greijdanus were suspended. My dad read any brochure he could obtain from both sides, and so did I. I remember that he came home from a consistory meeting with a letter from Schilder that was mailed to all church consistories. It was my first introduction to the man who would become of so much influence in the Liberation and in the liberated-reformed churches.

As it was my father's conviction that we should fight the Germans, so also he never had any doubts in justifying the necessity of the Liberation. On Sundays we followed him into a school classroom instead of going to a real church building. It did not take long to get used to this.

Golden years

We experienced golden years. The elderly, who were old enough to compare, told us that the preaching had changed considerably. I could not make these comparisons, but enjoyed the new direction immensely. It was made clear to us how important the covenant was, and how trustworthy its promises. We were taught the meaning of Christ-centered redemptive historical preaching. We saw the lines from par-



advise to Christ's return. Sermons also drew our attention to the approach of His return and announced the arrival of the antichrist. After all, didn't we notice the concentration of political powers in the United Nations, as well as in an ecumenical bond, both ready to overthrow the small true church?

We said good-bye to the Kuyper era. For us, his name was synonymous with "scholastic," a word I first heard in those days. The message we heard was that we had to free ourselves from all scholastics. Did not Kuyper's views about presumptive regeneration shake the foundations of truth and of faith in God's promises and of infant baptism? Did his teachings about the pluriformity of the church not raise a lot of concern as well? Should we not have been grateful that with Schilder we had discovered the richness of the covenant, grateful, too, that we could read Scripture again in a redemptive historical way and that we could be serious about our confession concerning the church?

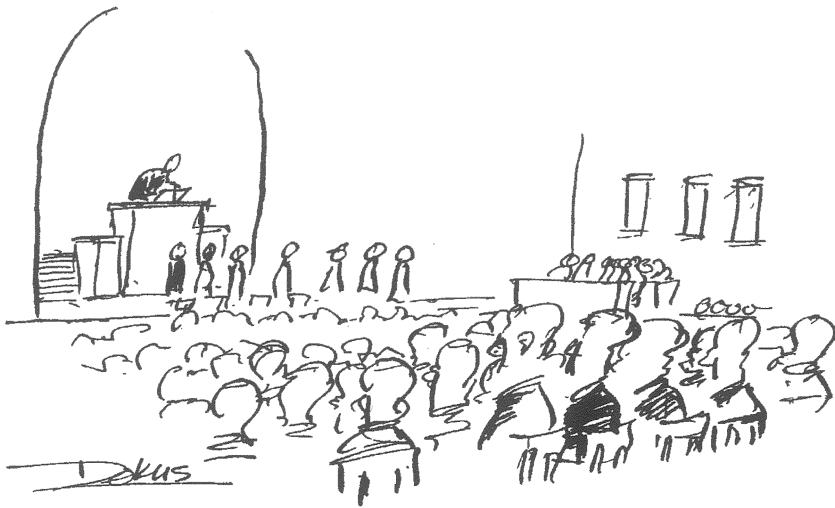
From within the liberated-reformed churches a rush of new activity in political and social fields developed. After all, membership in the Antirevolutionaire Partij or the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond was seen as no longer possible. How could you cooperate with people who did not want you in their church any longer on Sunday, but still wanted you to join them again

on Monday in their activities for the benefit of God's kingdom? This was ethically impossible. Furthermore, was it not required that all Christians, even those without "ethical conflicts" such as existed between the Liberated and the synodicals, should first be united in one church before they could join hands in politics, social activities and educational matters, etc.? This position made working together with synodicals, but also with "gereformeerde bonders" and "christelijk gereformeerden" (Free Reformed) impossible.

Liberation and remaining liberated

When we at first had our liberated church services in the classroom, I was very disappointed about one aspect. How was it possible that only one third of our congregation had been liberated? It should have been abundantly clear to any normal person that synods had exceeded their authority, and demanded submission to the teachings of a pre-supposed born-again theory. This submission had never before been required! It was really crazy that learned and reformed people like Schilder and Greijdanus were suspended and deposed! Even Dutch reformed theologians like C.G. van Niftrik agreed with us.

These were my thoughts at a time when I felt that important choices in one's life were made by clear reasoning



and airtight arguments. Besides our mind, however, there is a will which does not always listen to the commands of pure reasoning. The emotional aspect should not be forgotten. We may think here of the parable of Jesus about the people who were invited to a feast. Who could be so silly as to decline the invitation? Yet, one by one, all of the invited guests excused themselves. The first one had bought a farm, the other a number of oxen, the third one had just been married (Luke 14 and 16). A large number of situations may have priority when we must make a very important decision in our life. While we may be amazed at those who did not accept the invitation, we also know that these are people like us. If you really don't want to go, you will always find a reason.

That's what happened during the Liberation. Wife, children, relatives, friends, the job, an uncertain future, a dislike for hot-headed concerned church members or the "all or nothing" attitude of Schilder and his followers – these and many other factors may have been decisive for many not to go along with the Liberation, in spite of their personal concerns. It is not very pleasant to leave an environment where you have lived with so much enjoyment.

When we analyze what has happened among us since the Liberation, we see that for many it became unpleasant to remain liberated. They were turned off not by the Liberation, but by the liberated. They could no longer function in what they regarded as an almost choking climate. Many felt left out because they would not go along with what was presented as "continual reformation" (doorgaande reformatie). Others complained about legalism as an attack against Christian freedom.

Many desired more space for opinions which were not according to our Confession. For example, some wanted room for ideas that conflicted with Lord's Day 22 (is my soul, after this life, immediately taken up to Christ, my Head?) while for others there were disagreements with the teaching about predestination in the *Canons of Dordt*. To discipline those who adopted these opinions and propagated them was rejected as confessionalism. Others asked whether the break with the synodicals was really so serious that it could not be fixed. Even when the liberal ideas of Kuitert and others created an all around turmoil, the call for healing the break was still maintained. The well-known "Open Letter" (Open Brief) of 1966, signed by ministers and other important liberated church members, called for a burial of the hatchets. It asked us to leave our own preconceived ideas in order to clear the 1944 conflict once and for all.

Thus, to go along with the initial Liberation became a different story than to remain liberated.

Why did we stay?

We who are still liberated fifty years later should give account of our staying with the Liberation when so many left. Did those who left see the negatives for which we were blind, or to which we deliberately had closed our eyes?

In a short while, I will address the controversial items. It needs to be said that in spite of all the controversies, there was and still is every reason to remain liberated. I do believe in more than the historic justification of the Liberation. After fifty years we are allowed to observe with satisfaction that our adversaries of that time (synodalen) are

embarrassed when looking back at what their synods had earlier done. The historic justification has not weakened, although it represented only one aspect of the issue. It is a fact that even the thousands who left our liberated churches did so without any apologies for their liberation.

Why then did we remain liberated? I speak for myself, but allow me to be the spokesman of many. I remained liberated because I did not want to be non-reformed. You can have the typically liberated, but I do not want to part with the typically reformed. What does this mean for me? Allow me to explain this on the basis of the questions asked when we did profession of faith, which we answered with "Yes."

In the first place we confessed that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament is the true and complete doctrine of our salvation, and we promised that with the help of God's grace, we would stay with this confession in life and death. We declared that this doctrine is taught "here, in the Christian Church." I still declare this, while I could not make this statement about a lot of other churches. Naturally, a Church should do more than defend the true doctrine, but if she fails in this task and instead attacks the doctrine or allows it to be attacked, then we might as well go home. Fifty years ago, when the "Act of Liberation" talked about the decay that had crept into the doctrine, many felt that this statement was too strong. Today, this decay is evident enough for us to remain what we are, namely, members of the Reformed churches, where the first question of our Profession of Faith is taken seriously.

The second question we were asked at our Profession of Faith was whether we acknowledged God's covenant promises which had been signified and sealed to us at our baptism. What this question really meant is explained in what follows immediately in the Form. We were admitted to Holy Supper, because we declared that we detested and humbled ourselves before God because of our sins and sought our life outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ, our only Saviour. This elaboration highlights the promises of the covenant that we were delivered out of our personal misery by Jesus Christ.

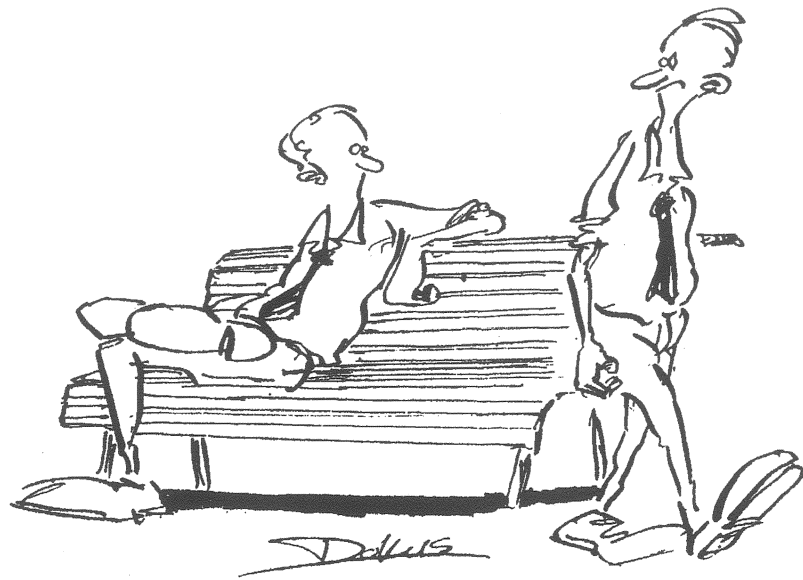
Thus, to be Reformed clearly involves a lot more than mere acceptance of the reformed doctrine. We should be personally part of that doctrine. Being Reformed is about my bap-

tism and what has been promised, namely, Jesus who is my life. In opposition to the pre-supposed regeneration doctrine, we embraced complete reliance on God's promises to all those who are baptized. This reliance on the promise was not intended to lead to covenant-robot thinking which ignores the importance of how baptized people react to God's promises. It is quite possible that personal faith within the liberated churches is somewhat subdued. In any event, it has not disappeared. With every celebration of the Lord's supper we are called to self-examination, to discover our poverty, our emptiness and our superficial lifestyle. We should be true to ourselves in realizing that there is only one name through whom we may be saved. It is therefore unreasonable to blame the church instead of ourselves when complaining about spiritual poverty.

Also in view of the second question of our Profession of Faith, therefore, I may be thankful that I am liberated reformed. Among us, sin and guilt, together with our personal experience of both of these, are not swept under the carpet.

The third question at our Profession of Faith asked us to declare that we loved the Lord and that it was our heartfelt desire to serve Him according to His Word, to forsake the world and to crucify our old nature. This confronted us with the question what we as liberated reformed members of the Church of Christ were going to do with our faith. We need doctrine, we need faith, but we also need Christian works. If we may look back at what has happened in the past fifty years, we have enough reason to be thankful. It would not be hard to be critical, but one should look at the broader picture. Then I dare to state that collectively, as churches, we have a heartfelt desire to love our God and to serve him according to His word. I think about the care for our handicapped, the chronically ill and elderly, and of what was done in mission work and world relief. Works of mercy were certainly not lacking among us.

Finally, we consider our fourth question, according to which we promised to submit ourselves willingly to the admonition and discipline of the Church, if it should happen that we became delinquent in either doctrine or conduct. We thereby undertook to be part of a community which could address us and deal with us if we went the wrong way. In spite of some in-



stances among us in which the judgments were rather harsh – perhaps too harsh – this does not prevent me from stating aloud that I am very glad to be allowed to live in a Church which still knows what discipline is.

Let me summarize this part of my story. Fifty years after the Liberation, I am still very grateful for what I inherited. It has been for the benefit of my whole life. On certain issues I did change my mind, as did many among us. Something else, however, has priority over those changes. The choice made by my parents, which I soon adopted also as my own, I will always recognize. For me, the Church was not the “outside” of my faith, but touched the depths of my life. The statement that our faith concerns Christ but not the Church is unacceptable to me. For me it is Christ, and also His Church. I was born in a Church that took me to Christ, a Church that taught me respect for Holy Scriptures, and that would not exempt me if I went the wrong way, and would also show me in days of happiness and sorrow what communion of saints means. Anyone will have moments when he speaks about “his” Church in a less positive way than I do here. However, as we now remember the Liberation and ask the question whether we see the tie between 1944 and 1994, then I will have no difficulty giving a positive reply. I hope that we all may agree, in spite of any differences among us.

The break of 1967

I already mentioned the controversial issues which I intended to cover. To avoid being long-winded, I will confine myself to only a few of these. At first I thought to discuss the separation of 1967. It is better not to do this,

at least not in a broad form. One may ask me why I classify this as a controversial issue.

I have discovered that many among us have great difficulty coping with what then took place. By reason of my close involvement, I prefer that others will judge this issue, and at the same time provide a critical assessment of my part in it. Earlier I had mentioned the meaning of the “Open Letter” with respect to what it said about the need and possibility for unity with the synodical Churches. Only a small group of the signatories, including the composer B.J.F. Schoep, drew the natural conclusion to join the synodicals. Others who signed the “Open Letter” did not do this and have declared that they never intended to do so. They also stated that they differed from others, including me, in their interpretation of certain clauses of the letter. I ask myself today if we did them right in judging their intentions. There are additional items which now give me reason to question the wisdom of Synod 1967 of Hooegeveen. I am less convinced today.

What is still convincingly valid for me today about 1967 I have already mentioned. Publishing personal opinions which clearly contradict, for instance, Lord's Day 22 and the predestination doctrine of the *Canons of Dordt* is totally unacceptable for a reformed minister without following the proper ecclesiastical procedure, as he had promised to do. It is true that we should be against confessionalism. It is not difficult to show that there are some flaws in our three forms of unity. If we were to write a new confession today, we would do it differently than our fathers have done it. It would be really strange if four centuries of church history would

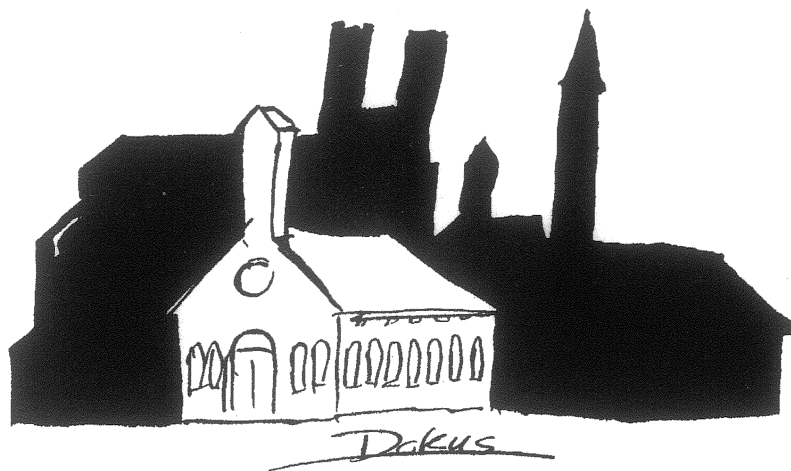
be totally meaningless in a re-write of what we believe. However, as reformed ministers we are still bound by what we have promised. Being critical on a detail is different than criticism of large parts of our doctrine; it was for the latter that some were publicly confronted in and about 1967 by our churches. I am pleased that we have taken up contact again with the "Nederlands Gereformeerden," even at a deputy level.

I sincerely hope that these contacts will result in unity. We will need a climate in which both parties will admit that mistakes were made without digging them up again.

True and false church

We went through a lot of change since the Liberation. After fifty years that does not surprise me. More important is the question if we had left "the track" or not. Some of us feel we have.

The most obvious difference with the past is, in my opinion, that many among us have changed their vision of the application of how the true and false church is recognized and distinguished according to art. 29 of the *Belgic Confession*. These members who have changed their views have no difficulty with the article, but with its application in the current situation. Are we really to believe that in the Netherlands today there is only one visible true Church, the Liberated Reformed churches? When we propose this as a straight forward statement, how do we look then at article 27 that speaks about "a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers?" (in Dutch: alle Christgelovigen). Also, how do we read article 28 when it says of the Church that "there is no salvation outside of it?" Almost none among us dare to make this statement with respect to the Liberated Reformed churches. We were angry when outsiders tried to put these words in our mouths. Still, when we apply the confession in our discussion about the Church today, how do we interpret that little sentence? Or, what shall we say about the closing remarks of article 29, that these two churches (true and false) are easily recognized and distinguished from each other? To say this about the Roman and Reformed churches during the Reformation is no problem. May we today, however, make this statement about all churches with one exception, bearing in mind the horrible statements about the false Church?



On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Liberation, I had already made the statement that we could have combined God's gift of the Liberation with a more modest handling of the term "true church." The damage inflicted should not be underestimated. It does not help to blame those outside, nor should we take false comfort in the truth that we were not quite as narrow-minded as we were accused of being. We were often indeed not so narrow-minded and did better than we thought. Often, however, we were real narrow-minded and that did cost us dearly. I remember that in one of my former congregations in which I served as pastor, we were requested by another local church to join in a protest against swearing. We could not do that then, we felt, because such cooperation would mean a denial of the fact that we were the only true church. We could not stand in one line with other churches, in spite of the fact that others also took up the good cause against swearing. In another municipality the consistory of the Netherlands Reformed Church requested the local liberated reformed Church to join in a protest to town council to oppose an approval to hold a fair on the Lord's Day. But our consistory could not do this, because it was "the only lawful consistory and the only lawful local congregation of Christ," and could not approve a submission of a Church which was not living by the standards set by Christ for a lawful Church. Our consistory urged the Netherlands Reformed congregation to liberate themselves and join the true Church. There are many of these examples. To remember the Liberation is for me also an assessment of the damage we have caused by our narrow-minded vision of the Church. The issue of Rev. Hoorn

showed us how an opinion can become a life-or-death ideology in someone's life. Rev. Hoorn's ideology, however, was made from our liberated ingredients. How many were persecuted under even milder circumstances?

The strange part of this was that our doubts about our well-entrenched vision of the Church started to grow as we increased our dialogue with foreign Churches. We desired and became ecumenical. However, as soon as we crossed the borders, we had less difficulty than we had in the Netherlands to recognize good Churches from the others and to qualify the name "Church" even with Baptist and Peoples' Churches. We justified our somewhat broader position on the basis of the obviously different history of these Churches. In reality, their history did not really vary from ours. Our problems are exactly the same as theirs. However, the majority of our fellow believers abroad cope in a different way as soon as the term "Church" is mentioned. When we are honored with their visits with us, as a rule, they enjoy it as much to be in Kampen, Apeldoorn or the "Gerformeerde Bond."

Christ will be present where there is true faith, and where His Church is gathered. We should believe this in a much broader form than we did before. We certainly are not followers of the pluriformity doctrine when we recognize Christian faith in other people or churches. Such recognition does not alter the fact that we must cooperate to strive for unity with everyone who belongs to the Church of Christ and to show this also in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Kuyper showed us that certain things may go together very well. His (too) great admiration for the Church and those who gave themselves

that name, did not hinder him in his reformative efforts in the Netherlands in 1886 and 1892.

Working together in politics

Nobody will deny that there was also a change of direction in another activity. Initially, the liberated reformed organizations were very isolated. They currently are here and there open (ajar) for others. As real Kuyperians we did not only leave the existing organizations after the Liberation. We built new ones, be it then on a smaller scale. What at one time was protestant-christian, became now exclusively liberated-reformed. That's how the A.R. Party was replaced by G.P.V. An increasing deterioration in Christian Holland drove many non-liberated in the direction of G.P.V. which, in spite of its small size, showed a remarkable presence in the Dutch political scene. Since it had a "closed" membership, these sympathizers could not become full members. To solve this problem, a parallel party was formed under the name Nationaal Evangelisch Verband, which did not differ a word in its political platform from G.P.V. It was impossible, however, to form a joint list of candidates for our national elections. What I mentioned earlier about the liberated-reformed church opinion dominated the thinking about a possible cooperation in the political arena. It did not take much guesswork to forecast the outcome. The members of the N.E.V. became tired of being used as servants, and in 1972 the N.E.V. was dissolved. A few years later (1975) the R.P.F. (Reformatische Partij) was founded. I have never experienced a clearer failure of the liberated church-visibility than in its application in the political arena. The founding of the R.P.F., with a political program that naturally was essential similar to that of the G.P.V., would have been totally redundant if the G.P.V. had opened its doors for membership a bit wider. I have often asked myself if the confession with respect to the true Church had to create a division of those who in the spirit of Groen van Prinsterer, Kuyper, Colijn, Schouten and Jongeling were actively involved in Christian politics. Nobody has ever been able to make that clear to me.

The result of the recently held parliamentary elections were again very meaningful for the G.P.V. While we had expected, on political grounds, that the G.P.V. rather than the R.P.F. would

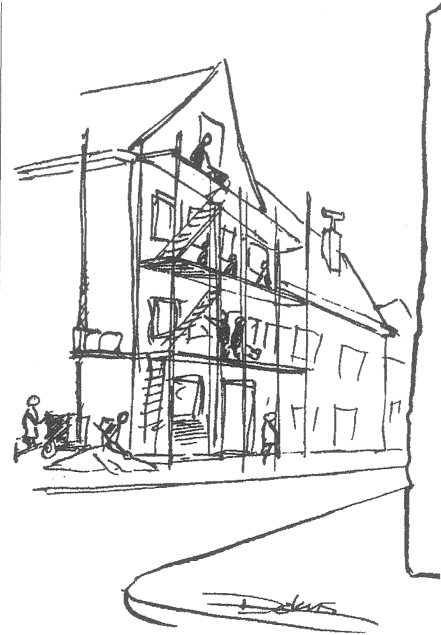
gain considerably, the opposite happened. The novice R.P.F. candidate Leen van Dijke had more support than the highly acclaimed political expert Gert Schutte, who ran for the G.P.V. The G.P.V. did not win a third seat, where the R.P.F. went from 1 to 3 seats. It is quite clear why this happened. The (relatively) closed character of the G.P.V. took care of this.

The process of openness will succeed where possible without any confessional concessions to achieve mutual goals. It will never really work, however, if one avoids the foundation – the vision of the Church.

Four magazines

Something has come up which was unthinkable five years ago. We do not possess one opinion-based church weekly (*De Reformatie*), but have now a choice of four, in addition to *Nederlands Dagblad*. Is this a plus or minus? I think the answer is both. The plus side is that not everything needs the approval of one editorial committee. That requirement had discouraged a number of people from writing, and the others who did write took the chance that their submissions were printed with a lot of comments. We have often been very tough, not to others, but also to ourselves, in spite of many statements that we did not deal with the people but with their opinions. It requires no special talent to discuss a certain issue (we always have enough arguments), but the ethical aspects are very difficult. I have found, however, a considerably milder climate since we have these four magazines. *Nederlands Dagblad* experienced most of its criticism with the massive changes it had sustained. Shortly after its start-up, the magazine *Bij de Tijd* was criticized for a lack of a proper approach to our confessions. The confessions were not questioned at all, but their application did not appear to be present in the magazine. As a result of this, the editors came up with an appropriate statement, aided by a critic who had pointed out that among us most of our discussions were based on the confessions. A renewed effort is in place now, with a declaration that everyone may hold the editors to the reformed confession.

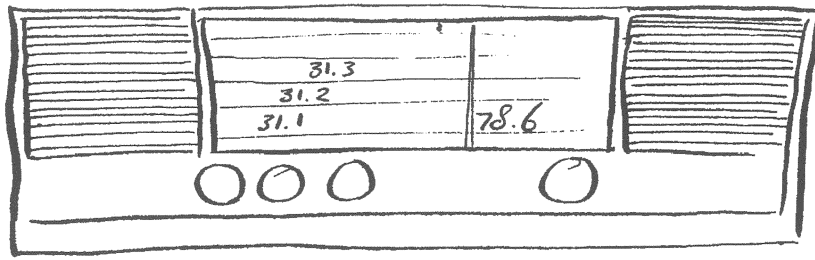
The start of *Reformanda* was considered to be totally redundant by *de Reformatie*. It was rather peculiar that some of those who were of that opinion, very quickly changed their support



to their own paper *Nader bekeken*, apparently dissatisfied with the internal policies of *de Reformatie*.

We developed a fairly good idea in the meantime about the direction of three out of these four magazines. *Reformanda* defends the old positions which I earlier in my presentation opposed. *Nader bekeken* is doing the same thing, but in a friendlier way. *Bij de Tijd* draws the attention to issues which, in their opinion, need coverage – for example, personal faith and the development of faith, bible study, our relations with children, and certain changes in the church.

In my opinion *de Reformatie* will have a hard time to find its way in the middle of these weeklies. The oldest magazine will have to regain its position by considerable renewal. I stated earlier that the presence of four weeklies is not only a loss for us. This is not to say, however, that it is only a gain. Let me assume that we may attack one another less fiercely because we become aware that no one has a monopoly in church affairs any more. But we still fight. There is a difference of views, otherwise we would not need four magazines. This may lead to divisions of certain groups and damage the unity to which we as brothers and sisters are called by Christ. There will be an awful responsibility upon the shoulders of these editors to listen to each other, to take everyone seriously and to make an effort to supplement rather than fight the others.



DOKUS

The overall situation

When I am asked to respond to the overall situation, after fifty years of liberation, then I will thank God for the church community in which he allows us to live. A person who criticizes endlessly would show that he does not realize he is talking about a church community where unity is much more apparent than division. There is not, in my opinion, another church community

which is as united as we are. May I point out the sound preaching? We may have good or bad sermons. However, I do not look for the good sermon in the direction of one magazine or for the lesser or bad one in the direction of the other one. It would be rather sad if we were to keep a minister away from our pulpit because of the company he keeps.

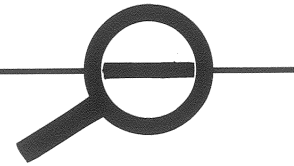
We can also be happy that we live in a church where we are kept awake. I realize that some of us would like to

keep everything “the way it was,” because it appears so safe. It may look that way, but it’s not, really! It would be nice if those who want to keep the old traditions would meet those who prefer renewal and notice that renewal is not destructive to the foundations of our church life. We are reformed and should desire to remain that way. We may address one another in the message of Holy Scriptures and in the way we confess it in our three forms of unity. And within these parameters we do need a lot of changes, and we should begin with ourselves. Because also *Bij de Tijd* wants to work on changes and renewal within this framework, I accepted with pleasure the invitation to write an article about the Liberation.

Dr. J. Douma is professor of Ethics at the Theological University (Broederweg), Kampen, the Netherlands. 

PRESS REVIEWS

By C. Van Dam



“Prehistoric” Pines Discovered

A discovery that has been likened to finding a small dinosaur alive on earth has set botanists jittering with excitement. Thirty-nine pines which are unique on earth have been found in an almost inaccessible part of Wollemi National Park, about 200 kilometres west of Sydney, Australia. The tallest are close to 40 metres high and the unusual tree has dense, waxy, fern-like foliage and knobby bark that makes them look as if they have been coated with bubbly brown chocolate. These pines bear cones, but unlike anything other known cone-bearers produce.

What makes these pines so special is that they appear to resemble pine fossils that have been dated to be many millions of years old. As *The Globe and Mail* put it “the closest relatives of the Wollemi Pines died out in the Jurassic Period 190 million to 135 million years ago, and the Cretaceous Period, 140 million to 65 million years ago.”

How must one evaluate this type of observation? How does this find fit into

the creation-evolution debate? The magazine *Creation ex nihilo* (March-May, 1995) correctly noted that any time someone finds a “living fossil” (a creature alive and practically unchanged from its fossil representatives) this supports the creation model by showing that things either have not evolved (despite the alleged vast ages separating the fossil from its living representative), or the vast ages are not real – or both.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Creation ex nihilo* Dr. J. Scheven, who has the world’s largest collection of living fossils in a museum in Hagen, Germany, notes that there are thousands of different types of animals and plants which are alive and essentially unchanged from the way they appear as fossils. This fact makes it difficult to believe that these forms were separated by those imagined millions of evolutionary years.

Just as with the the living coelacanth fish (known only from fossils before 1938) so the discovery of these

pinus is most surprising for evolutionists because they do not fit the imagined pattern of continuing evolution over vast periods of time. As the article on the Australian pines in *Creation ex nihilo* observes:

“Jurassic” fossils are either of creatures still known today, or of those which have since gone extinct. There has been no significant evolutionary change, and as the time of catastrophic fossilization was thousands of years ago, not millions, it is not surprising that some creatures previously thought to be extinct turn out still to be thriving.

Because the intervening rock layers do not represent vast ages, it is also not surprising that a “Jurassic” creature can be found alive with no fossils of it in the “intervening” rocks.

Just as with the living coelacanth fish, this is a finding surprising to evolutionary science, but in accord with the creation model.



Who Remembers the Armenians?

The Armenians and their lot are not very well-known in our circles. For that reason and in view of the 80th anniversary of the Genocide, we are reprinting (with permission) an article from The Mid-America Messenger by Rev. Mark Vander Hart, Professor of Old Testament at Mid-America Seminary.

CVD

The early months of 1995 have witnessed several 50th anniversaries of events that occurred in the closing days of World War II. In the early months of 1945 a number of Nazi concentration camps were liberated by Allied armed forces. The world got to see at close range some of the horrible brutality perpetrated by the Nazis at, for example, Auschwitz. It has been claimed that Adolf Hitler was warned by German military officers not to sanction atrocities against the Jews. After all, they said to Hitler, "Remember the Armenians." To which Hitler reportedly replied, "Who remembers the Armenians?"

It's a good question. Who indeed remembers the Armenians? No, I didn't say the *Arminians*. Arminians are those people who follow a theology which denies man's total depravity in sinfulness, unconditional election, the particular nature of Christ's atoning work. Arminians deny the irresistibility of God's grace and the perseverance of the saints. Arminianism is a theological heresy, an error rejected by all Reformed believers. The Canons of Dort rightly repudiate Arminianism.

Rather, I want to draw your attention to the *Armenians*. This is a national group of people whose country lies at the eastern end of the Black Sea, near and in the Caucasus Mountains, next to the former Soviet republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Many of our readers may well-remember the major earthquake which devastated the country of Armenia in 1988. Horrible suffering descended upon Armenia at that time, and very little of the country has been rebuilt since then, despite all the aid that was sent by sympathetic countries. There is also the ongoing conflict between the neighboring Azeris and the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, a region within the largely Muslim republic of Azerbaijan.

It is a remarkable fact that about 12 years before the Roman emperor Constantine the Great declared the

Christian faith to be a permitted religion, the country of Armenia in A.D. 301 officially converted to the Christian faith, following the persistent work of Christian missionaries, notably Gregory the Illuminator, and the conversion of the Armenian emperor Tirdates III. Mt. Ararat lies within the bounds of Armenia, and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers begin in these mountains, giving rise to the claim by Armenian Christians that the Garden of Eden was in Armenia at the beginning of the world.

So why do I want you to remember the Armenians? April 1995 marks the 80th anniversary of the beginning of what Armenians call the "Genocide," a slaughter sanctioned by Turkish authorities. The Armenian population within the Ottoman Empire had pledged loyalty to the government, but the Turks considered them a foreign element whose true sympathies lay with the Allies in World War I. On April 24, 1915, Turkish police in the Ottoman Empire began rounding up Armenian leaders and then killed them. This touched off a series of massacres and forced deportations throughout the Turkish Ottoman Empire, brutal slaughtering that lasted from 1915 to 1923, an "ethnic cleansing" that killed anywhere between 800,000 and 2,000,000 Armenians, most of them Christians of either the evangelical or Armenian Orthodox faith. To date the government of Turkey has never officially acknowledged its role or complicity in this senseless and brutal slaughter of Armenian children, fathers, and mothers. But in April 1995 Armenians, many of them now dispersed around the world, will pause to remember. Do you remember the Armenians, their martyrs, their sufferings, their need for Christ? May God grant forgiveness, peace, and justice.

There is in all this a remarkable providence of Almighty God. Many of the Armenian refugee families fled to the safety of Athens, Greece. Many of those who are familiar with the work of the Back to God Hour of the Christian Reformed Church are aware of the ministry of the Rev. Aaron Kayayan, whose Armenian ancestors fled to Athens to escape the Genocide that snuffed out the life of so many Armenian people. Before coming to serve as the French broadcast minister for the Back to God

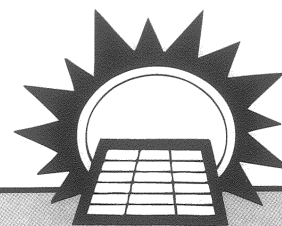
Hour, Rev. Kayayan served the French Reformed Church as a pastor for many years. Nevertheless, he retains his ability in the Armenian language, and he now seeks to reach out to the people of his ancestral area.

In the providence of God the fall of communism in the former Soviet Union also freed the peoples of Armenia from Soviet domination. Now a window of opportunity has come open that enables the saving Gospel of God's grace to be broadcast in the Armenian language, and Rev. Kayayan has spearheaded an effort to do precisely this. He and others have banded together to form an organization called Christians for Armenia. Members of the organizing committee come from a variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Rev. Jelle Tuininga, member of the Mid-America Board of Trustees, and I are among those who serve on the Board of Christians for Armenia. The principal project of this group at this time is to bring the Gospel over the radio airwaves to the Armenian people. These broadcasts began in March, 1994, with the permission of Armenian church authorities and the Armenian government. In time Reformed literature will be produced and brought into Armenia. Hope now is coming back to a people who have suffered so much. Christ also has His church there.

I know that many nations and peoples have their own stories to tell of suffering and martyrdom. We do not want to forget any of them. But one people whose story is hardly known, let alone remembered, is the people of Armenia. Will you join with me and others in recalling the Genocide that began in April some eighty years ago? Will you also join with me and others in praying for the ministry of the Gospel to Armenia so that darkness may give way to light, that despair may yield to hope, and that superstition may be replaced by the Reformed faith?

If one desires more information and/or wishes to support Christians for Armenia, one can write Christians for Armenia, Levon Melkonian, Acting Secretary, 157 B Prospect Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94110.

CVD 



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"...they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful."
Rev. 17:14

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In spite of all the misery that came into the world as a result of the fall into sin, there are still many beautiful things left that we are allowed to enjoy. After the winter, when for many months the trees looked as if they were completely dead, all of a sudden they come to life again. Sometimes in a matter of a few days they carry a crown of leaves again. Then the grass turns green, flowers pop up and the whole scenery changes. Where you could see far away, now the view is blocked by the green trees. Everything looks happy and alive. The birds become very busy. They are courting, they are busily building their nests, and lay their eggs. After that comes a time of devotion and commitment. For several weeks they sit patiently on their eggs through hot sunshine and stormy showers. Only when someone comes too close to the nest do they fly away, to return as soon as they find it is safe to do so. When the eggs have hatched the bird parents also show much care and devotion for their young. Yes, there are many beautiful things to watch in the world of nature when you have the opportunity for it.

Ever since the days of God's creation the birds, the animals, the plants, the trees, have behaved and grown in the same manner. From the day that they hatch the little birds know what to do, and what the "language" that their parents speak to them means. They know when they can hop around, or when they have to sit still because of an approaching danger. They even know what they can eat to survive. The trees have grown, shed their leaves and come to life again for years and years. Nothing has changed, everything is still the same as when the Lord created the world. Maybe the only thing that is not quite the same is what the people did to the world, which has endangered and sometimes killed the lives of animals and plants.

In this world we are allowed to live today. The Lord made man as the crown of His creation. Man was the most beautiful in the whole world, because the Lord made man in His own image. Man was allowed to live in that beautiful world, and to "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

But man fell into sin, because he listened to the serpent, who talked into man the desire to be like God. Yet God gave man many qualities: man could think, and learn, and invent. With those skills the people have been able to come up with many "new" things. People have become very smart. They will continue to invent more things, they continue to desire to be like God. They do not only want to have dominion over everything that is on the earth, but they want to rule the moon and the stars as well. They continue to explore all the possibilities that the Lord put into His creation. They use the brains that the Lord gave to them to do so. But they forget to give the

Lord the credit for their inventions. They act as if they were so smart themselves, and therefore, they will never stop. They will continue to work into the area of childbirth and death, and they do not realize that they can only go as far as the Lord will let them go. Do they realize that, if they do not want to accept their limitations, they may cause their own destruction?

When God gave the people their "job description," He told them He wanted to be served by them. Man was allowed to live in God's beautiful world, but he had to thank the Lord for it, and praise Him every day. After the fall into sin, the consequences of sin: death, sickness, sadness, etc. were everywhere. Yet God was still the same, and He had still the same expectations of His people. They had to serve Him, and praise Him, and thank Him. And now there was much more to be thankful for: for He gave us His Son. He died on the cross for all our sins, and made it possible for us to come to our Father again. God's Son, Jesus Christ Who is our Saviour opened up a new future for us. When He returns on the clouds everything will become perfect again, there will be no trace left of all the consequences of the fall into sin. We will all be the same. All God's children will be perfectly healthy, perfectly happy, without sin. No one has to suffer, nothing will go wrong, we will be with the Lord forever.

But for now we still have to keep on living here on earth for as long as the Lord lets us. We will have to accept our difficulties, our suffering, our handicaps, our loneliness. But we do not have to do famous things, or make important decisions, or make a better world. For really, we cannot do any of that. The Lord does not expect us to do anything that we cannot do. He expects us to live a life of thankfulness and to give praises to His Name for all His wonderful deeds. We can do that alone at home or together with God's children in the Church. God's Church has been there throughout the ages. God's Church was, is, and will be there always. Even though the Church is standing in an ever changing world, it will not shake or tremble. For the Church's foundation is God's holy Word. That Word cannot be changed, it is always the same.

In the world the power struggle continues. It is the struggle between man or satan, and God. That struggle will continue as long as this world will exist. Let us not be tempted to take part in that contest. We do not have to be discouraged either if we think that we are unable to take part in it. With the Church of all ages we confess that the Lord Jesus Christ has overcome the power of satan. He conquered death, for He rose from the grave. Whatever is left now of that power struggle will come to an end when Christ returns on the clouds of heaven. And the promises of eternal happiness are for all those who believe.

So then, let us go on. Let us enjoy the many things that are there to enjoy. Let us depend on Him and pray to Him for help and strength in difficult times. Let us

praise God the Creator for all the beautiful things around us. Let us thank God, the Father for His Son, and let us pray the everlasting God of Glory for the return of Christ. That we all may be prepared and ready to be received by Him. For then all the promises, preserved for us in the Bible for many, many centuries will be fulfilled. Then we may face the Lord, our Father. And then we will be able to admire His beautiful creation under perfect conditions, and without end.

*The sparrow finds a home to rest;
The swallow deftly builds her nest
And has her young beside Thy altar.
So, Lord of hosts, my God, my King,
I seek the shelter of Thy wings;
Thou wilt not let me slip and falter.
How blest are those who dwell with Thee
And praise Thy Name unceasingly.*

Psalm 84:2

Birthdays in September:

8: Marsha Moesker

Gateway House, 4807 Georgia Street
Delta, BC V4K 2T1

11: Mary Vande Burgt

32553 Willingdon Cr., Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2

14: Jerry Bontekoe

"ANCHOR HOME," 361 30 Road
RR#2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

29: Paul Dieleman

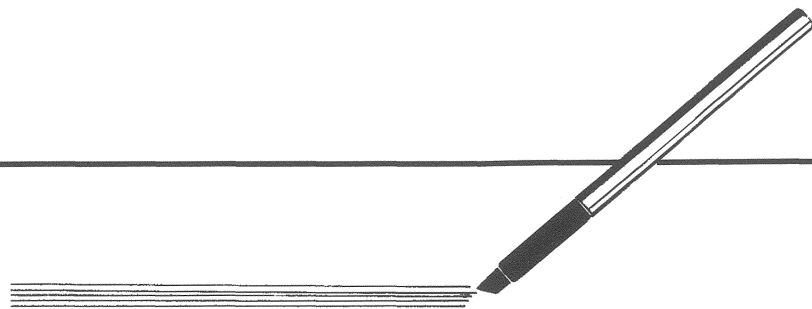
156 St. Catharines St., Unit 12,
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

I wish you all a happy birthday.
Until next month.

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

THE HI-LITER

By C. Van Spronsen



The Home Mission Board of Smithers informs us that "our temporary mission worker, br. Hilco DeHaan, is expected to arrive here, D.V., on July 1st. He is married and they are expecting their first child. Right now he is studying at the Theological College and hopes soon to have a diploma in theological studies. He has a degree in social work and has worked/studied in Mexico amongst the natives. Br. DeHaan has been in Fort Babine as well and has expressed the desire to come here."

In case you are tired of wearing the same old clothes, Smithers has a solution for that. "Another clothing exchange is being scheduled in the beginning of May. Please start saving your clothes for this."

The Vernon congregation has grown to such a size that elders and deacons decided to have separate meetings. They decided to adopt the name Council for the meeting of elders and deacons and Consistory for a meeting of only elders.

One of the Australian Churches delegated a sister to a Mission Meeting of cooperating Churches. Several Churches expressed that this was considered unscriptural.

The Consistory of the Church at Bedforddale (W.A.) "could not ratify article 83 as it regards continued membership of the ICRC because it is unscriptural to say that we

have unity of faith with the member churches, and so enter into cooperation with them, when we cannot acknowledge them as true and faithful. Christ tells us to let our yes be yes and our no be no. Consistory decides to submit an appeal against the decision to the next Synod."

Still in Australia, we learn from the news under Byford they now have a permanent address for the worship services in Bunbury. The Bunbury Hall was purchased.

Since the Australian students at the Theological College in Hamilton are not permitted to work in Canada during the summer as foreign students they trek home for the summer. No less than four students went home, some with family, hoping to earn their return ticket. We noted that several of them supplement their training by doing a "practical" such as teaching catechism classes and attending council meetings.

In the Rehoboth Church of Burlington the signing of the Subscription Form by the new officebearers is now brought "out of the confined quarters of a council meeting" and takes place in the presence of the congregation immediately following the service.

From Albany's news we glean some news about the mission work in Papua New Guinea, visited by Rev. A. Veldman. He reports: "Summarizing, I can say though there is

concern, there are also encouraging signs. There surely is a faithful core of members (be it small in number) whose eager desire is to learn more and to serve the Lord according to His Word. It is wonderful to see their response to the teaching br. Fokkema is giving. Seeing that at present br. Fokkema has to divide his attention over three areas (Port Moresby, Ekoro and Lae) there is urgent need for a second worker."

* * *

Missionaries are sometimes faced with real challenges. "Mission Aid worker br. Plug and family moved into their home in Brazil in November, but their goods were sent by mistake to Africa. Hope to get them by June."

* * *

Also in Chatham discussions are going on with the Free Reformed Church. At their second meeting they discussed two questions tabled by the consistory of the Free Reformed Church: "Does Christ or the covenant save us?" and "Does the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the work of Jesus Christ to our hearts, receive sufficient emphasis in the preaching in the Can. Ref. Churches?" Obviously there are misconceptions and there is a need to get to know each other better!

* * *

Prof. J. Geertsma has been touring Alberta and Manitoba conducting "College Evenings" and speaking about such topics as "The Letter of James" and "The New Age Movement".

* * *

There are advantages to being a smaller congregation. In Houston "a camping outing for the students of all catechism classes and members of the boys and girls club has tentatively been set for August 16-18."

* * *

For the fourth consecutive year Ebenezer Church of Burlington, ON has obtained permission from the city for their Summer Outreach Program in a local park and will be conducting a "Singing-in-the Park." All three Burlington congregations are invited to participate in this musical out-

reach on Sunday evenings in the end of July and early August. Song sheets as well as other hand-out pamphlets will be available. May the Lord grant His blessing!

* * *

How is this for a farewell? Rev. Versteeg was in the process of leaving the mission in Irian Jaya. "We had a very nice farewell with the church at Waena. Many people saw us off at the airport. We are very thankful that the Lord gave us good health and strength during these last very, very busy weeks. During the last 60 hours we slept for only 2. The last night when we were finished packing at 3 o'clock in the morning, a group from the church came and sang on the veranda until they brought us to the airport. That was nice but we were tired!" They are returning via Australia and the Netherlands and are expected to arrive in Alberta on July 14th and in Toronto by the end of August.

* * *

Having established Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland also has practical implications for churchlife in Canada. We read that the Church at Orangeville, as convening Church for Classis Ontario North of June 9th also sends an invitation to the Ontario Presbytery Free Church of Scotland.

* * *

Good news from Barrhead, AB. Overcrowding has been a problem for some time already but this is soon to be solved since they were able to purchase an existing church-building in the town of Barrhead, namely that of the St. Paul's Lutheran Church. They were able to buy this facility for a very reasonable price and under unique conditions. St. Paul's allowed them to spread \$ 35,000 of the amount owing over 35 yearly payments of \$ 1,000 as donations to the Barrhead General Hospital, interest free! Including renovations and installation of an elevator total cost is expected to stay under \$ 100,000. The congregation is very busy this summer and anticipates to meet in the new facilities by August.

* * *

Have a great summer!

C



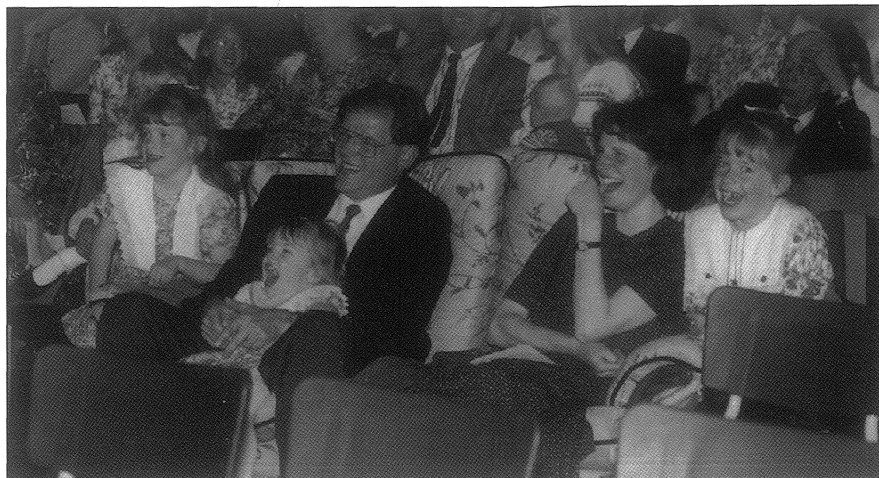
Farewell to Rev. R.A. Schouten and family

For eight years, our congregation in Calgary Alberta was blessed by the work of the Lord through Rev Schouten. He was our pastor, our teacher, and our friend, a faithful servant of the Lord. This spring, however, Rev. Schouten accepted a call extended by the congregation in Abbotsford, BC. On Friday, May 26, we gathered to wish the minister and his family a fond farewell. Our evening was an enjoyable mixture of memories, laughter, and goodbyes. We sang songs of praise to our Lord, we prayed, and we listened to each others contributions to the evening.

The consistory opened the farewell evening by reading from Ps. 146. "Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob . . . who keeps faith forever." These words set the tone for the entire program. Mr. Ostermeirer reminded us that God had blessed both the congregation and Rev. Schouten with much growth during his work among us. He also reminded us that the Lord would continue to bless us as long as we remain faithful to him. Mr. van den Hoven and Mr. Slaa were the "masters of ceremonies." Together they introduced for the audience a series of musical pieces, poems, and skits. Some were humorous, some were serious. The Schouten family watched the proceedings from a couch placed front and center for them. They enjoyed themselves immensely.

Among the presentations were some poems and funny little songs performed by the grade school children and the catechism class. Even the kindergarten kids did a little number for their departing friend Jilian Schouten.

Various members of the congregation sang songs for us or performed on different instruments. We heard the piano, a flute, a guitar, and three different accordians (our congregation boasts an above average percentage of accordian players). We also listened to different people sing the songs "All Good Gifts," "I am the Good Shepherd," and "O Lord of All." The musical medley was supplemented by congregational



The Schouten family enjoy the farewell evening

singing of a number of psalms and hymns. The gym echoed for much of the night with songs of praise and thanksgiving.

Although we were all participating in the "farewell evening," the overwhelming atmosphere was one of thanksgiving. We thanked the Lord in song and prayer for the preaching of the Word and the guidance which we received through Rev. Schouten. We thanked the Reverend for his bible study sheets, his direction, his answers to our many questions, his endless hours of work on our behalf, and many other things. We thanked Mrs. Schouten for her work in our newly formed school and the consistory especially thanked her for the coffee and cookies served at their consistory meetings.

The young people also had some thanks to offer to their minister, but being young people they had to be unconventional. They thanked Rev. Schouten for being their judge at Kangaroo Court during the annual Calgary Study Weekend. The young people returned the favour to Rev. Schouten before a similar, though shortened, Court. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced before he knew what hit him.

On a more serious note, a letter was read from Rev. Schouten's good friend

Rev. Wynia of the Bethel Independent Reformed Church. Rev. Wynia's family attended the evening, but he was unable to come himself. In his letter, Rev. Wynia reminisced about his official contact and unofficial friendship with Rev. Schouten and of his high regard for our departing pastor. He spoke (wrote) for all of us when he concluded his letter with the words, "may our paths cross again and often."

Rev. VanPopta of the Church at Taber also addressed a farewell message to Rev. Schouten and our congregation. He spoke on behalf of the classis Alberta-Manitoba, his own congregation of Taber, and as a personal friend of Rev. Schouten which he has been for a number of years. Rev. VanPopta thanked Rev. Schouten for his leadership and encouragement in the work of the classis. He thanked him for his work in Taber when it was vacant. He then went on to speak of his own friendship with Rev. Schouten. Rev. VanPopta left us with the words of Heb. 13: 20,21,

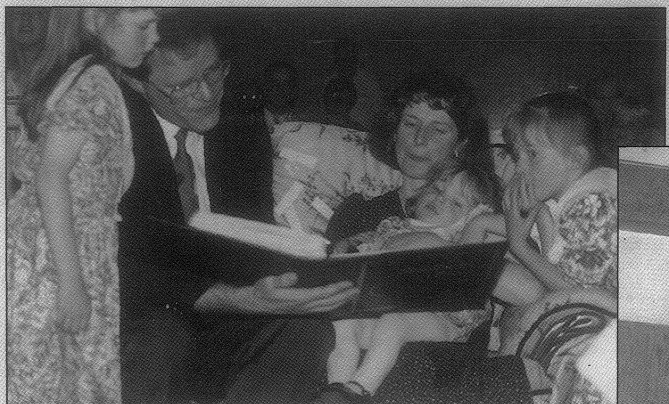
"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which



Tyndale Christian School class



Sr. Van Bostelen presents congregational photo album



Enjoying the many memories in the photo album



Gift from the congregation – a Calgary skyline

is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

The evening ended with some closing words from Rev. Schouten. He thanked us for our love and affection. He reviewed his eight or so years with us from the time when he arrived straight out of the Theological College till the present. He told us his hopes and prayers for our congregation; that we would receive a place of worship, that we would remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that our paths would cross again. Rev. Schouten charged us with the words of I Cor. 16: 13,14,

"Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."

Our farewell evening for Rev. Schouten was for all of us a sad time of parting, and it was a time of joyful praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for all the work that Rev. Schouten was allowed to do in our congregation. The evening was also, as the following weeks and months will be, a time of learning. Learning more and more to put our trust in the Lord every day. From Him we expect every good thing.

David De Boer

Rev. Schouten delivered his farewell sermon to the congregation at Calgary on May 28, 1995. He chose as his text Colossians 3:9-17, continuing the series of sermons on Colossians he had preached for several weeks.

The theme of the sermon was "The call to a unified life in the local church." We saw that this unity comes about when believers realize that they are: 1. People of a new creation 2. People belonging to a New Israel 3. People who owe loyalty to a New King

Fundamental to our identity as new creatures is that we live in the Truth. In dealing with verses 9 to 11, we heard that lying and dishonesty are enemies of all forms of fellowship in the church of Jesus Christ. Lying attacks the integrity of the church and destroys all relationships. As new creatures who have put off the old nature, we must live sincerely and openly with each other in the church. Our new identity implies we have a new lifestyle, directly opposed to

what we formerly were in our depraved nature. This new nature must become increasingly visible and conspicuous. The truth must be present in all facets of our lives, in all of our relationships.

We must become more like the God of Truth, not as God but like God. Unity grows and is preserved when the Word of Truth lives in the hearts of the people. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew because divisions would contradict the new creation; there cannot be divisions because Christ is all and in all. Christ is the most important reality in our lives. All divisions, therefore, have to go and go now! We cannot be content to relegate this ideal to heaven, but must strive for it here on earth. Paul wrote this letter to a very real congregation, expecting them to work these things out in their congregational life. If we work this out, unity will grow by leaps and bounds; it will grow between believers, between congregations and between federations.

Rev. Schouten then dealt with the realization that we are people of the New Israel. He compared the language that Paul used addressing the Colossians in verse 12 with that of the Old Testament, particularly in Deuteronomy 7:6ff and in Exodus 19:5,6. Paul's language is similar to that of the Old Testament showing we have the same command to be holy, to walk with the LORD in

covenantal fellowship. Paul gets very specific, showing that this holiness consists of a "wardrobe" of Christian attributes. There is compassion – the ability to live in someone else's shoes and to have empathy with their struggles. Kindness is analogous to old mature wine; smooth, mellow, not sour, harsh or bitter. Lowliness is living by the example of Jesus Christ; gentle and lowly of heart, not insisting on our way. The Bible describes Moses as the most meek man, meaning he was always under the control of God, relinquishing his desires, seeking the purpose of God. We must show the same patience with others that God has shown with us. Paul also includes forbearance or tolerance, not a tolerance for false teaching and unholy conduct, but a tolerance for the quirks and foibles of others – we must learn to forgive each other and to tolerate differences. And above all these, Paul commands us to "put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Love is the bond of perfection, and as the new Israel, we must show this love.

Lastly, Rev. Schouten spoke to us as people who owe loyalty to a new King, namely Jesus Christ. When Paul says to us, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. . . ." he says that this peace is for all believers for we have all heard the gospel of peace. There is a social dimension to this peace, re-

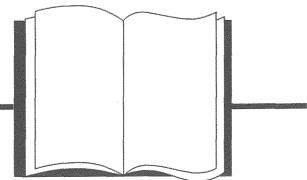
flected in the inner life of the church. We must consider what makes for peace in Zion – we should do things in a way that brings peace to congregational life, not nit-picking or complaining, but doing things out of love for Christ and each other.

The Word of Christ must dwell in us richly, the message must sink deep into our souls, permeating and saturating every facet of our lives. It must dominate our lives and we must dedicate ample time to it. Rev. Schouten reminded us of the words in Deuteronomy 6: 6ff – the Word must be before us in every part of our lives – and exhorted us to maintain a constant and diligent study of God's Word. Studying the Word and hearing the Word preached imbues in people the desire to praise God which is our purpose. We must fulfil our task with joy, doing all in the name of the King Jesus Christ. If we live as the New Israel, we will bring honour to our LORD and King Jesus Christ.

After the service, the congregation took advantage of one last opportunity to say farewell to the Schouten family and to wish them the blessing of the LORD as they take on the new task God has given them in our sister church at Abbotsford.

John Hoogerdijk 

READER'S FORUM



Rocking the Boat

By Ralph Winkel

"Rocking the boat" means mentioning or writing about matters in our church federation which are "untouchable." Let us take a look at a few of them. In the first place, there is the matter of our congregational meetings. During these meetings, a few members air their views either pro or con on certain matters. As a straw vote or even an opinion poll is not allowed, these meetings are useless. The silent majority has no way of expressing its views. One can assume that the same occurs in council meetings. There the cruelty of the majority can be detrimental. Also in Clas-

sis this happens. As an example, remember the "Denver" decision. One single vote decided the issue. As a result, there are now TWO true churches in Denver, totally in disagreement with John 17:21, etc.

I also want to say something about assessments. First, let's take a look at the Needy Church assessment. I remember that in the Netherlands, after the needy (armen) collection, there was quite often a second collection for various other causes. One of these was needy churches. These collections were either for needy churches within or outside

the Classis. In Canada, we should do away with the Needy Church assessment and follow the Dutch example. Instead of collecting for within or outside of a certain Classis, we should collect for either within or outside of Canada, meaning the USA. As an example in the Classical region of AB/MB, those opposed to the "Denver decision" could pass the plate or bag; indirectly, they would then be voting with every collection. The minority speaks. . . . As far as Mission assessments are concerned, these should be abolished and replaced with collections – one for Home Mission and one

for Foreign Mission. The Church members are then able to support the one in which they believe.

It seems that our volunteer boards act autocratically. While some churches are struggling, 34 cents of every budget dollar collected leaves the local church to pay the assessments. Sometimes, maintenance to church buildings suffer. These boards do not take into consideration factors like 9.5% unemployment or high interest rates.

Some of the boards also receive an automatic increase. For example, every year approximately 200 young people make a profession of their faith. This means that the Theological College, for instance, will have an automatic \$12,000 increase in income, year after year. Because of membership increases, assessments should come down. Please check your Church Budget. In the Church to which I belong, the opposite


happens. Why? Ask that question at a congregational meeting.

With respect to the Superannuation Fund, I believe it should be expanded to cover a retired minister's shelter allowance. As it stands, smaller congregations cannot call an older minister, knowing that in the future they may not have the funds to cover this extra expense. On the other hand, older ministers may appreciate a call to a smaller congregation in order to have lighter workload. And increase in the fund would be advantageous for all parties.

Finally, some comments about our Book of Praise. A supplement should be available, containing all the beautiful hymns sung by our choirs. I am sure that our brothers and sisters in the OPC would appreciate our borrowing some hymns from their hymnal. Another reason for a supplement is that some of our Genevan melodies are awful; different

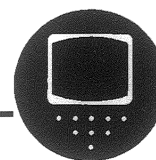
melodies could also be incorporated in this proposed supplement.

Write your consistory, asking that it present Classis with the changes you prefer. If it does, great. If not, there is always Art. 31 of our Church Order, leading along the road to the next Synod, three years hence. Do not expect fast changes. Churches do not like them. After all, you are rocking the boat.

Ralph Winkel is a member of Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton, AB. 

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.

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Ontario North, June 9, 1995

1. On behalf of the convening church of Orangeville, Rev. W. den Hollander opened the meeting of delegates. He asked the brothers to sing Hymn 37:3, 4, read from Galatians 5:13-26, and led in prayer.

2. The credentials were examined by the delegates of the church at Guelph. All the churches were duly represented.

3. Classis was constituted. The following officers were appointed to serve Classis: Chairman – Rev. G.H. Visscher, Clerk – Rev. J.L. Van Popta, Vice-Chairman – Rev. J.G. Slaa.

4. In his opening notes, the chairman thanked the convening church for the work done in preparation of Classis. In memorabilia he remembered the church at Fergus which will be vacant soon. Rev. den Hollander was congratulated with his call from Lincoln. The church at Toronto was remembered as she continues in the vacancy of a minister. The missionary Rev. Versteeg hopes to be in Toronto in August. The respective ministers and consistories

were wished the blessings of the Lord in these matters.

5. The agenda was adopted.

6. The following reports were submitted to Classis:

a. For church visitation (Art. 46 C.O.): to Burlington East, Burlington South, Elora, Fergus, Orangeville. Classis gratefully took note of these reports and expressed thankfulness to the Lord for His continued care of His churches.

b. From the treasurer, br. J.J. Poort. Total assessment for 1995 is \$5.00 per communicant member (\$4.00 for Classis and \$1.00 for Regional Synod). Classis appointed br. John Dykstra, member of Burlington East, to have signing authority of the cheques for Classis in addition to br. Poort.

7. Question Period according to Art. 44 C.O. was held. The Church at Fergus asked for advice in two matters of discipline. Classis gave advice.

8. According to Art. 9 C.O., Classis released Rev. J. Huijgen from classical duties, in view of his acceptance of the call to Smithers, B.C. All documents were in order. Rev. J. Huijgen and his family were wished the Lord's blessings.


9. Classis appointed the church at Ottawa convening church for the next Classis. The suggested date was set for September 15, 1995. The suggested officers for next Classis are: Chairman – Rev. P. Aasman, Clerk – Rev. G.H. Visscher, Vice-chairman – Rev. J.L. Van Popta. Upon the request of the church at Fergus, Classis appointed Rev. J.G. Slaa as counsellor of Fergus. Classis appointed Rev. J.L. Van Popta as examiner of Ethics.

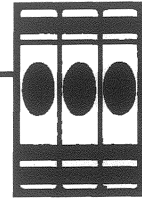
10. Question Period was held. Rev. J. Huijgen spoke some words to Classis. He expressed appreciation for the work and cooperation that could take place in the past years and wished the churches of Ontario North well.

11. It was noted with thankfulness that censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not necessary.

12. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

13. After singing Hymn 46:2, Rev. G.H. Visscher led in thanksgiving prayer.

For Classis Ontario North
June 9, 1995
J.G. Slaa 



By C. Van Dam

Directory of Independent and Alliance Congregations. (February 1995).

Distributed by Reformed Believers United, 16424 Cottage Grove Avenue, South Holland, IL 60473 USA. 110 pages. \$5 US.

This is the fifth directory of the independent churches and those affiliated with the Alliance of Reformed Churches since the beginning of the recent secessions from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The last directory had been published in 1993. The present publication is a useful and interesting record of the present situation in the ongoing secessions from the CRC.

The Preface informs us that since the last directory was published, the number of independent Reformed churches in the Alliance has more than doubled, growing from 32 congregations in 1993 to 55 congregations in 1995. The membership has almost doubled in the same period, having grown from 7,255 members to 10,805. There is an almost even number of churches and members in the United States and Canada.

Also noteworthy is the fact that there are 27 churches in the Alliance which are already in federation with others, such as CRC, Orthodox CRC, and a Canadian Reformed congregation and two from the OPC.

This directory is set up in an effective and pleasing manner. Each congregation has a full page with information and is listed alphabetically according to its geographical place. There is also a listing of the Regional Fellowships, including the member churches who make up each fellowship. Three such fellowships function where the churches have a more formal relationship with each other, namely Lake Michigan Regional Fellowship (organized March 12, 1993), Ontario Regional Fellowship (organized June 18, 1994), and the Western Regional Fellowship (organized February 3/4, 1995). The directory also includes an alphabetical listing

of all independent ministers and licensed exhorters.

This directory is a useful resource for all those who are interested in the independent churches and wish to have reliable information on them.

By C. Van Dam

The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, G. Holden Pike.

Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991. Originally 5 vols. and reprinted in 2 vols. (hardcover, 608 pages per volume; \$ 69.95 US)

It is just over 100 years ago that Charles Haddon Spurgeon died. He was born in 1834 (incidentally, the year of the Secession in the Netherlands) and died in 1892 (the year of the Union of the Secession and "Doleantie" churches in the Netherlands). During that time his name became a household word; even today most Christian families will have at least one volume of Spurgeon sermons in their possession. There is no doubt that Spurgeon was an especially gifted servant of the Lord whom the Lord used to bring many to himself.

Already at the young age of 18 he became pastor of the small Baptist church at Waterbeach, England and two years later he was called to the pastorate of the New Park Street Church, Southwark, London. Before long the chapel had to be enlarged; even the enlarged chapel soon proved too small. Eventually, in 1861 the Metropolitan Temple which seated 6,000 was opened and here Spurgeon preached until his death. Spurgeon's fame as a preacher is legendary. Already at the age of 21 he was the most popular preacher of the day and there apparently had been no minister of such a reputation since the days of George Whitefield. As he preached everyone listened spellbound; he spoke in a conversational style – the church building had such good acoustics that he did not need to shout. But it is not only his special gifts of oratory and his power to draw thousands to his preach-

ing Sunday after Sunday which deserve mention. Although we lament his view of the covenant (he was a Baptist), we can only seek to emulate his fight against modernism; he never wavered in his defense of the authority of Scripture. Also he vigorously denounced Arminianism.

Not only was he a master of the spoken word, he also left a legacy of publications "voluminous enough to fill *Encyclopaedia Britannica*." Besides preaching and writing, he also had time for a variety of other activities such as teaching students for the ministry and opening the Stockwell Orphanage which eventually grew to a group of twelve houses accommodating 500 children.

Since Spurgeon's death a number of biographies have been written. These two volumes are a reprint of a biography published in 1894 two years after Spurgeon's death. The author, G. Holden Pike, was a close friend for thirty years and lived through the whole period of Spurgeon's ministry in London. That fact makes this biography special. Also his exacting detail and many quotes from contemporary newspaper accounts of Spurgeon's preaching give these volumes an immediateness that is commendable. The usefulness of the volumes are enhanced by an extensive index.

By C. Van Dam

Useful Study Aids on 1 Peter and Holiness

Two rather useful study aids deserve mention and recommendation in our magazine. The first is by Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Professor of New Testament at Mid-America Seminary) and is entitled *I Peter. Pilgrims Among Pagans* (Reformed Fellowship, 2201 Oak Industrial Dr. N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49505 USA; 1994, 80 pages). In 16 short chapters, Professor Kloosterman deftly summarizes the key elements of each passage under consideration and presents the material in an easily un-

derstandable format so that God's Word can be readily applied in our present situation. Useful questions that can encourage discussion are provided at the end of every chapter. It is of interest to note that Dr. Kloosterman acknowledges his debt especially to the insights of P. H. R. Houweligen (who wrote a commentary on 1 Peter in Dutch in the New Testament series edited by Dr. J. Van Bruggen) and to John Calvin.

The second work is by Rev. Joel R. Beeke (minister of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Church in Grand Rapids). It is a booklet of 25 pages entitled *Holiness. God's Call to Sanctification* (Banner of Truth, 1994; \$ 2.00 US). Although this study is brief, the topic is truly all encompassing and extremely important. Dr. Beeke gets to the heart of the matter with clear discussions on the nature and basic meaning of holiness in Scripture. He also discusses sanctification both as a gift and responsibility. Many practical pointers are given that one may be truly separate from the world and receive the benefits of being holy in accordance with God's demand. At the top of the list, Dr. Beeke correctly places knowing and relishing the Scriptures, that is, memorizing and searching the Scriptures so that Scripture teaches us to live a holy life in an unholy world. This study on a crucial Biblical teaching respecting our identity as Christians in this world will repay careful study and be of help to experience the true joy in the Lord.

By P. Aasman

The Necessity of Reforming the Church, John Calvin. Originally published in 1544, republished by Old Paths Publications: Audubon NJ, 1994. (Pages i -iv Publisher's Note by E. Springer; v-xi Introduction by W.R. Godfrey; text 117 pages; \$ 7.95 US.)

Few of the collected works of Calvin are books, as books are generally measured. Most of them are responses, lectures, addresses, and letters. *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* is a lengthy address which Calvin wrote to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. He attached the following address to this work,

To the most invincible Emperor Charles V., and the most illustrious Princes and other Orders now holding a Diet of the Empire at Spire: A

humble exhortation, seriously to undertake the task of restoring the church, presented in the name of all those who wish Christ to reign.

In the introduction to this volume, W.R. Godfrey provides the important historical background of this address. Calvin had been invited by Martin Bucer to address the Diet in writing on behalf of the Reformed churches. Calvin rose to the challenge and produced this masterful address. He sought nothing less than for the Emperor to use his authority for "bringing back the body of the empire to sacred concord." It is not entirely clear what Calvin was concretely proposing for the Emperor to do, but it seems that he would have him convene provincial synods in religiously troubled areas around the Empire as was done in the ancient church to resolve serious controversy, in order that necessary reforms might be made in the church. Calvin's ecumenical vision was broad. He dared to hope that unity in worship might again reign over all Christendom.

Calvin leads up to this recommendation by defending the action of the Reformed churches in separating from the church of Rome. He wrote,

I wish only to show how just and necessary the causes were which forced us to the changes for which we are blamed. To accomplish this, I must take up together the three following points. *First*, I must briefly enumerate the evils which compelled us to seek for remedies. *Second*, I must show that the particular remedies which our Reformers employed were apt and salutary. *Thirdly*, I must make it plain that we were not at liberty any longer to delay putting forth our hand, in as much as the matter demanded instant amendment.

The presentation of these three points then takes up the substance of his address. It is a masterful apologia for the existence of the Reformed church, and at the same time a devastating critique of the Roman church.

This is a well-thought-out address. Each of the three points are worked out on the same four focal points: the mode in which God is worshipped and the manner in which man is saved (these Calvin calls the soul of the church), and then her sacraments and her polity (these he calls the body of the church).

At the end of his address, Calvin apologized to the Emperor that "on a

subject so noble and splendid I should be so cold," for he feels that he had set this matter before the Emperor "without any embellishment of words." In typical fashion, Calvin underrated his own work. There are books from which one must be satisfied with the pleasure of having simply acquired more knowledge, and then there are books which please one with their eloquence, power, and urgent passion. These 117 pages will reward you in both ways.

By P. Aasman

Earnestness in Preaching: Admonition from the Fathers., Ernest Springer. Old Path Publications: Audubon NJ, 1994 (36 pages; price \$ 2.95 US).

This is only a little booklet, and even a fairly padded one (with nearly a dozen pages of advertisements for other Old Path Publications added to these 36 pages), yet it will affect one who reads it, either to comfort, encourage, or perhaps admonish him.

The first eight pages is an introduction to Charles H. Spurgeon's thoughts on the subject as contained in his book, *Lectures to My Students*. Spurgeon was very concerned that preachers be not lazy and take shortcuts in their sermon preparations. They must struggle with the text themselves so that they might be edified directly by the Holy Spirit rather than indirectly through the writings of Bible expositors. Thus only will a preacher be earnest in his preaching and will a congregation be blessed by it. The lively and vivid quotations from Spurgeon make these pages delightful to read.

I find, however, that Spurgeon and Springer with him, tie the worth of the message too closely to the earnestness of the preacher. Springer writes, "God has no obligation to bless the laziness of one who is unwilling to prepare his own sermon." And Spurgeon is quoted as saying, "The Holy Ghost is also vexed by laziness. I cannot imagine the Spirit waiting at the door of a slug-gard, and supplying the deficiencies created by indolence." It should be noted, however, that the Apostle Paul held that the worth of the message does not depend on the preacher. God can bless preaching even if it is not earnest. He wrote to the Philippians that even though some people preached the

gospel from envy and rivalry, yet Paul knew God could bless it. He wrote, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice." (1:18) As heinous a sin as laziness and plagiarism may be in a minister, such a preacher may yet be a blessing for the congregation, but not for himself. On the contrary, he becomes his own

judge, for after exhorting the congregation to give their hearts to God, he did not do so himself. This is why every preacher must strive to be earnest in his preaching.

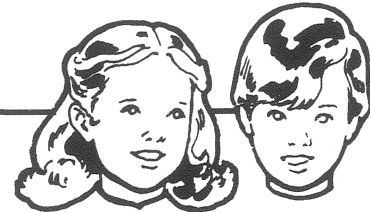
The remainder of the booklet contains quotations from various Reformed catechisms, confessions and polities, and from commentaries on these documents which in a systematic fashion, re-

quires that ministers be earnest preachers. These quotations relate to the fifth, eighth and ninth commandment, and to the doctrinal basis for the office of the minister of the word.

Although the reader will have to overlook some orthographic quirks, (like the strange appearance of question marks before each colon), this is a nice booklet to have. C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

How is your summer going? Are you enjoying your holidays? You probably are, but here are some things for you to do if you run out of ideas!

20 THINGS TO DO ON A SUMMER DAY

1. Read a book.
2. Do a puzzle.
3. Make a nutritious snack in the kitchen.
4. Work in the garden.
5. Cool off in a pool.
6. Play a game.
7. Go to the library.
8. Take care of your pets.
9. Explore a pond.
10. Go for a bike ride.
11. Do a craft.
12. Clean out your closet.
13. Listen to music.
14. Blow bubbles on the lawn.
15. Have a water fight using dish-detergent bottles.
16. Write a letter to a penpal or relative.
17. Write a story.
18. Collect and press as many wild flowers as you can find.
19. Help Mom make supper.
20. Write a letter to Aunt Betty.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

To all the Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in August we say, "Congratulations, and may our Heavenly Father bless and keep you in the year ahead!"

Hannah Verhoeff	1	Alanna Jager	17
Lydia Kingma	1	Margriet Snip	19
Melissa Tuininga	4	Amanda Tamminga	19
Joshua Burger	5	Art Smit	19
Laura Dalhuisen	7	Trisha VanWoudenberg	20
Jessica DeHaas	7	Devon VanVeen	22
Danielle Ostermeier	8	Laurence Kingma	22
Ryan Linde	9	Christa Agema	22
Tim Burger	10	Aaron Hordyk	28
Erinna Jansen	14	Katrina Meerveld	31
Tamara VanderBruggen	15		

Quiz Time!

SCRAMBLED BIBLE NAMES

By Busy Beaver Lorelle Barendregt

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. caojb _____ | 6. emsso _____ |
| 2. usea _____ | 7. ilve _____ |
| 3. maahbra _____ | 8. uhtr _____ |
| 4. arias _____ | 9. mealus _____ |
| 5. bekhar _____ | 10. theser _____ |

BIBLE NAMES WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver Luanne Feenstra

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

Can you find these names?

God	Lord	Jesus	Abram	Christ
Jacob	Sarah	Rebekah	Rachel	Leah
Isaac	Daniel	Saul	Solomon	David
Absolom	Adonijah	Amasa	Bathsheba	Abigail
Shimei	Nabal	Yahweh		

THE SONS OF JACOB

by Busy Beaver *Shaun Smeding*

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

Find these names:

Reuben	Simeon	Levi	Judah
Dan	Naphtali	Issachar	Zebulun
Joseph	Benjamin	Manasseh	Asher

SAM HIDES

Story by Busy Beaver *Laura Kanis*

One day Sam was hiding under the couch and peeking out because he was playing peek-a-boo with Kitty. Suddenly, Mother called "Sam-my, Sam-my! Bathtime!"

But Sammy just said, "Bad Baf! Me no dirty!" and ran upstairs.

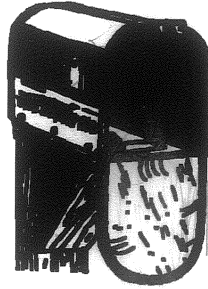
When Mother came up she said, "I wonder where he is." She looked under the couch . . . no Sam. She looked behind the fridge . . . no Sam. She went into the bedroom. She looked UNDER the blankets and there he was!

He said, "You found me. I will have baf now."

RIDDLE ME!

Here are some riddles from Busy Beaver *Tanya Meints*.

1. Where do snowmen hide their money?
 2. What did the polar bear order at Dairy Queen?
 3. Why do ducks fly south?
 4. Where is the best place to hide a chocolate?
 5. Why did Jimmy cut a hole in his umbrella?
1. In a snowbank.
 2. A Blizzard and a hamburger.
 3. It's too far to walk.
 4. In your mouth.
 5. To see if the rain had stopped.



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Ashley Vanderploeg*. I see you want to be a real member. Hope you enjoy doing the activities and puzzles. Bye, Ashley, and have a good summer!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Katie Van Spronsen*. How many brothers and sisters do you have? Well, have fun

doing the puzzles and have a great summer vacation! Hope to hear from you again, Katie. Bye!

Hello, *Heidi Kingma*. How you do like your new house and congregation? It must be quite different for you! And in September, a new school, too! Thanks for the puzzle. Have a fun summer! Bye Heidi.

Hi, *Tanya Meints*. Are you having a busy summer, too? Where did your relatives travel to? Have a great vacation! Bye, Tanya.

Hello, *Jonathan Kingma*. Sounds like you had quite the party at your friend's place. I hope you didn't have to go to school the next day! And in September you'll have a new school to go to. That's exciting! Have good holiday! Bye, Jonathan.

Love, Aunt Betty



With great joy and thankfulness to our Lord God who has blessed our family, we announce the birth of our fourth child, a daughter

JENNIFER KAREN

Born May 19, 1995

A sister for *Dennis, Melanie* and *Jodie*

John and Elaine Van Dyk
(nee Weening)

315 Bluegrass Boulevard
Richmond Hill, ON L4C 3H3

June 29, 1995

"Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever!"
Rev. 7:12

Our heavenly Father has again blessed and enriched our lives with the birth of a son and brother

JARED MICAH

Aubrey and Jane VanderGaag
Jeff, Lisa, Shawn, Tyler, Matthew,
David and Daniel

26818-25th Avenue
Aldergrove, BC V4W 2Y4

With great joy and thankfulness to the Lord, we received another covenant child

JULIA THERESA

Born March 9, 1995

A sister for *Rebecca Margaret*

Dave and Theresa Bos
(nee Barendregt)

Third grandchild for
Richard and Margaret Bos
Nineteenth grandchild for
Dorothy Vangrootheest

General Delivery
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0