



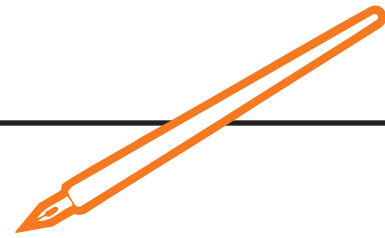
# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
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*Calvin on the Inspiration of Scripture*

By C. Van Dam



## A Burning Issue

The evidence is overwhelming and the message is clear. Smoking does great damage to one's health and in far too many cases actually kills. There is no need to rehearse here the evidence. It is well-known. The one at greatest risk with smoking is the smoker him/herself. But the potential damage does not stop there. Those who breathe the same air be it in the same house or office are also affected and the consequences of smoking by an expectant mother on her unborn child are well-documented and frightening.

Now all this is of course well-known, but familiarity can lead to an underestimation of the seriousness of the problem we are looking at. If smoking indeed is so detrimental to health and even kills, is smoking then not sin? I remember a minister telling me that after a discussion about the sixth commandment in Catechism class, a student asked, "But if the commandment 'Do not kill' indeed means (as the Catechism puts it) that you are not to recklessly harm yourself, how can you be a smoker? Does smoking not damage your health?" The minister's response was: "You are right;" and he never smoked again. That was being consequent.

In one sense we have by and large recognized the seriousness of smoking as an evil that needs to be opposed by banning smoking in and around our church buildings. On the whole, church buildings in our midst are now smoke free. However, are we also working on making church members smoke free? Should we not do that too? Are we not otherwise inconsistent? Should smoking not be more of an issue in our midst, given its sinful nature?

### Addiction

Now the whole issue of smoking is a touchy one, and a common response when someone is told that he or she should stop is "I can't." It is true that smoking is addictive. This means that we must show understanding to addicted smokers, especially towards older members of the congregation who started at a time that the health hazards of puffing cigarettes were not adequately recognized. However, it is becoming more and more obvious from ongoing research that we would be doing longtime smokers a great dis-

service if we did not seek their physical well-being by also urging them to stop a most damaging habit, damaging for themselves and those who live with them and damaging by the poor example they set for the younger generation who should in no way start the habit.

Does Scripture not speak against being addicted? Does the Apostle Paul not say that he would not be enslaved by anything (1 Cor. 6:12)? Christians must therefore say no to addiction. It should also be noted to the encouragement of those who need to break the habit that addiction to smoking can be broken with simple determination, as those have discovered who suddenly quit when lung x-rays turned up sinister dark spots or who were informed that their life was on the line. It takes some will power. But physicians can be of help with, for example, means such as nicotine patches. In other words, medically speaking no one can say, "I'm addicted and can't stop." As a physician informed me: that is a cop-out. Besides, have we not received the Holy Spirit who enables us in our struggle against sin (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2)?

### Why action is needed

In many ways we have compromised ourselves on the issue of smoking. In a sense this is understandable. We live in a time of transition between the time when smoking was quite normal and today when its deadly dangers are well understood. This means that we have smoking office bearers who are in an impossible situation when it comes to applying the Word to this evil. However, should this not change? We simply cannot afford to remain on this dual track of condemning smoking by outlawing it in our public buildings and yet tolerating it everywhere else.

Why can we not continue this way? For at least three reasons. In the first place, the present ambivalence sends a terrible message to our young people. If this does not change, their resistance to this practice will continue to be seriously undermined and another generation will start a vicious cycle of tobacco dependency with all its disastrous effects. Tolerating such a continuing development is immoral. Secondly, doing nothing about smoking within the congregation sends the message that as long as the soul is all right, it is of




secondary importance how you treat the body. Scripture fights against such reasoning which has similarities to ancient Gnosticism. Scripture teaches us that our bodies are also very important. They are temples of the Holy Spirit and should thus be treated with great care (1 Cor. 6:19-20)! Thirdly, if our young people and others detect a double standard and hypocrisy in one area, will they not start wondering about the message of the church in additional areas as well? In other words, tolerating this evil by not addressing it consistently can lead to a loss of credibility for the church and her office bearers.

One could object and say that we do not need more rules in the church, such as this new rule "you shall not smoke." No new legalism please! Indeed, we do not need legalism in the church. But this is not a matter of another rule for the church; this is simply a matter of applying the Word of God, especially with respect to the sixth commandment and the fact that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and should be taken care of accordingly. The extensive damage, suffering and grief caused by smoking makes it an obvious area of concern.

### How to proceed?

In view of the fact that we live in a time of transition between a time of toleration of smoking to today's situation, we should proceed carefully and pastorally. But we should proceed and not stay in the situation which by and large is the case now when those who endanger their own life and that of others with smoking are generally speaking not shepherded with regard to their specific need as much as they could be. In the nature of the case we should try to contain as much future damage as possible by educating and addressing the young people with this problem firmly and consistently. It is simply intolerable for Christians to begin smoking today! However, it will be clear that also the older generation should be sensitively but consistently pastored as well.

A step in the right direction could be to disqualify all smokers from consideration for nomination for the special office in the church. That can be awkward when there are already office bearers who smoke, but it would send the right message and bring about more urgent communal reflection on a problem that will not go away by itself. When the communal will is there, we can help and encourage each other to solve this problem, in the Lord.

May He give us the insight we need to apply His Word to this modern evil in a manner that is pleasing to Him. 

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dr. J. De Jong had a reply to what I wrote in the Year End issue of *Clarion* about his article on Synod's decision on Bible translations; however, it was agreed not to continue this discussion. This includes further "letters to the editor" specifically addressing this discussion. (Of course, contributions dealing with the larger picture will not be unwelcome)

*J. Geertsema*



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~ *In Memory of a Servant of God* ~

*Johannes Dirk Wielenga*

*July 21, 1935 ~ January 29, 1996*

by G.Ph. van Popta



On Monday, January 29, 1996, the Lord took unto himself the Rev. J.D. Wielenga at 60 years of age, a child of God and a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Wielenga served three congregations on three continents. On January 21, 1962, he was ordained as minister of the Word in the Reformed Church of Veenendaal, the Netherlands, by his father, the Rev. D.K. Wielenga. Four years later, he answered the call of the Free Reformed Church in Albany, Western Australia. He served the congregation of Christ there for some 12 1/2 years after which the Wielenga family immigrated yet again – this time to Coaldale, Alberta. The Canadian Reformed Church of Coaldale was well served by this faithful and able preacher of the Gospel since 1978.

Rev. Wielenga will be remembered for his exceptional exegetical skills and his ability to make the Word of God crystal clear to the congregation. When he preached, there was never any question what the Lord was saying to His people. Rev. Wielenga was, first and foremost, a teacher who was himself trained for the kingdom of heaven and who brought out of the treasure what is new and what is old (Matthew 13:52). After having preached for more than 17 years in Coaldale, his sermons were still as fresh as the day he arrived there.

Rev. Wielenga will be remembered for his personal integrity. He cared not one whit what people thought about him. He spoke his mind and was concerned only about having a clear conscience before the Lord. He expected the same of others. He was no “respector of persons.” He could strongly agree with you one time and disagree vehemently another time. Who you were was not the point; what you *said* was the point.

Rev. Wielenga will be remembered for his tireless efforts to keep the churches honest in the face of their own confession and church order. This man who was so patient with struggling and broken sinners quickly became impatient when he witnessed broader assemblies using criteria other than the Word of God, the reformed confessions, and the agreed upon church order.

Rev. Wielenga will be remembered for his deep knowledge of some things and his total unfamiliarity with others. For example, he had 16th century synod decisions at his finger-tips, but, as I discovered once when I was with him in Lethbridge, he was unable to find a donut shop. Recently, we had a western Canada ministers’ conference in Coaldale. The plan was for us to have one meal at a local restaurant. I asked him where a good one was. He answered with his characteristic: “I have no clue.”

People who met him only briefly will remember him for his genuine interest in others. No sooner would he have met you, and he would have you telling him all about yourself. There are two kinds of people in the world: those who, when they walk into a room, say, “Here I am;” those who, when they walk into a room say, “Oh, there you are.” Rev. Wielenga was of the latter kind – interested in others.

Rev. Wielenga will be remembered not only for his faithful work in his study and congregation as well as for the federation of churches; he will also be remembered for his love of the outdoors. On a bright winter day, he would rejoice because of the snow and the brilliance of the sun. His idea of a restful vacation was solitary canoeing down fast rivers.

This servant worked as long as it was day. He was taken from the harness. He was doing all of his work

until December 17 – a mere six weeks before the Lord discharged him of his commission. He was always working, like the servant in the parable the Lord told in Luke 17:7-10. Once the servant finished one job, he went and did another, not expecting any special commendation – just doing his work.

When the effects of cancer prevented him from preaching to those under his care, he still gathered with them every remaining Lord’s day he was given to spend on this earth, except the last one, the day before he died. Even on that day, he wanted to go to church, but he could not. He had said more than once, “You are never so close to heaven as when you are in church.” There was nowhere else he wanted to be on the Lord’s day. (Not a bad thing for us to reflect on when we so easily “skip church” because of vacations or minor ailments.)

When it became abundantly clear that the Lord was going to take him home, he wanted to go. He was eager to see Jesus Christ and to fall into His arms. He was excited about it. Shortly before he died, the passage he asked to be preached on at his funeral was Philippians 1:23b – *My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*

No one is surprised that he should have chosen that passage. Rev. Wielenga was very conscious of how we are pilgrims here. We are travelling to a better place. As we travel, we enjoy union with Christ. But as we die and as we are glorified, we enter into a yet deeper and profounder union with Christ. His preaching often emphasized that our citizenship is in heaven. The way he lived underlined that he knew and believed that with all his heart. Perhaps that is why he was still a Dutch citizen when he died. Although he

lived more than 12 years in Australia and more than 17 years in Canada, he had never changed his citizenship. Somehow, it just did not seem to be all that important. His citizenship was in heaven. Today he is enjoying that citizenship in a more profound way than he enjoyed it when he was still among us. He is with Christ, his Redeemer.

The scriptures exhort us to remember our leaders, those who spoke to us the Word of God, to consider the outcome of their lives, and to imitate their faith. Let us remember this leader. No, we do not praise man and

his accomplishments. Rev. Wielenga was a sinner in need of the cleansing blood of Christ just as well as anyone else. There is no use in praising man. We praise the Lord for having given this servant, this leader, to work among us so faithfully for many years. May the Lord crown the work He did through Johannes Dirk Wielenga with His blessing. May it bear fruit in the lives of God's people on three continents for generations to come.

We stand still at the death of the Rev. Wielenga, but not for long. We cannot. We may not. We must carry on. There is still work for us to do.

We work as long as it is day, like the servant in the parable. We carry on and do our work. And at the Lord's time, he will take us to Himself.

We commend sr. Wielenga, her children and grandchildren into the care of our faithful God and Father. May the Gospel of Christ that your husband, father and grandfather preached for 34 years so boldly comfort you in your bereavement.

Farewell, Dick Wielenga – colleague, friend, father. I know that you are faring well. How could you not fare well in the arms of Jesus?

## MEDITATION

By H.J.J. Feenstra

### BE WISE WITH WISDOM

Originally published as  
*Wees wijs met de wijsheid*,  
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Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

#### Wisdom – Some aspects

Although wisdom can be learned, it is not just another subject, another form of knowledge; it is not merely a matter of scholarship. A scholar is supposed to be knowledgeable about his own discipline. He might have many diplomas, and he might even be honoured publicly for his work. Yet such a learned individual could well be a fool; he or she may make mistakes and get into a lot of trouble; such a person could well be insensitive to people and situations.

Now consider someone who understands life, who is able to judge people and things. Compare the scholar I mentioned above with someone who is really able, every day, to listen to the Word of God and who absorbs and internalizes the Sunday sermon. Think of someone who uses his or her life's experience in a positive, fruitful manner.

An illustration to clarify this. Consider a family, sitting around the dinner table. The father reads from the Bible the story of the arrest of the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. A discussion results from the words of Jesus, . . . *all who take the sword will perish by the sword*. Does this text not forbid all war? Does it not command us to be pacifists?

The children argue about these things but fail to reach a satisfactory conclusion, till the father joins the discussion. He simply reads the text out loud once more, but strongly emphasizes the word *take* with word and gesture. *Unlawful* use of the sword is condemned, but there is also a lawful use of the sword by the government in the service of God. The father explains that difference by emphasizing one word and making just a simple gesture.

Every one uses the same Bible, studies the same text, and reads the same words. Some really see what it says there, others do not see it (yet). That is wisdom: knowledge and insight; being able to discern what is important.

Bezalel and Oholiab were wise men. The Bible tells us that these men were filled with the Spirit of God, with ability, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with craftsmanship. That was their wisdom; they knew what to do with gold and silver, with wood and linen. The holy tabernacle of God was built and decorated with taste and skill, with the wisdom of these craftsmen. Also in this context wisdom means insight and discernment, knowing what to do with the material you are working with, knowing what to do with the realities with which you are dealing.

One more Scriptural illustration. When we see God's greatness in creation and nature, we will say with the psalmist, *O LORD, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. . . .*

You will realize that Psalm 104 is no study in ecology; it is a song in praise of God who made the world in such a beautiful and harmonious way. Creation is multi-coloured in its variety, yet it forms a marvellous unity. Truly, the creation is a glorious illustration of God's wisdom. He has given each creature its own character and shape, and He has given each its own place and task in serving its Creator.

Really, it should not surprise us to discover that the Bible uses the word *wisdom* when it refers to insight and discernment as well as to knowledge and understanding of materials and the world we live in. When we speak of these things we are dealing with what God thought of and made. No wonder that the Bible speaks of *wisdom* as very practical insights in the things of every day life.

When we are young, we must learn how to live. We can learn that from the Word of Him who made all things. Proverbs is dedicated in particular to the teaching of the scriptural art of living. Indeed, christian living is an art, a craft that requires intensive training and much practice before we ever achieve mastery.

From Scripture            Matthew 26:52  
   Romans 13:4  
   Exodus 35:30 - 36:2  
   Psalm 104:24

From the Confessions  
   Belgic Confession Art. 12

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# Spirit Baptism as a Dual Transition

## Theological reflections on the charismatic movement<sup>3</sup>

By J. Boersma

Last time we looked at chapters 8 and 10 of the book of Acts. It became clear that these two passages do not support the theory of a second blessing for which we must still look today. Such a claim does not do justice to the particular transitional character in which the people of Samaria and Caesarea found themselves. A third passage in the book of Acts to which charismatics appeal is found in chapter 19: the experience of the twelve disciples in Ephesus. When Paul was there during his third missionary journey, Apollos had just moved away from there to Corinth. While he was still in Ephesus, he had “taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). When Priscilla and Aquilla came into contact with Apollos, they instructed him further. Yet, it is no wonder that when Paul came to Ephesus he found these twelve disciples who had never even heard that there was a Holy Spirit and who had received John’s baptism (19:2-4).<sup>1</sup>

When Paul found “some disciples” in Ephesus who “believed,” the question is whether this means that they were Christians (19:1-2). The word “dis-

ciples” does not necessarily speak of people who have committed themselves to Christ. Also, the case of Simon the Sorcerer already indicates that Luke does not consider every “believer” a true believer.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these disciples’ lack of knowledge with regard to the Holy Spirit makes clear that an essential aspect of their faith was lacking. Their connection with John the Baptist tied them positively to the Old Testament dispensation (cf. Mt. 11:11). Paul’s very question “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” may well reveal a certain suspicion on his part (19:2): Were these “believers” indeed believers in the full New Testament sense of the word? Had they indeed truly become part of the New Testament church of the ascended Lord? After all, why would Paul have to ask about the Holy Spirit if he did not question their faith at all? Most likely he had received certain indications that there was something lacking in these “believers.”<sup>3</sup> The answer of the twelve disciples confirmed Paul’s suspicion: They +had not even heard that the Holy Spirit had come. Stott rightly challenges the charismatic assumption

that the Ephesian disciples were Christians before they received the Holy Spirit. He poses the astute question: “[I]f it seriously maintained that people who have never heard of the Holy Spirit, nor been baptized in the name of Jesus, nor even apparently believed in Jesus, were true Christian disciples? Surely not.”<sup>4</sup> The result of Paul’s conversation with these disciples was that they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, and that they then received the Holy Spirit and started speaking in tongues and prophesying after Paul had placed his hands on them.

### Salvation history

What this all means is that it is not enough to simply ask whether or not the twelve Ephesian disciples had faith. The question regarding the *nature* of their faith must be asked. Once this is done it becomes clear that just like the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and just like Cornelius in Caesarea, these disciples still had to make an important transition. They had to be transferred from the Old Testament to the New Testament dispensation.<sup>5</sup> This again indicates that the salvation-historical character of

## What’s inside?

It takes about ten years before a former smoker’s susceptibility to lung cancer is the same, again, as someone who never smoked. On the other hand, the many benefits of quitting begin the day you quit. Twenty minutes after butting out that last smoke, your blood pressure and pulse rate drop to near normal, and the body temperature of your hands and feet increases to normal. *It’s never too late to quit.* If you smoke, read Dr. Van Dam’s editorial – I dare you. If you don’t smoke, well, read it anyway. The author makes some challenging recommendations.

Dr. J. Boersma continues testing the charismatic movement on the basis of the Word of God. In the previous article, he showed that the charismatics are wrong in their appeal to Acts 8, 10 & 11 for their doctrine of Spirit baptism as a second blessing which follows the coming to faith. As he continues to work this out, he shows that their appeal to Acts 19 is as illegitimate.

Dr. N.H. Gootjes interacts with an article found in a book reviewed in the last issue of *Clarion*. Some Calvin scholars want to make John Calvin somewhat of a father to the ruinous biblical criticism of the last two hundred years. Dr. Gootjes shows that Calvin was convinced and defended the position that the Scripture *is* God’s Word.

Especially these two articles will require careful reading, but the reader will be amply rewarded.

In these pages you will also find a meditation, a book review, a press review, the Hiliter, and a Ray of Sunshine. Blessed reading!

GvP



the events must be kept in mind before deciding that they are still normative for the church today.

It may be concluded that the charismatic believer cannot appeal to the book of Acts. None of the passages appealed to – Acts 8, 10-11, 19 – prove that today's Christian can expect a time lapse between faith and Spirit baptism. The experiences of the Samaritans, of Cornelius and his family and friends, and of the Ephesian disciples indicate instead that Spirit baptism marked the beginning of the New Testament believer's walk of faith in the ascended Lord, just as it does in 1 Corinthians 12:13. It was connected with tongues (and prophecy), both in Caesarea and in Ephesus (Acts 10:46; 19:6). In both instances Spirit baptism was also connected with water baptism, although there appears to be some flexibility here: In Caesarea baptism followed the gift of the Spirit, while it preceded the gift of the Spirit in Ephesus. This flexibility should caution us not to make too much of the exact order. The point is that both water baptism and Spirit baptism mark conversion and entry into the New Testament church of Christ.

### What is Pentecost?

This still leaves us with the apparent dilemma that has been touched upon in the first article of this series. Paul connects Spirit baptism with initial conversion and with initiation into the church (1 Cor. 12:13). Peter, however, makes clear that this gift of the Spirit is the same as the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost on people who are believers already (Acts 10-11). How are we to rhyme these two facts? Does it mean that the day of Pentecost marked regeneration for the 120 disciples? This seems far-fetched. Their obedient expectation of the Holy Spirit in the upper room shows that they were believers already. What is more, none of the Old Testament believers experienced a baptism with the Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit gave all of them true faith. How can Spirit baptism be identical to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Paul), while it is the same as what happened at Pentecost (Acts)?

This question forces us to take another look at the event of Pentecost. What happened on the day of Pentecost? Stott suggests that Pentecost has three meanings: (1) the inauguration of the Messianic age in fulfilment of the long-promised outpouring of the Spirit; (2) the fulfilment of Jesus' special

promises in the upper room; and (3) the first "revival" in the history of the Christian church. Stott considers the first two of these meanings as clearly unrepeatable, "as unrepeatable as the Saviour's death, resurrection and ascension which preceded it."<sup>6</sup> He does not regard the third significance as normative either, even though it has repeated itself from time to time.

Hendriks likewise emphasizes the redemptive historical aspect of the events of Pentecost. It is a fulfilment of Jesus' promise to his disciples that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5); of John's announcement of the coming baptism with the Spirit (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33); and of the Old Testament prophecies about the outpouring of the Spirit (Is. 32:15; Joel 2:28; Zech. 12:10). Hendriks points to two elements that are new at Pentecost: (1) a richer presence of the Spirit than in the old dispensation (an outpouring); and (2) an extension of the gift of the Spirit to *all* (Acts 2:4). The Spirit now comes to *live* in the congregation.<sup>7</sup>

Floor interprets the Pentecost event as the fulfilment of the law as given at Sinai. The wind and the tongues are reminiscent of the Sinai event (Heb. 12:18). Thus, "the coming of the Holy Spirit was also the fulfilment of the covenant treaty at Sinai. The coming of the Holy Spirit realizes what had been the actual intent of the Sinai event."<sup>8</sup> In an excellent description of Pentecost, Floor considers it as a salvific event. The book of Acts is concerned with the spread of the gospel of the kingdom of God. Christ is the exalted and ascended king at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). Before Pentecost, the Spirit's presence was not yet that of the crowned Lord, Jesus Christ. Christ now furthers his kingdom on earth through the indwelling of the Spirit. While God lived in the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament, in the New Testament the indwelling of God has become more personal, more intimate. Floor then concludes that Pentecost is unrepeatable in the *history* of salvation. Yet, a baptism with the Holy Spirit must also take place in the *order* of salvation, in the life of every believer. This Spirit baptism is identical to regeneration. Finally, Floor points out that also the power which comes with the Holy Spirit is a new element in the New Testament (Luke 4:14; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 10:38; 2 Tim 1:7).<sup>9</sup>

The redemptive historical character of Pentecost, to which both Stott and Hendriks draw our attention, can indeed scarcely be overlooked. This element fits within the framework of the book of Acts, which is structured around the extension of the kingdom of God from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. At the beginning of this program, the ascended King and Lord pours out his Spirit and so ushers in the beginning of the age of the Spirit. It is an age in which there will be a richer and a more intimate indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each and every believer. This means that Pentecost, as the inauguration of the new age of the Spirit, and as the beginning of the spread of God's kingdom beyond the Jewish nation, cannot be repeated. It is only repeated to transfer certain groups of people from the old into the new dispensation – the Samaritans, the Gentiles, and a group of disciples who only knew the baptism of John.

Spirit baptism in these cases was part and parcel of a decisive event in salvation history, namely, the breakthrough of the gospel, the extension of the kingdom of God from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Spirit baptism clearly marked the decisive moment in the lives of the people who experienced this. The 120 disciples were Old Testament believers when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Samaritans were believers when they received the Holy Spirit. Cornelius was a pious and God-fearing man when he was baptized with the Holy Spirit. And also the twelve Ephesian disciples had some association with John the Baptist when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

### Historical and personal category

The phenomenon of Spirit baptism in the book of Acts does not need to be problematic for the Reformed tradition. There is no difficulty once it is understood that this gift of the Spirit entails a dual transition. In all four cases described in the book of Acts, the transition still had to be made to the New Testament age of the Spirit, to the church of the New Testament, which had become a distinctly *Christian* church. Faith, from now on, would only be faith if it would be faith in *Christ*, the ascended King of the church. It was this King who would pour out *his* Spirit. The book of Acts is the book of the acts of Jesus (1:1). Only since the day

of Pentecost is the work of the Spirit the work of the ascended Lord and King. Moreover, in the first three of these cases this gift of the Spirit also marked a transition to a wider circle in the extension of the kingdom of God. Neither of these two transitions really apply anymore after the period of the book of Acts. Then the gospel of the kingdom of God has – at least within the book of Acts and in principle – reached the ends of the earth. When the Corinthians came to faith they no longer needed to be transferred from the old age to the new.<sup>10</sup> Their regeneration, their baptism with the Spirit of the ascended Lord, immediately placed them into the New Testament church of Christ. The Corinthians – unlike the 120 disciples, Cornelius and the twelve disciples in Ephesus – never had to make that transition from the old to the new. They were, so to speak, “brand new” Christians, without any attachment to the Old Testament dispensation. This explains why their baptism with the Spirit is identical to regeneration and membership of the church (1 Cor. 12:13). This is also the norm for the church today. There is no second blessing. Every believer has been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Every believer is a “brand new” Christian through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is an explanation (1) which does justice to the redemptive historical emphasis of the book of Acts; (2) which explains how in the book of Acts the Spirit can be given to people who already have some kind of faith, while in the rest of the New Testament all believers have the Spirit; and (3)

which explains how Spirit baptism can be a salvation historical category in the book of Acts and a personal category in Paul. Thus, Spirit baptism is something which marked Pentecost, which marked the initiation into the church by the Samaritans, the Caesareans and the Ephesians, and which marks the beginning of every Christian life since that time.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>When the disciples said that they had not heard that there was a Holy Spirit, they may well have meant to say that they had not heard that the Holy Spirit had already been poured out. The Holy Spirit had a prominent place in the teaching of John the Baptist, and it would seem strange if these disciples had not heard about the existence of the Holy Spirit. Cf. L. Floor, *De doop met de Heilige Geest* (Kampen: Kok, 1982), p. 96; A.N. Hendriks, *Die alles in allen volmaakt: Een bundel praktisch-theologische opstellen* (Haarlem: AcaMedia, 1990), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. the previous article in this series.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. the comment of Versteeg: “It does not mean anything in this connection that Acts 19:2 speaks about the twelve men having come to faith. By asking the question recorded in this verse Paul places the character of that faith under discussion. He inquired what kind of faith it actually was which they had. If it were true faith, they would also have to have the Holy Spirit” (“De doop volgens het Nieuwe Testament,” in *Rondom de doopvont: Leer en gebruik van de heilige doop in het Nieuwe Testament en in de geschiedenis van de westerse kerk*, ed. W. van ‘t Spijker, et al. [Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1983], p. 57).

<sup>4</sup>Stott, *Baptism and Fullness*, 2nd ed. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 36.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Hendriks’ comment about the disciples: “They had fallen behind in the move-

ment of redemptive history. They had stayed behind at John’s baptism” (*Die alles in allen volmaakt*, p. 33).

There does not appear to have been a time lapse between the disciples’ conversion and baptism on the one hand, and the laying on of hands and the gift of the Spirit on the other hand. As James D.G. Dunn comments: “Nor can we compartmentalize the experience of the twelve or distinguish different operations of the Spirit. It was a single (conversion) experience, the high points of which were their commitment to the Lord Jesus in baptism and their reception of the Spirit – the only coming (upon) of the Spirit that we read of here” (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism today* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], pp. 87-88).

<sup>6</sup>Stott, *Baptism and Fullness*, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup>Hendriks, *Die alles in allen volmaakt*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>8</sup>Floor, *De doop met de Heilige Geest*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>9</sup>Floor, *De doop met de Heilige Geest*, pp. 54-57.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. the comment of Dunn: “In one sense, therefore, Pentecost can never be repeated – for the new age is here and cannot be ushered in again. But in another sense Pentecost, or rather the experience of Pentecost, can and must be repeated in the experience of all who would become Christians. As the day of Pentecost was once the doorway into the new age, so entry into the new age can only be made through that doorway, that is, through receiving the same Spirit and the same baptism in the Spirit as did the 120” (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, pp. 53-54).

<sup>11</sup>This is also an indication that we should not expect that the phenomena accompanying Spirit baptism at Pentecost were different from those found later in the book of Acts and in the church of Corinth.

# Calvin on the Inspiration of Scripture

## Some corrections on the article of W.H. Neuser

By N.H. Gootjes

Calvin has dealt extensively with Scripture. Not only did he summarize the doctrine of Scripture in his *Institutes*, but he also preached and lectured on whole books of the Bible and wrote many commentaries. His commentaries cover almost all of the New Testament and a considerable part of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Calvin, obviously, had a high regard for Scripture.

W.H. Neuser, therefore, dealt with a central doctrine in Calvin’s theology when he discussed “Calvin’s Understanding of Holy Scripture” at the International Congress on Calvin Research.<sup>2</sup> This is a timely topic, as the doctrine of Scripture is much debated in our century. Neuser, in this article, warns against the temptation to enlist Calvin as a champion for one’s own

view on Scripture. He refers to the disagreement between J.A. Cramer and D.J. De Groot. Cramer, in a study published in 1926, attempted to make Calvin the precursor of modern Bible criticism. When De Groot wrote his doctoral dissertation on Calvin’s doctrine of Scripture (1931) he presented Calvin as a proponent of organic inspiration. Neuser is critical of both. Calvin



adopted neither a positive nor a negative attitude toward the historical-critical method of exegesis.(43)

After this conclusion it comes as a surprise that Neuser, when he returns to the issue, states that Calvin would be sympathetic toward the critical approach:

J.A. Cramer has attempted to make Calvin the father of scientific Scripture criticism and he understood the inspiration as a being prepared to reproduce the received words. Calvin did not think in such a modern way. Calvin thinks of a reliable passing on of the received message through the writers of the Bible. Nevertheless, this does not exclude a basic openness for Scripture criticism.(63)

Suddenly Calvin is placed in the discussions of our century and even presented as being open to the critical approach to the Bible. Since this is a fundamental issue, it seemed good not to include it in a general review, but to deal with it separately. We will have to be brief, but we will go into the three arguments Neuser presents to prove his position that Calvin would allow today's critical approach to Scripture.

## 2 Timothy 3:16

This text is a focal point in every discussion on the character of Scripture. Referring to the Old Testament, Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness . . ." (RSV). We are not going to discuss here what this text means; rather, we will see how Calvin understood it. According to Neuser, Calvin said two things about this text. First, the statement about inspiration does not apply to the book of the Old Testament; rather, it applies to its authors. According to Neuser, Calvin even goes a step further to state that these books are not inspired, but only their doctrine.(57) Calvin, says Neuser, does not take this text as an expression about the nature of the Old Testament but as a functional expression about its authors and its doctrine.(58)

If Neuser's analysis were correct, Calvin could be accused of an inconsistency, for the first statement does not agree with the second. The first statement says that inspiration does not apply to the written text of the Old Testament at all but only to its authors. The second statement, howev-

er, says that inspiration does apply to the written text, but only to its doctrine. Is Calvin really so confused in his reasoning?

Concerning the first statement, Calvin wrote:

In order to uphold the authority of the Scripture, he declares that it is *divinely inspired*; for, if it be so, it is beyond all controversy that men ought to receive it with reverence. This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare.<sup>3</sup>

Contrary to the statement of Neuser, Calvin, in this explanation of 2 Tim. 3:16, twice connects inspiration with Scripture. Calvin does not say: "In order to uphold the authority of Scripture, he[Paul] declares that its authors were divinely inspired." Rather, he says about Scripture itself that *it* is inspired. Further, in the second part of the quotation Calvin speaks about the authors, the prophets. Even there, however, Calvin does not say merely that the prophets were inspired; instead, he focuses on what the prophets said. They only spoke what they had to declare. Calvin did not limit inspiration to God's work in the authors. No, he states clearly that the resulting words and writings are from God.

Does Calvin limit this inspiration to only the doctrine? To find out, we will quote another part of his commentary on 2 Tim. 3:16:

Whoever then wishes to profit in the Scriptures, let him, first of all, lay down this as a settled point, that the Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

From this, it is clear that Calvin does not make a distinction between Scripture and its doctrine. Rather, the Old Testament itself (the Law and the Prophets) are the doctrine (= teaching) dictated by the Spirit.

According to Calvin, the Old Testament itself is the inspired teaching of the Spirit. Calvin is dealing here with Scripture, and not limiting inspiration to its authors or to its doctrine, as the last sentence in this section proves conclusively:

This is the first clause, that we owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God; because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it.<sup>5</sup>

## Personal inspiration

Neuser's second argument elaborates on something he already indicated in his discussion of 2 Tim. 3:16. Neuser claims that Calvin did not think that Scripture was divinely inspired; rather, he held that the authors were inspired.<sup>6</sup> He refers to the well-known fact that Calvin frequently mentions the work of the Spirit in connection with the authors of Scripture. Calvin often says that God, or the Holy Spirit, speaks through the mouth of Moses, or David, Isaiah, etc. These expressions indicate that Calvin emphasizes personal inspiration. According to Neuser, personal inspiration excludes verbal inspiration of the words of the Bible.(58,59) Neuser seems to work here with an inappropriate dilemma. His reasoning is that inspiration applies either to the Scripture text or to the authors of Scripture. Since Calvin speaks of personal inspiration, Neuser concludes that he does not teach that Scripture is inspired.

This reasoning, however, does not fit with Calvin's expression. Calvin does not say something like: "The Holy Spirit inspired Moses, and Moses said. . . ." The expression of Calvin to which Neuser refers, namely that "The Holy Spirit speaks through the mouth of Moses," implies that the Spirit is the speaker of the words that come out of Moses' mouth. The Holy Spirit used the mouth of a prophet, but the resulting words are the Spirit's. The expression itself surely does not support Neuser's view.

Neuser refers to many passages in Calvin's *Institutes* where this expression is used. Do these passages indicate that Calvin taught personal inspiration, as opposed to scriptural inspiration? We need not go into all the references. One will suffice to show that Calvin does not deny the inspiration of Scripture when he uses this expression. In his discussion of the incarnation of Christ, Calvin refers to 1 Tim. 2:5: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. . . ." He writes:

(Paul) could have said "God;" or he could at least have omitted the word "man" just as he did the word

“God.” But because the Spirit speaking through his mouth knew our weakness, at the right moment he used a most appropriate remedy to meet it: he set the Son of God familiarly among us as one of ourselves. Therefore, lest anyone be troubled about where to seek the Mediator, or by what path we must come to Him, the Spirit calls Him “man,” thus teaching us that He is near us, indeed touches us, since He is our flesh. (II,12.1)<sup>7</sup>

Calvin uses three expressions here: 1. (Paul) could have said; 2. the Spirit speaking through (Paul’s) mouth, 3. the Spirit calls him “man.” Calvin attributes Paul’s words directly to the Spirit. For Calvin, then, inspiration is more than personal inspiration. Inspiration means that the words Paul spoke are the words of the Spirit.

This is confirmed when we look to what Calvin wrote in the *Institutes*, in a section devoted to Scripture:

Therefore, illumined by (the Spirit’s) power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else’s judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it [= Scripture] has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. (I,7,5)<sup>8</sup>

Calvin does not say that the Spirit merely inspired the authors of the Bible. No, he says that Scripture *itself* comes from the mouth of God. Neuser’s distinction between verbal inspiration and personal inspiration is not found in Calvin, but is a later invention used to give an opening to Scripture criticism.

### The Spirit dictates

According to Neuser’s count, Calvin used the word “to dictate” some forty times in connection with Scripture. Neuser brings together interesting material and adds in an appendix the quotations where Calvin spoke of “dictating.” (67-71) He is able to show that this verb as used by Calvin does not mean to say that the Spirit literally dictated words which the human author simply wrote down.

Neuser goes much further, however, when he says that the term “to dictate” is not used to explain the inspiration of the words of Scripture, but to indicate the importance of the words and to relieve the human writer of his responsibility. (61,62) This is clearly a reduc-

tionist interpretation. The expression “to dictate” does not say anything about the importance of a written text; instead, it speaks of its origin. This is also the way in which Calvin uses this expression, as can be seen in his commentary on Jer. 36:4f. This text speaks of Jeremiah dictating to Baruch, but Calvin sees behind this God dictating to Jeremiah:

Therefore a greater part of so many words must have escaped the Prophet, had not God dictated them again to him. Jeremiah then stood, as it were, between God and Baruch; for God, by his Spirit, presided over and guided the mind and tongue of the Prophet. Now the Prophet, the Spirit being his guide and teacher, recited what God had commanded; and Baruch wrote down, and then proclaimed the whole summary of what the prophet had taught.<sup>9</sup>

God’s dictation, then, means that God, by the Spirit, guided the thoughts as well as the words of Jeremiah. Therefore, the prophet could reproduce what God had commanded.

Another example of Calvin’s use of the verb “to dictate” occurs in the commentary on 1 Pet. 1:11, about the Old Testament prophets who prophesied Christ’s suffering:

At the same time, a high praise is given to their doctrine, for it was the testimony of the Holy Spirit; the preachers and ministers were men, but He was the teacher. Nor does he declare without reason that the Spirit of Christ then ruled; and he makes the Spirit, sent from heaven, to preside over the teachers of the Gospel, for he shows that the Gospel comes from God, and that the ancient prophesies were dictated by Christ.<sup>10</sup>

Dictation by Christ is here virtually the same as teaching by the Holy Spirit. As a result, the Gospel is from God. The term “dictating” does not say much about the way God or the Spirit made known His word to the authors of the Bible, but it does mean more than that the authors personally were inspired when they wrote. It clearly means, according to Calvin, that their writings are God’s word. Actually, we had already seen this. In the second quotation from Calvin’s commentary on 2 Tim. 3:16, given above, exactly the same meaning occurs.

### Conclusion

Calvin did not limit the inspiration of Scripture to personal or doctrinal inspi-

ration. Instead, Calvin taught that, as the result of inspiration, Scripture *itself* is the Word of God. As every exegete of the Bible, Calvin knew of the difficulties in the Bible text. He addressed these on the basis of his conviction that Scripture is God’s Word. It does injustice to Calvin to present him as having been open to the destructive biblical criticism of the last two centuries.

<sup>1</sup>A 22 volume set, originally printed in the 19th Century, is still available, republished by Baker Bookhouse, Grand Rapids.

<sup>2</sup>W.H. Neuser, “Calvin’s Verständnis der Heiligen Schrift” in W.H. Neuser, ed., *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 41-71. Numbers in the text refer to the pages of this article.

<sup>3</sup>See J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (tr. W. Pringle; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 248f. For this and the following quotations I have checked the original texts but since there were no difficulties concerning the debated issue I will use existing translations.

<sup>4</sup>J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 249.

<sup>5</sup>J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, 249.

<sup>6</sup>Neuser adds that Calvin also connected inspiration with some particular statements in Scripture, but not with Scripture as a whole. (58) We need not deal with this since it does not play any role in Neuser’s explanation.

<sup>7</sup>The quotations of Calvin’s *Institutes* are taken from *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. J.T. McNeill; tr. F.L. Battles; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960)

<sup>8</sup>This is part of Calvin’s discussion of the testimony of the Holy Spirit; see on this my article “Het getuigenis van de Geest in verband met de Schrift” in *Radix* 11 (1985) 185ff, on Calvin, 186-194.

<sup>9</sup>J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations*, vol. 4; (tr. J. Owen; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 329; the Latin text in the article of Neuser, 68.

<sup>10</sup>J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (tr. J. Owen; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 39,40.

### CORRECTION:

Re: Press Release Alberta/Manitoba – Oct./Dec. 1995 Volume 45, No. 2.

In Article 6B, re Committee Aid to Needy Churches, it was stated that the churches at Denver and Neerlandia requested aid. This is incorrect. It should have read: *The churches at Denver and Barrhead request aid.*

With apologies for this error,  
Rev. K. Jonker



## Conservative Action in the Christian Reformed Church

In the wake of the 1995 Christian Reformed Church (CRC) Synod decision permitting women ordination in ecclesiastical office, the conservatives within the CRC have been busy weighing their options. One tangible result was an interclassical conference last fall in the Chicago area. The December 1995 issue of *Outlook* carried a report on it by Darrell Todd Maurina.

Meeting at First Christian Reformed Church in the southeast Chicago suburb of South Holland, an unprecedented 290 delegates, from 110 of the Christian Reformed denomination's 985 churches, voted to call the Christian Reformed synod to lead the denomination to repentance. The text of the call to repentance will be drafted by the officers of the conference, but conference chairman Rev. Andrew Cammenga confirmed that the call to repentance will respond to Synod 1995's decision allowing women to serve as ministers, elders, and evangelists in the 294,000 member denomination and its failure to sever ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC's mother church, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland ("synodical"), despite its earlier decision to admit practicing homosexuals to church membership and ordain them to church office. Both items were cited in the call to convene the conference.

To accomplish these goals, the conference also voted to form a Covenant Union of Christian Reformed Churches (CUCRC) seeking "to return the Christian Reformed denomination to its historical biblical positions regarding important denominational issues." The Covenant Union, to be organized as a non-profit corporation, is to hold an annual conference and may hold regional meetings as well to "encourage its members to form a united front in their participation in classical and synodical sessions."

Other specific objectives for the Covenant Union will be to "assist in the preparation of overtures and communications," "promote education for officebearers," "enable its members and member churches to do ministry," and "promote the restoration of discipline in its member churches." To organize the Covenant Union, the conference voted to have its officers appoint a group of conference participants to "create the organizational structure, recruit churches and individual members, prepare communications regarding CUCRC, to advise all CRC churches, classes, and denominational functionaries, (and) solicit ideas from its members about what synodical actions would demonstrate an appropriate change in direction for our denomination."

Responding to the actions of six classes which have exercised an option given them by Synod 1995 to permit the ordination of women by declaring parts of the church order "inoperative," the conference voted to "endorse the idea of classes based on the idea of *theological affinity* for churches that in conscience believe they must be part of such classes."

Adding some "teeth" to the call to repentance, the conference also adopted a resolution to "inform synod that should she not humble her heart in repentance before the Lord, this conference will reconvene next year to consider a proposal to form a new denomination."

It is clear that this was an important conference, both in terms of the large numbers that attended as well as the agenda items that were dealt with. Prominent conservatives were present such as Dr. Joel Nederhood of the CRC Back to God Hour, Rev. Jacob Eppinga, a regular columnist in the CRC's official publication, *The Banner*, Rev. Thomas VandenHeuvel, editor of *The Outlook*, Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, president of

Westminster Theological Seminary in California, and Dr. John R. Sittema, President of the Board of Trustees of Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

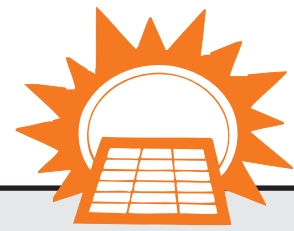
The *Outlook* article noted that according to Dr. Godfrey:

the "Covenant Union" is modeled after an earlier group of conservatives in the mainline Presbyterian Church (USA) at the time of the disruptions which led to the formation of Westminster Theological Seminary and finally of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936.

As an outsider looking in, we wish the brothers well. Since their decisions were made the Independent CRC churches have decided to federate. In light of that fact, should the CRC not heed the call for repentance and should these concerned members of the CRC decide to leave, we sincerely hope that they do not resolve to form another Reformed denomination. Rather they should seek the newly federated brothers and sisters who have already left the CRC for the same basic reasons that troubles these conservatives.

At the conference delegates also endorsed "the idea of classes based on the idea of theological affinity for churches that in conscience believe they must be part of such classes." I do not see how such an arrangement could ever work or be justified in the church which by definition should be one. To be consistent, will synods based on theological affinity be next? Will there then not be a schism? While the unity of the church is an article of faith which is understandably dear to the concerned within the CRC, it should also be admitted when that unity is no longer there. Attempting to paper over the type of differences and rifts emerging in the CRC by trying to set up theologically homogeneous classes within a larger church is not the answer and only underlines the brokenness of the fellowship.





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Isaiah 35:10*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are well on our way into the year 1996. For most of us, life is still much the same as it was in 1995. Once the holiday season was over, everything settled down again into the old routines. And now? A long year ahead of you, still no job, still the same physical limitations, still that illness, still loneliness, still . . . How much longer can we carry on?

When we look around us in the world, there are many other things to worry about as well. Through the radio and the newspapers we know a little fraction of the terrible things that are going on in the world. There are the wars, the famines, the earthquakes. There is also the ungodly world of murders, crimes, prostitutes and drug abuse. Probably we do not know half of all those things; only the Lord knows everything. And He is grieved and angered by the lifestyle of those who live their lives in the grip of Satan.

Is there no hope then for us in the year of 1996? There are among God's children those who have to endure such difficulties that they can hardly carry on, and there are those who ignore God's Word and pollute the world with the consequences of their ungodly lifestyle. If that were the only thing we knew, there would not be much hope for any of us. Fortunately there is hope and comfort for all those who believe that Jesus Christ is their Saviour. Christmas is not something we celebrate once a year and then we put it away with the Christmas decorations. Every day of the year we commemorate that our Saviour was born and died for our sins. He took God's wrath upon Himself and so delivered the world out of the grip of Satan. All the sad and terrible consequences of the fall into sin are tolerated by the Lord until He will send us final delivery. The Israelites had to live under the yoke of Pharaoh for 400 years. They could hardly see their way out anymore, and then, finally, they were set free from the slavery in Egypt. That is how we are waiting to be freed from the consequences of sin. And for us that is not some kind of an uncertain hope, it may come or it may not. No, it is something we can count on. Our prayers for the return of the Lord are being heard. That Day will come, as the Lord has promised it to us.

When we read the book of the prophet Isaiah, we can read all the warnings that the Lord gave to the people Israel. They did not always serve the Lord as they should. And the Lord told them that they would be severely punished for their wrongdoing, if they did not repent and turn their hearts to the Lord again. But He also promised them everlasting joy if they would serve the Lord. The words spoken by Isaiah also apply to us. The warnings, but also the promises of hope and comfort. Some of those words are written in the text above. We may know that the day will come that we enter the new Jerusalem with singing

and joy and gladness. Then there will be no more sorrow and sighing.

Everything will be indescribably beautiful and joyful. For there will be no more sin, no more suffering, no more worrying, no more feeling left out. We will all belong together as God's children. He will be the Centre, the joy, the goal of our lives. There will be nothing that can spoil it, or interfere with it. And all those beautiful things will never come to an end, because the joy will be everlasting.

So there is much more to the year 1996 than meets the eye. Sure there is suffering, we may have trying times, we may hardly see our way out anymore. But there is a way out. Maybe we still have to wait for a long time. Maybe we will still live to see the year 2000 or more. But when we know that our God has promised us such wonderful things for the future, would He not be with us now? When He promised us a permanent end to all suffering in the future, would He not be there to help us through trying times right now? When we are allowed to call Him "our Father," would He not be a Father to us right now? So let us not despair; let us not give up all hope, but let us keep our eyes open to all the wonderful blessings which the Lord bestows upon us now already. When we put our trust in Him and accept Him as our Guide in this life, then He will make us feel that we are not alone. When we accept our lives, even with trials and disappointments, out of His Fatherly hand He will give us joy and gladness. Some now, and much, much more everlastingly.

*Be still! What God in His good pleasure  
To you in wisdom may impart  
Is given you in perfect measure;  
Thus be content within your heart.  
To Him who chose us for His own  
Our needs and wants are surely known. Hymn 48:3*

## Birthdays in March:

### 3: Trevor Hofsink

4249 Academy St., Box 772, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

### 12: Gerry Eelhart

6203-100 Ave., Apt. 14, Edmonton, AB T6A 0G1

### 15: Jim VanderHeiden

7162 Canboro Rd., RR #1, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1

### 18: Rosalyn Kuik

68 Lynn Lake Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7

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

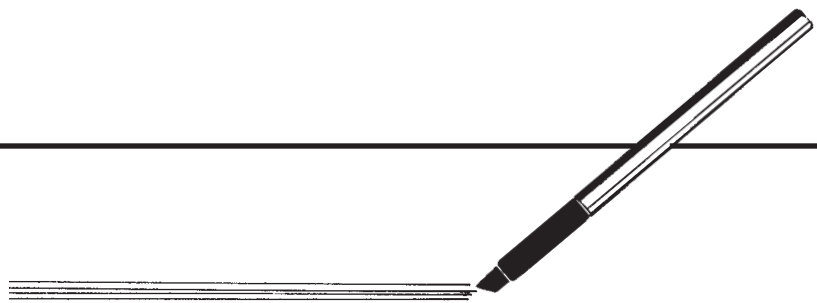
Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Hwy 20 RR #1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

# THE HI-LITER

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## News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



The Church at Hamilton received a letter "from the consistory of Burlington South regarding the urban ministry proposal. They indicate a desire to take upon themselves the task of investigating and possibly proceeding with this effort." Hamilton gladly supported this effort about which they had initially approached the churches in that area.

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A Mission Meeting was held in Armadale, WA where amongst other things the following was decided concerning the mission in Papua New Guinea: 1. To give more emphasis to the training for the ministry. Two brothers will receive a three year program of theological training, a part of which will be done in Australia. 2. To have three workers in the field of which two should preferably be missionaries. All this is subject to available finances.

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In Coaldale, AB the young people remember the elderly in a special way around the Christmas season by delivering flowers to them!

\*\*\*

Rev. R. Sietsma who was working as missionary in Maceió, Brazil, for the sending Church of Hamilton, ON has accepted a call by the Church of Assen-Zuid for the mission work in Curitiba, Brazil and will be their responsibility as of January 28, 1996. This leaves Rev. J. Kroeze, missionary, and Mr. H. Plug, mission aid worker in Maceió.

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The council of the Church at Edmonton AB, is requesting contact and possibly a meeting as combined councils with the Presbyterian Reformed Church at Edmonton which they understand to be a mission work of the Free Church of Scotland with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

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Some problems just do not disappear. We read in the Manitoba Church News that Carman received a letter from the Church at Winnipeg "re: members of the congregation of Carman living and working in Winnipeg. Should they become members of the Church at Winnipeg? It is decided that a letter will be sent to the Church at Winnipeg, conveying our thoughts about this." I recall that almost thirty years ago similar questions were raised! Likely it again concerns young people who have their parental homes in Carman where they spend the weekends.

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Some churches take a very organized approach to informing a called minister about the needs in their congregation. "Five members of Council gave presentations under

the headings: Statistics, Preaching, Diaconal Work, Pastoring and Positive Elements and Attractions of our congregation." That should give a clear picture!

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In Watford, ON they are in desperate need of larger facilities which is felt especially when the Lord's Supper is celebrated. "The consistory has great difficulty continuing with the status quo in which many people sit in the lobby and cannot see the minister or the sacrament."

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Many churches decided to support the L'Église Réformée du Québec upon the recommendation of Synod '95. In Grand Rapids, however, "the consistory did not believe it was appropriate to organize special collections in our congregation for these churches since we do not have ecclesiastical fellowship with them yet." If this would be the criterium to be on the roster of collections in the churches it would eliminate many collections for a variety of causes which are presently held throughout the churches.

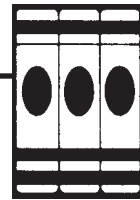
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After relating an incident when a judge sent home people who were not appropriately dressed for a courtroom (they were wearing shorts!) Rev. Nederveen of Burlington remarks:

"If there is such a thing as being inappropriately dressed for appearing in court, how much more diligent should we be to show ourselves courtly dressed when we appear together in worship of God. Casual Friday may be a good business move. Is it a proper thing for coming to the worship services? You may have noticed that I did not say worship services on Sunday. It is not the Sunday that determines the dress code; it is the fact that we appear before God in worship that should determine how we dress, whether that is on Sunday or on any other occasion where we are called together as congregation for a worship service."

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The matter of Bible translations continues to receive a considerable amount of attention throughout the churches. In Armadale, WA it was decided to return to the RSV: "Given the different opinions and information received from the Congregation and the developments in the Canadian churches, the Consistory with the deacons could not arrive at a consensus, and therefore would not commit the Congregation to a translation which could in a few years require change again. Therefore we will await a final Synod decision prior to adopting a particular translation." They resolved to send an overture to Synod Australia 1996 requesting it to arrive at a decision on adopting one translation.



## Calvin's Sermons on Galatians

*Sermons on Galatians* by John Calvin  
Old Paths Publications, 223 Princeton  
Road, Audubon, N.J. 08106 USA; 1995  
964 pages; hardcover; \$49.50 US

This is the first time that the only English translation of Calvin's 43 sermons on Galatians have been made available in over 400 years. In this handsomely and durably produced work with sewn binding, the publisher has newly typeset the 1574 translation of Arthur Golding and updated most of the spelling (although verb forms retain their archaic dress). If a word has changed its meaning or become obsolete, a modern translation has been provided in brackets. The end result remains a sixteenth century translation, but it has been made more understandable. With some patience, the average reader should have relatively little difficulty with it. This volume comes complete with both subject and text index.

When Calvin preached through the letter to the Galatians from November 1557 to May 1558 he was returning to a part on Scripture on which he had already written a commentary in 1548. Calvin's Galatians commentary has long been available in a modern translation (translated by T. H. L. Parker in 1965) in the so-called Torrance edition. One might ask, what is the advantage of having both Calvin's commentary on Galatians as well as his sermons? In his Foreword to the sermons on Galatians, W. Robert Godfrey, President of Westminster Theological Seminary in California, notes that "Calvin does not follow the brevity and conciseness of his commentary in preaching; rather, he seeks to communicate to the people with a much fuller elaboration of the themes of the text" (p. xii). A sermon of a given passage is much longer than the relevant commentary. Another difference with the commentary is that the

sermons directly apply the text to us, our faith and our lives.

For these reasons, this volume of sermons (which expound text after text in order) is most worthwhile for study and personal upbuilding in the faith. Calvin seldom had time for immediate formal preparation of his sermons (he preached about 8 times in two weeks), and apparently preached straight from the original text, relying on his wide knowledge of Scripture and previous studies. His sermons therefore have a directness and relevancy about them for his hearers that is impossible to capture in a scholarly commentary.

By and large, these sermons have not lost their relevance for us today. For example, Galatians 3:28 is a passage which is still very much discussed. It has been used to defend women in ecclesiastical office in the Christian Reformed Church.<sup>1</sup> In this part of Scripture we read: "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Now Calvin was not confronted with the issue of women in the offices of the church but his sermons on Galatians 3 perform the invaluable service of setting out in great detail the context and meaning of this passage. Whereas the commentary on this part of Scripture is very brief (eleven printed lines), the sermon which deals with this text covers six pages. It makes very clear that the issue in this passage is that God does not look at what we are in ourselves or what we deserve, but accepts us as if Jesus Christ were in us. What is necessary for salvation is to be in Christ by faith. One's race, social position or gender are not decisive. Only in Christ Jesus do we have what is necessary. The apostle is here not talking about abolishing the order established by the Father (pp. 492-498). For a twentieth century audience it thus becomes very obvious that this passage does not at all deal with the is-

sue of ecclesiastical office for which purpose it is often used today.

In another way these sermons are also very helpful for today. They remind us of our riches as believers in Christ. All kinds of areas that are sometimes less than clear for believers today are touched on in a pastoral and moving way. For instance, while there is much confusion today on baptism, Calvin's sermons give much insight and comfort with respect to the meaning of this sacrament. For example, Calvin speaks of the rich promises of God in our baptism and says that we must use baptism "as a shield to beat back all the distrusts that come upon us to stop us from praying unto God and from having our whole recourse unto him" (on Gal 3:27, p. 491). A second illustration concerns the freedom in which we must stand as Christians (Gal 5:1). Calvin says (among other things) that we are free when we know that God has received us in Christ and forgives our sins. Also, this freedom means that we must not waver to and fro but walk steadfastly according to God's Word "knowing moreover that our consciences are free, and that whether men command or forbid anything, it is nothing to us." Calvin stresses that freedom is found in obeying God's word, though it be done with infirmities (pp. 645-646). Of course these two examples do not even begin to scratch the surface of the riches of God's Word in Galatians as explained by Calvin in these sermons. Think for example of that grand message of salvation by grace alone through faith which plays such a large part in Galatians.

The English is old, but the Gospel message is as timely as ever. These sermons are heartily recommended.

<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., N. H. Gootjes, "Galatians 3:28 and Women in Office," *Clarion* 41:20 (1992) 425-427.



# PRESS RELEASE



## PRESS RELEASE OF CLASSIS CONTRACTA ONTARIO-SOUTH December 13, 1995 in Hamilton

1. On behalf of the convening church at Hamilton Rev. Cl. Stam called the meeting to order. He read Luke 1:67-79 and lead in prayer. He then welcomed the delegates.

2. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. The churches at Ancaster, Hamilton, Smithville and Rockway were duly represented.

3. Classis contracta was constituted and a proposal was adopted to appoint

the following brothers: as chairman: Rev. Cl. Stam and as clerk: Rev. J. DeGelder. The clerk was instructed to look after the press release.

4. The agenda was adopted.

5. The Church at Hamilton requested the approval of Classis for the release of Rev. R. Sietsma, missionary in Macaió, Brazil, who had accepted a call from the Gereformeerde Kerk at Assen-Zuid, the Netherlands, to serve as a missionary in Curitiba, Brazil.

After examination of the required documents, which were found to be in good order, classis decided to discharge

Rev. R. Sietsma from his duties as minister of the Canadian Reformed churches in Classis Ontario-South. A Certificate of Release was read, approved and signed.

6. Upon request per instruction of the church at Rockway, Classis appointed Rev. D.G.J. Agema as counselor for the Church at Rockway.

7. The Acts were read and adopted.

8. Rev. DeGelder led in thanksgiving and the chairman closed the meeting.

For Classis Contracta Ontario-South of December 13, 1995  
J. DeGelder, clerk e.t.

## OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



### Dear Busy Beavers,

The time has finally come!

Here are the winners of the Picture Contest!

First Prize : Richelle Kruisselbrink

Second Prize : Richard Oosterhoff

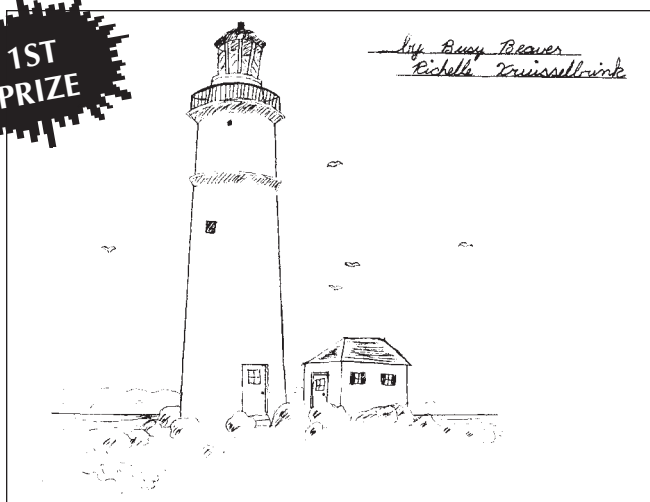
Third Prize : Marja Vandekamp

Honourable Mention: Dorothy Gunnink

Congratulations to the winners! Look for your Prize in the mail soon!

To all those others who entered but didn't win. . . . Thank You very much for joining in the contest. I enjoyed receiving all the pictures of many different kinds. Look for your reward in the mail soon!

To all Busy Beavers: Thanks for all your letters, pictures, cards and puzzles! Please keep sending them in!



### POEM

by Busy Beaver Barbara Bultena

### WINTER

When it gets cold out  
Winter's on its way  
When it's here we like to shout  
We like to run and play.  
Snow everywhere on the ground  
No grass to be found!

# Quiz Time!

## DOVES

Answer each of the following questions about doves.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who sent a dove to see if the water had dried off the earth? (Gen. 8:6-8)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What did the dove return with the second time it was sent out? (Gen. 8:11)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The third time the dove was sent out, what happened? (Gen. 8:12)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Why did the psalmist want wings like a dove? (Psalm 55:6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who said he mourned like a dove and his eyes failed with looking upward? (Isaiah 38:9-14)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Whom did Jeremiah tell to dwell in the rocks and be like the dove? (Jer. 48:28)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who said that the Israelites who escaped would be like doves, mourning for their iniquities? (Eze. 7:16)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Whom did Hosea say was like a silly dove? (Hosea 7:11)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. At his baptism, who saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove? (Mt. 3:16)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Whom did Jesus tell to go out as harmless as doves? (Mt. 10:5, 16)

## GOD CALLED

When God calls people, they are usually at work. Match each person with what he was doing when God called him.

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:10        | a. mending nets                            |
| 2. David, 1 Sam. 16:11-13     | b. serving the king                        |
| 3. Paul, Acts 9:2-6           | c. searching for lost animals              |
| 4. Amos, Amos 7:14-15         | d. caring for sheep                        |
| 5. King Saul, 1 Sam. 9:17-20  | e. herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit |
| 6. Matthew, Mt. 9:9           | f. journeying to persecute Christians      |
| 7. James and John, Mt. 4:21   | g. plowing with oxen                       |
| 8. Nehemiah, Neh. 1:1, 2:1    | h. collecting taxes                        |
| 9. Peter and Andrew, Mt. 4:18 | i. being a priest's helper                 |
| 10. Elisha, 1 Kings 19:19     | j. fishing                                 |

## CRACK THE CODE!

by Busy Beaver *Henriette Vandekamp*

A ○	G ☒	M ♣	S +	Y #
B □	H ♀	N ♀	T ×	Z ☹
C △	I ✦	O ↑	U ☐	
D °°	J ♥	P ↓	V =	
E ☉	K ♀	Q ☺	W ✱	
F ☹	L ♣	R ◇	X ☐	

↓ ◇ ○ ♣ + ☉ × ♀ ☉ ♣ ↑ ◇ °°

## WORD FIND

by Busy Beaver *Rebecca Bethlehem*

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

### Can You Find:

Rat	Cat	Dog	Rabbit
Bear	Kangaroo	Koala	Fox
Bird	Mouse	Zebra	Lion
Antelope	Cheetah	Moose	Fish
Ape	Monkey	Seal	Penguin
Polar Bear	Bat	Owl	Tiger
Crab	Gorilla		



### From the Mailbox

Hi *Kimberly Tuininga*. Thanks for the letter. I'm glad to hear that you are having fun in this winter weather. You probably have lots of work all the time because you live on a farm, right? How are things going at school? Hope to hear from you soon, Kimberly!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Trisha Hartman*! I hope you enjoy our club activities and join right in. I can see that you have no trouble keeping busy! Bye, Trisha.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Joel Slomp*. What kinds of things do you enjoy doing? If you like making puzzles, why don't you send in a few for this Little Magazine? When is your birthday? Send it in soon, so I can put your name on the birthday list. Hope to hear from you soon. Bye, Joel.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Tamsen Lodder*. Did you have a good time at your grandparent's place in Chatham? How is your Mom doing? Hopefully you aren't too busy helping out to write me back! Bye, Tamsen.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Chantal Lodder*. I hope you enjoy being a member. Do you still write letters to your good friend in Australia? Let's wait until your little sister can write, herself, before she joins the Club, ok? Bye, Chantal.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jordan Lodder*. What kinds of things do you like to do in the snow? Did you live close to a beach when you lived in Australia? Hope to hear from you soon, Jordan.

That's all for this time.  
 Love to you all.

Aunt Betty

**Aunt Betty**  
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