

Clarion

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*Martin Luther
as translator of the Bible*



By R. Schouten



Covenant Renewal

Many Christians today have a sense that things are not as they should be in the Church. Try as they might, these believers cannot suppress an ominous feeling that something has gone awry. Symptoms include a general inability in the churches to articulate the basic features of Reformed religion and a general breakdown of a once commonly endorsed Reformed lifestyle. Not a few members experience an unhappy sense of spiritual, moral and ecclesiastical drifting. Old clarities appear to be yielding to newer confusions. Many time-tested and allegedly time-worn pieces of mental furniture are being hauled off to the antiquarian dealers of the mind. In times of emerging change, many questions arise. What shall we believe? How shall we live? How must we go on? How can we maintain our identity as the people of God?

In the face of what some even venture to describe as deformation, solutions are requested. How can the churches find renewal? What is the road to a revival of genuine religion? Sometimes, answers to questions like these seem to focus entirely on **strategy** and **technique**. According to thinkers in this vein, the present malaise may be attributed to a failure of strategic thinking. The loss of vision is due to the church's ineptitude in getting out the Gospel message in a form and style that is appropriate to the age. Needed are new methods of packaging and presenting the Gospel. We're also told that people can't relate to the old ways of worshiping God; they need something new and different.

Naturally, all efforts to get truth into the hearts and minds of church members are to be applauded. Still, it may be asked whether a stress on technique and strategy is appropriate. Are the alleged problems in the church due to weaknesses of method or to the condition of the heart of God's people? Can we attribute a loss of zeal simply to poor technique? When the preaching of the prophets in Old Testament days often brought no repentance, was this reason to conclude that their strategies were inefficient and that a new method was needed? A low level of spiritual and moral life need not inevitably lead to a critique of method. Instead, it may lead to an intensified covenantal critique of God's people!

Perhaps our search for answers to some current questions can find direction by looking to Scriptural patterns of covenant renewal. Covenant renewal is a constant theme in Scripture. Repeatedly, we see patterns of deformation followed by a call for re-commitment which, if heeded, leads to renewal or, if not heeded, leads to covenant judgment. Let's take a closer look at some aspects of covenant renewal in Scripture.

What God has done!

Examples of covenant renewal in Scripture include the events described in passages such as Exodus 19:3-8, the entire book as well as specific sections of Deuteronomy (e.g., Deuteronomy 26:5-11), Joshua 8:30-35, Joshua 24, 1 Kings 18 and 2 Kings 22-23.

If we take Exodus 19:3-8 as our first example, we find Israel at Mt. Sinai – brought there by God's mighty hand. What happens at Sinai is the beginning of a new phase of

God's salvation work. When Moses speaks to the people, he says on behalf of the LORD, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." The stress in this message is on what God has already done for His people. God has taken His people from Egypt, He has shown them mighty signs and wonders, He has drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea and has now brought His people Israel to Sinai! Similarly, in chapter 20, verse 2, in the preamble to the Law, God declares, "I Am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Once again, the stress is on God's initiative of grace. Law is set in the context of grace and is itself a gift of grace.

If we turn now to the book of *Deuteronomy*, we find out that it consists of a series of messages delivered by Moses to Israel on the Plains of Moab, just prior to Moses' death and the entrance of Israel into Canaan. The whole book shows a clear covenantal structure. It is a covenant renewal document. It begins with a long and detailed summation of God's redeeming actions in the past (chapters 1-4). Only after detailing what God has already done for Israel, does the book continue with an urgent appeal to be faithful to the LORD. Once again, the implication is that covenant renewal starts by focusing our hearts and minds on what God has already done for His people.

Specific examples within the book of *Deuteronomy* confirm this direction. Chapter eleven contains a concluding exhortation of Moses. He begins by detailing again the great, redemptive deeds performed by God in the midst of His people. What the LORD did in Egypt, how He gave deliverance through the Red Sea, how He showed judgment in the deaths of Dathan and Abiram — all this is summarized when Moses says, "Your eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did" (verse 7). Only after this summary of God's actions of redemption, does Moses continue with the words, "You shall **therefore** keep all the commandment which I command you this day."

In other words, Israel's obedience is a response based on what God has already done! In *Deuteronomy*, Moses often uses phrases such as, "And now, Israel," or, "Now, then," or, "Therefore." This is covenantal language. After summarizing the acts of God, the author comes to his application: **now then, therefore, and now** . . . live in obedience before God (for a similar pattern, see *Deuteronomy* 6:20-24).

For a somewhat different example, we may turn to Deut. 26, where we find some rules about the tithes in Israel. When a Jew wished to bring his tithe to the Lord, he had to first recite a moving Old Testamentic Credo. We could think of this Credo as an Old Testamentic *Apostles' Creed*. This is what the worshiper had to say: "A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the LORD the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our op-

pression; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and He brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. **And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which Thou, O LORD, hast given me.**" Once again we see the pattern: human response of gratitude based on God's great acts of grace.

In the famous events of Joshua 24, we find a similar style. This chapter consists of Joshua's last address to Israel – a short form of Moses' address of a generation earlier (the book Deuteronomy). In verses 1-13, Joshua first recounts the astonishing deeds of the LORD. What we find in this part of his speech is pure Gospel! We are reminded by Joshua that God is the God of redeeming grace, the God who sets free and liberates His people. After this extensive review of God's acts, we find the familiar phrase, "**now therefore.**" Yes, "Now therefore, Israel, fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served Beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

New Testament covenant history, although shorter than Old Testament history, is much more powerful. As New Testament believers, we have a richer and deeper Credo in which we confess God's actions in Christ Jesus to overcome sin, death and the devil and to bring about His own everlasting Kingdom. Also as New Testament believers, we must call to mind what God has already done for us. After all, God is Yahweh, I AM WHO I AM, the God who has been dynamically at work to rescue His people.

Thus, the pattern which emerges from the Bible is that covenant renewal begins by focusing our hearts and minds on what the LORD has already done for us! Covenant renewal involves remembering the great deeds of the LORD. We could say that covenant renewal always involves **confessional reawakening**. For the confession of the faith is a summary of God's great works in Christ. By focusing on God's great acts summarized in our Credo and elaborated upon in the confessions, we put the LORD back in the center. In our act of confessing, we realize anew that God has done all, that He is an active God who has long been busy for our salvation. Renewal cannot happen if we don't know and love the work of God summarized in the Credo! It may be asked: are we impressed by Yahweh in

action, Father, Son and Spirit busy for us, as summarized by the Credo?

What God requires

As already mentioned, the covenant renewal episodes of Scripture involved a recapitulation of covenant history followed by the inevitable word, "therefore" or "now then." The reasoning of covenant renewal goes like this: "Israel, seeing that God has done so much for you, now then, believe in Him and walk in His ways." The "therefore" of Biblical religion is based on the acts of God. On the basis of His already revealed saving deeds, the LORD calls for respect, love and obedience.

The central covenant response sought by God is **loyalty**. He reveals Himself to His people as redeeming God and King. In the covenant renewal events, the LORD urges upon His people the need for making a clear **choice!** For example, after a description of the LORD's great deeds, Moses says, "See I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; **therefore, choose life**, that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19).

From this example, we can see that the covenant renewal episodes force the

issue. The objective of these episodes is to restore integrity to God's people. The objective is to overcome the attitude of pretended neutrality. Repeatedly, it could be observed that the people of God wanted to serve the Lord and the Baals, the Lord and the world, but the covenant renewal event made clear that such duplicity could not be maintained. What the LORD asks of His people is undivided loyalty and allegiance.

In covenant renewal, God shows how He does all for us and now wants all from us. Yes, God wants to be everything to us! By describing His great deeds to us, the Lord lays claim to our whole existence. Since we are created by the Father, redeemed by the Son and sanctified by the Spirit, our entire existence belongs to Him! What He desires is a bond of burning love. His goal is a covenant fellowship of fiery zeal, a covenant people with passion for their King. The Lord is not prepared to stand idly by while His people attempt to get by with part-time and half-hearted service. That kind of covenant service amounts to idolatry and the result of such a life will be covenant judgment.

Really, we have only two options: covenant renewal or covenant wrath. The God who gives all and does all will not allow Himself to be treated as a God-on-the-sidelines, called in when all else fails.



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and the man of understanding
acquire skill,
to understand a proverb and a
figure,
the words of the wise and their
riddles.

Older people must read along with the younger ones. They may be farther

along on the road of wisdom, but they are never too old to learn. Those who think themselves fully qualified experts with nothing more to learn, are certainly not wise!

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From Scripture

Proverbs 1:4-6
Ecclesiastes 12:9-11

Eschatology or Canon?

Theological reflections on the charismatic movement⁴

By J. Boersma

Scripture does not speak about the gift of the Holy Spirit as a second baptism which we should still expect today. This suggests that whether or not prophecy and tongues continue today, they are not restricted to a certain segment in the congregation which has been baptized with the Holy Spirit. This conclusion as such does not yet prove that tongues and prophecy no longer function today. Our views about the cessation or continuation of these gifts will have to be based on other Scriptural evidence.

Both charismatics and non-charismatics appeal to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. In verse 8, the apostle comments that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will all pass away. He then states that he has put childish ways behind him. (v. 11) Therefore, when the apostle speaks about the coming of "perfection" (v. 10) when he "shall know fully" (v. 12), does he perhaps refer to the completion of the New Testament canon? If so, this would mean that during the infancy stage of the church, tongues-speaking was still an acceptable phenomenon, but once the canon was completed, tongues were out of the picture. Such an interpretation would be a real support for the Reformed position that tongues have, in fact, ceased. Another view is that in referring to the coming of "perfection" Paul speaks about Christ's second coming, the eschaton. This keeps open the possibility that tongues and prophecy continue until that time and, therefore, still function today. Fee, for example, rejects the former inter-

pretation with the stroke of a brush.² He is convinced that Paul does not speak about the closing of the canon, but of the eschaton.

Wrong-headed spirituality

The context of the letter pleads for an eschatological interpretation. Already in chapter 1:7 the apostle hints at the Corinthians' erroneous understanding of the eschaton, when he writes: "Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." The "revelation" of Christ, His second coming, is something which has not been realized yet. It is something which will take place at a later date. The Corinthians were wrongly of the opinion that they had made it already, that they had arrived (cf. 4:8,10).

This is the theological framework in which the apostle Paul addresses the question of glossolalia, of speaking in tongues. The Corinthians were speaking in "tongues of angels" (13:1), possibly a reference to glossolalia. Just as in connection with other questions, however, they also here drew the wrong conclusion that they were so "spiritual" that the present life no longer counted. The result of their wrong-headed spirituality was a phenomenal list of ethical problems in the congregation: incest, prostitution, sexual abstinence, use of secular courts to resolve congregational problems, eating of sacrificial food in idol temples, and individualism at the communal celebration of the Lord's Supper.

One of the problems arising from this sense of: "already having arrived" in the kingdom of glory was an over-emphasis on speaking in tongues. In the eyes of the Corinthians, this was truly *the* mode of communication for this spiritual age. Paul addresses this erroneous view in chapters 12-14. Throughout these chapters, he has tongues-speaking in view.³ First he gives some basic teaching about spiritual gifts, and in particular about the need for diversity. It is the character of the church which is at stake. The church is not a group of people who all have the same gifts, but there is a wide variety of gifts in the one body.

Paul concludes chapter 12 with a number of rhetorical questions, emphasizing the wide variety of gifts: "Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret" (12:30)? He then concludes with the exhortation: "But eagerly desire the greater gifts." He comes back to this at the very beginning of chapter 14, when he writes: "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts." Both at the end of chapter 12, and at the beginning of chapter 14, the apostle encourages his readers to eagerly desire spiritual gifts. This is an indication that chapter 13 is an interlude.⁴ Paul has had such interludes or digressions on earlier occasions.⁵ Also here, while this passage about love (chapter 13) may seem out of place, it actually is a very fitting digression, which in a certain way is foundational to the entire argument.

Why is this so? What does love have to do with speaking in tongues? Perhaps not much, in the eyes of the Corinthians. But Paul makes clear that tongues are useless if love is not the guiding principle in all of one's actions. This most beautiful passage on love is at the same time one of the sharpest possible criticism. The wonderful descriptions of love (13:4-7) form in many ways a sharp contrast to the dealings of the Corinthians. Love is patient. The Corinthians were not. Love is kind. The Corinthians were not. Love does not envy. The Corinthians did. Love is not rude. The Corinthians were. Love is not self-seeking. The Corinthians were. Love is not easily angered. The Corinthians were. Love keeps no record of wrongs. The Corinthians did. Love does not delight in evil. The Corinthians did. In many ways the ethical dealings of the Corinthians were diametrically opposed to the "way of love" as Paul outlines it here. This means that the Corinthians at least ran the danger of being like "a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal," of being "nothing," and of gaining "nothing" (13:1-3).

Poor vision

After this sharp, antithetical characterization of love, Paul comes with the verses 8-13:

(8) Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. (9) For we know in part and we prophesy in part, (10) but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. (11) When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. (12) Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (13) And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

"Knowledge" is a key term in this passage. First, it occurs together with prophecies and tongues in verse 8. Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will all come to an end. All three are ways of revelation.⁶ They will all come to an end. Paul uses a verb here which he uses more often when he refers to the end of the world.⁷ This is an indication that Paul probably has in mind the end of time. In verse 9 the apostle drops his reference to tongues and continues

to speak only about knowledge and prophecy, of which he says that we only have them "in part." Finally, in verse 12 Paul no longer speaks of prophecy, but only mentions "knowledge." While I now "know in part," then I shall "know fully, even as I am fully known." This emphasis on "knowledge" is too prominent to be ignored.⁸ The Corinthians boast of their knowledge. It is one of the gifts of which they are most proud. Just as in chapter 8 in connection with sacrificial food, so also here the apostle corrects the Corinthians' boasting of their knowledge. While they may be of the opinion that they know a great deal, Paul puts them in their place already in chapter 8: As long as they boast of their knowledge, they still do not know the way they ought to know. Only if they love God, are they indeed known *by* him (1 Corinthians 8:2-3).⁹

In chapter 13 the apostle, in a sense, reiterates this: Their knowledge is still only very limited. What is the reason for this limited knowledge? Is it because the canon is not yet complete? Or is it because they have not yet arrived in the kingdom of glory? Verse 12 plays a key role in determining this question. What does Paul mean when he says that now we see "but a poor reflection as in a mirror"?¹⁰ What does he mean, when he says that then we shall see "face to face"? Much of the discussion on this text has focused on the meaning of looking through a mirror. Some are of the opinion that mirrors only produced vague images in Paul's days. After all, they were made of bronze. Paul would then contrast the blurred vision in a bronze mirror with the sharp vision which one has apart from the use of a mirror. Others think that it is not at all proven that the mirrors of those days were of such poor quality. In their view Paul is not speaking of blurred or indistinct vision, but more likely of *indirect* vision. Standing beside someone and looking in a mirror, one does not see the person himself but only a picture or an image of him.¹¹

Most likely, the latter interpretation is correct. But this discussion does not yet answer the question: What does the apostle mean with this verse? To find out we must turn to the well-known account of Numbers 12, to which Paul refers. It tells the story of Miriam and Aaron's opposition to Moses. They felt that the LORD had spoken through them just as well as through Moses (v. 2). The LORD then summoned Aaron and Miriam and said to them:

- (6) When a prophet of the LORD is among you,
I reveal myself to him in visions,
I speak to him in dreams.
 - (7) But this is not true of my servant Moses;
he is faithful in all my house.
 - (8) With him I speak face to face,
clearly and not in riddles;
he sees the form of the LORD.
- Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

There are a number of striking parallels between Numbers 12 and 1 Corinthians 13. Both chapters deal with situations of boastful arrogance in connection with revelation. Miriam and Aaron felt that the LORD had also spoken through them. They had "prophetic" qualifications just as well as Moses. Similarly, the Corinthians were proud of their "knowledge," of the "prophetic" qualifications by which they gained insight into the "mysteries" of the Christian religion.

The LORD made clear to Miriam and Aaron, however, that they were mistaken. There was a difference between Moses and the other prophets. The LORD came to other prophets in "visions." The Hebrew word for "vision" can also be translated with "mirror." This ambiguity in the Hebrew set off a discussion among Jewish rabbis about how God revealed himself to the Old Testament prophets. Some speculated that Moses only needed one mirror to see God, while the other prophets needed nine mirrors to see him.¹²

This Jewish explanation is rather fantastic: Moses did not need a mirror at all to see God. He spoke to God "face to face."¹³ Moses' interaction with the Lord was a direct one. It was an interaction like one has with a friend (Exodus 33:11). Moses' contact with the Lord was so direct that the very glory of the LORD reflected from Moses' face after meeting with the LORD in the tabernacle. It was a glory that the Israelites were only able to observe in an entirely indirect fashion: only by looking at the face of Moses (Exodus 34:35). While Moses saw the LORD face to face, the Israelites only had an indirect look at this glory of the LORD. The apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians of this episode in his second letter (2 Corinthians 3:7-18).

Whereas God would speak to other prophets only in a vision or a dream, he spoke to Moses "face to face." This difference between the other prophets and Moses is similar to that between the believers "now" and "then." Now the

Corinthians only saw through a mirror, indirectly.¹⁴ Then they would see “face to face,” just as God spoke to Moses “face to face,” just as Moses saw the “form of the LORD” (cf. Exodus 33:22).¹⁵

Partial knowledge

This “face to face” contact between God and the believers is something the Corinthians were still missing. At the moment they saw “but a poor reflection” as in a mirror. Literally translated, they saw as through a mirror “in obscurity” (*en ainigmati*).¹⁶ For a proper understanding of this phrase, we again have to go back to Numbers 12. There the LORD says that He did not speak to Moses “in riddles.” The Hebrew word used refers to an enigmatic saying, to something which is spoken indirectly and needs interpretation.¹⁷ Paul is saying that it is no different with the New Testament prophets in the congregation of Corinth. Just as the Old Testament prophets came with obscure sayings, with riddles that needed interpretation, so also those who prophesy and speak in tongues in the New Testament still need some sort of evaluation (12:10; 14:29).¹⁸ This will only change when we “know fully.”¹⁹

This interpretation sheds light on Paul’s repeated use of the phrase “in part” as opposed to “perfection.” Just as the mode of revelation to the Old Testament prophets was indirect, so also the revelation to the New Testament prophets was indirect. Just as the LORD “made himself known” to the Old Testament prophets indirectly, by means of visions and dreams, so also his prophetic revelation to the Corinthian prophets yielded an indirect knowledge of God. For a full understanding of these prophecies the Corinthians would have to wait until they would see the Lord “face to face.” Then their knowledge would include a full understanding of the prophecies. In other words, only then would their knowledge be complete.

The conclusion must be that 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 is a passage about eschatology rather than about the closing of the canon. It may, therefore, seem logical to conclude that prophecy and tongues did not cease with the closing of the canon, but that they will continue until Christ’s second coming. After all, it is at that time that our poor vision and our partial knowledge will disappear. This would be too hasty a conclusion, however. The Reformed theologian Richard B. Gaffin acknowledges that this passage does not speak about the closing of the New Testament

canon. He draws attention, however, to Paul’s comment about seeing “a poor reflection as in a mirror.” According to Gaffin, Scripture is just as much a mirror as any other kind of special revelation, such as tongues and prophecy. Concludes Gaffin: “But inscripturation has ceased. And if that be granted, then it is gratuitous to insist that this passage teaches that the modes of revelation mentioned, prophecy and tongues, are to continue functioning in the church until Christ’s return.”²⁰ In other words, we must have an eye for the revelatory function of tongues and prophecy. The passage not only speaks about eschatology, but it speaks about *our present knowledge as this relates to eschatology*. Paul is simply asserting the partial character of the knowledge which we have in this present dispensation. The Corinthians, who felt that they had already arrived, lost sight of the partial, imperfect character of our present knowledge. Therefore, what Paul is saying about prophecy and tongues can also be said about God’s revelation in Scripture: Also with Scripture we still only know in part. This will change when Christ returns. This means that despite the eschatological emphasis of this passage the “time of the cessation of prophecy and tongues is an open question so far as this passage is concerned”²¹ Thus, we must continue our quest next time.

Rev. Boersma is minister of the church in Aldergrove, BC.

¹This view is defended by Robert Glenn Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), pp. 125-29.

²Fee states that this “is an impossible view, of course, since Paul himself could not have articulated it. What Paul himself nor the Corinthians could have understood can[not] possibly be the meaning of the text” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], p. 645, n. 23). Although this comment has merit, it must be kept in mind that the Corinthians were under obligation to regard Paul’s letters as divine revelation – even though they may have been unwilling to do so, considering their antipathy toward Paul. Fee does not make clear why the notion of a New Testament canon being formed would have to be such a strange notion to Paul and the Corinthians.

³Cf. J. Van Bruggen, *Ambten in de apostolische kerk: Een exegetisch mozaïek* (Kampen: Kok, 1984), p. 154.

⁴At this point, I follow the exegesis of Fee, p. 626.

⁵For example, chapter 9:1-27 occupies a very similar position between chapters 8 and 10.

⁶I plan to return to the revelatory character of prophecy and tongues in the next article.

⁷Paul uses the same word (*katargeō*) four times in this context (13:8 [2x], 10, 11). Although not invariably so, the word often has an eschatological meaning (cf. 2:6; 6:13; 15:24-26; 2 Thessalonians 2:8).

⁸See Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), pp. 110-11.

⁹The passive “is known by God” of 8:3 makes it clear that also in 13:12 God is the implied subject when Paul writes, “then I shall know fully, just as I am also fully known” (cf. Galatians 4:9; 1 John 4:10). Günther Bornkamm comments in this connection that “the divine gracious will of election reaches into the eternal pre-temporality before my knowledge begins, before I am born” (*Early Christian Experience*, trans. Paul L. Hammer [New York: Harper & Row, 1969], p. 185).

¹⁰Literally, verse 12 reads: “For now we see through a mirror in obscurity [*en ainigmati*]; but then face to face.”

¹¹See, for example, Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 647-48.

¹²Gerhard Kittel, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 1.178; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1926) III.453.

¹³Numbers 12:8 literally says, “mouth to mouth.” Exod 33:11 and Deut 34:10 speak of Moses speaking to God “face to face.”

¹⁴Paul picks up the rabbinical speculation about a mirror to make clear that the indirect character of the revelation to the Old Testament prophets is similar to the indirect vision of God in the present dispensation. This is an argument to regard Paul speaking of a mirror not because it gives blurred vision but because it gives indirect vision.

¹⁵Both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint (the Greek translation) in Numbers 12:8 speak of God speaking to Moses “mouth to mouth.” Paul does not go back to the Septuagint, however, but to the rabbinic tradition. Moreover, both Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10 do have the phrase “face to face.”

¹⁶The Greek phrase used (*en ainigmati*) only occurs once in the New Testament, so that its meaning is somewhat hard to determine.

¹⁷The Greek word *ainigma* is used in the Septuagint version of Numbers 12:8.

¹⁸Gaffin points out that “Paul associates with prophecy the gift of discerning or distinguishing with spirits,” just as he associates with tongues the gift of interpreting tongues. Also in 14:29 he commands that the prophecies be weighed or evaluated by others (*Perspectives on Pentecost*, p. 70).

¹⁹Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, *De wederkomst van Christus* (Kampen: Kok, 1963), pp. 167-68: “It seems as though Paul refers to the relation between *now* and *then* in the same category as the difference, the antithesis, between the prophets (riddle) and Moses.”

²⁰Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, p. 111.

²¹Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, p. 111.

Martin Luther as Translator of the Bible

By R. Faber

Of those who have translated Scripture into the vernacular Martin Luther (1483-1546) ranks among the best. Whereas Luther himself gave a very modest assessment of his German translation of the Bible, history has shown that the "Luther-Bible" was one of the greatest services which the reformer rendered to the church of Christ. Not only did the German Bible promote the reformation of the church in Germany, but also it became the standard for subsequent translations of Scripture throughout continental Europe and England, thereby furthering the Reformation beyond Luther's native country. The most influential translator of Scripture into English, William Tyndale, revealed an open debt to Luther's version. And the Authorized Version, which remains the touchstone for modern English editions, shows several influences of Luther's German Bible.¹ And yet relatively little attention has been devoted to the principles which guided Martin Luther in his translation of Scripture. Perhaps it will be of interest to Reformed believers concerned about English versions of the Bible used in the home and during the public worship services to know the principles that governed this powerful translation. The purpose of this article is to sketch the theory and practice of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German.

Luther did not publish a systematic exposition on the theory and practice of Bible translation; it was long thought that the reformer had not defined these clearly in his own mind. While Luther did have the opportunity to discuss the translation of certain specific passages in his commentaries, letters and in the "table talks", it was concluded that he "operated not according to set rules from without but according to precepts guiding him from within."² In recent years, however, scholars have given greater attention to Luther's German rendering of the Hebrew and Greek Testaments, and have begun to discern Luther's systematic approach.³ Thus while the examination of the principles

which guided Martin Luther has yet to be completed, several important studies have provided the main lines of investigation. It is clear that Luther did apply carefully considered principles to his translation of Scripture. These principles may be crudely arranged under two headings: theological and linguistic. To make such a division appears somewhat artificial but is not without basis in Luther's own thinking, as the reformer himself defended his translation of Romans 3:28 with theological and linguistic arguments.⁴ In what follows I shall



Martin Luther

describe briefly some of the theological premises which Luther brought to his method of translation; then I shall discuss the linguistic considerations which guided Luther in producing what became the most influential translation of the Reformation. Space prevents treatment of Luther's thoughts on textual criticism, exegesis and hermeneutics, except insofar as they impinge upon Luther's *translation*, as it is translation which appears to be of concern today.

1. Theological considerations

One important theological consideration in translating Scripture into the vernacular is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Together with the

other reformers, Luther professed that the Bible is the revelation of God to all human beings. In His Word, Luther believed, God speaks directly to everyone who reads it. What is more, God's revelation is clear and readily understood by all. As priests of God, all believers have the duty to read and apply God's Word in their lives. The Roman Catholic church, however, had assumed a position between God and man, claiming to be the sole interpreter of God's Word. And as the majority of Luther's contemporaries were unable to read for themselves the church-sanctioned Latin Vulgate Bible (let alone the original Hebrew and Greek texts), they trusted the interpretation given by the church. But as Luther and the other reformers well-knew, the Church purposely concealed the clarity of Scripture and obscured the Gospel for its own interests. In fact, it was a restricted group of official expositors which claimed the duty that belonged to every believer. A few men, learned in the original languages of the Bible, had appropriated a responsibility which was not theirs. By providing a German translation Luther aimed to restore the priesthood of all believers. It is this doctrine which underlies Luther's statement about the language into which he translated Scripture: "we must inquire about this (i.e. the vernacular) of the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly. That way they will understand it and recognize that we are speaking German to them."⁵

Another theological consideration which affected Luther's translation is the conviction that Scripture is the Gospel. Again in common with the other reformers, Luther believed that the central message of the Bible is the good news of salvation by faith in the death of Jesus Christ. This tenet, which the Roman Catholic church had obscured also, Luther read on every page of the Bible.

Accordingly, Luther thought, the message of the Gospel must be revealed whenever the text permits it. Indeed for Luther the foremost meaning of a text was the meaning which most illustrated the “evangel,” or good news, in Scripture. From the opening paragraph of his preface to the Bible onward, Luther insisted, contrary to the Roman Catholic introductions to the Latin Vulgate, that one distinguish between the “laws and commandments” and the “gospel and promises of God.” Luther desired to uncover what the Roman Catholic Church had hidden for generations: the message of God’s grace. Luther realized that the purpose of the Old Testament law is to direct the believer to Christ, Who alone fulfilled the law, and Whose death alone justifies. This central message of Scripture appears not only in Luther’s introductions to the individual books of the Bible and in the marginal notes which accompany the German text, but also in the translation.

Luther’s teaching is frequently summarized as “the theology of the cross;” it would not be far from the mark to say that this teaching permeates also his translation. Some scholars have gone so far as to say that Luther permitted this doctrine to affect the rendering of even those passages which do not point to the cross. To put it differently, Luther’s translation has been described as “Pauline,” as though the reformer read Scripture through the eyes of the apostle Paul, whose letter to the Romans champions the teaching of justification by faith. M.U. Edwards is so bold as to state that “Luther chose to translate crucial passages in a way that tended to reinforce the points he wanted the reader to take away from the text”.⁶ But such an appraisal does not account sufficiently for Luther’s belief that the Bible is God’s Word, and the charge that Luther was Pauline assumes that the Bible contains competing theologies. Luther had found illustrious precedents for reading all of Scripture in light of the cross in the church fathers. Augustine, for example, had criticised the Jewish exegete Philo because the latter did not interpret passages of the Old Testament “so that Christ would be understood in them.”⁷ According to Luther, since all Scripture points to Jesus Christ, the correct interpretation (and translation) is the one which reveals Him most fully: “I decided to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified.” The Lutheran scholar Kirster Stendahl expresses the effect of Luther’s Christocentric translation as follows: “this powerful clarity about

the central message of Scripture led to new energy not only in biblical study, but also in the life of the church and in the lives of millions.”⁸

Other theological considerations which affected Luther’s translation of Scripture could be discussed here, but one must suffice. Luther professed the unity of Scripture, and so believed that the Old and New Testaments should be interpreted as one whole. The central meaning of the entire Word of God should govern the translation of each component of that Word. For this reason Luther took issue with the 1534 edition of the Basel Hebrew scholar, Sebastian Munster, who employed rabbinic philology and exegesis of the Old Testament, ignoring the role of the New Testament as “interpreter” of the Old. The New Testament gains deeper meaning when read against the background of the Old, and the Old Testament gains its full meaning only when read together with the New. In short, Luther applied the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture to his translation.

2. Linguistic considerations

Whereas a distinction is drawn between the *letter* and the *spirit* of the text in modern discussions of translation, Luther considers these aspects inseparable. The believer reads “spiritually,” since it is the Holy Spirit Who permits the believer to understand the Bible. The natural man is blind to the true content of the Bible, but the regenerate man has a living relationship with the revelation of God, and thus for him the letter *becomes* spirit, and the Word becomes a living witness to the work of God in Christ for mankind.⁹ Translating by the illumination of the Spirit does not mean moving beyond the text to a “hidden” meaning. Luther repeatedly states that one need never translate in opposition to the grammar of the text;¹⁰ at the same time, Luther believes that the reader must go beyond the form to the content. “Words serve and follow the meaning, not meaning the words.”¹¹ Luther also uses the following image to illustrate his understanding of the relationship between the letter and the spirit of the text: the words of Scripture are the sheath in which the Word of the Spirit is placed. The translator must know the literal meaning of the original words in order to understand what they contain.

Luther’s principle of grammatical-spiritual translation was unlike the principles of exegesis and translation espoused by his contemporaries. The medieval tradition of interpreting Scripture allegorically was still very com-

mon in Luther’s day – indeed, on occasion Luther himself employed it. The allegorists sought to go beyond the text to a different, mystical meaning; Luther’s “spiritual” approach was to understand the letter of the text in order to reach the Spirit of God who had inspired that text.¹² Thus, for example, Luther interpreted and translated the Psalms according to the Spirit, who had endowed the psalmist with a prophetic power to compose a text which points to Jesus Christ. For Luther this Christocentric reading of the Psalms was not allegorical but literal; that is to say, the true meaning of the text can only be grasped in full when the reader understands why and with what the Spirit inspired the psalmist.

Since the literal meaning of the text gives access to the spiritual meaning, the translator must be an expert in the original languages of Scripture. Textual criticism, philology, exegesis and proper historical criticism are paramount to understanding the Bible. Luther was one of the “Biblical humanists” who promoted such scholarship. It is difficult, perhaps, for the modern reader to appreciate how important knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin was to the reformers. Ten years’ experience as professor of the Bible helped Luther to translate accurately. He made use of Erasmus’ 1519 edition of the New Testament with its accompanying Latin translation and annotations. He had studied the medieval writings on exegesis and interpretation; he knew the rabbinic expositions of the Old Testament, and he readily consulted fellow scholars on matters of language and exposition. Luther stressed the importance of knowing Hebrew and Greek because the literal meaning of the biblical text leads to its spiritual meaning.

When the translator has fully grasped the literal meaning of the original text, he must, however, relinquish the form of that text and concentrate on translating its substance. For Luther the letter is but a form in which substance resides. He frequently stated that one should not be a prisoner of the text. To quote Luther: “(the translator) must see to it – once he understands the Hebrew author – that he concentrates on the sense of the text, asking himself, ‘Pray tell, what do the Germans say in such a situation?’ Once he has the German words to serve the purpose, let him drop the Hebrew words and express the meaning freely in the best German he knows.”¹³ In stating that the translator should render the sense and not the letter of the original text, Luther was fol-

lowing a principle established by the church fathers and reaffirmed by Erasmus. Erasmus had reminded his readers that the translator's task was "to bring out the meaning in the most suitable terms," and that it was impossible to render every expression in one language in the same form in another.¹⁴ Luther was, like Erasmus, sensitive to the tension caused by the simultaneous desire to reproduce the factual meaning of the original text and to maintain the force and effect of the original words.¹⁵

In translating the Bible into German, Luther strove to express Scripture in words known to all German-speaking people. He chose to employ the dialect used by the German chancellery because it was the language spoken by the majority of Germans in both south and north Germany. As the Luther biographer M. Brecht notes, "at least some eighty or ninety percent of Luther's linguistic expressions, substantially more than the earlier translation, could be understood in both southern and northern Germany."¹⁶ Unlike existing Vulgate-based German editions of the Bible which were rife with Latinate expressions and sentence structures most German readers could not appreciate, Luther's edition is characterized by very "modern" German diction. Whenever possible Luther avoided using foreign words; difficult terms or concepts were explained in marginal notes. As most readers will know, Luther is famous for his direct, simple, and vivid writing style. So too the German edition of the Bible is marked by simple and graphic language. To quote H. Bornkamm, Luther's translation ". . . spoke the language of the entire people, from the studies of the learned to the huts of the common folk."¹⁷ But even so Luther was not satisfied with his first version. He continued to revise the translation until his death in 1546; and in each revision his goal was to make the Bible sound "more German" for German readers.

Luther's principle of translating according to the sense and not the form of the original text prompted severe criticism. In 1523 Jerome Emser, the Roman Catholic secretary to Duke George of Saxony who had banned Luther's translation, published a treatise bearing the lengthy but revealing title, "On what grounds and for what reason Luther's translation of the New Testament should properly be forbidden to the common man." Emser's main argument was that Luther's translation was too free and not in accord with the letter of the original. As might be expected of an orthodox Roman Catholic who foresaw the effect

which Luther's translation would have upon its readers, Emser claimed that the new edition was too far removed from the original texts and the Latin Vulgate sanctioned by the church and so posed a threat to the church.

Conclusion

Modern scholars are more or less agreed that Luther's translation was remarkably free for its time. Luther wished to produce a readable version. The liberties Luther took to make the text accessible to the German readers are most evident in the translations of his favourite Old Testament book, the Psalms. It has been observed that on occasion Luther translated the original Hebrew so freely that fidelity to the Hebrew was compromised. On this point it is worthwhile to cite Calvin's criticism of Luther's methods: "Luther is not so particular as to propriety of expression or the historical accuracy; he is satisfied when he can draw from it some fruitful doctrine."¹⁸ Considerable tension must have filled the heart of Luther, whose desire was to make David "sound purely German," and who professed that the Scriptures are the words of God and not of men.

In response to such criticism, and as conclusion, let us permit Luther to have the final word. The translator was very conscious of the difficulty that arises when the letter of the original text cannot be translated exactly into the vernacular. On one occasion he writes, I "have been very careful to see that where everything turns on a single passage, I have kept to the original quite literally and have not lightly departed from it . . . I preferred to do violence to the German language rather than to depart from the word."¹⁹ In fact, Luther argued that the doctrinal import in certain Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek expressions is so great that the reader must adopt the foreign expression into his own vernacular. Referring to Christ's victory over death as prophesied in Psalm 68:18 ("Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive"), Luther notes that a German would rather say "thou hast set the captives free." But in order to maintain the message of the Gospel in these words, he transliterates the Hebrew, stating that "out of respect for such doctrine, and for the comforting of our conscience, we should keep such words, accustom ourselves to them, and so give place to the Hebrew language where it does a better job than our German."²⁰ The translator's goal is to detract nothing from the meaning of the original text while rendering the words clearly in

the native tongue. In sum, Luther's grammatical-spiritual method of translation aimed at striking a careful balance between adherence to the original text and clarity of expression.

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¹Thus, e.g., H. Bluhm, "Martin Luther and the English Bible: Tyndale and Coverdale," in G. Dünnhaupt, ed., *The Martin Luther Quincentennial* (Detroit, 1985), 112-125.

²H. Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career. 1521-1530* (English Translation. Philadelphia, 1983), 47.

³See, e.g., H. Bluhm, "Luther's German Bible," in P.N. Brooks, ed., *Seven-Headed Luther. Essays in Commemoration of a Quincentenary* (Oxford, 1983), 178-194.

⁴M. Luther, "On Translating: An Open Letter," in E.T. Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works. Vol. 35* (Philadelphia, 1960), 195.

⁵Idem, 189.

⁶M.U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley, 1994), 122.

⁷Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manicheum*.

⁸K. Stendahl, "The Word of God and the Words of Luther," in M.J. Harran, ed., *Luther and Learning* (Cranbury, 1985), 138.

⁹This point is well-made by W.J. Kooiman, *Luther and the Bible* (English Translation. Philadelphia, 1961), 33.

¹⁰Thus M. Brecht, *Martin Luther. Volume 3: The Preservation of the Church. 1532-1546* (English Translation. Minneapolis, 1993), 110.

¹¹M. Luther, "On Translating: An Open Letter," 213.

¹²Thus Kooiman, 68.

¹³M. Luther, "Defense of the Translation of the Psalms," in E.T. Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works. Vol. 35* (Philadelphia, 1960), 213-214.

¹⁴For a summary of the principles which governed Erasmus' Latin rendering of the Greek New Testament see E. Rummel, *Erasmus as Translator of the Classics* (Toronto, 1985), 89-102.

¹⁵Thus M. Brecht, *Martin Luther. Volume 2: Shaping and Defining the Reformation* (English Translation. Minneapolis, 1990), 50; also M. Brecht, *Martin Luther. Volume 3: The Preservation of the Church* (English Translation. Minneapolis, 1993), 103-4.

¹⁶M. Brecht, *Martin Luther. Vol. 2*, 49.

¹⁷H. Bornkamm, 50.

¹⁸J. Calvin, "Letter to Peter Viret," in J. Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin. Vol. 1* (New York, 1972 reprint), 188.

¹⁹M. Luther, "On Translating: An Open Letter," 194.

²⁰M. Luther, "Defense of the Translation of the Psalms," 216. Luther's adherence to the letter of the original text is most clearly evidenced in Luther's debates with the Zwinglians concerning the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the bread and wine of the Supper. Whereas the latter argued for a mystical, non-real relationship between them, the former emphasized the words "This is my body."



Reformed Work in the Ukraine

The efforts of our Dutch sister churches and Christ for Russia continue unabated in the Ukraine. One of the areas where much work is being done is in theological education for the benefit of mission by the Hungarian Reformed Churches in the Lower Karpathes (in the southwestern part of the Ukraine).

The school at Tivardarfalva

This Bible school (located in Tavadarfalva near the Ukrainian-Hungarian border, close to Beregova) has only been opened in September, 1994, but it is flourishing. A new building with kitchen, classroom and possible dorm is being worked on. According to a *Christ for Russia Newsletter*:

The work of Tivardafalva is carried out under the guidance of the Dutch Liberated Churches (Art 31), Christ for Russia and the 90 Hungarian Reformed Churches (KRE). It began its second year in September 1995.

Among those who helped teach at Tivardafalva was Dr. Richard Venema of the OPC. He wrote an encouraging report, excerpts of which were published in a *Christ for Russia Newsletter*.

I arrived safely in Debrecen where I was picked up by Dr. Jos Colijn. Crossing the border took an hour



The student body and Dr. Richard Venema of the OPC on the far left

and a half. Observing the hundreds of people and cars waiting in line, I was thankful to the Lord that we could cross quickly.

Most helpful were my visits with Jos Colijn, Ben VanderLugt (from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, Article 31) and with Orasczi Pal. Of particular interest to me was their careful strategy of proceeding with plans only when they receive the approval and direction of the local churches.

Jos Colijn is serving as a full time instructor. Fluent in the Hungarian language, the language spoken in this area of the Ukraine, he is held in high esteem and is loved by the students. Presently, with David Pandy Sakaresh gone, he is taking care of the administration.

Ben Van der Lugt divides his time between the Ukraine and the Netherlands spending three weeks in the Ukraine and then returning to the Netherlands to work there. A former missionary to New Guinea, he impresses me as a person who is very knowledgeable in mission strategy, especially from a Reformed perspective.

Pastor Orasczi Pal pours himself being a pastor in a local church, teaching in the school, and building three church buildings as an architect and general contractor. He is an influential pastor in the Reformed Churches of the Ukraine and serves as a valuable liaison person to these churches.

With one exception, all the students (seven young men and two young women) were converted at a youth camp organized for evangelistic purposes. These camps attract 2,500 to 3,000 participants each year and many young people come to faith there. The years of communist oppression have



Students and instructors. Back row, second from the left is Mr. Ben Van der Lugt. Front row, second from the right is Drs. Jos Colijn. In the background is the new kitchen, classroom and possible dorm. On the extreme left is the building housing the classrooms, dorm and parsonage

taken their toll, but the church is still very much alive.

Each day of school starts at 7:30 with a devotion and every Tuesday evening there are group discussions on personal faith, prayer, Bible reading and whatever topics are necessary to apply the Christian faith to their everyday life. These evenings are very important for these young Christians who are full of questions and eager to learn.

The school is under the authority of the Hungarian Reformed Churches in the Lower Karpathes.

Help from Holland

Our Dutch sister churches give assistance by sending qualified personnel to aid the Hungarian Reformed Church. The church at Hattem acts as sending church for Classis Gelderland and Flevoland. Drs. J. Colijn, Rev. M. Nap and Mr. B. Van der Lugt are under their auspices. Mr. Van der Lugt was involved in the planning of the school curriculum and he also teaches English. Drs. Colijn teaches History of Revelation and church history. Their work appears to be much appreciated by the students.

Rev. M. Nap's task includes giving help in building up the small Reformed congregations in Rovno and Stepan. (These are in a completely different part of the Ukraine, in the north about 275 kilometres west of Kiev.) At the request



Classrooms, dorm and parsonage

of these congregations he will give courses and conduct worship services. Also at their request he will assist in setting up a Reformed seminary in Kiev and also help in establishing a Reformed congregation in this city. The two very small congregations in Rovno and Stepan are all that is left of the 55 Reformed congregations that were in this part of the Ukraine before World War II. Just after they had gotten established the terror of Communism rolled

over the land and most pastors fled to America. The majority of the members ended up in Baptist, Pentecostal and Russian Orthodox churches. Students from the mission school in Tavadarfalva will assist in the evangelism and mission work in Kiev.

(based on reports in *Christ for Russia newsletters* (14152 East Linvale Place # 303, Aurora, CO 80014 USA) and *Nederlands Dagblad*)

Reflecting on the Lord's work in one of our sister congregations

Sunday, January 28, 1996 – Coaldale is a congregation in mourning. There is a subdued air and many quiet tears flow. Their shepherd is suffering the effects of man's fall, the dark approach of death. He is leaving them. He does not stand on the pulpit anymore – he did his utmost to be in the pew; but this last week has taken its toll. Today he cannot be present in this building. But I am sure his thoughts and prayers go out to his gathered flock and theirs go out to him. They do not want to let him go yet; but they also want him to be free of this suffering. God, in His own time, will bring it all to pass.

This earthly shepherd, servant of the Most High God, is a gift of God's love to these brothers and sisters. He has led, and continues to lead, his sheep to the Chief Shepherd. Even in the face of death, *especially*, in the face of death, he points to The Way, the Only Way. He reminds them that God is so good; He's so good to us.

So Coaldale grieves, but not as those without hope (1 Thess. 4:13). All God's people will be united when we see God in glory. God's love comes to us in many gifts: one is a pastor and teacher whose life, work and death direct us to the Chief Shepherd. So we are all reminded to thankfully cherish

God's gift of faithful officebearers; but *not* to put our trust *in* them. They, too, are subject to human weakness and infirmity. We believe them when they tell us "Thus says the lord;" we eagerly feast on the Word they bring to us. And so, we believe *in* the Lord, the *Great* Shepherd. He was also the perfect sheep. He overcome Satan, sin and death *for us* so that we can put all our trust in Him alone.

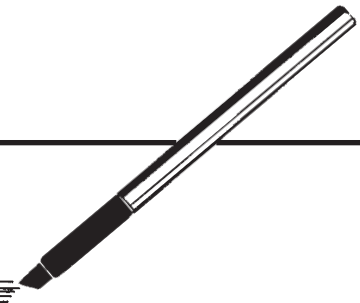
"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!"
Rev. 5:13.

A visitor

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



A Christmas Vacation Bible School was held in Orangeville for one afternoon during the Christmas holidays with a similar program as is being offered during the summer. Apparently this is happening in more congregations now.

A positive development in the mission in Papua New Guinea by the Churches in Australia.

Albany received notice "that the government officials in Papua New Guinea have given br. & sr. A. Slobe the green light to enter the country." If everything went as planned the Fokkema's would have returned to PNG on Friday, January 26. After an initial period together br. & sr. Slobe will be stationed in Lae. Both brothers were to be ordained as elders of the Church at Albany set apart for mission work in PNG.

In West Albany the question was discussed whether elders should have access to the list of Fixed Voluntary Contributions. Thoughts were expressed that the matter of contributions lies more in the deacon's domain. "The present arrangement where both elders and deacons have access to this information was maintained." That district elders have access to this information is understandable but why it should go beyond that and even to the deacons seems rather unusual.


In Watford the Consistory decided that when an attestation is requested, a letter will be sent to the church for which it was requested, notifying them of this member's intention to take up residence in that area.

The same Consistory also proposes that the congregation will recite the doxology at the end of the form for the Lord's

Supper together with the minister since it also states: "Let us together praise His holy Name." Other "innovations" which will be discussed with the congregation are that the congregation joins in reciting the Nicene Creed, the votum and saying the responsive "Amen."

Toronto's mission will lose a familiar name. Br. John Boot has resigned from the Mission Board after serving almost continuously for about 35 years! The missionaries and the churches have benefited greatly from his commitment to this work.

The Lord answered prayers and again provided opportunities. The Rev. Versteeg writes about his mission to seek the favour of the government for additional mission workers: "I must admit I had no hope. Yet, God has put me to shame and shown again to be the God of the impossible. . . . Just last week we received the final confirmation that a recommendation has been granted to add two new missionaries to the teaching staff for the training of ministers, elders, deacons and church treasurers." With thankfulness we pass on this good news!

The congregation of Coaldale AB and the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ in general have lost a great man when the Lord in His wisdom took home unto Himself the Rev. J.D. Wielenga at the age of 60 years after a brief illness. Even on his deathbed he testified of the Lord's amazing goodness and was eager to be with the Lord. May the Lord comfort and strengthen his wife and family as well the congregation of Coaldale which he could serve for well over 17 years. 

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I was happy to read in the Dec. 1/95 issue of *Clarion* that Dr. J. DeJong applied some brakes to the NIV locomotive. Indeed, it is a dangerous methodology to translate to English what the translators think the original authors "meant" instead of what they "said" breathed by the Spirit. The NIV also suffers the same general weakness of most other English translations in that it is incomplete. Many words and verses are omitted or relegated to footnotes. These alternate reading footnotes continues a recent tradition of ambiguity

with the Bible. What should be certain is not. We demonstrate great zeal when we continue to preserve our Confessions and we resist any attempt to alter them. Yet, when the Bible is translated it can be done afresh with "new" scholarly ideas and insights.

Moreover, the NIV New Testament is based on the same three Greek manuscripts as Roman Catholic versions. The main one (Vaticanus) remains under the Pope's lock and key in Rome! No one can examine it. This manuscript tradition places the Apocryphal books in the O.T. canon. These manuscripts

were not considered trustworthy by the Greek-speaking churches who did not include them in their tradition of manuscripts. Rome, however, maintained these manuscripts as trustworthy and therefore held the Apocrypha as canonical. The churches of the Reformation used Bibles based on the traditional Greek text and we can do so also today. The Roman Church will never accept the KJV, NKJV, etc. Bibles because these stand in the Reformed tradition.

With Christian greetings,
Rick J. Duker 
Edmonton

Quarter Century Anniversary 1970 – 1995

Canadian Reformed Church of Lincoln, Ontario

On August 16, 1970, the Canadian Reformed Church of Lincoln was instituted. We had the pleasure to celebrate this event on Friday evening, September 15, 1995 in our church building on John Street, located in the town of Beamsville.

The chairman of the festive committee, Br. H. VanLuik, opened the evening by calling the assembly to order, and requested the singing of Hymn 42: 1,2,8, followed by the reading from Matthew 6:25-35, and lead in opening prayer. After words of welcome, he wished everyone an enjoyable and memorable evening.

In his opening remarks, "Looking Back 25 Years. . .," he commented on the many blessings we have received as a congregation here in Lincoln: that we were able to meet uninterrupted every Sunday in worship, and use the sacraments at the appointed times, and that the Lord had provided us at His time with faithful servants to lead us as congregation in worship services and church life. It is with thankfulness to Him when we look back, and it is our hope and prayer to continue in faithfulness into the future. Reference was made to Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain," which is inscribed in the cornerstone of our church building.

Special welcome was extended to the following brothers, referred to as the "founding fathers": Brs. P.L. Schuller (Lincoln), G. Plantinga (Burlington E.), K. Post (Hamilton), C. VanAndel (Rockway), D. VanAmerongen (Lincoln) and H. DeVries (Lincoln). We remember them as committee members who worked hard with the institution of the church at Lincoln, and were able to accomplish this with the Lord's blessing. We were delighted that these brothers and their wives could be present with us and be part of our celebration. Another special welcome was also made to Br. M. Werkman and Rev. (and Mrs.) G. Wieske, both former ministers in this congregation. It was a great pleasure

that they too could be present with us and participate in this historical event.

Br. H. DeVries, member of the institutional committee, and presently chairman of the consistory, introduced Historical Perspective, with part 1 dealing with events leading up to institution, and part 2; after instituting, dealing with such matters as election for consistory members, worship services, (and in which language?), location and purchase of a building site, etc. etc. Part 3 dealt with Facts and Firsts in Lincoln. This in turn brought more memories, especially of the first worship service designating the institution, at which the late Rev. H. Scholten lead this service. The text of his sermon was based on Gen. 49:27. In this passage is spoken about the blessing bestowed on Jacob's youngest son Benjamin; a blessing, that this small tribe would fight the battle for the Lord. In this connection Rev. Scholten encouraged the congregation of Lincoln to be a militant church, using the weapons of God's Word. Then, she too as church, may be assured that the blessings of the Lord will rest upon her. He concluded his sermon with words of warning and encouragement when he said: "Keep the faith through Christ alone and uphold His Word as Guide. Fight the good fight of faith and the rich blessings of the Lord will be yours in the future."

Congratulatory messages were conveyed from former members. Letters from Br. B. Boot, one of Lincoln's first elders (who now resides in The Netherlands), and Rev. G. Snip, Lincoln's former minister (now residing in Edmonton) were read to the audience.

A slide presentation by Br. H. VanLuik helped us reminisce about the physical aspects of the church building, in which much work was done as volunteer (free) labour (interesting times!)

A number of presentations from various groups from within the congregation were presented and thoroughly enjoyed by all. The school children of the congregation, directed by Mrs. Anke Stulp, and accompanied by piano



Br. H. VanLuik – M.C. of the evening

played by Mrs. Lorrie Snow sang two fitting songs of praise. The Women's Society, presented a historical overview by way of a song using the melody of "A Happy Wanderer." The Men's Society graciously provided the joyful chorus between each stanza. The Adult Bible Study Group, presented by Mr. Siebrand Stulp made a (verbal) presentation of a gift – a wall hanging to grace the back wall of the church building. The Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Study Group, presented by Mrs. Cathy VanAndel and Lydia Schulenberg quizzed a panel of former office-bearers on important historical data pertaining to church life. It proved that the memory of both teams is still pretty sharp, even though they did on occasion need help from the audience! A



First row (L to R) – Brs. P.L. Schuller, G. Plantinga. Second row (L to R) – K. Post, H. DeVries, D. VanAmerongen, C. VanAndel

special anniversary choir (under the direction of Mrs. L. Snow) was also organized for this event – all present and former choir members came together and sang 3 selections that they had learned in the past. The Young Peoples' Society, represented by Mr. Bart DeVries and Mr. Jason Heemskerk spoke to us about

humorous times in society life in years past. The last presentation was a musical selection given by the well-known and well-loved Anchor Band, (Grace Homan, Bernie DeVos, Clarence Zwiep, Gerry Bontekoe, John Feenstra, and Tom VanderZwaag) under the leadership of Mr. Rees Heemskerk.

Delegates from Rockway church, Attercliffe church and Smithville church were given the opportunity to convey their congratulatory messages. Rev. G. Wieske, on behalf of Classis Ontario South, then took the pulpit, and spoke to us about growth – numerical growth versus growth in faith. Although both are important, the latter must have priority. In congratulating the church of Lincoln, he expressed the hope that this church may grow in faith and in size to the glory of God.

Br. M. Werkman, our former minister, took us along memory lane by highlighting some interesting events of the past. After congregational singing, vice-chairman of the consistory, Br. H. Vanlperen, closed with thanksgiving and prayer. Everyone was then invited downstairs for refreshments and food and to view historical memorabilia. Many stayed well until midnight and all who attended thoroughly enjoyed the memorable and fun filled evening.

W. VanSydenborgh 

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Subject: Meeting of the Board of Governors held on September 7, 1995

Opening

The meeting is opened by the Chairman, Dr. J. Visscher, with the reading of 1 Tim. 1:3-14 and prayer. Special welcome is given to the new members of the Board, Rev. R. Aasman, Br. Martin Kampen and Br. John Vanderwoude.

The passing of Rev. Van Dooren and the recent health difficulties of Dr. Deddens are remembered.

Roll Call

All Board Members are present, save and except A. Van Egmond who is absent with notification. The Principal, Prof. J. Geertsema is also present.

The new members to the Board sign the declaration for Governors.

Election of Officers

The following governors are re-appointed as officers of the Board:

Chairman: Dr. J. Visscher
Vice-Chairman: Karl J. Veldkamp

Secretary: Rev. D.G. Agema
Treasurer: Harry Sloots

Minutes

The minutes of the Board meetings held on September 8, 1994 and February 8, 1995 are approved.

General Synod Abbotsford, 1995

Article 97 of the Acts of Synod, Abbotsford, 1995, the article relating to Theological College matters, is reviewed. The decisions of Synod are received and acknowledged with gratitude.

Report of the Executive

The Executive reports on an executive meeting held in June of 1995. The Secretary also provides a summary of the correspondence received and sent.

Report of the Academic Committee

The Committee reports on their annual meeting held on September 6, 1995.

Report of the Finance and Property Committee

The Committee presents their thirteenth annual report, advising the Board that the regular matters of the College continue unabated. It is noted again with thankfulness that the Lord continues to bless the College abundantly and that the support of the churches continues faithfully. The audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending May 31, 1995, together with the budget for the fiscal year June 1, 1995 through and including May 31, 1996, are presented and approved. Aafke Spithof, C.A. is reappointed as auditor of the College. The Committee also reports on the effort expended to prepare and deliver a proposal to Synod, Abbotsford, 1995 regarding the expansion of the College.

Report of the Convocation Committee

The report of the Convocation Committee is received. A request from three members of a congregation in the West had been received regarding the possibility of holding Convocation

1996 in British Columbia. Such request included a promise of financial support. Following lengthy discussion the Board decides not to accede to this request. The Board was of the view, although they were grateful for the interest and initiative of those involved with the request, there were substantial and material logistical and cost issues that could not be ignored.

Reports

The reports of the Survey committee, visits to the Lectures, the Senate, the Principal, visits to the churches in Alberta/Manitoba, the Librarian, the Registrar and the Faber Holwerda Fund are received with gratitude. The College will have six new students for its Freshmen year. Margaret Vandervelde is confirmed in her appointment as Librarian.

Visitor's Schedule 1995-96

It is agreed that Rev. Agema and Rev. Feenstra will visit the lectures in the Fall of 1995 and Rev. Aasman and Dr. J. Visscher in the Spring of 1996.

Library Expansion

In response to the decision of Synod, the Board appoints a committee,

consisting of the Librarian, Margaret Vandervelde, the Associate Librarian, Dr. Gootjes, Rev. P. Feenstra, Br. J. Vanderwoude and K. Veldkamp. This committee is given the mandate to develop a detailed proposal for presentation to the Board and subsequently to the Synod scheduled for 1998. Synod Abbotsford, 1995 has requested that a detailed proposal be available for the General Synod, at least 6 months in advance.

Sabbatical

The first sabbatical to be taken at the College is scheduled for the Fall Term of the 1996-97 academic year. Dr. Van Dam will be taking this sabbatical with Drs. Hagens of the Church at De Bilt-Bilthoven, The Netherlands leading the courses for the Fall Term. Necessary preparations are discussed.

Press Release

The Press Release is read and approved.

Closing

The meeting is closed in the usual Christian manner.

Karl J. Veldkamp 



The Council of the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church at Surrey, BC, declares that its missionary, the **Rev. P.K. Meijer** can consider other calls as of March 1, 1996. His address is:

Ereprijsstraat 12, 9404 KH Assen
tel. 0592-312718

ADDRESS CHANGE:

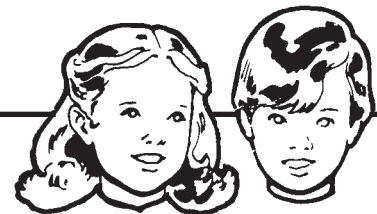
Canadian Reformed Church
of Coaldale
Box 1254
Coaldale, AB T1M 1N1
Phone: 1 (403) 345-3055

Chairman of Council:

Mr. Ite Veurink
Phone: 1 (403) 345-6073

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Others would rather play outside in the snowbanks.

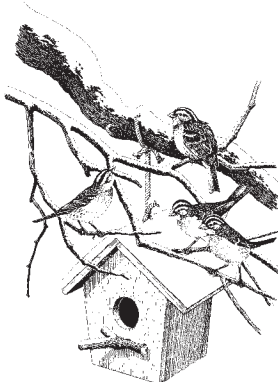
Maybe some Busy Beavers like to play (or work) on a computer.

I know that some of you have big families, so you probably help your Mom and Dad a lot at home or on the farm.

As you get older you will also get more work from school that you have to do at home.

Let's remember that in whatever we do, we should be doing what the LORD wants us to do. It's good to be reminded that wherever we are, the LORD is there too! We can't go somewhere and hide from Him.

Sometimes we are tempted to do what the LORD doesn't want us to do. Let's pray every day that He will help us do what is right, even when that seems to be a very hard thing to do.



Quiz Time!

MEDICINE

God uses many kinds of healing. Match the method with the person healed.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Jesus' fingers in ears and spit | a. Centurion's servant, Matthew 8:13 |
| 2. Lump of figs | b. Publius' father, Acts 28:8 |
| 3. Dip in Jordan River | c. Man with palsy, Matthew 9:2 |
| 4. Touch by Jesus | d. Israelites' snake bites, Numbers 21:9 |
| 5. Look at brass serpent | e. Deaf man with speech impediment, Mark 7:33 |
| 6. Spoken word of Jesus | f. Peter's mother-in-law, Mark 1:30-31 |
| 7. Touch of Jesus' garment | g. Naaman, 2 Kings 5:14 |
| 8. Dip in troubled waters of pool of Bethesda | h. Woman sick for twelve years, Mark 5:25-29 |
| 9. Prayer and laying on of hands | i. People around pool, John 5:4 |
| 10. Faith of his friends | j. Hezekiah's boils, Isaiah 38:21 |

