



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 45, NO. 22 NOVEMBER 1, 1996



*Remembrance Day -
Room to Live*



The worship service in a Reformed Church

In the previous issue, I said a few things about the high esteem in which a Reformed church and Reformed believers hold the Word of God and about how a Reformed church embraces the Word of God as the divine authority for both doctrine and life. I imagined telling an inquirer what a Reformed church is about and explaining to him that a Reformed church and Reformed believers base their teaching and their lives totally and exclusively on Scripture which is the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Central to the life of a Reformed church and its members is the worship service. Because a Reformed church holds the Word in such high esteem, the worship service of a Reformed church is unique. It is characterized by the Word of God and the responding words of the worshipers. God speaks His Word; God's people respond by speaking and singing words of praise and thanks.

The worship service of a Reformed church is a covenantal dialogue between God and His people

A Reformed worship service is a Word-centred service. God wants His people to be taught by the living preaching of his Word. The pulpit is central. From the pulpit, the Word of God is read and proclaimed. God's people respond with prayer and song.

A typical Reformed liturgy shows that the worship service is a covenantal dialogue between God and His people. God greets His people. His people respond in song. God speaks the Ten Words of the Covenant. His people respond in song and prayer in which they confess their sin, plead for forgiveness, and ask for God's blessing upon the reading and preaching of His Word. The Word of God is read and proclaimed. God's people respond with song, the giving of alms, and prayer. The service ends with God blessing His people.

Every element of the service is either the Word of God or the prayer of the people (remembering that the songs are prayers as well).

The worship service is like a conversation: God, people, God, people, God. Whenever the people respond, they do so together, communally, as a body. Because it is a dialogue, a conversation between two intimates (God and God's people), therefore we do not allow any foreign element into the worship service.

A Reformed Church does not allow any foreign element into the worship service

The Reformed churches understood this rather well until the 19th century. But then other things began to find their way into the worship service: choirs, soloists, testimonies, sharing, individual prayers, drama and dancing. These are impoverishments of the worship service. They are meant to enhance the service, but they make it poor. The end result is game show liturgies. Liturgy committees are put in place. The committees are constantly experimenting with the liturgy, making changes because people get bored. Once experimenting begins, there is no end to it.

These are impoverishments because, if someone is performing, then God and His people (the congregation) are both forced to fall silent. Someone gets in between God and His people. So much for dialogue. A Reformed person does not go to church to hear or see a performance. We organize talent evenings and choir performances for that. These can be very upbuilding. But Reformed people go to church to hear God's Word and to respond to God in prayer and song – to have a (corporate) conversation with God. When the covenant community gathers to meet with God, individual activities – sharing, soloists, choirs – are not appropriate. They detract from the united meeting of the people with God.

This is not to say that we have arrived at liturgical perfection. There is, I think, room for improvement. But these improvements would fall under adjustments, not complete overhaul. For instance, the corporate "Amen" is much richer than if the minister says it on behalf of the congregation (see Neh. 8:6; 1 Cor. 14:6). The votum (*Our help is in the Name of the LORD who made heaven and earth*) could better be spoken by the congregation in unison. These are adjustments which would enhance the dialogic character of the worship service. A decade or so ago, Dr. K. Deddens has called for the re-instatement of the reader. I believe he was right. Our worship services do very much look as if they are run completely by the minister. Why not allow a gifted reader to read the Scripture passages the minister selected? This, too, would enhance the principle that the congregation is really involved. These adjustments would not take away from the purity and simplicity of the Reformed worship service but would add depth to it.

The whole congregation attends the worship service

A Reformed church should not have “during church” Sunday schools. If parents desire Sunday schools for their children, let them run such a school before or after the worship service. If the worship service is a meeting between God and His people, it will not do to have part of the congregation missing when the Word of God is proclaimed. Those who say that the children cannot understand the sermon underestimate both children and the Holy Spirit.

The worship service and evangelism

Many evangelical churches have “seeker-sensitive” worship services. Such a worship service becomes a forum for evangelism. Everything is geared to making the seeker comfortable. Dead wrong! A Reformed worship service will not be specifically designed to be “pagan-friendly.” The unbeliever must feel welcome. The congregation must be sensitive to him and welcome him. But he ought to feel somewhat uncomfortable as he finds himself in the midst of a congregation of people worshiping the eternal, all-knowing, everywhere-present, infinitely transcendent God of the universe. In the worship service the congregation first of all looks up to God. The dialogic direction is vertical before it is horizontal. The time for evangelism is during the week. Jesus Christ calls us to evangelize (Matt. 5:13-16; cf. LD 32). And when you invite your neighbour, colleague or acquaintance to church, then you prepare him so that he knows what to expect.

We will tell our inquiring friend that the official worship service of a Reformed church is very simple and pure, but that great power lies exactly in its purity and simplicity. There are few frills. Just a simple but awesome meeting between the great God of the universe and his united people.



A worship service works best when, through long familiarity, we don't have to think about it. . . . The perfect church service would be the one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping. . . . 'Tis mad idolatry that makes the service greater than the god. A still worse thing may happen. Novelty may fix our attention not even on the service but on the [worship leader]. You know what I mean. Try as one may to exclude it, the question "What on earth is he up to now?" will intrude. It lays one's devotion waste. There is really some excuse for the man who said, "I wish they'd remember that the charge to Peter was Feed my sheep; not Try experiments on my rats, or even Teach my performing dogs new tricks.

C.S. Lewis



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,
C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
5621 - 51 Street
Taber, AB T1G 1K6
Fax: (403) 223-0149
E-Mail: 74124.1377@CompuServe.COM

**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:
(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):**

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

SUBSCRIPTION RATES	<i>Regular</i>	<i>Air</i>
	<i>Mail</i>	<i>Mail</i>
FOR 1996		
Canada*	\$33.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$38.00	\$52.00
International	\$53.00	\$84.00

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055
Advertisements: \$11.25 per column inch

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Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – The worship service in a Reformed Church — G.Ph. van Popta486

Meditation – Be wise with wisdom! — H.J.J. Feenstra488

Even So I Send You – Some Reflections on the Current Missionary Task of the Church — J. De Jong489

Remembrance Day – Room to live — G.Ph. van Popta490

The Max Factor — E. Kampen491

Nurture & Instruction – Are you well educated? — T.M.P. Vanderven494

The Hi-Liter — C. Van Spronsen495

Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. R. Ravensbergen496

Reader's Forum – A Response to Br. Adrian Hamoen — Wes Bredenhof497

Book Review – *The Sufficiency of Scripture* by Noel Weeks — E. Kampen497

African Reformed Alliance (A.R.A.)498

A thankful celebration in Taber499

Volunteers in the Church Community — Arie J. Hordyk500

Press Release501

Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty502

By H.J.J. Feenstra

BE WISE WITH WISDOM!

The only remedy against lawless sexuality – Proverbs 7

Originally published as
Wees wijs met de wijsheid,
Woord en Wereld # 11
Uitgeverij Woord en Wereld,
Ermelo 1989
Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

Strategy

Note the strategy used by the loose woman in Proverbs 7; be forewarned, and guard against it. The following stands out.

She is *wily of heart* – she cunningly made her plans, considering time, place and circumstances. She carefully planned her own presentation; Proverbs describes these things in detail. Let yourself not be caught by beautiful eyes or an enticing dress.

It is so simple – it starts with these things. And you better realize that. Notice also the seductive, smooth talk, the reasoning which changes wrong into right; notice the flattery which makes acceptable and understandable that which is not.

Such a loose woman may well be much more understanding than the man's own wife. She might even use a religious argument:

*I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
so now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have
found you...*

From Scripture Proverbs 7:10-15, 21

The remedy

However, not only the dangers are described; also the way-out is indicated. How do you get away from the dangers of lawless sexuality? The answer is found in Proverbs 7:

Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend. My sister – that is an endearing term. Read the Song of Solomon where the same term is used. There it means something like dearest. Thus, call wisdom your dearest, and insight your trusted friend, your confidante. The point here is a deep, sincere, all-encompassing trust. You do not give such trust to just anyone. The Christian condition for entering the world of sexuality is: being in love with wisdom. That is to be the desire above anything, and cannot be replaced by anything. We will do anything to gain that wisdom which has its starting point in the fear of the Lord.

That is beautiful advice which we all need. It teaches us how to deal with sexuality. Indeed, in this way we become wise with the God of the covenant who created man and after the fall placed him again on the road to life, and helps him to stay on the right path through His Word and Spirit.

Consider the end of the lawless who ignore the advice of wisdom. What seemed so attractive and enjoyable ends so disastrously. The attractive, perfumed, and enticing home of the loose woman turns out to be a battlefield with

wounded and dead. It will end with strangling remorse: *Why have I been so foolish?*

Be warned. Do not desire what you are not allowed to have. When you are married, seek the companionship of your own husband or wife. Put away dissatisfaction with your spouse! Extinguish the fire of dissatisfaction!

Stay away from temptations. What may be the cost of an unlawful sexual relationship? It might cost you your possessions, your honour, your good name, your health. Never forget the ground rule for this aspect of life: *be in love with wisdom*. Seek life outside yourself. Seek it in Jesus Christ and the Word of grace. He is the way, the truth, and the life, also with regards to sexuality.

From Scripture

Proverbs 7:4
Proverbs 7:26
Proverbs 5:11-13
John 14:6

Intermezzo

Proverbs 6:1-19 is an intermezzo in the middle of the story about sexuality. Our western logic seeks an explanation for this interruption.

Consult a commentary about the eastern way of thinking in associations. And start exploring these proverbs; it will be an excellent exercise. Discover how this section can be divided into smaller units. Experience the imagery, visualize what you read. And take this wisdom to heart.

From Scripture Proverbs 6:1-19 

What's inside?

In this issue you will find the final installment of Dr. J. De Jong's convocation address.

You will also find an article by the Rev. Eric Kampen of Port Kells on several books authored by Max Lucado. Lucado is a prolific author and an accomplished wordsmith. A recent catalogue features twelve of his books plus his *Inspirational Study Bible*. That a man sees fit to have his name splashed on the jacket of a study Bible ought to give us pause. Some may not like what Rev. Kampen has to write, but please read his article and think about what he has to say.

Many of you will remember a column called "School Crossing." Several years ago it sort of faded away. Today it comes back in full force in new dress. It's called "Nurture and Instruction." We hope you will benefit by this new column.

On November 11th we remember the slain who fell that others could live. We remember that Jesus Christ, King of kings, Lord of lords, exercises sovereignty over history and so gives his people room. "Room to live" reflects upon these things.

GvP

Even So I Send You – Some Reflections on the Current Missionary Task of the Church¹⁽³⁾

By J. De Jong

Current Directives

In part 1 of his speech, Dr. De Jong wrote about the changing nature of the missionary task of the church. Missionaries no longer work in very primitive areas among illiterate people totally cut off from the world. Most of the world has, in one way or another, been confronted with the gospel. Often, men are now sent out to teach and train indigenous people to be missionaries and pastors to their own people. Dr. De Jong then examined the modernistic perspective of mainstream churches and the World Council of Churches who no longer want to speak about the church bringing the light of the gospel to a people trapped in darkness; rather, they speak of a “dialogue between men of living faiths.” In part 2, Dr. De Jong wrote about how the Reformed Churches have historically understood the missionary task, and how this view is based upon the unchanging principles of Scripture. In what follows, he ends with some suggestions for directives and strategies for our current situation – Editor.

These issues are in flux today. I mentioned some in the introduction to my speech. What about teachers? What about training indigenous workers? What about providing assistance? So we could go on.

We must develop strategies and solutions that do justice to the missiological insights gained in the past. We should not overturn Amersfoort 1948: the specific task of the church remains the preaching of the gospel. If we do, we will not be able to hold on to the gains of Middelburg 1896. If we neglect our history, we will follow the way of the general breakthrough, the modernistic idea which blurs the boundaries between church and world, and between mission and dialogue. If one is not clear on his concept of the church, he cannot be clear on his concept of mission. A solid missiological strategy requires a solid ecclesiological foundation. The chief characteristic of the emerging ecumenical paradigm is that it has no sol-

id ecclesiological footing, and therefore has no concrete missiological direction.

We need to keep the primary task in mind. In this context we need to develop directives and strategies for our immediate situations. Allow me to give a number of suggestions.

1. The continuing task

The church still has a missionary calling today. The gospel must be preached to the ends of the earth, Mt. 24:14. Despite many changes in the existing world order, and despite the general post-Christian climate of the modern age, the church must continue to seek to reach the unreached: those who have never heard of the gospel or have become thoroughly estranged from it, and have no Christian churches in their immediate vicinity.

2. Mission vs follow-up care

We must retain the distinction between mission and follow-up care. Once the churches have been planted, whatever help the churches provide falls in the category of continued care and support. But continued care and support is not mission work in the proper sense of the word. And we probably need to institutionalize our continued care in more formal channels, so that the lines of responsibility and accountability are clearly delineated.² For example, the churches may need to consider the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad or the ICRC as an effective channel to provide assistance and support to sister or member churches. We can also use the ICRC to provide assistance to the mission projects of other member churches. But this should not be confused with our own specific missionary task, which must have continued priority in our minds.³

3. Training of indigenous workers

More attention is being given today to the training of indigenous workers. The primary responsibility for training falls on the young national churches themselves. But if they can benefit from training at foreign schools, as for exam-

ple, our college, then we should capitalize on these opportunities. The recent formation of the Institute for Reformed Theological Training in Kampen is a good step in this direction. However, Hamilton also has a role here, and we should be willing to support the training of indigenous workers as best we can. Then some of the expertise and knowledge gained throughout our history can also be passed on to other Reformed (and reforming) churches.

With increased mobility on the part of native workers as well as increased visa problems and difficulties for foreign workers, we must think more in terms of training indigenous workers rather than simply sending our own missionaries to foreign countries. For example, training Indonesian workers to carry on a ministry among Indonesian people may be more beneficial for us in the long term than training western missionaries for work in Indonesia. We are facing a policy of closed doors in more and more areas. But native workers can more easily be readmitted after more extensive training.

This is not a question of championing the priority of the western established churches over against the foreign nations. However, we do recognize that God has followed His pathway with His church, and this does involve the decisive lines that He has set. He Himself determined that the gospel go not eastward at first, but westward, Acts 13:24f. He chose the churches in Europe and opened Europe to the gospel. And He had the gospel brought to the new world. We do not exalt ourselves or seek to give a priority to ourselves. I do believe that Hamilton here has its own unique task along with other Reformed training institutions in the world. This is not simply a matter of giving, but also receiving; not simply an issue of teaching, but also of learning, as each in our own place we may be instruments in the universal gathering work of Jesus Christ.

4. The diaconal task

The Lord has also provided us with the means to give help to needy

churches and needy people the world over. Along with being missionary churches, our churches must also be diaconal churches. We promote the missionary congregation;⁴ at the same time, we must promote the diaconal congregation. One cannot defend the missionary congregation without at the same time defending the diaconal one, or vice versa. And a diaconal congregation will use its means and resources to foster and promote the work of mission wherever possible.⁵

5. Relationship between word and deed

In this regard, the relationship between word and deed needs our continued attention. At the very least we must say that these two belong together, and should proceed in harmony and cooperation as much as possible. One element lacking in the approach of Synod Amersfoort 1948 was the perspective on the role of the deacons in mission. The deputies left open whether the deacons were to be included locally in the diaconal work for mission projects. Apparently they saw the task of the deacons as limited to the local church. But the diaconal task of the local congrega-

tion is not limited strictly to the care of the poor within its own walls. The deacons can also provide direction and leadership in diaconal outreach beyond the local congregation. And what better avenue to pursue this than to seek to provide necessary help and support to fledging mission congregations?⁶ Hence I find it a positive development that our relief agency (CRWRF) is seeking to develop short and long term projects in connection with the Canadian Reformed mission work.

Conclusion

Ultimately we must be reminded of the fact that the missionary task of the church is not over. We can and should not hide behind other people's projects or other peoples' endeavour. Providing assistance is one thing, mission another. And the Lord calls us to be a missionary church. He calls us to be a living diaconal church. The needs are many; the challenges are great. But willing hearts make light work! And willing hearts are hearts of love – to the brotherhood, and to a world of people lost in pain.

¹Text of the address given at the Twenty-second Convocation of the Theological Col-

lege, September 6, 1996, at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario. Elements not included in the address have been incorporated in this revision.

²So C. Haak, in *Zending in beweging, Bundel ter voorbereiding op het congres Zending in beweging op D.V. 8 en 9 december 1995* (Zwolle: Gereformeerde Missiologische Opleiding, 1995), 31ff.

³It is noteworthy that the Roman pontiff has stressed the abiding importance of the mission mandate to the nations for the Roman Catholic Church. Despite a stronger sense of ecumenism, the Pope has not compromised on the central aim of Roman Catholic mission. He says: "Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction that *the Church is the ordinary means of salvation* and that she *alone* possesses the fullness of the means of salvation," [emphasis in text]. See the encyclical *The Mission of Christ the Redeemer (Redemptoris Missio)* [Vatican translation] (Sherbrooke, PQ: Éditions Paulines, 1991) 82. If Rome retains the mission mandate so strongly, how much more should not the true church be vigilant! ⁴This, of course, is not meant in the modern sense as defended by ecumenical missiology, viz., that the essence of the church itself is missionary.

⁵See the reports of the conference *Zending in Beweging* (Zwolle: GMO, 1995).

⁶See C. Trimp, "Zo zullen wij toenemen in liefde tot alle mensen" summary in *Digest*, Vol 39. no. 4 (July-August, 1991), 13-18.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Room to live

By G.Ph. van Popta

In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul said that we are to pray for those in high positions (kings and governors) so that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives, godly and respectful in every way. God's people are to pray that the rulers of the country may achieve conditions of peace and security, so that the church of Christ may be enabled to pursue a godly and holy life. Paul tells the church to pray that it may have room – that it may have space in society to live, to function, to be a light in a dark world.

Fifty-six years ago, the people of God in Europe were, to a great extent, denied this space. By the summer of 1942, 400 million people in Europe lay under the yoke of Adolf Hitler and the godless principles of National Socialism. Hitler's empire stretched from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, from the English Channel to the Black Sea. Hitler's partner, Mussolini, had been reduced to the role of a

puppet. In the ancient capitals of Europe – in Athens, Rome and Vienna, in Paris and Prague, Oslo and Warsaw – all voices were drowned by the voice of Nazi Germany. Hitler's panzer armies were within striking distance of the Nile River. His U-boats had carried his offensive to the Atlantic coast of North America and into the Caribbean. He seemed to be unstoppable. By the summer of 1942, he had been denied victory only in the sky above London and in the snow outside Moscow.

Those who lived in Europe at that time will remember what it was like to live under a regime which denied their most cherished values. Hitler's goal was to establish a world empire. To attain that goal, he formed Europe into a fortress. A fortress from which he could continue to conquer east and west.

He was seeking room to live. A word was coined to describe this search

for room – *Lebensraum!* Room for his followers! Space for his antichristian principles and policies!

And if his followers and his principles needed room and took up space, there was then no room nor space for those who opposed him. Already in Nazi Germany, the church had been largely silenced. In 1933, Protestants who supported Hitler seized control of the key positions of power in the national church. The national church fell silent in the face of the persecution of the Jews and the systematic massacre of the death camps. And that part of the church which, under the courageous leadership of men such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, continued to confess the truth of the gospel and spoke against the anti-Semitism and other Nazi policies embraced by the church became marked men. Many who spoke against Hitler

and the hypocrisy of the national church ended up in the death camps.

The oppressive policies of Hitler and Nazism suffocated true Christian freedom in other countries as well. My parents who were young adults in the Netherlands during the war told us children about this oppression. My paternal grandfather died in a death camp – Sachsenhausen – because he dared to act against Nazi oppression. The late professor Selles, who was a young minister in Holland during the war, had the secret police sitting in church on Sundays to hear what he had to say in his sermons – to see if he would say anything subversive.

Because of this oppression – because of the Nazi craving for more *Lebensraum* – others were no longer granted room. The room to lead quiet and peaceful lives (as spoken of by the apostle Paul) became very closed in.

But then God answered the prayers of his people. The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, sitting in majesty at the right hand of God the Father – the Lord Jesus Christ, He who controls the ebb and flow of history, Who raises nations up and sends them crashing to the earth – he raised up liberators. God's


people prayed for freedom and for space to worship him according to his Word. And God answered their prayers.

He used the Allied forces to push back Hitler's armies. He used many Canadian soldiers to liberate Holland. First the south in September of 1944. And then the north in May of 1945. Fifty years ago, Holland fell in love with Canada. And as we could see so powerfully last year, Holland's heart still throbs for Canada – because of the sacrifice of so many young soldiers in liberating Holland from oppression and suffocation. Older people who experienced the liberation of Holland will tell you that May 5th, 1945, stands out as the happiest day of their lives. For it was on May 5th, 1945, that a Canadian Lieutenant-General dictated the terms of surrender to his Nazi counterpart, and Holland was free. On that day, the Canadians, the liberators, rolled through the streets of their cities in victory.

Today, as a Canadian, born of Dutch immigrants, who has heard the stories about the war and about the Canadian effort to free the Netherlands, I salute the men and women of this country who gave of themselves to work for liberation. We salute all the men and women

who so unselfishly sacrificed themselves, often to the point of death, in the two World Wars and the Korean war to set oppressed people free. We wear our poppies. We will not forget those who gave their lives so that others could live and breathe and move.

But even more do we salute the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. For He, seated at the right hand of His Father, has been given all power and authority in heaven and on earth. He holds the reins of history in His hands. He is bringing history to its God-ordained conclusion. As He does this work, He raises nations up and pushes them down. All the while, He keeps His eye firmly focused upon His people, His church. In some periods of history, now here, then there, He, in His perfect wisdom, allows His people to be hemmed in by oppressive overlords and ungodly principles and policies. But then, at other times, He gives His people room to live, to serve, to worship, to breathe.

We remember those lying in Flanders Fields and in unmarked graves. But let us even more remember Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of heaven and earth who rules history according to His sovereign power and wisdom. 

The Max Factor

By E. Kampen

Max appeal

Among current popular authors Max Lucado must be close to the top of the list. Evangelical bookstores have prominent displays of all his books. By my last count they numbered 14. The deluge of books from the pen of this author has not escaped the community of Reformed believers. My experience is that his books are being enthusiastically embraced and promoted by an increasing number of people, and his books can be found in more and more homes.

When you begin to read books by Max Lucado, you have to admit that he has a catchy, captivating style of writing. It's witty, snappy, brief, filled with countless anecdotes from his own life and from life in general. He has a way with words. It is clear that he really tries to reach his audience and has their best interest in mind.

Perhaps your interest is whetted. However, before you rush to the store to

pick up a copy of one of his books, do take the time to read the rest of this article. Having read a number of his books, I have come to the conclusion that despite the depth of all his books piled up on one's desk, what we have is very shallow material. Further, not only is it shallow, it lacks in being truly Scriptural. From the books I have read, I can only come to the conclusion that on the whole his writing reflects an exemplaric, moralistic use of Scripture, is filled with endless speculation, is, at times, irreverent bordering on the blasphemous, and shows a doctrinal indifference. Though I have not read all his books, the four I did read showed this pattern consistently.¹ It is necessary to write about this type of literature because it is a negative factor in spiritual growth. It has the potential of stealing away the heart from careful, respectful listening to the Word of God. In what follows I will give some examples.

Exemplaric use of Scripture

The older readers may immediately recognize the term *exemplaric*. Though it was not the reason for the Liberation in 1944 from Synodical decisions in the Netherlands, it was one of the issues that was under discussion. For the benefit of the younger readers, who may be the most attracted to Max Lucado's books, it should be explained what this exemplaric use of Scripture is. It comes down to this: Scripture is used as a collection of stories with moral lessons. This applies especially to the so-called historic parts of Scripture, like the stories of Abraham, or the life of Paul. Their life experiences are treated as a model for our own life, even giving us the norm as to how we should live. There is a strong individualistic approach.

The problem with this approach is that the focus falls on how man responded to God rather than on how

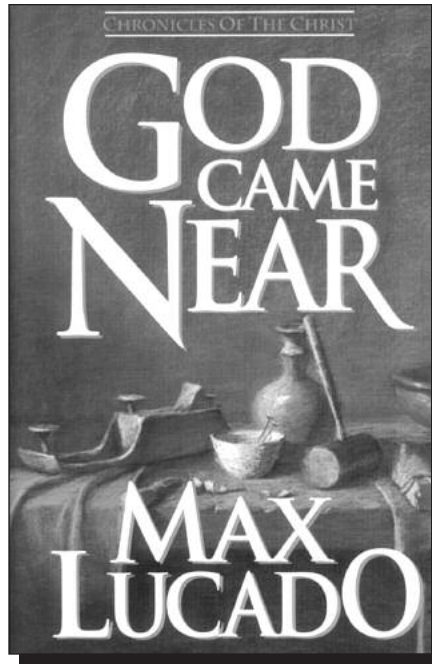
God continues to deal with man. To sum it up, the exemplaric use of Scripture takes descriptive parts and makes them prescriptive for us. By paying attention to what man is doing in the story, it fails to pay attention to what God is doing in the story.

Over against this exemplaric use of Scripture, we have to take great care to see the line of redemptive history, and ask: what is God doing for His people? Then the riches of Scripture unfold for us as we see God unfold His plan of salvation, fulfilling His promise to save His people from their sins.

What follows are some examples from Max Lucado's books. In his book *When God Whispers Your Name*, we see this individualistic character in the introduction. He quotes Isaiah 49:16, "I have written your name on my hand," and uses these words to address his readers very personally, individually (p. 2). In the prophecy of Isaiah, however, the focus is on Zion (vs. 14), which is the church as a whole. The verse reads, "Behold I have graven you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me" (RSV).

As for the exemplaric use of Scripture, in this same book Moses' call to his special office is used in such a way as if we too could receive a similar call (p. 11ff). The story of Moses is brought into modern life by the story of a janitor who hears the voice of God from a mop bucket. Thus, we are told, God can speak to us in unexpected events and ways too. Jesus' going to the wedding in Cana is held up as an example for us to have fun and to lighten up as Christians (p. 19ff). Philip's guidance by the Spirit to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch is something that we too might experience. If we had lived back then our name might have been in the Bible in place of Philip's! (p. 35ff). The author fantasizes about the type of questions Gabriel might have had about God's wisdom when God sent him to visit Mary with the news that she would give birth to His Son. This imaginary story is then used as an example of how we too might question the wisdom of God (p. 55).

In *He Still Moves Stones*, we are again referred to Jesus at the wedding of Cana. It is explained that Jesus turned the water into wine because He was bothered by the embarrassment of His friend running out of wine. The moral of the story we are told is that whatever matters to you matters to Jesus, and He will help out (p. 143ff). In this same book reference is made to the two men on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24), with the moral of the story being that with



Jesus there is hope even when others let you down (p. 81ff).

In his book *God Came Near*, he also deals with Luke 24. It is stated that we today are also on our road to Emmaus, wondering why God has let us down. Once again it is said to teach us about hope, which is said to be a "zany, unpredictable dependence on a God who loves to surprise us out of our socks and be there in the flesh to see our reaction" (p. 87-89). In this same book, reference is made to Peter's words about being eyewitness of His majesty (2 Pet. 1:16). The aim of the book is to lead the reader to also be an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty (p. 13ff). This seeing of Jesus is later explained as seeing Him in the daily experiences of life, like waves rolling in from the ocean, or in a baby or a group of boys playing soccer. These are said to be evidences of Christ's majesty, and we see Christ's majesty in being amazed at them (p. 83ff).

Many more examples could be given. These are representative of the exemplaric approach. It should also be mentioned that Scripture references are really buried in countless anecdotes. At times the link between the anecdote and the passage from Scripture leaves you wondering: How did he make that connection? As a Reformed believer, reading material like this leaves you shaking your head. Scripture is used, but really, it is misused. What lingers in one's memory is not the Bible passage but the endless anecdotes. The author thus has given insight not into Scripture but into how his imagination ticks. Material like this does not help one grow in

knowledge of God's plan as it is too busy focusing on what goes on in the life of man.

Speculation

Often, when we read the Bible, we might wish we were given some more detail. The danger is there that we fill in the gaps with speculation. We must then exercise the greatest restraint to stick to what is written. If the Lord has not revealed something in his Word, then we don't have to know it. Max Lucado, however, seems to delight in endless speculation, which then forms the basis of an application.

In *When God Whispers Your Name* he presents us with an imaginary set of questions the angel Gabriel may have had when God decided to send His Son into the world (p. 55). Scripture does not give any basis for such speculation. Further, he develops imaginary interviews between Moses and the *Holy Land Press* concerning the Exodus and King Jehoshaphat and the *Jerusalem Chronicle*. The application is to show us how God will help His children in a bind (p. 153ff). It is a nifty, attention getting way of writing, but totally unfounded in Scripture!

In *When God Came Near* we get a whole story about the people in Bethlehem, especially the busy innkeeper who had no room for Mary and Joseph and missed out on Jesus' birth because he wasn't looking (p. 21ff). The application is that things haven't changed. People still don't see Jesus because they aren't looking. This again is pure fiction. We also read about Mary's prayer for Jesus (p. 35ff), as well as what went through Jesus' mind when He had to leave the carpenter's shop and begin His ministry (p. 49ff). All this is pure fiction. What is worse is that it is given the aura of being Biblical, and thus forming an authoritative basis for a moral lesson.

The examples of speculation could be multiplied. They give us insight into the mind of the author but they do not truly give insight into the Scriptures. Scripture passages are pasted on to give some weight to the point the author is trying to make.

Irreverent

Scripture is straightforward, yet it is always dignified. Max Lucado's popular style loses dignity, and gives an air of flippancy and lack of respect. Two examples stand out. Earlier we mentioned how in *When God Whispers Your Name* he explains why Jesus went to the wedding in Cana. The title is "Why Jesus Went to Parties." We

are told that the only reason Jesus went was because He liked people, liked good food, and maybe even wanted to swirl around the dance floor with the bride. Basically, He went to have fun (p. 25). The turning of water into wine is turned into a mere "aside" in the story. This completely ignores the fact that our Lord laboured under an awareness of God's wrath against sin and was a man of sorrows (cf. Is. 53, L.D. 15). Further, it completely misses the point of the whole story, which indeed can only be understood by focusing on the changing of the water into wine, His first miracle!

In *God Came Near*, we are given a speculative treatise on Joseph, as he tries to decide whether to take Mary as his wife or divorce her. Joseph is held up as a man of courage who, rather than sitting on a branch, went out on a limb for God. We are told then that "He took cold showers for nine months so the baby could be born of a virgin. He had to push away the sheep and clear out the cow patties so his wife would have a place to give birth. . . ." (p. 42). Great stuff if you're trying to be funny, but irreverent speculation which serves no purpose but to show the author's vivid imagination.

These are two extreme examples, but throughout the books you find phrases that make you grimace, unless of course one gets pleasure out of making the holy and dignified mundane.

Doctrinal

I am not aware of Max Lucado's "denominational affiliation." He clearly spells out his position with respect to denominational differences in *When God Whispers Your Name*. He states: "If God calls a person his child, shouldn't I call him my brother? If God accepts others with their errors and misinterpretations, shouldn't we?" (p. 51). He does indicate that he is "not for watering down the truth or compromising the gospel. But if a fellow with a pure heart calls God *Father*, can't I call the same *Brother*? If God doesn't make doctrinal perfection a requirement for family membership, should I?" (p. 54). (Italics in original.)

The criteria for fellowship is thus a pure heart. I don't know how he is able to ascertain whether someone has a pure heart. According to passages like Ps. 139 and 1 Cor. 2, that is the exclusive prerogative of the Spirit of God. Human beings can only evaluate others based on words and deeds. In Luke 6:43-45, the Lord made clear that we can only know the tree by its fruits. Furthermore, we cannot just gloss over

doctrinal differences, as if all that counts is the heart. Paul spoke in different terms when he wrote to the Romans, "I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them; For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple minded" (Rom. 16:17,18). The way the author writes it appears that faith is more a feeling one has for God than a belief in God as based on what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture.

Also under the heading of Doctrine there is a need to address the way that Scripture is used in general. Examples were given of the exemplaric use of Scripture, and of pasting a text to reinforce a point the author wanted to make. In the end, Scripture plays second fiddle to the author himself. In *When God Whispers Your Name*, he states in the introduction that he has harvested thoughts from a landscape of fields to provide his readers with a word of hope (pp. 2,3). It is interesting how in a foreword to the book *The Applause of Heaven*, Calvin Miller extols the virtues of Max Lucado and his wisdom, and that he "wanted to know Christ as Max does." He also says that he needs "Max to give me lessons on obedience and spiritual need."

I do not share that glowing testimonial, for it is a testimony to the words of man, not the Word of God. The Word of God is pushed to the background, despite its being pasted in the text at various intervals. One is left not with a head full of Bible knowledge, but a head full of anecdotes, illustrations and speculations from Max Lucado. O yes, there come glimpses of the gospel, but they are buried under an avalanche of anecdotes and illustrations.

In connection with this one can also reflect on the general direction of his books, and how they do not help one grow in understanding the Word. The book *When God Whispers Your Name*, in the final analysis, suggests that God speaks more to you in the daily events of this world than bringing about faith through His Word. With respect to *When God Came Near*, which has the subheading *Chronicles of the Christ*, there is actually very little about the Lord Jesus Christ coming into the flesh as revealed in the gospel. Rather, the general drift of the book is to have Jesus become incarnate in your own life, so you can see His majesty as Peter saw His majesty. In *He still Moves Stones*, Jesus is brought down to a spir-

itual mister fix-it who jumps at our beck and call, and Scripture is seen more as an account of the faith experiences of man rather than God's revelation to us of the way of salvation in His Son Jesus Christ.

An example of a genre

It should be rather obvious that the style of writing as found in Max Lucado's books is not one that endears itself to me. Even though Max Lucado may have a way with words, it should be realized that his way of handling Scripture (in a superficial, exemplaric way), along with the heavy reliance on anecdotes, is typical of much material available today.

What should be done with this type of literature? I would urge you to think twice before you spend your money on such type of books. Remember that the evangelical presses are running at full speed to have new books on the market, a market filled with eager consumers. There is a great quantity of literature out there, but most is not of a great quality. Judging by how many books are produced as flimsy paperbacks, they are not meant to last too long either.

Practical advice

When it comes to spending our money on literature, we thus do well to be discerning, not just for the sake of our money, but for the sake of our mind. Max Lucado's books are not cheap. You'll easily pay \$17.00 for a soft cover copy or \$25.00 for a hardcover copy. Its popularity is easily understandable in a society that revels in thirty minute sitcoms and thus wants spiritual quick-fixes. Its popularity in Reformed circles, however, is disappointing. For, if this material becomes regular reading fare, it will affect not just your pocket book but your spiritual well-being, for it lacks spiritual depth and nutrition, though it may give the impression of piety and spirituality. It is a negative factor in one's life, for if one is impressed by books like this one will not long stay impressed with Reformed preaching, which works out of the text of Scripture and brings that to the heart of man, rather than working from the heart and mind of man and trying to find a text of Scripture to fit with it. Reformed preaching will lack the catchy anecdotes. Reformed preaching seeks its wisdom in the Word of God, not in the experiences in and of the world.

My advice is thus to avoid literature of this sort and spend your money on some more substantial literature from authors who have harvested the field of Scripture, not fields all over the world.

Above all, read Scripture itself, and get yourself a good commentary to help you understand difficult parts. Get yourself a good book on your confessions.


It is sad that spiritual wisdom and advice is being sought in books from all sorts of popular authors whose theological background we don't even know. It is remarkable how people are willing to put down good money for a book on this or that topic that seems relevant to them rather than spend time searching Scripture, one's confession, or even asking one's elder or minister.

Conclusion

My evaluation is that much of the literature that comes off the presses today, and the writings of Max Lucado are in that genre, amounts to spiritual snack (junk) food. It's pricey, but really does not do much good. Let's take care to keep on eating spiritual meat and potatoes. It will take longer to chew and digest, but it will also have far longer beneficial consequences. Like snack food, if you eat too much of it, after a while you lose your taste for solid, well-balanced food, and are no longer able to digest it. As your physical health will suffer from

snack food, so will your spiritual health suffer from spiritual snack food. It has nice wrappings, and tastes sweet, but its end result is an empty bitterness.

It is my hope that by means of this article you may have been alerted to dangerous trends before you got involved, or, that if this has become part of your life, you get back to solid, worthwhile food.

I read the following books by Max Lucado: *When God Whispers our Name; When God Came Near; He Still Moves Stones; The Applause of Heaven.* 

NURTURE & INSTRUCTION

By T.M.P. Vanderven



Are you well educated?

Editor's note – We are very pleased to introduce a new column, "Nurture & Instruction," which will be written by the Principal of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College, Mr. Tony Vanderven. Under this rubric, the writer will be addressing various matters which have to do with education and schools. In many ways, this column will be the successor of "School Crossing" which used to grace the pages of Clarion. We are confident it will be a worthy one. If you would like to have specific topics relating to education addressed or questions discussed, Mr. Vanderven would love to hear from you. Please address your suggestions or questions directly to him at the address given below.

GvP

Have you ever wondered about this question – are you well educated?

Some might readily respond: of course, I have a university degree. Others may be more timid: not really, I never finished that college program I started. And there will also be those who may be offended by the question: surely, you don't suggest that I'm not! Indeed, answers may vary, we may say. Just as all open-ended questions could be answered in a variety of ways.

Generally, schooling is considered an important part of education. Today, few will argue that a good schooling would not be necessary. Mind you, there are varying ways in which to gain such a good schooling! Whatever the case, there are few employment opportunities for those who lack schooling and are not able to show the results of their studies. In contrast to earlier times, at the end of the twentieth century the school stands as one of the most important and most influential agents of education. It will be difficult to imagine a society without schools, although this is not to say that schools will always be organized in the way they are now. Undoubtedly, other alternatives will be developed. Yet it will be correct to claim that today almost one hundred percent of the population is schooled. However, can we now also say that almost one hundred percent of the population is educated?

Being schooled and being educated are not the same thing. It will take little effort to recognize that schooling is a term with a narrower meaning than the term education. Sure, we learned much at school, but we learned many other things elsewhere, not in the least in our parental homes. Think about your schooling for a minute: have you ever

wondered what happened to you during your time at school? Were you filled with facts, perhaps forgotten immediately after you wrote the test? Do you remember your friends with whom you have travelled through school from grade to grade? Were you frustrated because you were asked to do things you were not very good at? Were you perhaps bored because the subject material held no interest? Did you look forward to going to school every day, or were your school days filled with trepidation and anxieties? In short, what happened to you at school?

Whether in a positive or in a negative manner, the school influenced your development. To be sure, other agents of education did that also. When we think of schooling we think in the first place of being exposed to a range of subjects, each with its own body of knowledge and its own set of skills. As a student, you were asked to acquire that body of knowledge and to practise those skills. Tests were organized at regular intervals to see whether you remembered the important information, and assignments were set to give you opportunity to demonstrate your competence.

Schooling is usually part of growing up, but in order to be considered grown up much more than schooling is

required. Similarly, schooling is an important way towards being educated, but much more than schooling is required in order to be considered well educated. The word "educate" derives from the Latin "educare" and "educere" (a good dictionary will show you these word histories; quite fun to explore them!). The first, *educare*, means to rear as in rearing children. Thus, education means to bring up young children from childhood so as to form their habits, manners, intellectual and physical aptitudes (Oxford Dictionary). The second Latin word, *educere*, means leading forth, or bringing out, perhaps even branching out as a river. This meaning suggests that being educated involves having branched out, being led forth from a simple, naive state to a more mature, adult state of life.


The boundaries between the educational responsibilities of the home and those of the school are not always so clear. It will help the home as well as the school to discuss how these two agents of education ought to work together in order to provide the young with an optimal education.

Our brief excursion shows that the terms education, educate, and educated have various shades of meaning which include physical care as well as the training and development of habits and minds. Being educated means, among other things, being able to look after yourself, and being able to apply what you have learned in school. Although it is possible to identify a point

at which we may be able to say that our education is complete – the end of the care of your parents; the conclusion of your schooling – being educated is a life-long process!

Therefore, when asked the question: are you well educated? young and old will often answer somewhat evasively yet correctly: yes, I have had a good education, but there is yet so much to learn!

If you would like specific topics or questions about education addressed, please direct your queries to:

Mr. T.M.P. Vanderven
Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College
856 Upper James Street, Box 20179
Hamilton, ON, L9C 7M5
E-mail: tmpvdv@hookup.net 

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



Three third-year students of our Theological College received permission to speak an edifying word in the congregations, namely Karlo Janssen and Stephen t'Hart, both from Australia, and Dirk Poppe, a Canadian student.

* * *

In Toronto they are experiencing the practical consequences of having Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland. Rev. W. den Hollander writes: "After the second service today I will be going to the congregation of the Free Church of Scotland here in Toronto for a preaching engagement, i.e. to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church at Sheppard Ave. E. in North York."

* * *

The consistory of the church in Byford, W.A. dealt with the question whether the business relating to synods is dealt with in a satisfactory manner. "The meeting agrees that when an objection is made to ratify a synod decision, it should be presented in written form and supported with proper grounds. The secretary will devise a program to deal with the ratification of synod articles."

* * *

The Mission Aid workers in Maceió, Brazil, Mr. and Mrs. H. Plug, have been visiting the churches in Ontario to report on their activities.

* * *

In Chatham, ON the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church will host a combined Reformation Day Rally together with their sister church in Watford, the Free Reformed Church of Chatham and the Independent Reformed Church in Wyoming. Similar events are happening in other places as well, such as Ancaster, ON and the Fraser Valley, BC.

* * *

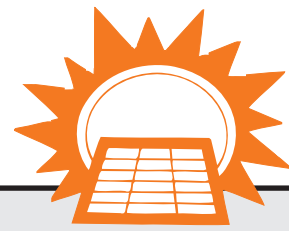
In the meantime the "ARCH" meeting has been held in the Fraser Valley. The following comments by Rev. VanLuik give you some impression on this event. "Last week Churches from four federations of Reformed Churches met together in Langley. This meeting gave an opportunity for the different churches to hear one another and discuss the future direction that the Lord wants from His Church. While it became clear from the meeting that there were quite a number of different opinions, the fact that all but 3 of the (24) churches invited were present, shows that there is a willingness to seek each other. If there is indeed a willingness to submit to the one Lord, there is no reason that the churches present cannot make progress in the direction that our Lord desires."

* * *

The Port Kells Church, BC will undergo a name change when they move into their new building, perhaps by the end of the year. They will then be known as the Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church.

* * *

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our ruler, the LORD is our king; He will save us.
Isaiah 33:22

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We all know the story about Job. Job, the rich and righteous man, who walked in the ways of the Lord. He had everything that you can think of: he was healthy, he had a big family, he was popular among the people, and he was very, very rich. He also served the Lord with all his heart. The LORD even says about Job, “. . . a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil.”

But then God's enemy, Satan, comes to the LORD and the LORD talks to him about Job. The LORD allows Satan to take everything away from Job, but to save his life. Satan thinks that by doing that, he can make Job to curse the LORD and turn away from Him. So Job loses everything: his children, his possessions, his house, his health, even his wife turns away from him. His friends come to visit him, and tell him that he must have been sinning terribly, otherwise the LORD would not have done this to him. They tell him that the LORD will only do something like this when He is really angry with someone. So Job must have sinned, and he better confess his sin! Job does not know either why the LORD gives him so much misery. He does not know about the fight between God and Satan. He thinks, and he says, that the LORD is not fair by doing this to him, Job. He did not do anything to deserve this punishment. Finally the LORD speaks, and He opens Job's eyes to the truth. And the lesson that Job learns from the LORD is a lesson that counts for all of us.

The LORD shows Job that He is the Creator of heaven and earth. There is so much in the creation that is hidden from our eyes. So many things happen in nature that we do not understand. When we pay attention to the animals, the birds, the flowers, the stars, the oceans, and the mountains, then we are speechless. So much beauty and detail, tenderness, but also force and strength. No person would be able to describe it all. No person could even think to make anything like it. And the LORD keeps the whole world in all its integrity in His powerful hand. Nothing, nobody escapes His attention. Everything happens from second to second according to His plan. Birds and beasts obey His voice, and the whole earth reflects God's greatness.

And Job, and we, where do we fit in? We only take a very humble place in God's creation, even though we were created after God's image: the most beautiful of everything. But after the fall into sin we lost our place of honour, for we were cursed. God was very angry with us, so angry that He could have killed us. But the LORD loved us, in spite of our sins. It is out of grace that He gave us His only Son. He is our Saviour, Jesus Christ. The LORD punished His Son in our place. He died for us and paid for all our sins. Through Him we all may receive eternal life.

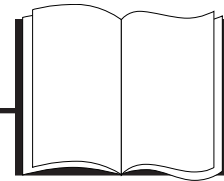
So what lesson do we learn from the story of Job? Job criticized the LORD, he said that the LORD was unfair. The LORD showed Job that He is so mighty and powerful that He rules the whole earth. We cannot do that, we cannot even understand His creation. So how can we say what is fair or unfair? We only have to look at God's love for us, miserable sinners. His love is always there, also when we experience many difficulties. In His compassion, and out of grace, He gave us His Son. All our troubles are still a result of the war between Satan and God. But our Saviour conquered Satan, He won the war. It will only be a little while yet until Jesus Christ will renew our damaged lives.

So let us pray for faith and endurance in difficult times. It won't be long! The promise is there. Our Lord and Saviour will open the door for us, and we will be allowed to enter the house of His Father.

*All praise the LORD, O sons of light!
Extol Him in the highest height.
Praise Him, His angels; from your post
Praise God with all the heavenly host.
You sun and moon, for seasons given,
You shining stars aglow in heaven,
You highest heights and cloudy sky,
All praise the Name of God Most High.*
Psalm 148:1

There are no birthdays in December, (at least not on my list!)

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



A Response to Br. Adrian Hamoen

In his recent letter to the editor, br. Hamoen discusses my assertion that fasting is "taught in Scripture both by way of example and by way of exhortation." At the beginning I would stress that I am not arguing that fasting be compulsory for the Church (that would lead to legalism) – only that it, like prayer, should flow naturally out of the Christian life. I will deal with his response as briefly as possible and in order:

1) Br. Hamoen assumes that fasting was an Old Testament ceremonial law which today has been fulfilled in Christ and is therefore no longer binding. However, the only place in the Old Testament where fasting is enjoined is Lev.16:29, in connection with the Day of Atonement. However, are we to believe that Christ was speaking of the fasting associated with this day in His words in Mt. 6 and elsewhere? Fasting on its own is not found in the OT ceremonial laws any more than is prayer. It is not in itself an OT ceremony. It is however found in the New Testament – and I might mention – in the back of our Book of Praise, in the prayers, "A General Confession of Sins and Prayer Before the Sermon and on Days of Fasting and Prayer." There is a Reformed historical background to this practice – one which we ought not to ignore (cf. Westminster Confession 21.5 and the Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 24).

Besides if Jesus was "still addressing the Old Testament dispensation" and therefore His words on fasting do not apply to us, then by the same reasoning tithing also may be done away with, as may prayer (even though, as with fasting, it is taught elsewhere in the Bible). In this passage of Mt. 6, Jesus is speaking about "when you pray, when you fast, when you tithe . . . do it this way." One element of this triad cannot be done away with arbitrarily. Mr. Hamoen's reasoning, followed consistently, leads to confusion.

2) Concerning 1 Corinthians 7:5: The KJV is not the only Bible translation which contains this word, it may also be found in the NKJV and in the Staten Vertaling. The fact of the matter is that the word "fasting" is found in the majority of Greek manuscripts and our modern translations portray a bias for the Alexandrian text-type which does not contain these words. I do not mean to get involved here in the debate about Bible translations: I refer the reader to the work of Dr. J. VanBruggen (emeritus professor at the Theological University in Kampen) in this field.

3) With respect to Luke 5:34,35: again I would note that the practice of fasting on its own was NOT mandated in the ceremonial law of the old dispensation.

4) Finally, br.Hamoen asserts that the "New Testament form of fasting has

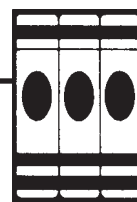
become an abstaining from the works of sin in the study of God's Word and the communion of saints." Br. Hamoen must wrestle with the examples I gave in my article of fasting in the early church (cf. Acts 14:23, Didache 8.1 and many other places in the apostolic fathers) and also the fact that fasting as a practice on its own is not a part of the OT ceremonial laws fulfilled in Christ. Moreover, again let us look back to the Reformation, where these truths concerning fasting were plainly understood. This is reflected in John Calvin who, according to the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, commended the practice of fasting (cf. his comments in the commentaries on the above-mentioned passages and especially Institutes 4.12.16-21, where Calvin provides a very helpful discussion of this subject – also its relation to the work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification). All of this demands the question be asked: did Calvin undermine Christ's perfect sacrifice?

In the Service of Christ,
Wes Bredenhof

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

BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by E. Kampen



THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

by Noel Weeks

The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1988

309 pages; \$21.95 U.S.; available from Great Christian Books

With the flood of books published for the Christian reader it becomes dif-

icult to know what to buy. A book well worth the price is *The Sufficiency of Scripture* by Noel Weeks. The title reflects what we confess in article 7 of the Belgic Confession. In the introduction the author explains his motivation for this book, namely, the tendency to see a limited infallibility and authority for Scripture. He notes the tendency to

limit its authority to religious questions, and disqualifying the Bible when it comes to questions of science or history. It will also be said that since these areas do not touch the heart of the gospel, we are free to think differently from what the Bible teaches when scientific and historic research present us with conflicting information.


The author's position is that Scripture is sufficient, accurate and authoritative over all of life because it is the Word of God. In the first part of the book he deals with general arguments used to reduce the authority of Scripture over all of life. One such argument is that Scripture is not exhaustive in matters of science, and so it cannot be considered an authority. It is nicely shown how this argument turns back on those who propose it because the scientist, though aiming to be exhaustive, can never know everything himself. In a section on General and Special Revelation, it is pointed out that what is called General Revelation is revelation about God, that is, His majesty, power and deity. By pointing to Colossians 2, where Paul warns his readers not to be taken in by vain philosophies of the world but to remember the sufficiency of Christ, we are reminded that human scholarship is in the bonds of sin, and therefore any human scholarship which makes conclusions from general revelation is by

its very nature suspect. Another way that the authority of the Bible is challenged is by what is called contextualization. It is argued that the Bible was given in a certain historical and cultural context which is not normative for us today. This is the argument of cultural relativism, as if there can be no absolute truth valid for all cultures.

In the second part of the book, which makes up about two-thirds of the book, the author goes into detailed analysis of a number of issues where the sufficiency of Scripture is attacked. Included are the issues of Scripture's testimony concerning creation versus modern science, women in teaching/ ruling offices in the church, and the Scriptural teaching on divorce and remarriage, as well as homosexuality, over against claims based on advances in modern psychology, the task of the church in society, and Bible translations. In these sections the author does some excellent exegetical work. There is a clear explanation of the relationship between Gen. 1 and 2, and the structure of Gen. 3.

Very worthwhile comments are made on 1 Cor. 11-14 in connection with the place of women in the church. In connection with divorce and homosexuality, the light of Scripture is placed squarely over against the immorality of today, and the church is called to be faithful and courageous.

There are many other worthwhile chapters. In all these specific issues it is made clear that the real issue is the sufficiency of Scripture, and accepting it as the authoritative Word of God for all of life. The word and wisdom of man as the creature is no match for the Word which contains the wisdom of the Creator.

This book cannot be read in an evening or two. Nevertheless, the one who takes the time to read and digest it will be well rewarded, not only by being reminded of the sufficiency of Scripture but by gaining further insight into the Scriptures. As such it will serve as a stimulus to study Scripture further and to be guided by it in all of life. 

African Reformed Alliance (A.R.A.)

Following A.R. Kayayan's recent trip to several French speaking African countries, and the constitution of new Reformed Confessing Churches, upon his suggestion, an African Reformed Alliance has been established.

Members of the Alliance are Reformed Confessing Churches of Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Togo, Zaire, (soon to be followed by other countries), as well as various non-ecclesiastical organizations, and individual Reformed Christians.


The Alliance has adopted as its doctrinal basis The Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches (*Gallicana*), of 1559. Only Africans will be its members; if a non-French speaking church, or organization of African origin, wishes to become a partner, there will be provisions for their inclusion. The aim of A.R.A. is to establish:

- a Christian fellowship between several Reformed churches and individuals
- a mutual encouragement
- exchange of information
- the promotion of a Reformed Faith and World-view
- the elaboration, wherever and whenever possible, of a common strategy for the realization of the above goals, based on a strong and consequent Reformed doctrinal, ecclesiastical and socio-cultural thinking.

The idea has been enthusiastically greeted by all the churches of Reformed persuasion in French speaking Africa. An executive committee will coordinate both the desired fellowship and meetings and common action. A news exchange, to appear biannually, will be issued by "**Reformed Faith and Action**," c/o A.R. Kayayan, in Palos Heights, IL.

To promote and strengthen A.R.A., a correspondence course, called **DIDASKALIA**, is being prepared; in two or three years, subjects such as Dogmatics, Ethics, Pastoral Theology, Reformed Philosophy, Cults and Religions, will be taught. Several candidates have already been registered. They will be acquainted with Reformed Thinking and Action, in order to, in their turn, train church members for the mission.

For further information contact:

A.R.A. Kayayan, Pasteur, "**Reformed Faith and Life**," (formerly **PERSPECTIVES REFORMEES**), 12233 S. 70th Ave., Palos Heights, IL.
Tel. (708) 361-5101;
Fax (708) 361-5197;
E-mail:ARKCAR@AOL.COM. 

A thankful celebration in Taber

After having worshipped for several years under the serene gaze of three elk-heads in the local Elks Hall, the Taber congregation could, with much thanks, begin worshipping the LORD God in her beautiful new church building on Sunday, June 30, 1996.

On Friday September 6, the congregation gathered for an evening of celebration, thanksgiving and praise to God for His goodness to His church. He alone gave us the talent, the time, the financial ability, and the Christian spirit of unanimity, to bring this project to fruition. We have only given to Him of what He has first placed in our hands.

Under the enthusiastic leadership of the M.C., Mrs. L. (Sheila) Ypma, we sang, spoke, listened, laughed, rejoiced, and prayed as we offered up thanks to God. The theme for the evening was, *Praise to the Lord . . . for His steadfast love is sure!* We enjoyed the company of many visitors – from the Canadian Reformed Church in Coaldale, Trinity Reformed Church in Lethbridge, others from the Town of Taber, and even from as far away as BC.

It is our prayer that our new church building planted on the edge of town, looking east across the prairie, may



stand until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and may always be a place where the people of God worship in Spirit and truth, awaiting the return of the Master.

Praise to the Lord . . . for His steadfast love is sure!



Mr. L. Tams, chairman of the building committee, presenting the ceremonial key to chairman of consistory, Rev. G. van Popta



Children's choir



Volunteers in the Church Community

By Arie J. Hordyk

Picture this: The consistory rejected our proposal without giving us a reason. Or: Council altered our proposal without really telling us why. Or: Council decided to take over a matter or function that has been mandated to us for years. . . .

And of course, you can change the name Consistory or Council into School Board, High School Board, etc. and you may have a similar scenario.

I have noticed a bit of dissatisfaction in and around the volunteers I am familiar with, and wonder what the problem is. Is it with the volunteers or the consistories or boards?

In my active lifetime I have served in church or church related boards and committees, was active in local and area community work, served my industry on the local, provincial and national levels for over 30 years. And when I hear about volunteering in and around the church, I listen to problems I really never heard about in secular organizations. Why is this so? Why do some of our consistories and boards go over committee minutes with a fine tooth comb and spend hours of their valuable time doing committee work? After all, I assume that they appoint very capable church members to these committees in order that the job gets done. Or do we too often have a situation where the expertise is less important than the popularity of the church member? Or do we feel we should give someone a job to keep him or her interested in the church?

It is prudent of any consistory to delegate any other work, outside of the spiritual aspect in the care of the congregation, to church members who have the required expertise. After all, an elder does not have to be a banker or accountant to be a good and compassionate elder. To be a good shepherd should be pre-eminent. And that is why he was ordained. But for the books of the church you want members with financial experience. And

the elders, who appoint these members to look after the material management, better have a very good reason to overrule them.


As far as our school boards are concerned we could have a similar situation. Most board members are parents of school going-children. They have a vested interest. They are elected to the board in a democratic process and are responsible to the membership for a sound and efficient operation of the school. Without capable and dedicated committees, you might as well go home!

What is the difference between the church and school societies? First of all, our societies are operated in a democratic manner. These boards are totally accountable to the membership. It is rather interesting that some of our presidents or board members who have served in a consistory don't always subscribe to this, and this can cause a lot of dissension among the membership to the extent that it hurts the operation of the school. It is a lot easier for a school society to lose members than for a church. You don't leave the church. You are sort of locked in. And that is where a good consistory is worth its weight in gold. Knowing that the Lord has given them the responsibility for the congregation, consistory members should realize that their authority over them is secondary. In day-to-day life we talk about our duties, not our rights.

To do any work in God's Kingdom is a privilege. And one should give his very best to serve the Lord wherever and whenever possible. To volunteer as the bookkeeper or treasurer of the church or to be involved in evangelism should be an enriching experience. In particular, take the example of Vacation Bible School. Is it not amazing that we always find the same members doing V.B.S. year after year? In our church V.B.S. is the least structured committee, and it operates very well on its own. As a matter of fact, we would like to see our

consistory members show some interest during the 2 week presentation!

My advice goes to everyone: Without volunteers you won't get the job done. These people should be trusted after being appointed. They deserve to receive some encouragement, instead of being put through the grinder of criticism.

On the other hand, consistories and boards are human too, and maybe a face to face meeting "on neutral ground" may do wonders. How about an informal coffee social for the leadership and volunteers? In the Kingdom there should not be a visible level of service. Everything is important. After all, we expect the coming of our Lord. And He wants all of us to be busy in His vineyard, in brotherly love when He gathers the harvest. 





Press Release of Classis Pacific October 1, 1996 in Langley

On behalf of the convening church of Yarrow, Rev. C. Vandervelde asked the brothers to sing Psalm 138: 2,4 read Ephesians 1, and led in prayer. He then welcomed the delegates.

The Church of Vernon reported that the credentials were found to be in good order. Two churches had instructions. Classis was declared constituted. Appointed as executive were:

Rev. Boersma, chairman
Rev. Louwse, vice-chairman
Rev. Schouten, clerk

The agenda was updated and adopted.

Two submissions were received from the Church at Aldergrove with regard to their relationship with the Abbotsford Free Reformed Church. The following motion is adopted "Classis Pacific decides that submission B of the Church at Aldergrove is inadmissible due to the fact that some churches have not been able to deal with these matters and although submission A is admissible, seeing the close connection between them Classis decides to advise the Church at Aldergrove to submit submission A and B to the next classis."

Reports:

- A report from the Church at Vernon for auditing books of the treasurer was presented.
- A report from Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry was presented.
- There is no report from the Committee for Needy Churches.
- Church visitation reports for the churches at Port Kells, Cloverdale, Houston, and Smithers were read and received.

Question period (ad Article 44 C.O.)

The churches at Cloverdale, Smithers and Langley receive advice on various matters.

The following appointments were made:

- For the next classis the convening church is the church at Abbotsford. Classis will be held D.V. on December 10, 1996 (April 8, 1997 alternate date) in Langley.

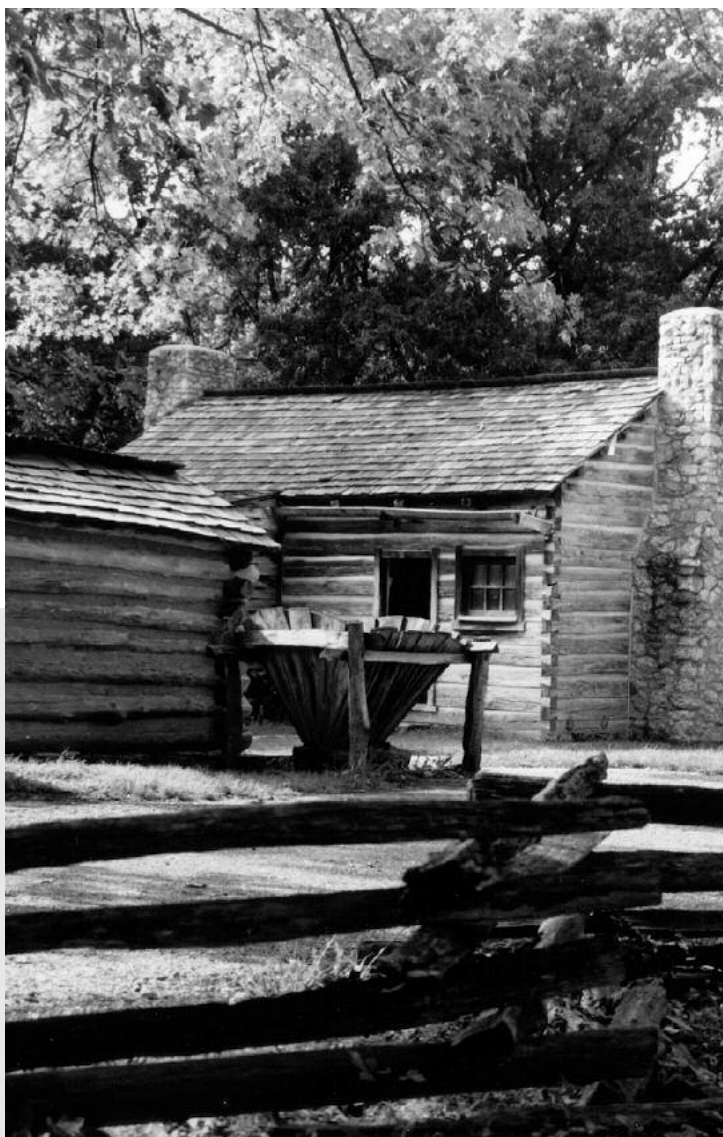
- Suggested officers are:
Rev. J. Louwse, chairman
Rev. R. Schouten, vice-chairman
Rev. J. Huijgen, clerk
- Delegated to Regional Synod West scheduled for December 4, 1996 at Neerlandia:
Prima: Elders H.A. Berends, C. Leyenhorst, H.H. Moes, P. Vanwoudenberg
Secunda: Elders G. Boeve, S. Koat, H. DeLeeuw, C. De Haas
Prima: Reverends R. Schouten, C. Vandervelde, M.H. VanLuik, C. VanSpronsen

Secunda: Reverends H. Boersma, W. Wielenga, J. Moesker, W. H. Huijgen

Question period was held

Censure according to Article 34 C.O. was not necessary. The acts were adopted and the press release was approved. The chairman asked the brothers to sing Hymn 64:1,3,4 and vice-chairman led in prayer. Classis was closed.

For the Classis
J. Louwse



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Here are a few puzzles to keep you busy in the cold month of November. I hope you enjoy them.

Have you tried the play-dough recipe from the last column? Remember to ask permission especially before using the oven!

Quiz Time!

IN COMMON!

What have the members of each of the following groups in common?

1. Timothy, James, Titus, Jude _____
2. Elah, Jezreel, Achor, Baca _____
3. Abraham, Peter, Israel, Paul _____
4. Timbrel, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer _____
5. Cherith, Kidron, Besor, Eshcol _____
6. Darius, Cyrus, Artaxerxes, Ahasuerus _____
7. The prodigal son, the unjust steward, the lost sheep, the sower _____
8. Jacob, Pharaoh's chief butler, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife _____
9. Belial, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Apollyon _____
10. The raising of the Shunnamite's son, the increasing of the widow's oil, the healing of Naaman, the striking blind of the attacking Syrians _____
11. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna _____
12. Absalom, Chileab, Adonijah, Solomon _____
13. Coos, Melita, Chios, Patmos _____
14. Bithynia, Pamphylia, Galatia, Cilicia _____
15. Joseph, Daniel, Obadiah, Pilate _____

(Answers at end of column)

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to all you Busy Beavers who celebrate in November. May God bless you in the coming year.

Anna Kampen	2	Richard Oosterhoff	20
Kaitlin Hordyk	4	Terry VanAndel	21
Kay-Leigh Linde	4	Amanda VanderHoeven	22
Melissa Bremer	12	Jodi Hordyk	27
Kayla VanderHorst	12	James Aasman	28
Ashlea Jagt	15	Pauline Boeve	29
Heidi deHaan	15	Dorothy Gunnink	30
Ainsley VanVeen	16	Natasha Oosterhoff	30
Joshua Sietsma	18		

WORD SEARCH

Prophets of the Old Testament

Can you find the hidden names of these prophets?

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

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Samuel	Elijah
Hosea	Zephaniah	Elisha	Malachi
Joel	Ezekiel	Amos	Jonah
Nahum	Haggai	Zechariah	

TWO OF A KIND

The two people listed in the right-hand column were alike in one thing. Match the two with how they were alike.

Put letter here

- | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------------------------|
| _____ | 1. Walked on Water | a. David and Paul, 1 Samuel 19:12 |
| _____ | 2. Dogs licked their blood | b. Mary and Martha, John 11:19 |
| _____ | 3. Slew (Killed) a lion | c. Jesus and Peter, Matthew 14:29 |
| _____ | 4. Fell from a window | e. Joshua and Caleb, Numbers 14:6-8. |
| _____ | 5. Appeared at transfiguration | Ahaziah and Eutychus, 2 Kings 1:2 |
| _____ | 6. Were first two disciples | Acts 20:9 |
| _____ | 7. Were Lazarus' kin | f. Benaiah and Samson, 2 Samuel 23:20 |
| _____ | 8. Became friends at Jesus' trial | Judges 14:5-6 |
| _____ | 9. Were let down over a wall | g. Ahab and Jezebel, 1 Kings 22:37,38 |
| _____ | 10. Gave good reports of the Promised Land. | 2 Kings 9:33-36 |
| | | h. Moses and Elijah, Matt. 17:2,3 |
| | | i. Peter and Andrew, Matt. 4:18-20 |
| | | j. Herod and Pilate, Luke 23:12 |