



Clarion

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Speaking an edifying word.



Christ Jesus the Answer

Many questions today

Throughout the ages many questions have been asked about the meaning and goal of life, as well as about right and wrong. These questions can be of a general nature, remaining the same throughout the ages; they can also be specific, coming up in specific times and situations. For instance, never before in all of history have questions been asked about the ethical correctness of cloning animals or, more importantly, whether it is permissible to produce human clones. Every age has the same questions, as well as some new ones of its own.

Can we as Christians say that the answer to each question and to every problem is Christ Jesus? Or does this sound too vague and cheap? It has been said, too, that the Bible does not give us an answer to every question, implying that we need other sources for wisdom and knowledge besides the Bible.

Of course, we are not dealing here with questions like how much two plus four is or how many legs a spider has. We are dealing here with questions about life and about right and wrong.

With regard to the question whether Christ Jesus is the answer to our questions and problems, we can learn from what the apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Many problems in Corinth

Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians deals with many difficulties and sins in the congregation at Corinth. The first four chapters speak of the evil of division in the church. In Chapter 5 the apostle addresses a case of incest "not found even among pagans." In the next chapter Paul warns against having court cases against each other before unbelieving judges; he warns against many forms of immorality, concentrating on the matter of going to a prostitute. In Chapter 11 Paul struggles against a kind of feministic thinking in the congregation and against sinful abuse of the congregational meals. In summary, the letter shows that the congregation was far from perfect. On quite a number of points there was the obvious need for ongoing conversion from sin in thoughts and actions. The old pagan leaven was still working strongly.

Further, a delegation from the congregation had brought a number of questions to the apostle. In 7:1 Paul writes, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. . . ." Their questions dealt with marriage (Ch. 7), with eating meat sacrificed to idols (Ch. 8-10), with the proper, humble way of receiving and working with the different gifts of the Holy Spirit (Ch. 12-14); with the truth about the resurrection of the dead and with the collection for the needy in Jerusalem

(Ch. 15-16). These questions arose because of false teaching on these points in the church which led to sinful practices. The apostle had to do quite a bit of correcting and instructing.

A remarkable introduction

This letter has a remarkable opening and introduction. As for the opening verses, Paul presents himself, in his usual way, as an apostle of Christ Jesus, called to this office according to God's will (v. 1). Also as usual, the addressees are mentioned. Here they are "the church of God which is at Corinth" (v. 2a). It is followed by the apostolic greeting with which Paul lays the opening blessing of God upon them (v. 3). In all this there is nothing unusual.

The extension about the addressees in verse 2b, however, is remarkable. In spite of all the sins and imperfections to be dealt with in the letter, Paul speaks of them as "sanctified in Christ Jesus" and "saints called" by God "together with all those who in every place call on the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours." This emphasis on the Lord Jesus Christ is very special. He is mentioned here three times: first in the words "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (two names and the work of sanctification); then in an expression indicating what believers in Him do: they "call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (the full three-fold name and His significance for believers); and third, at the end, in the term that stresses Christ's being the Lord: the One who ransomed and bought those who believe in Him; the One who rules over them; the One to whom they submit themselves in obedient faith.

This remarkable emphasis on the Lord Jesus Christ and what believers have in Him serves the purpose of asking all the attention of the Corinthian believers for their Redeemer-Lord, right from the very start of listening to this apostolic letter.

Such an extension, with a special addition within the greeting at the beginning of a letter, we find also in Rom. 1:1a-6; Gal. 1:1b, 4-5; and Titus 1:1b-3. These special additions contain, in summary, the basic or thematic message of the letter that follows.

We can already draw the conclusion that the central message of Paul in 1 Corinthians is: for answers in all your problems and difficulties, focus your attention on Christ Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

But this is not all. What Paul says in the opening words in v. 2b he elaborates on and gives even more emphasis in the introduction proper to this letter. Since in 1:10 the apostle begins to deal with the first sinful condition, that of division, verses 4-9 are to be taken as introduction to the letter as a whole. And in these verses, too, all the emphasis

is on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His name is mentioned in everyone of these verses. Verse 4 speaks of the gift of God's grace "in Christ Jesus." Verse 5 adds that "in every way" they were "enriched in Him with all speech and knowledge." Verse 6 says that "the testimony to Christ was confirmed among" them, and v. 7 adds that they lack no spiritual gift while they are waiting for "the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 8 continues to speak about Him: God "will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." For, so Paul adds in v. 9, "God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

In summary, God has richly blessed them with His grace in Christ Jesus by granting them all these enriching gifts.

Pointing to Christ Jesus

With this rich truth about what the Corinthian believers have in Christ, Paul now begins to work in order to overcome the wrong ideas and the sins in the congregation.

Dealing with the sin of the division among them, Paul starts by referring to "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," saying, "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you are united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1:10). And in 1:13 the apostle asks: "Is Christ divided?" In 1:30 he writes that God "is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." In 2:16 we read that as believers "we have the mind of Christ." In chapter 3, Paul shows that all the apostles and their fellow workers are merely servants for the church, and that the church is of Christ. Thus, by looking at Christ as the One through whom God bought, gathers, and preserves His one church, they must overcome the sin of division. All that the apostles are doing is preaching Christ. He is the one and only foundation of the church (3:10). Clearly it is the name of Christ that is to correct the sinful situation.

The question what to do in the case of incest is also answered by pointing to Christ Jesus. In 5:7, Paul says: "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed." Believers have died with Christ to sin and have been raised with Him to a new life to be lived for God. This is the meaning of the redemption through Christ. See also v. 8.

As for the points dealt with in Chapter 6, why is it sinful for brothers to have court cases against each other? It is sinful because as brothers in Christ we are not to seek our own interests, but, in love, are to seek first of all the glory of Christ as well as the well-being of the brother, trusting that God is taking care of us. Having court cases against each other in the church is a defeat for and failure of faith in Christ as Redeemer. And why is it sinful for a Christian to go to a prostitute? It is because the believer is one with Christ: Christ has ransomed him, body and soul, for Himself, from sin.

As for marriage and being married or single (Ch. 7), also here the answer to the many questions is Christ Jesus as Redeemer. It is good not to be married because then one can devote oneself with undivided devotion to Christ (v. 32), while the married person is divided and is devoted also to the spouse (v. 33). This being devoted also to the spouse is not wrong; it is required in marriage. For being married is good, if only it is in the Lord (v. 39). For then husband and wife will be devoted to each other, and, at the same time,



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together they will be devoted to the Lord. And this is the goal for all who belong to Christ as their Lord, married or not. Indeed, again Christ Jesus as Lord is the answer to the questions.

As for the eating of meat that was sold at the market but which came from sacrifices offered to idols, here, too, Christ Jesus is the answer to what is right or wrong. In itself, Paul says, there is nothing wrong with eating this meat. But if such eating is sinful in the eyes of a weak brother and he draws the conclusion that living in sin and belonging to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ goes quite well together, then my eating could cause the brother, for whom Christ died, to stumble and fall into sinning. The answer is clear. Since Christ showed His love for this brother by sacrificing Himself on the cross for him, I should show my loving care for him and bring the very small sacrifice of refraining from eating (such) meat (Ch. 8-10).

Jumping to Chapter 15, we see the same thing. Paul corrects the error about our resurrection by elaborating on the resurrection of Christ.

The conclusion is clear: Christ Jesus is the answer to the problems and sins in the church.

The Doctrine of Christ Jesus is the Answer

More has to be said, however. The answers are in the person of Christ and what He has done and is doing, but all this as it is revealed in the Scriptures by the prophets and apostles.

When, taught by Paul, we say that Christ is the answer to our questions because God gave Him as our wisdom

and righteousness and sanctification, it still remains somewhat vague. We must be more specific. Paul himself makes it more concrete. In 1:10, he begins the application of Christ as being the answer to the first problems, and he does not simply speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks of *the name of* the Lord Jesus Christ. "The name of" Christ means the Lord Jesus Christ as He has been revealed to us. It is the Lord as prophesied in the Old Testament and as preached by the apostles in the New Testament. In other words, the answer is the Christ as revealed to us in the Scriptures, in the teaching or doctrine about Him in the Bible and, therefore, as the church confesses Him according to the Scriptures. This revealed and confessed Christ Jesus is the answer.


Now our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as the eternal Son of God through whom the Father created the entire universe. Therefore, speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ includes speaking about creation. Christ is not just the redeemer of the soul for eternal life. He is the redeemer of what God the Father created in the beginning through Him. In Him creation and redemption belong together. And He received the Holy Spirit from the Father at His ascension, not for Himself but for His people, for creation, to sanctify again the entire creation for God. This sanctification through the Spirit begins in this life with the believers and their life here on earth. Through the Spirit, the believers devote their life, as gift of creation and redemption, to God again, whether single or married, as families, and in their labour and other relations. They sanctify their life as a sacrifice of

thankfulness to their God. Christ Jesus works all this out in their life through the Holy Spirit.

Christ Jesus, our Lord, through whom God created and upholds, redeemed and continues to save, sanctified and goes on to make holy, is (in this unity of all God's works) the wisdom of God given to us. In Him, as God has revealed Him in the Scriptures, God answers our questions and we can find the answers to our questions.

Our calling

This does not mean that all the answers to the manifold questions in life are immediately and readily available, that there is no need for thorough study. Modern life creates many new questions beside the old ones. The scientific know-how and the technological possibilities of our days seem almost unlimited. Think of modern science which can produce plant clones and now even animal clones. Human clones are said to belong to the possibilities. Is what is possible also good?

To find our answers, let us maintain the apostolic inspired teaching: the answer is in the Christ of the Scripture, that is, in the Scriptures of the Christ. That must remain our principle. For if we seek our answers not where God has given them but elsewhere, we disobey God and deceive ourselves and others. And when we do not find specific answers right away, let us, in humbleness, continue to go to the right source and, in the way of thorough study, seek them where God has given them: in God's revelation in Christ Jesus, our Lord. He is our wisdom. 

What's inside?

In this issue, Mr. Karlo Janssen concludes his study of the provision we have in our Church Order for students of theology to speak an edifying word in the churches. We thank Karlo for sharing the fruit of his research with us.

Rev. P. Aasman of Grand Valley contributes an article arguing in favour of having not only collections for the needy during the worship service, but also collections for the church.

In Reader's Forum, Mrs. A. Flach responds to a recent editorial.

Dr. J. De Jong reviews the recent book on marriage and the family published by the Burlington Reformed Study Centre, Rev. J. Mulder, editor. Marriages and families of Reformed people need constant fine-tuning. And often, they need much more than just that. This sounds like a very worthwhile book. It can be ordered from Premier.

Under Press Review, Dr. De Jong reviews an article which highlights exactly what the problem is in many marriages and families – *selfishness*.

GvP

By G.Ph. van Popta

Mourners get comfort

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4

The Lord Jesus had a way of turning things around. In the Beatitudes, in the Sermon on the Mount, He said first: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* The poor get a kingdom. He turned things around in the second beatitude as well. He said: *"Blessed are those who mourn."* We could paraphrase it: "Happy are the unhappy."

Whoever heard of that? Whoever heard of unhappy people being the happy ones? It doesn't even seem to make sense. Who are these people who mourn? Who are these people who are sad, who cry and lament? Will all sad people be happy? Will all those who mourn be comforted? No. Not all who mourn are blessed.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, the apostle Paul spoke of two kinds of grief. He called them "godly grief" and "worldly grief." By godly grief Paul meant grief over sin. Godly grief, said Paul, produces a repentance that leads to salvation. Grief over your sin is the first step towards repenting of your sin. And it is repentance that leads to salvation. And so repentance leads to true happiness, comfort and blessedness.

But there is also a worldly grief. Worldly grief is being sad, even angry, about certain unfortunate situations – say, a bad business deal. It does not produce repentance. It does not lead to salvation and comfort.

The Lord Jesus was speaking about *godly grief*. He will bless and comfort those who mourn in a godly way.

We can think of the apostle Paul's experience as he himself described it in Romans 7. He compared his life to the law of God. What did he find? He found sin. When he examined his life he discovered that he was a sinner. This made him cry out: *"Wretched man that I am!"* It made him mourn. He bemoaned his sinfulness.

The Word of God convicts each of us. When we hear the Word of God,

then we discover that we are sinners. It accuses us. It convinces us that we are wretched sinners. We deserve the wrath and curse of God. God's anger against sin was so great that He could not leave it unpunished. He had to punish it. In fact, He has punished sin in Jesus Christ by His bitter and shameful death on the cross.

Do you understand that? Do you understand the depths, the horror, the wretchedness of your sins? Of your own personal, sinful, wretchedness?

In James 4:9 the apostle James urged us to be wretched, to mourn and to weep. He said: *"Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord."* That's what James calls all sinners to do. To be wretched. To cry. To be dejected and humble.

Well, how is it with you? Do you mourn because of your sin? Does the knowledge of your sin make you humble before the Lord? Does it make you weep and moan? Do you cry out with the apostle Paul: *Wretched man, wretched woman that I am?* As you consider your sins, does your laughter turn to mourning? Does your joy turn to dejection? Do you humble yourself before the Lord?

I am not saying this to make you get a bad case of low self-esteem. We are to bemoan our sins, to humble ourselves before God on account of our sinfulness, so that God will esteem us highly. For the promise is that the Lord will exalt us if we humble ourselves before Him. James said more in the fourth chapter of his letter. Not only did he tell us to be wretched, to mourn and to weep. He also wrote, in James 4:10, *"Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you."* God will embarrass the proud and self-righteous, but He will exalt the one who falls before Him in humility, ashamed of his sin.


It is the one who, with Paul, cries out, "Sinful wretch that I am!" whom God comforts by the Gospel of free grace. It is the one who asks, "Who will deliver me?" who can say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Only such a person can say, "There is no condemnation for me, because I belong to Christ Jesus. That's my comfort."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," said our Lord Jesus.

Do your sins make you sad? Do they make you feel wretched? Do not fear. Knowledge of your sins and misery is the first step towards redemption. For godly grief produces repentance which leads to the wonderful comfort of salvation.

The Bible teaches a very deep doctrine of sin. We may not gloss over sin. Sin offends God. We understand that. And it makes us weep. But the Bible also teaches a very high doctrine of joy. God reaches down into the depths of our sadness. He sets us on our feet and wipes away our tears. He does it for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ.

And so we know true comfort. We have the comfort of knowing that Jesus Christ has fully paid for all our sins with His precious blood, that things are well between us and God.

Blessed! Happy! Happy and comforted in Christ. 

CHURCH NEWS 

CALLLED to Rockway, ON
Rev. G. Wieske
of Chatham, ON

Speaking an edifying word₂

By Karlo Janssen

Theological students who have not yet been ordained can, after appropriate classical examination, receive permission to speak an edifying word. In a previous article we reviewed the history of this practice in Holland. We noted that the churches after the Liberation always argued about the practice on the basis of practical reasons, never disputing the principal grounds. The only principled statement that was made dates back to 1896 where it was stated that students are not permitted to administer the Word. This time we wish to take a brief look at Canada and then turn our attention to testing some of the grounds.

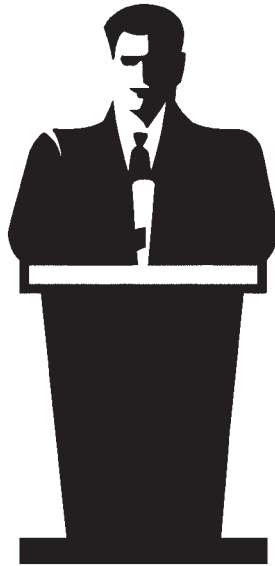
The Canadian history

The Canadian history is rather short. Soon after the College was established it became apparent that there were no rules for “speaking an edifying word.” The next synod (1971) received a request from one of the churches to allow the practice and it decided on the rules for this practice.

In 1974 one of the churches appealed the decision of 1971. The appeal suggested that Eph. 4:11,12 exclude the practice of “speaking an edifying word.” Synod decided that the ground for the appeal was incorrect and maintained the previous decision. Since then the practice has been unchallenged in the CndRC. In fact, it became such a prominent practice that it was even adopted into the Church Order of the CndRC (art. 21), a move which neither the Dutch nor the Australians have followed.

The practical grounds

When we draw together all the grounds offered in the various synods of the past century, it is noticeable that most of the arguments in favour and against centre on practical grounds. Synod Groningen-Zuid 1978 admitted as much. Let us then consider the practical arguments first.



Need in the churches

Most prominent is the argument “there is a great need within the churches for pulpit supply.” In Holland this need is all the more prominent because there are many churches which are too small to support their own minister. The vacancy rate has usually been over the 30% in a federation now numbering some 250+ churches.¹ On the other hand, there are also very large churches which should really be served by 3 or 4 ministers, but often only have 1 or 2. In such churches the pastoral demands are much larger, and there are usually double services every Sunday.

In both the Canadian and Australian situation this need is no way near as pronounced. At present there only 7 or 8 vacant pulpits in North America and none in Australia. If one adds to this the number of active professors and emeritus ministers, the vacancies could be filled in both continents. Thus this ground cannot be a prominent ground in the Canadian or Australian context at the present time.

For the training of the students

Article 21 of the CanRC CO offers two reasons for “permission to speak

an edifying word.” The first of these is that such a practice will be good for the training of the students. They will gain pulpit experience and receive input from people other than those who have an academic theological training. Congregational members can approach the student and he will soon enough discover whether his Aussie accent is too pronounced for the Canadians to understand him or his explanation of the text is different from that of the Korte Verklaring or NIV Study Bible.

Although I can see the benefits of this, I myself am leery of turning the worship service into a “practice session.” A student should not ascend the pulpit simply to “gain some experience.” There are sermon sessions at the college for this.

Nor has the profitability of the practice gone undisputed in the past. In 1951 it was the professors who believed that too much time would be taken away from the university study. However, it should be said that at other synods professors have supported the practice.

Thus, in my opinion, the experience gained should be regarded as a fringe benefit and not as a ground for the practice.

To become known to the churches

The second reason the CndRC CO gives is that the students may become known to the congregations. By “speaking around” the vacant churches can hear sermons from the students that will be graduating in the coming year and the congregation will be acquainted with the views and pulpit capabilities of the candidates-to-be.

This, I believe, is a good practical ground that has merit not only in the Great White North but also Down Under. Such a practice would be particularly helpful for students preparing themselves for mission work, since the calling church usually acts in behalf of more churches.

Immaturity of students

In 1993 Friesland spent some time discussing the argument that unfinished students are theologically too immature to stand on the pulpit. In response it noted that only those students who come with the endorsement of a professor can be granted permission to speak. (In Canada the endorsement of all the teaching staff is required). This would imply that the professor considers the student mature enough to ascend the pulpit.

Secondly, Dutch students who are in their last year of theology have already completed their dogmatics courses and are thus fully qualified to teach. In Canada this is not the case. The dogmatics course is taught over the last three years at our College and thus students who request "permission to speak an edifying word" before their last year have not yet completed their dogmatics training. In view of this the Canadians have taken the wise move of ensuring that the professor of homiletics (preaching) reads every "sermon" that a student wishes to use in a worship service. In this way the professor becomes a check to ensure that the "sermon" is not doctrinally skewed. Furthermore, it is Canadian practice to have the consistory of the place in which the student presents the "sermon" to fill out a questionnaire which is to be handed in to the professor. In this way proper oversight is maintained. I understand that such strict oversight is at present not maintained in the Netherlands though there have been requests for it at the more recent synods. Finally, it should be noted that the exam at the classis concentrates on the pulpit and on dogmatics.

In Australia the church of Armadale has suggested that one of the ministers fulfil the duties of the professor of homiletics. This is a good move. We may soon have to move in this direction too since the number of students requesting permission to speak an edifying word is on the increase, and our homiletics professor (Dr. de Jong) has quite enough on his plate already.

The principal ground

There has been only one principal ground in the whole debate. It was raised to an extent in 1896 and 1908, was expressed by two members of synod in 1952, and was raised in Canada in 1974. It is actually a ground against the practice, positing that it is

unscriptural for an unordained person to lead the worship service.

The church of Goes was of the opinion that Synod 1908 had disallowed the practice for this reason. 1978 pointed out, however, that 1908 had only said that students "do not administer the Word." In plain English this means: "students may not preach." This does not mean that students may not ascend the pulpit. When they do so, their activity on the pulpit as far as the "sermon" goes is of a different nature than that of the ordained minister. From the fact that Synod 1908 allowed candidates, also unordained men, to speak from pulpits it is clear that Synod 1978 was indeed correct.

There are then no principal or Scriptural reasons that would prevent unordained students and candidates from ascending the pulpit on a Sunday.

Article 21. An Edifying Word

Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, also others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training and in order that they may become known to the congregations.

An aside: The Dutch and new grounds

In its most recent decision the Dutch stated that if the churches want to give permission to speak an edifying word another basis, this will have to be done by a revision of the decision of 1908 and 1914.² Attached to this decision is an extensive discussion reviewing the whole history of the matter in Holland. Missing, however, is any reference to what the sister churches in Canada have done. This, I believe, is a great pity. If the Dutch would accept the Canadian grounds, particularly the second, the whole debate would be ended and the concerns of the church of Goes about un-Reformed church polity could be allayed.

Implications of the various grounds

The difference between the ordained and unordained has several repercussions for the practice of students leading the worship service. On a very minor note, the address should not be called a

"sermon" (since a sermon is the official proclamation of the Word of God) nor should the practice of speaking an edifying word be termed "preaching consent" (a warped Dutchism for "spreekconsent" perhaps). Rather, a student speaks an address to the congregation, and he does so in order to edify her, to build her up.

Being unordained, the student should not presuppose to utter the blessings in the liturgy but to pray for them. Whether elders may do so or not is not of importance here since elders are still ordained office-bearers. Students are not ordained and do well to keep this in mind.

The language of their address should also be in keeping with its nature. It would be more appropriate, in my opinion, for students and candidates to begin their addresses with "Beloved brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ" rather than "Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ." This may seem rather pedantic, but it makes the point clear. In the first, the speaker clearly identifies himself with the group he addresses, whereas in the second he stands somewhat more removed. Moreover, within the body of the address, the student should avoid addressing those sitting before him with a general "you" and instead should try to speak in the first person form "we." He speaks with indirect authority and not with the authority of the office. If humility is to be the mark of the pulpit for ministers, how much the more so for unordained students and candidates.

Some may ask whether the character of the worship service is not violated if the address of the student is not "the administration of the Word." It must indeed be admitted that something is detracted from the character of such a worship service. This makes it all the more important that those who have been ordained should lead in the service and only in situations of need should the unordained students lead. 1896 said with good reason "students may occasionally present a proposal. . . ." On the other hand, the strict oversight that is practiced in Canada will ensure that the congregation will be fed during the Sunday. Finally, while the character of the worship service is altered, its content is not. It is still the Word of God which is being opened and read, and it is the same congregation that is gathered in

the Name of Christ to bring her worship to God. And if the congregation is not edified by the address, the professor (and hopefully the student too) will get to hear about it.

Students should also be good stewards when it comes to their time. They should only seek permission to speak in the churches if they know that their study load will allow them to prepare for the Sundays and their preparation does not detract from their college work. Not the pulpit experience of the Sunday but the weekly theological training ought to have the higher priority.

Conclusion

I believe that "speaking an edifying word" is a commendable practice within our churches which does not violate the teachings of Scripture. However, the sharp lines that mark it off from official preaching have become rather fuzzy. It is necessary that consistories take careful note of the character of the practice and the rules that accompany it. Then the pulpit will be well protected and supplied, not only in the present but also for the future.

Br. Janssen is a fourth year student at the Theological College, originating from the Free Reformed Church of Australia at Bedfordale. He has intentions to pursue his studies at Kampen in the field of Church Polity.

¹The report to Synod 1996 notes that there has been a slow decrease in the number of vacancies: 68 in 1993, 63 in 1995, and 52 in 1996. At the time of the synod there were 9 students who had permission to speak an edifying word.

²Decision 2, Ground 3: "wanneer de kerken het spreekconsent een andere basis willen geven, nl. het nut voor doorstuderende studenten, kan dit alleen in de weg van revisie van het besluit van de Generale Synode Amsterdam 1908, gehandhaafd door de Generale Synode 's-Gravenhage 1914, tot stand komen." Although this ground only mentions the benefit for the student (the first ground in Canada) this should not be taken to exclude becoming known to the churches (the second ground in Canada).

Walls of darkness – Doorway of light

As the walls of darkness close in on me
I strain my eyes so I can see
What has led me into this deep dark hole
Wherein I have lost my body and soul?

As I wander about aimlessly
I stumble over what I can't see
I've lost my foothold which I held so dear
And now I live in constant fear

Where is the light which kept me strong
When with Him I knew I could belong?
Everything about me is so cold
And I know I have strayed from His fold

My cry for help comes echoing back
Behind me the dogs run in a pack
When I seek shelter, it is in vain
Throughout my empty being I feel only pain

Just when I think that all is lost
He comes to save me, but at what a cost!
My heart which was heavy now floats high
For now I know that I will not die

I thank the Lord for His saving power
And on Him I will my praises shower
For there is no other God like He
Through Whom we can live eternally

This poem was written by a young brother who suffers from schizophrenia. In the darkness of this young man's illness, the Lord has shone the radiant light of the Gospel. The author requested that his name be withheld.

The collection for the church

By P. Aasman

Church budgets are prepared by the council carefully and prayerfully. It is a holy matter. They may not place financial obligations upon the church beyond that which the ministry of the Gospel requires. All items and expenses on the budget must be justified on this single basis. If it does not serve this purpose, those costs should be borne some other way. Although the church's budget is written in figures of dollars and cents, it nevertheless remains a spiritual matter because at bottom, it is

about the ministry of the Gospel. Therefore, the consistory can impress upon the congregation our mutual duty to meet this budget. In fact, the failure of any members to be diligent in this matter is of such great concern that elders commonly pay a visit to those members in order to admonish them if they are remiss. But the point here is that the budget is a spiritual and holy matter.

So how does the church fulfill this holy duty? Is it fulfilled by members slipping an envelope into the box marked

"CHURCH," in the foyer of the church building? Often, that is how it is. There are still some churches which have a collection for the church. I think that once it was more common than it is at present. Why is this not commonly done anymore? Once the giving of an offering for the ministry of the Gospel was an official act of worship, a distinct portion of the liturgy of the covenant. Now, however, this sacrifice is offered in a relatively insignificant way. It is not an act of worship in the congregation and by

the congregation. It is done usually before the service, by individuals unseen. It is especially strange in the context of a family: the mother or father writes out a cheque for the church at home without the rest of the family being in any way involved, in fact, without them even knowing that this is being done. It could be said that this practice diminishes the fullness of our religious worship which the Scriptures recommend.


One of the reasons why some people oppose collections for the church is because they feel that collections during the worship service should be solely for the poor. When LD 38 itemizes some of the acts of Sunday worship, it includes 'Christian offerings for the poor,' but not collections for the church. The early church was zealous in this matter. Justin Martyr (martyred AD 165) says that during the Sunday service, "they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widow, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need." The compassion of the Christians toward anyone in need became a powerful testimony to God's love in the early centuries, and it should remain as such today. This concern is well founded in the Bible. Because Christ with his disciples wanted to alleviate poverty, they appointed Judas Iscariot as treasurer to receive money and to use it, among other things, to give gifts to the poor. The Apostle Paul instructed the church at Corinth to make the collecting of money for the poor a regular part of their Sunday worship (1 Cor. 16:2). More could be shown from the NT, but this is not just a NT concern. The act of giving for the relief of poverty was an official part of OT worship. For two years during the seven year cycle the tithe was to be devoted to the relief of the poor (see Deut. 14:28,29; 26:12-15). On this basis, many have argued that we ought to have offerings only for the poor. Abraham Kuyper, for instance, specifically opposed collections for the church and urged that they be held only for the poor.

The fact that the church should hold collections for the poor is firmly established. But that does not mean that there should not also be collections for the church. Paul was deeply concerned about the duty of the congregation to support the ministry of the Gospel as well. He spoke about it in his earlier and later letters (see 1 Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17,18). Christ himself laid down the principle that "the

worker is worthy of his keep" (Mt. 10:10). From this it is clear that supporting the ministry of the Gospel is just as important if not more than that of supporting the poor.

But the Bible explicitly identifies the giving of our sacrifices for the support of the ministry of the Gospel as a public act of worship to be performed by the whole family. We learn this from the tithe legislation. It is true that two tithes in seven years were to be devoted to the poor, but four tithes in seven were for the ministry of the Gospel. God demanded the tithe especially to support the Levites (see especially Num. 18:21-32), and the Levites were the local pastors in Israel. They were the ones who were set apart to preach the Gospel and teach the law to Israel. This is what Moses declared when he blessed Levi in Deuteronomy 33 saying, "He teaches your precepts to Jacob / and your law to Israel" (verse 10). The OT church gave the tithe for the very same purpose for which we give to the church. The offering of the tithe was a sacred duty and a holy liturgical act. The

whole family had to go up to Jerusalem to present it to God so that they might give this gift together and so that they might receive back from God a portion to enjoy a family feast (see Deut. 12:6-19, 14:22-29). Now, while the demand to give 'the sacred portion' (precisely one tenth of our income) to the church is no longer in force, the demand to support the ministry of the Gospel is. The tithe legislation teaches us not only that this support is our sacred duty but that it should form an integral part of our official worship.

The business we transact at the annual budget meeting is a holy one. It should form a part of our corporate worship from Sunday to Sunday. It is a spiritual matter that is too important to be fulfilled in a relatively insignificant way as it is often done. The Scriptures recommend that it be performed by the family unit within the corporate body of Christ. This would help people to realize that this is a holy activity, and it should lead to greater vitality in fulfilling this sacred duty. 

Who follows in His Train?

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood red banner streams afar;
Who follows in his train?
Who best can drink his cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below:
He follows in his train!

That martyr first whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave;
Who saw his master in the sky
And called on him to save;
Like him with pardon on his tongue,
In midst of mortal pain,
He prayed for those that did the wrong;
Who follows in his train?

A glorious band the chosen few,
on whom the Spirit came;
Twelve valiant saints their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and flame;
They met the tyrants brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane,
They bowed their necks the death to feel!
Who follows in their train?

A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril toil and pain;
Oh God to us may grace be given
To follow in their train!

— Reginald Heber



The Me Generation

A recent issue of *The Outlook* carried an article by Rev. Gary Cox, a minister in the PCA in North Carolina, in which he describes one of his pastoral visits, and highlights problems that are not strange to our own circles as well.

I was sitting in her kitchen having a Coke. She was an attractive woman and the parent of a pretty little girl. She was also another sad product of the "Me" generation who had overdosed on the road to "self-fulfilment."

She had recently divorced her husband for the unspeakable crime of not making her happy. She had just sort of fallen out of love with him, whatever that means. And this baby boomer could just as easily have been of the male gender, for this kind of insanity knows no discrimination.

As we talked, it became clear that she desperately wanted to justify herself to me, to her little girl, and to the world if it cared to listen, that what she had done was okay.

She succinctly concluded her closing argument with this question: "God wants me to be happy doesn't He?" And with those eight words this 30-something lady summed up a philosophy of life that permeates our culture.

Somehow, too many of us have bought into an ancient theology that says God exists for my personal pleasure. Ultimately, the end of all things is whatever I think will make me a "happy camper."

After all, doesn't the Declaration of Independence guarantee me the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?"

Yet in the process of that never-ending odyssey we have ended up crucifying the notion of commitment, self-sacrifice, honour and integrity on the cross of convenience and immediate gratification.

You know what the truth is? The truth is that God is far more concerned about our holiness than He is with our happiness!

And the fact might rub us the wrong way, but it's the right answer.

You see, "happiness" is something you can receive by obeying the Word of God. It may sound a bit trite, but the old hymn writer summed it up fairly well when he penned, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Most Americans are frantically searching for contentment and a full, rich, satisfying life. The only problem is that too many of us are looking down the wrong holes. That's why we pursuers of the "good life" consume 50 percent of the world's illegal drugs. It's a major reason why 46 million teenagers have a drinking problem.

We are so busy running after our own happiness that the average dad can only squeeze out seven minutes per week with his children, and then we wonder why!

Why is one in every four children from a single parent family? Why is it that every 26 seconds there is a run-away? Why is it that every 8 seconds a child drops out of school? How come every 7 seconds a teenager has a baby?

Who can account for the reason why every seven minutes a young person is arrested for drugs and every day 135,000 kids bring guns to school?

Ah, but we have taught our children well! As a society, we have communicated to them (whether we meant to or not) that the most important thing in the world is one's own personal pursuit of pleasure regardless of the broken pieces left in the wake of one's own free spirit.

Sorry folks, but Pogo was right: "We have met the enemy and it are

us." We have attempted to fix the engine without the manual of life which is the culturally transcendent Word of the living God.


He knows exactly what "makes us happy" and it's not doing our own thing, but it's doing His will.

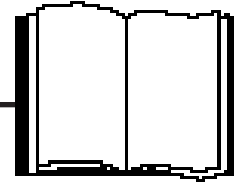
America is sliding down a slippery slope of materialism, hedonism and humanism. At the bottom of that slide is the abyss of self-destruction. But here's some good news. Jesus said: "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." It's not the old life warmed over. It's not reformation, but transformation through a personal relationship with Christ.

That's the road to happiness and joy and contentment and peace and all the things that people really long for but so few ever really seem to find.

"But God wants me happy doesn't He?"

Yes He does. But you'll only find out how much at the foot of the cross and in a life lived for His glory instead of your own happiness.

In our circles we would perhaps say a few things differently. But the issue is the same. And it does not concern strictly the '30-something' crowd, but reaches beyond one generation. The over-powering influence of the 'me-mentality' can be seen everywhere, and it probably touches every one of us in one way or another. 'Go ahead and spoil yourself' is getting to be the rule rather than the exception. Calvin's motto was "promptly and sincerely." Life is not for our pleasure but for God's service, even at the cost of our immediate happiness. Only through this route can true happiness be found. For lasting joy comes only by living all of life to the glory of God. 



Thinking Biblically

Rev. Schouten's article entitled "Thinking Biblically about the Role of Women in the Church" leaves me very concerned.

Having read this article several times I finally began to understand why these Biblical women were brought forward as examples of working in the Gospel.

If I understand correctly what is really being said here, it is "that there is a desperate need in the church for godly men, who are growing in the Lord and the knowledge of His Word and can thus offer Biblical guidance and government for the congregation." This is a most alarming declaration!

But can women take on the responsibilities mentioned here without being ordained? Men who are not ordained may not taken on these responsibilities. So unordained women may not either. And since women may not be ordained they can't be the answer to accommodate our slothful men. We can look long and hard, high and low in Scripture, but we cannot escape the fact that woman was created as a helpmeet for her husband, to serve and please him. Is that not also her marriage vow? It is also primarily the task of the woman to instill the fear of the Lord into her children. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7a). The Lord willing, won't it be her sons who may eventually become the prophets, teachers, elders, or deacons in the Church? Her daughters to become faithful wives and good mothers? Naturally woman may and must also extend a helping hand to her fellow man, if God lays it in her way to do so.

Since there is a desperate need for godly men have we mothers then not failed somewhere? Has feminism and its consequences already reared its ugly head within the Church? Let's seriously examine ourselves.

The picture on the front of the same magazine in which this article is written may be a good place to start. Three women are depicted. They may be wives and mothers, but they seem to portray the more glamorous career

women who prefer to "do their own thing" to fulfil "their own life."

The late Rev. G. VanDooren, quite a few years ago, also clearly revealed and emphasized at a women's league day during the question period, that according to Genesis, women first and foremost were created to please and serve their husbands. Having said this, there was such an uproar from the audience as I had never heard before, or since. Rev. VanDooren, barely suppressing his anger (righteous anger), came down from the pulpit, walked down the aisle and pointing his finger stated, "If you women of the Church will not submit to this fact in Scripture this will be the end of the Church?" Back on the pulpit he told us that earlier he had made a phone call to Dr. Ohmann, professor in Old Testament studies who had confirmed the accuracy of his address.

Could Rev. Van Dooren have known on that league day that women, forgetting their place, become rebellious women? Who bring forth, rebellious offspring? Undisciplined young men, who strive to be "cool" rather than God-fearing? That these in turn become men who will abandon Christian leadership? Did he realize this, when he warned us, about the demise of the Church?

We also read something about chauvinism. This is devastating feminist terminology with far-reaching consequences. It is better that such terminology not be heard among God's people. Such an ambiguous word may (and it already has) hamper true Christian men to apply discipline when and wherever needed. A God-fearing man who knows his position and responsibility, given by the Lord, must so rule and discipline, that those placed in his care, live a lifestyle that glorifies our Father who is in heaven. Therefore women have to be submissive to him.

This role has been made extremely difficult for our men within today's society. Let us therefore greatly respect and support those who understand and choose to please God rather than man.

Lastly, I sincerely hope that such unchristian catastrophes as unwed

mothers, divorced wives, abandoned wives, abused wives, etc. are not expected to be accepted as a norm in the household of God.

*"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit"
(but then) "nor can a bad tree
bear good fruit."*

(Matthew 7:18)

A concerned sister
Mrs. A. Flach, Hamilton, ON

Response: I agree with the overall thinking of this letter. However, I don't see it as conflicting with the editorial in question. I stressed the many opportunities for women to be busy in works of "supportive service." At the same time, I stressed the headship/leadership of men in family and church. Just as married women may support their husbands in marriage, so all women may use their many talents and insights for the supportive work of building up the congregation. I would have liked to see sr. Flach interact with the Scripture passages cited in the editorial. Sr. Flach's caution against the term "chauvinism" is well taken. This term can be a weapon in the ungodly arsenal of the radical feminist who seeks to destroy God's good creation order. However, by "chauvinist," I mean a man who believes in male superiority. Such a man has no appreciation for the talents and gifts of women. Instead of tenderly leading and sacrificially loving his wife, a chauvinist degrades her. These kind of men, believe it or not, do exist within our Christian communities and wives suffer under their tyranny. What I aim for is recognition of the talents and abilities of women as creatures made in the image of God just as the men – be it then with a different role in which to serve.

R. Schouten

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.

Ordination of Rev. Eikelboom

By David Deboer and John Hoogerdijk

On October 20, 1997, the Lord blessed the congregation of Calgary with a new pastor and minister of the Word in Rev. Eikelboom. Rev. Schouten had the joyful opportunity to return to the pulpit of his former congregation in Calgary, for he returned to lead the worship service in which Rev. Eikelboom was ordained as a minister of the Word. He chose for his text 2 Timothy 4: 1-5. The theme of the sermon was "The apostolic charge to ministers to preach the Word," and he considered three points: 1) the centrality of this charge, 2) the special urgency of this charge, and 3) the fulfillment of this charge. After the service, Br. C. Van Seters from the church in Coaldale extended congratulations to Rev. Eikelboom and the congregation. Other churches in the Classis sent greetings and congratulations as well.

In the afternoon, Rev. Eikelboom preached his first sermon as minister of the word in Calgary. He chose as his text 1 Corinthians 2: 1 - 5, and had as his theme, "Paul's preaching proves that he is a servant of God for the gathering of Christ's Church" and he considered three points, 1) the focus of this preaching, 2) the style of this preaching, and 3) the outcome of this preaching.

That evening, the congregation came together to enjoy a time of fellowship, and extend congratulations to Rev. Eikelboom and his family.

Welcome Evening for the Eikelboom Family


On Friday, November 1, the congregation of the Canadian Reformed Church at Calgary was able to celebrate the arrival of a new pastor, and welcome him and his family. Barely one and a half years ago, we had the sad occasion to bid Rev. Schouten farewell. Our prayer since then was that the Lord would send to us another minister of the Gospel. The Lord answered our prayers and has sent Rev. Eikelboom to work amongst us. At the official welcome evening, the congregation gave thanks to the Lord in song and prayer for His grace.

Mr. H. Van den Hoven opened the evening by reading from Isaiah 52. He



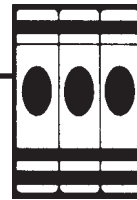
reminded the congregation from this text that she has the perpetual duty to "shake yourself from the dust, arise" so that she may be ready to hear him "who publishes peace, who brings good tidings." The congregation of Christ must always be ready to hear the words of the Gospel as they are brought by His servants. Mr. Van den Hoven also reminded Rev. Eikelboom that his task, though not an easy one, is essential to the well-being of the church. Isaiah wrote, "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings." In addition to these reminders, Mr. Van den Hoven, of course, extended a warm and hearty welcome to Rev. Eikelboom and his family.

After the opening remarks, the Eikelboom family and congregation were treated to a number of presentations, skits and songs. The Ladies Aid, the children of Tyndale Christian School, and various other members all sang different songs of welcome and celebration. Between the songs, the Young Peoples, and the School Board had opportunity to present some skits. One highlight of the event was an entertaining quiz where the School Board, Consistory and the Eikelboom family competed in demonstrating their knowledge of Scripture.

We are thankful to the Lord for bringing us a pastor and teacher to work in our midst. We pray that He will bless the efforts of our pastor and congregation in His service. 

BOOK REVIEW

By J. De Jong



J. Mulder, (ed) *Marriage and the Family. Speeches and Discussions on Christian Marriage and the Family*, Premier Publishing Winnipeg, 1996, 167 pages, \$9.95.

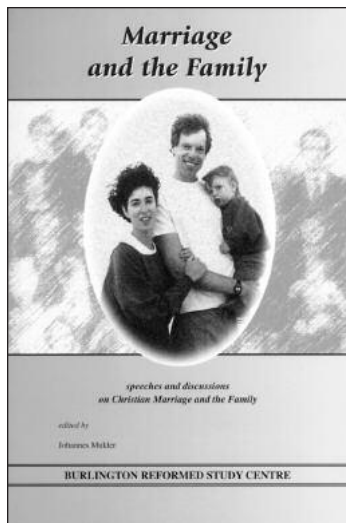
It is a pleasure to be able to review this book, the second of the publications of the Burlington Reformed Study Centre. This volume presents the four speeches held in the fall of 1991, along with remarks of the respondents and the questions and discussions from the floor. It has been some time in coming, but it was worth the wait! The volume gives a user friendly and easy to read overview of the issues facing Christian marriage and family life today, and of the normative principles that must be applied in these relationships.

Rev. J. Visscher – leave, cleave and weave

Rev. J. Visscher's opening speech centres around the injunction to "leave and cleave" in Genesis 2:24. To this he adds a (homiletically predictable) third point called: weaving. So we have the points: leave, cleave and weave; the first, a past action, is soon over and done; but the second two are actions that require constant training and humble listening to the Word of God. While the presentation is not laced with an abundance of references and sources, one must say that years of pastoral experience are evident in the speech. Visscher presents us with a lot of sound and balanced wisdom from the Scriptures on the issues of marriage and having a family.

Rev. J. Visscher – troubles in the Christian family

The second speech on the Christian family touches on some of the more troublesome areas facing family life today, also in Christian circles. While sinful behaviour will affect relationships in every family, cases of more violent and unrestrained abuse are more common than ever before. We are not immune to the pressures of sin as they are rampant in the world around us. Visscher deals with these issues in a sensitive and pastoral way. He is obviously constrained by time, but the issues are



at least brought into the open for our attention. The discussion on the speeches also includes frank statements on birth control, family planning, raising adopted children, and the role of mothers, and especially fathers in the raising of the children. Visscher makes a sound plea for fathers to spend more time with their children, since the most common parental confession is: "I wish I had spent more time with them."

Since the style of the spoken word has been retained as much as possible, one will find the remarks of the respondents both interesting and instructive. Dr. Scholtens, in his characteristic way pleads for caution in birth control because of the joys of having a "nakomertje," (he speaks from personal experience), and the Rev. Agema perhaps unwittingly shows the ideal relationship between husband and wife when he says: "You may know that I for one have told my wife to make sure that there is one day for the family; and she makes sure that I keep that." (p. 70).

As in any book there are a few points about which one could quibble. Visscher follows Susan Foh's exegesis of Genesis 3:16, which holds that the 'desire' of the woman for her husband is really a desire to rule over him; the last part of the verse is then adversative: but he shall rule over you. On the whole I am not convinced of the argu-

ment here. There may be similar word usage, but there is different nuance in the meaning of the words in their various contexts. And I would think that the 'desire' of the (married) woman represents an almost ingrained gravitation to the husband, despite the elements of pain and hardship now connected with the marital relationship. Although we already see the beauty of the renewed marriage relationship in the Old Testament, this period is mainly characterized by a more servile role for the woman. Yet even this was used to fulfil God's redemptive purposes.

More attention might also have been given to the element of companionship as the essential feature marking the Christian marriage. It seems to me that this relationship always entails a special form of friendship and communication, and that all other aspects of the love relationship revolve around this element. Married partners are "yoke-fellows" in a noble task: dressing the garden! Carrying out this task effectively requires mutual companionship and support, each in their own role.

Another issue touched on but lacking the attention it requires is the matter of home schooling. Visscher and his respondents are by and large critical of this phenomenon, but mostly because it puts too much strain on the mother, and does not promote a balanced and harmonious development of family life. Other arguments brought forward are the weakening of the schools through home schooling, and the need for parents to instruct their children in the history of the church. I wonder if there are not more issues involved here. To refer to Kuyper's grand vision for the Christian life: one's schooling was to prepare him for his office in "church, state and society." I wonder if the home schooling option does not include an element of withdrawal from the world, perhaps a (unwitting) flight into a position of otherworldliness which exchanges the broad cultural task of former years for a more personal, and inwardly directed world and life view. It's only a question for me, not having studied the matter. But I think more attention needs to be

given to this issue to solidify the position taken in this book.

Mr. W. Smouter – finances in the family

The third speech deals with finances in the family, and was presented by Mr. William Smouter, whose years of experience in banking and financial administration are evident in his address. Once again the speech presents us with good deal of Biblical insight and practical wisdom in the area of financial management in the Christian home and in business life. The discussion also indicates how much of a living issue this is in our circles, and how much people need a forum in which these matters can be discussed and viewpoints and insights exchanged.

Smouter concentrates specifically on the area of giving, an area in which he feels Reformed Christians have not been sufficiently challenged. He steers around the concept of tithing, suggesting that it can too easily be interpreted in a legalistic way. The principle of stewardship requires that we approach matters more holistically, rather than divide our portion and the Lord's portion. He opts for a system of proportional giving in which those who have been blessed with a greater material blessings are encouraged to give to various causes in proportion to these blessings. It may be time to review our current system of setting levies per communicant member without regard to income or family situation.

In this section one will find helpful suggestions regarding the purchase of RSPs, life insurance and ways to handle debt. Smouter's entire presentation is fittingly framed around the Biblical concept of stewardship: those who are managers must do their best to maxi-

mize the use of their resources available to them, but never for their own gain or profit. Everything must be directed to the glory of God.

Smouter also feels that the issues of financial management and resource use needs more attention in Reformed circles. He says: "Economic life has become fairly complex and I am concerned the Reformed community has not kept up in developing skills needed to exercise responsible, Christian stewardship in the handling of our finances." He then offers a number of suggestions which I can only recommend for the reader's consideration. Given the fact that many families are even too busy to develop a sound overview of their own financial situation, the support and the guidance of a Christian counsellor and financial planner is becoming an increasing necessity today.

Mr. H.C. Van Dooren – the transition of the generations

The final address in the book was by Henk C. Van Dooren, clinical director at the Child and Adolescent Services in Hamilton, who also functions as a marriage counsellor and family therapist. Van Dooren's contribution is a perceptive and challenging discussion that raises some new issues and puts many older ones in a different focus. The approach is partially sociological, partly psychological, but above all personal: Van Dooren looks at the transition of the generations from one who stands "in the middle," with the older generation passing on and a new generation coming on.

Reading this selection I could not help be reminded of Paul's words in Philippians 2: that we are to look not only to our own interests but also to those of others. Van Dooren's statement is eminently personal; in fact there are

some personal and candid remarks concerning his relationship to his minister father. Yet he takes a broad approach, and his intention is to provide an overview of the entire field in the transition of the generations, or as he calls it: going through the periods of adolescence, the middle-essence, and obsolescence. His aim is to foster a harmonious cooperation – interdependence and complementarity are the terms he uses – among the generations as we go through the changes of life and face the challenges of new situations and continually evolving forces in church, nation and society.

This essay gives a lot of food for thought and self-reflection. Van Dooren is obviously at home in his field, and is forthright in presenting material that has challenged him to think carefully about the changing patterns and perceptions in our family and church life. Being a minister's son, he seems to have a unique awareness not only of the power of the pulpit, but also of its limitations: there is a dimension in which personal dialogue and interaction is needed in order to shape and mould our lives as effective care givers in the church of God.

With this brief overview I hope I have given the reader some idea of what to expect from this book. I must also congratulate Rev. Mulder for his excellent job in editing the book. With the trustworthy help of Mrs. Joanne Van Dam as proof reader, he has come out with a highly presentable and readable product. I can only heartily recommend the book and I hope that it represents not the end, but the beginning of a much needed discussion in our circles.

'He 'translates' this as a "Johnny" or (inclusively!) a "Susy come lately."

I.L.P.B. Update April 1997

The Lord has richly blessed us by granting us another Bible study season, and this is a good time to prepare for the next by choosing a topic and obtaining suitable reformed outlines. Please contact the I.L.P.B. representative in your congregation for a brochure, listing the outlines available. They would be very pleased to help you.

The I.L.P.B. is a joint venture of Men's, Women's and Young Peoples

Societies. Our mandate is to translate and publish reformed Bible study material and our goal is to promote the study of God's Word in order to equip God's people to serve Him in true obedience.

Currently we are working on Acts, II Corinthians, Believe and Confess, Outlines on Joshua, Een Koning naar God's Wil, Jona, Profeet van God and None Like Thee (on Micah). We have decid-

ed to reprint Colossians, James and I & II Peter, Response to Your Baptism and Infant Baptism and Conversion.

May the Lord establish the work of our hands and continue to bless our endeavours.

Thank you for your support and wishing you the Lord's blessing on your studies.

for the I.L.P.B.
Jo Anne Van Middelkoop

Meeting of the Inter-League Publication Board

with the Administration Committee on Friday, March 7, 1997, in London, ON.

Present from the I.L.P.B.:

from the Men's League: George Helder and Keith Sikkema

from the Women's League: Jane Oosterhoff and Joanne VanMid-
delkoop

from the Young People's League:
John Smith

Present from the Administration Com-
mittee

Pete Engbers, John Schouten, Elaine
Spruiensma, Ted and Lynda Schouten,
Rennie Pieterman, and Ed Salomons

The meeting was opened by reading
James 2:14-26 and with prayer. The
chairman, George Helder, welcomed
everyone present.

The agenda was amended and
adopted.

Proposed Projects:

The I.L.P.B. will soon republish
Epistle to the Colossians by W.G.
DeVries and *Response to Your Baptism*
by K. Deddens, as well as *Infant Bap-
tism and Conversion* by J. Douma.

Administration Committee

Reports:

Sales have increased greatly during
the past year. A favourable financial re-
port was presented for the current year,
as well as a budget for the next fiscal
year. The I.L.P.B. was thankful for do-
nations received.

The next combined meeting was
scheduled for October 17, 1997.

John Smith closed in prayer, and the
chairman adjourned the meeting.

on behalf of the I.L.P.B.

John Smith 

PRESS RELEASE



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

*Subject: Meeting of the Board of Gov-
ernors held on February 13, 1997*

Opening

The meeting is opened by the Chair-
man, Dr. J. Visscher with the reading of
Psalm 131 and prayer. All present are
welcomed. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Principal
of the College is also present.

Roll Call

All Board Members are present to-
gether with Dr. N.H. Gootjes.

Report of the ad hoc committee regarding "Practical Training"

The committee presents their updat-
ed and revised report. The committee
members together with Dr. Van Dam
as an invited guest and representative of
the Faculty are present to assist in the
explanation of the report. Consideration
is given to the proposal to develop a
program which would lead to a "Cer-
tificate of Pastoral Proficiency." The
committee report is discussed and is in
substance approved. It is agreed that the
proposal would be circulated to all of
the Churches and the students of the
College to receive their comments by

no later than July 1, 1997. These com-
ments will serve the basis upon which
a final proposal will be presented to
the Board of Governors in September,
1997, which will allow the submission
of a final proposal to the Synod sched-
uled to meet in May of 1998.

Report of the Building Expansion Committee

A further interim report of the build-
ing expansion committee is received for
discussion. Consideration is given to the
proper manner in which the funding of
the expansion can be achieved. In prin-
ciple the suggestions of the committee
are approved. The committee will submit
its final report to the Board in September,
1997. The intention is that the proposal
would be submitted in its final form at
least six months prior to Synod.

Request of the Senate re Juan Calvino Theological Seminary/Mexico City

In response to the request of the Sen-
ate regarding Juan Calvino Theological
Seminary the Board grants its approval
to have Dr. Van Dam provide assis-
tance to the Seminary by delivering one
week of lectures in Old Testament The-
ology. This would likely take place in
late April or early May and substantially
all of the cost would be borne by the
Juan Calvino Theological Seminary.

Financial Statements/Auditor

The financial statements for the Col-
lege for the fiscal year ending December
31, 1996 are presented, reviewed and
approved. Aafke Spithoff, C.A. is reap-
pointed as the auditor for the College.

Promotion Committee

The committee reports on the vari-
ous initiatives that it is considering to
raise the profile of the College. Consid-
eration is given to the development of
an informational video or poster. It is
agreed that the poster would be pursued
at the present time and the video would
be deferred.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is
scheduled for d.v. September 4, 1997.

Press Release

The Press Release is read and ap-
proved.

Closing

The meeting is closed in the usual
Christian manner.

On behalf of the Board of the Theo-
logical College of the Canadian Re-
formed Churches

Karl J. Veldkamp 