

Clarion

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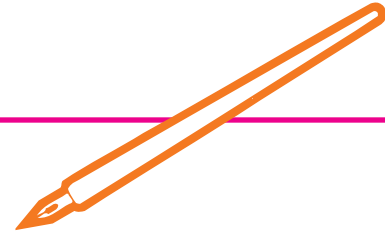


The Trenton congregation

Numbers

10:1-10

By N.H. Gootjes



“Perfect” Christians

Can Christians be perfect? Some have no difficulty giving a positive answer to this question. Of course, there are thoroughly good Christians. They may not be fully perfect, but they live good, honest, and valuable lives in helping others. People who do many good works, exist. Think of someone like Mother Theresa who did so much good supporting the poor, fighting abortion and helping mothers take care of their babies. Such people are good.

Without taking away from the good she and others have done, it is of course true that good works by themselves are not enough for someone to be called good. The heart must be considered, as well. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about that when He said: “What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man” (Matt. 15:18-20). We cannot look into the depths of the heart, but God can. He sees the evil desires behind the deeds. People who have dirty or nasty thoughts come up in their mind cannot be called perfect. At least not in God’s eyes.

Some theologians in the past have been toying with the idea that Christians could be perfect. This can be found in early Methodism. One taught the ideal of Christian perfection as a result of a second change, following the change of conversion. Not all reach this state of perfection on earth, but some do, for God gives them this grace. Moreover, God’s commandments requiring our complete obedience would not make sense if Christians could not fulfil them.

Another early Methodist went beyond this by teaching that man with his effort would have to contribute to this perfection. Man can reach it when God’s free grace is joined by human free will to do what is good. Actually, man can gradually reach the state of perfection. Neither of the two thought, however, that he had himself reached the state of perfection.

This self-appraisal shows that they knew themselves better than they knew Scripture. It teaches: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). As long as we are in this life, we are not perfect. Even the best of us have only a small beginning of the required obedience.

Father is perfect

Then, why did Christ exhort us to be perfect (Matt. 5:48)? He set a high standard for our perfection. “You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” That seems impossible. How can we ever reach God’s standard of perfection? God is good through and through. Even if we would not do anything wrong, we could never reach the perfection of God. Why does Christ ask the impossible?

Perhaps we had better ask at what occasion Christ required this perfection. It is the concluding word of a section in which He spoke about the commandment to love one’s neighbour (Matt 5:43-48).¹

The listeners had often heard this teaching: “You shall love your neighbour, and hate your enemy” (Matt.5:43). Israel was God’s chosen nation. But it was surrounded by hostile nations which did not serve God. Throughout many centuries, these nations had been jealous of Israel, trying to subject them. As a result, Israel had suffered much from the oppression of other nations.

But the times are changing. Jesus Christ has come into this world, and Israel is on the brink of being no longer God’s chosen nation. The Word of God will go out to all the nations, and the church will be gathered everywhere. No longer will the church coincide with the nation of Israel, the church will be a people living among many nations.

It will not be easy for the church people to live among people who do not serve God. Christ tells them, however, that they have to love their enemies. If they are persecuted, they have to pray for them. They have to do good, even to those who are out to kill them. Christ is requiring something that is virtually impossible.

That is the reason why Christ encourages them by pointing to what God in heaven does. God lets His sun rise over the evil and over the good. Everyone needs the sun, for warmth and growth. Without the sun, life on earth is not possible. God allows this sun to shine on all people. That means: God does not keep the sunshine away from the unbelievers. He grant His life-giving sun to all, without distinction. And the same goes for the rain. Without water nothing can grow, and people die for thirst. God gives rain, not merely to the righteous, but to the evil people, as well. God is, therefore, perfect. Perfection in this context is not a sinless existence. It means that God gives His gifts and support to all.

Actually, Christ says: *Your* heavenly Father is perfect. God is not the Father of all living people on earth. He is the Father of His people, of those who follow Jesus Christ. God has a special relationship with His people. He is their Father. But the Father of the Christians is perfect, in that He gives sun and rain to all, without making distinctions.

Perfect Christians

Christ’s people have to do the same. They have to be perfect, in the sense that they have to do good to all. That does not make life easy for us. It means that the church people cannot be a community that is totally turned inward. The church is not to be isolated as one nation among the nations, it is gathered from among the nations. Within those nations, the church people must not restrict their attention to those who believe. They have to do good to all people.


That begins with greeting and showing simple friendliness to all. Christians are people who greet other people in their neighbourhood. Not all of them will be Christians. Not all of them are friendly. Christians, however, are not just friendly to their special friends, and they do not shut themselves up

in their group, their friendliness goes out to all. That is included in being perfect as God is perfect.

More than words are needed, however. God gives things like rain and sunshine to all. Followers of Christ must be willing to contribute to good causes in the world. It is true, much money is required of Christians. They have so many things that need to be supported, the church, the schools, the needy. It would not be good, however, if they would limit their giving to their own community. God does not restrict His good gifts to His own people, He gives rain and sunshine far and wide. Christians must not say no to door to door collections, and must support fund-raising for general good causes.

But Christ requires even more. God gives His good gifts of rain and sunshine even to evil people. Christians, therefore, cannot turn away from them. Even when they are very hostile, we should not repay them in kind. When we can do something good for them, we should do so. Actually, Christ says that we should love our enemies. When we can do a good turn to someone who always hated us, we should use the opportunity. Followers of Christ should not be known as successful and rich people, they should be known as good people, always ready to help out. That will reflect well on our heavenly Father.

Christ's commandment requires us to do something we do not want: We must be perfect, in doing good to all. Perhaps we need to think more often about rain and sunshine, gifts we do not deserve.

¹At first glance, it could seem as if this commandment of perfection is connected with Christ's general teaching about the commandments of God in Matt. 5:19. "Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches man so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does them and teaches them shall be great in the Kingdom of heaven." However, the parallel with our heavenly Father is not mentioned there, but much later in this chapter in v. 45 where Christ says: "So that you may be perfect of your Father who is in heaven." The commandment to be of perfect must be taken as the conclusion of vvs. 43-47. See, e.g., J. Van Bruggen, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Winnipeg: Premier, 1986), pp. 51-55. 

What's inside?

Well, we are getting closer to the convening of General Synod Fergus 1998. In these pages you will find a few more items relating to the upcoming Synod. There has been significant upheaval in the past decade in churches which were once Reformed. Many have seceded; new churches were established. As Canadian Reformed Churches we acknowledge our calling to seek out fellow Reformed believers. Thus we have synodical Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. Herein you will find a summary of the report this committee is submitting to Synod and a report on a meeting it had with delegates from the URCNA.

Dr. Gootjes fills us in on the latest about the Theological College.

I can testify that Dr. Gootjes is not a trouble maker – honest! His editorial on WWJD did generate a fair bit of mail, however. You will read a few more letters on this, as well as a response from Dr. Gootjes.

We round this off with some newsy items. We hope you enjoy the menu.

GvP



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By E. Kampen

The Relay Race

We will not hide (the things heard from the fathers) from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God (Psalm 78:4-9).

We are all familiar with relay races. Perhaps we have even participated in one and remember the sense of excitement, even fear, as the runner came up behind us. In such a race the heart begins to beat faster as your turn approaches to take the baton and run to give it to the next runner. If one person drops the baton, the whole team loses.

Scripture shows us that the way God gathers His Church can be compared to a relay race. The runners are parents. The baton is the Word of God containing God's covenant promises and obligations. We are reminded at every baptism that God established His covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:7), a promise repeated on the "birthday" of the New Testament church (Acts 2:39).

The obligation to pass on the baton comes out in Deut. 6:7 where we read how Moses commanded the parents by saying: "and you shall teach (God's words) diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

A poetic description of this relay race is found in Ps. 78:4-9. In those words we are reminded of the content of what parents must pass on. It consists first of all of God's glorious deeds. That point deserves emphasis: God's glorious deeds! Due to the sinful nature of the children, parents will naturally spend much time giving commands to their children. The first thing that must be passed on, however, is not what the LORD demands, but what the LORD has done. When Asaph, in Psalm 78, wrote of the glorious deeds of the LORD and his might, he especially meant the way the LORD had delivered Israel from Egypt and given His people the promised land. As New Testament believers those "glorious deeds" are not only deliverance from Egypt, but above all the way God has delivered us from bondage to Satan and sin through Jesus Christ. These are not isolated from each other. Rather, the one is part of the other and foreshadows the other.

Closely related to the account of these glorious deeds are the commands the LORD has given. It is a solemn duty of

Christian parents to teach their children how to walk in the way of covenantal obedience. This can only be fruitfully done against the background of the LORD's love as shown in Christ. Notice how Asaph adds the reason for this instruction: "they should not be like their fathers"! The rest of Psalm 78 gives a description of the "fathers" and their unfaithfulness. By thorough instruction in the LORD's mighty works, His promises and His commands, the next generation is to be equipped to serve the LORD. Once the baton has been pressed in their hands, their turn will come to pass it on to their children.

We see then the tremendous responsibility of one generation to the next. There is need for much instruction. Knowledge of the LORD's promises and demands is not passed on genetically. There is no such thing as a Christian gene or chromosome. Our children are conceived and born in sin. The Spirit promises to work in them, but He uses the means of instruction. It is all part of His regenerating work through the Word, which alone is the seed of regeneration.


We must remind ourselves from time to time of this relay race in which God has placed us. It presses upon the parenting generation their great responsibility. They are runners, in the process of handing over the baton. It would not be surprising if there is tension, even a degree of fear in the hearts of parents as they are in the process of handing over the baton. There is daily need to pray for strength to run faithfully. This relay race should make each generation very conscious that they cannot just assume that their children know and understand why they should do certain things. To the next generation many things may appear as custom and tradition, which they do not understand and therefore do reluctantly. Children may wonder: Why do we belong to a Reformed Church? Why do we go to a Canadian Reformed School? Why are children baptized in our church, and does that make any difference? Why can we not join just any labour or employee organization? Why is dancing not an ac-

ceptable Christian pastime? Why do parents consider certain kinds of music inappropriate? This, of course, is only a sampling of many doctrinal and practical questions the younger generation may have.

Though it may cause parents a headache at times, children have every right to ask their parents: Why should we believe in this way? Why should we or shouldn't we do this? This is not necessarily a sign of rebellion; it is a sign things have not been clearly explained to them. So it might be that the next generation does the right thing, but they do it out of custom. When challenged, they don't know why. When the time comes to teach their children, they might try to hand over the baton but it is incomplete. That will make the next generation even more vulnerable.

We all are in this covenant relay race. It is of course possible that a generation grows up which knows God's promises and demands, and yet rejects them deliberately. Such a situation is beyond the responsibility of the parenting generation. In the meantime, it is incumbent upon the active, running, parenting generation to tell the next generation of the LORD's promises and demands: and to explain, explain, explain. Many things might have become second nature because parents have learned through personal struggle and conflict what is right and wrong in terms of doctrine and lifestyle. Yet, it is not enough to sigh to our children, "Don't you know better? Doesn't history teach you?" Children are not born filled with knowledge. It is the task of parents to fill them with knowledge of the ways of the LORD.

Let us encourage one another to run well and as we pass the baton so that the next generation might know of the glorious deeds of the LORD and the baton might be firmly planted in their hand to pass on to their children.

Rev. E. Kampen runs his relay race in Langley B.C. He passes the baton as father and Minister of the Word in Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church. 

Report of the Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity

Mandate

The mandate of the committee was as follows:

Synod decide . . .

B. To re-appoint Deputies for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to promote the unity of Reformed believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church, with the mandate:

1. to make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation wherever necessary;
2. to make themselves available for advice on local developments;
3. to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of pursuing ecclesiastical unity;
4. to report on its activities to the churches and to the next General Synod. (Acts General Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art. 86 V.B)

The Committee

As deputies we have enjoyed a good working relationship. Most of the work is done by correspondence, but some is also done by telephone and fax. So far communications have worked very well. We have decided as deputies that the local concerns in western Canada would be dealt with by western delegates, and that local issues (meetings, consultations, etc.) in eastern Canada would be covered by the eastern delegates.

In this connection we must mention the passing of one of our delegates, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, who was called home by the Lord on January 29, 1996. We remember with gratitude the work he did as a deputy. Even though this was a relatively short period, he did this work with all his heart, and offered much time and effort for this cause. We are thankful to have had the opportunity of working with him, and it is our hope and prayer that his efforts for church unity may not be fruitless.

As deputies appointed by Synod 1995, we have sought to build on the preliminary work done by the deputies appointed by Synod Lincoln 1992. For example, we have made use of the discussion paper *Pursuing Ecclesiastical Unity*, as drafted by the previous deputies. However, since this document was not adopted by General Synod 1995, we have not felt obliged to operate entirely within the parameters of this discussion paper. Our approach was somewhat eclectic, determined in part by the reaction of various churches to the "Discussion Paper" and Synod's considerations on this matter.

Activities

All deputies have been involved in the process of formulating and evaluating correspondence from and to committees both in the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) and the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC).

The eastern deputies have attended the first two synods of the URCNA, and two of them have attended the meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. The eastern deputies have also met with the eastern delegates of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the URCNA (see report elsewhere in this issue).

The deputies have also sent a letter of support to the organizing committee of the Inter Classical Conference based in Escondido, CA. Since this time, four churches in this area have left the CRC and joined the URCNA. Several churches in New Jersey have also recently left the CRC for the URCNA.

We continue to correspond with local churches in our federation with regard to the discussions on church unity taking place at the local level. In some cases these discussions have progressed more rapidly than in others; yet on the whole we can be thankful for the spirit of brotherly cooperation reflected in these discussions. While we acknowledge and appreciate the various differences in approach from place to place, the commitment of the deputies is that as much as possible we foster one con-

sistent approach in our interaction with the URCNA.

Assessment

On the whole we are thankful for the opportunities provided for us, and we can be positive about having made our presence known in the current ecclesiastical scene in both Canada and the US. Discussions at the public meetings indicated quite clearly that the Canadian and American Reformed Churches are known as a group of churches that desire ecumenicity on a solid Reformed basis. The very fact that we are introducing ourselves and our background to believers seceding from the CRC is a positive step. Many people are hardly aware of our existence, and if they are, they attach no direct significance to us, since their perspectives are clouded with misconceptions regarding what we stand for.

We were very encouraged by the most recent exchange with the Committee of Inter-Church Relations of the URC. From this correspondence it is obvious that they place considerable importance on continuing their relations with us, with a view to establishing federative unity. We feel it is our duty to examine carefully their new church order, isolate our differences, and carry on the discussion concerning these differences. An initial meeting to this end was held on February 2, 1998, and a report of this meeting will be published in *Clarion*.

The position of the most recent synod, on the other hand, was less encouraging for us. It did not give a clear endorsement to the Committee's approach to the Canadian Reformed Churches, and concentrated on the establishment of fraternal relations with twelve other national and foreign church federations. This implies that the specific goal of federative unity with Reformed churches of a more immediate range and historical background has been let go in favour of a broader policy on ecumenical relations. However, in this context, we feel that continued discussions and consultations regarding our common heritage and aim need to take place.

With regard to the latest developments in the Alliance of Reformed Churches, we do not feel that it falls within the scope of the original mandate given to the deputies to be a part of an organization designed to discuss issues that divide Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. Therefore we do not feel that as deputies we have an integral role to fulfil in this situation. However, given the fact that there are still several churches among the Alliance that remain unfederated, and that the involvement of the Canadian Reformed Churches is most sincerely appreciated, we feel that a more restricted involvement, particularly with regard to the churches that are still independent, should be maintained, if only to continue to let obligation to church unity be voiced.

Suggestions

Despite slow progress, we are convinced that this work must continue, if only to show to the contemporary ecclesiastical world in Reformed North America that we are dedicated to the principles of Reformed ecumenicity, and that this is a vision that ought to be shared by all Reformed churches, especially those sharing our background and heritage. This is another avenue for us to heed the call of Christ who died for His church, that also through our voice, His sheep may be one, as He calls them to be, (John 17:21). Our efforts are modest, but if they are done in the conviction of love and service to God then we may be sure of God's blessing even in ways we least expect. Therefore we believe the Deputies' mandate should be renewed with the following additions and/or modifications:

1. that deputies be instructed to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches of North America with a view towards establishing federative unity.
2. that deputies pursue a more restricted involvement in the Alliance of Reformed Churches with a view to pursuing federative unity with unfederated (independent) Reformed Churches.
3. that deputies represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity.
4. that a new deputy be appointed from western Canada to fill the vacancy among the Deputies created by the loss of Rev. J. Wielenga.

For the deputies,
J. De Jong, secretary/convener 

REPORT ON CONTACT WITH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA

Report of the Meeting held with delegates of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the United Reformed Churches of North America (eastern delegates) and the Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (Eastern deputies), held at the Theological College, February 2, at 2:00 pm.

Delegates from the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA): Rev. J. Bouwers, Rev. R. Stienstra, Rev. P.J. Vellenga.

Deputies from the Canadian Reformed Churches: Dr. J. De Jong, Rev. W. den Hollander, Elder H. VanderVelde.

At the initiative of the delegates from the URCNA, a meeting was held with our regional deputies. According to the wishes of the URCNA delegates, the meeting was informal and exploratory, and was intended to uncover the elements that unite us and the differences that exist between us.

After Christian opening the following points were touched on: our correspondence to date, ecumenical relations of the churches with other churches, theological education, and the revised church order of the URCNA. In the course of the discussion, differences in preaching approaches were singled out as an area that would benefit from further discussion.

On the matter of ecumenical relations the members of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the URCNA indicated that due to historical proximity, particular attention should be paid to developing the relationship between the two church federations. While the committee has received a broad mandate, and therefore will be pursuing discussions with other Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, the brothers indicated that they saw the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches as an important part of that mandate.

With regard to the revised church order, the close relation between our two church orders was noted. Art. 29 of the URCNA church order was revised to include the "settled and binding" provision of our Art. 31 CO. More discussion centred around Art. 34 of the CO of the URCNA, which allows for "occasional pulpit exchanges" and "occasional table fellowship" with other Reformed churches which need not be reported to classis.

The URCNA delegates stressed that both federations are concerned about guarding the pulpit and purity of doctrine, but that they do this in different ways. The URCNA delegates saw the refusal to share pulpit exchanges as a hindrance to unity, whereas the Canadian Reformed delegates saw the practice of occasional pulpit exchanges and shared table fellowships, in the absence of qualifying provisions, as a potential barrier to federative unity.

The question was broached whether this provision could be seen as congruent with the tradition of Dort. This was not a difficulty for the brothers of the URCNA who essentially see their church order as modelled on that of the church order of Dort. The position of the Canadian Reformed delegates was that in the absence of any further qualifications, this practice represents a departure from the approach taken by the church order of Dort.

The matter was then raised how churches that are close together on a local level should come to greater federative unity. All delegates felt that the process must move from recognition, to initial cooperative steps to fellowship and cooperation, to fuller forms of fellowship and final merger. But how should this process be delineated? It was agreed that a model outlining the process from recognition to merger would be introduced at the next meeting by one of the Canadian Reformed delegates.

Theological education was only briefly discussed. The merits and relative importance of a 'denominational seminary' were reviewed, and it was agreed to give the issue further attention. Generally it was felt that although the approach of a 'denominational seminary' is highly commendable, not maintaining such an approach should not be seen as an obstacle to unity between the two federations. This is the more so where an unaffiliated seminary requires subscription to the Three Forms of Unity. The Canadian Reformed deputies felt that, whatever form or shape unity would take, the principle of the 'denominational seminary' as such should not be sacrificed.

Appreciation was expressed for the open and brotherly tone of the discussions and at the same time for the frank and candid way the differences could be considered. The next meeting of the two delegations was set for Monday, April 27, at 2:00 pm.

for the meeting,
J. De Jong,
(secretary, Canadian Reformed deputies)

COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH THE OPC

There is no special report from the Committee for Contact with the OPC because they published their report in *Clarion* last year (March 21, 1997; 46:06, pp. 128-29) and no new developments need to be reported. In that report they noted that the remaining obstacles for coming to a full sister church relationship with the OPC had been removed. This report ended with the words: "May the Lord bless us in this final stage toward entering in full sister church relationship with the OPC." – Editor

COLLEGE CORNER

By N.H. Gootjes



I was planning to write another College Corner by the beginning of the second semester. Before I knew it, the time for the March exams had come. The students are writing their exams, and this provides me with the opportunity to finally write about some important aspects of our College life.

Publication Foundation

One of the least known committees at the College is the Publication Foundation. This foundation was set up a number of years ago to stimulate the publication of Reformed literature in the English language.

It cannot be denied that there is a need for scholarly books that will help develop Reformed theology on this continent. Several factors, however, may impede the publication of Reformed books. In the first place, the language barrier. There may be good books in languages other than English, that could benefit English readers. These books need to be translated. The Publication Foundation can provide the money so that a qualified translator can be found to translate the book. Another problem is that publishers are often hesitant to take on Reformed theological books. They are uncertain whether the publication is financially viable. Through a subsidy from the Publication Foundation, it becomes possible for such books to be published.

This initiative has had positive results and several books have already been published with the support of the Publication Foundation. To give an example, a book containing studies on the Liberation of 1944 was published in this way: Dr. C. Van Dam (ed.), *The Liberation: Causes and Consequences*. Another example is the book on church polity, edited by Dr. J. De Jong: *Bound*

Yet Free. Another publication that received support from the Publication Foundation was a collection of articles on the theological contribution of Dr. K. Schilder, edited by Prof. J. Geertsema: *Always Obedient*.

Several projects are still in the pipeline. One is a translation of Dr. J. Van Bruggen's study on a difficult chapter of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 7. A collection of articles on preaching is also being prepared.

The Publication Foundation is only a small part within the College. We hope that under the blessing of the Lord it may produce good results for the benefit of the churches.

Practical Training

Synod Fergus is coming up. Synods always deal with the College, but this time, Synod will have to deal with two particular issues. The first is practical training for theological students.

Already for some time, it was felt that theological students could benefit from hands-on experience of the pastorate. The students are not totally unaware of the life of a minister; they have seen it from the perspective of a church member. Moreover, they acquire the necessary knowledge for the work of a minister in the course of their studies at the College. In spite of all their preparations, however, they are not exposed to the reality of the life of a minister. Just as in earlier days someone taking on a new job had to learn to do the work on the job, so were theological students supposed to learn the practice of the ministry after they had become a minister.

Times have changed, however, and now people are often already exposed to working in a job during their study at High School and College (co-op pro-

grams). A higher level of professional skills is expected of people starting a new job. Within this context, it is understandable that theological students should be exposed to the reality of the pastorate.

A proposal has been presented to Synod that, among other things, includes supervised training in catechetical instruction. But the main part is a three month period during which a student works beside a minister in a congregation. He is to present a (supervised) sermon once per week, to attend consistory meetings and to visit people at their homes and in the hospital.

We hope that this new program can be accepted by Synod, and that it may contribute to the preparation for the ministry. It can take away some of the apprehension for entering the ministry, and give the congregations the benefit of receiving as a minister a candidate who has already been exposed to the work.

The Library

The other important proposal concerns the library of the Theological College. All those who work with the books at the College on a regular basis feel that the library needs additional space.

The library is presently housed in a room with a very high ceiling; originally it was the meeting hall of a Presbyterian Church. Gradually, the books have taken over more and more room in this building. When I started working at the College, in the fall of 1989, there was a type of stage at the far end of this room, where originally the pulpit stood. The stage area was used as a study and reading room. Some years later, however, this stage was removed, and additional bookcases were placed in the study area. As a result, the present study area is too small to accommodate even half

of our students. Moreover, the bookcases are reaching the point of being filled to capacity.

Several options to solve the problem were investigated. The conclusion was that the best solution would be to build an additional library building onto the existing facility. There is room on that side of the property, since the original plans for the Presbyterian Church already took into account that there would be another church hall on that side. Another ad-

vantage of building is that in this way we would have a library building that is meant to be a library. It could provide an excellent environment for study, reading and research.

The present library could be turned back into a meeting hall to be used for the meetings at the opening and closing of the week, for sermon sessions and for other meetings such as ministers' workshops. Speaking in this hall will teach our students to use their voices properly in a larger room.

This is, of course, a very brief introduction to the building plans, as well as the plans for practical training. The complete plans are presented to Synod, and will be discussed, the Lord willing, in May. We hope that it will be possible to realize these plans, under the blessing of the Lord. In this way, the College can be enabled to provide the churches with candidates well trained to take on the many tasks involved in the ministry.

N.H. Gootjes 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

WWJD?

I would not like to make a big issue out of whether or not we should own a bracelet/ necklace/ keychain/etc. bearing a gentle reminder of WWJD? on it, but would like to point out a law given to the OT Israelites in Numbers 15:37-40. It reads "The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God.'" (NIV) Not all new ideas are necessarily evil.

Liz van Weerden
Guelph, ON

DISAPPOINTED

It is with disappointment I read Prof. Gootjes' article regarding the 'What Would Jesus Do' bracelet. I was equally disappointed with the letters to the editor regarding the same topic with the exception of the letter written by B.F. Vander Bruggen.

I very much hope God's laws and testimonies are inscribed on the hearts of God's people by way of the *living word*, not on some bracelet. Is the wearing of this bracelet with its vague and fuzzy initials to remind us of what the will of our God and Saviour is? It may lead us to where we are "having the form of religion but missing the substance of it." Is perhaps the extensive or exclusive reading of evangelical authors weaning some people away from Reformed Scriptural thinking?

For Canadian Reformed people to wear a W.W.J.D. bracelet or to defend its use reminds me of a quote from the late Rev. H.A. Stel who until the time of his death served the

church at Winnipeg "When the living word of God loses its importance and authority, outward forms of religiosity increase."

Prof. Gootjes would have built us up better if he had ended his article by telling us that. It is not proper for Canadian Reformed people to wear such bracelets even though we do not judge non Reformed people when they do wear one of the bracelets.

T.M. Veenendaal
Carman, MB

"WAT ZOU JEZUS DOEN?"

Dr. Gootjes did us all a service by getting the excellent discussion going in your pages, on "What would Jesus do?" Your readers may be interested in a piece of information provided by the Dutch historian, Dr. George Puchinger. In a recent English translation of parts of his major study of the life of Abraham Kuyper (*Abraham Kuyper: His Early Journey of Faith*), Puchinger tells us that in 1903 Kuyper wrote to his daughter Jo: "My calling is high, my task wonderful, and above my bed there is an image of Jesus on the cross, and looking upon it, it seems that He asks me every night: What is your part in the cup I drink?" It was around this same time that Herman Bavinck wrote his article "Wat Zou Jezus Doen?" (*De Bazuin*, 1900), in which he gives a somewhat positive review of Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps*. (Professor John Bolt gives a brief account of Bavinck's discussion in his little book, *Christian and Reformed Today*.)

Richard J. Mouw
President, Fuller Theological Seminary,
Pasadena, California, USA

BRIEF RESPONSE BY DR. N. H. GOOTJES

I am grateful for the many responses, written and oral, to my article on W.W.J.D. Since the editor has given the opportunity to respond I would like to make three remarks.

1. It was not my purpose either to encourage or to reject the bracelets. I only questioned whether the expression 'What Would Jesus Do' is helpful. People would *imagine* what Christ would have done in a certain situation and try to imitate that. Their actions would be based on speculation, when obedience to King Jesus would be a better guide.

2. The texts quoted in several letters do not speak of what Jesus Christ *would* do but what he actually has done. Moreover, they do not say that we are required to do the same thing he did, rather we should follow him in his attitude. Take, for example, Phil. 2:5: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." The next verse indicates what Jesus Christ did: "He, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing. . . ." This is not something we can do. Paul uses this to teach us the attitude of selflessness: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others", v. 4. Servants do not imitate, but follow their king.

3. The two quotes Dr. Mouw refers to can be found in J. Bolt's book *Christian and Reformed Today*. A. Kuyper wrote:

My calling is high, my task is glorious. A crucifixion scene hangs above my bed and when I look at it it seems as though the Lord asks me every evening: 'How does your struggle compare with mine?' Serving Him is so elevating and glorious (p. 144).

And Bavinck wrote:

The true imitation of Christ occurs when, freely and independently as children of God, in our circumstances and relationship, even when it demands of us the most severe self-denial and a bearing of the heaviest cross, we do the same will of God which Christ explicated and at the cost of His glory and life, even to death on the cross, perfectly

fulfilled, since whoever does the will of God is Jesus' brother and sister and mother (p. 142).

It must be noted that both Kuyper and Bavinck refer to what Christ did. Moreover, both emphasize service and obedience. I can agree with this approach.

N.H. Gootjes


UNITY

In the February 20 edition of *Clarion*, I was pleased to read an article entitled *Confession and Church Unity*. I applaud Prof. De Jong's frank and honest appraisal of a somewhat contentious issue. His desire "to foster

as much as possible a unity in approach, despite more minor differences of opinion" is commendable but I question whether such an approach is possible. It is clear to most, in and outside of our churches, that a consensus does not exist on this issue. I think we would do more to promote unity with others, such as the United Reformed Churches, if we as a federation would attempt to discuss and come to a unified belief on the issue. How can we approach unity with others in honesty if we can't even agree among ourselves? I would like to echo Prof. De Jong's "hope that also in the Canadian Reformed

Churches some measure of unity will be maintained in the message we are projecting to the Reformed churches around us." Unfortunately I fear this hope will not be realized without further discussion. The article by Prof. De Jong was definitely a good start.

Steve Van Leeuwen,
Winnipeg, MB

We thank all the participants in the discussion on W.W.J.D. No one can say that the first article of Dr. Gootjes as co-editor did not have the interest of the readers! This discussion is now closed. – Editor 

News from the Trenton Congregation

By Nancy P. Schriemer

Early this winter God blessed the Trenton group of the Toronto congregation with its first sacraments, administered by Rev. 't Hart. Toronto's new missionary to Papua New Guinea, Rev. 't Hart, is busy preparing for missionary service while awaiting his visa. In the meantime, he is being introduced to some practical aspects of his calling as he helps the fellowship in Trenton and does other work in the Toronto congregation.

In the fall of 1996 the Trenton group, a small part of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, began meeting about two hours east of Toronto on the Bay of Quinte. In June of 1997 the videotape services were moved from the Van Middelkoop residence to a local hall to accommodate the expected crowds of Canadian Reformed vacationers and other visitors. Several times during the summer attendance exceeded one hundred people. Since visitors from other Canadian Reformed congregations are frequently present, even winter services often include more than the five member households. Local people have also expressed some interest but are hesitant about taking the difficult first step of attending.

Although a Canadian Reformed house congregation in this region did not grow in the fifties, it seems that God has provided more favourable circumstances in the nineties. First of all, travel to the area is easier, partly because of highway 401, and also because most families own a reliable car. Secondly, housing prices are very rea-

sonable, making the area ideal for young families and retiring couples. Thirdly, government studies predict that the area from Oshawa to Kingston will experience much growth in the next ten years. This trend is already evident in the large number of advertised jobs, the growth of the air force base, and the relocation of government offices to the area. Finally, the local Christian school seems to provide a Reformed education in a conservative environment.

On December 21, 1997 Rev. 't Hart was the first minister to lead a Canadian Reformed service and to administer a sacrament in Trenton. Most appropriately, he preached about Abram's call to leave his family so that in him all the peoples of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Both Rev. 't Hart and the Trenton group have also been called, in very different ways, to leave their extended families and so to further the spread of the gospel. The sermon concentrated on the nature, promises, and purpose of Abram's special call. During this service, Rev. 't Hart baptised Maria Elisabeth Schriemer. Elder R. Cowle and his family, the 't Hart family and other guests witnessed this joyful event.

As usual, everyone enjoyed conversation and coffee between services. Fellowship continued over lunches brought from home. In this way, members and guests were refreshed for the afternoon service and experienced the communion of saints despite the distances between their homes.

For the second service Rev. 't Hart chose Isaiah 9:1-2 as text and proclaimed, "The Lord brings light to your darkened existence out of mere grace." He emphasised both the cause of darkness and the source of light. All could go home thankful for God's light both in their own lives and in the Trenton region.

A mere three weeks later Rev. 't Hart returned, this time to administer the Lord's Supper for the first time. Since his daughter Evelyn had been born early that morning, the celebration took place in the afternoon service. Directly addressing the situation in Trenton, Rev. 't Hart preached about 1 Corinthians 11:26 and encouraged the members to "Remember the value of the Lord's death and the consequences it has for your communion with each other." Elders R. Cowle and J. Heres as well as others from Toronto participated in the celebration. After the service the congregation was videotaped for Rev. 't Hart's work in Papua New Guinea.


In a few months Rev. 't Hart and his family will leave Toronto to continue their preparations for missionary service. The Trenton group, too, will renew its outreach efforts. May God bless these church-building activities to His honour.

Services are at 11:00 and 2:00 at Quinte Polonia, 2459 Rednersville Road. For more information, call:

G. VanMiddelkoop (613) 962-4467

R. Schutten (613) 966-8493

L. Benschop (613) 397-3074

H. Schriemer (613) 542-6681 

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By J. de Gelder

Western Australia

This time we will start in Australia. Obviously the growth of the churches in this area has been significant enough to work towards further expansion and hopefully church institution. In Byford there is

a so-called "Bunbury Church Development Committee" to assist the brothers and sisters who are living in the Bunbury area. The aim of this committee is "to promote good communication between the Consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford and the 'Bunbury' members on matters, spiritual and practical, related to 'church development' in the Bunbury area." This committee received as mandate "investigate and advise the consistory of the F.R.C. of Byford regarding ways and means of promoting church development in the Bunbury area. And in fulfilment of this mandate the committee is expected to attend to, for instance, the Church Services, Communion of Saints, Reformed Education, Bible Study Club. In the Committee has been appointed two members from the Bunbury part of our congregation; two members of the Byford part and two office bearers.

Similar developments are considered in Kelmscott.

A report dated January 1998 recommending the institution of a new congregation in Kelmscott West is received from the Kelmscott Church Development Committee. Consistory discusses the report and recommendations in detail and makes a number of amendments. Consistory will recommend to the congregation that a two ward system be implemented in March 1998.

Another matter that keeps the sister churches down under busy is contemplating the future possibilities in the field of mission. In a newsletter from Albany we read:

Our mandate as sending church comes to an end at the conclusion of 1997. The last meeting of co-operating churches agreed to Albany's request for it to be relieved of its task as sending church for the mission work in PNG, and subsequently the Free Reformed Church of Armadale was requested to take on the task of caring for Lae and exploring the possible expansion of the work there. . . .

The co-operating churches deemed it prudent to continue our endeavours in Lae with a possible new expansion of the work. This same meeting charged Albany to visit PNG before the end of 1997 with the aim to visit the areas where we have been involved, to settle any matters outstanding and communicate once again the Australian Churches' position.

In the meantime the Church of Armadale is working out the details of this new responsibility.

After due consideration, the Consistory of Armadale has agreed to see what can be done. It has decided to appoint a Committee, consisting of 5 persons, with the following mandate:

1. To give spiritual care, in a limited way, for the members in Lae.
2. To organize an investigation as to how our pledges to Lae can be fulfilled.
3. To offer support to the church of Toronto, as requested, and where feasible.
4. To review the agreement of co-operation, if considered necessary, and to come with a recommendation to a following meeting of co-operating churches.

The other churches in the bond have been informed of this decision.

The Consistory is aware that to take on the task of sending church is a large responsibility, which is likely to require a major, long-term commitment of time, manpower, financial and other resources. At the same time it believes that this task may be placed on its way by the Lord of the Church, and that there is a real prospect that in this way the congregation can continue to be involved in Christ's church-gathering work in PNG.

At the same time other options are explored as well. The Church of Kelmscott appointed a Mission Investigation Committee. From the consistory report we glean the following.

A report by the committee outlines the work being done so far, regarding the investigation of available opportunities in bringing the Gospel into mainland China. Br. and sr. F. Dong, during their recent stay in Perth, were very much involved in the activities of the committee. The committee recommends a strategy to broadcast the Gospel into China by radio, capture the interest of individual people, gather responses, assist in forming fellowship groups and, when possible, institute churches. A preliminary budget is also presented for information. Consistory accepts the recommendations and mandates the committee to detail a plan of implementation, identify necessary resources, prepare an itemised timetable and seek any appropriate assistance.

Vernon

We turn from the Australian summer to the Canadian winter, and we start in the West.

In Vernon much attention is given to the missionary task of the church in this world. An Evangelism Training Course was held for the whole congregation, so that in personal relationships the members could become more effective in sharing the gospel message with others.

A worthwhile initiative. We all know what we are supposed to do, but many of us find it difficult to initiate a conversation about the gospel in a personal relationship.

Winnipeg

Since the beginning of this year we have to speak of the churches of Winnipeg East and of Winnipeg West.



CHURCH NEWS

Both consistories have asked the members to suggest names for the respective churches. It was reported from Winnipeg East:

The consistory received 5 letters with suggestions for names to be considered. Some criteria that were used in our considerations were as follows:

1. The name must have a meaning;
2. It must be familiar and not obscure;
3. It should be recognizable by outsiders.

The consistory chose the following: "Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg".

There are various ways in which office bearers can equip themselves for their tasks within the congregation.

In Winnipeg West they did the following:

A video course, which has been viewed and well received by other consistories, is available. This course is given by Prof. Dr. N.D. Kloosterman, professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Chicago. The consistory decided to view this video course in February. All brothers who like to join the consistory in following the course of Dr. Kloosterman are most welcome.

Rev. Jonker, who stays with the West side in Winnipeg, reports extensively on the contacts with the local congregation of the URCNA. These contacts are very positive and encouraging.

On the basis of their Church Order (art.33) the PRCW (Providence Reformed Church at Winnipeg) is now ready to express the unity in a closer working together as churches, e.g. occasional pulpit exchange and combined worship services. We emphasized that this freedom for local churches is not expressed in our church order. The policy in our churches is that first the bond of churches has to be involved and recognize that the "United Reformed Churches in North America" are true churches of the Lord. This ecclesiastical route has been followed by our churches in Ontario and in British Columbia.

Rev. Jonker, then, goes on to suggest which ecclesiastical steps should be followed in working towards the establishment of federative unity.

Brampton

As Canadian Reformed people we can argue at length about all kinds of weighty issues. One of them is the temperature in Church. What is comfortable for one person, is too warm or too cold for someone else. And most of the time the caretaker gets the blame from both sides. The Council of the Brampton Church decided to settle the matter of the ecclesiastical climate once and for all.

Council has set the following standards. In the heating season the temperature is to be set to 21 degrees C. In addition the ceiling fans will be turned on at a slow speed and left on to save on the heating costs and provide a uniform temperature in the auditorium. Members are asked to adjust their dress to achieve their own optimal comfort level given the above information. If there are any questions they are to be directed to council and not to the caretakers.

Hamilton

Under the responsibility of the Home Mission Committee of the Church in Hamilton a Children's Summer Bible Camp was organized in 1997, named "Campfire!," and

CALLED TO COALDALE, AB:

Rev. J.L. van Popta

of Ottawa, ON

* * *

CALL FOR A SECOND TIME TO FERGUS, ON:

Rev. J.E. Ludwig

of London, ON

* * *

Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church

The afternoon worship service will begin at 2:30 effective April 19.

new plans are in the making for this year. The Hamilton bulletin reports:

Council members had received a well-prepared and extensively documented report from the Campfire! committee. Council thankfully commends the organizers and volunteers for their work. A proposal for another Campfire! program is received. The organizers are encouraged to continue their work.

And in various bulletins in Ontario, I found the following:

Campfire! 1998 – Children's Summer Bible Camp. With the onset of the new year we have begun plans for our second ever Campfire! God blessed us very richly in 1997 with a successful and exciting first year. We would like to express a belated thank you to all those people who contributed towards our camp through prayer, contribution or otherwise.

Campfire! is an overnight children's summer Bible camp. We have scheduled four weeks of camp for the upcoming summer, stretching from July 20 through August 15. During the first and last week of camp we hope to host groups of children sent to us by the Inner City Mission operated out of the St. David's Presbyterian Church in the north end of Hamilton. During the middle two weeks of camp we will be hosting children from the Canadian Reformed community as well as their neighbourhood friends.

Ancaster

The mandate to reach out with the message of salvation in our own surroundings also received serious attention in Ancaster. At a Consistory meeting

a proposal for a Mission Worker project is discussed. The idea of this mission project is to appoint a mission worker to work in the greater Hamilton area. Several practical matters will have to be discussed further. Some concerns are raised with respect to fundraising and accountability of the project. It is decided that two members of the Ad Hoc committee will be asked to a meeting of the consistory to discuss the proposal.

This is it for now. By the way, is there someone in Barrhead who can explain to me what a *pyrogy* is?



Middle East Reformed Fellowship

Building the Church in the Middle East for Service in the 21st Century

By G.I. Williamson

From October to December of 1997 I was privileged to assist Rev. Victor Atallah – director of the Middle-East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) – in Larnaca, Cyprus at the greatly expanded and improved center, and also to spend a few weeks in Egypt on his behalf.

The old building which had previously housed MERF was on one floor, and did well to accommodate 15 visitors at a time from the Arabic speaking countries. The new building is five stories high and can easily accommodate four times as many resident trainees.

In November a group of approximately 45 ladies came from Syria, Egypt and the Sudan for two weeks of intensive instruction. It was a pleasure to see how much improved the operation is when compared with a visit there four years ago.

The work of MERF is supported by Reformed churches in various parts of the world. One of the reasons for my extended service was to carry on the regular task of preaching twice each Lord's Day at the John Calvin Center in Larnaca, and in teaching two mid-week adult Bible study classes that meet either in homes or at the Center. One of these requires the use of an Arabic translator while the other uses English. My presence enabled the director to carry out other ministerial obligations. This made me appreciate, as never before, the enormity of the task the director has had in building up this work to its present status. He is now joined by two other ministers – Rev. Thabet Megly of Egypt has become part of the team for the growing Arabic Gospel broadcasts and Rev. Donald Buchanan of the USA is coordinator of local ministries and resident instructor.

Since various duties prevented Rev. Atallah from going to Egypt, I was asked



John Calvin Centre – Larnaca, Cyprus

to go in early December. The purpose of my visit was to speak at two conferences for ministers and ruling elders, and to classes at the Seminary in Cairo conducted by Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, the Chairman of MERF's Board of Directors. Though completely unexpected, it was an "experience of a lifetime" for several reasons.

Firstly I came into direct contact with the Evangelical Church in Egypt,

a church which was built by the old United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) which is the church of my ancestors. As a boy I remember them talking of the work in Egypt, and especially remember references to As-siut which was long an important center of that work (and still is today). When the UPCNA abandoned its heritage to join with the liberal Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1958 it cast

a dark shadow over the church in Egypt. The old UPCNA missionaries had been Bible-believing men. This cannot be said of those that they have had to deal with since that union. For various reasons still unclear to me the Evangelical Church in Egypt is still yoked in some things with this liberal American Church. And yet the rank and file in both the pulpit and pew in the Egyptian Church continue to resist this influence.

Secondly, it was quite evident to me that the men I met and instructed love the historic faith. They want to be faithful to the Bible. They have no sympathy with the liberal agenda of the American church. One of the reasons for this must be the very situation in which these men must live and work. Islam dominates everything in Egypt. If a congregation of Christians succeeds in building – or otherwise securing – a place of worship it is virtually certain that a mosque will be built next door! A mosque was built next to the Evangelical Church's conference center near Alexandria. And every morning at 5 a.m., residents are blasted out of sleep by the loud speaker mounted on the mosque's tower next door (pointed right at us).

One pastor who serves a new congregation, said his church has waited for a building permit for over five years. Another church I preached in was in desperate need of repair, but the Islamic dominated government would not grant a permit to repair the building. And this same oppressive reality is felt everywhere. Christians do not share equal rights or opportunities with Muslims. And one result is that people would neither become nor remain Christian without good reason.

During my stay the Evangelical Church provided a guided tour of many of the great ancient marvels of that land.



Students from Egypt, Syria and the Sudan at the Cairo Seminary.

From the mighty pyramids to the solid rock in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor, the question of how these enormous structures were built with manpower and little else remains a mystery. But we do know why they did it – in a quest for eternal life.

That one thing stood out like a beacon. These ancients were concerned about what follows in the afterlife. In that respect they were much wiser than many today – members of Generation X. Yet, at the same time the misguided quest of the ancient Pharaoh's is tragic because of Paul's great indictment in Romans 1.

When the missionaries of the old UPCNA (and its predecessors) went to Egypt 150 years ago they began their work by seeking to reach people in the icon-reverencing Coptic Church. Almost everyone I met in the Evangelical Church came from a family line which had once been Coptic (this is true even of Victor Atallah himself). To see the Coptic Church up close – as well as the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus – is to understand why the missionaries of the old UPCNA had the right idea.

They saw how the people in that degenerate church needed the light of the Reformation. And they showed them that light – they saw it, embraced it, and still cling to it today. It is my hope that my small effort might contribute something to that end, and that the men coming to help Victor will contribute much more.

The Evangelical Church of Egypt totals about 400 congregations, with some 50,000 family units. Members and adherents together are estimated at between 600,000-700,000. Of the 370 ordained ministers in the church a majority are conservative. A large majority of them have attended MERF conferences in either Cyprus or Egypt. In addition to that nearly 2000 people who are not ministers have taken part in the Augustine study program, and the majority of them are from Egypt. I spoke on two occasions to large classes of students at the Church's seminary in Cairo, and was impressed with the zeal and commitment to Biblical authority that I saw in the young men – some of whom were from the Sudan.

Through the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship churches in Islamic countries in the Middle East and beyond have been strengthened greatly. In the good providence of God the work of MERF remains a cooperative work of sound Reformed denominations – denominations that love the same message that built the Evangelical Church in the first place, and now seeks to revive it to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Rev. G. I. Williamson is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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By T.M.P. Vanderven



Music in support of Christian Education

Over the past few months I received a number of CDs which have at least one important thing in common: they were produced to support Christian education. Two CDs were produced by supporters and students of the benefiting schools, while the others contain the musical efforts of a male choir and a mixed choir. For this reason alone these discs are recommended. Sure, they are priced rather high (some companies manage to market new recordings for under \$10!), but this is offset by far by content and purpose.

Each of these CDs stands out in its desire to submit musical talents to the service of the Giver of such talents. Making music is one of the many mercies our LORD God gives us; through these gifts we may share of the goodness of our God: how good and pleasant it is to live in the house of the Lord and to sing of His wonderful mercies and grace. That's what these discs aim to do, each in its own individual way.

THE CITY OF LIGHT. The Mattaniah Christian Male Choir. Director: Herman den Hollander. Organ: Andre Knevel and John Vanderlaan. Piano: Andre Knevel.

(Crescendo Classa 197052. CDs: \$25.00; Cassettes: \$15.00. Available from: H. den Hollander, 29 Newcombe Rd., Dundas, Ontario, L9H 7B4.)

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD. The Hosanna Choir. Director: Herman den Hollander. Organ: John Vanderlaan. Piano: Mary Devries.

(Crescendo Classa 197051. CDs: \$25.00; Cassettes: \$15.00. Available from: H. den Hollander, 29 Newcombe Rd., Dundas, Ontario, L9H 7B4.)

Any profit from these CDs will go to Rehoboth Christian School, Copetown, Ontario.



As expressed in the insert, these choirs seek to proclaim the Word of God in a variety of songs, inviting the listener to sing along. I am sure that this invitation will be accepted by many – very nice Sunday morning music, my children might say! The names chosen for the choirs express that desire as well. *Hosanna* means an explanation of praise, and *Mattaniah*, a great-grandson of Asaph, was a temple musician in the time of Nehemiah. The inserts contain the texts of all the hymns, most useful when singing along. These discs will give much wholesome listening pleasure for the whole family.

The Mattaniah Male Choir sings general hymns of praise which remind us of the city of light, as described in Revelation. Among the selections that I favour are Psalter 426, known to me as Psalm 116, and Psalter 353, known to me as Psalm 124. The old psalms gain solemnity and dignity in performances that underscores the words of praise and thanksgiving: *Our help is in Jehovah's Name, Who made the earth and all the heav'nly frame*. Piano and organ join the choir in a number of selections, for instance in Psalter 29: *To Thee, O Lord I fly*. Andre Knevel plays two organ solos, an improvisation on the hymn tune of Abide with me and an organ choral for Psalm 25 using the tune of the Genevan Psalter. Through-

out, choir and accompanists perform with sincerity and joy, as exemplified in the final selection: Psalm 150.

The Hosanna Choir sings a program that tells the story of Christ's coming on earth to complete His work of salvation: from Christmas to Easter. The title of the CD is therefore quite appropriate: *For God so loved the world*. I enjoyed *Hark, the glad sound!*, with female and male voices alternating; *Sing, O Heavens* written by Simper, in which the whole choir sings out in joyful celebration of the Christmas event; *He is risen* (music by Jennifer Jongerden) in which all forces join together: choir, soloist (a nice, full sound), organ, piano; *Canon of Praise*, a vocal (shortened) setting of the famous Pachelbel canon.

Although the choirs that sing on these discs do not pretend to be particularly schooled, it will not be surprising that a comparison with other choir performances comes to mind. That is the "risk" you take when publishing a CD. Especially after repeated listening (as is necessary for a review), the wish grows for greater control of the voices (pitch and rhythm are not always secure), and a more musical shaping of the words. In the mixed choir performances the altos at times overshadow the sopranos, while the tenors tend to be too overbearing in a number of places. It needs much hard work to

balance enthusiasm with musical refinement, and I am sure that conductor and choirs are their own most severe critiques in this department. In the meantime, they have made available some enjoyable performances of fine Christian music.



GOODNESS OF GOD. Musicians of the Immanuel Christian School, Lethbridge, Alberta. Director: Rick VanderWoude.

(DMP-9718. \$15.00. Distributed by the school.)

A rather different program of spiritual songs is offered on this disc: a number of contemporary Christian songs, most (9 of 15 tracks) written and performed by Kristy-Lee VanderGaast, a student at (graduate from?) Immanuel Christian School, Lethbridge, Alberta. The insert provides the texts (always a most useful necessity in CDs!). Two flute solos enliven the program as a whole.

It is refreshing to listen to the work of these young musicians. Perhaps in tonal colour not always original (there are reminders to other contemporary

MY GOD

You are the King The Prince of Peace

Your praises I sing And your love will never cease

Allelu, Allelu

You are my God

Praise your name

I lift up my voice

Almighty God Awesome One

Wonderful God Faithful One

Words & Music:
K. VanderGaast

ON THE EDGE

*Here we stand on the edge of our lives
Hoping that the future can be understood
Trusting that God will show us the way
Though not knowing what's ahead
Hoping that the winds of change
Won't blow us away . . .*

Words & music:

K. VanderGaast, E. Snip

Christian musicians), in intent and execution this disc is quite professional and a worthy addition to a collection of contemporary Christian music. My favourite selections include: *Prayer* – a sincere and reverent hymn: *to you I whisper a prayer*; *Gesu Bambino* – a gently rocking Christmas lullaby with the well-known *O come let us adore him* as descant; *On the Edge* – young people gazing at their future with fear and trembling, yet confessing their trust in a God who always will care.

Highly recommended!



COME, PRAISE THE LORD! A collection of songs and music produced by supporters of Immanuel Christian School in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

(ICSSAC-1997-2. CDs: \$20.00. Cassettes: \$13.00. Distributed by Joanne Gunnink, 34 Parkwater Crescent, Winnipeg, MB, R2C 4W7.)

The insert lists quite an impressive array of participants in this performance: a school choir and band, a vocal ensemble, a mixed choir, organists, pianists, a harpsichordist, a keyboardist, flautists, a violinist, a trumpeter, a clar-

inetist, two vocalists – indeed a talented group of musicians, and all members of the same congregation! It makes you think of all the instruments and voices mentioned in Psalm 150 – performed by the Immanuel school choir and band in a setting of Natalie Sleeth: Praise the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.

The performers present a wide range of music, including a number of instrumental items. The flutes and harpsichord present themselves in music of Telemann and Loeillet. Organ and piano combine in an arrangement of a movement of one of Handel's organ concertos. The violin is heard in a selection from Mendelssohn. The organ presents settings of a hymn and a psalm, while the school band gives an inspired rendition of *Great is thy faithfulness*.

The three (!) choirs are accompanied by various keyboards, and in selected items by trumpet, flute, and clarinet. The vocal ensemble offers the first selection on the disc with a contemporary song *Come, lift a song of joy* (music by Sonja Poorman). It certainly sets the tone for the rest! The mixed choir Jubilate Deo contributes a number of items as well, among these I found *The Lord bless you and keep you* (music by Joyce Eilers Bacak) quite pleasing: these are such wonderful words. The school choir has the honour to conclude the disc with *Oh, the depths of the riches, the wisdom of God* (music by John Elliot, arranged by Grietje Gortemaker). It is good to hear these young voices articulate their faith clearly and with conviction.

The vocal soloists present themselves in music of Handel. Actually, there is too much to mention in this review: purchase this disc and learn what joy it is to make music to your Lord together with your brothers and sisters.

Well done, Winnipeggers!
Highly recommended.

BOOK NOTICES

By Gerhard H. Visscher


Jerome M. Julien, *What the Spirit says to the Churches* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1996) 107 pages; paperback, \$ 9.95 Canadian.

This is a collection of sermons preached by the Rev. Jerome M. Julien in the (then) Independent Reformed Church of Sheffield, Ontario just before he left for Lynwood, Illinois. By way of these seven sermons on the seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2 and 3), Rev. Julien bids farewell to Sheffield and expressed gratitude for the happy and blessed years he spent there. Rev. Julien has succeeded in drawing on the rich background of the seven letters to explain what they originally meant for each of the early churches and at the same time manages to apply them in a pastoral and practical way to the twentieth century congregation. It is a pity that, as in other books on the seven letters, we are not

given first a sermon on the vision of Revelation 1 in which the Lord Jesus is seen walking among the lampstands, as this really is the introduction to these seven letters. It is also regrettable that the use of the KJV even means that sometimes the congregation is indirectly addressed with "thee's" and "thou's." Nevertheless, those who read this little book will be enriched as their attention is drawn to the wondrous way our ascended Lord Jesus speaks to His churches.

Frederick S. Leahy *The Cross He Bore: Meditations on the Sufferings of the Redeemer* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996) 82 pages; paperback, \$ 6.99 U.S..

Browsing through a bookstore in Glasgow in the forties, F.S. Leahy laid his hands upon a copy of Dr. K. Schilder's trilogy on the sufferings of Christ (*Christ in His Suffering, Christ*

Crucified, Christ on Trial). Purchasing them "proved to be an investment" says Leahy, for "over the years I have turned to those volumes again and again, and have been immensely helped by Schilder's insights." Leahy suggests that the cross should be central in the thinking and experience of the Christian; it is his conviction and sad experience "that as the cross goes out of focus in the Christian's life, coldness and backsliding set in"(xi). Without trying to be complete, Leahy then gives us thirteen brief meditations on the sufferings of our Lord. Leahy has obviously done careful exegetical work, and then, while drawing on the insights of Schilder and others, meditates on the significance of what is written with respect to the suffering and death of our Lord and the many implications that this passion has for the church today. This little book is aimed for those in the pew, and comes highly recommended. 

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Contracta Ontario North of March 13, 1998 Held in Burlington

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church of Flamborough, the Rev. G. Visscher welcomed the delegates present, read from Hebrews 2:1-9, and lead in prayer.

2. Constitution of Classis

The delegates from the church of Flamborough examined the credentials and reported that the following churches were lawfully represented: Burlington East, Burlington South, Burlington-Waterdown, Fergus, and Flamborough. By common consent classis was constituted with the Rev. Visscher serving as chairman and br. Horsman as clerk.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Before the proposed agenda was adopted there was some discussion as to whether it was appropriate for a clas-

sis contracta to deal with the request from the church of Fergus re a second call to the Rev. J. Ludwig of London. It was decided that even though the regulations for classis do not cover this eventuality, the nature of the matter would allow a classis contracta to deal with it.

4. Request from the Church of Fergus

In accordance with Article 4. C of the Church Order the church of Fergus requested classis to approve the decision to extend a second call to the Rev. J. Ludwig of London. The delegates from Fergus explained that they had been informed by Rev. Ludwig that his reasons for declining the original call were no longer valid. They also stated that the congregation had been informed and that upon classical approval another vote would be held to determine the support of the congregation before proceeding with the second call.

Classis decided to approve the request from the church of Fergus.

5. Appointments (As per Acts of Classis December 12)

- Convening church for next classis: Flamborough
- Date: June 19, 1998
- Suggested officers:
Chairman - Rev. J. Van Popta
Vice-chairman - Rev. A.J. Pol
Clerk - Rev. J.G. Slaa

6. Question Period


The brothers from Fergus thanked classis for its cooperation.

7. Censure According to Article 34 C.O.

Censure according to Art. 34 was not necessary.

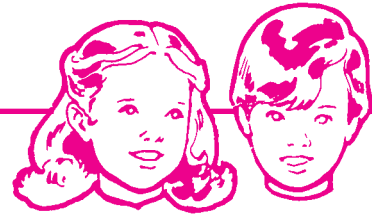
8. Closing

The Acts and Press Release were approved. Rev. C. Bosch led in closing prayer.

For Classis Ontario North of March 13, 1998.
W.F. Horsman, Clerk at that time. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers:

What did you learn during the Easter break? Did you learn the true meaning of Easter? Did you learn that on Good Friday, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, was placed on the cross for your sake, and my sake? Don't you think that was very brave of Him? And then, on the third day, which is now what we call Sunday, He rose from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of His heavenly Father.

This makes us very humble – it makes us want to get on our knees and thank Him for His wonderful gift of eternal life. You can do that, at any time that you want. He is always listening to you, no matter how dark it is, or how far away from your home you may be.

It's a wonderful thing to do – pray to thank Him!



From the Mailbox

Two letters were received in the mail.

Thanks to go *Jennifer Post* for her excellent puzzle. That's a lot of animals you have thought of. But it's excellent. Please send another one soon. Bye now, Jennifer.

Thank you very much, *Jaclyn Nobel*, for your letter and puzzle. It was nice to hear from you. Do you want to join the Busy Beaver Club? If so, please write and I will send you a membership card. I'm glad you really like school. I hope you enjoy moving to Fergus in the summer. Bye for now, Jaclyn. Please write again.

SLAVES WERE COMMON IN BIBLE TIMES. NAME THE PERSON INVOLVED.

- Who was the slave Paul wrote to his friend Philemon about? Phil. 10 _____
- Who was told of a way to be cured from leprosy by a slave girl? 2 Kings 5 _____
- Who made slaves of the Israelites? Exodus 1 _____
- Who was sold into slavery by his brothers? Genesis 37 _____
- Who killed an Egyptian for hitting a Hebrew slave and then had to run to save his life? Exodus 2. _____
- Who sent a slave to find his son a wife? Genesis 24. _____
- Who was the slave who told David where Jonathan's son was? 2 Samuel 9. _____
- Who was Elisha's slave? 2 Kings 4. _____
- Who cut off the ear of a slave? John 18. _____
- Which prophet left his slave, went a day's journey, sat under a juniper tree and wish to die because Jezebel was trying to kill him? 1 Kings 19. _____
- Who had a slave inform him that his sons and daughters had all been killed by a great wind? Job 1. _____

PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver Jennifer Post

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

FIND:	rabbit	turtle	raccoon
jaguar	bear	rat	fawn
yak	goat	pig	zebra
alligator	loon	ant	starfish
deer	otter	trout	cow
crocodile	eel	unicorn	daddy long
whale	elephant	doe	legs

HOW MANY?

- The _____ tribes of Israel.
- The _____ Commandments
- The _____ Gospels
- ' _____ days you shall labour and do all your work.'
- ' _____ barley loaves and _____ small fishes.
- _____ pieces of silver.
- 'No man can serve _____ masters.'
- The _____ churches which are in Asia.
- 'They drew the net to land full of fishes, _____.'
- The _____ Wise Men.
- By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, after it was surrounded for _____ days.
- David chose _____ smooth stones out of the brook.
- The _____ apostles.
- Samson went out and caught _____ foxes.
- Goliath was _____ cubits and a span high.

AUNT BETTY

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