

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
VOLUME 49, NO. 1      JANUARY 7, 2000

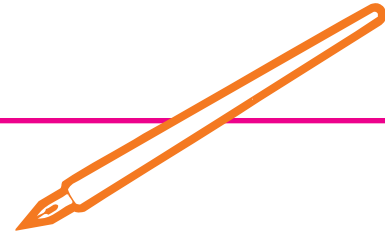


*We pray  
"Come, Lord Jesus,"  
Maranatha*

**Numbers**

**10:1-10**

By C. Van Dam



## “To You O Lord I Lift up My Soul”

### A prayer for the new year

It's almost a relief that the millennium hype is now behind us and we have actually entered the year 2000. We can now get on with the task of normal living and concentrate on the usual things of life like doing our daily work, parenting, earning a living or going to school.

#### Normal?

But how “normal” is life today? There are some rather “abnormal” things given the current state of affairs in the world today. In the first place, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the year 2000 is an *annus domini*, a year of the Lord! We live in the year of the Lord, A.D. – *anno domini* – 2000. The mainline media don't talk about Him, but Christ, our Saviour rules. He's the one who has dated our year and He is ultimately in charge – right now! But very few want to acknowledge the fact and our civilization has consciously rejected that truth. Indeed, in some quarters C.E. (Common Era) is used instead of A.D. This state of affairs brings me to a second “abnormal” thing.

For all appearances, the people of God, the holy catholic church, does not seem to benefit very much from the fact that their Saviour is in charge and ruling this world from on high. Christians have apparently never been so viciously and widely persecuted as in our day and age. The chief shepherd may be victorious and rule, but the sheep of the pasture often have a hard time noticing it. The cry for help and relief goes up from the earth. How true that picture of the church in Revelation 12 is. In that chapter we read how the dragon, Satan, was cast out of heaven because of Christ's victory, but he takes out his wrath on the church, pictured in Revelation 12 as a woman and those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The enemy pursues and does not relent. He is the devil, the hater of God from the beginning.

Such is the “normal” state of affairs today, as we live in the last days. The triumph of Christ seems distant, because Satan is so close. We are surrounded by enemies. There is the world whose values, lifestyles and goals are hostile to the gospel. There is Satan who in and through the things of this world goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour. And let us not forget, there is our heart, which though claimed and renewed by Christ, still wages a daily struggle against the old flesh. Enemies all around and even within us!

#### The prayer

This state of affairs calls to mind the prayer of the beginning of Psalm 25. David experiences enemies who threaten to triumph over him. Then he prays.

*To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust,  
O my God.*

*Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies  
triumph over me.*

David is one of us. He is a member of the same church that we are members of. Today we can sing his Psalm, which is part of God's revelation to us. When we sing this Psalm, we identify with David and his situation. We know ourselves part of the same community of God's people. Although there is a big difference between being in the old dispensation and the last age of the Spirit where we find ourselves, yet, there is also much that is the same. The struggle against sin, for example, is still there and we too can know that feeling of being hemmed in by the enemy. Satan seems to be everywhere and we can fear for ourselves and our children!

What are we to do when we are troubled and Satan seems to be everywhere at once and we fall into sin or sin brings grief into our life? What are we to do when we get depressed or unable to handle it all, when our very life seems to come apart at the seams because of the screaming tensions within us?

In such a situation, we can take David's prayer on our lips and lift up our souls to God. What does that mean? What is involved in lifting up our soul to the Almighty? What is our soul? Our soul is our heart and mind – our life. It's we, ourselves. When we lift up our souls to God, we confess that we cannot resolve the problem at hand. No, we bring it all to God. To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul – my heart, my life, my everything! Yes, we have a God to whom we can go and we can place our life, our questions and anxieties in his care! Our God is for real!

The key difference between all pagan and true worship and living is that pagan worship (and we are living in a society that is rapidly becoming a new heathendom) tries to solve all its problems by itself, even creating new gods if need be to solve their difficulties. However, it all remains a human effort. But Christians may know, there is God to whom we may go because He has first come to us. There is God who is over and beyond this world who has come to us in Jesus Christ in grace and mercy. And therefore we can go to the Almighty, the LORD, Yahweh, and take to Him our anxious soul, life, and being.

Our souls and lives benefit much from human company and a Christian cannot be a loner. We need each other. The communion of saints is a great gift of God. But, all the human help we get is not enough. “To you O Lord I lift up my soul!” The Lord is ultimately the only one who can give direction to our lives and so heal broken hearts, rest agitated lives and restore us from sin and enable us to go on. His Word will show us the way and guide us in his truth (cf. vv. 4-5).

#### Our hope and trust


And as we lift up our lives to God and commend ourselves to his care and direction, we confess that our life is hid in God. That is ultimately where we want to be – with Him!



What a privilege to be able to go to Him and to go through life with Him, also the year 2000! For He is Yahweh, the covenant God, faithful and true in Jesus Christ our Saviour. He rules victoriously! And what we do as individuals in commending our lives to God, we can also do with our families, the congregation we are a member of, the federation of churches, and his catholic church.

Let's not forget to lift up our souls to the Lord our God often. It is so easy to get accustomed to what seems "normal" as we settle down to another year of living, working, worrying, enjoying and planning. But as long as we are here in this world as children of God, the present situation is not at all normal. Our Saviour rules but Satan harasses! The tensions and hostilities are real for those whose citizenship is in the Jerusalem above.

But, we have the promise that as long as our life is orientated to God and we let ourselves be guided by his Word, He will supply our every need – personally, as families and also as churches. We can put our trust in Him! Our hope in God will never be put to shame! Let's rejoice that we can so enter and experience this new year. May it be a year in which our gaze is not mesmerized by the things of this world, but a year in which we know that our life direction and assurance comes from above, from God who is faithful. To Him our life must and may be directed! Is He not our everything?!

"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul, my life, my everything!" No one who prays that prayer, prays it in vain. They will know and experience, the sure life direction that the Lord gives in his Word. And they will receive the peace and joy surpassing all understanding that comes along with that. 

### What's inside?

Happy new year! A new year. A new century. A new millennium. A new volume of *Clarion*. We will once again do our best to fill a volume with articles to build you up in the Christian faith and help you in your walk with the Lord.

Well, we made it. The sun rose on January 1st, 2000. We were not plunged into darkness and cold. At y2k.00.01, the taps and the telephones still worked. For the past year, we were subjected to endless talk and literature about the possible failure of our computer integrated society. There is no doubt we live in quite an age. We are the first generation of the sons of men who have the scientific and technological capabilities to render the global village we live in a complete wasteland. Perhaps we Christians feel insecure at times about our world. We need to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is in control. The Head of the church is the King of the Universe. 2000 is a year of our Lord. Dr. Van Dam writes about this in the editorial. After all the y2k hype we have come through, it is good to reflect upon some words of King David written about three millennia ago but that still speak powerfully to us today.

We are very happy to publish another meditation by Dr. J. Faber. You will notice that it is the twin of the year end one Dr. Faber wrote for us.

And then, the Rev. Peter Feenstra informs us about a growing relationship between a Reformed Church in Owen Sound and a Reformed Church in St. Georges de Beauce. Mrs. Ravensbergen supplies a Ray of Sunshine, and Dr. Jack De Jong a press review. Aunt Betty has something for the children. Undersigned concludes the mini-series on the topic of Authority. You will find a few other things too. Happy reading!

GvP



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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 Publications Mail Registration No. 09907  
 ISSN 0383-0438

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By J. Faber

## We expect a new world!

*But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13*

The apostle Peter wrote about Christ's coming. Over against scoffers outside and doubters inside the church he proclaimed that the day of the Lord will come. The heavens will disappear with a roar, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (v. 10). Peter pictures the last day in bright and vivid colours: The day of God will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat (v. 12).

But the dissolution of heaven and earth is not the end. The coming of Christ is his appearance in glory and it is the hope of all believers. We expect a brand new world.

The word "new" does not mean that God will abandon his creation. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). He formed and shaped the universe and He will never let go the works of his hands. He does not annihilate them but He renews them. He does not replace them but He restores them. The first world was cleansed by water in the days of Noah; the last world will be purified by fire in the day of Christ. But God does not relinquish his creation. Otherwise the redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ would not be recreation but an entirely other – a different creation. Then we could not expect the resurrection of the body.

But our Lord Jesus Christ spoke about a *renewal* of all things, a *regeneration* of heaven and earth (Matt 19:28). Peter himself preached after Pentecost that Christ must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything (Acts 3:21). The apostle Paul writes that the creation itself will be *liberated* from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom 8:21). This world *in its present form* is passing away (1 Cor 7:31). So the world remains but it receives another form: we expect renewed heavens and an earth renewed. Heavens and earth will receive an excellent new quality.

Indeed, we expect also a new *earth*. However blessed we may be when after death we will be with Christ, our full expectation is not that our soul will be in heaven. We look forward to the resurrection of the body and the restoration of our entire existence. We hope also for a new earth as our new environment, our new dwelling place and our new workshop.

This is the beautiful prophecy at the end of the Bible (Rev 21). It pictures heaven and earth united. The apostle John writes: I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God. . . . John heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them."

Let us look forward in Christian expectation, and let us conduct our lives in accordance with our hope.

This is the contents of our expectation. At the beginning of a new year, a new age, a new millennium, we look forward to a new world! We long for it, we groan inwardly (Rom 8:23), and last but not least, we pray for it: Thy kingdom come.

But how are we certain about this eager expectation? Is it not a pipe dream, an illusion of men, a *fata morgana*? No, for look at the beginning of Peter's message: It is *in keeping with his promise*. It is the contents of what God has spoken. Our hope is based on his faithfulness. He who promised is faithful. God is no man that He would lie. All men are liars but God cannot lie. He is dependable and trustworthy. We have his Word. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is no cleverly invented story (1:16). God gave his promise.

The apostle Peter here uses the singular. He thinks of one specific promise and he undoubtedly refers again to the Old Testament. We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you do well to pay attention to it (1:19). Here the prophetic word is that of Isaiah through whom God spoke: Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind (Isa 65:17). "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure" (Isa 66:22).

This promise gives us comfort and consolation. There will be new heavens and a new earth, *the home of righteousness*.

Righteousness means that you are in the right with God, in the right with your neighbour, and in the right with yourself. It is wholeness, harmony, integrity, and peace.

Here in this world there is so much unrighteousness. And if you find some righteousness, it is like a visitor; it is there only for a short while. Righteousness is like a homeless person; it does not have a dwelling place. Even the fear of the Lord is imperfect in the life of God's children. But in the new heavens and the new earth the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. What would the new world be without God and without his righteousness? Finally we will love and serve Him in perfection.

There will be perfect harmony among men, a society of righteousness. Peace and unity between men and women, tribes and nations, tongues and races. There will be no strife anymore, no war, no arguments, no violence. David's Son will uphold his kingdom with justice and righteousness. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end (Isa 9:7). With

righteousness He will judge the needy, with justice He will give decisions for the poor of the earth (Isa 11:4).

This was real comfort for Peter's readers: those young congregations in Asia Minor – Turkey – were pestered and boycotted.


It is comfort for us, who long for righteousness. Righteousness will *dwell* in the new world. Heavens and earth

will be united by the redeeming work of our Saviour Jesus Christ. He has reconciled both what is in heaven and what is on earth. He is the Saviour of the *world*.

He is the LORD our righteousness. He died on the cross at Calvary and He obtained righteousness for us. Let us then lift up our hearts into heaven where Christ is. Let us look forward in Christian

expectation, and let us conduct our lives in accordance with our hope.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. And your Saviour promises: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

At the beginning of a new millennium we pray: come, Lord Jesus, Maranatha! 

## Authority<sub>4</sub>

### The Abuse of Authority and the Rejection of Authority

By G.Ph. van Popta

*In the past issues we wrote about how God is the source of authority. He mediates his will to us by way of his Word. And so the Word, because it is God's Word, has authority over our lives. Further, we said that God approaches us in life through several agents. We wrote about parental authority, the authority of the church, and the authority of the state. We also addressed the style of authority. Those in positions of authority must exercise their power by way of servant leadership. And then we also wrote about the limits of authority. No human has absolute authority. Only God does. If you are placed in the unfortunate situation where obeying man would force you to disobey the commandments of God, then you must disobey man in order to obey God. For only God has unlimited authority. This concluding article brings forward two related matters, namely, the abuse of authority and the rejection of authority.*

#### Abuse of authority

##### In the state

Sadly enough, it happens that some who are in positions of authority abuse their power and position. Governments do. There are governments that oppress their people. We can think of the communist regimes of Stalin and Mao Tse Tung. Every November a Sunday is declared the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians. In many Asian and North African countries, Christians are persecuted for their faith. They are oppressed by the state. Clearly, such

governments are abusing their authority. God will hold them to account for this and will punish them for it.

##### In churches

This abuse of authority also happens in churches. In the 1500s, church reformers called the Medieval church back to the Word of God. Through the centuries, the church had strayed far away from the simple but true message of Scripture. The church had added all sorts of doctrines not found in the Bible. On top of that, many of the church leaders were living godless lives. The reformers called the church back to the Bible and away from false doctrine and permissive living. What was the reaction of the church? Persecution! Excommunication! Death by burning at the stake!

**It is only when we fall broken at the foot of the cross that we are reconciled to God and that we can be reconciled to one another.**

The church assigned more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God. It refused to submit itself to the rule of Christ. It persecuted those who lived holy lives according to the Word of God and who rebuked it for its sins and false doctrine. The church of the Middle Ages would not take it. It used – or rather – it *abused* its power and authority to silence those who called it to faithfulness and submission to God's Word.



Joseph Stalin

This example, which led to the Reformation of the church, is not the only example of the abuse of ecclesiastical authority. Throughout history, there have been many instances of churches abusing their authority, misusing their power, to silence those who would live godly lives and call a disobedient church back to the Word. The history of the Canadian Reformed Churches, which goes back to the Netherlands, bears this out.

##### In families

Abuse of authority does not only happen in the state and the church; it is also, sadly, found in families. All physical, verbal, and sexual abuse by someone *in* authority perpetrated against someone *under* authority is abuse of authority. We wish we could say that this does not happen among



Christians and in the church, but we would be lying.<sup>1</sup>

What must someone suffering abuse do? He or she needs to go to someone else in authority for help. We are all under several spheres of authority: the authority of parents, teachers, the police, and elders in the church. An abused person must go to someone else in a position of authority for help. The abuser must be brought to justice and face the just consequences of his crime. He must be brought to repentance at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only when we fall broken at the foot of the cross that we are reconciled to God and that we can be reconciled to one another.

### Rejection of authority

The rejection of authority began in the Garden of Eden. God told our first parents, Adam and Eve, that they could eat from every tree in the garden except for one. Not content with *all-the-trees-but-one*, they ate from the one excluded tree. They rejected God's authority. This spirit of revolution has been alive ever since.

Today's anti-authority spirit is largely a result and working out of the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

René Descartes (1596-1650), the father of modernism, coined the well-known phrase that is always associated with him: "*Cogito, ergo sum*" (I think, therefore I am). He started with the self. Man is the measure of all things. He thought that man could live apart from God. Revelation is to be rejected. We depend upon the self, upon human intellect alone, the ability to reason.

This spirit of revolution was cranked up a hundredfold by the French Revolution that lasted from 1789-1799. It was a revolution against the church and the king. Ultimately, it was a revolution against God. The battle cry of the French Revolution was: "No God! No

master." The king was beheaded. France was de-Christianized. Dating the years on the basis of the year of Christ's birth was abolished. 1789 became Year One. The seven day week was replaced by a ten day week. The churches were closed.

A cycle of bloodshed ensued. Those manning the guillotine one day were its victims the next. The French Revolution killed itself. France ripened for a takeover. In 1799, someone did take over – Napoleon. He declared himself Emperor. They killed the king and got an emperor.

This spirit of revolution that cries "No God! No master" is still very much alive today. It is alive in the media. It is alive in the entertainment industry. You see it on TV. Authority figures are routinely ridiculed. On many sit-coms, the father is either a lazy oaf sitting in front of the TV clicking through the channels or a bungling fool just barely tolerated by wife and children. You see it in the many labour unions which are, by nature and constitution, against the employer. You see the spirit of revolution on the evening news as you witness screaming protesters waving their pickets signs.

The rejection  
of authority began  
in the  
Garden of Eden.

The rejection of authority creates havoc, as does the abuse of authority. Both create disorder and chaos. Everyone ends up doing what is right in his own eyes.

### Conclusion

God is the ultimate authority. He is the source of all authority. He revealed Himself and his will in his Word, the Scriptures. He calls people to positions



Mao Tse-tung

of authority in life: Parents, government leaders, church leaders. As those in positions of authority act as servants – not as tyrants, but as servants to those under them – things will be well. As husbands provide loving, kind, servant leadership to their wives, reflecting the relationship between Christ and the church, things will be well in their marriages. As parents provide firm but kind servant leadership to their families, reflecting the relationship between God the Father and his people, things will go well in their families.

This goes for churches and governments too. As those in positions of authority exercise their power by serving those they are called to lead, things will be well.

If they abuse their authority, things will go poorly. Families, churches, countries fall apart when those in authority abuse their authority.

As those under authority respect those whom God put over them, again, things will be well. As children respect their parents, as congregations honour their elders, as citizens obey their governments, things will go well in our families, churches and country.

May we all obey the Word of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Triune God has absolute authority. He has revealed his will in his Word. Let us obey it. Every word of it. As we keep the Word submitting to it in humility and obedience, things will be well in our lives. Reject the Word, disobey it, and your life will turn upside down. Obey it and things will be well.

<sup>1</sup>Please see "Please, just listen!" by George van Popta, *Clarion*, Vol. 48, No. 22 (October 29, 1999), p. 514 ff.

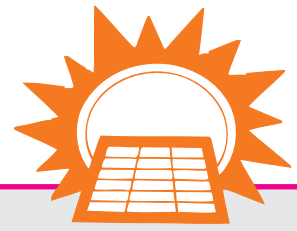


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By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Isaiah 60:20*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have slipped into the year 2000: a new millennium. Many people made a big deal of that. Some were very worried about it out of fear that the computers could not handle the switch. Others were just very excited because of the change from 19— to 20—. But now that we are in it, and getting used to it, everything is calming down. After all, not very much has changed. . . .

It is now more than 2000 years ago that Jesus Christ was on the earth, that He died on the cross, and later on ascended into heaven with words of peace and comfort for the disciples. On Pentecost the Lord poured out his Comforter, the Holy Spirit, on all those who believed in Him. The Holy Spirit came to help God's children to trust in Him. There was also the promise that the Lord Jesus Christ would return on the clouds of heaven.

It was not the first time that the promise of Christ's return was given, for the prophets of the Old Testament had spoken of that as well. An example of that are the words of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 60 even ends with the words, "I am the Lord; in its time I will hasten it."

Did the Lord really hasten his return? God has waited all these 2000 years to fulfill his promises. And how many years are there yet to come? Another 1000? Will there be a year 3000, too? We do not know. But we do know that from the day of his return on, there will be no need for a sun and moon anymore because *He* is our everlasting Light. At that time there will be no need for the sun to make the time go into hours, and days, and months, and years, for the time will be *everlasting*. There will be no more sin nor any consequences of sin, such as mourning and sickness. There will be everlasting happiness, for we will be *with* the Lord.

But does the LORD forget His promises? Two thousand years is a very long time! To us it is a very long time. But not to the Lord! He is at work with his plan of salvation. In the meantime the Lord also works with us. He gives us a task to do, so that none of us has to be idle while we are waiting. Everyone receives a different task, one that is fit for him or her. Sometimes we think that our particular task is much more difficult than someone else's. But only the Lord knows what each of us can handle. No one will ever have to do something that he or she cannot accomplish. The Lord will help us when we are sick, or when we are unable to hear or speak. He will guide us when we are

blind. The Lord gives help when we are unable to look after ourselves; He comforts when we are grieving; He is there when we feel lonely. He is there for us in all circumstances, and no hair will fall from our head without his will. But everything that happens to us, will bring us closer to Him, and will help us to serve Him better.

The Lord will help and guide us, also in the year 2000. For He has given us his Holy Word, the Bible. In it we can read, time and again, as often as we want, that our life here is only a small beginning of what is awaiting us. For we will pass on into eternal glory when the Lord decides that our time has come. When? We do not know. What will happen in the world this year, or what will happen to us? It does not matter, for when the Lord is in control, nothing can go wrong.

I wish you all a very happy New Year.

*My faithful Saviour keeps me in his care;  
Without my Father's will cannot a hair  
Fall from my head; He shall for me prepare  
A heavenly habitation.*

*All things must serve to further my salvation;  
His Holy Spirit brings me consolation;  
He makes me willing now with veneration  
In hope his yoke to bear.*

Hymn 49:2

## Birthdays in February:

**12: CONNIE VAN AMERONGEN,**  
35 Bredin Pky # 102,  
Orangeville, ON L9X 3X1

**24: CORA SCHOONHOVEN,**  
24 James Speight,  
Markham, ON L3P 3G4

Congratulations Connie, with your 35th, and Cora with your 49th Birthday!

Thank You Mary VandeBurgt for your letter. I am copying it here:

"I would like to thank the brothers and sisters for sending me 50 birthday cards this year and presents too. Thanks a lot. And have a Happy New Year 99 and 2000."

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen,  
7462 Reg.Road 20, RR #1,  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0  
Tel: 905-957-3007, e-mail RWRavens@netcom.ca

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# St. Georges de Beauce – Owen Sound

## A developing relationship

By P.G. Feenstra

Two years ago our local congregation expressed a strong desire not only to fulfill the missionary calling of the church in a foreign land but also within our beloved country of Canada. As a result, a “mission committee” was established and met for the first time in August 1998. The Committee was instructed to look at the possibility of starting a new project or supporting one that already existed. Two areas of work were suggested: Northern Ontario or Quebec. The province of Quebec was given priority. The Committee was instructed to see if there was any way of helping l’Eglise Réformée du Québec (ERQ) in their work of mission.

### A request from St. Georges

In the process of doing this work a request was received from the ERQ church in St. Georges de Beauce (located approximately one-and-a-half hours south of Quebec City). They asked if we were willing to support the calling of a second minister who would help develop Reformed church life within the congregation. This is an area where there is a great need within the ERQ in general. Rev. Paulin Bedard was called by the congregation and he accepted the call on the condition that financial support would be forthcoming. Whereas their present minister, Rev. Mario Veilleux, will concentrate on evangelism, the emphasis in Rev. Bedard’s work will be on a teaching ministry (training elders, catechism classes, translating Reformed material etc.). Yet there will be some flexibility in the division of the workload.

By far the majority of the members in the church at St. Georges de Beauce – and all the congregations in the ERQ – are very new to the faith. The congregation is small (35 communicant members and 30 non-communicant members, plus about 20 other participants who as yet have not professed their faith). Presently they are self-supporting. Yet the addition of a second pastor will require additional resources. As they wrote to us, “According to the

experience of Rev. Paulin Bedard and the ERQ scale of wages for ministers, an annual amount of \$43,000 is needed.”

In their letter to us the consistory of St. Georges also wrote:

During the last few years, we have been encouraged and stimulated by the development of relationships between the Canadian Reformed Churches and l’Eglise Réformée du Québec, through many personal contacts and also through the work of our synodical committees. Our consistory believes that we can learn a lot through these contacts and that the Lord gives us opportunity to be a source of fraternal encouragement for each other. We see the usefulness and importance to deepen these relationships and promote them on a local level, between a CanRC congregation and ERQ congregation. It is the reason why we approach you and present to you our project, so that you may pray more specifically for us and know our needs.

During the first week of August 1999, a delegation from Owen Sound was sent to meet with the consistory of St. George and to visit the congregation for a weekend. They found among the brothers and sisters a sincere desire to serve the Lord in a Reformed manner and an eagerness to learn more about church life in our federation. Many things we take for granted need to be developed in these young churches.

### Acceptance of the invitation

As a result of this visit the consistory of Owen Sound decided to pursue this project provided:

- Rev. Bedard spends approximately three months in the Owen Sound area to become familiar with the overall functioning of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- St. Georges sends a delegation to our church on a yearly basis.
- A delegation is sent from Owen Sound to St. Georges to review their situation.

- This contact draws us closer together as church federations.
- Financial help is received from other congregations (and individuals) in our federation.

The church in St. Georges has agreed to pursue this course of action.

We believe this project is very much in line with the recommendations of Synod Fergus. We hope that through this type of contact the ERQ will learn and have a better understanding about us as Canadian Reformed Churches and we about them.

### Visit on November 19-21, 1999

Last November I was given opportunity to visit the Reformed Churches in Quebec. I attended on behalf of the Committee for Contact with ERQ and because of the contacts we have been developing between our local congregation in Owen Sound and the church at St. Georges de Beauce.

### The ERQ Synod November 19-20

On Friday evening I attended the Synod that was held in Charny at the Institut Farel. Seven brothers were present as delegates. They were: the Rev. Messrs. David Craig, Jean Zoellner, Ruben Kwint, Mario Veilleux and the elders Yves Bergeron, Patrice Michaud and Luc Thibaudeau. Rev. Paulin Bedard was present as an observer. The atmosphere was more relaxed than our major assemblies tend to be. For example, observers were given opportunity to ask questions and questions were directed at them. Voting, however, is done only by the delegates. The chairman of the meeting was elder Patrice Michaud. He led the meeting in a very impressive and efficient manner keeping everyone in line (including the ministers)!

The following morning the delegates returned at 8:30 a.m. Rev. Jean-Guy DeBlois arrived having just returned from attending the meeting of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). He was not seated as a delegate because there were already



two delegates from the congregation in Montreal. The first hour-and-a-half was spent in devotion, song and prayer. Rev. Ruben Kwint gave an extensive meditation on Ecclesiastes 7:16.

During the meeting of the Synod every church was given opportunity to report on matters pertaining to their local church. The joys and the difficulties of the churches were expressed. Two of the six churches, Trois-Rivieres and Quebec City, are without elders. The minister of Quebec City, Francois Cordey, has been given a leave of absence due to health problems. Several churches indicated that they are already or are planning to use catechism material that has been translated and adapted by Rev. Bedard.

The project of support for St. Georges de Beauce received considerable attention at the Synod. It was agreed that the first 75% of the funds collected would be for local work in St. Georges and that the remaining 25% would be used for work Rev. Bedard would be doing for Institut Farel (teaching and developing courses for the Internet). It was also stressed that the salary schedule as used for ministers in the ERQ be used.

At this point in the meeting I was given opportunity to address the delegates and to pass on greetings on behalf of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas and on behalf of our local congregation in Owen Sound.

### Committee Reports

Several Committees gave an oral report of their work. The Committee for Inter-church relations now consists of two men, Rev. DeBlois and Rev. Zoellner. They informed the brothers that they had passed on to our Committee the decision made by the June Synod of the ERQ. In reaction to the decision of Synod Fergus 1998 the June Synod of the ERQ decided:

The Synod of the ERQ thankfully acknowledges the Canadian Reformed Churches' expressed desire to be of assistance to us and appreciates that the issues raised by Synod Fergus 1998 are important and legitimate. Considering that some of the same issues have been raised by our local consistories; and that other observations and concerns expressed by Synod Fergus 1998 are not of present concern to us; therefore, (1) it is recommended that the ERQ begin its own synodical discussions in order to clarify the concerns of our

local consistories which have also been raised by the Canadian Reformed Churches; and (2) that our Synod (through its Inter-Church Relations Committee) advise the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the ERQ that the items of discussion raised by Synod Fergus 1998 which are neither current nor urgent within the ERQ be dealt with if and when they are raised by our local consistories.

Rev. DeBlois reported on his visit to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. He attended as an observer and found it would benefit the ERQ if they would apply for membership. As an observer he was given ample time to present the situation of the ERQ.

There was considerable discussion on the work of the committees appointed by the ERQ Synods and the usefulness of the work that was done. Reference was made to an extensive report on liturgical forms that had been prepared by the Committee for Education which was defeated and never picked up again. A discussion was also held on the possibility of Synod employing an individual for work in the ERQ. This discussion came about because Ben Westerveld (formerly of the CRC in Dunnville, ON and now a member of the OPC) is presently living in Quebec and hopes to receive a call from one of the churches in the future. In the meantime he is being supported by OPC members. Apparently the donors need receipts and the only legal way this can be done is when Ben can prove that he is employed by the ERQ. In this debate it became evident that there is some tension as to which model of church government should be followed (Presbyterian or Reformed). Is it possible for a synod to be the employer of an individual or should this be done on a local level?

### Sunday worship

On Sunday I attended the worship service in St. Georges de Beauce. Rev. Mario Veilleux read three passages of Scripture (Genesis 39:7-9; Jeremiah 8:6; Romans 8:5-8) and on the basis of these texts spoke about how sin wrongs God in all his attributes (in his goodness, omniscience, wisdom, sovereignty and justice.) The mediator by which we must be saved must be God himself. The reason is because sin has done such infinite wrong to God.

After the service I was given opportunity to address the congregation. I passed on greetings from our local congregation and briefly spoke about our desire that the contact we have may

draw us closer in the Lord and that we may be encouraged by what we receive in each other as Reformed Churches. The response of the congregation was overwhelming. My overall impression was that the congregation in St. Georges genuinely treasures the contact.


### In general

The visit was very beneficial to get a better picture and understanding of the life of these young churches and to see it first hand in the life of the congregation at St. Georges. The people with whom I spoke are full of eagerness and enthusiasm for the service of the Lord. Most of them did not grow up in a Reformed home and are eager to learn more of what it means to live as Reformed Christians in all areas of life. On more than one occasion I heard the phrase "You have such a rich heritage!" The blessings of Reformed church life which we tend to take for granted are valued as a new-found treasure. It was refreshing and a reason for great joy and thankfulness to see how the Lord also preserves his church in Quebec.

### Financial support

We are responding to financial and other needs of the ERQ (Synod Fergus, Article 97 V C 2). We have asked the churches in Classis Northern Ontario to support this work either as an item on their church budgets, through collections or through the deaconry. We are hoping to have Rev. Bedard and his family come to the Owen Sound area as of March 1, 2000. The amount that will be needed will be approximately \$45,000. If we receive more support than we need to support this project we will pass it on to the ERQ. If you have any further questions please feel free to write us.

As local consistory we are very thankful for this opportunity to be of assistance to these brothers and sisters and in the process, to be enriched in faith and in our common desire to serve the Lord in the future. We pray that the Lord may continue to bless the developing relationship between the congregations of St. Georges and Owen Sound so that it benefit all the churches in the ERQ and draw us closer together as church federations.

We are now soliciting funds from any individual or church that wishes to support this project. Please make your cheques payable to the "Owen Sound Canadian Reformed Church" and indicate it is for "Project Quebec." Individual donations of \$10 or more will be given a tax receipt. 

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Welcome to Aldergrove

# Rev. and Mrs. P.H. Holtvluwer, Lucas



## Report of the Ordination of Candidate P. Holtvluwer and the Welcoming of the Holtvluwer Family to Aldergrove held on October 24/25

On Sunday, October 24, the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove along with many guests were able to witness the ordination of Candidate P. Holtvluwer into the ministry. We were privileged once more to have Rev. R. Schouten, minister of Abbotsford on our pulpit for this service. He spoke to us on Eph 4: 11 and 12, how our Lord has given us another office-bearer for his church in Aldergrove. He reminded us that the primary task of this new office-bearer is to equip every member of this congregation for service in the Lord and to strengthen and mature his church in this place. Rev. Schouten asked us to consider what we have received and not expect that all things will be done by this minister. We have to remain focused as congregation and as office-bearers in our work here in Aldergrove. After the service words of congratulation were given by our counsellor, Rev. R. Schouten, who also spoke on behalf of

Classis Pacific East. Many letters of congratulation were also read.

The afternoon service of this wonderful day saw the opportunity for our new minister to proclaim the Word. For his inaugural sermon in Aldergrove, Rev. Holtvluwer chose as his text from 1 Cor 2:1-5. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified for us, remains the focal point of everything in the Church. We were asked to consider how this is displayed in the weakness of the preacher, how this is displayed in the power of the gospel, and how this is displayed in the firm foundation of our faith. We were reminded that relying strictly on the minister for all answers is not the proper response of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

After a vacancy of 18 months we will do well to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ is and remains, the head of his Church here on earth. He works in each and everyone of us by the Holy Spirit to remain faithful to his Word. Let us also remain faithful to the confessions that we have made before Him and his congregation.

The following evening we could meet together as congregation and

guests to welcome the Holtvluwer family in our congregation. The chairman of the consistory, Mr. B. Vane, opened the evening. We as congregation sang the praises of God from Psalm 67.

Very quickly our masters of ceremony, Mr. C. VanDelft and Mr. M. VanWoudenberg, took over. They allowed Rev. J. Visscher of Langley the opportunity to say a few words. He congratulated Rev. Holtvluwer and his wife along with the congregation of Aldergrove in their receiving a new minister.

After this the congregation had a number of things they wanted to present to the new family. First, the younger children of the congregation sang a number of songs for them and us all. We were all treated to the wonderful efforts of the 3 to 7 year olds and the again from the 8 to 10 year olds.

Following this the Adult Bible study groups presented to the Holtvluwer family a wall map on which were marked all the places of residence of the various families in the congregation. This wonderful gift will allow the Holtvluwers to find their way easily through the Aldergrove area.

The Women's society had a special poem that enlightened Mrs. Holtvluwer on the schedule that the minister will soon be assuming. It seems like the minister's wife will be drinking coffee alone many evenings of the week.

The Young People's society took the time to involve Rev. and Mrs. Holtvluwer in a game of Aldergrove Squares. The game's host took some liberties with the rules to allow a good number of questions to be asked. Did you know that there are many teachers living in the Aldergrove congregation? Most of us knew this but didn't get the number right due to the fact that Mrs. Holtvluwer was a recent addition to this long list.

Then a group of ladies representing the four professors of the Theological College got up and did a wonderful







skit for us. The four professors had some fun discovering the family ties and other things about the Holtvluwes. These four ladies and we had a wonderful time learning more about the

family. Especially enjoyable were the wonderful Dutch accents displayed by our professors.

The evening was then turned over to the grade 10 band from Credo Christian High School. Some older band members from the Aldergrove congregation accompanied them. They played a number of tunes for the congregation and visitors. One young member of our congregation, Breanne Meyer, also performed a piano piece for us.

The council of the church rounded off the evening with a skit. They replayed a scene that had occurred the past summer when the Holtvluwes were visiting. It seems that the weather was so hot at the time that Brother P. Holtvluer "insisted" on a fan to be placed near the pulpit. The council made sure that he did not forget this "incident."

Rev. Holtvluer had some kind words to say at the end of the evening. He thanked all for their wonderful participation in the evening. He had kind words for his family who had helped him through the last number of years as a student. It was very nice to see that both the families of Rev. and Mrs. Holtvluer could be in attendance this evening. Rev. Holtvluer gave the final thanks to his heavenly Father who had seen him and the congregation of Aldergrove to this wonderful moment in all of our lives.

The congregation of Aldergrove wishes to thank the Lord for what He has provided in Rev. and Mrs. Holtvluer. May the blessings He has provided, be fruitful here in Aldergrove and may these blessings be for the upbuilding of his church.

J. Marissen 

## PRESS REVIEW

By J. De Jong



# Unity in Discussion

A summer edition of the *Reformed Herald*, a paper serving the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), reports on the discussions held at the 253rd meeting of the RCUS synod held at the Ebenezer Reformed Church of Shafter, California, and the Grace Reformed Church of Bakersfield, California from May 17-21, 1999. Many visitors and fraternal delegates both from other churches and Presbyterian theological seminaries addressed the Synod, including delegates from our sister churches in Holland, the United Reformed Churches, (URCNA, represented by Rev. Johinda Ganger) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC, represented by Rev. Robert Needham). Of interest for our purposes is the statement that the synod adopted on the matter of church unity. Since an RCUS delegate was also present and addressed Synod Fergus 1998, it may be important for our churches to interact with this statement at some future time.

Here then follows the statement on church unity:

### **Biblical Principles on Church Unity**

This committee presented a thorough paper which addresses our re-

lationship to other church groups. Five principles from the report were adopted by the Synod: 1) "In establishing relationships with other churches there must be a mutual agreement regarding the fundamental nature of the Church, including the three marks of the Church as set forth in the Word of God;" 2) "In pursuing the unity of the visible Church it must be remembered by all faithful denominations that within the multiformity of the visible Church there is a true uniformity, and that multiformity does not per se obscure the unity of Christ's Church. Therefore, it is not absolutely necessary to unite the visible Church on earth into a single church government by merging all faithful denominations into an organic union;" 3) "When establishing an ecclesiastical relationship with another denomination, the primary consideration is the other Church's faithfulness to the doctrines of Scripture and Christian faith. Ecclesiastical fellowship must never be established with an unfaithful church;" 4) "Ecclesiastical unity with other churches may be achieved by entering into a corre-

sponding or fraternal relationship where biblical counsel may be given and received by an exchange of delegates at Presbyters/Classis meetings, as well as at the General Assembly/Synod meetings;" and, 5) "Organic union with other denominations is desirable if the denominations are separated by unessential differences, and when unity may be accomplished without surrendering biblical and creedal convictions."

There is much in this report with which we can concur. It is clear that in their situation the RCUS brothers are reaching out to other groups in order to promote a confessional unity, one that also shuns fellowship with unfaithful churches. Ever since these churches adopted the Canons of Dort and Belgic Confession along with the Heidelberg Catechism, our churches have noticed a greater sense of affinity with them. This culminated with their offer of a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with our churches, which was considered extensively by Synod Fergus 1998.

However, one can detect some problems in the statement, especially with thesis 2 and thesis 5. In thesis 2, the brothers appear to be intent on



# CHURCH NEWS

Classis Ontario-South of December 8 examined

**br. Frank Dong**

because of his request to being declared eligible for call within the federation. On behalf of that classis I inform you that br. Dong was successful in his exam and was declared eligible for call. His address is:

Apartment 1002  
790 Mohawk Road West  
Hamilton, ON L9C 6P6  
Phone: (905) 389-5745

\*\*\*

DECLINED the call to  
Smithville, ON

**Rev. W.M. Wielenga**

of Lynden, WA

\*\*\*

CALLED and declined to the church at Houston, BC

**Rev. P. Aasman**

of Grand Valley, ON

\*\*\*

ADDRESS CHANGE:

**Pastor Ted and Christine Van Raalte**

23 Windsong Place  
Winnipeg, MB R2C 4T9  
1-204-222-8670 (home)  
(study/fax) 1-204-222-9119  
email <tvanraalte@idirect.com>

\*\*\*

CALLED by the Free Reformed Church of Australia at Kelmscott, AU, for mission work via radio broadcasts amongst the Chinese of mainland China:

**Cand. Frank Dong**

of Hamilton, ON



\*\*\*

CALLED and accepted to the church at Legana, Tasmania

**Rev. J. Kroeze**

\*\*\*

ADDRESS CHANGE:

**from**

Canadian Reformed Church  
at Brampton  
150 Main Street North,  
PO Box 74071  
Brampton, Ontario L6V 4J7

**to**

**Canadian Reformed Church  
at Brampton  
10060 Creditview Road  
Brampton, Ontario L6V 1A1**

defending a legitimate multiformity within a supposed "uniformity" which appears to have the effect of dampening the urgent call to visible unity. We can appreciate a certain multiformity arising through historical differences and human failings throughout history, but do we not have the obligation to seek to overcome differences and strive for greater unity, including merger where national boundaries do not form an impediment, and where historical differences can be overcome?

Thesis 5 then states that visible unity is *desirable* if the differences between the denominations are only of an unessential character, (my emphasis). I can appreciate this desire and can concur with it. But let us not lose sight of our obligations! Consider John 17:21, where the Lord Jesus prays for the unity of the church. Given the context in which the Lord Jesus prays to the Father concerning the church He has established (Matt 18:16-18!), it would appear that his prayer cannot be limited to simply a spiritual reality in which no visible concrete organizational implications are present. Barring national or physical constraints, we need to work together as closely as we can!

We may speak of the *desirability* of church union, but in effect, we are faced with an impinging *obligation*. Let's translate our desirables into *mandates*! Then we will all end up being less complacent with regard to the con-


tinued fragmentation of the church visible and less compromising with regard to the confession of the faithful church visible. For what is invisible in the heart must be present in attitude and life style, and in an active pursuit of true unity according to biblical norms. May the Lord continue to bless our contacts with the RCUS as we work for this goal!

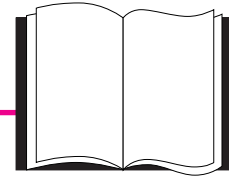
## Days of Creation

Another matter that received extensive discussion was the length of the days of creation according to the biblical accounts of Genesis 1 and 2. The synod felt called to defend the position of the churches on this question. The report continues:

The 252nd synod of the RCUS erected this special committee [on the days of creation, JDJ] to defend our position on the days of creation. The position taken by the RCUS is that the days of Genesis one are six normal, chronological days of light and darkness. The committee prepared a report to defend this position which was distributed in booklet form. The report highlights the importance of this issue as one that is fundamental to the question of hermeneutics (the discipline of interpreting the Bible). Our position that the days of Genesis 1 are exactly what they appear to be (not only to the Hebrew shepherds and farmers

who first heard the words of God through Moses, but also to the 20th century person reading them today) is essential to our proclamation of other doctrines, such as the bodily resurrection of Christ, which the modern world may also find "incredible." In fact, the Synod sees this matter to be of such importance that not only will this lengthy report be included in the *Abstract*, additional booklets will also be prepared for wider distribution.

Here again we can express great appreciation for the zeal and industry of the brothers in working out a detailed statement on this matter. And we can appreciate their deepest intentions, viz, to guard the interpretations of the scriptures against the encroachments of liberal theology and rationalistic scientism. But should we not be wary of binding ourselves beyond the explicit teaching of scripture? In the early chapters of Genesis, Scripture clearly refers to a normal day in straight forward historical language. But to insist, as the synodical *Abstract* does, that this was a 24 hour day exactly as we know it today goes beyond the testimony of Scripture. Let us avoid the danger of binding ourselves beyond and above the requirements of Scripture, especially where this does not appear to be necessary. This, too, is an essential step in promoting the unity to which we are called by the prayer of our Master, (John 17:21). 



## Leaving your Bible at Home?

By Bram Vegter

There seems to be a growing trend in the Canadian Reformed Churches, to be placing Bibles and Books of Praise in the pews. Is this a positive trend? Why is this being done? It is worthwhile to find out. Please think along with me about the following:

**What is happening? Why is this being done? What are some of the results? What are we teaching our children? What then shall we do?**

### What is happening?

More and more Canadian Reformed Churches are placing Bibles and sometimes Books of Praise in each pew for every member and/or visitor. Sometimes there is room for your own Bible in the rack in front of you, sometimes there is not. Rather than having ushers give a Book and/or Book of Praise to a visitor who requests or needs one, the books are now permanently placed in front of everyone, and ready for the taking.

### Why is this being done?

It could be any number of reasons. The obvious reason is: people don't bring their own Bibles and/or Book of Praise, and this may refer to members as well as visitors. Another reason may be that, since the congregation switched to the NIV Bible translation, the church council now feels compelled to "help" their members along, by supplying the new NIV Bibles for them in the Bible racks in every pew. Perhaps funds have been provided to council for this through a church event. Or maybe we are following a trend found in other church denominations. Yet another reason is that, perhaps, we have blurred the distinction between helping visitors who come empty handed, and "helping" our own congregational members who plainly forgot to bring their Bible and/or Book of Praise.

### What are some of the results?

The results are that things are made very easy for us as congregational members. You can come to church without anything (oh, do bring some money!), for it is all provided and waiting for you, in the rack in front of you. It creates apathy, lazy Christians if you will. Does "lukewarm" and "Laodicea" ring a bell? I trust it does! You see, the Laodiceans thought they were rich, when in fact they were poor. Are we richer or poorer with these Bibles provided for us. That is an interesting question, deserving an answer.

The provision of Bibles for everyone diminishes the individual responsibility that each of us has before the Lord. It fits rather well in a world where many things are "instant," and where increasing gigabytes convey that it cannot come to us fast enough. But does it fit a Christian who prepares to meet with his/her God, in his house? Should we be at ease when we leave our personal Bibles at home and use whatever we find in the pew? And if we don't find what we expected to be there (!), well that probably means that we won't read along, or we won't sing! Slightly uncomfortable perhaps, but we'll get through it.

By providing Bibles and/or Books of Praise in the pews, we encourage congregational members to leave their books at home. If you regularly underline words or make notes in your personal Bible, that is now impossible, for you cannot make notes in a pew Bible. We also have to question the stewardship of church councils who spend large sums on Bibles and/or Books of Praise, when this responsibility ultimately rests with each Christian believer.

Is a (new) Bible too expensive nowadays? Isn't it amazing how cheap \$1,100 is for a modern laptop, and how

expensive \$110 seems to be to purchase five Bibles for a Christian family?

### What are we teaching our children?

By "taking our books from the pew" and not bringing our own personal Bibles and Books of Praise to church, we tell our children: "No need to bring your own books along." This is what we role-model to them, and I'd like all parents to consider this carefully. No need now to be upset or surprised, let alone complain, when you find out that some young people, perhaps including your own children, don't bring their Bible and/or Book of Praise to Bible Study or Catechism class. After all, they're doing exactly what we have taught them! This is a concern with *our* young people, and from the following bulletin quote we may deduce it is also a concern elsewhere. "Too many students leave their Bibles, Books of Praise or Catechism binders at home. Parents, please ensure that your children come to Catechism class fully prepared!"

### What then shall we do?

Where are we to look for guidance but in his word? God, through the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 6, speaks to us: "Put on the whole armor of God" and He teaches us to: "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." He wants us to be prepared at all times, and that includes when we go to church to worship. Part of today's preparation is to bring your personal Bible (his word to you!) and Book of Praise, and your monetary gift for Him.

It is such a blessing, to have his word in our own language. I am privileged to have met some of His children who were eagerly awaiting the moment when they could see and hold His word

in their own language. Can you imagine that? But now, here in Canada, where we have been so richly blessed, *do we still crave his word? Are we eager to possess our own copy of it?* Do we still show and pass on that eagerness to our children?

Psalm 78 says: "He decreed statutes for Jacob, and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands." "It's amazing that we don't blink when our kids

have their own telephone, TV, computer, etc. Have we forgotten what our first and foremost priority should be for ourselves and for our children?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 we learn that we are to "encourage one another and build each other up." Let us do this, by providing some Bibles and Books of Praise for our visitors, to be handed out by ushers, when necessary. Let us also encourage and exhort one another to come fully prepared to church, i.e. if you can read, you can usually carry your own Bible and Book of Praise! Let us be proud to carry our bible, and let us be faithful to instruct our children to also come prepared.

Do we now have all the answers? By no means. But my hope is that I have raised some questions. Questions on an issue that deserves our attention. Is it not wise to leave the responsibility of purchasing your own Bible and/or Book of Praise with each church member? Should we not encourage one another to do so? Or have we arrived at a new millennium, where taking a book from the pew is now fashionable, and seemingly approved by most? Let us look up to our heavenly Father for help and guidance, to be fully prepared! **C**

May I invite you to respond? It will be good to read what others have to say about this matter.

(All quotes from the NIV)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Re: Divorce and remarriage

I would like to take a moment to comment on Rev. Visscher's article in October 29th issue of *Clarion*. He continually speaks about divorce being permitted, but re-marriage is not. I feel that this interpretation is also incorrect.

We know, from Scripture, that marriage is instituted by God. It is not a physical union as much as a spiritual and emotional one. God has stated that when a man knows a woman, they are married. This does not just apply to the physical aspect, but also the emotional. Jesus defines marriage as a joining of two into one. "But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 16:6-9)

Upon further study of Scripture, we find that we are permitted to separate from our spouse until such time that they are reconciled to each other. "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:10,11) Scripture is very

clear here that divorce is not permitted under any circumstance. I recall from "marriage class" that our minister continually stressed that God hates divorce. (See Malachi 2:16). This is not an option when "times are tough." When we marry, we take a vow that we marry for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, in good times and bad. This vow is not only a promise to our respective spouses, but also to God. Therefore to divorce our spouse is to break our promise to God as well.

We acknowledge that we are sinful man, and that we cannot keep any commands, and as a result, we sometimes commit sin against God as well as our spouse. If we were to ask God for his forgiveness, though, He would graciously grant it. How much more should we, as mere men, forgive our fellow men? This is the basis for our not being allowed to divorce. We must teach FORGIVENESS before "abandonment." Running away does not solve the problem; talking and praying, especially prayer, can and will, with time.

In all that we do we must remember to turn to God for help. The only way to do that is to pray. Faith and prayer heals all wounds. It may take time, but it will happen.

*John Van Amerongen*

*Guelph, Ontario*

### Rev. G. H. Visscher responds –

The concerns of br Van Amerongen are certainly ones that I share, as do the Revs. Engelsma and Van Delden. As I stated in the book review, "in many situations the church needs to say unequivocally that divorce and/or remarriage is disobedience to God and His Word." Even in cases of adultery, the first responsibility of faithful officebearers is to encourage couples to be reconciled in the way of Christian forgiveness; this is truly God-pleasing for indeed "the Lord hates divorce." So in this regard, There is agreement all around.

If br. Van Amerongen wishes to maintain, however, that in this broken

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world, the Lord never allows for the possibility of divorce, I am afraid he is being stricter than God himself. What then do we do with the “exception clause” of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9? And while it is good to quote from 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, can one ignore what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:15? Also Brothers Engelma and Van Delden would agree that divorce, though not preferable, is a possibility in some instances; where they depart from the position generally held in Reformed circles is in their insistence that remarriage is never permitted.

I have no doubt that all our office-bearers teach “forgiveness before abandonment”; when both spouses choose to go down the way of faith, prayer, and forgiveness – that is truly the more excellent way in which the Lord rejoices!

**Re: book review of Rev. G.H. Visscher, *Clarion*, October 29, 1999.**

After having read the review I was left with some questions.

Although Rev. G.H. Visscher states that the author writes out of “godly concern about the declining morality and the need for the church to speak the Scriptural truth in such a world”, his further evaluation does not show this.

Examples: “VanDelden seeks then to strengthen his position...” “For one thing, the failure to study the background adequately...” “... there is a significant hermeneutical principle which is forgotten.” “While this is interesting, the problem is that there is a context here which is not adequately taken into account.” Then the final part of the review climaxes. A highlight: “Do Reformed pastors dare to suggest that this is sin when even men like John Calvin and many others after him have argued that it is not?”

I have quoted the above passages to show that Rev. Visscher is being harsh. The last statement quoted is very dangerous. If a Reformed pastor searches the Scriptures diligently and draws conclusions from these studies they had better be in line with what Calvin and others wrote, at least that is what Rev. Visscher tells us. Did not the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus’ days argue along similar lines? Did they search the Scripture in the light of what Jesus told them and test his Words on Scripture? No they rather went by the established

views. Is it not possible that the Reformers are fallible?

Rev. Visscher is inconsistent as well. Page 518 bottom left: “Regrettably, VanDelden does not supply the source for these remarks.” Yet a line or two further he writes “As one respected authority suggests...” and fails to make mention of his ‘authority’. Then in the middle right hand column of the same page “others would argue...” Craig S. Keener is then mentioned. It would perhaps be more correct based on the one name supplied, to say that Keener is of a different view from Engelsma and VanDelden on this point.

Besides, is this article truly a book review? It appears that Rev. Visscher takes it upon himself to defeat in two and a half pages the whole reasoning and argument of no less than two different authors in two different books. If the idea is to interact so much with the books it is my opinion that more space and attention ought to be given to the writings in question.

Willem Amoraal  
Armada  
Western Australia

**Rev. G. H. Visscher responds –**

Brother Amoraal is to be thanked for his response to my Book Review and for the concerns that he raises. It is unfortunate, however, that he draws all the conclusions that he does. I have tried on the one hand to be sympathetic to the intentions of the authors of the books mentioned, but at the same time critical regarding their views. The remainder of the first sentence that br. Amoraal quotes above in fact expressed my exact sentiments regarding the whole endeavour: “*who wants to be critical of such voices?*” But if we believe that views are being expounded in our midst that are not Scriptural and unjust with respect to the lives of some members of our communities, are we permitted to remain silent?

Despite what br. Amoraal writes above, my point is not that our views must agree with respected though fallible people such as the Reformers. In the review, the primary criticism of the views of the Revs. Engelsma and Van Delden was that, despite very honorable intentions, their views are not in accordance *with Scripture*, and that it was the neglect to study the background sufficiently and to apply other proper hermeneutical principles that led to these regrettable unscriptural positions. Ultimately, their failure to in-

terpret Scripture properly is the sole reason why these approaches must be rejected. In a subsequent point, it was argued that if in our pastoral work we intend to accuse someone of sin, we better be certain that God is the one calling it sin. It was in that context that I asked the question whether the fact that other trusted and respected men, such as John Calvin, came to different conclusions should not give us reason to hesitate and reconsider.

Contrary to what br. Amoraal suggests in a subsequent paragraph, the reference to the authority (S. Safrai) is given quite clearly in footnote 6. Footnote 14 contains the abbreviation “e.g.” (for example) which means that Craig S. Keener is one among many who take this view; I did not feel it was necessary to mention a whole string of commentators or lexical authorities who share this view.

While the review obviously was longer than most book reviews, apparently the editors shared with me the belief that it met the criteria for a book review as it reviewed and critically analyzed the contents of the books. Precisely because the two books are so similar in perspective, it was also appropriate to deal with them in one review. To give more space and attention to them was of course possible, but that would be more suitable for a scholarly journal than for a magazine like *Clarion*.

In short, I regret that a review like the one under discussion has to cause some disagreement and hard feelings. The fact is, however, that these voices bidding us off the path the Reformed churches have traveled so far on these points, are not convincing. I, like the authors of these books, will continue to oppose any who wrongly seek divorce, and continue to exhort all that forgiveness is the better path than the path of separation and divorce. I only wish that they, in line with so many Reformed voices in the past, would maintain that those who are divorced on biblical grounds are free to remarry. Any other position is too harsh with respect to such members of our congregations; towards them, I am convinced, o

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## Press Release of Regional Synod West of the Canadian Reformed Churches held in Taber, Alberta, on Tuesday, November 23, 1999.

On behalf of the convening church, the Church at Taber, the meeting was opened in the usual Christian manner by the Rev. T. Lodder. Thereafter, the credentials were examined and found to be in good order. The Synod was constituted and the following officers were elected: Rev. C. VanSpronsen as chairman, Rev. J. Visscher as vice-chairman and Rev. K. Jonker as clerk. The agenda was adopted.

Two overtures from Classis Pacific East and Classis Alta-Man. were declared admissible. Both call on General Synod to change Article 49 of the Church Order increasing the delegation that each Regional Synod sends to the General Synod from four ministers and four elders to six ministers and six elders. Regional Synod West decided

to support these overtures and passed them on to General Synod 2001.

Reports were received from the Deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. who informed Regional Synod that concurring advice could be given in the peremptory examinations of the brs. D. VandeBurgt, P. Holtvluwer, K. Wieske and T. VanRaalte. The Treasurer submitted his report and the Auditor's report indicated that the books were in good order. The Immanuel Church at Edmonton reported that the archives were also in good order.

It was decided to re-appoint br. H. Lubbers of Coaldale as Treasurer, the Church at Taber as Church for Auditing the Books of the Treasurer, the Church at Edmonton (Providence) as the Archive Church, and the Church at Edmonton (Immanuel) as Inspection of Archive Church. It was decided to appoint as Deputies ad Article 48 CO: for Classis Alta-Man – Rev. R. Aasman (alternates: E. Tiggelaar and W. Slomp, in that order); for Classis Pacific East – Rev.

R. Schouten (alternates: D. Moes and M. VanLuik, in that order); for Classis Pacific West – Rev. C. VanSpronsen (alternates: E. Kampen and J. Huijgen, in that order).

The Church at Willoughby Heights was appointed the convening church of the next Regional Synod to meet D.V. at 9:00 a.m. on Nov. 7, 2000, in Langley, B.C.

Question period was used by some. One delegate asked about the possibilities of using teleconferencing if the only matter at the next Regional Synod had to do with electing delegates to General Synod. This suggestion will be passed on to the convening church.

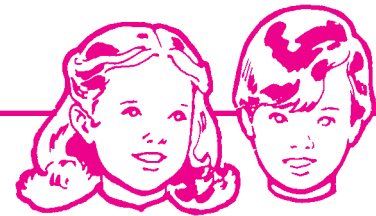
Censure ad. Art. 34 C.O. was deemed not to be necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

The Chairman, Rev. C. VanSpronsen, closed the meeting in the usual Christian manner.

For the Regional Synod,  
J. Visscher, vice-chairman 

## OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



### Dear Busy Beavers

What is your favourite food? I was cooking my supper today and I wondered what the Busy Beavers enjoy eating most. I know, most of you will say you love candy and icecream. But what about other food, food that is healthy for you? I love potatoes with other vegetables and meat, but I also love rice dishes and macaroni dishes. And I really love pancakes!

Are you allowed to cook supper sometimes? It really is a lot of fun, especially if you have lots of people to cook for. I guess as you get older, Mom will let you cook a meal from time to time. Then you can cook your favourite dish. Yummy!!

Love from Aunt Betty



### WINTER WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver Sophia Jansema

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