



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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In the Name of God Amen:

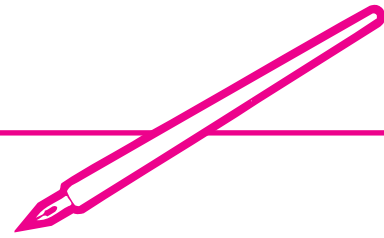
The twenty-eighth day of November 1827,
I, Thomas Hardy Sr., of Gabarouse,
County of Cape Breton and Province of
Nova Scotia, Yeoman, being of perfect
Mind and Memory, Thanks be unto God:
Therefore calling unto Him the Mortality
of my Body and knowing that it is
appointed unto all Men once to die, do
make and ordain this my Last Will and
Testament, That is to say, principally and

Last Will and Testament

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. De Jong



Telling readings . . . a state funeral

Telling readings . . . a state funeral

It was one of the more gripping events in the life of the nation in recent years, certainly one which drew the attention of the media around the world. The prime minister cut short a state visit to Guatemala in order to be with all Canadians in a time of national mourning. First, a lying in state of the former prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, then a journey of the casket accompanied by close friends and family members, and finally, the state funeral in the Notre Dame Cathedral in Montreal. Dignitaries arrived from around the world, spectators filled the streets. There was some anticipation as to what the funeral would be like. It was said: it would be solemn, simple, religious, and also personal.

It was the religious aspect that caught my attention. First, a solemn reading, in French, of a passage from 1 Corinthians 15 by Prime Minister Chrétien. It was the first time I have heard a Canadian Prime Minister reading Scripture. Whoever reads Scripture must know what he reads, must believe it, indeed, live it. I recalled a reading by the



Sacha Trudeau, Justin Trudeau and their mother Margaret view the casket of Canada's former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

British prime minister in a similar setting: Diana's funeral. Remarkable, this turn to the Word! Who cannot but hear?

The eulogy

Later in the service, a eulogy was spoken by the oldest son Justin. Here and there some pockets of exaggerated admiration, but on the whole: a remarkable address with fitting words. With an honourable ending: *je t' aime, papa*. For in the midst of the turmoil and upheaval that marked his political career, and in the midst of energy and passion with which he lived his life, one thing was clear: he wanted to be and remain a father to his sons. He had many excesses, bad principles, frivolous habits, wild pursuits. His marriage fell apart. His political career came to an abrupt end. But in all this he was a father to his sons. They often accompanied him on world trips, and could be seen pulling on his pant leg as the photographer was lining everybody up for the solemn picture. Justin himself mentioned his father's playing Santa Claus at Alert Bay. The *joie de vivre* of one who lived it to the fullest. He drank the cup!

But what seemed entirely strange was a reading by the second son taken from Daniel 4.

Sacha

But what seemed entirely strange was a reading by the second son taken from Daniel 4. He read as follows: "But leave stump and roots in the ground, bound with hoops of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, let him be drenched with dew of heaven, let him share the grass of the earth with all human kind." The presiding cleric also referred to the reading in his homily. Daniel? At a funeral? It was going to be religious but I was not expecting this.

It was obvious from the text of the reading and from what was said about it that this son was applying the words of the prophecy to his own father's burial, that in some way by leaving "stump and roots" in the ground, his father would continue to share the grass of the earth with all human kind. It all seemed to be a "new age" twist to an ancient text, even though it required the change of some words to give it the desired sense.

However, one look at the context in Daniel 4 tells us that here we have a prophecy not to be applied at whim to whomever we wish, but referring directly to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was punished by the Lord



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because of his arrogance and wilful neglect of God's law. He was punished by a severe mental illness, here described as being turned loose to live among the animals of the field. God did it in order to show Nebuchadnezzar that "all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride, he is able to humble" (Dan 4:37 NIV).

A Scripture reading at a funeral says something about the person who has died. And here, apparently unwittingly, the eulogy of the second son drew a comparison between Pierre Trudeau and Nebuchadnezzar. An odd comparison . . . or, should I say, a telling comparison. Here, again perhaps unwittingly, the one who often had been compared to a Roman Caesar in his political life, especially in the cartoons, is linked up with a Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in his death.

It was said by more than one, including the prime minister, that after the death of his youngest son, Trudeau was never the same.

What does it all say to one who is at the same time confronted with a barrage of media coverage concerning the eventful life of this unusually charismatic leader? You could see it all: the arrogant pout, the raised middle finger, the pirouette at the palace, beaming elation as he stood among the enthralled crowds, the gunslinger pose, the vigorous athlete, the happy just-married couple, a beautiful young mother with her three young boys . . . the outdoorsman, the debater, a man who *lived his land* . . .

Misha

I stopped at one of the pictures: the estranged couple leaving the church after the funeral service for their youngest son, Michel. A mother frantic and distraught, torn by grief, a huge crucifix swaying recklessly across her chest. A former prime minister . . . a broken man. All those pictures of smiles and fun-filled moments . . . was it all meant to end like this.

It was said by more than one, including the prime minister, that after the death of his youngest son, Trudeau was never the same. Margaret, too, gave indications that she could not be consoled. And it was all very understandable. For, seeing this photograph, who could not but recall the reports of Misha's death? For an agonizing quarter of an hour he called out from the middle of the lake for someone to come and save him, yelling at the top of his lungs into the cold and desolate wintery air . . .

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such a vast void of cold, empty space! What an echo! The reverberations would cut into the heart of even the coldest and dullest Canadian.

Hope!


We know there is one who leads the history of every life, even the lives of the great ones in our land, those who have the means to “make their own life.” The world speaks of chance or fate, but we know: God reigns. He has done it. Nebuchadnezzar learned about it! “He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’” (Dan 4:35).

It is not my intention to pass any judgment on the former prime minister. Reports had it that since the funeral of his son he had become more religious, intrigued by the Bible, especially the book of Job. Somewhat of a rebel¹ Roman Catholic in his youth, when the sunset dawned he asked for the last rites and died reconciled with his church.

Let me also be silent on his legacy. Generally at the funeral and in the period of mourning, most speakers observed well the ancient rule: do not speak ill of the dead. Obviously such a figure cannot escape the critical public evaluation and reflection upon his principles and policies. But there is no room for any of that here.

In this short space, my concern was with this religious component, the voice of the Scriptures at a funeral, the voice of God himself, God in his word, God and what He did. He has done it that kings may “bow down before him” (Ps 97:7). Trudeau, Caesar, Nebuchadnezzar – and then above them all the Lord of lords himself, the Christ, the Messiah.² *He reigns!* And with Him alone, and in the obedience to his will, there true comfort can be found.

¹See the editorial by Rev. R. Aasman in the issue of November 10, 2000.

²Next to a Bach chorale, a selection from Handel’s oratorio *Messiah* was the only more or less Protestant element in this otherwise thoroughly Roman Catholic requiem mass. 

What’s inside?

You have just opened the first issue of volume 50 of *Clarion*. Our magazine is almost fifty years old. Considering that the first Canadian Reformed Churches were instituted just over fifty years ago, we can see *Clarion* has “been there” nearly from the start of our federation. Of course, back then it was called *Canadian Reformed Magazine* and it was written all in Dutch. The first editor was Rev. W. Loopstra who laboured long and hard as a faithful servant of the Lord. *Clarion* is not the official magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches nor does it come under the authority or supervision of some church committee. It is an independent magazine. However, the editors and publishers are from our churches, and the press releases of ecclesiastical assemblies in our churches, the Theological College, our schools and various other organizations and study groups within the Canadian Reformed Churches are all published in *Clarion*. In other words, this magazine has served our churches well and it has a treasured place among our people. May the Lord continue to bless this magazine in the years to come and thus serve the members of our churches. Of course, there are also readers of *Clarion* from outside the Canadian Reformed Churches. May they also benefit by a magazine which serves to give all the praise and glory to our God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dr. J. De Jong’s editorial examines the funeral of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau from its religious aspect. Even at the funerals of powerful men and women, it must become clear that Christ alone is King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns. In Him alone we find comfort. Dr. De Jong also has a press review which deals with the matter of one’s Last Will and Testament. Also in this aspect of life, one can and should give praise to God.

Rev. Cl. Stam presents us with a very practical guide to family devotions. Every family should read this and take it to heart. Family devotions are essential to our spiritual well-being.

We have some regular columns in this issue of *Clarion*: Treasures New and Old, the Hiliter, Ray of Sunshine and Education Matters. We also have two press releases and another book review by Dr. N.H. Gootjes. Dr. Gootjes reviews a collection of sermons by John Calvin. Although we can no longer listen to Calvin actually preaching, we can read his sermons. There is great benefit in that.

RA

Family Devotions

By Cl. Stam

When we consider the topic of *family devotions* or even *personal devotions*, we need to make one thing clear from the start. These devotions may never replace the worship services which we attend every Sunday and whenever the consistory calls the congregation together for that purpose. We need the corporate experience of worship, the weekly preaching of the Gospel, and the communal prayers to form a basis for the family devotions.

The worship services are the prime source of blessing and encouragement. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10: 25).

There is probably a correlation here. Those who do not regularly and seriously attend the church of God, will not be inclined to engage in personal or family worship. The whole matter of worship, together or personally, will be far from their minds. The family devotions need to rest on and be built up from the corporate devotions.

What are devotions?

It is important for us to determine what is meant by the word *devotion*. Understanding this word properly sets the scene for what we must do. The root of this word is an old verb *to make a vow*. You see this still in the letters "vo." In our devotion, then, we commit ourselves again to the Lord and renew our vow of faithfulness to Him. There is an element of consecrating or hallowing oneself to the Lord. This is to be a very conscious re-commitment.

A devotion differs from a worship service in that it is done in the family circle, or alone, at home. A good dictionary defined it as private worship rather than the public gatherings of a congregation. This is a very necessary complementation of the worship services. What began in church, we con-

tinue at home. As we dedicated the entire week on Sunday to the Lord, so we dedicate each and every day to his service and personally pledge our commitment to Christ.

This commitment must be made every day again. Every day anew we must devote ourselves to the Lord. First we need to praise his Name, for it is great and wonderful. The Psalms, for example, tell that the Lord is to be praised and we must give Him the honour that is due to Him. We also draw near unto Him for forgiveness and strength. We need to confess our sins concretely, be cleansed and renewed, and receive the strength that is needed to continue as God's children, fighting the good fight of faith (Eph 6).

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Time and frequency

The Bible does not prescribe a certain time or frequency when and how often we must conduct our devotions. We know from Daniel that he was accustomed three times a day to get down on his knees to pray, giving thanks to God (Dan 6:10). In Psalm 119:164 we read, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws." In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, we find this admonition, "Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." The word "continually" here has the meaning of praying *regularly*. We cannot pray all the time, but prayer must be a constant and regular feature of our daily life.

As the apostle Paul in many places assures the churches that they are constantly in his prayers, so he also exhorts the members of the churches to "always keep on praying for the saints" (Gal 6:18). They must also pray for Paul and his fellow workers. Daily prayer played an important role in the lives of the saints.

It is safe to say that devotions need to take place on a daily basis, at regular times, and that in these devotions we consider not only our own needs but also intercede for Christ's church all over this world. This ministry of constant prayer is crucial for the spiritual well-being of the churches and their members.

Structure and spontaneity

Devotions do not need to be structured so that they are always done in a certain way and in a certain manner. It is good to strive for some variation. There are those who have memorized a certain prayer, and who will not or cannot deviate from the same form(at). I fully understand that for some who are not eloquent and cannot think fast, it is difficult to change the daily prayers. But we also need to grow in our prayers to touch on the things that are important from day to day. Our petitions need to be *specific*.

There must be structure, but within that structure there must also be spontaneity. As an introduction to a prayer, a father or whoever will speak the prayer, may ask if there are any special concerns or prayer requests. While at first there may be hesitation and even some discomfort about this approach, in due time the involvement of all in the prayer will increase and deepen.

The greatest hindrance to family or personal devotions is a *perceived lack of time*. I use the word "perceived," because I am convinced that we can make time. We make time for all kinds of other things which we consider important, but when it comes to devotion, it

is often said, "Hurry up, I have to do" Everyone must be committed to taking time for devotions, for it is the best time spent during any day.

Another hindrance to structured devotions is the inability to coordinate. Everyone leaves home at a different time, and therefore communal meals are becoming less frequent. Breakfast is often chaotic, lunch is fragmented, and even at supper not everyone is always online. The family must therefore designate a time that is always reserved for devotions. Whoever misses the family devotion must be committed to making a personal devotion covering the same material.

It may be next to impossible to have everyone in a busy family together present for devotions three times a day. Therefore, personal devotions must fill that void. And the family devotion must be set for one time per day, at least, when everyone pledges and tries to be at home. This time is best found after supper or in the early evening, before everyone has scattered.

The components of devotion

A devotion suggests that a certain pattern is followed. So we may speak of certain components which should be found in a devotion. These are as follows, also in the order presented: reading of Scripture, meditation, prayer, and singing. When this structure is followed, it is clear that a devotion must be carefully *prepared*. It is the lack of proper preparation which renders a devotion superficial and ineffective.

There is first the *reading* of a passage of Scripture. This is mostly done chapter by chapter, going through the whole Bible. It is not advisable to stick at all costs to the notion that one whole chapter must be read. Sometimes a chapter is too long or difficult for one sitting. Then it is better to divide this portion into smaller passages so that each unit can be carefully considered. This is especially important when there are little children present. If the children cause too much noise or are disruptive, as they tend to be during supper, it is best to close the meal with a brief reading and prayer, and then later to proceed with the longer devotion.

An element that is often lacking is the *meditation*. To meditate means to think about or to reflect upon something. In this case it is the passage read. One person will give some thoughts, and others may ask questions. It is important to ask: what does this passage

mean for us and require of us? A simple summary of the message of the passage may lead as an introduction to the prayer.

Everyone must be committed to taking time for devotions, for it is the best time spent during any day.

A devotion should include the singing of a psalm or hymn.

Prayer needs to be based on Scripture. When we properly meditate, we open ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word, and our prayer will take flight. We can begin with thanking the Lord for his Word and the riches granted us through and in that Word. Prayer must always be combined with thanksgiving, and we need to be directed in this by God himself through his Word. Meditation also helps us to discern what is needed most, so that we may prioritize our petitions properly.

A devotion should include the *singing* of a psalm or hymn. Singing is important because it allows everyone to participate *together*. There is not one person speaking, but all are vocalizing their gratitude and love. We may praise the Lord together with our song. Some families have the custom that each member picks a song. This also increases the involvement of everyone in the family.

We are blessed that we may have schools where our children are taught the contents of the Bible each year in a manner that grows with their understanding.

I know that all this is almost too much to ask. A devotion based on these four components is not generally followed anymore. We have little time to prepare the family devotions, and to study the passage that will be read. But failure to conduct proper devotions will lead to superficiality in faith and secularism in lifestyle. This may be one of

the greater problems which we must face in our churches today.

Devotionals

There is one matter left about which I have been asked to say a few words. Many find it difficult to conduct a meditation on their own, or by themselves. We easily feel incapable and insecure, afraid to say something wrong. Family members especially can be strong critics. In order to get more out of the devotions, devotionals are used, books written specifically for personal or family worship.

There are many kinds of devotionals. Some are written for a specific target group, like children, teens, singles, or the elderly. Others are more general and can be used personally or in the family setting. Some churches produce their own devotionals for the use of the members; that is, then a devotional written by ministers of the churches. I can mention as far as our own churches are concerned the books *Lasting Food* and *Mercies New Every Morning*. In our sister-churches in Australia, a devotional has been published titled *Every Day, Daily Readings with the Bible*. These devotionals differ from most in that they were not written by one person, but by many. The advantage is variation in selections and style; the disadvantage is that a clear line is lacking. Here and there the editing also leaves something to be desired.

Scriptural or anecdotal?

Some devotionals give a direct and clear explanation of Scripture passages. These are the ones which are to be preferred. Many devotionals are typical in this sense: they are thematic or topical, filled with anecdotes rather than exegesis. Anecdotes should not replace Scripture.

Of course, it is good to have fitting *examples*. Many well-known writers have also published devotionals with a crisp, compelling style, and the contents of their books are professionally edited and carefully compacted. These devotionals can be helpful, as long as they focus in on Scripture reading and not on storytelling.

Some devotionals are outrightly ingenious, such as Charles Stanley's *Enter His Gates*, a daily devotional based on the twelve gates of the city of Jerusalem. As each gate has a special meaning, so each month is cast in a certain mould which mirrors the meaning of that gate. We have to be careful

for exemplaristic works, which see everything as an example but neglect the crucial line of Scripture to Christ.

Sometimes older devotionals are edited and republished. James C. Schaap has adapted daily meditations written Abraham Kuyper, titled *Near Unto God*. These meditations are not always easy to understand. Daily readings from John Calvin on the Psalms have been published under the title *Hearts Aflame*. This book is typical of Calvin's powerful and pastoral style. A contemporary version of Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* still carries the evangelistic stamp of Methodism. The well-known book of Oswald Chambers, a student of Spurgeon, *My Utmost for His Highest*, largely follows the style of Spurgeon,

be it that some unique and deep insights are offered.


Devotionals which in my understanding are to be preferred are those which stick to a Bible passage and explain it with clarity, in simple but powerful terms. Among these I found to be very helpful *Be Still and Know* by Millie Stamm and *Drawing Near* by John F. MacArthur Jr. MacArthur also offers suggestion for prayer and refers to passages for further study, a feature which appealed to me because there is much improvement required in these areas.

Devotionals for children

Unfortunately I have not found a devotional for children which I considered to be of excellent quality. Some children's Bibles are worth using, but these are not in a strict sense a devo-

tional. These Bibles use an abundance of pictures, and not all of the illustrations are equally fitting.

Attempts to be simple are sometimes dangerous and can quickly become simplistic. It is not easy to get and keep children's attention during the family devotions. Sometimes it is best to summarize the Bible portion that was read, and have the children react to this personally by asking pointed questions. These questions should lead the focus to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are blessed that we may have schools where our children are taught the contents of the Bible each year in a manner that grows with their understanding. Living contact with Christian teachers who use good resource material should never be underestimated. 

Wisdom

(Proverbs 8:22-31)

Ere God had built the mountains,
Or rais'd the fruitful hills;
Before he fill'd the fountains
That feed the running rills;
In me, from everlasting,
The wonderful I AM
Found pleasures never wasting,
And Wisdom is my name.

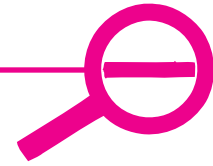
When, like a tent to dwell in,
He spread the skies abroad;
And swath'd about the swelling
Of ocean's mighty flood;
He wrought by weight and measure,
And I was with him then;
Myself the Father's pleasure,
And mine, the sons of men.

Thus wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and thy grace.
Thou everlasting lover
Of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye survey'd us
Ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom thou has made us,
And died for us in love.

And couldst thou be delighted
With creatures such as we!
Who when we saw thee, slighted
And nail'd thee to a tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine!
The Voice that speaks in thunder,
Says, "Sinner I am thine!"

Olney Hymn

By J. De Jong



Last Will and Testament

Writing in the *Covenanter Witness*, the official publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), Don Reed, vice-president of Institutional Planning at Sterling College in Sterling, Kansas asks the question: Whatever happened to the Christian will?

In a brief article he explains what he means:

Those of us in the Baby Boomer generation and older can recall hearing the term *Last Will and Testament*. These were the words identifying the legal document that carried a person's last words and directives to those left behind.

The *Last Will and Testament* was to do two things. First, the document helped people to will their worldly possessions to others, either people or organizations. Second, the document served to declare or "testify" to what they had learned from life and make final statements of importance to their loved ones.

The phrase *Last Will and Testament* is seldom heard or used anymore. With our American desire to shorten, abbreviate, and simplify as much as we can, and probably in part to reduce the cost of drafting the document, we have removed the testament portion of this final declaration and focussed on the willing of our possessions to others. Now we simply refer to this final document as our will, and the only time the phrase *Last Will and Testament* occurs is at the top of the document.

One of the great privileges in working in the area of estate planning for a college is the opportunity to read the *Last Will and Testament* of those who have named the college as a beneficiary in their final distribution of God's gifts to them. Reading a will is a learning experience.

Most wills today are concise. There is the standard opening paragraph stating that being of sound mind and memory the testator is now making the following directives for the distribution of property and hereby revoking and cancelling all former wills. This is followed by paragraphs and sections that state how the testator's possessions are to be distributed.

But if you were to read wills of some of our very elderly citizens who were raised with former generations as their example for their wills you will find quite a different document. I love reading these wills. They tell me so much about the person. They testify to the life and beliefs of the person. They share the testator's lessons learned in life and sometimes their challenge to those to whom they are passing on God's gifts. They gave me a much greater appreciation for the gift bestowed on my organization.

Some of the best examples can be found in final documents nearly two centuries ago. Consider the opening paragraph of the will of one Peter Cottrell in 1803. "In the name of God, Amen. I, Peter Cottrell of Prince William County Vir-

ginia being sick and weak in body, of sound and disposing mind and memory, knowing that it is appointed for all men to die, do make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament, commending my soul into the hands of Almighty God, hoping alone for Salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ and my body to the dust to be buried in decent Christian burial at the discretion of my Executors. As to such Worldly Estate as it hath pleased God to bless me with I dispose thereof as follows . . ."

What a testimony for loved ones to read. And what a time to make our testimony – at our last opportunity!

Christians today should consider this opportunity to witness to their faith through their will. We should think in terms of spiritual wills as well as legal documents.

One attorney, Tim Minors, a member of First Presbyterian Church in LaGrange, Ga. writes . . . that "Christian wills could also include a personal statement of faith, expressions of love, forgiveness and encouragement to family members; and instructions about donating assets to the church. A will does not have to be a cold

Example:

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT


IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN: The twenty-eighth day of November 1827, I, Thomas Hardy Sr., of Gabarouse, County of Cape Breton and Province of Nova Scotia, Yeoman, being of perfect Mind and Memory, Thanks be unto God: Therefore calling unto Him the Mortality of my Body and knowing that it is appointed unto all Men once to die, do make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament, That is to say, principally and first of all, I give and recommend my Soul in to the Hands of Almighty God that gave it and my Body I recommend to the Earth to be buried, in decent Christian burial, at the discretion of my Executors, not doubting but at the General Resurrection I shall receive the same again by the Almighty Power of God. And as touching such Worldly Estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me in this Life I give, devise and dispose of the same in the following manner and form.

worldly legal document that reflects nothing of the personality of the person who signed it. It can be a source of comfort and encouragement to grieving family members.”

Remember a will is a public document. Wouldn't it be a special legacy to leave a Christian will that is forever filed as our testimony to the goodness and mercy of God in our lives? Who knows, someday in the future one of our relatives may locate our will at the courthouse

and may read how God led us in the lives of faith.

It is important that we as Christians do not let the world lead us down another path of worldly materialism in regards to our final opportunity to testify and act for the Lord. We need to consider making our wills more spiritual and give deeper consideration to leaving our possessions not solely to our children, but also to places in God's kingdom where the gospel can move forward.

Our *Last Will and Testament* is, in a way, our final opportunity to witness to the world and our loved ones before we stand before the Lord God for judgment of our stewardship with what He gave us while we were in dominion over his earth. This is good food for thought on what for many is a sensitive and private matter. We should also reflect carefully on those matters which we do not easily bring up for discussion, so that here, too, we leave a Christian witness in the world. 

TREASURES, NEW AND OLD

MATTHEW 13:52

By Douglas W. Vandeburgt

A love letter

“I have loved you,” says the LORD. Malachi 1:2

I admit that I have written very few love letters. If I would write one today, I suppose it would begin by addressing the one I love, and then continue by writing to her about why it is I love her so. I would conclude the letter with the words *I love you* under which I would sign my name.

The LORD's love letter to his people Israel through his servant Malachi is somewhat different from what I have outlined. It begins in a standard enough way. The one addressed is mentioned in chapter 1:1 “The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.” Then, rather than giving Israel the reasons why He loves her and ending with the words, “I love you” the LORD instead begins with those words: “I have loved you,” says the LORD. The Hebrew tense of this verb also allows for an English translation which makes clear that this love is not just a thing of the past, but continues even into the present: “I love you.”


Why does the LORD write his love letter this way? The truth of the matter is that there is not much, if anything, about Israel that makes her lovable. When one reads through the book of Malachi one cannot help but be struck by all the things that make Israel so unattractive. She is a faithless friend of God. Her worship is unacceptable. Her marriages are ungodly and only made worse by her sin of divorce. She accuses her God of injustice, and her tithes are not faithfully brought. In-

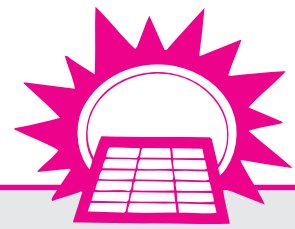
deed, who would even bother to write a love letter to this people called Israel?

The answer is that the LORD would and does bother. He sends his servant Malachi to a people completely faithless within the covenant relationship, and the very first words out of his mouth are, “I love you.” In confronting Israel's sin the LORD does not have his servant Malachi begin by pounding the pulpit but by touching their hearts which have grown so cold to his love. This is worthy of imitation by God's people today. The apostle Paul teaches, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1-2).

What draws forth these words of love? So often, if not always, words of love within human relationships are drawn forth by the person to whom they are spoken. For a young man or woman, the words “love you” express an attraction to the opposite sex, an attraction grounded in some outward or inward beauty. However, when God says to Israel that He loves her, then it is not grounded in her inward or outward beauty. She is at that moment not attractive. When you go back to the moment the LORD first set his love on Israel, she was not attractive. In fact, according to Ezekiel 16, she was downright ugly. Yet, the LORD chose to love

her because He is love (1 John 4:16). This truth remains when one looks at the people of God today. By nature, each person is downright ugly due to a common share in the sin of Adam and Eve. The apostle Paul is even more accurate when he describes the human condition as being dead in sin (Eph 2:1). Nevertheless today God comes to his people and says, “I love you.”

Why? The verses 2-3 of Malachi 1 begin to answer that question: “Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” the LORD says. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.” Here God underlines that his love for his people comes from Him and not from them. The patriarch Jacob was loved by God, but his twin brother was hated. Why? The apostle Paul's answer is that this is not a result of something either brother had done, but even before they were born God had set his love on the one and not on the other (Rom 9:10ff). God's love is unconditional since it is based not on what you do but upon what He from eternity has chosen. He has chosen from eternity to love a people for himself in Jesus Christ and to bind himself to that people in covenant love. Even in the midst of sins and shortcomings in your life He comes to you and touches your heart with these words, “I have loved you,” says the LORD. What a love letter! What a Lord! 



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. Psalm 139:9

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

A new year

We have approached another year in the Lord. Another year to serve and praise Him. In this year many of us continue on with our busy schedules and routines. We all have many things to do. Usually a day does not seem to have enough hours to complete our many obligations. In the church we continue to be busy with committees and such. Belonging to the church of Christ is indeed beautiful. Here we all share each other's joys and also the burdens which we may have to carry.

For some of us, to start a new year is not easy. When you live by yourself and have a difficult time getting out, it is easy to become lonely. The Lord also knows the loneliness that some of us have each day. He gives us great comfort from His Word, and when we turn to Him in prayer. He promises to be near in Psalm 145: 18. Before we were even born, our Creator who made us was very near to us. He did not leave us for a moment. All the days of our life, even before we were born, were written in the Book of Life. How comforting to know He will never let us go or forget about us.

The Lord is near

It is so easy when we are lonely to think that nobody cares for us. One day leads to the next with the same lonely feelings. Even when we are fighting our loneliness He promises to help. When we turn to Him in prayer and ask Him to help us, we can be thankful that He hears every prayer. He knows our thoughts even before we pray to Him. "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD" (Ps 139:4). And in Psalm 139:1 we read, "O LORD you have searched me and you know me." Our faithful Father gives us such beautiful and comforting words to live with and apply to our own personal lives. It is too wonderful for us to fully appreciate it. We know one thing: He will never leave those who love and put their trust in Him.

A time to glorify God

When we are all by ourselves each day it can become difficult to see the purpose of being alone each day. We do know that our purpose in life is to praise and glorify our Father. During this time in our life God gives us many precious moments to reflect or think back on what the Lord has done for us. He has given everything we need to make us strong to serve Him. He provided for our physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and much, much more. Most importantly, He provided for us so that we can serve Him. He has given us His Word to study as well as His Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts. Every day we may also pray to Him and ask Him to help us in whatever situation we may be in. We will always have our heavenly Father who will never leave us. He was there before we were even born and continues to take care of us for each day that we live on this earth until we go to be with Him.

There we will live with Him and all loneliness will be gone forever. Each day while we live on this earth He holds out His hands to us and says, "Follow me for I have promised never to leave you."

Remember Christ

To know real loneliness we have to remember Christ's death on the cross. He was completely forsaken, not only by people, but also by His Father. We will never be able to feel the real loneliness that Christ had on the cross. He suffered so we could have eternal life.

Remember that this life is only for a short while. We might be lonely but we are never without hope. Our comfort in life and death is that we belong with body and soul to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Even in our most difficult days, He promises to be near at all times. What a joy and comfort to belong to such a loving Father!

*My faithful Savior 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 late January

- 17: HENRY DRIEGEN** will turn 45
19-31450 Spur Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3
- 17: GRACE HOMAN** will also turn 45
C/O Anchor Home
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 19: JANINE SMID** will be 31
510 2nd Street, RR 7, Strathroy, ON N7T 3H8
- 27: HANK ORSEL** will turn 70
Apt 10, 2424 Woodward, Burlington, ON L7R 4E3
- 30: TYLER HOEKSEMA** will be 12
6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

Birthdays in February

- 12: CONNY VAN AMERONGEN** will turn 36
35 Bredin Pky. 102, Orangeville, ON L9X 3X1
Phone #: 519-941-6195
E-mail: connie_evl@hotmail.com
- 18: CORA SCHOONHOVEN** will be 50
24 James Speight, Markham, ON L3P 3G4

These are all the birthdays that we have for the next month and a half. We hope you all have an enjoyable day, and may God continue to bless you with health and happiness in this new year. Till next month,

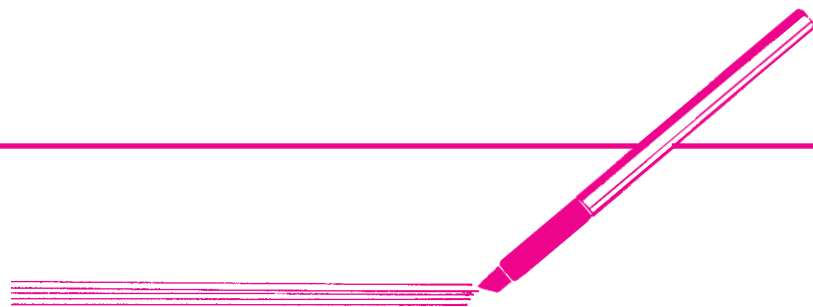
Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman

Mailing correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
1-905-563-0380

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By J. de Gelder



We have another collection of gleanings from the local bulletins. This time we start in Ontario.

Kerwood

The consistory decided to hand out to the congregation a preliminary budget of expenses in December to allow the congregation to give input before the budget is finalized at the beginning of the following year. Not a bad idea. Too often you can hear about the congregational meetings that deal with the budget: "What is the sense of being there. You can ask questions, but it's a done deal anyway." This approach may spark some more interest and involvement.

London

I have the impression that in recent years, several congregations have made some changes in their voting procedures. It used to be that all the votes were counted and read out in the public meeting of council with the congregation. In the London bulletin, *The Pilgrim's Voice*, I found the following:

Council decided at its last meeting to have the votes counted in private. The reasons for this change are threefold. Firstly, public knowledge of the amount of votes each nominee receives is not necessary, seeing that all those nominated by council are deemed fit to serve in office. Secondly, private counting takes away any opportunity for the vote to be perceived as a popularity contest. And thirdly, many churches in the federation have resorted to this procedure and have experienced positive feedback . . . The number of votes each nominee receives will be confidential. Nothing but the names of the newly elected brothers will be announced to the congregation.

Toronto

The position of the few house congregations in our federation is not always easy, also for the councils that have the responsibility for these brothers and sisters. This is especially true if there does not appear to be much growth. The council in Toronto discussed the Trenton situation:

A decision was made to continue the present arrangement for another year. At the same time we heard about a few contacts and the prospect of some new members. We wish the brothers and sisters of the house congregation the continued blessings of the Lord, and the vigilance and dedication to pursue their objective of church planting in this area.

Would it not be wonderful to see more growth in these places? By the way, I didn't hear lately about the group in Saskatchewan.

Orangeville

Sometimes we receive unexpected chances to spread the Word. Rev. R. Pot tells us the following:

I did have the opportunity to deliver a sermon in the middle of the week. In connection with a project being done by a religion class at a local Roman Catholic High School, I was invited to present a sermon to the class. Needless to say, a Reformed preacher does not quickly pass up an opportunity to preach the gospel in a Roman Catholic school. You'll not be surprised that I selected a passage from Romans dealing with justification through Christ by faith alone. It is amazing how many people in our society and even in other churches have never heard the pure preaching of the gospel, and when the Lord gives

us opportunities, we can certainly make use of them.

The pastor of the Orangeville church gives also some other food for thought when he reflects on an emergency surgery for acute appendicitis of a member of his flock:

My medical encyclopedia tells me that an appendix is a body part that has no known function. Certainly the Lord has a purpose for it, however, if only to remind us of our dependency on Him for health and strength in the course of an appendectomy.

I never thought of it this way, but it's so true!

Carman East

We go west and read an interesting piece in the Manitoba bulletin, written by the Rev. J. Moesker for Carman East:

Note that instead of a pre-confession course, the Consistory has decided to begin with what we call a preparation course for students 18 and over this year. The aim is that profession of faith may be requested at any time during the course of the year. Instead of a group of students finishing a pre-confession course together, this class can be attended for as long as students need to prepare for profession of their faith. The course will be different every year and will include some review of confessions, church history, church life and the study of a book of the Bible.

A refreshing look at the process that leads up to the public profession of faith, taking into account that the decision to profess your faith is not a group decision, but a personal decision. Sometimes you get a question from a student: "is it necessary to profess your faith in May? Why not in August, or in November, or in January?" The answer

is always that at any time of the year you can ask the consistory to be examined for profession of faith. But in practice you won't see it a lot. The thinking appears to be: "No one else does it, so I am not going to do it all by myself either." And even in Carman East it may take some time for the young people to get used to this idea. But it is definitely worth trying.

When I come to think of it, there is another benefit here. You prevent that in May and June you have these huge crowds traveling around every Sunday. They leave many churches in the area with only seventy-five percent of their regular attendance, while the church that has profession of faith that particular service is faced with so many worshippers that it is sometimes impossible to fit them all in the building.

Yarrow

Good news from the Fraser Valley. Rev. C. VanderVelde wrote in his congregational news:

We're off! After much dedicated planning by the Building Committee, and after yet another positive signal from the congregation, Council could give the official go-ahead for the construction of our church building. After more than seven years without a church building, it is nice to know that we will soon have our own facilities.

By now the building will be well on its way. We share in the joy of the brothers and sisters in Yarrow with this encouraging development.

Aldergrove

The celebration of the Lord's Supper continues to generate discussions, and sometimes consistories develop interesting procedures. In the Aldergrove church news I read this:

I would like to remind all Aldergrove congregational members that if they know of guests who will be visiting that afternoon and who would like to celebrate with us, that they bring this to the attention of their district elder this week. Likewise for members of other congregations in the valley: if you know that you will be in Aldergrove that Sunday afternoon and you wish to celebrate with us, please phone the minister and arrangements can be made ahead of time.

Here is a good way to get the elders actively involved in fencing the Lord's table in admitting guests to the celebration.

Surrey

Another example is the statement made by the consistory of the Maranatha church in Surrey:

The availability of individual cups is not intended as a transition to exclusive use of individual cups; individual cups are made available to those who desire them.

The problem is, are there any restrictions, or conditions as to why brothers or sisters would desire individual cups? What I mean is this: if it becomes a matter of simple preference, you may end up with half the congregation using individual cups, for a variety of reasons, and the other half sharing the common cup. Would that make for an orderly celebration?

Willoughby Heights

An interesting declaration was made by the consistory of the Church at Willoughby Heights:

Upon further discussion regarding the matter of the Biblical understanding of creation the consistory concludes agreement with the view that Scripture is clear about creation having taken place in six days of evening and morning. An overture will be sent to the next Synod with a request to mandate committees discussing unity with other federations to confirm their agreement with this understanding.

If I understand it well, then the consistory concludes in the first part agreement with Scripture. Since this is already clearly stated in our confessions, we wouldn't expect anything else from a Reformed consistory, of course. Nevertheless – it can be appreciated.

The second part seems to me a bit more complex. First I thought that in their discussions with other federations the unity committees (do we have more than one?) were supposed to confirm Willoughby Heights' agreement with Scripture. But that doesn't make a lot of sense. Now, this quote is from a short report of a consistory meeting, so I assume that this is just a summary of the overture. But the question remains: what do the brothers want next Synod to do? And is there actually a need to do something here?

Is the Scriptural doctrine of creation so heavily attacked in our churches, that our confessions are not sufficient anymore, and that it is necessary to issue special doctrinal statements about it? I would question the wisdom of such an action in a situation in which (to my knowledge) no one among us really questions the historical reality of what Scripture teaches about the creation.

Rockingham

We make a quick visit to our brothers and sisters down under. The Church at Rockingham is struggling with a problem that many, if not all, churches are confronted with: what is the best way to deal with wayward baptized members? They asked their Synod 2000 for advice:

This advice included that the congregation should also be encouraged to work with these members and that if no fruit was evident, consistory could consider such members as having withdrawn themselves from the church.

Especially the last part leaves me with the question: what about discipline? I don't have the complete Synod advice in front of me, but I have always had a hard time with the option to consider a member as having withdrawn him or herself from the church, just by their actions.

Armada

In Armada the consistory discussed some liturgical matters. I'd like to highlight one element:

After discussion it is decided not to adopt standing during singing after Baptism and Apostles' Creed.

When we sing the national anthem we all rise spontaneously (at least here in Canada!) Why? I guess we feel that it is appropriate to show honour and respect to our country. Well, if that is true and good, it is beyond me that we would not rise when we profess together our faith in the Triune God.

I will leave you with this beautiful one liner that I found in one of the Australian bulletins:

By the way, if you are looking for or want to join the perfect church or a church with no problems . . . DON'T, you will ruin it!

Till the next time.





Board members visits: are they necessary?

By A. Kingma

Board members visiting

If you are a teacher unfamiliar to the Canadian Reformed School system, you would be rather puzzled when board members (board members may include education committee members) come to visit your school. They usually visit in groups of two, sitting in the backs of classrooms, chatting with the teacher at the end of the lesson, and joining the staff in the staff room for coffee if there is time. Another Reformed tradition, you might say, and wrong you are. It is not really a Reformed tradition; rather, it was a very standard tradition before public school systems of superintendents and before evaluation teams came to being. But instead of discussing how school visits came to be, discussing the value of the school visit is more interesting. Do board members know why they are visiting? Do teachers know why they are visiting? Are these visits necessary?

Newer board members are usually nervous the first time they visit the school. They often have not been well prepared to know what to look for either. What must they really observe? Should they focus on noise levels, students' attitudes or teachers' ability to teach? The beginning teacher (and maybe even the not-so-beginning teacher) is also nervous. What will the visitors look for? Will they evaluate my performance? Should I see this visit as a teacher visit rather than a school visit? Some school societies have prepared checklists for the board members. The check list provides security for the visitors, not only in looking for details that are supposed to be important, but also in providing details for reporting back to the board. With a checklist in hand, board members no longer need to feel nervous. And if the school has the policy of sharing this list with teachers (a copy in the teachers' handbooks), then the teachers can re-

ally be prepared also. Nervousness therefore can be reduced, and the school visit can become a more objective and concrete experience.

Newer board members are usually nervous the first time they visit the school.

First visit by board members

An "old-time" teacher recently shared that she was very nervous about her first school visit by the board (way back in 1972). Two older gentlemen came to the school, spent the whole day in the school, moving from one classroom to the other. When they came to her room, they sat in the back for only a very little while, walked about and started chatting with their grandchildren, then left. She did not receive any oral communication except for "Looks good." Of course the comment was positive, but it left a nagging question, "What looks good?" Perhaps those board members felt that there was good rapport, good Reformed teaching and thus a good atmosphere. Perhaps they judged on the basis of an intuitive sense that things were going right in the classroom. And perhaps that's all a school visit is and should be.

Board members must be interested in and knowledgeable of the school. They have the delegated task to ensure that our schools do remain Reformed.

Necessity of these visits

A document that circulated throughout our schools in 1992 suggested that school visits are still a necessity, but have their limitations. They are not teacher visits. They are and should remain exactly what they should be: school visits.

The author, Drs. van den Berg, outlined that a school visit should perform two main functions: to examine the fundamental/philosophical aspects of the school, and to show concern for personal or individual matters of the school (*Zin en Onzin van het Schoolbezoek*, Drs. van den Berg, Kampen, 1988; translated by R. Koet, 1992). Van den Berg does not outline these two tasks well, but I venture to interpret the first task to be that of observing whether the teaching and atmosphere are visibly Reformed. For example, are knowledge and faith interwoven in teaching and discipline? The second aspect deals more with keeping up the relations between board and staff – showing personal interest in the school's activities. By stating this, I think that van den Berg likes to cover that whole aspect of personal contact which board members should have: listening and sharing with teachers and students, observing good communication and proper atmosphere in the halls, classrooms, and perhaps even the staff room.

What should it not be?

So if that is what the school visit should be, what should it not be? When a school visit becomes a teacher visit, or a subject-content visit, then the visit changes character and is no longer a school visit. Visiting a teacher usually has a different intent. One is trying to analyze methods of class management; the correct method of instruction given to the age-level students; or one is trying to decide whether the method followed (either the textbook/activity book method or the teacher's self-made units materials) is the best for the children. Or perhaps one is trying to see whether all students' needs are being addressed by the teacher. These areas, van den Berg says, are really the areas the principal oversees, or the areas an external evaluator should review.¹ At the least, these areas should receive the board's attention in different ways, not in the school visit.

I wish to add a third reason for the board's visit. Being representatives of the parents, board members must be

interested in and knowledgeable of the school. They have the delegated task to ensure that our schools do remain Reformed. They, therefore, do need to inspect and evaluate the school. Can this task be done in a school visit? Certainly. Twice a year, generally speaking, board members visit, and they do get a good sense of what is going on inside and outside the classroom. If they cannot say, like those two old-time visitors, "Looks good," then they need to schedule follow-up visits with the principal, and maybe also the staff (member) to help solve the "problem."

Clear objectives

Doing a school visit is not an easy task for board members. Having clear well-versed objectives in mind will make the task easier. Discussing the purpose and the procedure together with staff and board would be very productive. It would build trust and understanding too. For the board to do its work knowledgeably, we must continue the practice of school visits. Sure, the school visit is only one method, and perhaps a limited one, but it is one method which can help board members say thankfully, "Looks good."

¹See OACS Education Committee Manual, Part III. This section also suggests that teacher evaluation is mainly a principal's task. p. 23, 24.

Peregrine school survey

By K. Sikkema

Credo Christian Elementary School in Langley recognizes the importance of the unity of home, school and church; however, sometimes there are situations in which not the parents, but the grandparents desire to send a child to the Christian school. Credo has been revising its admittance policy to now allow for this possibility with a proposed replacement article borrowed from Chatham's constitution and by-laws. The proposal was defeated.

Tyndale Christian School in Calgary reports a new government program which promises an additional \$67 per student for three years for just about any conceivable board plan to improve learning. The program is under the care of Mr. Gary Duthler, the executive director of the Federation of Independent Schools in Canada (FISC). FISC has "submitted a brief, calling for a change to the

Income Tax Act which would allow parents to deduct independent school tuition from their income for tax purposes . . . FISC has noted that Stockwell Day has made this solution part of his commitment, and that this position is consistent with his long standing record of support for parental choice in education."

After several years with just one teacher, Owen Sound Canadian Reformed School is a lively entity enjoying many blessings with continued growth in enrolment, a host of volunteers who each generously contribute of their particular talents to the communal effort, and two full-time staff members.

Guido de Brès Christian High School cautiously announces its joy over \$11 million the Ontario government's health department is making available to certain special needs students in faith-based schools. Qualifying students will be placed on the Community Care Access Centres' waiting lists to receive these services: "This development opens the doors for many children with special needs who might otherwise not have been able to attend Christian school."

This fall, Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College offered a very well attended three-evening minicourse on Curriculum Modification with Sharon Hofsink. The course provided guidelines, suggestions, and practice in modifying content-area material of local curriculum to meet the needs of special students. The College also experiences a healthy enrolment development, with seven students in year one of its three-year program, and four students in its one-year program. May all students enjoy a good preparation for the divine calling of teaching God's children.



CALLED by the church of Albany, Western Australia:

Rev. W. Wielenga

of Lynden, Washington, USA.

CARE (Curriculum Assistance to Reformed Education), a committee of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies, is supervising Miss Judy Kingma's development of a grade 1-4 Church History curriculum based on CARE's previously established Reformed perspective. She is sponsored for one year by a private donor, and visits the schools in Ontario to promote and field-test the work-in-progress.

The Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association-East held its annual two-day convention in Fergus' Maranatha/Emmanuel School. The organizers provided four rounds of five workshops each. Dr. Riemer Faber's keynote contribution, contrasting Luther's and Erasmus' views of education, was an excellent historical springboard for examining the foundations of our Christian schools today. Also of note, the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies has contributed financially to a CRTA-East convention for the first time this year.

This column is supported by the CRTA-East. Reader responses or articles are encouraged, and can be sent to abkingma@kwic.com or directly to the managing editor of Clarion.

New Year's Greetings from:

Calgary

MARCEL and ELAINE JACOBI, *Kelsey and Jasmine*
BILL and ELAINE VAN OOSTERHOUT, *Jason, Nathan*

Langley

RALPH and GRACE VISSCHER
JAMES and MICHELLE VANDEBURGT, *Noah*

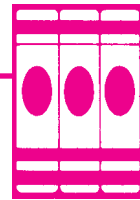
Rockway

APPIE and EM BREUKELMAN, *Melissa, Tim, Shane,*
Tyler, Leanne, Daniel, Kenneth

Smithers

RON and DIANE KLEEFMAN, *Katrine and Janelle*





Sermons by John Calvin

reviewed by N.H. Gootjes

John Calvin, The Deity of Christ and Other Sermons. Translated by Leroy Nixon; Foreword by Richard C. Gamble. Audubon, N.J.: Old Paths Publications, 1997. Hardcover, 302 pages.

A collection of sermons preached by John Calvin in Geneva was recently republished. The title on the dustcover and on the spine is misleading: *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*. Actually, there is only one sermon dealing with the deity of Christ; other sermons explain the meaning of his birth, his suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension, his pouring out of the Holy Spirit and his return. In all, there are twenty sermons.

All these sermons date from his years in Geneva. Calvin did preach in Paris and in Strasbourg, but none of these sermons have been preserved. The sermons brought together in this book follow the church year from Christmas to Pentecost. But it is well known that Calvin himself did not keep it in his own preaching. Actually, he was not much in favour of it: he rather preached through a whole book of the Bible in successive sermons. It seems he preached only once a special sermon on Christmas.

Around the same time I received this collection of sermons for review, my uncle gave me, from his own collection, an older book on the preaching of Calvin, written by P. Biesterveld. Here, I found interesting information about Calvin's sermons. Calvin used to improvise his sermons. This does not mean that he did not prepare himself. He studied the text and read some commentaries. He must even have made outlines, for in a footnote on p. 114 of *The Deity of Christ*, Calvin's outline for the sermon is mentioned. This sermon proves that Calvin, speaking freely on the basis of his outline, sometimes went beyond the outline.

The reason why Calvin's sermons have been preserved is that someone was appointed to write down the sermons. It was apparently not hard to capture the whole sermon, for Calvin was asthmatic and spoke slowly. The person who wrote the sermons was paid by the deacons to provide a neat copy. The sermons were then printed and sold; the profit was for the needy. We can therefore be confident that the written sermons are to all intents and purposes Calvin's work, although he did not even look them over before publication.

Calvin used to improvise his sermons.

The sermons collected in *The Deity of Christ* come from different occasions. Some have been preached on a Sunday (see pages 66, 269), others were given during weekday services (see page 150).

Today, we cannot go to Geneva to listen to Calvin preaching. But people who would like to hear Calvin preach, can read these sermons.

One states clearly that the Lord's Supper will be celebrated next week, and calls the hearers to participate and to observe the benefits of the Holy Supper (page 65). The sermon on Christ's birth (see pages 48 and 49) includes a clear reference to the Lord's Supper, and was probably also used as a preparation sermon. Calvin did not chose particular texts for these sermons, it seems.

The sermons are rather lengthy. I read aloud for myself one of the shorter

ones; it took me just over forty minutes. In a church building without a sound system, delivering it may have taken close to an hour. The sermons are not hard to understand. The explanation is in simple language and they address the hearers rather directly. They are different in style from our sermons. To give an example, when Calvin deals with Jesus Christ's returning to his disciples and finding them asleep, he does not tell the story of how this was a painful experience for the Lord. He simply ignores that. Instead he gives a general encouragement on prayer: we should not grow faint if we are not heard as soon as we would wish (page 67). In general, Calvin does not follow our custom of beginning the sermon with an introduction to draw the attention of the listeners; he begins preaching with the understanding that he is preaching about very important issues which deserve the interest of his hearers. To give an example from his sermon on Acts 1:1-4:

Let us note, then, that when the Gospel is announced to us, it is in order that we may leave this world; namely, all the wicked affections that we have in us, and all the vanities which hold us here below. We must be entirely changed and God must give us a new life. This is how we ought to profit by the Gospel that it may be truly the Kingdom of God, and that it may have such authority over us as belongs to it (page 203).

Calvin's explanation is direct and to the point.

There are places where we would explain the text differently from Calvin. In his explanation of Matthew 26:41, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," Calvin works from a different translation: "The Spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak." He explains:

That is, since we feel in us some good will, and God has already set us on the way, and has extended to us His hand, may we experience that He really governs us by His Holy Spirit. Although, then, we may have all of that, yet we must not be slow to pray. And why not? Let us consider whether there is in us only the Spirit. Surely we shall find many infirmities remaining. (page 71)

Taking the word “spirit” in the sense of the Holy Spirit, Calvin comes with a completely different explanation of this well known text.

The translator has spent much effort on the translation, as the explanatory footnotes show. One can differ on certain choices. When the translator speaks of the Son of God as “His counsel and His virtue” (page 18), I would prefer to replace the misleading word “virtue” with “power.” And the expression, “bru-

tal stupidity” (page 56) no doubt refers to brutes in the sense of animals. Overall, however, it is a very readable translation.

A bonus is the brief foreword by Dr. Richard C. Gamble, written particularly for this edition. He gives an introduction to these sermons, pointing out some characteristics of Calvin’s preaching. Today, we cannot go to Geneva to listen to Calvin preaching. But people who would like to hear Calvin preach, can read these sermons. C

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Pacific East of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches held on November 30th, 2000 in Abbotsford, B.C.

1. Opening on behalf of the convening Church at Abbotsford.

The chairman of the convening church of Abbotsford, Rev. R.A. Schouten, opened the meeting by requesting the delegates to sing Hymn 14:1, 2, reading Luke 2:39-56 and prayer. In his opening remarks Rev. Schouten remembered the recent national elections in the USA and Canada and that we may continue to practise our faith in freedom. Secondly, he noted that the Church of Chilliwack could complete its renovations. Further, two new mission activities have begun in our region, namely the Urban Mission Project under Rev. Frank Dong and the Native Mission in Fort Babine under Rev. Wes Breidenhof.

2. Report on the examination of the credentials by the delegates of Yarrow.

The credential were examined and all *primi* delegates were present with proper credentials.

3. Constitution of Classis.

Classis was then declared constituted.

4. Appointment of officers:

The following brothers assumed their positions as recommended by the previous Classis: Chairman:

Rev. M.H. VanLuik; Vice-chairman: Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer; Clerk: Rev. R. A. Schouten

5. Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted after several modifications.

6. Correspondence received.

- a. Appeal from a brother and sister was received and replied to.
- b. Appeal from a brother and sister was received and replied to.

7. Proposals or instructions from the churches:

No proposals or instructions were forthcoming.

8. Reports received:

- a. Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Students for the Ministry.

A request from a theological student originally from Classis Pacific East asking for financial support during his participation in the Pastoral Proficiency Program. The request was granted and the churches in Classis Pacific East will be assessed in the amount of \$8.12 per communicant member. Classis expects that churches participating in the PPP will contribute along with Classis to the financial needs of the student.

- b. Church Visitation reports. The church visitors reported on a visit to the Church of Alder-

grove which Classis received with thanksgiving.

9. Question Period according to Article 44, CO.

All churches answered yes, yes, and no to the questions of Article 44 posed by the chairman.

10. Appointments:

- a. Convening church for the next Classis, place and date. The next Classis is scheduled for March 29, 2001, to be convened by the Church of Aldergrove in Aldergrove’s place of worship. The alternate date for Classis is June 21, 2001.
- b. Suggested officers for the next Classis: Chairman: Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer; Vice-chairman: Rev. R.A. Schouten; Clerk: Rev. C.J. Vandervelde.

11. Personal Question Period.

Several questions were raised.

12. Censure according to Article 34, CO.

It was noted with thankfulness that censure was not needed.

13. Adoption of the Acts of Classis.

The Acts were read and approved.

14. Approval of the Press Release.

The press release was read and approved.

15. Closing.

The chairman, Rev. VanLuik, asked Classis to sing, led the meeting in prayer and adjourned the assembly.

For Classis Pacific East November 30, 2001, P. H. Holtvlüwer (vice-chairman at that time)

Press Release of Regional Synod West, held on December 5, 2000 in the Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church, Langley, B.C.

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. E. Kampen called the meeting to order. Hymn 1B was sung. Psalm 48 was read. Prayer was offered. For memorabilia it was noted that since the last Regional Synod, Rev. F. Dong, Rev. W. Bredenhof, and Rev. D. Poppe had been ordained to office. It was also noted that Rev. A. J. Pol was a new minister in the churches in Regional Synod West.

The credentials were examined. All the classes were represented by the *primi* delegates. Regional Synod was constituted. Elected to serve as officers were: Rev. R. Aasman as chairman, Rev. E. Kampen as vice-chairman, and Rev. W. M. Wielenga as clerk.

The agenda was adopted. It was decided to have a general round of discussion on most of the items on the agenda and then divide into committees to draft proposals.

Upon request of the church responsible for the archives, Regional Synod agreed to bear the cost of obtaining a fire proof filing cabinet. After the other items had gone through a general round of discussion, the various committees met.

After Synod resumed meeting in full session, it dealt with five aspects

pertaining to various decisions of Classis Pacific East of March 30,31, 2000.

A suggestion from the Church at Coaldale to have the clerk of Regional Synod forward copies of overtures submitted to Regional Synod was not accepted.

Regional Synod dealt with overtures concerning the Heidelberg Catechism, the Forms for Ordination, and a standardized Subscription Form from Classis Pacific West of April 25, 2000, which had originated from the Willoughby Heights church. The overture concerning the Catechism was not accepted, but it was decided to forward this submission to General Synod for consideration by the *Book of Praise* Committee. Synod decided to adopt a proposal to overture General Synod to establish a standardized Subscription Form, as well as a proposal to overture General Synod to change the answer in the Forms for Ordination to "I do." Synod also dealt with a proposal from Classis Pacific East of September 21, 2000 which originated with the church at Abbotsford concerning the *Book of Praise*. This was not accepted.

Regional Synod appointed br. H. Lubbers as treasurer, the Church at Taber as auditor for the books of the treasurer, the Church at Edmonton-Providence as the Archive Church, and the Church at Edmonton-Immanuel as the Church responsible for inspection of the Archives.

As deputies ad art 48 CO, Synod appointed Rev. K. Jonker (alternates Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. A.J. Pol) from Classis Manitoba, Rev. R. Aasman (alternates Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, Rev. W. B. Slomp) from Classis Alberta, Rev. R.A. Schouten (alternates Rev. D. Moes, Rev. M.H. VanLuik) from Classis Pacific East, and Rev. C. Van Spronsen (alternates Rev. E. Kampen, Rev. J. Huijgen) from Classis Pacific West.

Nominated for the Board of Governors of the Theological College were: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. R.A. Schouten (alternates, Rev. W.B. Slomp, Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, Rev. E. Kampen). Delegated to General Synod to be convened in Neerlandia, May 1, 2001 were the Reverends R. Aasman, J. Huijgen, E. Kampen and A.J. Pol, with alternates, in order, J. Moesker, R.A. Schouten, J. Visscher, J. van Popta, and elders P. DeBoer, W. Gortemaker, E. Kampen, W. VanAssen, with alternates, in order, R. Klaver, J. DeHaas, I. Veurink, and H. Ludwig.

The next Regional West was scheduled for December 4, 2001, with the Church at Winnipeg-Redeemer as the convening church.

Question period was held. The chairman noted with gratitude that no censure was needed. The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and approved. Psalm 116:1, 7, 10 was sung. The chairman led in prayer. Synod was closed.

*On behalf of Regional Synod West
December 5, 2000
Rev. E. Kampen* 

