

Clarion

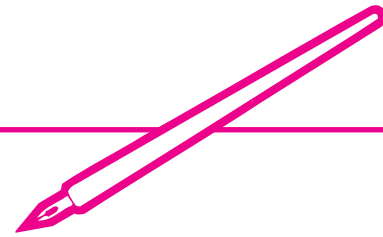
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*The Meaning and History
of "Reformation"*

Numbers

10:1-10



By Cl. Stam



Distinction and/or Separation?

The summer season is now far behind us and the schools are well into another season of education and learning. Special summer activities have come to an end. I think here in particular of two summer activities: Vacation Bible School (VBS) and the children's camps organized by Campfire! While most congregations in Ontario have lent support to and been involved in these activities, there are also among us those who feel that such activity is unwarranted, even unbiblical. In these congregations such "evangelism" work is strongly opposed. In one instance there was even a "pastoral letter" written to the congregation in which participation in Campfire! was declared wrong. I can understand that some object to the manner in which things are done. Usually the debate about evangelism is not whether it should be done, but how it must be conducted. Some feel that we must witness only in this way that "through our godly walk of life we may win our neighbour for Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A86). Others suggest that our godly walk of life also includes our godly talk. The neighbours will see that we are different, but the reason for this difference must in due course be explained.

Usually the debate about evangelism is not whether it should be done, but how it must be conducted.

Distinguished

The consistory in question, however, presented a very auspicious argument. Referring to Lord's Day 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism, the line was quoted that infants "by baptism, as sign of the covenant, . . . must be ingrafted into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers."

In subsequent discussion it became clear that this was for the consistory the main issue: the distinction between children of believers and unbelievers must be kept in mind, and therefore no communal, evangelical activity of any kind may take place. We would then be sending confusing signals to our children and actually placing them in a position of danger. Our children might come to think that interaction with children of unbelievers is allowed and that common recreation with unbelievers can be enjoyed. Since this is not possible, VBS and Campfire! are out of the question. The logic is airtight, it seems. Of course, I share the consistory's concern for the well-being of covenant children. The remark was made that if we follow the same open policy in the schools, these would soon cease to be Reformed. If you integrate the youth at one level (camp), will this not filter through to every level (school)? Put in this way, it is understood that the church thus puts its youth in great danger.

Allow me to make a remark about the schools and evangelism. The school is not a means or instrument for evangelism, but is a means to instruct our children in the way of God's covenant. Agreed? VBS and Campfire! are evangelism tools, and thus directed to a different goal. The slippery slope theory here compares apples to oranges. We must keep the specific purpose of each effort in mind, and not simply place the one beside the other. For then we would be pressing our argument.

Our children, too, have a calling to bring praise to God in their own simple way, and for this task they must be properly equipped, precisely because they are distinct.


Separation?

But I have a more serious objection to the manner in which the consistory approaches this matter. It is true that infants by baptism are grafted into the Christian church and "distinguished" from the children of unbelievers, but does distinction imply separation? Is it not true that we can be in the midst of this world, not separated from it, but yet remain distinct? Did our Lord not speak about this when He said that we are in the world but not of the world? (John 17:15, 16). Could it perhaps even be true that we have a mandate to be in this world, not separate from it, but distinct within it? Is this not the meaning of our Saviour's words when He said, "You are the light of the world. . . let your light shine before men" (Matt 5:14, 15). The Lord speaks here to adults, I know, but are our children not to be lights in this world?

What does it mean in Psalm 8:2, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger." Children and infants function actively in God's kingdom work. Our Lord Jesus refers to this Psalm when He enters Jerusalem and the children are shouting "Hosanna." The chief priests were indignant at the role of these children and wanted them to be silenced, but Christ simply directed them to Psalm 8. Have you never read? Our children, too, have a calling to bring praise to God in their own simple way, and for this task they must be properly equipped, precisely because they are distinct. For this reason we have daily devotions with our children, instruction in our Reformed schools, and direction also in the catechism classes. I cannot understand why distinction must mean separation. The danger is now that we lay upon ourselves a yoke of isolationism that is not biblical at all and cause our children to be confused about their relation to their neighbours.

Appreciation and caution

I appreciate the concern of this consistory. The world can easily influence us all, adults as well as children. Adults are sometimes more gullible than children. Therefore in the VBS and Campfire! programs there is a very strict code and constant supervision. The numbers ratio always favours the children of believers by ten to one. Further, there is the camp director, there are camp chaplains and counsellors who all are communicant members of one of our churches. All this work is also under the supervision of a consistory of one of our churches. The true concerns are being met in a responsible manner. I also wish to sound a note of caution. If we interpret distinction to mean separation, we fall into zealous, but misguided Anabaptism, which has brought forth the old order Mennonites. World-avoidance and total seclusion are the hallmarks of a sect that does not differentiate properly and seeks safety from the world behind self-erected walls of separation.

I know that no one wants this. To be in the world and yet not of the world is something that needs more discussion and attention among us. So that God may be praised by us all, old and young. 

What's inside?

The editorial by Rev. Cl. Stam examines the summer activities of Vacation Bible School and a camp organized by Campfire! Some discussion has been generated in Ontario among the churches whether it is proper for our children to be involved in formal evangelistic programs. While the editorial does express caution, it affirms that under the right circumstances; it is good and right that our children and young people are involved in such things as VBS and Campfire! and thus bring the gospel to others around them.

Words like "Reformed" and "Reformation" are often used in ecclesiastical circles. There is the danger, however, that not everyone who uses the term "Reformed" will attach the same meaning to the word as in the past. Thus we appreciate that Dr. R. Faber presents the readers with an article which examines the meaning and history of the "Reformation."

Dr. N.H. Gootjes continues his series of articles on drugs. In this article he demonstrates how we can know the will of God concerning drugs from his Word. All of life is to be dedicated to God in holy sacrifice. That says something about the use of drugs in one's life. Dr. Gootjes looks at different kinds of drugs, and he also discusses whether something like coffee can be considered a drug and therefore should not be used. To put your mind at ease, you may drink a cup of coffee while reading this issue of *Clarion*, provided you are not at that point that you cannot function without coffee.

Rev. P.G. Feenstra continues his column on the means of grace, addressing specifically the use of the sacraments. Rev. G.Ph. van Popta provides us with an *Observations* column on the relevant topic of the Taliban. This issue also contains the columns, *Treasures New and Old* and *Ray of Sunshine* as well as a Press Release from Classis Northern Ontario.

Education Matters by H. DeJong dovetails with certain remarks in the editorial: the behaviour of our students during athletic competitions with other schools. Are they a light to others in their actions and language?

RA



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By A.J. Pol

Jesus Christ and Him Crucified

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."
1 Corinthians 2:2

October 31

October 31 should be an important day for us, not because of Halloween, but because we remember the Reformation. On this day Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses for debate on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This led to debates not only in Wittenberg. Discussion related to issues raised by Luther spread throughout Europe. Changes resulting from this came to be known as the Reformation. Books and pamphlets containing "Reformed" insights circulated widely. Latin slogans summarized some of the central truths. Although most of us do not understand Latin, we are familiar with some of those slogans. *Sola gratia* highlights the fact that our salvation is by grace alone. We receive this salvation *sola fide*, by faith alone. Scripture alone is the rule for our faith, *sola Scriptura*. We are saved by Christ alone, *solo Christo*. To God alone be the glory for our salvation, *solī Deo gloria*.

Relevance

These scriptural themes were emphasized in opposition to certain Roman Catholic teachings. They continue to be relevant for us today. They summarize truths that do not change with time, although the application may vary from one century to the next.

The Reformers highlighted the work of Jesus Christ in their confrontation with Roman Catholic doctrine. We must do the same. But our focus on salvation by "Christ alone" can be undermined in more than one way. Moralistic or legalistic preaching, for example, emphasizes what believers must do, without proper attention being given to what our Saviour has said: "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Tensions in church life can also blur the necessary focus on Jesus Christ.

Unity through Christ alone

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul deals with the problem of divisions that have arisen in the congregation. He describes the quarreling: "One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ'" (1 Cor 1:12). His approach to this problem also shows us something of the relevance of continuing to focus on Jesus Christ.

How does Paul go about restoring unity in this divided congregation? He reminds them of the way he brought the gospel to them. Paul did not seek his strength in eloquent words. He did not try to dazzle them with a show of human wisdom. He didn't want them to focus on himself, but on what he was saying. To regain their unity as a congregation, they must focus once again on God's grace through Jesus Christ. That was the main thrust of Paul's preaching: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Jesus Christ

The full name, "Jesus Christ," already tells us something about the message Paul brought them. "Jesus" was the name of our Saviour during his earthly ministry. He was a man of flesh and blood. But what made Him so special? He was also the "Christ," the promised Messiah. The word "Christ," or "Messiah" reminds us that He was anointed by the Holy Spirit to fulfill his ministry.

"Jesus Christ and him crucified": That was a message that Paul had to explain to the Jews, who had very different expectations concerning the Messiah. But it was also a message that was important for people of a heathen background. After all, Jesus Christ is not only the Saviour of Jews. He is the Saviour of all who put their trust in Him.


But to be saved, we have to know some very basic things about Him. We have to know who He is. We also have to know what He did. That is where the message concerning his crucifixion comes in. Otherwise we will never understand why repentant sinners receive salvation through Him.

A powerful message

If you wonder what to say to an unbeliever concerning the gospel, don't get lost in all sorts of details. Keep this in mind: "Jesus Christ and him crucified." Explain who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for the salvation of sinners. Once someone understands that, there is more you can tell that person. The message of the cross is foundational for everything else.

The fact that we have faith and that we also see others repent and believe in Jesus Christ is not because of brilliant rhetoric or human wisdom. It is "a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Cor 2:4). The Holy Spirit works through the good news of Jesus Christ to bring about dramatic changes in people's lives.

The members of the Church of Corinth were confronted with this power of the Holy Spirit. By God's grace, through the testimony of the gospel, spiritual life took the place of death. This life became manifest in spiritual growth. Paul reminds them of this proof of the power of the Spirit of God in chapter 3: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

The seed of the gospel continues to be planted and watered. It takes root in human hearts, growing and bearing fruit. Let us never forget: "To God alone be the glory." Glorify God because of "Jesus Christ and him crucified." The message is still powerful today. 

The Meaning and History of “Reformation”

By R. Faber

Introduction

The term “Reformed” first arose in the sixteenth century to define those churches which were re-organized according to theological principles that distinguished them from the Roman Catholic church. At that time, the complete name was “churches that are Reformed on the basis of Scripture.” Since then the shortened form “Reformed” has become part of the official designation of numerous churches around the world. Generally speaking, these churches promote the doctrines that were rediscovered during the age that is labeled “Reformation.” In calling themselves Reformed, churches declare that they share with the sixteenth-century churches the Bible as the foundation for their essence and structure. As one generation replaces another, however, the connection between the first manifestation of the name “Reformed” and its current one threatens to be weakened. Therefore it behooves us to know how the name came about, and what it means. It is the purpose of this article to relate briefly how the words “Reformed” and “Reformation” originated, and how they are used today. We shall begin with the biblical concept of reform, and then examine the meaning of “Reformation” in the Middle Ages and sixteenth century. Thereupon we shall consider the significance of the name “Reformed churches,” before giving an explanation of “Reformation” and related historical terms. In conclusion, we shall make some observations about the value of knowing the meaning of these terms today.

Biblical reform

The Latin verb “*reformare*,” from which the English word derives, oc-

curs only twice in the Latin translation of the Bible. The concept of reform, however, is a biblical one, and appears throughout the Old and New Testament. True reformation is an act of God whereby in his covenant love He directs his people back to his Word and to the proper worship of Him. In the Bible it is made clear that return to Scripture and proper service are the main components of reformation. One could give several examples of reformation recorded in the Bible, but three will have to suffice: 1) the reforms of Asa (2 Chron 14) based on the laws and commandments of God and consisting in a return to true worship; 2) the rediscovery of the Book of the Law during the reign of Josiah (2 Chron 34-35) and the proper keeping of the Passover; 3) the reforms recorded in Nehemiah 8, where the

Law is read, the covenant is reaffirmed, and the Sabbath-day worship is restored. True reformation, then, occurs when God directs believers to his Word and the right worship of Him. The reformation of the sixteenth century, we may say, was a reformation of this kind. As a theological term, then, reformation means reinstatement of proper service to God that is based on Scripture.

The Bible stresses that reform comes not by the instigation of great doers or thinkers, but by the grace of God. It is not for the glory of man but for the glory of God’s Holy name that He causes reformation. In Nehemiah we read that God brings about changes in order that He may make his name dwell among his people again (Neh 1:9). In Ezekiel 36 we read that God will cause his people to walk according to his statutes.

*John Knox,
Scottish Reformer*



Verse 23 states: "It is not for your sake, O Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my Holy Name which you have profaned among the nations." Thus the goal of reform among God's people is the restoration of God's holy name. Also the sixteenth century reformation was an act of God to restore the glory of his name. Not unlike the prophets in ancient Israel, the reformers knew that they were no more than "unworthy servants" who performed the duties assigned by their Master.

When he published the famous theses in 1517, Luther did not envisage that a total break with the Roman church would occur.

"Reformation" in the Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages the word "reformation" was used commonly in the realms of law, society, and church. For example, amendments and applications of legal regulations were labeled "reformations." In social life the term meant renewal, or revival of lost values. In the church, "reformation" meant institutional change; often such change occurred following a decision of a Council. Several popes attempted to make changes within the church, and already during the twelfth century it became possible for ecclesiastical

reforms to be enacted without the approval of the state.

As time passed, it became clear that the church needed to be reformed completely, from the top down. To use the phrase of the time, the church required renovation "in head and in members." Accordingly, Pope Innocent III convened the Fourth Lateran Council in order to "reform the universal church." Due to internal and external opposition, however, changes were difficult to enact. Nevertheless, the notion that the structures of church and state required correction was being accepted widely between 1400 and 1500. Out of these medieval sentiments grew the conviction of the sixteenth-century reformers that renovation based on the Bible was required. We must appreciate this continuity in the history of ideas if we wish to understand many aspects of the Reformation.

"Reformation" in the Sixteenth Century

It is not yet clear whether or not the term "reformation" became more limited in meaning and use at the turn of the sixteenth century. Most students of the period think that the broad sense of "renewal" used in the medieval period remained. Whatever the case, the reformers themselves did not invent the term to describe the developments in which they were involved. They used various expressions for the changes they advocated. For example Erasmus, whose role at the dawn of the Refor-

mation is often undervalued, spoke of conversion and repentance, whereby he stressed that true reform begins in the heart of individuals. Martin Luther rarely used the word "reformation." At first he applied it to proposed changes in regulations governing universities; so that the modern, humanist methods of study might be fostered, bylaws had to be amended. When he published the famous theses in 1517, Luther did not envisage that a total break with the Roman church would occur; he merely intended to provoke academic debate with fellow priests. He did not know that October 31 would be considered the start of the Reformation.

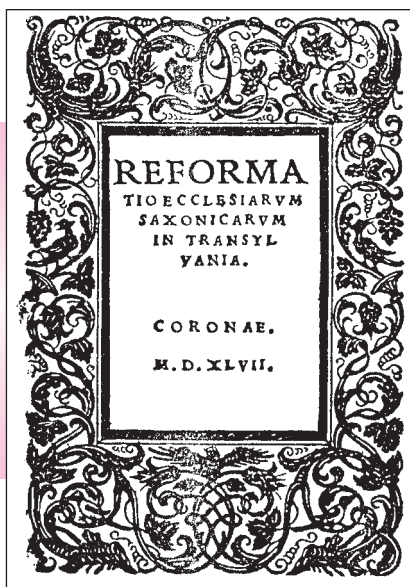
Luther's call for renewal was based on deep theological convictions, however, and these convictions became the basis for the formation of a renewed church. It soon became clear that the rediscovery of long-lost biblical teachings would have significant consequences. Contemporary and later thinkers agreed that Luther's theology of the cross entailed rejection of many medieval teachings and practices that had no grounds in Scripture: the authority of the pope, monastic vows, veneration of Mary and other saints,

Reformation occurs when God directs his people back to his Word and to the proper worship of Him.

pilgrimages, indulgences, etc. Thus the term "reformation" developed into meaning something more extensive and more precise than it did earlier. Already by 1518, Luther himself used the word in the ecclesiastical sense of total renewal of the church. For this reason some theologians today use the word "reformation" to refer to the consequences implied by Luther's discovery of certain biblical doctrines.

"Radical Reformation"

The word "reform" became popular in part because the reformers insisted that the alterations they advocated were really no more than changes to the structure ("form") of the existing church. They were merely reshaping the church on the basis of biblical doctrine; they were not promoting a total rejection of the church. The Roman church, however, portrayed the



Sometimes "reformation" meant reformed church order, as this title page of a Hungarian ordinance illustrates.

reformers as radicals who were separating themselves from the “catholic” church, the church of all times and places. It is for this reason that the writings of the reformers are replete with citations of the church fathers; one cannot understand the Reformation well unless, like the reformers themselves, one is steeped in the writings of Jerome, Augustine, and others who served the church between 200 and 500 A.D. Even today, churches that are truly Reformed proclaim their identity with the church of all ages.

During the sixteenth century there were groups, however, which advanced a complete break with the catholic church, and with political structures. While the magisterial reformers hoped to convince the governing authorities to adopt their proposals, there were many sectarians for whom opposition to political powers was a key part of the platform. Three groups have been identified as belonging to this left wing of the Reformation: Anabaptists, spiritualists, and evangelicals. These groups formed no unified movement, but did share a number of characteristics, such as rejection of church organization, an appeal to the individual, and a desire to restore pristine Christianity. In a sense, then, these dissident movements were more fundamental than those linked to Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Hence modern historians often refer to these groups as belonging to the “Radical Reformation,” which lasted from 1518 to 1580.

“Reformed Churches”

Although Lutherans referred to the period ushered in by the publication of Luther’s theses as the “reformation,” the term “reformed” was not employed in Germany during the 1520s to identify congregations implementing change. At that time, the word “protestant” was applied to them. In 1529, at the Diet of Speyer, several south German cities submitted an official declaration in which they objected to the decision to reinstate Roman authorities, orders, and practices in places where reform had been implemented. While today “protest” has the negative connotation of opposition or objection, in the sixteenth century the Latin word “*protestari*” had the positive meaning “to profess, to witness.” It referred to the public expression of the consciences of those who believed that

Menno Simons,
Anabaptist leader.



the reforms which had been implemented were based on the will of God. The term fell out of use during the latter part of the sixteenth century, when different entities emerged as a result of opposing views, and it was not until the nineteenth century that “Protestantism” became popular as an umbrella name for the various churches that had separated from the Roman one.

It was in Switzerland and France that the phrase “reformed church” (*église réformé*) was first used to identify those congregations which were experiencing doctrinal and ecclesiastical renovation. During the 1540s, more and more congregations described themselves as “reforming on the basis of Scripture” – while the Roman church depicted them as belonging to a faith that merely “claimed to be reformed”

Churches that are truly Reformed proclaim their identity with the church of all ages.

(*religion prétendue réformée*). However it is viewed, the word “reformed” referred to the doctrinal foundation of these congregations. It was imported by Huguenots into the Netherlands, where it was adopted quickly. It is from this time and place that many Reformed churches derive their current name. And the significance in this name should not

be forgotten today: modern Reformed churches are not grounded in the ideas of the sixteenth-century Reformation, but share with the churches of that time a common biblical foundation.

In the first place, then, “reformed” points to the theological basis of the churches that are so called. The teachings of justification by faith alone, by God’s grace alone, etc., are defining characteristics of Reformed denominations today as well as of those in the sixteenth century. Similarly, these churches share the consequences of these doctrines in their manner of worship and communion. One example will have to suffice to show that “Reformed” concerns especially teaching and practice. During the sixteenth century it was the controversy over the physical presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper that helped to give the word “Reformed” a theological sense. For when John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli’s successor, expressed agreement over the issue by signing the Zurich Agreement (*Consensus Tigurinus*) in 1549, a “Reformed” understanding of the sacrament became clearer and distinguished itself from the Lutheran one. From that time onward, there was increasing clarity about the features that identify the Reformed faith. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, then, “Reformed” was used increasingly for churches linked to Calvinism. Lutheran churches were distinguished

occasionally from Roman Catholic by means of the same name, however, and to be clear about which reformation they speak, some historians use the phrase "Calvinist Reformation" for changes in those churches throughout Europe that were influenced especially by the reform of the churches at Geneva and Strassbourg and the writings of John Calvin.

"Reformation" as Historical Term

In English usage, "Reformation" has become a specialized historical term that denotes the development of the Protestant confession and churches in the sixteenth century. From the perspective of universal history, it is a term denoting the specific period in time from 1517 until 1600. Following the publication of *German History in the Age of Reformation* (1839) by the influential historian Leopold von Ranke, "Reformation" was used widely in identifying this time period. While it refers especially to the changes which occurred in the church, "Reformation" is not applied to the specific reforms of Zwingli, Knox, or Calvin, but to the whole series of changes which occurred throughout Europe during the sixteenth century. Furthermore, while "Reformation" points in the first place to religious, theological, and ecclesiastical change in the sixteenth century, it is applied now to an increasingly broader range of topics. In recent years historians have examined cultural and social aspects of the time, from trade and economy to demographics and lifestyle. Thus also developments of a secular nature may be referred to as part of the "Reformation."

Since von Ranke's time, various phases and stages in the Reformation have been identified and labeled, so that now there are subdivisions in the history of the sixteenth century. For example, the years 1519-1527 have been named the "Early Reformation." Another common term is "Magisterial Reformation"; it refers to that time and place in which political authorities were advised by masters and teachers of reform. Luther and Zwingli hoped to carry out reform with the co-operation of municipal magistrates. It is a useful specialization, for it points to the political as well as religious dimension in which these reformers worked. Yet another example of the subdivision is the term "Age of Confessionalization," which points to

the time in the late sixteenth century when reforms were encoded in official documents which in turn controlled the direction of many leaders and common people. It was this process of confessionalization which prevented the formation of a single Protestant response to Roman Catholicism, and in fact contributed to the development of concepts such as "Calvinist," "Evangelical," or "Lutheran."

In English usage, "Reformation" has become a specialized historical term that denotes the development of the Protestant confession and churches in the sixteenth century.

Such divisions and labels within "Reformation" are reserved mainly for specialists in the field, but it is important for the general reader to know that the Reformation era was one that evolved through different phases. The sixteenth century was a time of drastic and rapid changes in politics, social norms, and economics, and the exact historical situation of each reform must be appreciated. What is more, just as the historical context of the reforms matters, so too does the geographical one. Readers will appreciate that the Reformation in England, for example, is marked by unique characteristics. There, the relationship between church and state was much closer than in many places in mainland Europe. The "Dutch Reformation," to give another example of a geographical determinant, refers to the development of the Reformed faith in the lowlands between 1550 and 1650.

"Counter-Reformation"

The term "Counter-Reformation" first appeared in the middle of the seventeenth century to depict the efforts in certain reformed regions to return to Roman Catholicism. Used in this way, the term meant reaction or response to the Reformation. The Council of Trent (1545-1563), at which the Romanist church sought to reaffirm the Romanist beliefs and practices, is frequently cited as an instance of counter-reform. More generally, all the

attempts of governing authorities between 1550 and 1650 to enforce Roman Catholicism upon their communities were described as examples of the counter-Reformation.

Most modern historians, however, think that the term "Counter-Reformation" may be misleading. One reason why they are abandoning it is that in many cases it was applied to a process that was not consciously anti-Reformed in motivation or nature. Rather, they suggest, the many alterations implemented by the Roman church were the result of a positive development that had begun well before the sixteenth century, and so were not reactionary. Recall the concept of reform in the Middle Ages, as discussed above. Another reason why the term "Counter-Reformation" is falling into disuse is that it was perceived as having negative connotations: counter-reform means opposed to reform. Since the term had a negative flavour, "Counter-Reformation" seemed a subject less interesting than the innovations of the Protestant reformers. The unfortunate result of this attitude is that scholarship of the sixteenth century is lop-sided towards Protestantism. This imbalance is detrimental to our understanding of the Reformation, which can be understood better when seen in comparison with the Romanist reforms of the time.

"Catholic Reformation"

Instead of "Counter-Reformation," historians began to use the abbreviated title (Roman) "Catholic Reformation." This term certainly has its value, for it depicts the initiatives of the Roman Catholic Church to make changes whereby it would remain viable. Especially for Italy and Spain, where numerous reforms within the church took place during the sixteenth century, "Catholic Reformation" is a useful name. The term helps to explain why in these countries the Protestant Reformation had little effect, and why Roman Catholicism remained (and remains) generally unchallenged there. As was stated in the previous paragraph, when we understand why and how the Roman Catholic Church developed during the sixteenth century, we gain a better understanding of the reasons why and to what extent the Reformation took place in various European lands. In Poland, for example, resurgent Roman Catholicism

prevented the Reformation from becoming institutionalized; consequently, the reforms in that land differed in nature from the changes occurring elsewhere. For the period of change within the Roman church between 1550 and 1650, therefore, the term "Catholic Reformation" remains current.

"Second Reformation"

The latter phase of the Reformation, from 1550-1700, has been called the "Second Reformation." Some writers use it to define the reforms emanating from Geneva during this period, to distinguish them from the changes promoted by the "first" generation of reformers. Others use "Second Reformation" to denote the period of Pietism in (northern) Germany and the Netherlands, when there was a strong appeal to religious experience. The term has met with its critics, however, and it remains to be seen whether it will stand the test of time. For while it is true that the period 1550-1700 witnessed an emphasis upon some features of the Reformation that had been neglected – such as a stress on individual faith and criticism of church institutions as such – there were no major theological discoveries which produced ecclesiastical reform. In short, critics of the term suggest that the renovations were not significant enough to warrant the term "reformation."

Conclusion

Modern Reformed churches declare by their name that they have been, and continue to be, reformed by the Word of God. While the term points to the period of Reformation in the sixteenth century, the theological

meaning of it implies also that "Reformed" churches are not restricted to maintaining only the reforms that occurred then. In fact, in the old and new dispensation, God repeatedly reformed his church in doctrine and practice. "Reformed" churches therefore declare that they are one with the "catholic" church in acknowledging imperfection and the constant need for change. In the time of the church fathers or the Middle Ages – not to mention the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – renovations occurred which became part of this one church, and it is imperative that the catholic church know how Christ has governed it throughout history.

We must not exaggerate the importance of the Reformation by elevating it to a status of being definitive.

During the sixteenth century, however, there occurred a significant reformation, and it remains necessary for modern Reformed churches to appreciate and advance the biblical doctrines whereon the reforms of that age were based. It is important to understand also the teachings and customs of the Romanist church which caused the reformers to promote changes, and to pray and act for its return to biblical truth. Furthermore, the place of the Reformed churches in the context of broader Protestantism should not be forgotten, and we must appreciate why and how it happened that during the



Called to the church at Smithers, British Columbia:

Rev. R.J. Eikelboom

of Calgary, Alberta.


• • •

The ordination of

candidate Carl Vermeulen

in Elora, Ontario, scheduled for October 7, 2001 had to be postponed because of visa difficulties. A new date will be chosen when the Canadian government issues the appropriate visa.

sixteenth century different kinds of reformation occurred.

For the modern church it is useful also to evaluate the differences that arose due to social, political, and geographical influences. While the Reformation in Scotland, for example, produced a heritage with features different from the one in Hungary or the Netherlands, there remains for the resulting federations a common basis in the return to the Scriptures and the proper service of God. At the same time we must not exaggerate the importance of the Reformation by elevating it to a status of being definitive or prescriptive. We must remember especially that the hand of God in guiding his church remains active until the fullness of time, and that our duty is to serve Him as "unworthy servants." 



Drugs (Part 2)

By N.H. Gootjes

The Bible and drugs

The Bible does not deal with drugs, or with drug addiction as such. That does not mean that we cannot know the will of God on drugs. God gave us clear directions on how to live. These should also be applied to drugs.

An important statement for this topic can be found in Romans 12:1, where the apostle Paul addresses the question what we should do with ourselves:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship.

God gave us clear directions on how to live.

This is a general statement on Christian life, emphasizing that our whole life should be dedicated to God. Our bodies are called sacrifices. That does not mean, obviously, that we must kill our bodies just like the animals were killed in the temple, for he speaks of living sacrifices. Paul wants us to know that we should totally dedicate our bodies to God. In other places, such as 1 Corinthians 6:13 and 15, he works this out in specific situations. Here, in Romans 12, he gives the general rule: We should devote our bodies to the service of God, to do the will of God, the good and pleasing and perfect.¹

When we apply this to drugs, the question of drugs must be answered in the context of the service of God. We cannot simply go by our liking or aversion of something, but we have to consider that we should serve God with our bodies. What do drugs bring about in our bodies? We have to confront ourselves with the question whether we are we serving God when we do drugs.

Another important text is 1 Timothy 4:4:

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

The statement that everything God has created is good, goes back to Genesis 1. God created the world in stages, and on several occasions He surveyed what He had done and concluded that it was good. At the very end of creating the world, God saw all that He had made, and it was very good (Gen 1:31). There is nothing wrong with the things God has created. They have their place and task in the whole, and fulfill the function God had in mind when He made them. We can thank God for them.

That applies to drugs, as well. They are created substances, and good. As we saw, the natural drug opium had an important function in suppressing unbearable pain. Synthetically produced drugs, as well, have useful applications. Gasoline can be abused as a drug, but it is normally used for driving cars. All things which God has created are good. They have their place and function in the whole of creation. We can use them in thankfulness to God. Actually, Paul emphasized that we need not stay away from the things which can be used with thanksgiving to God.

The reason is that the things God has created are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. We can take "sanctified" in the sense of: included in the service of God. The most important question is now, how are all created things sanctified and suitable for the service of God? Paul answered that two things are needed for a holy use of the things God created: the Word of God and prayer. This refers to the two sides of the interaction between God and us: God speaks to us, and we speak to God. God speaks to us in his Word, the Bible. And we speak to God when we pray. To

use some part of God's creation properly, we should listen to God and his will, and use it in prayerful communication with God. In a living relationship of listening to the word from God and responding to God, we can use all things God has created.

God has created drugs, and He has given them certain properties. The question is now, whether they can be used for our enjoyment while listening to God and praying to Him.

Kinds of drugs

Drugs work in different ways on the human mind. It is possible to divide them into several categories, according to their effect on the mind. We follow here a division of drugs as given by Schuckit, but in a different order.²

1. The *stimulants* make people feel powerful and alert. Well-known examples are cocaine and amphetamines. Weight-reducing pills have the same effect.
2. The *depressants* make people feel calm and tired. To this group belong Valium and similar drugs, barbiturates and alcohol.
3. The *opiates* are drugs that make people feel no pain. Opium and heroin are derived from the opium poppy plant. Also, methadone and most prescription pain killers belong to this group.

Drugs work in different ways on the human mind.

4. The *hallucinogens* cause intensified sense perceptions. The name is misleading for they do not cause hallucinations. Some examples are LSD, Mescaline, Peyote and Ecstasy.
5. *Solvents* and *inhalants* make people lightheaded, they feel as if they are floating. The volatile substances in glues, paint thinners, and gasoline

are inhaled so that the desired effect is quickly achieved.

6. The *cannabinols* make people feel mellow. They are derived from the marijuana plant. The different kinds (marijuana, hashish, charas, ganja, bhang) are produced from different parts of the same plant.

In addition, also several *prescription drugs*, and even *over-the-counter drugs* could be mentioned. Schuckit includes among these caffeine and nicotine. They have mind changing side effects, but they cannot be brought together in a special category for these drugs have different effects.

This list shows the variety of experiences which can be caused by drugs. But there is a confusing element in this explanation. Several substances included in the list of drugs are openly sold in stores and supermarkets and bought by people who do not have any idea they are buying a drug. That applies particularly to alcohol, caffeine and nicotine. They are freely available. Actually the government, rather than preventing people from buying them, gladly rakes in additional taxes from the sale of these substances.

The question arises why the government allows some drugs to be sold, and outlaws other drugs. If drinks like coffee and wine are, in fact, drugs, why does it allow these to be sold and enjoyed? In fact, this argument is mentioned by people who want to legalize drugs.

In my opinion, there are good reasons for excluding alcoholic drinks, coffee and cigarettes. They cannot simply be equated with what we call drugs. Including them only causes confusion. It would not be good to spend too much time on them, when we want to concentrate on the mind-altering drugs. Therefore, we will limit ourselves and deal briefly with only one of these: caffeine.

Caffeine

Very few people on this continent would be "clean" if caffeine would be included among the drugs. There is a difference of opinion on the question whether it is a drug. J. Douma mentioned coffee, tea and coke as substances which affect the brain but cause little change in consciousness. He included coffee, together with sedatives and wine, among the drugs that need not be rejected.³

Can we include caffeine among the substances created by God which can

be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer? Is it possible to use it in the service of God and can we thank God for it? Coffee does not affect the ability to make decisions, nor does it undermine people's sense of responsibility. It has a moderately stimulating influence. All of this sounds positive.

On the other hand, there are people who emphasize the negative side of drinking coffee. Schuckit even distinguishes two kinds of addiction. He points out that many people develop a psychological dependence on coffee and other caffeinated beverages.

We can agree that withdrawal symptoms such as headache, sweating and disorientation are indicative of abuse of a food stuff.

He adds that there is evidence that some people who regularly take caffeine, become physically addicted to it. They develop a syndrome of headache, sweating and a feeling as if they cannot think straight when they try to cut down on their coffee intake. According to Schuckit, this resembles mild withdrawal, pointing to a coffee addiction. "This seems to indicate a form of physical addiction in at least some people."⁴

We can agree that withdrawal symptoms such as headache, sweating and disorientation are indicative of abuse of a food stuff. Someone who had to skip breakfast, for example, would still be able to function properly. And someone who is ill cannot function properly, but that is not his fault. However, in this case someone has made himself dependent on caffeine to the extent that he cannot function without it. His weakness is not the result of an illness that has come over him; he has brought himself to the point that he has impaired his ability to work. If someone becomes physically sick if he has to go without coffee, there has been abuse of caffeine.

But the question is whether this is a necessary result of drinking coffee. Obviously not, for Schuckit distinguishes another case. He calls that psychological dependence. What, exactly, is this psychological dependency? Is that something evil? Schuckit distinguishes two kinds,⁵ and we have to look at these

separately. The first kind is that someone is willing to pay heavily for the substance, by spending much time or money to get it, or by risking problems at the job or in relationships.

Again, we can agree that something is wrong when a person would neglect his work or get into trouble with the law in order to obtain such a substance. The point is that this would not apply to coffee. No one spends much money on coffee, nor does drinking it interfere with his work or with his life at home. Such problems do occur with drugs such as hash and marijuana, but not with coffee. It is hard to see how this argument could be used to reject coffee.

There is also another kind of psychological dependency, according to Schuckit. This occurs when someone is willing to pay a relatively low price for coffee, or when the substance poses few dangers. But it is unclear why he speaks in this connection about dependency at all. The fact that someone is only willing to pay a relatively low price indicates that he does not crave for it at all cost. In other words, there is no real dependency which urges him to acquire the drug. And if coffee is a harmless substance we need not worry about it further. If coffee is harmless, then psychological dependency on coffee, whatever that may be, is harmless. Schuckit's argument does not prove that coffee is a harmful drug.

We can conclude that coffee, just as about anything, can be abused. But it does not alter the mind, and so make people unfit for work and life. It is a substance that can be used while working in the service of God.

The next time we hope to start discussing several kinds of mind-altering drugs.

¹ See for this text, the explanation by J. Murray, *Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 110f. To quote one sentence: "Paul was realistic and he was aware that if sanctification did not embrace the physical in our personality it would be annulled from the outset."

² M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs: A People's Primer* (New York and London: Plenum Trade; revised edition, 1998) 27-47.

³ J. Douma, *Christelijke levensstijl*, 172, 175.

⁴ M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 48.

⁵ M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 16.



The Means of Grace: the Sacraments

(Part 3)

By P.G. Feenstra

When the Lord our God presents to us the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, He not only manifests his work in what we hear but also in what we may behold through the sacraments or signs, which seal to us the promises pledged in his Word. Baptism and Lord's Supper are signs but also the means through which the Holy Spirit communicates God's grace in Jesus Christ to us. Sacraments are a visible picture of an invisible reality. They symbolize what the Lord is working within our hearts. They are a sign and seal of the forgiveness of sins and of the communion that is in Christ (Matt 26:28; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 10:16-17; Titus 3:4-7).

The word "sacrament" is never found in the Bible. It is derived from a Latin word meaning "used for a sacred purpose." The word was also used in a military sense to swear an oath of allegiance. Within a theological context the sacraments are sacred (holy), visible signs and seals demonstrating how God, in Christ, has sworn an oath of loyalty to his people. The sacraments are like God's oath confirming that we can trust what He promises in his Word. They were instituted by Christ to display his covenant faithfulness. Many Christians view sacraments as an oath of their allegiance to the Lord. But this is not the reason why the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper. The Lord did not give us the sacraments to exhibit the strength of our faith, but to help us in our weakness.

Relationship between preaching and sacraments

Due to the weakness of our faith, God the Holy Spirit adds the sacraments to the preaching as a means by which the grace of God is distributed to

us. God manifests his love to us by showing us very concretely, in visible signs and seals, what we have in Christ. In his *Institutes*, John Calvin makes this applicable remark:

By this means God provides first for our ignorance and dullness, then for our weakness. Yet, properly speaking, it is not so much needed to confirm his Sacred Word as to establish us in faith in it. For God's truth is of itself firm and sure enough, and it cannot receive better confirmation from any other source than from itself. But as our faith is slight and feeble unless it is propped on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, totters, and at last gives way (Book IV.14.3).

The Lord did not give us the sacraments to exhibit the strength of our faith, but to help us in our weakness.

What we hear in the preaching we may see visibly before our eyes in the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper. The sacraments are given in addition to the preaching to give visible confirmation of the promises of the gospel. Article 33 of the Belgic Confession summarizes the relation beautifully when it states:

We believe that our gracious God, mindful of our insensitivity and weakness, has ordained sacraments to seal his promises to us and to be pledges of his good will and grace towards us. He did so to nourish and sustain our faith. He has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external

senses both what He declares to us in his Word and what He does inwardly in our hearts. Thus He confirms to us the salvation which He imparts to us.

When the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession were written in the sixteenth century, the true meaning of the sacraments was not understood in the churches. They had been elevated to a position high above the Word and looked upon as having some magical power. When the churches of the Reformation returned to the teaching of Scripture it was understood once more that the sacraments are "servants" of the Word. The preaching of the Word must be given priority. The preaching must come first. John Calvin stresses that apart from the Word, which must always be proclaimed alongside the sacraments, the sacraments are nothing in themselves. They are an appendage to the gospel (*Institutes*, Book IV.14.3-5). This should also be reflected in the place that the sacraments receive within the order of worship. The sacraments place a crown upon the Word which has been heard. The celebration of Lord's Supper or baptism should not alter the character of the worship service to such an extent that the sacrament appears to be elevated above and beyond the preaching.

The sacraments are accent marks

In the Latin text of the Heidelberg Catechism answer 65 says that the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and accents it by the use of the sacraments. The sacraments put the accent marks on the Word. In the English language accent marks on words are not all that important. There are some languages where the accent mark can change

the entire meaning of a word. Yet most often an accent is used for emphasis. The sacraments were ordained by Christ to help us put the proper emphasis upon the Word of God. Sacraments are given to the church to bring out more clearly and visibly the meaning of the Word.

This tells us something about the character of the sacraments. What does an accent mark mean if you take away the Word? Nothing. Sacraments mean nothing without the Word of God. The sacraments depend on the Word for their meaning. When the Word is forgotten the sacraments become either empty symbols or magical rites. The sacraments do not add anything to the message of the gospel. They underline the story of Christ's redeeming work.

A good teacher uses illustrations to confirm a point which is being made.

The sacraments should not be neglected. The true church is under obligation to maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them (Belgic Confession, Article 29). When the office-bearers, under Christ's command and authority, call the congregation together for public worship we are also under obligation to participate in the two sacraments Christ has ordained. The Lord requires of us that we diligently attend the church of God to hear his Word and to use the sacraments (Lord's Day 38). Neglect of their use results in spiritual impoverishment.

The sacraments are not primarily an oath whereby we show our allegiance to the Lord. They attest to God's work of grace in us. Yet as a secondary function, they attest to our piety toward Him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men (Calvin's *Institutes* Book IV.14.1).

The illustrations of the Spirit

A good teacher uses illustrations to confirm a point which is being made. The Holy Spirit, as the teacher of the church, pictures before our eyes what He has taught us. He illustrates outwardly what He works inwardly in our hearts. The Spirit takes water and sprinkles it on our heads and tells us, "Just as surely as water washes dirt from the

body you can be assured of the promise that Christ washes away your sins through the shedding of his blood." The Spirit distributes to us bread and wine and thereby assures us that the sacrifice of Christ and the forgiveness of sins which He obtained by his death are granted to us. In the Lord's Supper the Holy Spirit pictures how we are fed by Christ, the true food and drink for everlasting life.

Faith strengthened through the use of the sacraments

The Holy Spirit has been pleased to use the sacraments as a means of grace. Thus the activity of the Holy Spirit is not only apparent in the preaching but also in the use of the sacraments. He is active when a child or an adult is baptized. He is active in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The same obligation applies in the sacrament as in the preaching. All three of our confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, say that the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith, not by the administration of the sacraments, but by the use of the sacrament. Our minds are not always contemplating the full significance of the sacraments during their administration – when we stand at the front presenting our children for baptism or when we eat the bread and drink from the cup at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The *administration* of the sacrament only takes a minute but the *use* is for a life time.

Sacraments are for the congregation

Baptism is not only for the child or for the parents but it is a sign and seal given for the benefit of the whole congregation. Communicant members participate in the Lord's Supper but it is a sign and seal for the whole congregation. Just as a husband and wife exchange rings on their wedding day so Christ gives his bride the sacrament of baptism and Lord's Supper as a token of his constant faithfulness and abiding love (Eph 5:22-31; see also answer 76 of Lord's Day 28). When a husband gives his wife flowers or a gift he expresses and underlines his love for her. The relationship does not depend upon such kindhearted gestures, yet these gestures can be very helpful by assisting the couple to go through difficult times. Such tokens of love encourage the couple to look to the foundation of their relationship, the

words and promises they made to each other. Likewise the sacraments are presented as gifts to us by Christ to strengthen our relationship with Him. Every Lord's Supper celebration is a gift of Christ to his bride. We become ashamed because we see how we fail to uphold our side of the relationship. At the same time we are encouraged to keep going because Christ's love for us has not abated or dwindled over time. The love that brought Him to sacrifice Himself on the cross for our sins carries us through all of life (C. Trimp, *Woord, water en wijn*, pp 106-108).

Thus it should be understood that sacraments are first and foremost a celebration of the congregation and not a private or family affair. In the local gathering of believers the Lord confirms his mercy and love for his people.

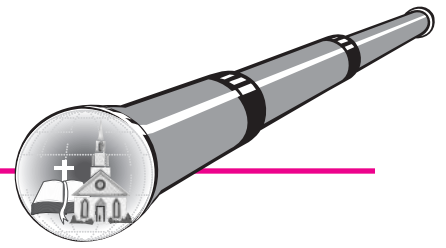
To help us overcome our doubt

What God promises in his covenant and proclaims to us in the preaching of the Word is consolidated in the sacraments. Here again we see the love of God. He helps us overcome our unbelief. He not only proclaims to us his promises but illustrates to us what we have in Christ, very concretely, in visible signs and seals. Sacraments guarantee the trustworthiness of the Word of the Lord. They make visible that our only salvation and safety is to be found in the outpouring of Christ's blood at Golgotha.

Baptism is not only for the child or for the parents but it is a sign and seal given for the benefit of the whole congregation.

Both sacraments encourage us not to doubt that the Lord will wash away our sins and feed and nourish us to everlasting life. Make good use of your baptism and the promises that were signed and sealed on your forehead. Remember the Lord has established an eternal covenant of grace with you and adopted you to be his children and heirs and therefore will help you through trials, suffering, hardships and death. Remember and believe what your baptism and the Lord's Supper confirms to you. Jesus died for your sins and is your Saviour.





Observations

By G.Ph. van Popta

Taliban

Likely, most readers have, by now, heard of the “Taliban,” the ultra-conservative Islamic government of Afghanistan. The Taliban first rose to prominence in the Western media when we read about the destruction of centuries old Buddha statues in Afghanistan. Then, early August, we read about how the Taliban had arrested eight Western Christians, identified as citizens of Germany, the United States and Australia and working for the German-based Shelter Now International (SNI), a Christian humanitarian organization, on charges of spreading Christianity. And now (I am writing a week after the September 11 terrorist attack on New York and Washington, D.C.) “Taliban” is splashed all over the news media. Who are the Taliban?

Who are the Taliban?

The Taliban (“the Seekers”) was formed in September of 1994 in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar by a group of ethnic Pashtun graduates of militant Pakistani Islamic colleges on the border with Afghanistan. The members of the Taliban Islamic Movement of Afghanistan (TIMA) are led by a mullah (a village-level religious leader), Mohammad Omar.

The Taliban advocated an “Islamic Revolution” in Afghanistan. They proclaimed that the unity of war-torn Afghanistan needed to be re-established under Sharia (Islamic law). On September 11, 1996, the Taliban, whose fighting ranks are mostly filled with veterans of the war against Soviet forces, captured Jalalabad, the eastern city bordering Pakistan. Two weeks later, they pushed through to the capital city Kabul and ousted the government. President Najibullah, who had taken refuge in a UN compound after the fall of his Soviet-backed government in April 1992, was beaten and then hanged from a lamp-post in the city centre. Today the Taliban control 90% of Afghanistan.

The Taliban have applied a strict interpretation of Sharia. The “Department for Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice” is in charge of administering and enforcing the law. Their attempts to eradicate crime have been reinforced by the introduction of public executions and amputations. In Kabul soldiers search homes for evidence of cooperation with the former authorities or for violations of Taliban decrees, including depictions of living things (photographs, stuffed toys, etc.). Individuals are beaten on the streets by Taliban militia for what are deemed infractions of the rules concerning dress, hair length, and facial

hair. Women may be beaten if found in the company of men. Women must wear strict Islamic garb in public. A man who has shaved, or even overly trimmed his beard, may be imprisoned until his beard grows back.

In October 1997 the Taliban changed the name of the country to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, with Mullah Omar as head of state. Omar has assumed for himself the religious title of Emir of the Faithful. Although Omar has his advisors, ultimate authority for Taliban rule rests in him.

Osama bin Laden

The UN imposed sanctions against Afghanistan in 1998 in an attempt to force the Taliban to hand over the Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden, who stands accused by the United States of plotting the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed more than 250 people. The Taliban has said that Osama bin Laden is a guest in their country, and they will not take action against him.¹



Osama bin Laden



Since bin Laden is the prime suspect in the recent September 11 attacks, demands that the Taliban turn him over have been intensified. At the time of writing it is not sure what they will do.

Shelter Now International (SNI)

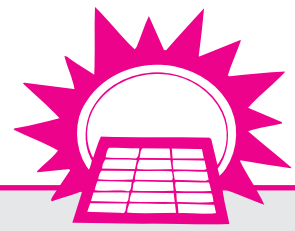
In early August of this year, eight Western Christians, were arrested for allegedly “trying to convert Afghan Muslims to Christianity.” Another sixteen Afghan staff employed by SNI in its relief work in Kabul were also arrested and jailed separately from the foreigners. The *National Post* of September 7, showed a Taliban official displaying evidence against the Christians, a copy of *Children’s Guide to the Bible*.

What will become of these imprisoned Christians in Afghanistan? A week ago the world’s attention swung to

the carnage in New York and Washington, and then to Afghanistan as the country providing refuge for Osama bin Laden. Left behind as all Westerners evacuate Afghanistan are the eight foreign relief workers who remain in prison. Forgotten by the politicians and the media are the twenty-four Christian SNI workers imprisoned for speaking about the good news of salvation through Christ. What will happen to them if the United States mounts a military strike against Afghanistan?

Pity them. Don’t forget them. Pray for them.

¹ The above information on the Taliban is derived from a number of Internet web sites and articles from the *National Post* and the *Hamilton Spectator*.



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

Psalm 105:1-4

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Trick or treat! Yes, what do these familiar words remind you of? The last day of October, or does this perhaps also remind us of a time when we can dress up and go around to homes in the neighborhood and ask for candy? Trick or treat! Is this what we should have foremost on our minds? In this article we will focus on a "treat" that happened many years ago. Yes, the Reformation, which is such a rich part of the history of the church. So often we tend to forget about the ways that the Lord has guided his church, especially when we live in a day and age where we have it so good.

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther had nailed ninety-five theses on the door of the church. What was the reason for this? The Roman Catholic church was the ruling church at that time, and they had great influence on the people on what they believed and on how they lived. The people were being told that they could only be saved by doing good works. They were being punished if they lived and acted according to the Word of God. The Lord then guided Martin Luther to go against what the Roman Catholic church believed. By nailing the ninety-five theses on the door, Martin Luther was telling the people that the only way to be saved is by: faith alone (*sola fide*), grace alone (*sola gratia*), and by Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*).

Martin Luther also had the true and simple preaching of the gospel brought back, as well as the proper use of the sacraments of Holy Supper and Baptism. Christ was again the central focus of the people's lives and not the pope. The church returned to the offices as given by Christ, that is, the office of minister, elders and deacons. Let all praise be to our God and Father for "the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might, and the wonders which He has wrought" (Ps 78:4).

This can now lead us to a question, namely, why then is it so important that we must learn and have knowledge about the history of the church? In order for us to know and understand the times that we live in, we must be aware of the past and the former developments that have taken place. When we do not study about the history of the Church, then we are very liable to fall and make the same mistakes that the earlier churches did. Therefore by studying we will be able to understand our own times and

be aware of possible dangers, and we will be able to distinguish between the true and the false church. With this knowledge, we can only but continue to praise God in the glorious deeds that He continues to shower upon us his people.

Through studying the history we can see the weakness of God's people, and how they fall away time and again from the foundation laid by God. On the other hand we also see how through God's power and grace He brings back his people time and again to the one foundation and service, because of his Name and of the covenant oath given to us.

Let us remember this "treat" that we receive from the hand of our heavenly Father. May we be comforted that He is still to this day governing his church with his Almighty Hand. Let us give Him the thanks and praise for the grace and mercy that He continues to show to us his chosen nation.

Such things we'll tell, not from their children hide them,

*That those accounts of olden days may guide them,
And we will tell the coming generation*

*How God has dealt with Israel, His nation –
The glorious deeds the LORD for them has wrought,
The wonders which His mighty hand them brought.*

Psalm 78:2

Birthdays in November:

3: WILMA VAN DRONGELEN will turn 44.
306-33375 Mayfair Avenue,
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

Congratulations Wilma, and we wish you the Lord's blessing in this new year.

Until the next issue:

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Views of a Spectator¹

By H. DeJong

Sports programs

From time to time we read a report in our school's newsletter about the welfare (or lack thereof) of the school's extramural sports teams. Although we haven't seen such a report for a while, that doesn't mean that no sports are being played. It may be that as a non-parent school supporter I do not receive the weekly newsletters, and am therefore left out of the loop of news concerning our volleyball and basketball teams. This may be the case for more of our members. However, lack of news hasn't prevented me from participating in the sports program over the past few years: I have been able to make the time to come out and cheer on the efforts of our high school students, particularly those teams which involved some of my younger relatives in capacities of players or coaches.

At one time, not being especially athletic, I tainted my outlook on the sports program as something of a novelty, a hobby horse of some, an endeavour of far lesser import than the more academic pursuits of a school. With my increasing participation, however, came a growing awareness of the value of this program to our school. Besides the more direct benefits of physical activity and athleticism, team sports in school promote a sense of camaraderie and encourage social interaction among the players, heightening their awareness of identity and fostering maturity. For a school largely isolated by its Reformed character from the perceived possibilities and attractions of public and pseudo-Christian schools, this type of program can be immensely rewarding.

There are those who would caution against such a program for reasons of maintaining precisely that Reformed character. They warn that mingling with other schools in order to have competi-

tions may well lead to a watering down of the antithesis the Lord has commanded his people to maintain here on earth. We are however in the world, although certainly not of it. Restricted as we are by geography and time from being able to stage competitions with other Reformed schools, we have the choice of limiting the sports program to being strictly intramural, or of seeking competition with other schools of similar size. Clearly the school society has opted for the latter choice. This does not

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mean that we throw all caution to the wind and abrogate our responsibilities as Reformed educators and parents to raise the covenant youth in the ways of the Lord. Although I hesitate to state that the sports program has a written mandate outlining behavioural parameters (it may/should have?), I do not doubt that the teachers/coaches involved in the program endeavour to instill in the players a sense of what it is to be Christians in a secular society. This must by definition go on at all times in a Reformed school, regardless of subject or activity. Depending on age and also on what goes on in the home, students will react differently to this kind of instruction from their teachers. Where home, church and school are all in tune concerning the Christian lifestyle, interacting with other schools in a sports setting will not be detrimental, and may even serve to attract the attention of the opponents to the uncommon behaviour of our students.

This is where being a spectator at sports outings places one in a unique position: to be able to view our stu-

dents as others might view them. And, while doing so, one can't help but observe students from the schools we visit and play against, and compare their looks, their attitude and their behaviour to those of our students. It was already mentioned that an immediate benefit of team sport activities is the enhanced level of friendship the players (and coaches and even fans) enjoy. Rarely does one witness serious rifts between players or cliques of players. Goodwill is frequently displayed by all. It always impresses me that even the "rookies" participate cheerfully, despite often being unable to get any significant playing time due to inexperience. They are generally relegated to the lofty positions of luggers of ball bags and fillers of water bottles. Yet they show up with equal zeal on each occasion. I realize that unless this is the case, these up-and-coming players are unlikely ever to reach "starter" status, and that as such they have little choice, but it is clear by their demeanour that they want to be there, want to belong, and want to eventually achieve. These are good social skills to learn early, and the teachers/coaches are to be commended for building a system that engenders these attitudes in our students.

How do our students compare?

As stated, it is natural to seek to compare our students with those of the opposing teams. In the environment of other schools, one doesn't feel as much "at home" as in our own school. One sees condom dispensers in bathrooms and anti-violence posters on the walls. One meets students with outlandishly coloured hair (sometimes just for the occasion of a tournament, sometimes permanently). One is repulsed by students adorned with jewelry ranging from minute to immense in places ranging from ears to tongues or worse, and inscribed with tattoos of similar description. One is swiftly and comprehensively grateful to the Lord for the opportunities provided by a private school operated by parents of a unified Reformed persuasion.

Yet to look at the players of opposing teams would not readily give one pause (hairdos or tattoos notwithstanding). They are not necessarily better or worse than our own students in a tangible way. Not infrequently their sportsmanship has them cheering for our players when one of them manages a particularly impressive display of ability. Sure, there are rivalries between teams that cause attitude adjustments that may result in animosity or even

I fear that . . . I've also seen the hallmarks of evil close at hand.

rudeness. There are outbursts of dismay when the score of the game precursors a near-certain loss. There is disgust over a particularly ill-conceived call by a referee. But none of these emotions are unique to the opposing teams. They are natural reactions to the flow of the game, and are displayed the world over by participants in any sport, including our students.

Right? Or have we come full-circle in our argument and short-circuited it? We agreed that the sports program was a good thing for the students, for various well-founded reasons. We stressed, however, that participation must be prefaced by the need for maintaining a Christian identity. And then we pulled the rug out by declaring that since it's sports we're talking about, it's normal that emotions run high and that outbursts and rudeness are as prevalent with our own students as they are with the (generally worldly) opponents. Out the door goes the Christian identity.

I fear that whilst observing all the good things that the sports program has meant for the students and the school society as a whole, I've also seen the hallmarks of evil close at hand. Assuredly evil lies close at hand every day of our lives and in all of our activities. It is not a product of the sports program in and of itself. Strong emotions can prevail elsewhere than in the gymnasium, with equally rude reactions. Sport without emotion and enthusiasm is like a car that's out of gas – it's not going anywhere. Frustration at missed passes, unwarranted calls, or vicious play by an opponent is indeed a natural part of playing sports, and it feeds the drive to persevere, to push on, to win despite the adverse circum-

stances! But when the frustration comes to expression in swearing and foul language, we must draw the line. For then the antithesis has gone the way of the game – it is lost. The Christian identity becomes a laugh, and the God we profess as central to the school is mocked.

Offensive

One night after a volleyball tournament hosted by another local Christian school, I returned to my vehicle to find inscribed in the window coarse and offensive language. My first reaction was that I clearly must have neglected to wash the car, for there was sufficient filth to make such an inscription possible. My second thought was: how appalling to have one's property thus besmirched on the premises of a "Christian" school hosting a tournament attended by a number of other "Christian" schools, as was the case here. By extension, I thought to myself: how marvelous that the Lord has granted us the opportunity to operate a Reformed school for his covenant children, where we can be spared these worldly afflictions. On further reflection at home (after washing the car), I came to the conclusion that I was overly optimistic in my outlook. For that very evening I had witnessed one of our players, having made rather painful contact with the gym floor after an unsuccessful dig for the ball, unmistakably utter a particularly filthy word without even a pretense of regret or embarrassment. And I can't say that that was the first time, or the last. In fact, the frequency with which our students use this word is quite alarming. Sometimes I wonder whether indeed the students using this word *know* its actual meaning.

The words mentioned here are but examples. Others have been heard, both of the foul and profane variety, on the basketball court and elsewhere. The fact that these words are used so readily in situations that are in the scheme of things completely trivial (a missed basket, or a botched serve) are a good indication that our students have not yet fully realized the perspective in which we must view our God-given lives. For what is a missed basket compared to the honour of our God? What significance does a flawed serve have when compared with the salvation our Lord Jesus Christ has achieved for us? A carelessly uttered expletive measures accurately the regard we have for hallowing God's name and glorifying his works.

Glory of God

When our teachers address the students about the use of inappropriate language, one of the standard replies is: I hear the same thing at home! As if the influences of secular society and its primary forms of entertainment (television and theatre) weren't already enough to lead our children astray, apparently these are only amplified in the home. Earlier we made the statement that participating in sports with schools outside our Reformed circles need not be detrimental when the home, church and school are in sync with a view to the antithesis we are to exhibit in a Christian lifestyle. Are we now to conclude that the sports program is to be abandoned as it inspires cursing and foul language? I hardly think so. Instead, let's abandon the cursing and foul language so that the sports program (and indeed all of our life) may more fully function as it should in a Reformed school: to the glory of our heavenly Father.

What significance does a flawed serve have when compared with the salvation our Lord Jesus Christ has achieved for us?

Students: Keep up your efforts, in academics and also in sports activities, to the glory of God. Drop the expletives, also as a witness to the world.

Teachers: Continue your efforts in educating, coaching, encouraging and reprimanding. Stimulate the covenant youth to live holy lives, to the glory of God.

Parents: Pray for the continued well-being of the school (students, staff and board), so that the environment the Lord has allowed us to create for the education of his covenant children may prosper. Be an example of godliness for your children, to the glory of God.

Education Matters is a column supported by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association of Ontario. Please send reader responses or articles which you think could benefit the reader to Arthur Kingma at acres@kwic.com or to Clarion.

¹This article was originally written for the Parkland Immanuel Christian School audience, but the author agreed to share his message with all the Canadian Reformed Schools and their supporting communities.





Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario held at Grand Valley on September 21, 2001

Opening

Rev. P. Aasman, chairman of the convening church at Grand Valley, calls the meeting of delegates to order and requests the singing of Psalm 103:1, 2. He reads Isaiah 1:1-20 and leads in prayer. A word of welcome is extended to the many visitors. A special welcome is given to Candidate C. Vermeulen, who is at this Classis to undergo his peremptory examination.

Examination of credentials

The credentials are examined by the delegates from the church at Fergus and found to be in good order.

The churches are represented by the following delegates:

Brampton: Rev. B.J. Berends and Elder S. Tenhagen

Chatsworth: Rev. P.G. Feenstra and Elder R. Kruisselbrink

Elora: Elder H. Nobel and Elder J. Post

Fergus: Rev. J. Louwse and Elder B. Niezen

Grand Valley: Rev. P. Aasman and Elder B. DeHaan

Guelph: Rev. J. VanWoudenberg and Elder C. VanderPol

Orangeville: Rev. R.E. Pot and Elder E. Kampen.

Constitution of Classis

Rev. Aasman, on behalf of the church at Grand Valley, declares Classis Northern Ontario of September 21, 2001 as constituted.

Appointment of Officers

The following officers are appointed:
Chairman - Rev. P.G. Feenstra;
Vice-chairman - Rev. B.J. Berends;
Clerk - Rev. P. Aasman.

Adoption of Agenda

The chairman thanks the convening church at Grand Valley for preparing this Classis and by making its facilities available for this classical meeting. The agenda is adopted after adding some matters of correspondence. He extends a special welcome to the rep-

resentative of the United Reformed Churches, Rev. A. Merwin, minister of the Grace United Reformed Church at Guthrie.

Peremptory examination of candidate br. Carl Vermeulen

The chairman welcomes the Revs. D.G.A. Agema and G. Wieske, who are present as deputies Regional Synod, art. 48 CO. After examining the required documents br. Vermeulen is given the opportunity to deliver his sermon proposal on Isaiah 1:18-20. Immediately afterwards Classis enters closed session to discuss the sermon. In open session it informs br. Vermeulen (and the many visitors) that the examination can indeed continue.

He is examined on the following subjects:

Old Testament – 2 Chronicles 33 and Lamentations 2

New Testament – Matthew 18 and 2 Peter 1

Doctrine and Creeds and Knowledge of Scripture.

Classis breaks for lunch. It reopens with the singing of Psalm 3:2. The chairman draws attention to the terrorist attack of Tuesday, September 11. He stresses that all things are in the hand of the Lord and that He remains a Shield of His people under all circumstances.

Candidate Vermeulen is then examined on his knowledge of Church history, Ethics, Church polity and Diaconology. Classis enters closed session once again and with concurring advice of Deputies Regional Synod decides to sustain the examination of br. Vermeulen. In open session the chairman informs br. Vermeulen, his wife and the many visitors of the result. He wishes br. and sr. Vermeulen the blessing of the Lord, as well as the church at Elora on the blessed outcome of the examination. He reads the subscription form (art. 26 CO), which br. Candidate Vermeulen signs without any hesitation. The chairman also thanks the Deputies for their participation at this examination and bids them farewell. We sing the praises of the Lord with Hymn 5:1,2, the chairman leads in a thanksgiving prayer, and gives an opportunity to wish br. and sr.

Vermeulen the blessing of the Lord. After receiving a declaration from the two office bearers of the church at Elora that the proper announcements re Candidate Vermeulen's call have been made on two consecutive Lord's Days Classis decides to approbate this call.

Address by and response to Rev. A. Merwin

The chairman gives Rev. Merwin the opportunity to address the delegates of Classis. Rev. Merwin brings fraternal greetings from the Southern Classis of the URC. He expresses his appreciation for the manner in which the peremptory examination was conducted. He considers it a privilege to be at this Classis to experience first hand the bond between his and our federation. He wishes the blessing of the Lord on our mutual work of service as members and office bearers of Christ's churches in our respective classical regions in Ontario.

The chairman, br. Feenstra, responds in kind by stressing our common foundation, which is Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. He expresses the need to do our mutual work as office bearers in our respective federations in submission to Him, and stresses the importance of coming together on that one Foundation.

Reports from the church visitors

Reports are read of the church visits to Brampton, Elora, Fergus, Grand Valley, Guelph, Orangeville, and Owen Sound. They were received with gratitude, all expressing the presence of the Lord by His Spirit and Word. Reports from the treasurer, from various committees, and from the churches responsible for the auditing of the financial transactions were taken good note of as well.

Question Period according to art. 44 of the Church Order

The chairman asks the delegates as representatives of their respective churches in this classical resort whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. These two questions are answered in the

affirmative by all the churches. He then asks whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgement and help of Classis. Two churches ask advice on matters of discipline. Classis enters closed session and after some discussion advises these churches to proceed with the next step of discipline. The chairman wishes the churches the wisdom and strength with these often difficult and time-consuming disciplinary matters.

Correspondence received

Committee for Needy Churches – Classis adopts the Committee’s recommendation: “That the respective classes decide that in respect to the fund for needy churches, each Classis assumes responsibility for its own region only, effective as on the end of the year 1999 as per the committee’s proposals.”

The convening church of Regional Synod East, Nov. 7, 01, requests election of delegates for this Synod

The last held Classis Ontario South communicates that their classical region

will be divided into Classis Niagara and Ontario West as of January, 2002.

In response to the invitation to attend the next Classis of the URC, Southern Ontario, Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2001, Classis appoints Rev. Aasman (and Rev. Berends as alternate) to represent the churches in this classical region at this URC Classis.

Appointments

Convening church for the next Classis is the church at Guelph. The suggested officers for the next Classis are Rev. J. Louwerse, chairman; Rev. P. Aasman as vice-chairman, and Rev. P. Feenstra as clerk. All the appointments as per article 7 of the classical regulations are made. The church of Orangeville is appointed to send a representative to the ordination of Candidate C. Vermeulen.

As delegates to the Regional Synod East, November 7, 2001, were appointed:

The Revs. P.G. Feenstra, J. Louwerse, and R.E. Pot;

As alternates the Revs. J. Van-Woudenberg, P. Aasman and B.J. Berends;

Elders: the brs. E.L. Niezen, J.W. VanOmmen, and F. Westrik;

As alternates the brs. J. Jonker, H. Hutten, and R. Kampen.

Personal Question Period

Various questions are asked and answered. The delegates receive the information that Rev. R. Knigge has declined his call by the Church of Toronto to the Mission field in Papua New Guinea, as well as the passing away of br. Sarumi, a much appreciated co-worker to Rev. S. ‘t Hart.

Censure according to art. 34 CO is not required.

Acts and Press release – The Acts of Classis are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

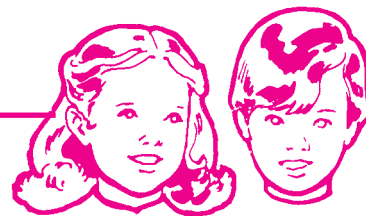
Closing

After delegates sing the praises of the Lord, the chairman leads in a word of thanksgiving and prayer, and closes the meeting.

For Classis B.J. Berends, clerk e.t.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I have become very sad lately. I thought I had lots of friends and only three or four of them wrote me letters during their holidays. I write and I write, but no-one seems to want to answer me. And I feel very upset. I have gotten no new friends either, at least not for some time. Some of my friends used to even make up puzzles or jokes and send them to me. But not for quite a few weeks. That gets me very down, you know.

Do you enjoy getting mail, either by “snail-mail” or by “e-mail”? I love getting mail from friends, especially when they send me some fun news or some exciting news.

How about you write me something, something to cheer me up. I would really appreciate that, you know. I have, however, received an e-mail from a parent who was wondering how their children could become members of the Busy Beaver Club. I will NEVER refuse to allow anyone to become a member of the Club. I love new members and all members are welcome. However, if you wish to become a member, you must request membership.

The information you will also need to send me are your name, address and date of birth. Those are three very nec-

essary pieces of information to be added to your letter. For the rest, you may tell me whatever you like. You may ask questions if you wish, but I am not allowed to tell you who I am or where I am from.

In the last edition of the *Clarion*, most of the articles dealt with Remembrance Day. Do you know what that is about? Many years ago, possibly even your grandparents or great-grandparents went to war against Germany, because Germany wanted to take over the whole of Europe. So many other countries fought against them and finally won. But it was a hard and very difficult time for all the people, either fighting or at home.

Imagine how it would be if someone in your family, your dad or your brother or your uncle, had to go to war. How would you feel about that? You would be waiting and always wondering whether they would ever come back to you. But even in those times, God looks after us and always keeps us in His care. He will always provide. Remember that.

Love from
Aunt Betty

Puzzles

This puzzle was made by *Busy Beaver Rhonda Wiersma*.

It came too late for the Remembrance Day edition last year, so I have kept it to put into Our Little Magazine this year.

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 S L T R E A N C I Z A N A S I D D A U U N I F O R M S W S T H I

Find:

Murder	Canada	British	Bombs	World War One	World War Two	Bullets	Poppy
Death	Red	Fire	Uniforms	Machine Guns	Flanders Field	Joy	Tears
Men	Sadness	Americans	Nazi	Churchill	Starvation	Hate	Japanese
Allies	Jews	D-day	Germans	Cattle Cars	Korean War	Trenches	Holland
Tanks	Hitler	Russia	Armistice	Remembrance Day	Die	Dog Fights	

TRUE OR FALSE

- “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?” is the first verse of the first Psalm 2. There is no book in the New Testament beginning with a letter late in the alphabet than ‘T.’
- The first five books of the Bible are often referred to as ‘the Pentateuch.’
- Mary and Martha lived at Bethphage.
- The island named “Melita” in the bible is now called “Malta.”
- Joseph had a dream about seven thin cattle eating up the seven fat cattle.
- Moses led the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan.
- It was a Troas that Paul saw a vision of a man saying, ‘Come over into Macedonia and help us.’
- Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had had prepared for Mordecai.
- The widow whose son Jesus raised from the dead came from Zarephath.
- Elias was another name used for Elisha.
- A centurion was a man in charge of a hundred soldiers.
- Ahab, King of Israel, was killed when a certain man drew a bow at a venture and smote him between the joints of his armor.



Aunt Betty

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