

# Clarion

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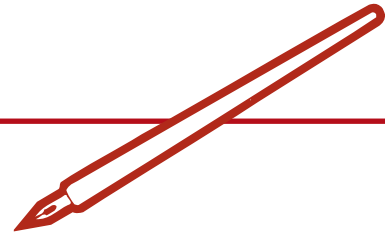
*Numbers*

*10:1-10*

*Streetlight  
Ministries*

INSIDERS!





By J. De Jong



## How to Reach Out?

The work of evangelism remains a challenge for the church. How do we reach out to the world around us? What sorts of programs do we use? Some suggest that we need to bring the church to the world. We need to tailor the church to seekers. But our strategy ought to be different! We need to bring the world to the church! In the parable of the great banquet, the master says to the servant: “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled!” (Luke 14:23).

### *How do we become a missionary people?*

We may be grateful for the projects that have been initiated in our churches. Over the years with increased opportunities in our church life, congregations have been developing and organizing structured evangelism programs. However, there’s still some disagreement concerning the way this is to be done. How do we become a missionary people? In this editorial I will offer a few suggestions with regard to the programs that churches should develop for outreach and evangelism which grew out of discussions with students in our course on evangelistics at the Theological College.

#### **Planning**

First, programs should exhibit adequate planning and preparation. Evangelism activities should not be done on a whim, but should be the result of a careful planning process. It is not a matter of loosely scattering some seeds, but of a prepared and structured approach to previously established target groups, incorporating at the same time a detailed follow-up plan. For example, church evangelism workers should divide the community into various neighbourhoods or sections, and then plan a projected set of activities for each defined neighbourhood.

#### **Supervision**

Furthermore, channels for supervision and oversight should be set in place. Here I am not referring to the supervision of the consistory over the church’s organized evangelism programs, although that too is an important element in the process. I refer here to the team of workers who plan the activity from inception to follow-up. When members of

the church retain control over the program, then you are not bringing the church to the world, but bringing people of the world to the church! There’s no doubt that in the process one will meet with negative words and even at times unacceptable behaviour. But with members of the church controlling the program, they will pastorally deal with these sorts of situations as they arise.

#### **Assigning tasks**

Third, we need to retain some forms of division of labour in our approaches. Donald McGavern, who spearheaded the church growth movement at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, distinguished between sodalities and modalities. The sodality represented a mission team designed to win and bring people into the church. The modality was the corporate or group structure of the church that received the new members and made them feel welcome in the flock. I question whether we need such an elaborate distinction, but the blueprint itself is worth considering: we need front-line people and then a group of back-ups – helpers and assistants, receivers and welcomers.

*You cannot just tell people about the gospel and leave them with their broken homes, or broken marriages and families.*

This is especially the case in today’s culture. Invariably in evangelism, people are going to come across serious social problems. In fact, some target groups, such as, for example, inner city neighbourhoods, will have a very high incidence of social, economic, and psychological problems: alcoholism, broken homes, marriage problems, youth rebellion, and so on. In a book published towards the end of his ministry, Rev. J. Arnold of Amersfoort, Holland raised the question: how do we deal with these sorts of situations in our evangelism efforts?<sup>1</sup> These problem situations are more common than ever in today’s modern city. He suggested that we need support agencies to help deal with these situations. You cannot just tell people about the gospel and leave them with their broken homes, or broken marriages and families. You also do not help the situation by simply giving money to these people.

Behind our "front-line workers" we need congregations which have organized support groups who meet regularly and who are ready to provide diaconal and spiritual assistance to problem afflicted situations. The outreach church is a diaconal church!

**Promote involvement!**

As a fourth point, churches should vary their chosen target groups according to the gifts and opportunities existing in the congregation. Often churches are content to carry out a particular pamphlet blitz in the neighbourhood of the church building. That is then regarded as the extent

*What's inside?*

There has been recent dialogue in *Clarion* about certain evangelistic efforts within our churches. Dr. J. De Jong who teaches a course on evangelistics at our Theological College offers his insights on how to prepare for and supervise evangelism efforts. His editorial will offer food for thought to all of us.

The editorial is nicely backed up by a report on the work of *Streetlight Ministries*, an evangelism endeavour in the Hamilton area, in which Richard Bultje is working with much blessing from the Lord. It is encouraging to see the light shining in the darkness.

Dr. R. Faber presents us with the first of a two-part series about the place of Martin Luther in the Reformation. Apparently, there is still misunderstanding about the struggle in which Luther was involved. Hopefully Dr. Faber's articles will help to clarify our understanding of Luther's important work. Dr. R. Faber's articles are an adaptation of a speech delivered in Chatham on October 31, 2001, where brothers and sisters from the Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed, Orthodox Christian Reformed, and United Reformed Churches were present.

Dr. J. Visscher introduces us to some need-to-have books. Those who know Dr. Visscher realize that he has a real talent for sniffing out valuable books. His advice is always appreciated. We also have a book review on a recently published book of Dr. C. Van Dam, *Perspectives on Worship, Law and Faith: The Old Testament Speaks Today*. It also comes well recommended.

*Education Matters* by A. Kingma enlightens us as to the principals' conference which took place at the beginning of the school season. It is good to see that the principals of our schools are getting together for highly informative speeches and discussions. May this be a blessing to our covenantal schools.

We have some press releases, a letter to the editor, and a couple of regular columns. We also have an article which commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of Dr. J. Faber in the ministry. Dr. Faber has been a real blessing to our churches. He is also well remembered for his articles in *Clarion*. May the Lord continue to bless him together with his wife.

RA



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**IN THIS ISSUE**

Editorial – How to Reach Out? — J. De Jong .....250  
 Treasures, New and Old – No Saviour Besides the  
 LORD — C.J. VanderVelde .....253  
 Dr. J. Faber – Fifty Years — J. De Jong .....254  
 Letter to the Editor .....255  
 Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Beginning of  
 the Reformation (Part 1) — R. Faber .....256  
 An Introduction to Streetlight Ministries  
 — Karen Dieleman .....259  
 All About Books — J. Visscher.....262  
 Book Notes — R. Aasman .....264  
 Education Matters .....265  
 Ray of Sunshine .....267  
 Press Release – Classis Northern Ontario,  
 Classis Pacific West.....268

of the evangelism effort for another season. But we need more than a pamphlet blitz, although they have their place. Specifically chosen target groups need follow-up, and invitations to programs held at the church should provide an additional pull for outsiders. Hosting discussion evenings on relevant social topics will also trigger greater community involvement. The real question here is: are we making use of the talent in the congregations, especially among those who have more time and opportunity to be involved in these activities?

### Follow-up

Further, the church's outreach agencies need to be channels of healing and support as well. An evangelism team will be sure to have a network of back-up people to whom difficult situations can be referred: a lawyer, a doctor's office, social workers, and so on. With the announcement of the Word of life comes the will and desire to bring healing in life. To be sure, all churches are limited by budget constraints, broader obligations, and limited resources. But a caring church in a given community looks not only to the immediate neighbours (although they are included) but to the community as a whole. It asks the question: with the opportunities given to us and the resources we share, how can we be a light in this community, and with the Word, provide help in the best possible way?

*While retaining our Reformed identity we can and ought to introduce such adaptations in evangelism settings that facilitate bringing people a message they can understand and to which they can relate.*

### Training

Target groups take on all forms and shapes today. Some are culturally conditioned, others socially conditioned. However, generally speaking, we have a more literate and articulate society than generations gone by. Both on our front lines and in our follow-up teams we need people who are "ready to give an answer to anyone who asks concerning the hope that is in you" and yet doing that "with reverence and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Our follow-up outreach requires people who will be able to interact with questions, oppositions, rebuttals, challenges, and so on. Paul says: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (Col 4:6). Should not a component of our pre- and post-confession training also include a unit on how to interact with your neighbour in the world on the issues of the gospel?

Already in the thirties, J. Gresham Machen, the central figure surrounding the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, used the techniques of apologetic, argument and interaction in his radio addresses designed to reach outsiders.<sup>2</sup> Since his day we can point to a flood of literature dealing with defending the Christian faith against its "cultured despisers" or its implicitly prejudiced rejecters.<sup>3</sup> Leading figures in this area were C.S. Lewis and F. Schaeffer

(among others), and while in some respects one may dispute their approach and methods, they developed and also assisted others in developing the gifts of convincing opponents and refuting errors according to the principles of the Word of God.<sup>4</sup>

Being communicators of the word of life takes skill and training. Should not our societies, Bible study groups and youth clubs, long devoted to training our members in knowledge, maturity and understanding, also serve as forums to develop the skills of discussion, interaction, and debate in dealing with the "outsiders" God puts on our path? (1 Thess 4:5).

### God gives the growth

Lastly, programs need to be evaluated in terms of their results. We know it is never a matter of numbers in evangelism. Opposition to the gospel also implies that numbers may decline. Sometimes people leave after being a part of the church for a brief period. They become critical and dissatisfied. We cannot hide the *antithesis* of the gospel. Indeed, the message is specifically for those who by God's grace can become like children, Matthew 18:4. However, at times our own programs can put up hindrances for people to remain in the church.

We do not need to bring the church to the world but the world to the church. However, in doing so, the church is and can be an *accommodating* people. That is something different than being a *compromising* people. Paul became a Jew to the Jews and a gentile to the gentiles, "all things to all people," in order, as he says "that I might win some" (1 Cor 9:16). While retaining our Reformed identity we can and ought to introduce such adaptations in evangelism settings that facilitate bringing people a message they can understand and to which they can relate.

### Forbearance

Evangelism is a challenging task, fraught with a good deal of danger, disappointments and trials. Finding one's way is not always easy in uncharted waters. But we do make progress if in these areas we strive to be a hand and a foot to each other, and avoid entanglements which only foster an "ingrown" spirit. The church of Pentecost had the "goodwill of all the people" (Acts 2:47). Should not the Pentecost church of today strive for the same goal?

<sup>1</sup>J. Arnold, *Als de kerk kerk is*, (Oosterbaan en le Cointre, Goes, 1986)

<sup>2</sup>See J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, (W.B. Eerdmans, Grand rapids, 1936) and *The Christian View of Man*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1937)

<sup>3</sup>The phrase is from F.D.E. Schleiermacher.

<sup>4</sup>See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Collins, London, 1955) and F. Schaeffer, *How should we then live?* (F.H. Revell, Old Tappan, N.J., 1976).



*Dr. J. De Jong is principal and professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.*

By C.J. VanderVelde

## No Saviour Besides the LORD

*"I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no Saviour."*

Isaiah 43:11

In our North American society, there are Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, adherents of even less familiar religions, as well as Christians. In this pluralistic society, the politically correct view is that all religions are equal. But the LORD says: ". . . apart from me there is no Saviour" (Isa 43:11). The Christian faith presents itself as an *exclusive* faith: there is no other religion of equal value. In fact, orthodox Christianity teaches that all other religions are *false*. There are no other gods than the LORD God.

In Isaiah's day, God's people fell into the mistaken idea that the Baals were also worthy of worship. This angered the LORD so much that He was going to send his people into exile in Babylon. Judah had spurned the LORD's love, and now Judah was going to feel the LORD's anger.

But Isaiah could also proclaim the comfort that the LORD would not abandon his people in exile. He was going to deliver his people. From east and west, from north and south, the LORD was going to gather his people together (Isa 43:5-7). The LORD was going to glorify his name among the nations lest any of them say that He was too weak to protect his own people (cf. Ezek 36:22-24). The LORD did not want the nations to think that their gods were better because they had conquered and deported Judah. That is why Isaiah could proclaim comfort to Judah: God's people would return from exile! The LORD was going to keep his covenant promises for the glory of his name in the presence of the nations. The LORD would demonstrate that He alone is God!

And so the LORD issues a challenge: let the nations assemble and let them

bring forward witnesses. Which of the nations was told by its gods that Judah would return to its land (Isa 43:9)? Which of the gods had foretold the other events in Judah's history? The LORD knows that all so-called gods will fail the test. By contrast the LORD says that his people are his witnesses (Isa 43:10,12) because Judah's history is a living testimony to the fact that the LORD is God. The history of the LORD's way with his people is a witness to the nations. The LORD made promises of salvation in the history of his people, and He fulfilled them. The LORD says: "'I have revealed and saved and proclaimed . . . You are my witnesses' declares the LORD, 'that I am God'" (Isa 43:12). Think of the exodus from Egypt, which the LORD had promised, and which He brought about (cf. Isa 43:16,17). God's people should have known this and also *confessed* that the LORD is God alone!

In the middle of all this, as a climax, we read: "I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no Saviour" (Isa 43:11). This may be Judah's certainty as it hears Isaiah proclaiming a return from exile. No one will be able to withstand the LORD for as the LORD himself says: "When I act, who can reverse it" (Isa 43:12)?

The LORD speaks very emphatically: "I, even I, am the LORD. . . ." And He connects his name with *salvation*: ". . . apart from me there is no saviour." The *covenant God* is the only Saviour! For, the name *LORD* is God's covenant name, and with this name He revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush and promised to deliver Israel from Egypt, thereby showing his covenant faithfulness (Exod 3). Apart

from covenant fellowship with the LORD, there is no salvation.

The New Testament teaches us that apart from the fellowship which we have through faith with Jesus Christ, the Saviour whom God the Father sent into the world, there is no salvation. Besides Jesus Christ there is no Saviour! He alone unties us from the slavery of sin and death. Throughout his dealings with Israel in the Old Testament, the LORD was working toward the coming of this Saviour. The slavery of Egypt and Babylon symbolized the slavery of sin and death; the deliverance from Egypt and Babylon symbolized the deliverance from the slavery of sin and death. Moreover, the gathering of the exiles from the corners of the earth foreshadowed the gathering of all God's people from the corners of the earth. As Christ said: ". . . many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11). All those whom God created for his glory will be gathered in (cf. Isa 43:7). In Christ alone rests salvation. Our Saviour said it like this: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

As Christians in a pluralistic society, let us not be afraid to stand up for the exclusive character of the Christian faith. Apart from the LORD, there is no Saviour. This is the reason for mission and evangelism. To God alone be glory, now and forevermore.



*Rev. C.J. VanderVelde is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Yarrow, British Columbia.*



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# Dr. J. Faber – Fifty Years

By J. De Jong

With gratitude to God, Dr. J. Faber was able to celebrate his fiftieth anniversary in the ministry on Sunday January 20, 2002. He did so by preaching on the same text on which he preached when he started his journey in ministry in the city of Deventer on January 20, 1952. The sermon had been translated and updated for style by his son, Dr. Benne Faber, who teaches English at Mount Albion University in New Brunswick. It was a joyful occasion for the Church of Hamilton, for whom Dr. Faber has meant much over the years.

The first charge was Deventer in Overijssel, where the Fabers lived for six years. Already in this period he published his first articles on various issues living in the churches. He spoke on current issues, such as the impact of modern theologians like Prof. Gerrit Berkouwer, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

In May 1958 he accepted the call to the west of the country, the Church of Schiebroek- Hillegersberg (Centrum), a neighbourhood on the periphery of Rotterdam. He then began to develop his gifts as a preacher and pastor in the larger city congregation.

The desire for further study and academic work never left him. He was part of a group of younger ministers who formed the academic journal *Lucerna* in 1958, and as editor he also contributed several articles and reviews to the journal, specifically dealing with the developments in modern theology, and those surrounding Vatican II and the movement to openness in the Roman Catholic Church.

His interest in Reformed education also developed itself in his Rotterdam period. He joined the staff of the Reformed Lyceum (High school) in Rotterdam as a part time teacher of Reformed doctrine. Many of the young men among his students later found



their way to the Reformed seminary in Kampen!

Next to all this he was able to pursue academic work in the form of further studies at his *alma mater*, the Theological College on the Broederweg in Kampen. He completed the requirements for the “doctorandus” examinations in May, 1958, and then began working on a dissertation. The work, which could only be done in a part-time capacity next to his many other duties, took ten years to complete under the guidance of Kampen’s dogmatician, Prof. Dr. L. Doekes.

At the encouragement of several teachers, including Dr. K. Schilder, Prof. Faber went into the vast and almost unquantifiable area of patristics. Three “fathers” in particular held his attention in his doctoral dissertation: Cyprian, Optatus of Mileve, and Augustine. The topic was limited to the idea of baptism as a trace or mark of the church, but one will readily understand that here not only one’s view of the sacraments comes into the picture but also one’s view of the church, and the place of the church, the offices and the means of grace in the salvation work of God.

In a way we can say: the dissertation marks the professorate. In a sense, the figure of Augustine sets the tone for all of Faber’s dogmatic work. He began in Hamilton with a concentration on the catholicity of the Reformed standards, proving that although they have place names limiting them to specific geographical locations, yet they seek to maintain a catholic norm; this is the mark of the church universal. The authors of the Belgic Confession saw the document as representing the faith of believers all over the world, especially in the countries of persecution in Europe.

In many other articles he has written these and similar themes return. His lectures too, served for us as a constant reminder that the gathering of the church did not begin with us! How he loved to lead his students back to the fathers, and to the early reformers, especially Calvin and the authors of the catechism. Some of this was made clear for English readers with the publication of his *Essays in Reformed Doctrine*, a collection that covers various periods in his ministry.

Beyond these leaders it may be mentioned that Dr. Faber has always retained a special appreciation for

the work of Abraham Kuyper. Living as a youth in Amsterdam, the city of Kuyper, he breathed in the air of post-Kuyperian world: the growing Free University, the development of Reformed life in the political and social sectors. In his classes he never withheld his critique on Kuyper's perspectives, especially the leading ideas of pluriformity, common grace and presumptive regeneration. However, the deep respect for this great academician and statesman always shone through.

The work at the College involved many different duties for Dr. Faber. He was involved in the initial structuring of the curriculum, the setup of the lecture schedules, the process of receiving government recognition, and so on. But I think that through all this, he was most at home in the classroom. He is a born teacher, and the blackboard was often filled with charts and diagrams in order to outline schematically the relationships between various heresies, philosophies, movements and ideas. In his own inimitable way, he shaped the

perspectives of a generation of ministers serving in the churches!

Next to his academic work, there were the years of church work in Hamilton, especially in the times of vacancy. Dr. Faber served on a long list of synodical committees, was instrumental in building the educational institutions in the east, and also served to give guidance and leadership to the congregation in Hamilton. Besides all this, he preached regularly in the churches, wrote articles for *Clarion* and other magazines, and served as editor for a time. In all his labours the Lord gave health and strength.

The years of retirement have been productive and enjoyable for him and his family. He has continued to publish articles, attend academic conferences, and to preach regularly in the churches. Somehow preaching has remained his first love! He has continued to preach with zeal, right up to the fiftieth, even while combatting various ailments. The Lord has been good!

Also on behalf of *Clarion* we may say Salve, Professor! May the Lord give



Accepted the call to the church at Smithville, Ontario:

**Rev. A. Souman**


of Zaltbommel and Tiel, Netherlands.

\* \* \*

Accepted the call to the church at Edmonton (Immanuel), Alberta and declined the call to Vernon, British Columbia and Burlington-Waterdown, Ontario:

**Rev. W.B. Slomp**

of Neerlandia, Alberta.

you continued years of joy and gratitude in his service, with your wife and children and the many grandchildren that also fill the household! 

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Letter to the editor:

After having read Rev. G.Ph. van Popta's article in *Clarion* of February 15 about politics, I also read the article "Islam welcomed in the West" in the next issue of *Clarion*. Then I rubbed my eyes and thought: "Is this the same Rev. van Popta as the one who wrote about politics?"

In the Islam article he quoted twice about more than 1000 people attending meetings introducing Islam and he closed with a prayer: "Lord preserve your church!"

In the article of February 15, he mentioned taking out membership in the CHP but ended up with: "Eventually we let our membership lapse." Then he became somewhat optimistic when Stockwell Day became leader of the Alliance Party, for which Ray Pennings gave a good show. Ray Pennings also gave a good show in the late 80s in Hamilton Wentworth for the CHP but afterwards he figured that Reform would be a better choice.

I like Mr. Day, but not his party that voted 96% against confirming the preamble of the Constitution: The Su-

premacyp of God and the rule of Law. Mr. Day may be a serious Christian but his party ties him just as much as his opponents in media and parliament.

And now Rev. van Popta is promoting ARPA. That's fine! I hope that ARPA will take root this time and not die a silent death again. I am a poor organizer myself and too old for the excitement, but I hope ARPA gets a promoter here in Guelph and I will support him as much as possible.

However, I will ask Rev. van Popta the same question as I asked Peter Veenendaal: What are you going to do with the knowledge and wisdom that you will acquire from those ARPA meetings? What do I mean? I mean: "How are you going to put it to a good use?" How are you going to get people to write to their MP, PM or to the editor of a newspaper? Here in Guelph there is just one person of our congregation who writes letters to the editor once in a while. There should be many more, and not just from Guelph.

What are you going to do when the next election is called? Vote for the party that saddled us with abortion on demand like the Liberals? Or for the party that kept it up unchanged like the

Conservatives; or for the party that promoted it with gusto like the NDP? Or are you going to vote for the party that lets other people make its decisions as Pontius Pilate did?

I don't think that you are one of those people who go for a party that promises material benefit rather than showing by your vote that there are lots of people who are disappointed by the immoral way this country is ruled.

People say that abortion is not the only issue and that there are more important matters. First of all the CHP is not a one issue party but has at least eleven more issues in addition to abortion. But most of all: What is more important than the life of a 100,000 innocent babies? Who would like to make a million dollars if it would cost him his life? Life is worth more than any material gain.

It's time that our people, especially the younger ones, get thinking about this and at the next election try to get some experience working as candidates in order to leave a moral inheritance for the next generation.

H. Metzlar  
Guelph, Ontario

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# Luther's Ninety-Five Theses and the Beginning of the Reformation (Part 1)

By R. Faber

## Introduction

According to a tradition that may be traced to the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation began on October 31, 1517.<sup>1</sup> It was on this day, so the story goes, that a young Augustinian monk by the name of Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. While the publication of the theses is remembered even in the twenty-first century, not everyone recalls how it was used by God to start an important reformation of the church. What caused Luther to write the theses? What issues do they treat? What immediate effect did the publication of the theses have? Most importantly, why is it worthwhile for us today to recall this date in history, and what is its relevance to the modern church? In reflecting upon the beginning of the Reformation, I would like to recall three things: first, Luther's motivation for writing the theses; second, the significance of the contents of the theses; and third, the consequences of their publication. We shall conclude with some comments about the value of knowing the theses today.

## Causes

The reason why Luther composed the theses was that God by the power of his Holy Spirit led him to gain an insight into Scripture that had been obscured for generations. This insight developed over time, and may have dawned as early as 1513. In that year Luther was lecturing on the book of Psalms, and he noticed that they are to be read in a Christological way. That is to say, he saw that the Psalms point to the Lord Jesus as the only one who is able to bear the wrath of God for the sin of the human race. When he read

the words, "in thy righteousness deliver me" (Ps 31:1), Luther came to understand that God's righteous deliverance comes only through Christ. In Psalm 22:1, to give another example, he read David's well-known words, "why hast thou forsaken me?" Looking at this Psalm from the perspective of the New Testament, Luther realized that it points to the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on himself the iniquity of us all. Seeing that this book of the old dispensation shows that the way to salvation is not via works of the law but by way of faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice, Luther began to question the emphasis which the Romanist church placed on justification by works.

*Luther thus became convinced that we must acknowledge our sins and inability to be righteous in ourselves, so that we seek our salvation outside ourselves.*

By 1515 Luther was rereading the book of Romans, which impressed upon him the justice of God, according to which He clothes the sinner with the righteousness of Christ. Then Luther realized that "the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith." Luther thus became convinced that we must acknowledge our sins and inability to be righteous in ourselves, so that we seek our salvation outside ourselves. Now these scriptural teachings may seem obvious to us, but at the beginning of the sixteenth century

they were being obscured. To be sure, this "reformation discovery" needed to be developed, but at the time of writing the theses, Luther had learned that Scripture teaches a righteousness different from that taught by the church of his day. In sum, the primary cause for composing the theses was the rediscovery of important biblical doctrines.

## Indulgences

Closely related to this theological motivation for writing the theses was Luther's reaction to practices that had arisen from false teaching. For it was also in response to the sale of indulgences that Luther was provoked to write. You will remember that an indulgence was a paper issued by the pope in Rome, on which is stated that the bearer is granted partial or complete remission of the punishment that is due to acts of sin. Indulgences released the sinner from earthly punishment imposed by the church. During the eleventh century these indulgences were granted to people returning from crusades to the "holy land" as a token of a completed good work.

After the eleventh century the sale of indulgences was developed into a wider practice and became part of a sacrament. The sacrament of suffering the punishment for one's sin was called penance. Following a sinful act, the believer was to develop a contrite heart which caused him to confess his sin to the priest. Upon pronouncing the remission of guilt for Christ's sake, the priest requested an act of satisfaction. By making satisfaction, the sinner experienced the temporal punishment for the sins that had not been removed by absolution. This act, or good work, could consist of fasting, prayers, alms, endowments, or purchase of indulgences.





*Frederik the Wise*

By 1400 such remission of temporal punishment was granted to all who paid the church for it, and after 1476 indulgences could be purchased also for the dead in the supposed realm of purgatory. While the purchase of indulgences offered salvation to the people, to the church it provided vast sums of money that were used to finance wars, major economic projects, and the like. In the areas of Germany not far from Wittenberg indulgences were sold by Albert of Brandenburg, the would-be archbishop of Mainz. Pope Leo X had required him to pay 21,000 ducats to assume the new office, and Albert, who borrowed the money from a family of bankers, planned to pay off the loan by selling indulgences. The pope permitted this arrangement, as he needed the funds to complete the building of St. Peter's basilica in Rome. In exchange for supporting the construction of a proper resting place for the apostles and other saints, the advertisement said, buyers obtained a full remission of all sins.

Luther, as a parish priest concerned for his flock, noticed that people travelled to the nearby town of Marburg to obtain indulgences from the one appointed to sell them, John Tetzel. Luther saw that people preferred to purchase the external sign of piety rather than to show true repentance in their hearts. Tetzel's sales were not permitted in and around Wittenberg itself, because the governor, the elector Frederik ("the Wise") of Saxony had financial concerns of his own. In order to build a new bridge over the river Elbe, and to maintain other holdings, he required considerable sums of money. Therefore Frederik obtained his own letters of indulgence from the pope, and planned to organize a festival for 1 November,

when a special sale of indulgences would be held. To make the Castle Church an attractive venue, Frederik put on display a large collection of relics. Relics, you will recall, are remnants of saints or of the objects they used; to pray or confess in their presence was considered a good work. It is reported that more than 19,000 relics were set up for viewing. Those who viewed the relics on the appointed day, and made the required contribution, would receive a full reduction in time in purgatory for themselves or others.

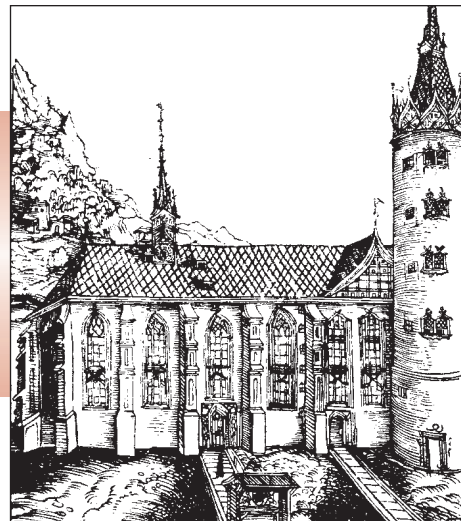
As the church had not developed an official teaching of penance and indulgences, Luther wished to engage fellow priests and theologians in a debate about the sacrament, and to that end wrote the ninety-five theses. The theses are statements of a perceived truth; fellow priests were to come forward with arguments and proof-texts in favour or against each statement. Thus Luther intended honestly and piously to promote the teaching of the church. But

Luther hoped also to make a statement, for it was in reaction to Tetzel's sermons announcing the sale of indulgences that he was provoked to write them. There has been some debate about the evidence for the posting of the theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg on October 31, but the consensus remains that Luther did issue them on this day. The fact that they were written in Latin shows that primarily theologians were the intended readers. Luther sent a copy of the theses to arch-bishop Albert, and wrote an explanatory letter to his ecclesiastical superior, bishop Jerome Schulze of Brandenburg. At the time he did not know that the theses would set into motion a re-examination of many doctrines and a popular rebellion against the Romanist church. The impact of the theses was much greater than Luther had imagined, and the question arises: what was it in the theses that caused so much reaction?

### Contents

Having considered some of the causes for writing the theses, let us summarize next their contents. Unfortunately, no original text of the *Ninety-five Theses Against Indulgences* survives.<sup>2</sup> We do know that thanks to the newly invented printing press the theses quickly were multiplied and also translated into German; two copies of the theses in poster format and one in booklet form survive today. We do not have the space here to consider all ninety-five theses, and discuss only some of the most important ones, while noting others briefly. Even so, it will become clear that the contents of the theses are so significant that they may be deemed as signalling the start of the Reformation.

*The Castle Church at Wittenberg*



Thesis One reads as follows: *When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "repent," he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.* Here Luther refers to Matthew 4:17 where the Lord Jesus says, "repent for the kingdom is at hand." The Reformer interprets the text to mean not "perform an act of penance," but to live a life that is marked by an attitude of sorrow for sin. In the *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, published in 1518 as an unfolding of the concise statements, Luther quotes Romans 12:2 to show that repentance refers to the conversion of the heart: "be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Repentance is not a sacrament, an act of confession and satisfaction, as the Romanist church seemed to teach; it is a radical change of heart which affects the entire life of the believer.

To make it clear that Matthew 4:17 is not a proof-text for the sacrament of penance, Luther posits a second thesis: *This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.* While he does not say so explicitly, Luther hints at the conviction that penance is not even a sacrament. In other words, we see in its early form the criticism of one of the seven sacraments of the church; this criticism Luther later applied to other "sacraments" and the re-examination of all the sacraments became a hallmark of the Reformation. This thesis is a good example of a public statement that had greater impact later when its consequences were considered.

Having made these two claims, Luther wishes to warn the reader that true penance is important. Looking again at the text of Matthew ("repent

for the kingdom is at hand"), Luther posits Thesis Three: *Yet it does not mean solely inner repentance; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortifications of the flesh.* This important statement is included because Luther knew from Scripture's testimony to his own conscience that it is not easy to live the life of a Christian. Yet there should be no inconsistency between our confession and our actions: one can't claim to be a Christian and not act like one. Luther knows that the Lord Jesus also commanded believers, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works" (Matt 5:16); but such good works, he rightly argues, are the outward fruits of inner penance and of the working of the Holy Spirit. Luther reminds those who purchased indulgences and then lived like unrepentant people, that their outward actions should reflect inner faith.

*Luther reminds those who purchased indulgences and then lived like unrepentant people, that their outward actions should reflect inner faith.*

In theses Five through Seven Luther treats the power of the pope. It should be noted that at this time Luther does not reject the office of pope altogether, but stresses its subservience to God. In theses Eight through Thirteen he advances the conviction that the church has no jurisdiction over those who have passed away. Once deceased, a

person cannot be under the control of the pope or the clergy, and therefore cannot be affected by the indulgences that are bought for him. Theses Fourteen through Sixteen are equally important, for in them Luther suggests that purgatory is a creation of people's own imagination. Indeed, he goes on to say in theses Seventeen through Twenty-Five, from the Scriptures or from reason nothing certain is known about purgatory. It follows that the indulgences granted by the pope cannot concern purgatory. Therefore, when preachers claim that indulgences free people from every punishment, they claim something about which they know nothing.

It is worthwhile at this point in the summary of the theses to observe that although ostensibly they deal with the sacrament of penance and the sale of indulgences, their significance is much greater. Indeed, they point to a questioning of the basic doctrines of justification and sanctification as taught by the Romanist church. How we are made righteous before God is the teaching of justification; during the Reformation the church learned that apart from works of the law we are righteous before God only by the instrument of faith in Christ and his merits. The letters of indulgence do not impart the grace of justification. The theses also concern the doctrine of sanctification. For it is true faith, worked by the preaching of the gospel and the operation of the Holy Spirit, that regenerates man and causes him to perform those works which God has commanded in his Word. While these biblical teachings were applied in the theses to the sacrament of penance and the sale of indulgences, in due time they would contribute to a complete reformation of doctrine and practice.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted text of a speech delivered on October 31, 2001 in Chatham ON, for the local Canadian, Free, Orthodox Christian, and United Reformed Churches.

<sup>2</sup>The theses as quoted derive from H.J. Grimm, ed., *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia, 1957), Vol. 31, p. 25-33.



*Dr. R. Faber is professor and chair of Classical Studies at University of Waterloo.*



John Tetzel



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# An Introduction to Streetlight Ministries

By Karen Dieleman

Streetlight Ministries is an urban mission project supported by the Ancaster and Fellowship Burlington Canadian Reformed Churches. Ancaster is the sending church for this mission project while Fellowship Burlington is fully involved in supporting the work. This article will introduce the reader to some aspects of the history and founding of Streetlight Ministries and some activities of its evangelist, Richard Bultje. Its intention is to share with the wider Reformed community the blessings of the Lord with regard to spreading within local communities the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

## Some aspects of history

The initiative and groundwork for the establishment of a local urban mission project did not begin as a formal discussion in the consistories of Ancaster or Burlington congregations. In Burlington, support for such a project began in 1995. The consistory of Hamilton had received from a congregational member a letter which discussed the outreach work being done in downtown Hamilton by a few Canadian Reformed theological students. This letter stressed that the work could only truly continue if the church became officially involved. Because of its role as a sending church for mission work in Brazil, Hamilton felt it could not adequately undertake this additional responsibility, but via a letter, it encouraged other churches in the Hamilton area to consider taking on this important work. In response, Fellowship Burlington appointed an urban missionary committee to begin initial investigations.

In a separate course of events, some members of the Ancaster congregation had been talking about the need to do mission work in the local area. They formed an ad hoc committee in 1997 to discuss, formulate and present to council a report outlining the possibilities



*Ministry Centre.*

of appointing a mission worker for the greater Hamilton area. With the encouragement of the Burlington committee and council, which, after a lot of groundwork, had been unable to proceed with its plans, the ad hoc committee presented a report to the Ancaster consistory. The consistory responded by appointing an interim local Mission Worker Board in 1998, with the mandate to plan and recommend a person to be hired as mission worker. Just a few months later, the councils of Ancaster and Fellowship Burlington churches agreed to co-sponsor an urban mission project. A permanent Mission Worker Board, consisting of representatives of both consistories with additional members from the two congregations, was established and a mission worker was hired.

## Mission worker and ministry activities

The first newsletter of the Mission Worker Board to its supporting congregations began with an acknowledgment that this project was in response to “a vision first shown to our federa-

tion through the writings and the ministry of the late Rev. G. VanDooren over 25 years ago.” The newsletter then introduced Richard Bultje as the newly hired mission worker. At that time, Richard already had a wealth of knowledge and experience in sharing the gospel with those who didn’t know the truths of Scripture. Courses at Redeemer College and the Theological College had taught him much through books and lectures, and volunteer and work experiences in Christian relief organizations (for example, two years in Papua New Guinea), youth detention centres, Asian fellowship gatherings, local mission services and the Big Brothers organization had taught him much through experience.

When he was hired as an evangelist, Richard was able to turn his full attention to the activities he was already engaged in. He also established new Bible study groups and outreach projects, some of which will be described below. Richard’s first newsletter to the congregations of Ancaster and Fellowship Burlington concluded with Paul’s words to Timothy: “For God did



*New Year's Eve celebration at the ministry centre.*

not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord . . ." (2 Tim 1:7-8). Streetlight Ministries is thankful for God's goodness in providing an evangelist who is not ashamed to testify about our Lord.

The specific activities that Streetlight Ministries is involved in are many and varied. As evangelist, Richard plays a leading role in most of these activities. Over time and with guidance, some of the activities have come to be directed or assisted by volunteers from the supporting congregations. Not the least of these contributions comes from Richard's wife, YuKyung, who hosts many a guest at their lunch or supper table and accompanies Richard on visits to individuals' homes for Bible study. Their son Calvin is a favourite among the downtown people who have been reached by Streetlight.

What follows is a series of excerpts from newsletters and reports to give a sampling of activities, motivations, prayers, insights and blessings that God has graciously granted to us through Streetlight Ministries.

#### **From newsletters and reports:**

- September 1998: Richard writes about his experience with men in a downtown residence and drop-in centre: "Although most of the men came from very mixed-up backgrounds, they all felt a strong need to be loved, and desired a listening ear. . . . Most of them had been enslaved for so long to an offensive lifestyle that they had a very diffi-

cult time shaking loose the chains that they knew were destroying them. It was a real eye-opener to see how sin can totally destroy human lives."

- February 1999: Richard writes, "Through the Mission Worker Project, people are being drawn to respond to God's promises. . . . Although some people are just not interested in hearing the Gospel, many others are willing to listen if approached in the right way. . . . When we address our neighbours we should not be too hasty in saying they do not want to listen to the gospel. We have to exhaust all avenues. We have to sacrifice time and effort to get to know them. At the same time we have to show them that we do have hope in our lives and that our hope comes from

the promises God has made to us in the Bible."

- February 1999: The minutes of a board meeting note "that there are many volunteers already from each congregation."
- March 1999: Richard writes, "In the past month I have been blessed with bringing the truths of God's Word to an extended family with a Roman Catholic background. It is beautiful to see their desire to know what the Bible has to say. For many years they had a desire to know the truths of God's Word but did not know where to start."
- March 1999: The board writes, "We have a new name and with it a logo. Christ tells us to be a 'light in the world,' meaning on the street, in the workplace, or at home, and thus the board has chosen the name: STREETLIGHT Ministries. The logo depicts a light post with four different street signs: Truth, Faith, Hope, and Love, which are some of the virtues we as believers must have. The logo is multi-coloured in orange, green and black."
- April 1999: The minutes of a board meeting note that the facilities of a downtown church have been rented to give Streetlight Ministries a permanent and visible 'face' on the street.
- December 2001: Richard writes, "Bible studies are the heart of Streetlight Ministries. The majority of these are one-on-one, but more and more group Bible studies have been started. . . . Some weeks I visit



*Presenting the gospel to some youth between periods during an evening of road hockey.*



8 different individuals one-on-one. The background of these people ranges from lapsed Christianity to Muslim to no recognized faith background. Going from one person to the next often causes me to enter a whole new world view. For this reason I have to have a whole different approach for each person. . . . Another area that I have been involved in for a long time has been my work with children and youth. . . . After a summer break, kids' club, girls' club, road hockey and basketball are all in full swing again. In each case, games or crafts are combined with a Bible message. We have seen some growth not only in the number of people coming out, but also in the quality of the time that is spent with the kids and young people. This is mainly due to the longevity of our relationships with them. Through time, trust has been established. . . . In the last few months, we have also been able to run a Sunday night outreach service from the building we rent as our Ministry centre."

- December 2001: A volunteer writes of his experience on the summer canoe trip for downtown youths: "Throughout the trip and especially during our devotions, we talked about the fact that there is a God who created not only us but the whole world around us. We talked of how God has revealed Himself not only in creation but also in His Word. We also discussed what God expects from us in our lives. . . . When all was said and done, there were few complaints. One said we did too much canoeing but no one complained about having regular devotions."
- December 2001: Another volunteer writes of her experience with kids' club: "Most of the children usually greet us with hugs and high fives. For this growing bond we are extremely grateful. . . . We have seen incredible changes in some of the children – the desire to please, obey, and learn about Jesus can be seen – but temptation is often just around the corner for them, desiring them to fall."

### Giving and receiving

In a way, Streetlight Ministries has been as much a test of our desire to



*Volunteer counselor discussing matters with Martin in the early morning on the final day of our trip.*

show the love of Christ to others as it has been a blessing to those who are hearing the gospel for the first time. As individual believers, we have been challenged to step out of our comfort zones and meet face-to-face and without prejudice those who come from a different social and economic background. Many of the visitors Richard brings to church on Sundays have never been in homes like ours, driven vehicles like ours, worn clothes like ours. As a congregation and as individuals, we have been forced to examine whether we are genuinely eager to share the pew with those whom the world despises. Do we truly see that, stripped of our outward trappings, we are one with these people in our sin and our need of redemption? That Christ's love for us does not preclude his love for them? If we have been newly awakened to the message of the gospel by the presence of Streetlight Ministries, we have once again been astounded by God, who turns giving into receiving.

A comment in an document preliminary to the establishing of Streetlight Ministries reads as follows: "The involvement of the congregation is vital in making this endeavour a reality. This work can involve many church members and provides many opportunities to witness. This would not only benefit the Home Mission effort, but would strengthen [the church members'] own spiritual life as well." In Ancaster and Burlington, we have experienced the truth of this statement and can testify along with Scripture that "with the measure you use, it will be

measured to you – and even more" (Mark 4:24).

### Conclusion

The recent words of a board member serve well as a conclusion to this article: "'God has blessed this ministry!' This statement is becoming more and more clear to us (the Board) as we go about the administration of Streetlight. It is the highlight of each board meeting to hear the monthly updates on the various activities. It is truly heartwarming to witness the effect of Richard's patient persistence. Moreover, the budget has been met each year and we go forward in faith, relying on God to provide the means to continue."

Without a lot of precedence to rely on, founding an evangelist project and charting a direction for its future has been a challenging experience for the people involved. Even now, discussions continue as to vision and long-term planning. Even as we move along the path of learning, though, we see that the Lord is blessing Streetlight Ministries in many ways.

The Board of Streetlight Ministries and the supporting councils and congregations of Ancaster and Fellowship Burlington solicit your prayerful support for the work of Streetlight Ministries. It is our hope that other Reformed Churches will be encouraged to begin formal mission projects in their local communities, knowing that the Lord has instructed us to let our light shine in this world, also on the streets closest to our homes. To Him be the glory.



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# All About Books

By J. Visscher

A number of new books have found their way into my study since taking over as editor of *Clarion*. I would like to introduce you to them.

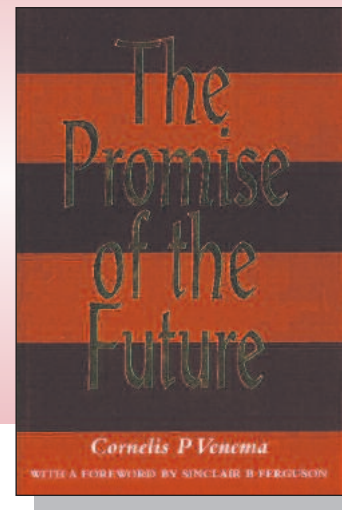
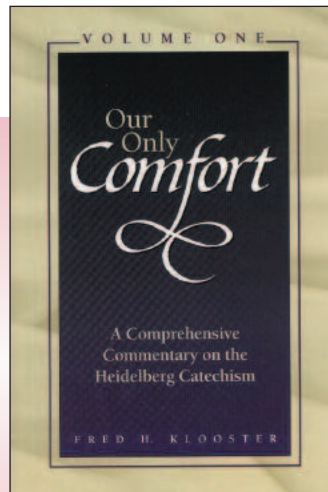
## A new work on the Heidelberg Catechism

Pride of place has to be given to Fred H. Klooster's two volume work called *Our Only Comfort* (Grand Rapids, Faith Alive). This happens to be – would you believe it? – a 1272 page study on the Heidelberg Catechism. As such it represents a crowning achievement in the career of Dr. Klooster, who for many years has taught theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. He is also well-known as a leading scholar on the Heidelberg, and thus we welcome his contribution.

What is all included in this lengthy study? The text of the Catechism is supplied in both German and English, a detailed exposition is given of each Question and Answer, words studies on important terms are added, doctrinal summaries can be found here and there, historical surveys are also given, and finally there are applications for preachers, teachers and students of the Catechism. Not to be overlooked are also some valuable appendixes.

Closer examination indicates that the real strength of Dr. Klooster's work lies in the area of historical theology. He gives valuable information about the theological issues that were current in the time that the Catechism was written. He also makes frequent reference to Ursinus and Calvin.

As for his expositions, they tend to vary. Many are excellent and suggestive for preaching and teaching, others are not so helpful. Indeed, when one takes a closer look, it is evident that the Lord's Days 1-31 receive much more attention than the Lord's Days 32-52. The former cover 881 pages, while the latter take up only 268. This means that you will experience some disappointment when you come to the third



part of the Catechism. For example, I found his treatment of Lord's Day 38 (the Fourth Commandment) to be so brief as to be disappointing. The same can be said for more Lord's Days in this section.

In addition, this work would have benefitted from the inclusion of more exegetical insights and biblical illustrations. Finally, I would have hoped for some more interaction between the subjects addressed in the Catechism and contemporary issues.

So what is my overall evaluation? Criticisms aside, I must say that I am impressed with the scope of this work and must commend Dr. F.H. Klooster for his labours. His study goes a long way to filling a real need and must be acknowledged as the definitive work on the Heidelberg Catechism now available in the English language.

Hence I would urge my colleagues, especially those who do not read Dutch, to add this work to their libraries. I know that it will hurt you to do so. After all, it will cost around \$150.00

Canadian. But then what are book allowances for? As for church librarians, if you are looking to buy the most comprehensive modern commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, this is it!

## A new work on the study of last things

In a day and age wherein the *Left Behind* of Jenkins and LaHaye series is all the rage, we need some biblical clarity when it comes to the Bible's teaching on the last things or eschatology. Well, we have it in Dr. Cornelis P. Venema's new book called *The Promise of the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000). Much of the material in these 539 pages first appeared in serialized form in *Outlook* magazine.

And comprehensive material it is! Dr. Venema deals with all of the basic areas: the intermediate state, the second coming, the signs of the times, Israel, tribulation, rapture, Antichrist, premillennialism, postmillennialism, Revelation 20, the resurrection of the body, final judgment, eternal punishment, and



the new heaven and new earth. There is also a glossary of terms at the end of this book, and that is beneficial, for anyone who ventures into this particular area of theology really does need it.

One of the basic merits of this book is its readability. If you are looking for something that is very technical, you will have to look elsewhere. On the other hand, if you are searching for a book on this subject that is clear, well-organized and reliable, you will find it here.

Indeed, Dr. Venema is to be highly commended for giving us a sound Reformed study on what is, for many, a very confusing topic. Readers, here is a book to add to your family and church libraries. And, if I might add a further suggestion for Bible study groups, order W. Hendriksen's book *The Bible on the Life Hereafter* (Grand Rapids: Baker) and use it as a guide but then read Venema's book along with it. It will make for a most rewarding season of study.

### A book on the Song of Songs

If the study of the doctrine of last things tends to be confusing and complex, one could say much the same thing about that Old Testament book called *The Song of Songs*. Here too there are all sorts of interpretations, positions and studies. One of the newest ones is from the pen of a former profes-

sor of Old Testament studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, who is now teaching at Westmount College in California. He is Tremper Longman III and he has written *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans). It is one of the newest volumes in the New International Commentary on the Old Testament series.

Although I am not aware of anyone who makes a habit of reading commentaries from cover to cover (although there may be such a rare creature out there), it is quite common at least to read the introductory chapter in order to discover the author's approach. In this regard Longman does not believe that this Song was written by King Solomon, and in that he is not alone, seeing that most recent commentators have rejected his authorship. In addition, Longman rejects both the long-standing Jewish and Christian allegorical interpretations, as well as the more modern dramatic approach which sees a certain definite plot in this song. Instead, Longman champions the view that the Song is a collection of love poems – twenty-three to be exact.

Now, I do not share either Longman's views on authorship (I remain committed to the youthful Solomon as author) and interpretation (a careful dramatic one makes the most sense to me); nevertheless, I do think that there is much to be learned both from the in-

roduction and the exegetical remarks in this commentary. Longman has added another fine piece of work to a Bible book that is suddenly no longer lacking in helpful commentaries.


Hence, if you have a particular interest in this Bible book, be it personal or as part of a study group, consider purchasing this work. It is a model of careful and reliable biblical scholarship. Having said that, however, I would recommend that something else be obtained as well, namely Tommy Nelson's *The Book of Romance*. Together, they will lead you into an edifying and – dare I say it? – exciting study of this part of God's most holy Word.

### A book on gracious Calvinism

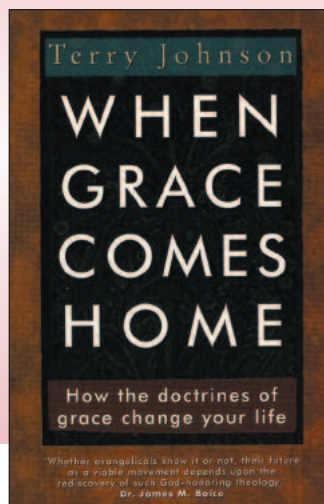
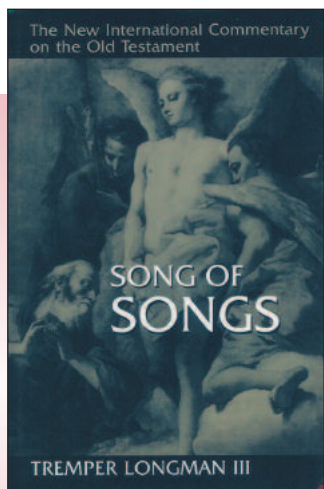
Finally, there is one more book that I wish to bring to your attention. It has been written by Terry L. Johnson and it is called *When Grace Comes Home* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus). For those of you who are not familiar with this author, he is the senior pastor of the historic Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia.

I happened to stumble across this book in a local Langley bookstore. After buying it, I took it home and read it. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that I devoured it in one evening. Thereafter, I went back to the store and ordered six more copies to give to others. In short, I can recommend it to you highly.

Why? The answer lies partly in how it is written, which is in a very clear and lively style. Yet the answer lies even more in what is written. Pastor Johnson gives a sub-title to his book and it is called "The Practical Difference That Calvinism Makes." Being a Calvinist myself, I am always looking for books that present the main tenets of Calvinism, or the Reformed faith, in a reliable, readable and applicable way. Well, Johnson does that in spades!

Here you have a great explanation of what it means to be Reformed or Calvinist today. Hence, if you need a personal refresher, or if you have children, grandchildren or friends who could use one, head to your local Christian bookseller and order this book. It will do you, and them, a world of good. 

*Dr. J. Visscher is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia.*



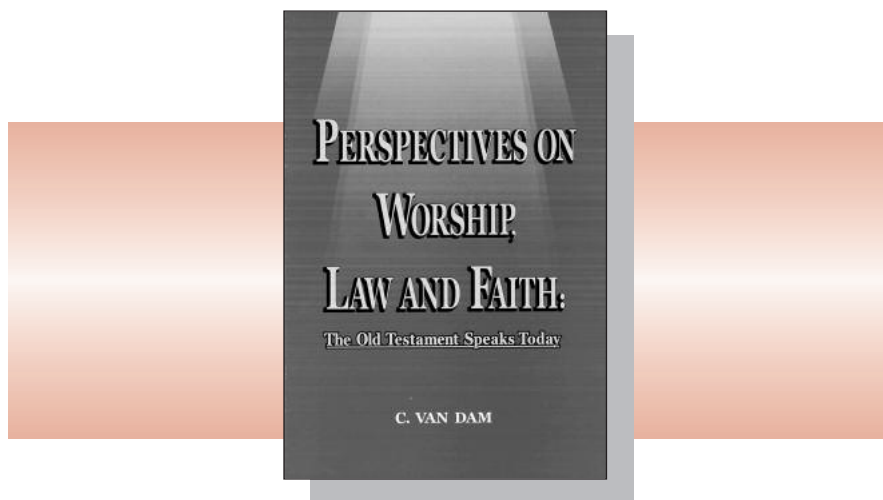
# Book Notes

By R. Aasman

C. Van Dam, *Perspectives on Worship, Law and Faith: The Old Testament Speaks Today*. Kelmscott, WA: Pro Ecclesia, 2000; Price \$11.95 Can. Available from Inheritance Publications

This book of a little more than 100 pages, contains four addresses which Dr. C. Van Dam delivered in Australia in the summer of 1999. Dr. Van Dam is a professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario. It is understandable, therefore, that his addresses focus primarily on his field of Old Testament studies. However, what is striking is that Dr. Van Dam deals extensively with both Old Testament and New Testament passages. He takes a thoroughly redemptive-historical approach to his subjects. This is an Old Testament scholar who always has the New Testament in perspective. Dr. Van Dam's lectures are clear and easy to follow. They also contain practical advice which relates to our situation today.


The first essay, *What is Worship?* underlines what an awesome thing it is that the almighty and holy God comes to his people so that we may know Him and worship Him. Dr. Van Dam applies this also to the modern worship service and what the implications of worship are for today. The second essay, *Clean and Unclean*, deals with the laws of clean and unclean in the Old Testament. These laws impressed upon Israel the reality of sin and death, and made them look to the coming Christ who fulfilled the law. After Pentecost, the New Testament church no longer needs to keep the laws of clean and unclean. However, with the greater blessings of the New Testament era also comes the responsibility to be clean and holy with our whole life before our holy God. In the third essay, *Where is the Old Testament Deacon?* the point is clearly made that although the Old Testament does not have the office of deacon, the princi-



ples of caring for the poor were manifestly established by God. Dr. Van Dam carefully outlines these principles as they are found in both the Old and New Testaments. He includes practical applications for our situation today. This essay is valuable for deacons and church members alike.

The fourth and final essay, *Faith and Reason*, examines the relationship of faith and reason in relation to God's revelation. The validity of God's Word does not depend on human logic or reason as many scholars have supposed. God's Word is valid because it comes from God. Once that is understood, mankind can use Scripture in an intelligent and logical way to praise and glorify God in every aspect of life. Dr. Van Dam makes clear that he is only intro-

ducing this subject; for more extensive reading he provides other works. But he makes clear the dangers of scholasticism and how they are to be avoided. This is particularly helpful for young people who attend secular college and university where human reason is hailed as superior to anything else. We only need to think of how secular education promotes evolution as a fact, over against the creation account in the Bible. This is a must read for our young people, as well as for us all.

As a preacher, I found Dr. Van Dam's book very helpful in understanding many Scripture passages, particularly from a redemptive-historical perspective. It will be a welcomed by anyone who appreciates gaining insight and understanding into the Scriptures. 



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## “Stand at the cross roads and look. . .”

### Review of the National Principals' Conference – September 2001

By A. Kingma

Nestled in the foothills of the Rockies, yet with a vista seaward, lies Cedar Springs, the conference centre used by twenty-four principals of the Canadian Reformed Schools. The principals began their three-day conference on a beautiful sunny Monday morning. Brother Apko Nap opened the conference with a theme text from Jeremiah 6:16 which says “Stand at the cross roads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” He then connected this theme text with Psalm 139 and with the topic which we discussed throughout the day: postmodernism.<sup>1</sup> After his introduction entitled “Postmodernism for Dummies,” we were well prepared to hear our guest speaker for the day, brother Gerrit Van Middlekoop, an editor of *de Reformatie*, and a former principal of a Christian school in Amersfoort. Both speakers mentioned the general characteristics of postmodernism, sharing that it is the present spirit of the times, and showing how we, in education, need to face up to the challenges that postmodernism presents. I will mention only some challenges which they presented to us.

1. Postmodernists say that no one grand story or paradigm can explain everything; grand stories are oppressive, tyrannical, enslaving and violent. Christians' grand story of creation-fall-redemption-last day must be erased from our culture – from politics, media, schools, textbooks, library books, etc. Our challenge, then, is to ensure that our teachers know the whole story well: biblical revelation and the story of the church throughout history. Another challenge is to ensure that we have Reformed, Christian curriculum and literature.
2. Postmodernists want us to deconstruct language, because language

controls. Meaning is only when the reader dialogues with text – not in text itself (e.g., King James language controlled the English language far too long; we need modern translations for today's meaning). In the light of this teaching, we are challenged on constructing meaning of scriptural and confessional language. We need to reveal the meanings of words like God's love, covenant, redemption, sanctification, and that can already be done in Bible and church history lessons.

*Our challenge, then, is to ensure that our teachers know the whole story well: biblical revelation and the story of the church throughout history.*

3. Postmodern proponents state that we do not have fixed anchors (principles or truths); therefore, we end up with a culture of moral instability. We are challenged to know what our fixed anchors are, and to know why they are non-negotiable or fixed.
4. Perhaps because it is technologically possible, but because it also fits the philosophy of the postmodern mind, culture is whatever you want it to be: one may borrow from any culture you want. Pick the style or music or religion that suits you the best. To refute this teaching, Christian educators are challenged to instill a Christian culture – one that is always governed by God's Word.

We are at the crossroads in education: we must respond to postmodern thinking. Christians can, according to Mr. Nap, state that we are people of the Book; people with a Reformed world-life view; people with historical redemptive preaching, people with a covenant perspective, people with church history and confessions. Brother Van Middlekoop mentioned that we should see ourselves as “children of God.” As children of God, we confess that He is the basis of our existence, that He speaks to us through his Word, that all our actions must show love to Him, and that we should see God's work in

us as part of his ongoing work with his church in this world.

Knowing that students are fellow children of God should make us educators keenly aware of our task to assist them for a life of service in a post-modern world. We need to recognize what we must highlight or emphasize as we teach. We need to provide values and norms based on Scripture; we need to provide a framework to evaluate and to work with the facts; we need to provide a thorough course of studies in religious education; and we need to use the right didactic approaches so that children may appropriate, internalize, and use knowledge, insight and skill willingly wherever God demands their services.

After Monday morning's speeches, we enjoyed good fellowship, a wonderful atmosphere, and superb food. During our discussions and workshop sessions, we discussed details raised or missed by the speaker. During lunch, we caught up on local or regional school news. After workshop sessions, we could care for the physical side of ourselves by walking the trails or by climbing up the hills to look out over the Fraser Valley. After a scrumptious and festive dinner, we could be lulled to sleep by listening to educational news from every province, only to be awoken and revived by the humorous understatement and hyperboles of the Albertan representatives, or by some wonderful accents and colourful words used by our Australian representative, brother Jack Swarts.

#### Tuesday

After a delightful Tuesday morning breakfast, we were joined by Rev. Cl. Stam, who spoke to us on the meaning of covenantal education. This speech was peppered with humor and constructed around “old” speeches on covenantal education, but he concluded the whole speech by emphasizing that the covenant is still a good and workable basis for Reformed education. Let me share some of the nuggets of his speech.

Covenant means faith, and faith means activity, the activity of confessing God's name also in our schools. Schools, therefore, must have a covenantal or confessional character. That character should be displayed in the teachers,

methodology, curriculum and students of the school. Teachers should pray about their work, and should interact with students beyond the classroom, because students, especially teenagers, says Rev. Stam, “don’t care what you know unless they know that you care.” Teachers should respect students as covenant children of God, and should therefore help them in their needs. Teachers should reach the affective domain of the students, but should not have affective outcomes for the students.

The curriculum of a covenantal school should be Christ-confessing or Christ-centred: it should have the “four r’s,” cognitive and skills objectives, and should accommodate the needs of all covenant children.

Our schools, being confessional in nature, are places for covenant children. These children want lasting relationships, also in our schools. They are scared of the real world (fear of marriage break ups, being left out, bullied, etc.). They are very open to present culture and other faiths right now. They struggle, so don’t ask them, “How do you know that you are a child of God,” but rather state, “You are a covenant child of God, so let’s work out the problem together.” And because our children are covenant children, it is not the task of the teachers to bring the child to faith, but it is their task to affirm the covenant relationship as they instruct these children.

Tuesday afternoon was spent in workshop sessions. In these sessions we worked out different aspects of brother Van Middelkoop’s speech, which we then shared with each other on Tuesday evening. The next morning, we were back in the meeting room, ready to hear brother E. Vanderboom (Langley) deliver his power-point presentation on “Due Process – Develop-

ing a Biblical Framework.” He clearly stated his position that policies for due process should no longer be a matter of tradition or whim, but should be a well-thought out and agreed-upon written policy. Credo Christian High School developed a due process policy that has three parts: Principles that direct, Process that enables, and Appeal process. Although Credo was indirectly motivated to write this policy by the Ministry of Education, yet it is important – and the endeavour was well worth doing – that each school does have a due process policy. Policies cannot cover every case, but are then used by schools as guidelines for every case. A copy of the policy was given to each principal.

*Our schools should remain covenantal schools, for it is because of the covenant that we have our schools.*

### Wednesday

We could conclude the conference by a Wednesday evening panel at the Langley Canadian Reformed Church open to the public. The panelists, Rev. E. Kampen, Rev. Cl. Stam, and Br. G. Van Middelkoop, all spoke on the thematic topic of the conference: “Postmodernism, Nurturing Faith, and the Role of the School.” Of course I can only share a few of the things that were spoken that night. We must not change the content of what we believe, but in our postmodern culture we need to change the *delivery* of the content. Biblical and confessional language must remain meaningful for our young people. The schools need not work on faith formation, nor should schools stick only

to the academics, but along with the home, schools should focus on “living out the faith preached.” In curriculum and discipline, our schools should maintain high standards, as high as the Bible says, “You should be holy for I am holy.” We should not focus on turf guarding between church, home, and school – although there are distinct tasks for each, but should “know how to answer everyone, making use of the times.” Our schools should remain covenantal schools, for it is because of the covenant that we have our schools.

The atmosphere at the resort was great for collegiality and congeniality. Any time “off” could be used for reflection, for discussions on other local or specific issues, or for encouraging one another in our tasks – very necessary for younger principals or for principals who are feel quite isolated. We did notice differences of opinion, backgrounds and regionalisms at this conference, but in an atmosphere of openness we could move ahead in keeping the unity among our Canadian Reformed Schools. It is for this reason that these principal conferences must continue to address topics that relate to the basis and need of our schools, and this conference did exactly that.

Thanks to the two main organizers, brothers A. Nap and P. Torenvliet, for setting up this principals’ conference. Thanks to the personnel of Cedar Springs and to the Ladies Auxiliary of Lynden for snacks, baking, drinks and other wonderful foods. Thanks to all the boards for sending their principals, thus recognizing this conference to be a worthwhile event for the bond of principals and for the bond of our schools. May the Lord bless our work at this conference, and our continued work because of this conference.

<sup>1</sup>Postmodernism denotes a shift in world thought from modernism. Some say that postmodernism began in 1989, when the Wall of Berlin crumbled. Modernity was the belief that man could find truth, not in the Christian faith, but in science and reason, and in technology and progress. (See Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff’s book entitled *Postmodernism: A Christian Appraisal*. Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1999.)

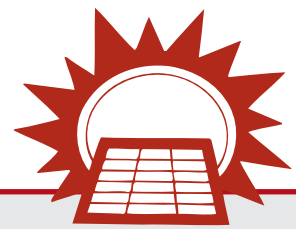
*The Education Matters column is supported by the CRTA-East. Reader responses or articles can be sent to [abkingma@kwic.com](mailto:abkingma@kwic.com) or to Clarion.*



*Arthur Kingma is principal of Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School in Ontario.*







By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.” Psalm 62:1, 2*

## **Dear Brothers and Sisters:**

In the business of everyday life, it is very comforting to read these words of the Bible. Everywhere we turn there is an increased amount of hardships, sicknesses, loneliness, and so on. The papers and TV spell it all out for us. When we look around us, we can easily despair at what we see.

Also in Christ's church many are afflicted with many difficulties. We do not escape the harshness of this broken world. We know that because of man's sin that life will not always be easy. When it comes to a loved one who has to suffer, it becomes even harder. Often we will never know why a loved one has to suffer so much. We do know that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18). We are assured of a future with God where it will be free of sickness, and sorrow. It will be perfect in every sense.

David writes it so beautifully in Psalm 62, when he tells us that our soul will find rest in God alone. He also put his trust in God alone, knowing his salvation comes from God alone. These may seem like such easy words to say when everything is going well in our lives. But when the Lord puts trials on our path, it is not always so easy. It is then that these words have a true meaning if we let the Lord work them in our hearts. When we pray to God to help us in time of need, He will never forsake us. His Fatherly care over his children is always there. We know that He is there by his Word and Spirit. Also in all creation, we can already see his almighty presence. When we find our rest in Him, it will give us unspeakable comfort. "Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me" (Ps 63:7,8).

The promises given to us at baptism stand firm forever. We are heirs of his covenant and are his children by adoption. Our Lord knows our thoughts before they are even on our lips. As it says in Psalm 139:4: "Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord." What an awesome God we have! He also knows all about suffering. His Son suffered more than we will ever know. For his only Son to cry out "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" demonstrates words that are of such intense suffering. It is beyond our human understanding to know what this meant for our God. Let us through the trials of life find rest in God alone. Each morning when we awaken, our soul can once more find rest in Him alone. In Him we will never be shaken.

With this Ray of Sunshine article, we would like to make special mention of a young sister who lives out West, who is a member of our sister church in Yarrow.

She is going through a very difficult trial in her life. Her name is Mirjam Binnendijk. She is the wife of Herman Binnendijk and mother of Celina. Several years ago Mirjam was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour. She received radiation treatment, which had some success in stalling the growth of the tumour. As of late however, the tumour has begun to grow again. Doctors have informed her that further radiation treatment is not possible and that there is no other treatment options for this type of tumour.

Mirjam at present is undergoing her second dose of chemotherapy. She does not want to give up hope. She is trying everything possible to help herself get better. On May 1, she will have an MRI done to determine the results of the chemo treatment.

As the body of Christ we need each other and must work together in all things. We therefore ask all of the household of faith and as brothers and sisters in the Lord to remember Mirjam and her family in your prayers. We ask that you petition God in your prayers to give them the extra measure of strength needed during this very difficult time. Mirjam's address is listed below as well. Cards of encouragement can also be very uplifting to her. Thank-you and the Lord's blessing to you all.

*My faithful Saviour keeps me in his care;  
Without my Father's will cannot a hair  
Fall from my head; He shall for me prepare  
A heavenly habitation.  
All things must serve to further my salvation.  
His Holy Spirit brings me consolation;  
He makes me willing now with veneration  
In hope His yoke to bear.*

*Hymn 49:2*

## **Herman and Mirjam Binnendijk**

42079 South Sumas Road  
Chilliwack BC V2R 4W3

P.S. Mirjam also hopes to celebrate her twenty-fifth birthday, D.V., on June 8.

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman  
Mailing correspondence:  
548 Kemp Road East  
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2  
1-905-563-0380



## **Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario, March 22, 2002 in Guelph**

### **Opening**

Rev. J. VanWoudenberg welcomed the brothers gathered. After inviting the assembly to sing Hymn 40:1 and 2, he read Ephesians 5:21-33. He then led in prayer for God's blessing. On behalf of the convening Church of Guelph, he welcomed all present. A special welcome was extended to Rev. Carl Vermeulen, now present as the minister of the Word in the Church of Elora. Special welcome was also extended to Rev. A. Korvemaker, minister of the Word in the United Reformed Church in Aylmer. Thankfulness was expressed that since the last Classis, relations with the URC has developed to Phase 2. It was observed that Rev. R. Pot had declined the call extended to him by the Church of Smithville.

After the Church of Grand Valley reported that the churches were lawfully represented, Classis was constituted, and the officers took their places. They were as follows: Rev. J. Louwse (chairman), Rev. P. Aasman (vice-chairman) and Rev. P. Feenstra (clerk).

### **Agenda**

The chairman thanked the Church of Guelph for their preparations and provisions for this Classis. After some additions were made to the agenda, it was adopted.

### **Reports**

Only one church visitation report served the Classis: for the Church of Orangeville. Gratitude was expressed for the positive testimony which the visitors could give in their report.

### **Question period**

The chairman asked if the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and

whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of their church.

### **Proposals and instructions**

The Church of Guelph proposed to amend the Classical Regulations so that Classis would weigh every invitation from other churches to attend their assemblies. Furthermore, that Classis no longer delegate individuals as observers, but churches. This proposal was adopted.

The Church of Guelph further requested Classis to overture Regional Synod and General Synod to decide to no longer appoint advisors at their assemblies. This request was granted.

### **Greetings from the United Reformed Churches**

Rev. Korvemaker extended greetings to the Classis, thankful that he may attend this Classis as a fraternal delegate. He expressed his hope that we might together work to mend the brokenness of the body of Christ. The vice-chairman received the floor to reply with suitable words.

### **Needy churches committee**

Classis Central Ontario had communicated with Classis Northern Ontario, indicating that they perceive that our Classis has a continuing financial commitment to support the needy churches in their region. Classis ruled that the joint responsibility was temporary only.

### **Conclusion of Classis**

The convening church for the next Classis, Friday, June 21 is Orangeville. The suggested officers are: Rev. R. Pot (chairman), Rev. P. Feenstra (vice-chairman), Rev. J. Louwse (clerk). In the place of br. W. Oostdyk, who has retired from the Committee for Needy Churches, Classis appointed br. J.G. Hutten. Classis expressed apprecia-

tion for the labours br. Oostdyk has rendered for the Classis in past years. Question period was held. In line with a decision made at this Classis, the Church of Orangeville was requested to invite a fraternal delegate from the URC Classis Ontario to the next Classis. The chairman expressed his thankfulness that he did not need to apply censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order to any member of Classis. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved for publication. The chairman invited the brothers to sing Psalm 122:3 and led in prayer of thanksgiving. Classis was then closed.

*P. Aasman  
Vice-chairman of Classis March 22*

## **Press Release of Classis Pacific West, April 9, 2002 held in Langley, BC**

### **Opening**

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. J. Visscher opened the meeting with the reading of Ephesians 4:1-16 and prayer. He then invited the delegates to sing together from Hymn 40:1, 2 and extended some words of welcome. The Church of Houston examined the credentials and found them to be in good order. Classis was declared constituted and the following officers were appointed: Chairman: Rev. C. VanSpronsen, Vice-chairman: Rev. D. Poppe, Clerk: Rev. J. Visscher. The chairman thanked the convening church and the agenda is adopted.

### **Correspondence**

A letter was received from Classis Pacific East of March 7, 2002 requesting the continued support according to our original agreement. Classis Pacific West approved to support Classis Pacific East as per the revised budget we received.



### Proposals from the churches

The Church of Surrey proposes that seeing that we have entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church of the United States and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and have entered into phase two of discussions with the United Reformed Churches that the convening church invite delegates of these churches to attend and observe our classical meetings. Classis decided to ask Surrey to report to the next classis with a well worked out proposal regarding this issue.

### Reports

1. The church visitors reported on their visits to the Churches of Cloverdale, Langley, Surrey and Willoughby Heights.
2. The Church of Houston reported that the archives are in good order.
3. The classical treasurer reported on the income and expenditures of classis and was thanked for his work.
4. The Church of Cloverdale reported that the books of the treasurer were in good order.
5. The committee for Needy Churches of Classis Pacific East reported on their income and expenditures.

### Question period

Question period ad Church Order Article 44 was held and several churches requested the advice of classis with respect to discipline and other matters.

### Appointments

- a. Convening church for next classis, place and time:  
Church at Surrey, in Surrey's church building on June 11, 2002 with October 8, 2002 as alternate date.
- b. Suggested officers for next classis:  
Chairman: Rev. D. Poppe  
Vice-Chairman: Rev. J. Visscher  
Clerk: Rev. E. Kampen.
- c. Committee for examinations:
  1. Coordinators/sermon –  
Revs. C. VanSpronsen and J. Visscher
  2. Exegesis Old Testament –  
Rev. E. Kampen
  3. Exegesis New Testament –  
Rev. C. VanSpronsen
  4. Knowledge of Scripture –  
Rev. D. Poppe
  5. Doctrine and creeds –

- Rev. J. Visscher
6. Church history –  
Rev. J. Visscher
7. Ethics - Rev. J. Huijgen
8. Church Polity –  
Rev. E. Kampen
9. Diaconiology –  
Rev. J. Huijgen.
- d. Church visitors: Revs. J. Huijgen, E. Kampen, C. VanSpronsen (convener) and J. Visscher.
- e. Church for taking care of the archives: Smithers.
- f. Church to inspect the archives: Houston.
- g. Classical Treasurer: br. R.H. Mulder, #208-6247 – 121 St. Surrey, BC V3X 3J2, ph. (604) 596-6657.
- h. Church for auditing the books of the treasurer: Cloverdale.

- i. Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry: R.H. Mulder, M. VanDriel and J. Winkel (convener).
- j. Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Churches: H. Leyenhorst, R. Van Oene, P. Vandergugten (convener).
- k. Deputy for preaching arrangements in vacant churches: Rev. E. Kampen.

### Closing

Delegates were given opportunity for question period. Smithers requested classis for pulpit supply under the same arrangements as last year. This request was granted. Opportunity was given for Christian censure. The Acts were adopted and the press release was approved. In closing we sang from Hymn 46:1, 2 and the chairman closed the meeting with thanksgiving prayer.

*For Classis Pacific West  
D. Ph. Poppe,  
Vice-chairman at that time*

1952 ~ June 13 ~ 2002

### HENDRIK VIS and ANNIE VIS (Vanderhoning)

On June 13, 2002 Dad and Mom,  
the Lord willing,  
hope to celebrate their

### *50th Wedding Anniversary*



They were engaged in the Netherlands in 1951 after which Dad came to Canada. Approximately one year later Mom also made the long journey to Canada. They were married in Hamilton, Ontario and took up residence in Burlington, Ontario.

First Dad worked in market gardening and later went on to truck driving. In the middle of the sixties they moved to the Dunnville area and joined the Smithville congregation. Soon thereafter they bought a farm in the Wainfleet area. They were blessed with six children. They sold the farm in the late 1970s because of difficulties with Dad's health. Dad drove a school bus for over 30 years until his health forced him to quit this as well. During their retired years they have had to struggle with Mom's decline in health relating to her heart. However, Mom had surgery four years ago and her heart problems have become much less of a problem.

Two years ago they once again moved to the Dunnville area in a smaller, new home and are enjoying their retirement. Both still remain active in the Attercliffe congregation, even though at times their health remains a concern. We wish them God's continued care and guidance for the years to come.