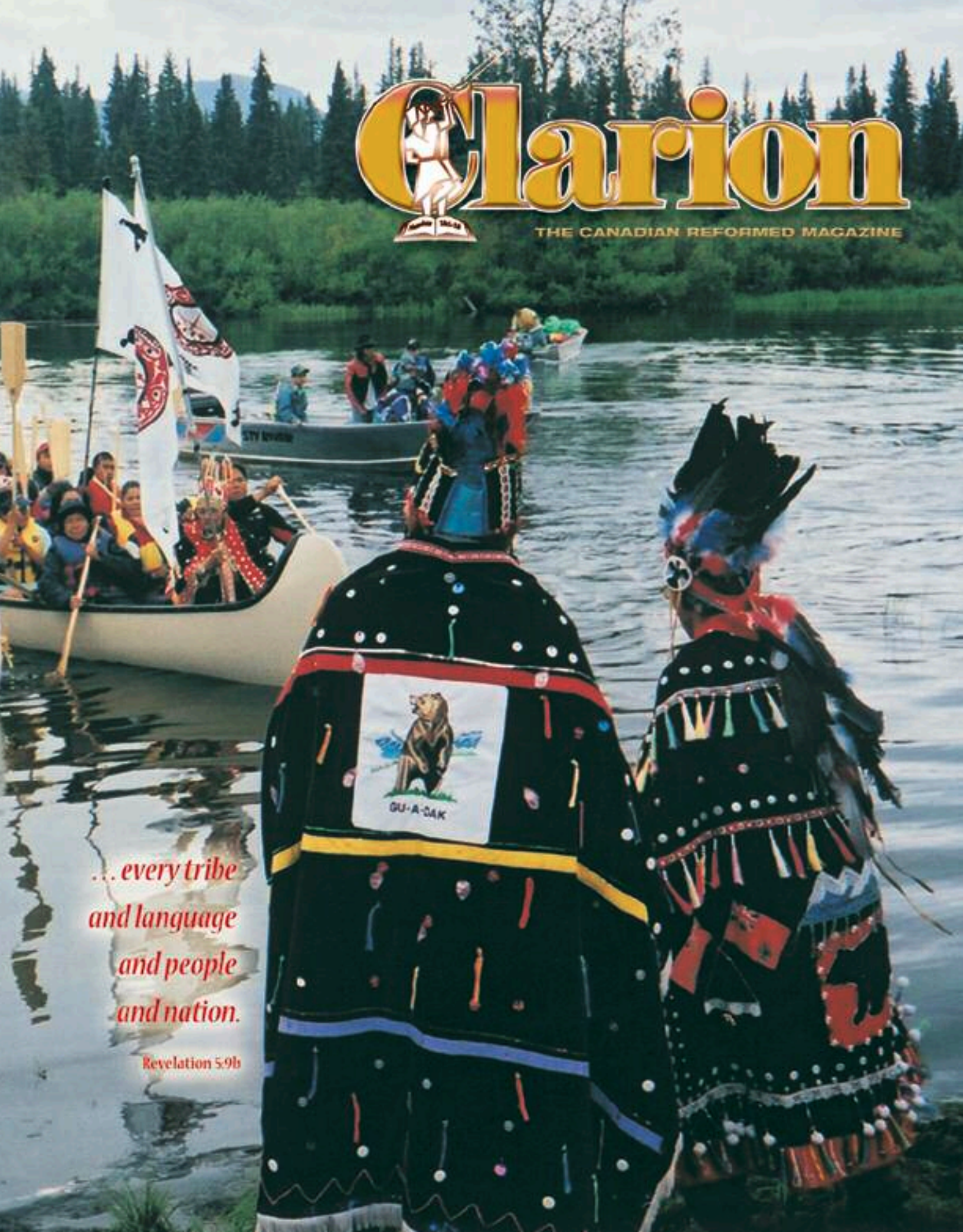


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



*... every tribe
and language
and people
and nation.*

Revelation 5:9b



*To all our readers,
Best wishes, and
the Lord's blessing
in the year 2003*

*The Editorial
Staff of Clarion*

Dr. J. Visscher, editor
Rev. R. Aasman, managing editor
Dr. J. De Jong, co-editor
Dr. N.H. Gootjes, co-editor
Rev. Cl. Stam, co-editor

By J. Visscher



How to Handle the End of Another Year?

This is the last issue of *Clarion* for the year 2002 and that alone makes it special. For what do we tend to do as another year draws to a close? Two things come to mind. The first is that we tend to reminisce or reflect on what the past twelve months have brought us. The second thing is that we try to prepare for what the new year will bring us.

Reflection and preparation – there is something intensely human and necessary about both of these activities. From time to time we do need to get off the bandwagon of our endless busyness, catch our breath and reflect on just how life has been. The same goes for preparation. While we can not predict with any great degree of accuracy what 2003 will bring, at the very least we need to ask about just how prepared we are to meet the future.

Personal reflection

If, then, during these days you find yourself reflecting on the swift passage of time and all of the events that have transpired, may I urge you to start with some personal reflections. I realize that this may be difficult for some of you. Looking intently at oneself is not exactly a favourite pastime of many. As people we would much rather look at others, at external events or at general trends.

Still, when it comes to personal and spiritual health some looking in the mirror is necessary. Ask yourself, "How have I lived with my God in the year gone by? Did I really love, obey and worship Him? How did I do in human relationships as a friend, a parent, a husband, a student, a worker, a citizen and a church member? Was my life-style biblically based and God honouring? Did I live with love, care and sensitivity to others? Did I put my talents and abilities to good

use?" In short, if this time of year helps us to gain some honest and needed insight into ourselves, it has already served a good purpose.

Community reflection

Moving from the personal to the community is the next step. What do I mean? It has to do with evaluating yourself in the context of the community within which God has placed you. Take, for example, the town or city or neighbourhood in which you live. Did you let your light shine? Did you let your voice be heard about some of the things that were happening in your area? Perhaps someone wanted to

build a bar, a casino or a pornographic outlet in your backyard. What did you do? How did you act or react?

In addition to being part of a civic community, most of you are also part of a church community. How did you function there? Did you volunteer for anything? Give yourself in any way? Donate to any cause? There is an unfortunate spectator mentality among some in the church. They expect to be catered to, noticed, stroked, and served.

They have little or no concept of service and sacrifice. They love to be on the receiving end. Are any of you like that? Just what are you doing to promote the well-being of the church?

I realize that there are always enough things to fall over and to prevent you from doing so. In any human community there are faults and failures aplenty. One can easily spend all of one's time criticizing this decision of the consistory or that policy of the church. One can get really worked up about the way that some so-called "saints" live. And some of that may even be justified. Nevertheless, a life that only has a negative orientation will lead to bitterness and disgruntlement. What is needed is a good

*In short,
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dose of realism in the sense that no human endeavour will ever be without weakness in this life. What is also needed is an infusion of humility in line with the wise saying “there but for the grace of God, go I.”

Planetary reflection

One more thing that tends to be part of year-end reflection has to do with the state of the planet. As people we need to have a right view of ourselves, a proper connection to our community, as well as a realistic assessment of the world in which we live.

In this regard there was very little to boast about in 2002. Economically, I hope that not too many of you invested your savings in utility companies like Enron, communications companies like Nortel or even computer companies like Microsoft. Militarily, this past year was dominated by armed intervention in Afghanistan and speculation about possible war with Iraq. Morally, it was all about further declines in Christian values and the additional inroads made by the gay rights movement. Weather wise, the months gone by were noted for drought, earthquakes, global warming, and Kyoto.

In short, 2002 was not a good year on planet earth. There was much to be concerned about, and even more to pray about. If downright pessimism was not the right response, at least frank realism was appropriate.

On to a new year

But enough about reflection, what about preparation? What about getting ready for a new year? How are we to do that? With what kind of mindset should we step out into 2003?

May I be so presumptuous as to urge you to turn the words of Hebrews 13:14-16 into your guide? There we are told, “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

Why am I pointing you to this passage? Because it has to do with three necessary things, namely confidence, thankfulness and generosity.

Confidence

2003 calls for realism, true enough. But it calls for more than that. It also calls for Christians to be confident. The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the people of God have a home and a destination. Our real home, our eternal home, is that “enduring city” or “the city that is to come.” This is what we are heading for and what each passing year brings ever nearer. This is where our treasure is. This is where our hearts should be as well.

Therefore, no matter what happens in the year to come, we must not lose sight of this. We must keep our eyes fixed on that city. At the same time we must remind ourselves repeatedly that this “enduring city” is not here. It is not to be found in this life, this world, this country, this city or place.

Together with Abraham and all the saints, we need to look forward to the great city of God. It is coming. No matter what man or devil does, it is coming.

Thankfulness

Besides, looking forward to the future with confidence, we do well to be filling the present with a sacrifice of praise to God. Verse 15 says to us too, “through Jesus, therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.”

These words represent a conclusion. The word “therefore” is used meaning that here the author is summing up. He has clearly illustrated that Christ is the better way – better than the

angels, Moses, the Old Testament priesthood, and the sacrifices of old. Christ is the incentive for our praise.

These words also give us the power. It says that “through Jesus” we can do this. We can do this not in our own strength and desire but in that which Christ alone can provide. So if our Saviour is the incentive, He is also the instrument and the power of the Christian life.

Finally, these words tell us about an activity, namely

praise. Of course, praise is a general word, but notice that the writer of Hebrews makes it more specific when he speaks about “the fruit of lips.” In other words, one great way to express your thankfulness to God in 2003 is through words – words of songs, words of witness, words of truth. If our words are full of God and his mighty deeds, they will be words of praise and thanks.

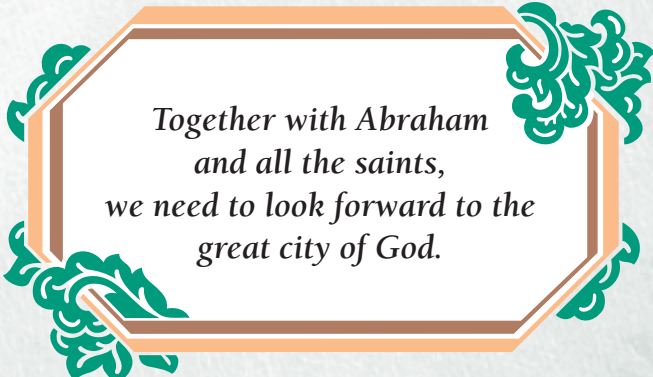
Generosity

And that brings us to the third thing, generosity. Hebrews 13:16 reminds us, “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Here you have your work program for the new year. It consists of doing good and sharing. This means that it has to do with other people and with helping them.

In Reformed churches this work is often associated with the office of deacon. They are the special promoters of goodness and charity in the congregation of Jesus Christ. Still, we need to understand that it is not their task to do it all for us. Goodness and generosity are Christian virtues. They represent things that we are to be and to do.

Therefore, if you see a need or come across an opportunity, you should not immediately call the deacons of the church. You should ask yourself what you can do, how you can help, what relief you can bring. And then as you do so, remember that “with such sacrifices God is pleased.” He loves to look down from heaven and witness the love and care, the deeds and charity of his people.

Need more be said? Naturally, a lot more could be said, but let confidence, thankfulness and generosity be the hallmarks of the people of God in the year of our Lord 2003. I wish you festive days filled with real reflection and proper preparation.



*Together with Abraham
and all the saints,
we need to look forward to the
great city of God.*

Dr. J. Visscher is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia. jvisscher@canrc.org

What's inside?

Typically, our Christmas/Year End issue of *Clarion* is much longer than any other issue. This one is no exception. We have a number of articles and meditations which commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the turning of the years. It is clear that we have much for which to be thankful, and much in the way of challenge and opportunities for the future. The Year End Review by Dr. J. Visscher summarizes this very nicely.

The Lord Jesus Christ left us with the great commission. Articles dealing with the work of Rev. Victor Atallah (MERF) among Muslims, The Reformed Evangelism Taskforce, Coram Deo, and an article by Rev. Wes Bredenhof on planting Canadian Reformed Churches are stimulating and thought provoking. There are plenty of opportunities provided by the King of the church for spreading the gospel.

The Guido graduation of this past year and a speech by Dr. R. Faber at this graduation can be found in this issue. We also have a report on the Forty-first Annual League Day of Women's Societies in Ontario. Revs. J. Huijgen and C. VanderVelde report on their visits to General Synod Zuidhorn 2002, and the Free Church of Scotland. It is very important that we take note of both matters of joy and concern regarding what is going on in our sister churches.

Dr. J. DeJong has a press review regarding Dr. Abraham Kuyper. We have also given room for a Reader's Forum which deals with the matter of Women Voting.

On behalf of all the editors of *Clarion*, I would like to wish you, the readers, the Lord's blessings for the coming year. Also, it has been a real pleasure to serve you with twenty-five issues of this magazine during the past year. May the Lord bless this work in the coming year as well.

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Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca
World Wide Web address: premier.mb.ca/clarion.html

Subscription Rates for 2003	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$41.00*	\$67.50*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$43.50	\$56.00
International	\$67.00	\$100.00

*Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$12.50 per column inch

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Cancellation Agreement

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Agreement No. 137753; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

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(See inside back cover
for Scripture reference.)



By J. Moesker

‘Twas the Night Before Christmas . . .

*M*ost of us have seen the nineteenth century poem by Clement Clarke Moore about the Christmas eve arrival of St. Nick with his sleigh drawn by eight reindeer. Unfortunately the St. Nick of this poem has crowded out of many minds what really happened the evening before Christmas as told in the Bible.

We know, for instance, that on that Christmas eve Mary and Joseph were looking for a place to lodge, and the only place they found was a stable. That’s what took place here on earth on Christmas evening.

However, there was more going on – in heaven. We don’t often think about it, but there was a lot going on in heaven on Christmas eve. For instance, heaven burst out in song as God’s Son made ready to become man. You read about that in Hebrews 1:6 where it says, “And again, when God brings his firstborn Son into the world, He says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him.’”

But someone else also spoke in heaven on that night before Christmas. Just before his incarnation, just before his birth in Bethlehem as child, the Son of God spoke to his Father yet. It says in Hebrews 10:5 that this dialogue between the Father and the Son took place when Christ came into the world.

The words the Son spoke to the Father weren’t new. Samuel spoke similar words already to King Saul, in 1 Samuel 15:22, “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD?” Samuel proclaimed God’s judgment against the

first king of Israel. Saul had not obeyed God’s command to destroy Amelek, and therefore was not fit to be king of God’s people.

Those words were taken up in Psalm 40 by David, the man after God’s heart. David probably composed that Psalm while fleeing from Saul. He had opportunity to take matters into his own hands and to destroy Saul, but he refused. For what God wants of the king is not just formal obedience, but heartfelt desire to do his will. Psalm 40 even speaks of having the ears pierced, or better, opened – a reference to ears being made eager to hear God’s commandments. That’s what was needed in the true king of God’s people.

But David couldn’t perfectly fulfill God’s will either, even though the desire was there. He had his weaknesses, and therefore his kingship was unable to provide the complete deliverance of Israel. He committed adultery and murder and was a man of blood. He was not the king who could completely deliver Israel.


However, the Son of God takes up the words of David, his father according to the flesh, as He is about to be born in Bethlehem of David’s royal line. He says to his Father in heaven, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God!’” (Heb 10:5-7).

Note that He used the words of Psalm 40 as found in the Greek trans-

lation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. Those words expressed more fully what He wanted to say. The sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament could never take away sins. They only emphasized that what was required was a king who would be obedient even to death. God had prepared a body for Him, and what was needed was the death of David’s perfect Son. That would bring about complete and eternal deliverance for God’s people.

So here, in the words of farewell spoken by God the Son to God the Father, spoken on the night before Christmas, so to speak, we hear the whole wonder of his coming into our flesh explained. God prepared a human for his Son through the working of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. He was like us in every respect – only without sin. He came to do God’s will as prescribed in the Scriptures. He came to be the perfect sacrifice needed to deliver others from sin.

What a Saviour we have! If you meditate on those words of the Son before He came into the world, don’t they just make you humble and thankful and eager to follow Him too?

‘Twas the night before Christmas and the Son of God said farewell to his Father with the words of Psalm 40 so that we might receive a glorious and complete and everlasting salvation! 

Rev. J. Moesker is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman East, Manitoba. jmoesker@canrc.org

By Harold J. Ludwig

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

A well-known and much beloved hymn that is a favorite at this time of the year is one that begins with the above words (Hymn 7 of the *Book of Praise*). As is often the case with something familiar, we sing it without giving it too much conscious thought. The words glide off our tongues and through our lips without having touched our hearts. Let us therefore reflect upon it a little more deeply.

The song is actually a plaintive cry from a people in exile who yearn for freedom. Freedom from bondage, from death and the grave, from the gates of hell. At first glance these are not images that we normally hear associated with Christmas time. In reality, however, that *is* what it's all about.

The language evokes images of the Old Testament: "ransom captive Israel," "Branch of Jesse's stem," "David's key" and so on. Indeed, how can one separate the coming of the Lord from the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the need for salvation of God's covenant people?

There is a fervent cry to "regard Thine own and rescue them;" to "disperse the gloomy clouds of night;" to "forever shut the gates of hell." The author is keenly aware of the need for salvation through the promised Emmanuel. Without Him the alternatives are indeed dark and grim as portrayed. The desire for salvation is not based on an individualistic motive as so often appears in generic Christmas songs, but it is placed within a historical, covenantal perspective.

There is confidence in this song as well. Confidence that the Emmanuel

shall "come to thee, O Israel." And to that sure knowledge the songwriter encourages the singer to "Rejoice!," not just once but twice. It is the same confidence that allowed Simeon "to depart in exaltation" now that "Thy promise is fulfilled" (Hymn 18).

To be sure, the fulfillment was not limited to God's Old Testament people but "For peoples everywhere/A light for revelation" (Hymn 18). Mary, too, recognized this in her song: "Rememb'ring evermore/what He to Abram swore/And to his seed forever" (Hymn 13).


While Hymn 12 anticipates the coming of our Lord, we live in the time of fulfillment. *Emmanuel* has become *Immanuel* (God with us). What wonderful knowledge to have as members of God's covenant people in the new dispensation! Does that mean we no longer need to sing this song? Have we "grown" beyond that in this time? Not at all.

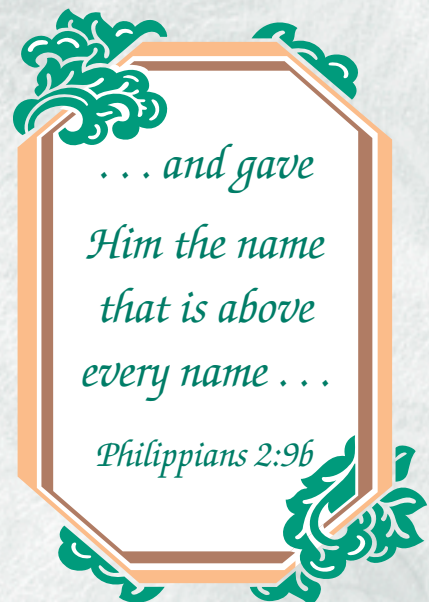
Even though "A great and mighty wonder/Upon the earth was done" (Hymn 16), we still feel the pull of our old nature which cleaves to us while we are alive. For us too, death and grave await and "death's dark shadows" need to be put to flight; the gates of hell "forever shut" so that we may rejoice as well with our Immanuel.

Now when you sing your hymns in celebration and remembrance of Christ's birth, may the perspectives of the Old and New Testament be joined in creating the perspective of eternity as so beautifully portrayed in another Hymn in the *Book of Praise* based on Philippians 2:6-11 (Hymn 19).

Here Christ's earthly suffering on our behalf is portrayed; it culminates in glory with the raising of the Son to "the heavenly heights," receiving "The Name surpassing every name in might" (Hymn 19).

And lest we forget the purpose, "Let at the name of Jesus every knee/From heav'n above to depths below the sea/Now humbly bow before His majesty." At the conclusion of each stanza we may repeat the "Hallelujah" in preparation for joining the great Hallelujah Choir to praise and glorify God throughout eternity. Amen.

 ¹The meditation is based on hymns found in the *Book of Praise*.



By J. Visscher

Year End Review

It is hard to believe but another year has almost come and gone. The calendar confirms this. The shorter times of sunlight testify to it. As well, the malls filled with people, Christmas carols and decorations, send us the same message. The festive season is here and this means that the new year is not far away.

Yet as the year 2002 comes to an end, so does another year filled with all sorts of events, personal and communal, local and international. Of course, we do not have time to itemize all of the things that happened, but we should at least reflect a little on how this year has gone in our federation of churches.

Thankful, but

Generally speaking, the reports that have been passed on to me say that it has been a good year. There has been ample opportunity to worship regularly, to study the Word openly, and to witness freely. Both local and foreign mission work could proceed. The Theological College could move from one academic year to another. In many places it was also possible for our children to receive a Christian education. In short, the list of blessings and benefits is long indeed.

Still, this is not to say that everything went well. We continue to have churches that are without a pastor and teacher. We also have several churches where there is trouble and disagreement. We see as well that in many congregations there are struggles because of the influences of materialism and secularism. Then too there is the impact of postmodernism which mini-

mizes truths and absolutes. Today church history, federations, and confessions mean so very little.

Thus, while on the one hand it behooves us to be thankful for so many good gifts from above, it also behooves us to be vigilant and valiant when it comes to the truth of the gospel.

Western congregational review

Moving from the general to the specific, something needs to be said about various local churches from west to east. Usually we go in the other direction, but this year we will start with the churches that lie on the Pacific Ocean.



Several things are worthy of note there. For example, the Church at Smithers, which had been vacant for three years and which had called many ministers, finally received a new pastor and teacher in the person of Mr. J. VanSpronsen. Toward the end of the year the Church of Vernon was also blessed with a positive response to its call when the Rev. J. Moesker of Carman decided that B.C. beckoned again.

Elsewhere in the province of British Columbia, the Church at Langley completed an extensive renovation and addition to its building. The Church at Cloverdale was making plans to do the same. The Church at Lynden, although in the state of Washington, was enlarging the study in the parsonage.

Among the ministers it may be reported that all are in good health. Several such as the Rev. E. Kampen and M.H. VanLuik are pursuing further theological studies in Vancouver. Additional time off was also made available to the latter as well as to the Rev. R. Schouten of Abbotsford and W.M. Wielenga of Lynden. One more fact is worthy of mention and it is that both Classis Pacific East and West now have a full complement of ministers.

Moving east, we come to Alberta where there have also been some developments. The Immanuel Church of Edmonton saw its minister accept a call to the Netherlands and was overjoyed to receive a new minister so soon in the person of the Rev. W.B. Slomp. The only negative thing about that was that he came from next door, namely from the Church at Neerlandia. As this is being written, the Rev. D.G.J. Agema is weighing a call from our most northerly sister church.

I am not aware that any new buildings are under construction in Alberta. I have been told, however, that the Providence Church of Edmonton managed to get a good deal on a used organ from the Netherlands and is renovating to accommodate it. Plans are also underway for the institution of a new church in St. Albert which is presently part of the Providence congregation.

Progressing to Manitoba there is no doubt a lot going on locally. For more national consumption it should be mentioned that with Rev. J. Moesker's move to Vernon, the Church at Carman-East becomes vacant. May this time prove to be brief. Further, much further to the south, it should also be reported that the Church at Denver is expecting a new pastor, the Rev. D. Boersma from South Africa.

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Eastern congregational review

Staying south of the forty-ninth parallel, we come to the state of Michigan and the city of Grand Rapids. After a time of vacancy the church there received the Rev. J. Ludwig as its new pastor. Further east this move meant that the Church at London became vacant and needs to look for a new shep-

herd. In the Ontario heartland the Church at Waterdown remains vacant and continues its calling work. The Church at Grassie is doing the same. As for the Church at Smithville, it received a positive response from the Rev. A. Souman of the Netherlands some time ago; however, the members are still waiting for the governmental paper work to be done and for their new minister to be installed. The Church at Glanbrook was thankfully spared these same frustrations when they called and received their new pastor, the Rev. D. VandeBurgt of Denver.

Various other newsworthy items need to be mentioned. The Church at Toronto decided to sell its church building in Thornhill and has bought property further north. Once all of the permits have been approved, they hope to proceed to the building stage. In that connection, and if my sources are correct, the Church at Guelph is in the building stage already and hopes to occupy beautiful new premises soon. No doubt in due time *Clarion* will receive a report of the happy event, along with some suitable pictures.

Among the ministerial ranks

2002 will also be remembered as the year that the widow of the Rev. G. VanDooren was taken home to the Lord. For many, many years sister VanDooren was a huge support to her husband and a wonderful mother to her children. We remember her with fondness.

Yet if this year brought death and departure to the ministerial ranks, it also brought retirements. Although officially

he retired in 2001, in actual fact real retirement did not begin for Prof. J. Geertsema until 2002. The reason? He decided to help out his successor and to teach for another semester. Hopefully, the adjustment to retirement living has been made by now and our brother will receive a goodly number of years to enjoy it together with his wife and family.

On a different note, one of the ministers decided finally that living alone in the church manse was less than ideal. The Lord sent him a beautiful bride and we congratulate the Rev. and Mrs. J.D. Louwse of Fergus, Ontario, on their new state of life. May it prove to be a very long and happy one!

Not such a happy state is the fact that the Rev. B. Hofford's ministerial status has now lapsed and that he can no longer serve as a minister in the ranks of the churches. Personally I may say that I am not so happy with this development, nor with the church orderly changes made in 1980 that brought this about. I hope to write some more on this in due time.

*Two
adults
and one child
became the first
members
of the Chinese
Christian
Fellowship.*

Home and foreign mission

From the reports received it appears that Streetlight Ministries in Hamilton, Ontario, is doing well and that brother R. Bultje's work is being blessed. Plans are being made to expand this work. This is good news and we hope that these plans will be blessed. Connected to this work is also the work of Campfire. A number of young people from the inner city of Hamilton once again could attend this yearly camp and be exposed to the gospel. May the seeds that were sown bear fruit.

In the northern reaches of British Columbia the work of the Rev. W.L. Bredenhof could continue without much interruption. The Summer Camp



Out hiking – Mission Smithers

was a success with a large number of volunteers helping out, including young people from Smithers and the Fraser Valley. It is good to see that some real inroads are being made among the native people of Babine Lake.

To the south in the greater Vancouver area progress can also be reported on the urban mission front among the Chinese population. The month of September saw the first confessions of faith and baptisms. Two adults and one child became the first members of the Chinese Christian Fellowship (CCF). And thus we hope that a wonderful beginning has been made to what will become in due time a flourishing Chinese Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. F. Dong also made a very successful trip to Alberta and Manitoba where he acquainted the churches with the work that he is doing.

On the foreign front, the Churches at Hamilton and Surrey continue to busy themselves with the mission work in Brazil. This year a visit could be made by representatives of the home churches. Apparently, the missionaries and their families: B. deGraaf, E. Venema and K. Wieske, are hard at work in their respective areas and the Lord is providing new contacts and opportunities. It should also be noted that the K. Wieske and his family enjoyed a well-deserved furlough.

Also, on the foreign front, the Rev. S. 't Hart and his family are continuing their work in Papua New Guinea. They were joined by two volunteers, namely Caroline and Heleen Knol from Langley, B.C. As fully qualified teachers, they will be of much assistance when it comes to meeting the various educational needs of the community, as well as helping out in other church activities. Next door is Irian Jaya, and once again the Rev. H. Versteeg of Chatham was able to visit the churches there and lend a helping hand.

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) is also deserving of our attention. This organization flies missionaries to remote places, as well it carries supplies and does emergency work. A worthy effort indeed! At present the C. Toegeretz family lives and works in Irian Jaya. They hope to see their ranks increase when the J. Koens and H. Feunekes families join them. Justin Koens hopes to work there as a pilot and Hugo Feunekes as a maintenance engineer.

One more organization deserves to be brought to your attention, and that



Julius VanSpronsen, Edwer Dethan, Walter Geurts

is the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce (RET). At a recent Fraser Valley-wide meeting of evangelism committees, the RET informed those present of its plans to expand its work and to increase the services it supplies to local churches and their outreach committees.

The Theological College

It is in Hamilton, Ontario, also called "Steeltown," that our seminary makes its home. During the past year the instruction could be held without interruption. Three students graduated

ministers looms in the future. If the Canadian Reformed Churches are going to have enough pastors and missionaries then many more students will be needed. May our God gracious grant workers for the harvest.

It would appear that both the students and the churches have embraced with enthusiasm the Pastoral Training Program, which includes a summer internship. Last summer student David de Boer spent a very productive three months in Edmonton, where he was mentored by the Rev. R. Aasman.

A massive piece of work was done by the Governance Committee which was charged with developing policies in a number of administrative areas. In addition, the Theological Education Committee continued to discuss and research the place and role of the College should the merger plans with the United Reformed Churches (URC) come to fruition.

Relations with other churches

Speaking of the URC, it should be mentioned that 2002 gave ample evidence that phase 2 is alive and gaining momentum. Increasingly URC ministers are welcomed to Canadian Reformed pulpits and vice versa. Also, in different places church councils are having meetings getting to know one another even better and building bridges.

While this is going on the respective committees appointed by both synods are meeting, either alone or together, and sorting out the finer details of a future merger. A lot has been done already but more work awaits. May God bless it!



in September, namely Edwer Dethan, Walter Geurts and Julius VanSpronsen. As well there was a changing of the guard in that Prof. J. DeJong retired as Principal and Prof. C. van Dam took over.

Four new students arrived, two from Ontario and two from Korea. We can be thankful for these additions; nevertheless, as has been written about already in the magazine, a serious shortage of

Contact with our new sisters churches in the USA, namely the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church in the US, continued as well. Classes and presbyteries, synods and assemblies were visited. Additional discussions took place and helped to promote further understanding and unity.

While all of this was going on, two members of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad, the Rev. J. Huijgen and C. VanderVelde visited the sister churches in Scotland and the Netherlands. Another member of the Committee, Mr. H. Leyenhorst, went to Korea at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, another sister church.

Finally, mention should be made of the fact that the Committee for Ecclesiastical Unity had further contact with the representatives of the Free Reformed Churches in North America. The Revs. R. Aasman and W.B. Slomp attended their general synod. On the whole some progress has been made in their talks; however, we will need to exercise a great deal of patience in our attempts to promote closer unity with them.

Christian education

The highlight of the year as far as the educational front is concerned had to be the opening of a new school in Lynden, Washington. At the moment all instruction is being given in rented facilities but plans are underway to change that situation.

Other than that our Christian elementary and high schools are doing well. Enrollment is up in many places.

The teachers are growing in numbers. Here and there buildings are stretched to the max, while in other places changing demographics have opened up some space.

The Teacher's College situated in Hamilton is also doing well. The Principal, Mrs. C. VanHalen-Faber, ably oversees a most willing group of teachers and students. A few problems remain. The first has to do with funding, for it requires a great deal of effort on the part of the Board and its representatives to raise the needed funds every year. The other problem has to do with the declining support from a number of western schools. Most of this is caused by the fact that the graduates of the College cannot teach in the western provinces. For the foreseeable future the College will continue to supply the schools in Ontario directly and many of the others schools indirectly.

Many organizations

This review would be incomplete if it did not mention a number of other organizations that serve the churches and their members. The mentally challenged in our community continue to find habitation and help from the Anchor Home in Ontario, Rehoboth in Alberta, and the Bethesda organization in B.C. Any number of our members benefit from seniors complexes in Langley, B.C., Edmonton, Alta., Carman, Man., Burlington, Grimsby, Hamilton, and Waterdown, all in Ontario. The emotionally distressed are being helped by counsellors and counselling organizations across the country.

Adding to the list, it should be noted that the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, as well as the Manna organization in Edmonton, did a lot of work, raised a lot of funds and is busy with a lot of new plans. Orphanages in Africa, disaster relief in different parts of the world, aid packages to needy children in Romania, the list of efforts goes on and on. May God bless it all!

Youthful enthusiasm

Related to the above is the fact that more and more young people, as well as adults, are volunteering their services at home or abroad. Whether it be Campfire! or Faith Works in Ontario, the Native Mission Camp in Fort Babine, mission trips to Africa, Mexico, Haiti, Eastern Europe, or elsewhere, the youth are on the move. The global village has arrived.

Much of this is good and deserves to be commended, encouraged and supported. In this regard it is good to see that there are consistories out there who give both leadership and support to their young people. Instead of rejecting these youthful initiatives as overly idealistic and impractical, they attempt to channel all of that energy in the right directions. Good for them!

Wrapping it up

If you are still reading and have come this far you will realize that we have made quite the tour. No doubt, much more could be said and should have been said; nevertheless, I have tried to bring you up to date on the highlights of 2002. What the new year will bring, we do not know. What we do know, however, is that our God is faithful and true. He will not abandon the work of his hands.

Should 2003 therefore fail to live up to your expectations or present you with new pains and troubles, do not forget where to bring your burdens and to find your strength. God will supply. Through his Son and by the power of His Spirit you will lack no good thing.

On the other hand, should the new year bring blessings, do not forget the One from whom all blessings flow. Resist the inclination to praise yourself and to spend it all on yourself. Give praise and thanks to God.



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A Word in Season

***A man finds joy in giving an apt reply –
and how good is a timely word!***

(Prov 15:23)

We are in the enterprise of publishing *Clarion* magazine, and thus, in the business of words. As we all know, words can have a tremendous impact on the hearers and readers. Rarely do words leave the recipients neutral. They affect everyone in a positive or negative manner. Precisely because of their import, we should choose carefully the words we place before our hearers and readers. Proverbs 25:11 teaches us this truth very poetically: “A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”

Scripture is replete with examples of the harm words may cause. The letter of James, chapter 3, is a prime example of the havoc our tongue can cause. Once more we quote from Proverbs 29:20, “Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Treating our words, therefore, as precious jewels, weighing them before we utter our thoughts, behooves us.

In this season, we especially celebrate the Word incarnate, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. In time, “The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us” (John 1:14a). He is the Word of life. The Word is always positive, life affirming – if believed on.

Yes! But, “The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Heb 4:12,13).

His Word makes us humble and careful to do his will, to speak our words thoughtfully, throughout the year as well as during this festive season.

Words of appreciation and thanks

Managing the flow of words are our chief editor, Dr. J. Visscher, and our managing editor, Rev. R. Aasman. Together they make an excellent team and they easily satisfy the publisher’s hunger for the next issue. Our co-editors Dr. J. De Jong, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, and Rev. Cl. Stam, ensure the managers are supplied with the materials so that we can publish *Clarion* with regularity. Thank you once again for making this year a pleasant publishing experience.

The editorial team counts on the regular assistance of faithful contributors: Rev. J. de Gelder, Dr. R. Faber, Rev. P. Feenstra, Mr. A. Kingma, Mr. K. Sikkema, Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman, and Aunt Betty. We very much appreciate your help.

Of course, there are many of you who write occasionally and submit meditations, reports, press releases, and other writings. All this adds to the magazine for everyone’s enjoyment. Thank you.

The steady support of our magazine by subscribers and advertisers allows for seeking improvements in the presentation of our magazine. Thank you to all.

Greetings

In a year beset by acts of terrorism and rumours of war we go forward with the knowledge that our Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate, lives, and his Word will never pass away. We greet you in his name, and wish you the Lord’s blessings in the year 2003.

W. Gortemaker

By W.L. Bredenhof

Planting Canadian Reformed Churches?

For over a year now we have enjoyed a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Perhaps “enjoyed” is the wrong verb in the preceding sentence. For, in that time, as in the years preceding Synod Neerlandia, much ink has been spilled criticizing the OPC or responding to criticisms thereof. It is difficult to speak of “enjoying” a relationship that seems to be always under fire.

In this article, I would like to advance a positive assessment of one aspect of life within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. I hope this positive assessment will lead to increased or perhaps new enjoyment of our relationship with this Church. Perhaps we can look at some of the things our brothers and sisters in the OPC are doing right and learn from them – isn't that what part of having ecclesiastical fellowship is all about?

Church planting in the OPC

Several months ago, the official OP magazine *New Horizons* featured a notice regarding a new booklet published by the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the OPC. The booklet is entitled, *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, Pennsylvania).¹ This is a manual intended for church planters in the OPC. It guides organizing pastors and overseeing elders as they seek to bring a home mission work formally into the OPC.

Before we look at the booklet itself, let's take a brief look at the church

planting work that the OPC does. The OPC has numerous home mission works across the United States and Canada. One only needs to glance at the “Prayer Calendar” in every issue of *New Horizons* to see that home missions and church planting is a big priority for the OPC. Last year alone, the OPC started six new church planting projects. Along with home missionaries,



the OPC also has so-called regional home missionaries (RHMs). These RHMs are each affiliated with an OPC presbytery (“Regional Church”). They are responsible for following up on contacts and then directing these into relationships with local home missionaries. These home missionaries bring the contacts into mission congregations which are intended to develop into OP congregations. From the appearance of things, the OPC is very successful in its church planting efforts.

Their success and experience have coalesced into this manual, *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. The booklet was primarily written by

the general secretary of the Committee, Rev. Ross W. Graham, though it did have input from other committee members. As indicated in the title, this booklet is geared towards home missionaries in the OPC. There are many OP-specific items contained in its ninety pages.

Despite that fact, there are many places in this booklet that would also be found helpful by those doing church planting in the context of other federations, including ours. I know for myself that reading this booklet has been extremely helpful for our church planting work in Fort Babine. So, what is so helpful?

Appreciation

First, the booklet elucidates many basic scriptural principles of church planting work. The emphasis here is totally on what the Bible teaches. At certain points, we will beg to differ on interpretations, especially when it comes to Presbyterian church government. But for the rest, I am very impressed with this booklet. For instance, there is a strong emphasis on caring deeply about people (esp. pp.37-38). A reference to 2 Corinthians 1-4 encourages the home missionary to be tenderhearted and full of care. John 10:14 exhorts him to be a shepherd, following in the footsteps of the Great Shepherd. The following section encourages home missionaries to “be concerned for what is believed.” “As the organizing pastor of a home mission work, you must never compromise the truth which you hold dear in order to reach people, or you will have sold your birthright. Be bold and caring at the same time.” This

is developed out of Paul's teaching in Galatians 1:8. There is more such instruction that I wish I could share, but if you're interested, you should order the booklet for yourself.

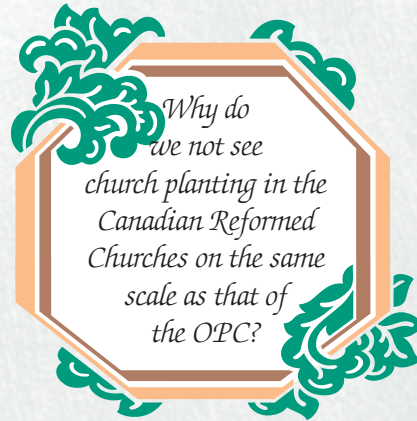
The second helpful point about this booklet is the practical and scripturally informed wisdom that it contains. Scripture does not always tell us exactly how to do things when it comes to mission work. In certain areas, we have to take general principles and work with them in wisdom. Early on in the booklet, missionaries are exhorted to implement catechism instruction in the earliest days of the church planting work. Closely connected with that are these words on page 12, "Those involved in planting a new church should be aware that the way things are done and said in the earliest days of the church planting process often become the expectations and the stated norms for years to come." It's very important to put in place the right precedents! The handling of money is another area that receives attention, as well as administration. All of these are points well taken for *any one* doing church planting work, not just OP missionaries.

Why not Canadian Reformed church planting?

That brings me to a question: why do we not see church planting in the Canadian Reformed churches on the same scale as that of the OPC? The OPC is a scant fourteen years older than the earliest Canadian Reformed churches. So, age is not really a factor. Maybe it has more to do with our immigrant background. But the Canadian Reformed Churches are changing. New generations have arisen which know nothing but Canada. So, isn't it time for

us to seriously think about planting new churches and reaching out to other Canadians by this means?

Nearly every major Anglo-Canadian city has a Canadian Reformed church in its vicinity. But there are several glaring exceptions: Victoria, Saskatoon, Regina,




and Windsor. We could also name a dozen smaller cities with virtually no solid Reformed presence: nearly every B.C. interior city, Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Fort McMurray, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury and North Bay. Consider also that the foreign and home missions in our country are concentrated in Classis Pacific West, Classis Ontario West, and Classis Central Ontario. Why is this so? Why would it be impossible, for instance, for the churches in Classis Alberta to call a home missionary to work at church planting in one of the smaller Alberta cities?

Is there a need for this? To answer the question, look at the direction in which our country is headed. There is no greater need today for Canada than the clear preaching of the true gospel. That includes missionary outreach in our communities, both our immediate surroundings and those further afield.

We can do this work and do it with optimism. *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* puts it very well: "We can therefore be optimistic as we plant new churches. We are the harvesters and this is the age of the harvest. No rebellious, sin-hardened individual is beyond hope, because the Sovereign Lord can, and often does, soften the hardest of hearts." Isn't that encouraging!?

Wouldn't it also be encouraging to look ten years down the road and see the publication of our own booklet, *Planting a Canadian Reformed Church*? The question is: are we up to the challenge? More to the point, how seriously do we take the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 28:19 about making disciples of all nations, including our own? Do we think those words are the responsibility of someone else? We need to develop a richer vision for home missions and church planting in our nation. We can definitely learn something here from our OP brothers and sisters. They have understood the command of Christ and take it very seriously. In that, they provide us with an example to follow. They also give us valuable experience upon which we can draw, if, or rather when, we decide that church planting should also be a part of our home missions program. If you're ready to learn from that experience, *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* will be a huge help!

The booklet is available from the committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, 607N. Easton Road, Bld. E, Box P, Willow Grove, PA, 19090-0920, USA. It is also available in electronic format on the OPC website, www.opc.org. 

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By M. Van der Velde

Evangelize your Muslim Neighbour . . . Now!

*M*osques have been sprouting up in many urban centres in Western countries in the past decade, but they have become much more noticeable to Canadians and Americans since the attacks of 9/11. The media has focussed our attention on the Muslim presence in our neighbourhoods and many Christians have probably come to view the situation with wariness, if not paranoia. But now is not the time to be paranoid, according to Rev. Victor Atallah, General Director of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) and missionary of the Orland Park Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States. Rev. Atallah was the guest speaker at a two-part series hosted by the Burlington Reformed Study Centre on November 7 and 8, held in the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church, in Burlington, Ontario.

The first evening of the series was devoted to explaining to the large audience the nature and beliefs of Islam. Areas explored by Rev. Atallah included the history of Islam and the background of its founder Muhammad, what Muslims believe, and why Islam has spread. The second evening was devoted to discussing methods for evangelizing Muslims, as well as, in Rev. Atallah's opinion, the tremendous opportunities that exist today for the church to reach out to Muslims. Each evening also allowed ample time for questions from the audience.

Islam and the church

Islam is a very complex religion and Rev. Atallah could only scratch



Rev. Victor Atallah

the surface and present some highlights. Introduced by Muhammad (570-633 AD), Islam was designed to teach the people of Muhammad's town, Mecca, the importance of worshipping one God only, just as Muhammad knew the Jews and Christians did. Over time, Muhammad became disillusioned with the Jews and Christians, as is evident in later parts of the Koran, and the beliefs of Islam are diametrically opposed to the Gospel. Atallah stressed that Islam is an expression of the failure of the church to effectively present the true Gospel to the Arabs and God used the Muslims to chastise the church, just as he used heathen nations in the history of Israel to chastise his chosen people. In the Middle Ages the church fought the Muslims not with the spiritual sword,

but with a material sword, and consequently the church's attempts failed miserably. In contrast, Islam crumbled during the time of the Reformation because the church returned to the Gospel again.

In the Evangelical world today, the church is still not presenting the full message of Jesus Christ. Many Christians are anxious, half-hearted in their attempts at spreading the message of God's sovereignty and grace, and are instead presenting an Arminian or semi-Arminian message.

It was clear that Rev. Atallah has his finger on the pulse of Christian and Muslim communities in the Middle East and beyond. He was able to bring greetings from Reformed believers in countries as diverse as Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan.

The Reformed faith is growing and, indeed, it is the Reformed faith which can shake Islam. It is only Islam and the Reformed faith which have a worldview. Reformed Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is sovereign in all areas of life. Islam is also a holistic religion, and thus it is no coincidence that where the Christian church is growing, it is Reformed.

Our response

Rev. Atallah stressed that we live in special times. Never before in 1300 years has there been as much opportunity as now for Muslims to live in countries abroad where there is freedom of religion. Muslims are free to be converted by the church! Do not face this freedom with paranoia. Within the Muslim world, youth are rebelling and questioning. The Koran has never been exposed to the type of rigorous academic higher criticism that the Bible has been subjected to for over a century now, but it is starting, and when it continues, the inconsistencies and fallacies of the Koran will be exposed. But the Bible still stands.

So how does one bring the Gospel to a Muslim neighbour? Don't be intimidated by Muslims, since many Muslims do not even fully understand the Koran because it is written in an archaic form of Arabic. Rev. Atallah repeatedly stressed the importance of beginning with personal contacts and friendship. Practise hospitality, and capitalize on the hospitable nature of Muslims. Do not use polemics, attacking the Koran or the teachings of Islam. Take the time to build a friendship and during that time show by our walk of life that we are Christians. Western society is a society that seeks and demands instant answers, responses, and conversions, but this is unrealistic. However, do not fall into the missiological trap of contextualization, compromising the truth or hiding certain aspects of our faith because they may be offensive to Muslims. Speak out when questioned about your faith. The church has a mission and if it is left up to evangelism centres or organizations, it will not be effective.

The questions clearly indicated that for some, the idea of befriending a Muslim was difficult to accept. Rev. Atallah simply replied that Jesus Christ befriended sinners while on earth. Perhaps here the speaker reflected a cultural perspective or approach to friendship and hospitality which is different




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from a typical North American Reformed community. Atallah also reminded the audience that the concept of Jihad is a defensive struggle and it is only the extremists who go beyond the real meaning. In regards to questions about American president George W. Bush's foreign policy, Rev. Atallah reminded the audience that the church needs to realize that its kingdom is not an earthly one, but that God is in control and that He operates with grace. Christians have a mission to accomplish and must not be distracted by the world's agenda when it is in conflict with the mission of God.

The Burlington Reformed Study Centre certainly chose a timely topic and invited a qualified and engaging speaker who challenged the audience to think in a biblical and Reformed manner. The Centre has made available tape recordings of the meetings. (Order via Audiocraft Productions: 905-639-1905 or audiopro@audiocraftproductions.com) Also, anyone wishing to delve further into this topic may wish to read *A Christian's Response to Islam* by William M. Miller (P&R Publishing, 1977). 

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By J. De Jong



Press Review

The magazine *Tabletalk* published by Ligonier Ministries ran a special October issue on the Dutch statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper. Dr. Joel R. Beeke, president of and professor of systematic theology and homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, wrote a brief survey of Kuyper's immense contribution to the development of the Christian life and world view. Here follows the main highlights of Dr. Beeke's article:

In 1898, Benjamin B. Warfield wrote, "Dr. [Abraham] Kuyper is probably today the most considerable figure in both political and ecclesiastical Holland." He spoke well, for Kuyper was a scholar, theologian, preacher, reformer, educator, journalist, writer, orator, politician, and statesman. But even more, he was a devout Christian, a passionate family man, a prodigious worker, a patriot, and the leading exponent of Calvinism's world and life view.

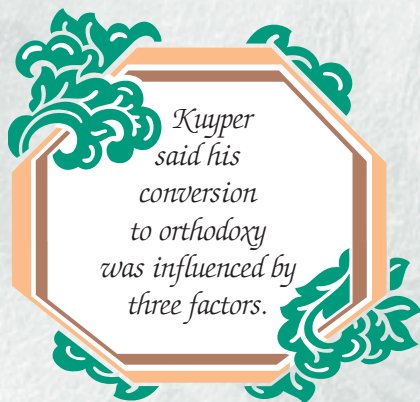
Childhood and education

Kuyper was born Oct. 29, 1837 in the small fishing village of Maasluis. He was the eldest son of Jan Frederick Kuyper, a minister in the Hervormde Kerk, the Dutch state church, and Henriette Huber, a teacher of Swiss descent.

In 1841, the family moved to Middelburg, the provincial capital of Zeeland, where young "Bram" was home schooled. In 1849, his father took a call to Leiden, where for six years Bram attended the Leiden Gymnasium in preparation for uni-

versity. In 1855, he entered the University of Leiden, graduating *summa cum laude* in 1858.

Kuyper prepared for the ministry at Leiden (1858-1861), where the theological faculty was uniformly liberal. He never succumbed fully to modernism but he flirted with liberal theology, which helps explain why he became such an ardent foe of modernistic thinking after his conversion to orthodox Calvinism.



Kuyper earned a doctorate in theology on Sept. 20, 1862, after completing a dissertation comparing the ecclesiology of the Polish reformer John à Lasco with that of John Calvin.

Conversion and early ministry

Kuyper said his conversion to orthodoxy was influenced by three factors. The first was the extraordinary way in which he located a treasury of à Lasco's writings in the home of a Leiden professor's father after a fruitless search of the holdings of major university libraries. The second was Charlotte Yonge's novel, *The Heir of Reddiffe*. This book, the story of a proud man who is humbled, convicted Kuyper. Third was

the congregation of Kuyper's first pastoral charge at Beesd, (1863-67).

The summer after his graduation, Kuyper married Johanna Schaay and moved to Beesd. The church included several committed Calvinists, such as Pietronella Baltus, a young peasant woman who confronted Kuyper about his experiential preaching, and lack of saving faith in Christ. God used those persistent parishioners to lead their pastor back to Calvin and the Reformed fathers, to the Scriptures, and to faith in Jesus Christ.

Preacher and pastorates

Not surprisingly, Kuyper's preaching changed dramatically. It now satisfied the hunger of the spiritually minded *kleine luyden* ("little people," or common folk) such as Pietronella Baltus.

In 1867, Kuyper accepted a call to Utrecht, a church with 11 ministers and thirty-five thousand members. In 1870, he moved to the Reformed Church at Amsterdam, the most prestigious church in the country, consisting of one hundred and forty thousand members, 136 office-bearers, 28 ministers, and 14 sanctuaries. Here Kuyper reached the height of his ministry as a preacher, though his sermons also evoked opposition from the modernists.

Church reformer

The battle lines drawn between Kuyper and the modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church eventually led to a major secession of conservatives from the state church in 1886. The breach was called the *Doleantie*, meaning "grievance" or "complaint." Kuyper and his followers

were dubbed the *Dolerenden*, “the aggrieved ones.” The *Dolerenden* were protesting the doctrinal tolerance of the state church. Kuyper and others called for a return to the theology of the Reformed confessions, strove for a church free from the domination of the state, and stressed personal piety. They were supported strongly by the common people.

An earlier Secession movement of 1834 had been strictly a church reform movement. The *Doleantie* wanted more, because of Kuyper’s expanded interpretation of Calvinism. For Kuyper, Calvinism stood for a total world and life view, not merely an ecclesiastical, confessional, or theological system. His goal was not only church reform but also a spiritual victory in all areas of life over the atheistic world view of modernism.

Despite these differences, Kuyper’s thinking was instrumental in merging the *Doleantie* churches with the majority of the 1834 Secession churches in 1892, giving birth to the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (“Reformed Churches in the Netherlands”). The new denomination consisted of four hundred Secession churches, three hundred *Doleantie* churches, and three hundred thousand members. Similarly, in North America, the Christian Reformed Church, founded in 1857 by Secession immigrants, welcomed large numbers of *Doleantie* immigrants who crossed the Atlantic in the 1890s and later.

Politician

In 1869 Kuyper got to know the secretary of the king’s cabinet, Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), the master mind of what would evolve into the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) in the Netherlands. The party would assert Christ’s lordship over public affairs and oppose the principles expressed by the French Revolution and political liberalism.

Kuyper united with the ARP, and in 1874 he was elected to the Second Chamber of Parliament. He thoroughly reorganized the ARP with a constitution, a statement of principles, and a well-formulated platform.

In time, Kuyper’s ARP formed a coalition with the Roman Catholics.



Abraham Kuyper

That coalition defeated the liberals in the election of 1888, but lost again in 1891 and didn’t regain power until 1901, when Kuyper was asked to head the new government as prime minister.

Kuyper’s stint as prime minister was only partially successful. A school bill was passed that gave Christian schools legal parity with government schools. However, most of the ARP’s goals were not achieved and his coalition was defeated in the election of 1905.

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In subsequent generations, the ARP abandoned most of its principles. By 1980, it merged with the Catholic People’s Party to form the Christian Democratic Appeal.

Journalist and writer

In 1869, Kuyper became editor of the weekly *De Heraut* (*The Herald*), calling “For a Free Church and a Free School in a Free Land.” In 1872, he became editor of *De Stan-*

daard (*The Standard*), a Christian daily newspaper and the official organ of the ARP. He edited both papers until he was 82 years old, writing thousands of articles on theology, history, philosophy, politics, and aesthetics.

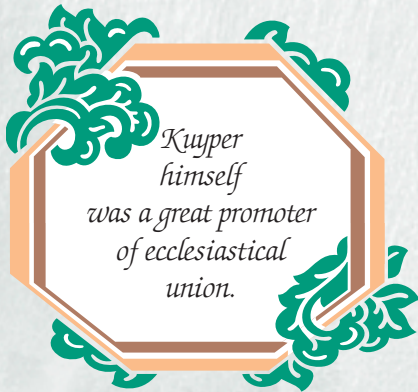
His greatest work was probably his three-volume *Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology*. He wrote four volumes on the Heidelberg Catechism, three volumes on common grace, a massive volume on the Holy Spirit, and a book on Revelation. He published four volumes on eschatology, *Van de Voleinding* (“Of the Consummation”), three volumes of *Pro Rege* (“For the King”), and allowed his *Dictaten Dogmatiek* (“Notes on Systematic Theology”) to go to press unedited.

Kuyper’s writings influenced thousands, and generated praise as well as criticism. Herman Bavinck and Herman Dooyeweerd, though not uncritical of Kuyper’s thinking, were greatly influenced by him. Cornelius Van Til advanced Kuyper’s ideas in the United States, particularly in the area of presuppositional apologetics. Francis Schaeffer also helped popularize some of Kuyper’s ideas. Various Dutch Reformed denominations in North America have been greatly impacted by Kuyperianism. And South Africa’s Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education was modelled after the university Kuyper founded.

Educator

Dissatisfied with government schools and universities, Kuyper

established a Christian university free from state control or influence. The Free University of Amsterdam, designed to affirm a Biblical and Reformed world view throughout its curriculum, was established on October 20, 1880.



Kuiper organized it as a school operated by Christian parents and supported by the prayers and gifts of Reformed Christians. The university began with five professors and only five students, but continued to grow, training ministers and schoolteachers for the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Kuiper served as rector and professor at the Free University from 1880 to 1901.

As prime minister, Kuiper helped pass a law granting full legal standing for private universities and technical schools that were preparing students for higher education. The Free University then received state recognition of its awarded degrees.

As a man

Kuiper lived out his Calvinistic faith as a believer. He revelled in the life of his family, with his wife, five sons, and two daughters. Like others, he struggled with losses. His 9-year-old son passed away in 1892 and his beloved wife in 1899 at the age of 58.

Though short of stature Kuiper's appearance was commanding. He held audiences spellbound with his uncompromising convictions and compelling oratory. Spiritually, communion with Christ sustained him throughout his long career.

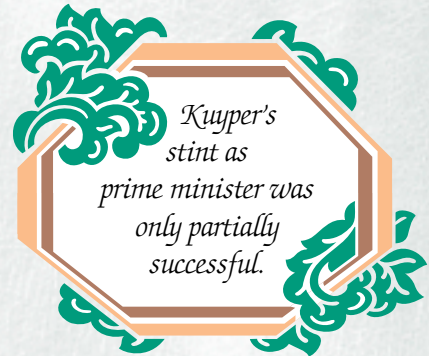
Kuiper died on Nov. 8, 1920, at the age of 83. Thousands attended the funeral.

His influence did not die, however; it remains powerful even today. Many throughout the international Reformed community continue to wrestle with the implications of Kuiper's declaration: "God's majesty and sovereignty require that we believe God's Word, not because of what it says, but because it is his Word, not because we think it beautiful and true, *but* because He has spoken it."

A Brief Comment

We can be very grateful of this overview of the life of one of the greatest nineteenth century leaders of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. In a succinct way, most of the points of Kuiper's life and contributions are covered. Allow me to make two comments in regard to this survey.

First, I do not think we can label the secession of 1834 as "strictly a church reform movement." Hendrik de Cock and other leaders of the Secession aimed for the reformation of life, including personal piety and practical conduct. In fact, many of the leaders of the Secession put more emphasis on personal piety and conduct than was found among the leaders of the *Dolerenden*. For the leaders of the Secession, life was *one*, and the reformation of the church could not be divorced from personal conduct and life-style.



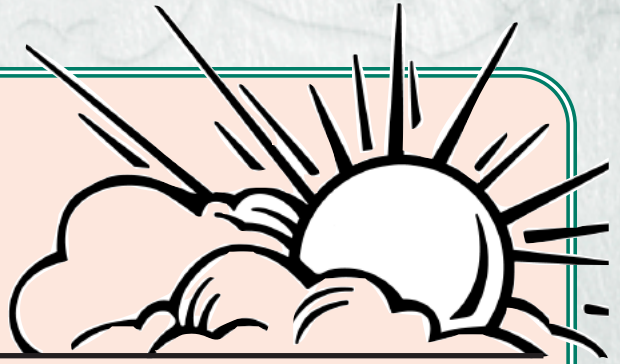
Second, Kuiper himself was a great promoter of ecclesiastical union. Without his leadership, the handshake between him and Rev. W. Gispen would never have taken place at the union of 1892. Kuiper *fought* for the union of true believers. Should not we do the same? C

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Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman



He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Psalm 91: 1, 2

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

As we are approaching another year, many of us take the time to reflect on what has happened during the past year. It can be refreshing to see how the Lord's goodness and love toward us has never failed. Throughout this past year, our gracious Father has provided for us in so many ways. All the things we needed for body and soul the Lord has given us, just as He has promised in his Word.

For some of us the year flew by and everything went well. We feel God's presence in our lives and we are very joyful as we go about our daily work. We may feel very blessed by what all that God has given us.

For others, this past year was not how we planned it. We may have had quite a heavy cross to bear. The Lord had put some trials in our lives, and as a result our faith has been tested. When things go well it is easy to be faithful. When extreme hardship come, we need to feel the Lord's presence even more. Our faith may waver and many questions such as, "Why did this happen to me?" may never get answered. The Lord knows all our thoughts. Even in our deepest sorrow we may cling to our Saviour. His love for us stands firm forever.

This time of the year when we celebrate Christ's birth let us remain faithful. He gave us his Son so we can have eternal life. His love for us was made so clear when his only Son died for us.

When we are grieving remember our God knows suffering and grief as well. He will sustain and comfort you if you find rest in "the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps 91:1). O Lord God, Almighty, who is like you? His faithfulness and unfailing love surrounds us each day. Almost every psalm speaks about his goodness and how He will never leave those who put their trust in Him. He is our dwelling place and our refuge in troubling times.

We may have started this year joyfully, and with praise to God on our lips. Our joy can easily be taken away when hardships come. It is when we are tested that we must know that our faith knows of God's un-

failing love. Our faith should not waver, but stand firm rooted in the ground as Matthew 13 explains it with the parable of the sower. It has to be a lasting faith that continues even in difficult times.

By turning to God, we will find joy again, a lasting joy. Having the comfort of his presence with us, leaves us with great peace in our heart. The world tries to find peace at this time of year. The malls are busy with people shopping and trying to find some happiness in this chaotic world. The birth of Christ they might know about, but the real meaning of Christmas is long gone. They do not know the peace we have. We have been given peace in knowing that whatever happens in the coming year, our God is in control, and will take care of those who put their trust in Him. I will say of the Lord, "You are my refuge and my fortress."

Through faith our eyes will be opened to see his goodness and love. His mercy also never fails us as his Word tells us. Let us continue to be strong in the Lord. Through joyful and sad times our covenant God says, "My Hand will guide you, trust in Me only and you will find comfort." It is only when our faith is strong and our hearts are dedicated to God that we can sing the words of Psalm 89:1 with true conviction.

Let us also in this new year continue to hold fast in the promises of God. It is indeed beautiful to sing praise to God and to pray to Him when we begin a new year. The world may begin this year not acknowledging God in any way, but our hearts should be filled with rejoicing in God our faithful Saviour. Praise be to our God who fails us never.

*He is the LORD, our God unfailing,
His judgments everywhere prevailing.
He will remember and uphold
His covenant made in days of old.
The steadfast words He did command
A thousand generations stand.*

Psalm 105:3

January Birthdays

- 2 Liz Koning will be 42**
9905 152nd Street
Edmonton, AB T5P 1X4
- 7 Christine Breukelman will be 31**
2225-19th Street
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 17 Henry Driegen will turn 47**
#19-31450 Spur Ave.,
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3
- 17 Grace Homan will be 47**
Anchor Home
361, Thirty Road S.
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
- 19 Janine Smid will turn 33**
510 2nd Street RR 7
Strathroy, ON N7T 3H8



- 27 Hank Orsel will be 72**
2424 Woodward, Apt. 10
Burlington, ON L7R 4E3
- 30 Tyler Hoeksema will turn 14**
6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

Congratulations to all of you who are celebrating a birthday in the new year 2003 D.V. We also like to wish you all blessed Christmas days together with your family and friends. Above all we pray for the Lord's blessing and guidance as we approach another year of our Lord. Best wishes, and till the next time:

Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman

Mailing Correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2, Beamsville ON LOR 1B2
Phone: (905) 563-0380



*Season's
Greetings
from
the
Kerwood
Congregation*



*Entire
student
body
singing
God's
praises
during the
graduation
ceremony.*



Graduation of Covenant Christian School of London and Kerwood.

By J. Huijgen

General Synod Zuidhorn 2002 and the Free Church of Scotland

So many new impressions

As Rev. VanderVelde and I were commencing our travels, we felt the weekend, between the Netherlands and Scotland, would allow for some mental adjustment. Adjustment would be necessary in the face of our uncertainty. We would encounter many changes in our sister congregations of the Netherlands and of the churches in Scotland. Members of our Canadian churches, upon visitation to the Netherlands, had commented on the vast, noticeable, changes. We were aware that Scotland too, primarily after the divide, would present new situations. We were about to embark on many new impressions.

New impressions in the Netherlands

On Monday May 13 Rev. VanderVelde and I travelled to the Netherlands from Vancouver. We arrived in the Netherlands at the conference centre of Mennorode on Wednesday morning and we met with the deputies of the Dutch sister churches to speak about concerns raised within our Canadian churches. We spoke with the deputies about the proposed Marriage Form, and the issues surrounding their celebration of the Sabbath. We discussed the number of hymns and their selection process, the various forms for the Lord's Supper, and the new academic setup of the Theological University. We voiced concern regarding the new format upon meeting at the Synod, the way individuals could now make submissions to Synod, how deputies envisioned the future of the Dutch churches, and the so-called "Third Party Rela-

tionships." We conveyed all the issues we had been directed to discuss by the Synod Neerlandia. Some of these concerns had been submitted ahead of us. Our Dutch counterparts intimated some of their uneasiness and reflections. Concerning the Sunday issues, for instance, we were assured by our counterparts that the Dutch churches maintain strong Sunday traditions. Rev. Vanderveelde and I wondered whether traditions alone would suffice. We requested scriptural basis for some of their assertions. We were presented with their rationale, a range of interpretations existing from one end of the "spectrum" to the other with variations in between.



We observed that their unity and uniformity has been exchanged for plurality. These discussions were successful in creating the ground work necessary for longer exchanges in the future with these deputies in the Netherlands. There is, however, another problem that has arisen in our discourse.

The changing roles of deputies

We noticed, for example, that the list of items for the agenda of their General Synod contained our summary of the study of the new Marriage Form. We never intended to have this placed on the agenda of their Synod. This alteration was accomplished because the role of deputies has changed substantially. In the past, deputies studied an issue and submitted a report, an independent and final document with recommendations given to the Synod. Today the Dutch deputies present to Synod any material they receive omitting discretion as to admissibility and relevance. During Synod the Dutch deputies are in attendance, to continue discussions and expedite the decisions. It should be noted that these deputies have the potential to be extremely influential due to their numbers (e.g. they have twenty deputies for relations with churches abroad). As a result discussions involving our members cannot be conducted unless our delegates partake at the Synod level. This degree of participation would require our physical presence for proper representation.

After our discussion with the Dutch deputies, Rev. VanderVelde and I met with the delegates from various churches in different countries. We witnessed a program containing strong overtones of missionary activities offered for churches abroad. A presentation was given from the committee for Mission and Mission Aid *Zending* and *Hulpverlening* and a presentation and meeting of the IRTT (International Reformed Theological Training Centre). The majority of their students are Kenyan and Indonesian. Being deputies

from Canadian churches that have conducted mission work in various parts of the world and at home, we attended these aspects of the conference with great interest and were much encouraged by the work of our Lord.

The days were not without tensions. The Free Church of Scotland Majority had sent delegates, and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing had sent delegates.

General Synod 2002

It is the custom of the Dutch Synod to meet on Friday and Saturday in full session. The rest of the week is devoted to Internet meetings containing members of Synod and members of different committees. A Reformed virtual chat room serves as a way of facilitating informal exchanges of thought. The committees prepare a majority of their proposals in this way. The proceedings at the Dutch Synod are worth noting. The opening includes a silent prayer by all members. This prayer is followed by meditation on Scripture and then discussion of the passage with an assigned neighbour. Singing and a public prayer ensue. Rev. VanderVelde and I arrived on Friday May 17. The vice-chairman introduced the delegates from the various churches, and every region was dealt with individually. We heard from the brothers in Australia and their words contained both appreciation and concern. We had opportunity to voice our concerns as instructed by Synod Neerlandia 2001. Our speech was well received (the text of our speech is published separately). Although our concerns were noted, emphasis was given to God and their joy that He cares for his people in Canada and everywhere. Our day was filled with speeches and responses from around the world. We felt a strong sense of world wide community during the General Synod. It is quite impressive to meet the many in this world who wish to

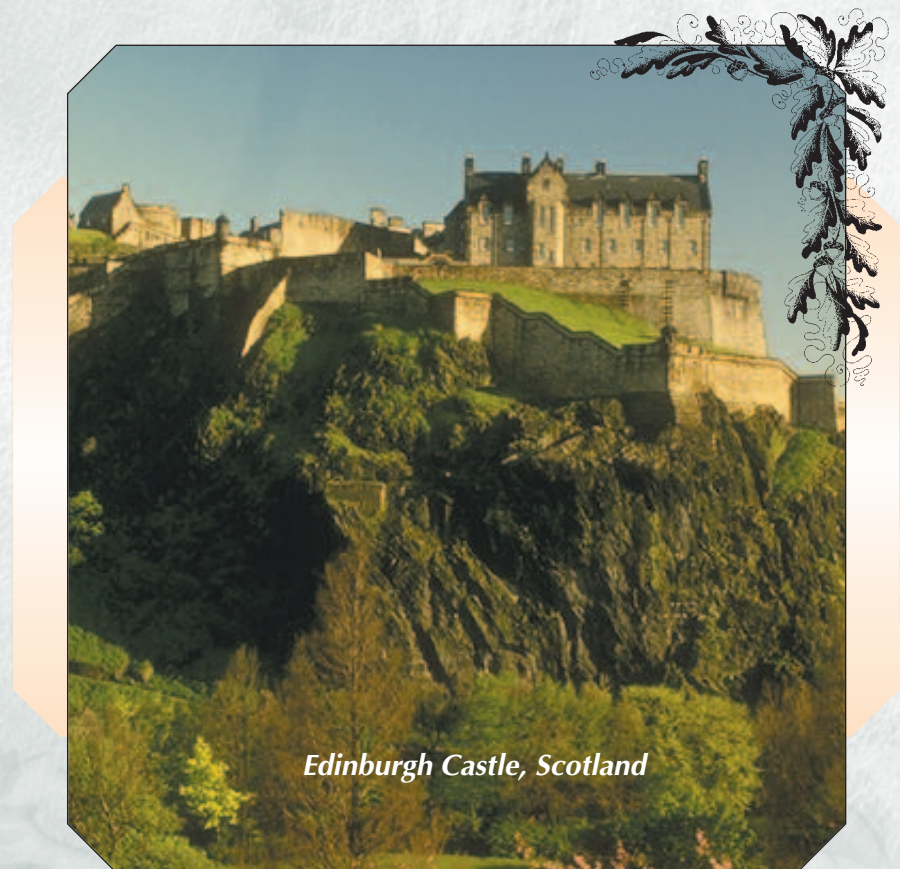
serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The contacts we made officially and in private left us very encouraged.

The days were not without tensions. The Free Church of Scotland Majority had sent delegates, and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing had sent delegates. The speeches delivered by both churches showed the awkwardness of being involved in a divided church. The Free Reformed Church of South Africa, represented by Rev. Pieter Nel, spoke strongly to the Dutch Churches against establishing contacts with "Dopper" churches. The very delegates of those "Dopper" churches were in attendance and spoke right after him with some dismay.

Changes to the Dutch liturgy

Having the privilege of spending the Lord's Day in Holland, we attended three church services. We discovered ways of worship quite new to us. In some instances the liturgy was very different. The congregation sang out various "amens" and the reading of Holy Scripture was executed by young girls. There were recitations of poems during the worship service. English hymns were included in the congregational singing and the Apostles' Creed was alternately re-

cited or sung by the congregation. We were told that these Dutch ministers are attempting to make the worship services more interesting. There is a special word for that in the Dutch churches: "opleuken." It was relayed to us that one minister brought a mask onto the pulpit to prove his point; another used a potato. One minister, while demonstrating to children, used a cell phone and dialled someone in the church, and hung up abruptly. This was his method of illustrating the do's and don'ts of communicating with God. Children can now download pictures or questions regarding sermons from their church's website. When we reflect back on the trip to the Dutch Churches we feel a sense of surprise and sadness. We were told that Canadian churches are approximately fifteen years behind Dutch churches. In other words, we would eventually face similar challenges in the future. In our defence we stated that both Dutch and Canadian churches had a parallel beginning after the Second World War. Both churches have supported the members of first, second and third generations. Both countries have likewise had the same developmental issues of church, school and their organizations. Rev. VanderVelde and I believe we



Edinburgh Castle, Scotland

were witness to a regression and not a progression. We suspect the Dutch churches to be relying on the same practices the Christian Reformed Churches in North America embraced fifteen or twenty years ago. We noticed a general trend among the Dutch churches which we summarize as a fear. This fear involves being identified as a type of church with exclusive truths. The Reformed character is almost unrecognizable. The Dutch churches are attempting to reinvent themselves in hopes of establishing an identity.



Impressions of Scotland

On Monday May 20, Rev. VanderVelde and I arrived in Scotland. On our way to visit a delegation of the Free Church "Continuing" we enjoyed a beautiful ride through the Scottish Highlands to the city of Inverness. We stayed at the manse of Rev. Maurice Roberts and his wife, who are very kind people. In the evening, we were introduced to Rev. John Macleod. Rev. Macleod is an interesting man, filled with great stories. All company present gave us a typical Scottish welcome, for which we were thankful. We sensed a great deal of anticipation with our host and his colleague. We were told that our evening meeting was informal, yet we received a lot of information – names and events – about the history leading to the official split in 2002 of the Scottish Reformed Churches. It was our good fortune to be supplied with these details as this information was very helpful to us.

Rev. VanderVelde and I experienced a refreshing sleep and a hearty breakfast in proper "Ye Olde Scottish" style. Later we were joined by Dr. Murdoch Murchison, Rev. Hugh Ferrier,

Rev. Maurice Roberts and Rev. John MacLeod. We felt that a straight approach at this gathering was appropriate, since by delegation the Orthodox Presbyterian Church had previously completed an investigation and subsequent report, which we considered satisfactory and which the OPC served at the ICRC body. We therefore presented a very direct question. What would you want us to report back to the Canadian churches so these same churches can affirm their relationship with you? This question proved to be more difficult to answer than to pose. From the response we were given we realized that the original reasons for the split were evolving. Whereas the primary focus had been on allegations against a "leader" exhibiting improper behaviour, the direction of blame was shifting. The Free Church was now turning away from the old historical path, and changing. We received a very favourable impression of the Free Church "Continuing" with respect to its direction. This cordial and informative meeting was followed by good fellowship and a very impressive sightseeing tour. We did not spot the Loch Ness monster although there were moments where we were nearly fooled.

On Wednesday, Rev. VanderVelde and I took to the road again and ended up in Edinburgh. Driving on the left side of the road with a right-sided wheel is one challenge. To drive in Edinburgh city itself, is another! We ended up following a friendly taxi driver who was willing, free of charge, to lead us to "the Mound." We were cordially received by the Free Church of Scotland "Majority," a ten man delegation. By comparison we were grossly understaffed but this fact had no bearing on the proceedings. We utilized the question we had presented to our brothers in Inverness the day before. "What would you want us to report back to the Canadian churches, so that these churches can affirm their relationship with you?" Our question needed to be explained more than once. Their answers at this meeting were helpful, and confirmed to us that the grounds for the split had emerged from a personal issue into doctrinal insights, and historical perspectives.

After the meeting we, along with our Scottish brothers, enjoyed a superb noon meal in historical surroundings. After this meal we toured through old Edinburgh accompanied by Rev. W. Mackay, a willing and knowledgeable

tour guide. We enjoyed ourselves so much that Rev. VanderVelde and I resumed our tour of historical Edinburgh the next day. If you have ever been up top in a double-decker bus, you know what a grand view exists from there.



We found the number of rifts in the Scottish churches perplexing. How could so many changes develop in just two short years? Obviously the "Continuing" and "Majority" Free Churches had pre-existing problems which had only recently surfaced. The Canadian Reformed Churches through Synod Neerlandia 2001 maintain a relationship with the Free Church of Scotland while monitoring the developments with the Free Church of Scotland "Continuing." This method appears to be the best course of action for now. The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad is busy developing further communication with the churches in Scotland and in the Netherlands.

Trusting and praying

There are some deep differences in the Scottish and Dutch churches. We wonder what purpose such developments might hold. We do know that the Lord God, in his providential care, controls all things and will use all things for his purpose. We may trust and also pray that the Lord will fulfil his purpose for his churches in other parts of the world also. Let us commit the brotherhood in the world into the care of our God. C

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By J. Huijgen

Address of Delegate to Synod Zuidhorn

Dear brothers and members of Synod Zuidhorn 2002:

We are grateful that in the year 2002, fifty years after the death of one of the servants of the Reformed Churches (Liberated), Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, we can be here with you and share with you our greetings. We pass on to you the greetings of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

To give you an idea as to how we have been faring under the blessing of the Lord, let me share with you some of the memorable facts of the life of our churches. The Canadian Reformed Churches have been blessed with a steady increase in numbers. Last year we grew in membership by approximately 300 members to approximately 16000. The number of ministers (active and retired) and missionaries remained fairly steady at sixty-five.

The year 2001 was also the year in which a General Synod was held. This synod has been dubbed "the synod of the Ecclesiastical Contacts." This was mainly because significant progress could be made in contacts with churches in North America. The contacts with the URCNA, the OPC, as well as the RCUS were the most remarkable. But significant was also the progress with the ERQ.

Our federation continues to see growth in the number of congregations. Two congregations became four congregations through the process of division due to growth. The most remarkable attempt to expand our churches is through the work of mission and evangelism. We enjoy various ways of mission. The missions in Brazil and Irian Jaya are known to you, but we also conduct mission work among the natives in northern British Columbia, as

well as among mainly Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. In the vicinity of Hamilton we may work in the inner city to do mission.

Our Theological College continues to be blessed. Students from various ethnic backgrounds study in Hamilton; the library saw a substantial building expansion; a Pastoral Training Program is now in place for students in theology.

We may rejoice also in the facts that the Lord Jesus Christ continues to provide for his churches in Canada all that is needed so that week by week the Word can be proclaimed and his people can be built up in the most holy faith.



We, as delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches would like to wish you the Lord's blessing in your work here at Synod. Your chairman has called this Synod, the Synod of the beautiful things, and we wish with him that your Synod indeed may turn out to be a blessing for the churches you serve. But you must also realize: *er staan veel mooie dingen op het spel*. We are somewhat aware of the pressures you face, as you are called to

deal with various matters, including many appeals out of the churches.

We have been instructed by our Synod to investigate various matters that are keeping you busy again. From the Acts of our General Synod Neerlandia 2001 you can glean that we have been instructed to:

- 1) stay in touch with your deputies concerning the relationship with the OPC in light of rule 3 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship;
- 2) to study the form for the solemnization of marriage adopted by Synod Leusden, to consult with your deputies and report to Synod 2004 whether this new form does indeed diminish the Scriptural teaching about marriage;
- 3) to make a thorough study of concerns raised in the churches and mentioned in the report serving at our last synod. To see whether the Reformed churches are deviating from the Reformed basis and the word of God and the Three forms of Unity. These concerns are: the increasing centralization in church life, the increase of the number of hymns, the shift of the Theological University from an institution for the training for the ministry to a knowledge centre, and an apparent professionalizing of the ministry;
- 4) to express our disappointment to the GKN that we were not informed that a major change to the Church Order was considered, when revisions were prepared in the manner of ecclesiastical examinations.

Based on this mandate we have spoken with your deputies BBK regarding these matters. We are thankful that we received opportunity to sample your thoughts and to hear about your vision regarding the future.

Your deputies presented us with the practical issues of living in a secularized society which led up to the formation of the new Marriage Form. We urge you to consider that the pressures of the world can only be addressed by obedience to Scripture.

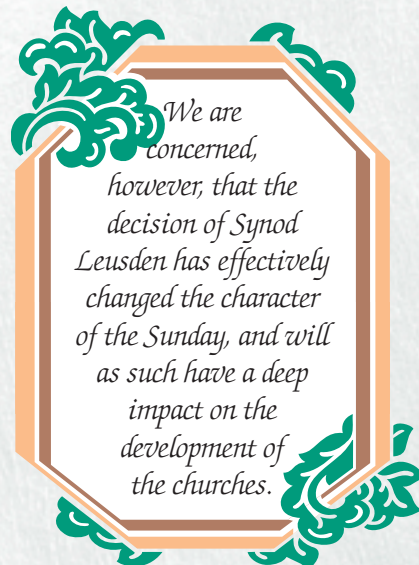
We were assured that the issues concerning the keeping of the Sunday as a day of rest were still within the parameters of opposing exegetical positions, and that the practice of keeping the day of rest is historically deeply rooted. We are concerned, however, that the decision of Synod Leusden has effectively changed the character of the Sunday, and will as such have a deep impact on the development of the churches.

It was very helpful to learn that the process of establishing a hymnal is a long process of experimentation and may eventually lead to a bundle of songs that addresses the various events the church commemorates. We wonder whether this is going to happen at the expense of the psalms and will eventually put man in the centre of the worship service.

We touched on some concerns that had arisen because of new situations you face, as there are asylum seekers desiring to partake in the Lord's Supper. We took note of the fact that your Theological University faces various challenges, not in the least the low number of enrollment of students. At

the same time the quality of scholarly excellence continues to improve.

Your new format of meeting as Synod, with inclusion of the means of electronic communication, shows that you attempt to stay with the times as you do not shy away from interacting




with new realities. We hope that with all your efficiency you will not develop an ecclesiastical bureaucracy, which could make the federation of churches top heavy, and eventually crush the grass roots. May the Lord help you to be steadfast in a ever more secularizing society.

We have heard at various levels that you expect the work of our Lord and

Saviour, the King of kings and the Lord of lords to be revealed more and more till the final day dawns and you will experience the brightest of days. As that is our expectation as well, we wish you the courage and the wisdom as well as the boldness to continue on the way of your calling. We do not know what the future holds, but we certainly know that the response of obedience to the calling of the Lord, will be blessed by God. In your history, more than fifty years ago, this was proven to come true.

You may have to work hard on various issues, especially considering the number of reactions out of the churches, but when you do the work as a work of service in obedience to God's revelation you may expect the blessing of our Lord.

We know that there are those who are somber and expect the worst and that there are those who are optimistic and expect the best. As you well know, you cannot please everyone, but One calls us to please Him in all we do. If one would look to people one would despair. But as the psalmist says in Psalm 121, "Unto the hills I lift my eyes, from where comes all my aid, when troubled or afraid." But then he says as well, "my help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." 

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A great and mighty wonder

Upon the earth was done

When Mary, virgin mother,

Gave birth to God's own Son . . .

Hymn 16 (Book of Praise)

By D. Ravensbergen

The Forty-first Annual League Day of the Canadian Reformed Women's Societies in Ontario held on October 23, 2002

The beautiful fall colours brighten the world around us; it is an invigorating reminder of mercies that are new every morning! This morning also, on October 23, 2002, we look ahead to the promise of a great day of study and fellowship when we abide in God and seek his will. It is the forty-first annual League Day and our president, Mrs. Martha deGelder, once again prepares to lead us for the day by welcoming the 320 women who have come from far and near to listen and learn, to study and socialize.

We began the day by singing from Psalm 147:1, 2, 4, accompanied by Sr. Schoon. Mrs. deGelder led us in prayer and read from Revelation 2:1-8, the theme for the day being "I am making everything new." God prepares everything for our glorious future. He is actively preparing to come to us in his Son Jesus Christ, just as we also should be prepared to come to Him! A few announcements were made. Our collection choice this year was for Anchor's second home in Burlington. Mrs. Martha deGelder also welcomed Mrs. Denise Vanderhoeven as the new corresponding secretary of the League Board. Everyone was informed also of the table set up for *Horizon* magazine where information could be received from Mrs. Ingrid Vandergaag. We could also note with thankfulness that our bond of faith extends beyond the borders of our own country: a letter from the League in Australia was read as well as an e-mail from the League in Holland. It was interesting to hear that in Australia they also enjoyed their League Day on October 23! Roll call revealed that most societies in Ontario

were well represented, including members from as far as Trenton!

A place of quiet rest

After the traditional singing of the League Song, we read from Scripture in preparation for the morning session to be introduced by Mrs. Jenette Schoon. We confessed from Matthew 11:20-30, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light;" from Isaiah 55 we learned from God that, "my ways are higher than your ways;" and from Psalm 119:105-112 we prayed, "preserve my life, O Lord, according to your Word." Mrs. Schoon shared with us her speech entitled "A place of quiet rest," using as basis for this study topic the beautiful and reassuring words we read in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Jesus promises us that when

we walk with Him, we will find rest for our souls. What characterizes this rest? Peace of mind, absence of fear, assurance of salvation and forgiveness of sins. How do we obtain this rest? Only by abiding in Christ, seeking Him, coming to Him, listening and calling upon his Name. Mrs. Schoon outlined for us the priority, purpose, pattern, practice, and product of abiding in Christ.

Abiding in Christ

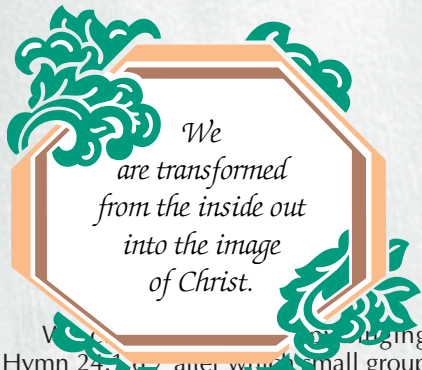
Our Lord Jesus experienced firsthand the busyness and pressure of life. How did He survive the pressing crowds, the requests for healing, the teaching and constant presence of disciples and their questions? He replenished his Spirit by making it a priority to step back from the clamour of this earth, to pray in a quiet place, to be reminded of his purpose on earth, namely to do the will of his Father. "Only one thing is needed," Jesus reminds us. We need to know God, to spend time in his Word in order to learn to know and confess our sins. Only then can He restore our souls (Ps 23). In Christ we see our example: in all He did, He asked of his Father, "Is this what you would have me do?" He withdrew to a solitary place in order to have intimate communion with God. Our daily devotions are a privilege and a necessity. We should arise at dawn ready to be taught by God. We should not face the day until we have looked first upon the face of our God. Only if we follow this pattern will we find peace in our plans for the day. God's Word is our source of strength; it alone can give power, freedom, comfort, understanding, peace. It



*"I am
making
everything
new."*

Revelation 21:5

alone can heal, warn, protect, lead. Thus the practice of abiding in Christ is characterized by a life lived in the Word, illumined by the Holy Spirit, which brings forth a response in praise and prayer. And what is the product of a life in Christ? We are transformed from the inside out into the image of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit promises "peace," and this peace of God will keep our hearts in Christ Jesus our Lord. "God longs to find refuge in the garden of our hearts and there to reap the fruit of the Spirit."



Following singing Hymn 24, after which a small group discussion was opened. Questions resulting from these discussions were brought forward and addressed. We discussed that often we seem to lack this peace in our lives, that the Sunday worship is not "food for the week" but that we should read and study the Word each day, and that in our group Bible studies we can help and teach each other how to daily abide in Christ. Mrs. deGelder thanked Mrs. Schoon heartily for making and presenting her speech. Collection was held for Anchor and we closed the morning session by singing Psalm 103:1,2. We asked the Lord for a blessing over our meal. A delicious catered lunch was enjoyed by all, and the lunch hour was a great time to socialize and renew acquaintances. We reconvened at 1:30 at which time we were treated to a pictorial presentation of the city of Brampton, the residential, industrial, and historical aspects of the city as well as slides of church life.

Afternoon session

The afternoon speech was prepared by Rev. B.J. Berends on the topic of "Our Christian hope and expectation: the return of our Lord Jesus Christ." To prepare for this we read from Romans 8:18-27, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:, and Revelation 22:20. We also sang Hymn 50:1, 2, 3.

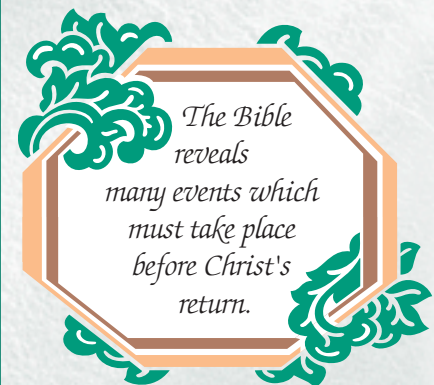
Christ was born in a godless earth which did not recognize the need for a Saviour. "The world did not recognize Him ... his own did not receive Him" (John 1). Can we imagine this world, one of depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, arrogance, boastfulness, full of senseless, hateful, and ruthless men? Indeed! This is the world we also live in today! Yet this is after having received and heard the gospel, a gospel which reminds us that the world will come to an end in the final judgement. At this time also our future glory will become a reality. Rev. Berends divided his speech into the promise of Christ's return, the longing, the signs, and the day of his return.

Even in the Old Testament we read of this longing for Christ, referring not only to his first but also to his second coming. Job confesses "Yet in my flesh I will see God." In Isaiah 11 we read the amazing account of the new earth, where "the lion will lie with the lamb . . . and a little child will lead them." Christ also reassured his disciples: "In my Father's house are many rooms; I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again!" Especially after Christ's ascension and Pentecost we read a great deal about Christ's promised return. We wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies, yet we are so tied up in earthly matters. How strong is our longing to be with Christ? It is for the sake of the gospel that God bides his time; all creation is groaning, waiting to be liberated! We also long for the end of pain, suffering, and sin. If we wait eagerly, we will have an open eye for the signs of Christ's imminent coming. There are two extremes in the interpretation of these signs: those whose whole life and theology focus on this return, and those who pay no attention whatsoever. We must fall between these two by being alert yet living and loving the life God gives here on earth. The Bible reveals many events which must take place before Christ's return: the preaching for the gathering of the nations, the great apostasy, the great tribulation, the anti-christ who is the sum total of man's wickedness. Then there are the concurrent events of the fall of Jerusalem, false prophets, wars, and earthquakes. When we see that these calamities intensify, we know Christ's return is near. And what will this day be like? We learn that the moon and the stars will fall from the sky, that the sign of the Son of man will appear, that we will suddenly, most surprisingly be

taken up to the clouds to meet our Saviour! God will judge, He will make all things new, He will open the graves of those who have died; we will hear the sound of the trumpet and a loud command with the voice of the archangel! And in the final judgement, all the nations will be gathered before God. The standard for judgement will be God's righteousness as revealed in Christ, and we will be saved despite all the sins we did while in the body. May this encourage us in all trials and persecutions; this return will be so glorious that not one of us will want to be missing!

Closing

We sang Hymn 50:4-7 after which discussion was opened. Topics of discussion included the man of lawlessness, the purpose of the day of judgement (to reveal the greatness of Christ's sacrifice), and the meaning of "rapture." Mrs. deGelder reminded us also at the close of the discussion that our activity also prepares for Christ's coming, that he works through us toward that time! It was the end of another wonderful day of fellowship! Mrs. deGelder announced that we collected \$1515.12 for Anchor. The women of the Brampton Society were thanked for their tremendous work and effort in preparing and hosting this League Day.



Also Mrs. Jane Oosterhoff was thanked for her work on the ILPB and Mrs. Chandra Vanderboom was welcomed as her successor. Mrs. Henrietta Van derlaan was also called forward in order that we could express our appreciation for her many years as corresponding secretary for the League Board. We sang together from Psalm 46:1, 2, 5 and Rev. Berends closed with us in thanksgiving prayer. Everyone was wished a safe homeward journey!

By R. Tomlin



Guido Graduation 2002

*I*t was just one of those mornings – a morning when the air was fresh, the sun was shining, and the autumn colours were beginning to appear. September 28 simply promised to be a wonderful day. This year's Guido de Brès Christian High School commencement lived up to these expectations due, in part, to several new twists to the program. This year the graduation ceremony was held on a Saturday afternoon, instead of the usual Friday evening – a change that cleared the way for a much more relaxed atmosphere. The switch also allowed the day to begin with a very enjoyable luncheon in the gymnasium at Guido. Graduates and parents relished the opportunity to reminisce and mingle while enjoying a casual lunch of cold cuts, buns, salad, and sweets. The graduates spent much of this time rekindling friendships and catching up on one another's activities of the past few months.

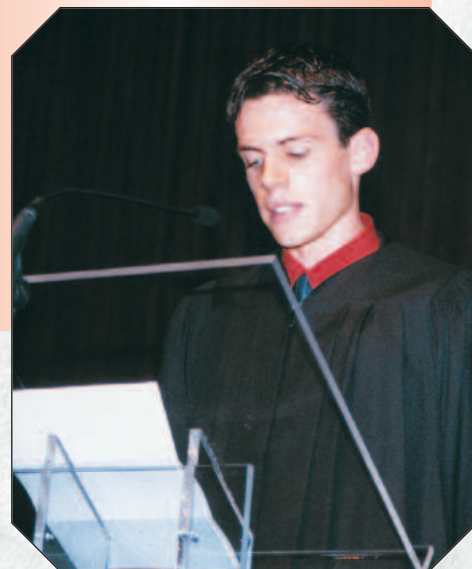
After the luncheon everyone headed down to the new venue for the ceremony, Hamilton Place! The relaxing atmosphere that began at the luncheon carried over to the ceremony as there was no difficulty seating everyone who wished to attend (a big relief for the organizers).

The graduates began marching in at 2:00 p.m., taking a full five minutes to get each one to his or her seat. To begin the program, Hebrews 2:1-9 was read and Psalm 92 was sung. Mr. Leo Kampen, the Board Chairman, gave the first address. In the opening of his speech he drew attention to the robes being worn by the graduates and briefly explained why the wearing of graduation gowns was introduced at Guido several years ago. Using this practice of being robed as a springboard to a more spiritual message, Mr. Kampen encouraged the graduates to use their Christian education and to become robed in the righteousness of Christ and to avoid being robbed of his gifts. To solidify his point and to maintain the relaxed atmosphere of the day, he ended the address with an intentional misquote of William Shakespeare: "Two B's [robbed] or not two B's [robed], may it never be a question."

The next speech was delivered by the Principal, Mr. Hans VanDooren. This address was opened with a brief historical description of the surrounding area of Hamilton. Using another twist of a famous quote (coined by a local steel company), Mr. VanDooren led the graduates and audience to recognize the work of so many people in the Guido community. The quote, "Our product is Christian education, our strength is people," opened the door to acknowledging



The principal, Mr. J.G. VanDooren.



André Schutten delivers the valedictory address.



*Alumnus
Dr. Riemer Faber
(1979).*



*Stephanie
Hordyk
performing a
solo.*



*Christina
Hutten
receiving
awards.*



Grads reminisce over an open yearbook.

the board, staff, parent, volunteer, and student contributions to the success of the school and highlighting God's grace in allowing all this to take place. This particular class, it was noted, had the highest percentage of honour students in Guido history and raised over \$16,000 to benefit the school and students (the new courtyard in the back of the school is one example).

The main speaker was Dr. R. Faber, Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Waterloo. Using the historical examples of Ptolemaeus, Lucius, and Perpetua, Dr. Faber demonstrated how faithful Christians have often been portrayed as rebels and punished or killed for this reason. Calling on the graduates to live "in this world but not of the world," he challenged them to face the tests that lie ahead with faith in Christ. He encouraged them not to avoid being a witness for God and closed by pointing out that the man Guido de Brès was also accused of being a rebel.

After the audience sang from Psalm 135, the graduates received their diplomas. A number of awards were also presented. Stephanie Hordyk, a member of the graduating class, next performed a solo, "You Will Never Walk Alone."

André Schutten then delivered the valedictory address with a sense of confidence and concern. He carefully pointed out the contributions of the staff at Guido and acknowledged the challenges that he and his classmates face in an increasingly ungodly world. André reflected on the achievements of his class while decorating his speech with just the right amount of humour. Following the theme of the day, he concluded the address with quotes from Doctor Seuss and Billie Joe Armstrong. This speech was a great end to a wonderful afternoon. **C**





Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

Brenda Aalbers
 Lisa Aikema
 Michael Alkema
 David Baartman
 Monica Bartels
 Richard Bartels
 Timothy Bartels
 Cindy Beijes
 Jerry Blokker
 Lisa Blokker
 Diane Boot
 Darryl Bosscher
 Ian Bosscher
 Jason Bosscher
 Harold Bouwman
 Jesse Bouwman
 Melissa Bremer
 Erica Broekema
 Danyse Buitenwerf
 Laura David
 Christopher DeBoer
 Gerben DeGelder
 Timothy DeJong
 Karen de Jonge
 Crystal Dekker
 Jennifer Dokter

Jessica Dokter
 Jason Feenstra
 Pieter Gelms
 Eugene Greyling
 Brian Hartman
 Andrea Havenaar
 Kathryn Helder
 Reuben Helder
 Yvonne Hopman
 Stephanie Hordyk
 Rebecca Horsman
 Devon Hummel
 Christina Hutten
 Johanna Hutten
 Ryan Kampen
 Henry Kelly
 Dina Kok
 Jolene Kroes
 Bradley Linde
 Jason Linde
 Ryan Linde
 Kara Lodder
 Emily Loopstra
 Jolene Lootens
 David Mans
 Jeffrey Morris

Joel Muis
 Brooke Nichol
 Darryl Oosterhoff
 Danielle Ostermeier
 Kristy Lee Ouwersloot
 Jason Poort
 Bernard Ravensbergen
 Melynda Reinink
 Joshua Roodzant
 Melissa Roza
 Lee Rozema
 Jocelyn Schoon
 Daniel Schulenberg
 John Schulenberg
 André Schutten
 Julia Schutten
 Kristi Schutten
 Nathan Schutten
 Erica Sieders
 Timothy Sikkema
 Anthony Spithoff
 Spencer Spoelstra
 Nicolaas Stieva
 Stephanie Stoffels
 Krista Strating
 Diane Terpstra

Bradley Vandelden
 Jonathan Vandenbos
 William VandenOever
 Rachel VanderBruggen
 Tamara VanderBruggen
 Maria VanderMeer
 Joanne VanderMooren
 Nicholas VanderVelde
 David VanEs
 LeeAnna VanLuik
 Robert VanLuik
 Jessica VanMeeteren
 Travis VanMiddelkoop
 Sarah van Popta
 Carolyn Van Straten
 Elaine VanTol
 Sheena Veenstra
 Denise Vis
 Emily Vis
 Jessica Vis
 Leanne Vis
 Mark Werkman
 Robert Wieske
 Leida Yousif



By R. Faber



Lions

Chairman of the board, principal and fellow teachers, parents, family, friends, and graduating class of 2002. Sometime during the second century, when Christianity was outlawed by emperor-worship, there was a man by the name of Ptolemaeus. When his Christian faith was reported to the authorities, Ptolemaeus was arrested and brought before the judge. The judge asked one question, "Are you a Christian?" Answering "yes," Ptolemaeus was sentenced to death, and immediately led to execution. Someone in the audience, a fellow named Lucius, cried out, "All he did was confess to being a Christian!" The judge responded, "It appears that you are a Christian too." "Yes indeed," said Lucius. Promptly the judge ordered him also to be executed.¹

Early in the year 203 a young Christian woman by the name of Perpetua was led to the lions and wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Carthage. She spoke of her faith to the procurator who had condemned her. Like other Christians throughout the Roman empire, Perpetua was viewed as a danger to society. It was thought that Christians were rebels who did not acknowledge the emperor as god. By Roman law, such rebellious people were to be thrown to lions or other wild beasts. Often such punishments were meted out on the birthday of the emperor. They were part of the "bread and games" given to the fickle mobs who cried "Christians to the lions" whenever something did not go their way.²

The early Christians confessed that Jesus Christ, and not the emperor, is Lord; by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit they were able to hold fast their confession without wavering (Heb 10:23). Perhaps those who were thrown to the wilds beasts thought of Daniel, who despite a law of

Medes and Persians prayed not to the king but to God, just as he had done before (Dan 6: 8-10). They may have recalled the comforting words of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "whoever confesses me before men, I also will confess before my father who is in heaven" (Matt 10:32).



At this point you graduands may be wondering, "How does this story of witnessing to Christ affect me? I do not live in a country of persecution." True, you may be thankful that in our part of the world Christians are not persecuted; but you do have to witness to Christ, and now when you graduate you enter a phase of your life when your faith must be increasingly evident before men. As you enter the workforce, college, or university, or continue in high-school, you assume greater responsibility for your actions and words. You are developing and applying your talents in the kingdom of God, knowing that while you are in the world you are not of the world. You have fellow workers who may, or may not, be fellow Christians. Some of you will meet teachers who may, or may not, be fellow believers. Your daily circumstances now are

different from what they have been for the past four or five years.

Well then, in your current circumstances you are called upon to witness to your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The way you talk, the way you dress, the way you behave at work or college must be a testimony to your growing faith. More importantly, the way you think and feel is determined by the conviction that with body and soul you belong to your faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, and that you wish to live for Him. At this time in your life you consider the purposes for which God has brought you into this world. The career you will pursue and the way in which you pursue it are determined by the Word of God and not by the values of this world. In other words, you may not avoid the opportunity to witness to the love of God. After all, Scripture says that if you deny Him, He will also deny you (2 Tim 2:12), and we should not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord (2 Tim 1:13).

However, you graduands may further wonder, "Why do you speak to us about witnessing to Christ in our daily calling today, at our graduation?" The answer is so simple that it may be overlooked. Recall that when you entered highschool, you did so at the bidding of your parents. They determined to send you not to a secular school in your neighbourhood, but to Guido de Brès. They made a commitment to send you to a school where the instruction is in accordance with the Word of God. This means you attended classes in which the confession, "Jesus is Lord," was presumed for every lesson. In the first place you have studied the Scriptures, in which God's love for you is revealed. It means that you have learned how the Bible applies to every aspect of your life, and that every area of human enterprise has been claimed by Christ. You

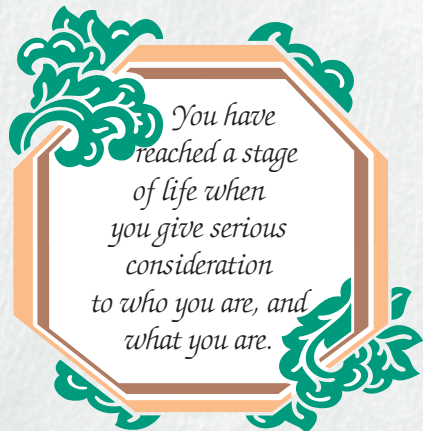
have studied art, chemistry, mathematics and English literature from the perspective of God's revealed Word. In other words, your graduation today marks the culmination of instruction received at home, church, and school. You have reached a stage of life when you give serious consideration to who you are, and what you are. You begin to contemplate the calling which God is giving you on this earth. You think about the kind of partner with whom you may serve God better together than alone. As you become more independent in deliberating these important matters, you do well to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

But there is more. The school you have attended is called Guido de Brès for the reason that God once called him to live and die in the faith. As you know, the reformer of the lowlands was used by God to be a witness to the teaching of Christ. Guido de Brès ministered to the Reformed believers in the town of Doornik in the 1560s, when the church was "under the cross" of persecution from Romanist authorities. Quietly, by visiting families in their homes, Guido and other Calvinist leaders sought to convince the people that the truth of the Bible was being suppressed by the Romanist church. He composed a manual, later called the Belgic Confession, to help believers come to a better understanding of the faith.

But it was a time of social and religious unrest, when radicals sought to effect immediate change in the officially Roman Catholic community. On one night, five hundred people disobeyed the municipal curfew and followed an anti-establishment leader in singing songs of protest. While de Brès would have nothing to do with such subversive activities, he was soon considered, albeit wrongly, the leader of the rebels. He determined to show that he and the Reformed Christians desired merely to serve the Lord according to his Word, and that they did not oppose the civic authorities.

On the night of November 1, 1561, a package was thrown over the wall of the castle at Doornik. The package contained a letter to king, and a copy of the well-known Confession. In the letter, which is modelled in part on a defence of the Christian faith written in the second century, de Brès asks the king to stop the persecution of God's people. He explains that the Reformed believers are not to be identified with the radicals who had caused unrest in the town. Like the Christians of antiquity, they are being accused wrongly

of opposing the secular government. Therefore, writes Guido, the persecutions are "misdeeds unworthy of our confession, unworthy of the Christian, indeed, unworthy of humanity; rather such misdeeds are worthy of recalling that ancient by-word. . . 'Christians to the beasts'."³




Besides the letter to the king, the package contained the confession, and I wish to end by telling you something about it. The original copy of that confession included a page that is not reproduced in most modern editions. This first page has the heading: "some passages in the New Testament, in which all believers are exhorted to make profession of faith before [all] people."⁴ Then follow five texts, some of which

were quoted earlier. Included also is the encouragement of 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Pay careful attention to what you have heard so that you do not drift away. Look to Jesus, who is not ashamed to call you his sisters and brothers (Heb 2:11), who will crown you with glory and honour. After all, the day will come when everyone will confess that Jesus is Lord: the chairman of the board, the principal and other teachers, your parents, family, friends, I, and you, the graduating class of 2002.

¹Thus Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology for the Christians*, 188-189 in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, 1885).

²Thus Tertullian, *Apology* 40.2, in T.R. Glover, ed., *Tertullian* (Harvard, 1931).

³Text of the letter (French and Dutch) appears in J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandsche Belijdenisgeschriften* (Amsterdam, 1940), 46-47.

⁴See C. Vonk, *De Voorzeide Leer* (Barendrecht, 1955), IIIa, 113-114. The four other texts are: Matthew 10:32, 33; Mark 8:38 (cf. Luke 9:26); Romans 10:10; 2 Timothy 2:12. 

Rev. R. Faber is professor and chair of Classical Studies at University of Waterloo. rfaber@canrc.org



Whoever confesses me
before men,
I also will confess
before my Father
Who is in heaven.

Matthew 10:32



By F. Jagt

Coram Deo

Imagine that you are contacted by a family who has a one-month-old baby. The baby has been sick and an untreated infection has resulted in gangrene. The young infant's feet are turning black and his flesh is beginning to rot. The family is poor and without resources. Most Canadians would find such a situation horrifying and nightmarish, but this is reality for people living in Haiti.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. There are no natural resources, life expectancy is fifty-one years, and unemployment stands at nearly seventy-five per cent. The average yearly income is \$300 US, sixty-five per cent of the population is illiterate, and three quarters of Haitians live in abject poverty. In addition to these troubles, the country has recently experienced political instability due to government mistrust and corruption. The government itself is divided over the legality of elections, which put Jean-Bertrand Aristide in power as president of Haiti. As a result there are many instances of violence and protests, and a lack of cooperation between government and law enforcement agencies. Add to this frequent interruption of power and communication services, and a painfully bleak picture of life in Haiti emerges.

Worse for the disabled

But life in Haiti is worse for those who are physically disabled. Although almost every Haitian professes to believe in God, at least fifty per cent also are strongly influenced by Voodoo culture. Part of the Voodoo superstition maintains that people who are handicapped are cursed, and should be avoided or disposed of. Because of

this, children with cleft palates, diarrhea, birth defects, hydrocephalus, and many other disabilities, are not treated and, in many instances, are left to die. These individuals are seen to be a burden to society, and therefore, disposable. Even so, those families who accept and love their handicapped children do not have the means to help them.

Everything in Haiti has to be paid for by the user. There is no national health insurance. If people need medical care, they must pay or they will not receive treatment. Furthermore, if people are hospitalized, it is up to their family or friends to feed and care for them during their stay. As a result many people, especially children, with curable illnesses and disabilities are not treated. Infection then becomes a constant threat because so many live in unsanitary conditions.

Similarly, education is also not available to all Haitians. Schools are not funded by the government, nor are they regulated. In addition to tuition, parents must also provide uniforms for students. If students cannot afford a uniform, they cannot go to school. If they lack a pair of shoes they cannot attend school. Therefore children who are poor, often cannot obtain an education, and the cycle of poverty is perpetuated.

Christian home

Coram Deo is a Christian home operated by Karen Bultje in Haiti, in Delmas 31 Community. This area includes three townships, Cite aux Cayes, Cite Jeremie, and Cite Soliel. These are neighbourhoods where the rate of unemployment and illiteracy are higher yet than that of the rest of the country. Other problems include open sewers,





no garbage collection, and poor house construction. In the midst of such misery and darkness, *Coram Deo* is an oasis of light, shining the love of Jesus Christ onto the poor and sick. Many individuals who require medical and personal care are given shelter and encouragement at *Coram Deo*.

Karen and her staff offer hope to Haitians who have nowhere else to turn. The medical needs of the people who have come to *Coram Deo* range from children with cleft palates, to broken bones, to cancer patients. Some patients simply need medication; others need surgery. Sometimes treatment is available locally. On other occasions treatment must be sought outside of Haiti, from United States or Canada.

Children who would otherwise be on the street, are given an education at the day school program provided. *Coram Deo* employs four part time teachers, as well as a child care worker and a part time tutor. A number of the children are physically disabled, a few are deaf, while others are too poor to be able to afford school. The children are taught at their own level, with the goal that they can eventually be placed in a Christian school, and reintegrated into Haitian society. There are also a number of children who are helped financially with the tuition costs of the school they attend.

The *Coram Deo* staff also includes a cook, cleaner, driver and guard. Students at *Coram Deo* are provided with a daily meal as well as some life skills training, and of course, they are presented with the Word of God, and the only hope for salvation, Jesus Christ.

Shipment of goods

Recently, *Coram Deo* and a neighbouring orphanage, *Notre Maison*, were the recipients of a large shipment of goods (26,000 lbs.) brought over from Canada by the Canadian Armed Forces. Food, clothing, toys, medical supplies and personal care items were donated by the members of United Reformed, Canadian Reformed and Orthodox Reformed churches in Ontario, in a campaign called, "Hope for Haiti." Although there were many frustrations and delays in obtaining the goods, the end result was that Karen was able to distribute a great amount of much needed items. As well, with the assistance of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, and a committee called "Faithworks," several groups and individuals have visited *Coram Deo* with the purpose of helping and supporting Karen and her staff, while learning more about what can be done about the plight of Haiti's poor.

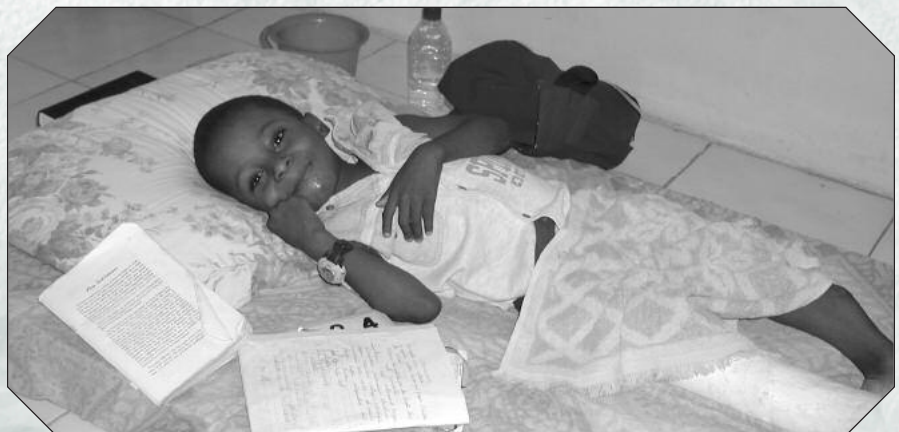
Registered charity

Currently, concerned members of these Reformed communities are working towards establishing *Coram Deo* as a registered charity in Canada. Funds are needed in order to keep *Coram Deo* in operation. Our immediate goal is to raise \$25,000 Can. before the end of 2002. In the new year, *Coram Deo* will be seeking on-going funding through child sponsorships, friends of *Coram Deo* memberships, and other means. Do you want to share in this work? There are few among us who are willing or able to give up our jobs or family in order go to a country such as Haiti, and offer help to desperately needy people in the name of Jesus Christ. However we are called to support those who do this work. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25, "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

The baby that is mentioned in the first paragraph is named Alexandre Solomon. He was brought to *Coram Deo* this past summer in very poor condition. Here is an excerpt from on of Karen's reports: "It was amazing to see rotten flesh turn to healthy flesh and we praise the Lord for healing him! He lost his toes but in the beginning people were saying he could die and it would be necessary to remove both of his feet." There are still many, many children like young Alexandre, who can by God's grace and loving kindness be helped at *Coram Deo*. If you wish to support this work, a recognized Canadian charitable organization, Word and Deed Ministries will accept donations for *Coram Deo* (Charitable Tax Receipt # 89 120 0941 RR 0001). Cheques must be made out to "Word and Deed," and designated for *Coram Deo*. Please mail to:

Coram Deo

72 Deveron Crescent
London, ON N5Z 4B5



The Reformed Evangelism Taskforce

Introducing ourselves

Since you have not heard from us in a while, we thought that it would be good to update the readers of *Clarion* on the efforts and plans of the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce (RET). In case you are not too familiar with us, we have been supplying the churches with resources in evangelism since 1983.

We publish a quarterly magazine called *Evangel*, which is meant to be distributed in the community. Currently, many churches subscribe to it in various quantities and give it to visitors, place it in local offices, as well as in various public places. The editor of this magazine is the Rev. D. Moes, who has faithfully lined up contributors from among the ranks of Canadian Reformed ministers and members. He is to be much commended for almost twenty years of diligent effort.

RET also publishes a semi-annual magazine called *Outreach*, which is placed as an insert to *Clarion*. This publication is meant to inform the local evangelism and home mission committees across the country about local efforts, give some guidance on evangelistic questions and approaches, and stimulate general interest in evangelism work in the churches.

In addition to these regular efforts, RET is also the publishing arm of the twenty-five part Bible course called *A Gift from Heaven*. This course is still in print in two different formats and continues to be ordered from us on a regular basis. Also the pamphlet *Introducing the Canadian Reformed Churches*



is one of our efforts and is being used nationally. Currently, however, our supply is almost exhausted and we are planning to produce a second, revised edition.

Reorganization

Moving on from our publication efforts, we would also like to inform you about some structural changes. Recently, RET received an infusion of new faces when the Board was approached by members of the Chilliwack Evangelism Committee. They expressed an interest in getting involved in this work. As a result, we have re-vamped the Board of RET. The Council of the Langley Canadian Reformed Church, which oversees the work of the RET, approved a revised Constitution to reflect this reorganization.

New Plans

Along with changes at the Board level, we have reviewed current activi-

ties, received feedback from the representatives of local evangelism committees in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia and made some new plans.

In addition to publishing the *Evangel* and *Outreach* magazines, the Bible course, and the introductory pamphlet, we intend to produce:

- **A new and more basic introduction to the biblical and Reformed faith.**

While *A Gift from Heaven* has helped many, it has been our conviction for some time that it is not an entry-level course. Something is needed for people who have no familiarity with biblical words, events and teachings. We hope to produce something that will meet this need.

- **A series of visually attractive and well-written pamphlets**

From the feedback we have received there appears to be a real

need for a series of pamphlets that will address a wide variety of issues and questions. These relate to doctrinal questions (infant baptism, Lord's Supper celebration, the office of elder) ethical matters (abortion, euthanasia, lotteries), to sects and cults (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons), to other religions (Islam, Hinduism) to worship and its various elements (worship style, the singing of psalms, preaching).

- **A training course in evangelism from a Reformed perspective**

A number of churches have expressed interest in evangelism training for their members. As a result, we intend to produce a course that can be taught locally, either with the aid of a teacher sent out by the RET or one recommended and trained by the RET.

- **A website to facilitate contact between the RET and the public**

In this increasingly electronic age we see new possibilities when it comes to spreading the gospel, as well as to having better communications between ourselves, committees and church members.

Hence we are currently setting up a website that will inform peo-

ple about the RET, keep them updated on new developments, supply articles, index past issues of *Evangel* and *Outreach*, have links to other sites, enable committees to order materials, and so forth.

- **Offer website services to churches**

We have also learned that not all local churches know how to set-up and maintain a professional looking website. As a result, we are in the process of teaming-up with a local website design firm. In this way churches can contact us and we will supply them with an attractive and up-to-date website.

- **A clearing house for evangelism resources**

From time to time we come across material produced by others on evangelism that could be used in our churches as well. We intend to alert the evangelism committees about suitable titles, order such books and brochures in large quantities and pass the savings on to them.

Your help

Surely, you will understand that we can not accomplish all of these things in our own strength, nor without

your help. Hence we would ask for your prayers that God may supply us with all that is needed. We would also ask you for feedback on these new plans. If you have suggestions or comments, please contact us. Finally, we thank you for your financial assistance whether that be by direct donation or indirectly through collections and local church budgets.

May our good and gracious God cause the light that He has given to the Canadian Reformed Churches in particular and the Reformed faith in general to shine brightly in this world of ever-increasing darkness.

The Board of the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce

Rev. James Visscher, *chairman*
Ed van Woudenberg, *vice-chairman*
Cameron Aikema, *secretary*
Jerome Lengkeek, *treasurer*
Martha Moes, *administrator*
Rev. Dick Moes
William Tams
Rev. Matthew VanLuik

Address:

Reformed Evangelism Taskforce

21804-52 Avenue,
Langley, BC Canada
V2Y 1L3



Incarnatio est maximum Dei donum



*Like as the fountain of all light created
Doth pour out streams of brightness undefined
Through all the conduits of transparent kind
That heaven and air are both illuminated,
And yet his light is not thereby abated:
So God's eternal bounty ever shined
The beams of being, moving, life, sense, mind,
And to all things himself communicated.
But see the violent diffusive pleasure
Of goodness, that left not till God had spent
Himself by giving us himself, his treasure,
In making man a God omnipotent.
How might this goodness draw our souls above,
Which drew down God with such attractive love.*

William Alabaster (1567-1640)

By J.A. Roukema

Women Voting

For the past thirty years, most of our general synods have had to deal with the question whether it would be good to allow also the women in the churches to vote in the elections for office bearers. There have been extensive reports to synods dealing with this matter, most notably, the reports which served General Synod Smithville 1980 and General Synod Cloverdale 1983. The extensive discussion about this matter has convinced me that the Bible allows for various ways to come to the appointment of office bearers, whether that be by household, single member, single-parent vote, or by the lot. Another method is to simply allow all professing members to vote, as is the case in some of our sister churches, such as the Reformed churches (liberated) in the Netherlands, the Free Church of Scotland, and the United Reformed Church.

Historical background

It may be good to analyze the reasons why previous synods have not seen their way clear to give the women the right to vote for office bearers.

Allow me to observe the following arguments that have been used by general synods in the past:

1. "The materials available to synod are not sufficient to lead to a responsible, clear decision, which takes all Biblical (as well as Church-political) aspects into account" (GS Toronto 1974, art 84. GS Cloverdale 1977 conclude, however, that Synod Toronto should have made a responsible, clear decision (art 27, conclusion 3)
 2. There is an "obvious lack of consensus on this matter" in the churches (GS Cloverdale 1983, art 160. C.1)
 3. The exegetical arguments in favour of women's voting rights are "rather unusual if not questionable" (GS Cloverdale 1983, art 160.C.2)
 4. The Dutch sister churches maintain that the binding character of the vote means that "the submissiveness of women does not allow an independent vote" (GS Cloverdale 1983, art 160.C.3)
 5. Various churches are of the opinion that the matter of women's voting right "does not live in the midst of the Churches" and that it would "cause great concern and even division" (GS Cloverdale 1983, art 160.C.4)
- Re 1:** This argument is no longer relevant, because it was overturned in 1977, and because two study committee have since submitted extensive reports on the matter (1980 and 1983)
- Re 2:** This argument will be dealt with in consideration B below
- Re 3:** This argument will be dealt with in consideration B below
- Re 4:** This argument has fallen away. The Dutch sister churches have, in the meantime, introduced the practice that women also vote in the election of office bearers (GS Ommen 1993 and Berkel-Rodenrijs 1996)
- Re 5:** The first part of this argument will be dealt with in consideration A below; the second part, in consideration C below.

Considerations

A. The matter of "women's voting rights" clearly lives within the churches

In reviewing Acts of Synods, this matter has been brought to the attention by individuals and churches at

general synods 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1995, 1998, 2001. Between 1974 and 2001 there have been over thirty submissions regarding women's voting rights to eight general synods. These submissions were not all in favour of women's voting rights. However, the point I wish to make in this consideration is not that the churches, by and large, favour women's voting rights, but, that the matter of women's voting is very much alive in the churches. The sheer bulk of submissions makes it clear that this is a matter which lives in the churches.

B. There remains disagreement among the churches on the direction Scripture gives on the matter of women's voting rights

The number of submissions indicates the following:

- nine in favour of women's voting rights
- five in favour of a study committee
- five against women's voting rights
- twelve submissions have no position indicated in the acts of synods

Judging from these data, there is clear disagreement on the direction Scripture gives in this matter.

Two synods have been served with extensive reports on women's voting rights (1980 and 1983). In my view, the churches have studied this matter thoroughly. No synod has ruled it unbiblical if women were to vote in the elections of office bearers. All GS Cloverdale (1983) said was that the *exegesis* used by a study committee to defend such a practice was "unusual" and perhaps "questionable." Exegetical disagreements remain. The disagreements we have are over exegetical questions and those disagreements may well continue beyond another study committee and another synod decision, whether it be in favour or against. In short, we have

come to a stalemate with regard to our understanding of the Scriptural data on the matter at hand.

C. The enforcement of a uniform practice on this matter is causing concern in the churches

GS Cloverdale (1983) concluded that to introduce women's voting rights might cause concerns in the churches. However, it failed to take into account that *not* to introduce women's voting rights would *also* cause concern in the churches. After Cloverdale's decision *not* to introduce women's voting rights, five general synods have had to deal with this matter, precisely because of the concerns that the decision of GS Cloverdale itself raised. The argument about concern and division cuts both ways.

This means that as churches we are caught on the horns of a dilemma. No matter which practice we enforce in the churches, there will continue to be concern in the churches because of the practice we have adopted.

D. There is no church-political need to enforce a uniform practice on this matter

The Church Order states that "the congregation" must cooperate in the election to any office. The "congregation" must be enabled to draw the consistory's attention to the names of brothers deemed fit for an office. The "congregation" is to choose certain candidates presented to her by the consistory with the deacons (art 3). The Church Order does not make any comment on whether or not this cooperation is restricted to male members. It is not a matter of "headship" or an exercise of authority, but it is an important task of all communicant believers, male or female (Synod Ommen, 1993). The background to "headship" or "authority" reasoning is our Western Civilization's view of democracy. Those who are elected are held accountable to the electorate, the voters. Heads of government are chief executives of the will of the majority, and it is to the electorate that they are accountable. But this is not a biblical principle. Yet, those who are against women voting reason along the lines of the principles of modern-day democracy; that is, they consider voting an act of governance. In Reformed Church polity, voting is a means by which God appoints those to serve his Church as office bearers. And this voting right is based on having made

public profession of faith. Why should that not then include also the women who have made public profession of faith?

In his commentary on the Church Order, *With Common Consent* (1990, p.18) Rev. W. VanOene writes,

A consistory could not be accused of violating our Church Order if it decided to let also the sisters take part. But there is a consensus among us and some of our general synods have also dealt with the question. Serious objections on this very matter are alive among many of our members. They fear that granting our sisters the right to take part in the election will lead towards opening the office to them as well. Besides, they say, taking part in elections is an act of government, and this is not in their province.

Others state that all we have to do is acknowledge a right of which they are convinced that the sisters already have it.

Fear is a bad counselor, and if the sisters have the right to take part, fear may not hold us back from recognizing this right and giving them the opportunity to exercise it.

Rev. Van Oene rightly maintains that the Church Order leaves it to the local churches to decide whether or not to grant women the right to vote in the elections of office bearers. Anyone who has made public profession of faith must be allowed to advise consistory by vote. *That* is what happens in the voting process of office bearers:

the consistory gives the congregation the opportunity to advise the consistory by means of an election, but ultimately the consistory is not bound by this advice, although it must have very good and compelling reasons to deviate from it. It is the congregation that elects; the consistory with the deacons that appoints and calls. Advising is still not the same as governing. (p.19)

Voting for office-bearers is not a matter of "headship" or an exercise of authority; rather, it is an important task of all believers, male and female.

• • •

Be that as it may, however, various synods have tried to maintain uniformity in the churches on this matter:

- GS Cloverdale 1983 stated that women's voting rights is "a matter of common concern" (art 27, C.2).
- GS Burlington 1986 stated that it is not up to the local "consistory to

introduce women's voting rights by its own regulations" (art 120.C.2, 3).

With regard to these two synod decisions allow me to make the following observations:

1. Women's voting rights may be a matter of common concern. This simply means that general synods have a church orderly right to deal with the matter (CO art 30). It does *not automatically* imply that there must be a uniform practice on this matter in all the churches. A synod may well observe that women's voting rights is a matter of common concern, and, may therefore, decide to deal with the matter (art 30). In the deliberations that follow, however, such a synod may come to the conclusion that it is in the interest of the churches to leave the practice of women's voting to the discretion of the local churches. The consideration of GS Cloverdale 1983 does not mean that there must be a uniform practice in all the churches.
2. GS Burlington 1986 maintained that it is not up to the local "consistory to introduce women's voting rights by its own regulations." This statement is understandable, seeing that various synods prior had decided not to introduce women's voting. Since 1986, however, five synods have again been dealing with this matter. It is a matter that has continued to live among the churches. In hindsight, therefore, it might have been wise if GS Burlington 1986 had considered the possibility of leaving this matter to the local churches. It should be noted that GS Burlington 1986 gives no grounds for this recommendation. As stated, its recommendation is in conflict with Art 3 of the Church Order.

• • •

In summary, then, it is my contention that:

1. female communicant members have the right and duty to vote in the election of office-bearers, as that is an important task of all believers.
2. based on article 3 of the Church Order, the local churches have the freedom to grant this right to female communicant members as well as male communicant members.

J.A. Roukema
Aldergrove, BC

What's New at the ILPB?

The ILPB, Inter League Publication Board, is comprised of two delegates from each of the three leagues of Bible study societies of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Ontario. The Board meets at least twice a year to consider the many matters concerned with publishing study aids. An Administration Committee takes care of the daily details of publishing, printing, advertising and distributing the study guides. This committee has recently gone through some notable changes.

New Faces

The Administration Committee welcomed some new faces this past summer, as the previous members said "good-bye" after many years of service. Mr. John Schouten (London), long time Coordinator of the committee was replaced by Mr. Paul deBoer (Guelph). The former Administrator, Mrs. Anne Boeringa (London), has been replaced by Mrs. Cathy Jonker (Grand Valley). Secretarial duties shifted from Mrs. Nellie Plouffe (London) to Annette Nobel (Elora). After many years as Marketing Coordinator, Mrs. Rennie Pieterman has passed the torch to Mrs. Theresa Westrik (Guelph). And finally, book sales and inventory has been relocated from Mrs. Tammy Blokhuis (London) to Mrs. Debbie Swaving (Elora). The Treasurer of the Administration Committee, Bernie Kottelenberg, is the only member of the previous committee who did not retire his services.

A great deal of gratitude is expressed to the "retired" members. Thank you for your years of service. Much time and effort was asked of these individuals in order that the publications of study aids could be completed in the past years. At the same time, we would like to thank the congregation in London, who accommodated the ILPB, by permitting the storage of the ILPB inventory in their church building.

Similarly, a great deal of gratitude is expressed to the new members. Thank you for taking on these new roles and tasks in this very important committee. We wish the new members much wisdom and resolve in their new tasks. May God bless the labour of your hands.

New Location

The Administration Committee is also considering moving to a new location. Since the new members hail from Guelph, Elora and Grand Valley, the Administration Committee will no longer have London as the central meeting location. Currently, the mailing address for the ILPB is still Box 783, London, Ontario. This address will be changed in the near future, after the new location is confirmed. We will keep you up to date as these matters unfold.

More Thank You's!

It is a challenging task to publish, print, advertise and distribute reformed literature. But we are not alone in this task. There are many individuals within our Reformed churches who provide assistance as writers, translators and editors. Thank you for your expertise and the gift of your valuable time.

A great thank you is also in order with respect to our ILPB representatives, who represent us in each congregation across Canada. At this time also a special thank you to Nancy Meerstra, who joins our marketing and sales team as the West correspondent. Our reps ensure that the ILPB publications find their way into the hands of study societies and into the homes of congregation members. Thank you for filling this position as rep within your respective congregations. May you continue to be motivated to provide the resources for excellent study materials to those who are eager to learn more about God's Word.

May God grant to all of us a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Be encouraged in 2003 to "always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know your labour in the Lord is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

*Christian greetings on behalf of the ILPB Administration
Committee*

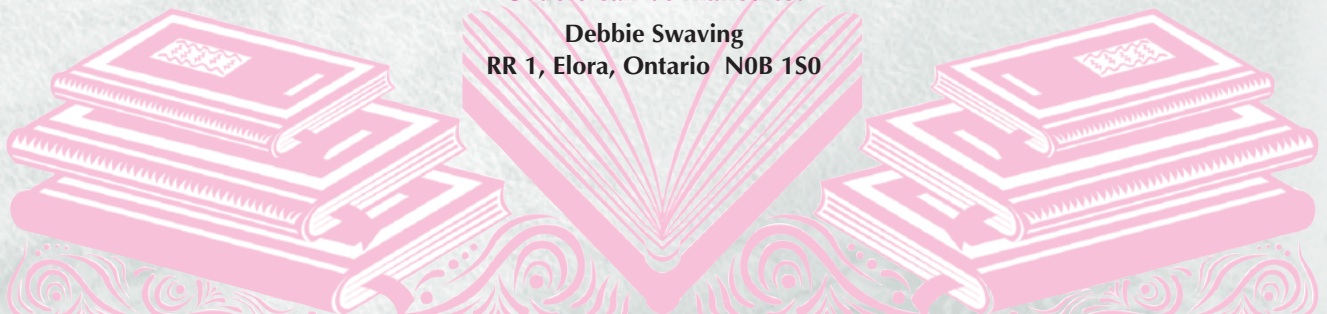
Theresa Westrik, Marketing Coordinator

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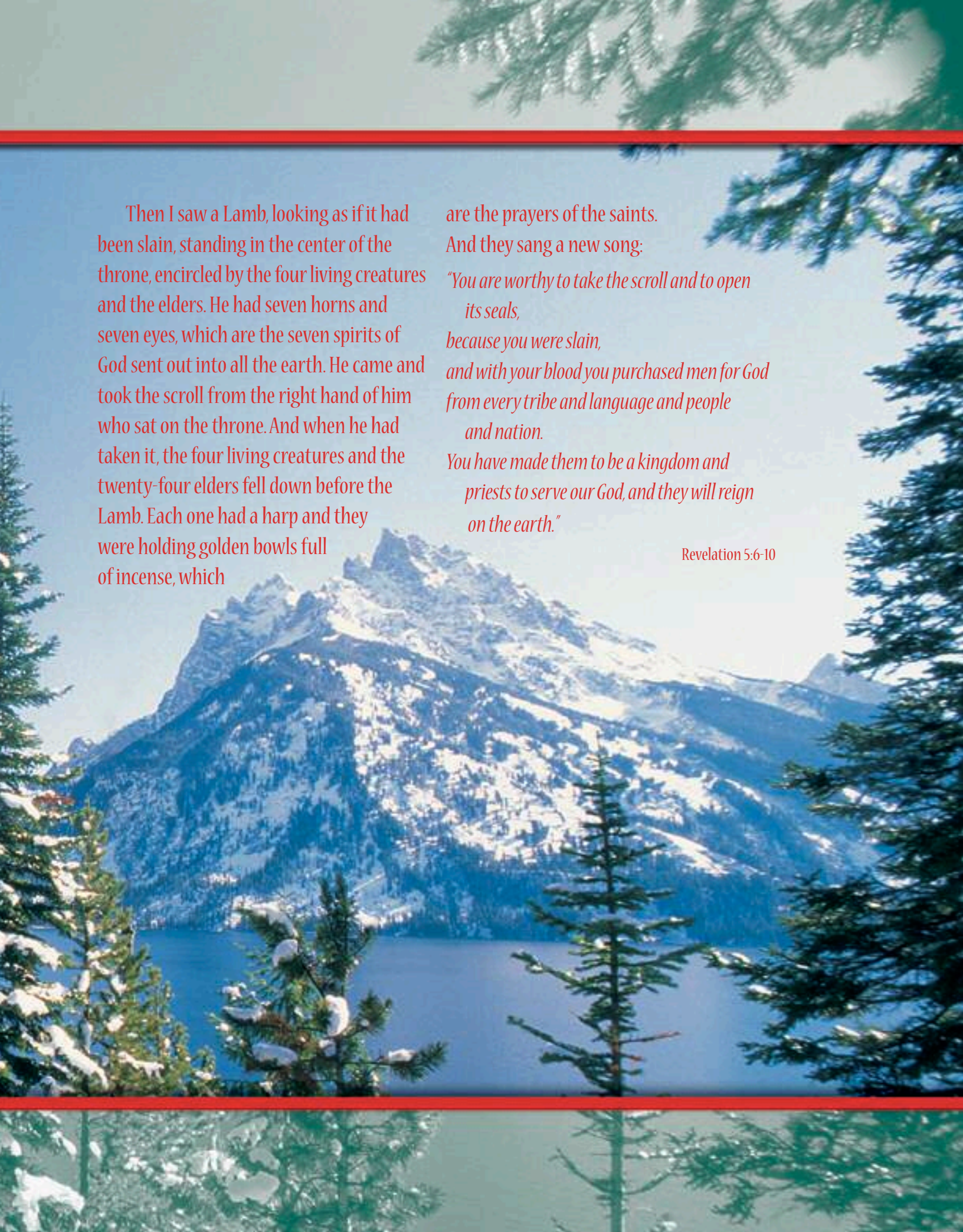
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*. . . but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

Isaiah 40:31





Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which

are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Revelation 5:6-10

*Greetings
of the
Season*

from all of us at

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