


# Clarion

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special manifestations  
of the Spirit,  
continues  
unabated.*

## Inside this issue

- *Salvation by Electric Touch* ■ *What Are You Thinking About?*
- *Who Is That Knocking At The Door?*





Cl. Stam

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# Salvation by Electric Touch

*They had felt something heavenly*

The plane landed safely on the hot tarmac of Entebbe International Airport near Kinshasa, Uganda. One of the passengers, Obiri Konjo Yeboah breathed a sigh of relief. It had been a long journey and finally he was again close to home.

Rev. Yeboah is chief pastor in the Reborn Church, a group of rapidly growing churches in Uganda where there is emphasis on rebirth and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gift of healing. This pastor, in particular, was noted for his healing crusades where he exuded massive spiritual power. He electrified his audiences and many people flocked to hear him and perhaps be touched by him in order to receive *healing* from "above."

But in the customs department, where the content of Rev. Yeboah's baggage was being examined, there were many looks of concern. Custom officials found an object in one of his suitcases which they could not properly identify. The agents confronted Rev. Yeboah with their finding and asked for an explanation of its use and purpose.

Rev. Obiri Konjo Yeboah was at first reluctant to speak about the item, but finally he did disclose its purpose and usage. It was a smart device, marketed as "Electric Touch" which passed a pleasingly light electrical current through the minister's body. But whenever Yeboah laid his hands on people they would feel a sharp and sudden shock. This is a true story, reported in *Nederlands Dagblad* July 10, 2007.

The agents soon figured out the rest of the story. Rev. Yeboah used this device to demonstrate that the power of the Holy Spirit indeed passed from him to those who came to be healed. Whether actually healed or not, the people would insist that the power of God had passed through them. They had felt something heavenly.

It was not a spiritual power that passed through the faithful but an electric current, however. Do not take this lightly. You might want to consider that the Reborn Church is one of the fastest growing churches in Africa. The charismatic movement is sweeping the Dark Continent. The demand for special manifestations of the Spirit, preferably in healing, continues unabated.

I understand this need. Many Africans have no one to whom they can turn for help. There is no access to medication. There are no hospitals. This is the Third World. Hence these Africans are easily victimized by charlatans. The unbearable AIDS epidemic is enough to drive people to seeking an instant cure. Ministers like Obiri Konjo Yeboah are happy to fill the void and strike it rich in the meantime. Pass the bucket; don't kick it.

## Counterfeit miracles

In a previous editorial (on cessationism) I made the point that the special gifts of the Holy Spirit belonged mostly to the apostolic time. While certain manifestations of the Spirit can occur today, the special gifts of the Spirit *as a regular feature of church ministry* are not needed anymore.

The italicized words are important. We may not limit the Spirit's sovereignty, but we must follow scriptural direction that these gifts functioned in the *infancy* of the New Testament church whereas today with the completed Word of God we must strive towards the (spiritual) *maturity* of the church. I quite understand that not everyone agrees with this position but it is my position based on biblical data.

The case of Rev. Yeboah made me think of what is written in Scriptures about "counterfeit miracles"





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
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(2 Thessalonians 2:9). It is so easy to fool people, especially when these people are illiterate and desperate.

It is not impossible to uncover what is counterfeit. But it does take a lot of training and time to distinguish between the real thing and a slick imitation. Are we convinced of the necessity to invest energy in unmasking what is counterfeit? Our church members need powerful and discerning preaching which helps them also to identify what is patently false. They need to attend study societies where the Bible is discussed.

The church of the "last days" is especially to be on its guard for counterfeit miracles. Because the coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by many fascinating diabolical signs and schemes. The Electric Touch ministry of Yeboah falls in the category of counterfeit miracles. Those who felt the Spirit pulsating through them were told that they were saved. Little did they know that it was all a hoax and a wicked scheme to take what little money they have. There really is no salvation by shock.

Yeboah's electrifier was confiscated and an investigation was launched into the fraudulent practices of the Reborn Church. I do not know if this matter was properly resolved. In Uganda, unfortunately, white-collar criminals are hard to convict when the government is divided and corrupt. It must also be stated that many mainstream charismatic churches in Uganda demanded that a full inquiry be held and Rev. Yeboah be investigated for fraud. But the good pastor is today probably still using his electro-redemption therapy. He is a cool cat with a hot touch. There are bigger fish to fry.

What bothers me most is how these so-called "preachers" abuse the Name of Christ and darken the light of the gospel. It is not just happening in Africa; we also have "our" Benny Hinn, Jimmy Roberts, and Peter Popoff, among others, who are using the vast cable network channels for the same self-serving purpose.

**Are there exceptions?**

Now someone may say: okay, there are false prophets out there, but overall there are many sincere preachers who really help people in their illnesses

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and distress. Once again a suspicious *Clarion* editor focuses on the negatives and forgets the positives. All we then get is a typical, expected, boring, and one-sided picture and we forget all the good that is being done.

Perhaps some good is being done. I will not deny it nor am I able to confirm it. But medically-verified miraculous healings are few and far between. Also, the selection process of those who actually get "the electric touch" is very strict and severe. You don't get on stage or near the platform unless you can walk and be jolted out of your seat. The healers need hullabaloo, not hallelujah.

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### *The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by many fascinating diabolical signs and schemes*

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But. . . are there exceptions? Are there unique ministries where the leader has an exceptional anointing to heal? I do not read of this in Scripture. I read about congregational prayer, pastoral prayer, and personal prayer, but *nowhere do I read about a special anointing to heal others on an ongoing basis except in the case of the apostles*. Nowhere in the Bible is there any indication of a crusade gathering with massive healing.

Yes, crowds flocked around our Lord Jesus Christ, bringing their sick and handicapped, seeking outward restoration and not inward renewal. He showed them by his healings that the kingdom of heaven was near.

I think he preferred personal encounters and often asked people not to make known what He had done. Remember how Isaiah prophesied of the servant of the Lord, "He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets." He did not seek the lime-light, did not want masses following Him for all the wrong reasons, and in the end He wept over Jerusalem where he was first feted and finally crucified.

### **The apostolic era**

Not many editorialists are willing to publicly support the cessationist line, namely that the special gifts disappeared or ceased with the apostolic era. I do support that line; because I am convinced it is

biblical. It is not that I minimize healing; I could use some myself. But we must abide by the Scriptures.

In the gospels, we find emphatically that our Lord Jesus Christ abundantly performed miracles of healing. These were meant to highlight a greater reality, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:20). The point is not (just) the healing of the body, but the salvation of the soul. This is also the emphasis in the letter of James 5:15 and 16. The point there is also not the healing of the body per se, but the restoration of the soul and the forgiving of sins (see also my book, *The Maturity of Faith*, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 2007).

When the Lord imparts the gift of healing to others, it is not a general gift for all disciples, but specifically a mandate to his twelve apostles. "He called his twelve disciples to him and gave *them* authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matt 10:1). Others may have had this gift from time to time, but that is exceptional: only the apostles had this task given to them. Even then, the disciples were not always successful, as the father of a demon-possessed boy says, "I brought him to your disciples but they could not heal him" (Matt 17:14-23).

It is not entirely clear whether this group of disciples included apostles. Why would apostles be unable to do what they were mandated to do? This group of disciples may be broader than just the Twelve. It does not really affect the point in question. The disciples of Christ were not (always) able to perform the miracles and wonders of the Lord. We find out why when we examine the context of this passage.

The gifts of the Spirit are not to be taken for granted nor are they given to everyone. *Moses* never healed anyone, even though he was the mediator of the old covenant. *Abraham* never had any special gifts, except his unwavering faith. *David* never healed anyone, even though he was a man after God's heart. *Solomon* had the gift of wisdom, but it failed him in the end. Oh, yes, *Elisha* was involved in the healing of *Naaman* the Syrian, but the prophet did not even come out of his house or anoint *Naaman*. The Syrian was quite upset. Only when he listened to the Word, was he healed! And the prophet did not even hold a collection.

Someone might say: but you cannot equate the old dispensation with the new covenant. It has been Pentecost! That is true. But we should not stuff into the new covenant things that functioned only for a time



and even make the stuffing a feature of the New Testament church. A church is not a sausage. We are not bratwurst reformed.

Who are on record in the *New Testament* as performing miracles, e.g. of healing? In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul mentions in general (with other charismata) "gifts of healing." But he does so in the context that not all possess the gifts of the Spirit in the same way and for the same purpose. Still, no one in particular is mentioned. Paul is *admonishing* people who abuse God's gifts and take pride in them; we should not make that a proof text for gifts of healing today.

Who are the healers in the New Testament? We know that the apostles healed people. Acts 3 tells us about the healing of the crippled beggar, but it was Peter, an apostle, who was the instrument. We read about Stephen (Acts 6) "who did great signs and miracles among the people," but Stephen was a member of the seven who were called and anointed by the *apostles*. He was also the first martyr, so to speak.

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### *The church is called to preach*

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Another of the seven, Philip, also performed miraculous signs (Acts 8) but this is in the special context of preaching to the Samaritans. Remember how Simon the Sorcerer wanted to buy into this gift? It is tempting to desire the Spirit's gifts for personal monetary gain. Paul also performed signs, but he, too, was an apostle. We do not read that his companions, Barnabas and Silas, did these works as well. They may have done so, but we do not read of it.

There is also the example of the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who went around exorcising demons in the name of Jesus "whom Paul preaches." It says that one day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but *who are you?*" (Acts 19:15). The evil Spirit gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. Must've forgotten their electronic apparatus.

But indeed, some performed amazing signs. *All this happened under exceptional circumstances by special office bearers at certain key moments.* But nowhere do we read that these gifts will always function in the church in the same manner. That is why the Rev. Obiri

Konjo Yeboah had to invest in an electric zapper. He promoted salvation by shock. Imitating the Spirit's power by any gadget is utter blasphemy.

I have already written about the passage in Mark 15:9-20. Some manuscripts do not contain that section, but we'll accept it as it is. Christ there also is speaking to his apostles, distinguished as the *Eleven*. They are to go out and preach the Word. It says then in Mark 16: 20, "And the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it." The signs do not stand alone as single events but they confirm the word. The church is called to preach, and if signs happen, this is the free and sovereign work of the Spirit.

Mark 16 tells us that it happened just as the Lord stated. We do not find there a promise and command that this must *always* take place or be done. A new and special era had begun, and the signs functioned in that beginning. Salvation is by faith, not by shock. Faith comes through the preaching of Christ according to the will of the Father by the power of the Spirit.

In another editorial I'd like to focus on the situation in Corinth where perhaps the strongest ground for cessationism is found. Someone sent me an email with that request and I gladly comply.

The special gifts as feature of the church indeed ceased with the apostolic time. I think that is quite clear from Scripture. We now have the full riches of the Bible and the eternal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I will never try to restrict the work of the Spirit, for He is sovereign and omnipotent. The point is not: what can the Spirit do? The point is: what has the Spirit called and enabled us to do? +

### **Special Event Submissions**

Submissions covering special events should be sent to the Copy Manager within two months of the event's date; there is a maximum length of 1000 words. If pictures of the event are available, please submit them (with a recommended digital size of 1200 x 1500 pixels or larger) with the article.

D.Ph. Poppe



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# What Are You Thinking About?



MATTHEW 13:52

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”*

Philippians 4:8

Imagine someone were to keep a record of the thoughts that go through your mind. Let's say that had happened for this past week. What patterns would emerge? What things did you think about?

These are important questions, because in order to experience God's peace in our lives we need to exclude certain things from our thinking and we need to contemplate other things instead. So what are we supposed to think about? In our text, Paul says we're to think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

Let's unpack this for a minute. When God tells us to think about what is true, that means firstly that He wants us to focus our attention on his Word. And we know from John 14:6 that Christ is the embodiment of the truth. He is the final and complete revelation from God, from whom and through whom we can know the truth. So our Father wants us to fill our minds with his Word and with a knowledge of his Son.

When we're told to think about whatever is noble, this is a word that's often used of a person who is of good character, honourable, and respectable. For example, it's a word that's used of elders and deacons. When we're called to think about whatever is right, God is telling us to focus our attention on those things that are just, on those

things that are in accordance with his laws and his character.

And then the apostle calls us to think about whatever is pure, lovely, and admirable. The word for purity speaks of what is holy, innocent, and chaste. The word for lovely refers to what is pleasing and the word for admirable describes what is worthy of praise. In a similar way, we're called to think about those things that are excellent and praiseworthy. This refers to moral excellence and to the redemptive acts and power of God, for God's works in creation and redemption are incredibly beautiful.

The point of this passage is that we focus our attention on those things that reflect God's character and on those things that come from Him. God wants us to fill our minds with the truth and to contemplate those things that are right. He wants us to give time in our thinking to considering people who are honourable and things that are pure and pleasing. He wants us to reflect on what He teaches us is good and on his redemptive acts and power. He wants us to ponder whatever is lovely and pleasing.

Now if I'm not mistaken, we don't naturally do this. We often give a lot of air time in our minds to sinful thoughts. Sometimes we mentally rehash how people have hurt us. We brood over how to get rich, or we pursue lustful thoughts, or we proudly turn over in our minds how good we are at something. This isn't

the way to live, because if we give these evil thoughts a place, we become corrupt – and eventually our minds will become sewers of evil thoughts.

So let's say you are convicted to think about only what is good and right. Do you think you'll be able to accomplish that? The Bible says you won't be able to do that by your own strength. We're evil by nature and our thoughts are depraved. But the good news is that Jesus Christ works this repentance and this change of thinking in his people (Acts 5:31). Christ renews our thinking so that we learn to fill our minds with the beautiful things that are from God.

Asking God to change your thinking is an important matter to pray about, because those who fill their minds with the Lord – who He is, what He has done, and the things that are true, just, pure, admirable, and beautiful – are blessed with a deep sense of his peace.

That's the promise of this text. In the next verse, after calling the Philippians to put these things into practice, Paul says, "And the God of peace will be with you" (v 9). By turning our minds to the beautiful things of the Lord, Christ grants a real presence of peace within us. We receive freedom from guilt and shame, contentment in life, and an incredible joy in the Lord and his work. So let me ask you: What will you be thinking about in this coming week?





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the magazine for Reformed young people

How can a young man keep his way pure?  
By living according to your word. Ps 119:9

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# Who Is That Knocking At The Door?

Greta Kleyn

Have you ever wondered what to do and what to say when a Jehovah's Witness (JW) team comes to your door? Some of us might think that they are a nuisance and simply say "I'm not interested" and close the door, while afterwards thinking that we perhaps should have said something to them. Others of us might be nervous, feeling a responsibility to witness to them, but at a complete loss as to how to do that! What do JWs believe anyway? How are they really different from us and how can we respond to them?

There are many JWs in the world today. In the United States, there are over a million of them! The average JW spends ten hours a month going from door to door. 100,000 of these will devote up to 100 hours per month to their witnessing work! No wonder that the JW organization is growing at a rate of approximately 4,000 converts per week and is building five Kingdom Halls (or church buildings) every week worldwide! For all of these JWs, door-to-door

knocking is one of the most important requirements for their salvation. It is the only record that is kept of their Kingdom Hall membership.

The JW religion is actually like slavery. A JW must attend five hours of meetings per week (including Sunday meetings) and at these meetings people don't ask questions, because that would arouse suspicion! They are told to avoid "independent thinking" and to accept Watchtower Society teachings without question. JWs must also devote a lot of time to communal religious training. Only fifteen percent of their study time is devoted to their version of the Bible, the New World Translation, while a whopping eighty-five percent of their study time is devoted to Watchtower publications. And despite all their study, JWs have no personal relation to Christ and no assurance of salvation.

What follows is a very brief overview of what JWs believe:

1. Jehovah is the only proper name for God.
2. Jesus is not true God who assumed our human nature to become our Saviour. Rather Jesus is the created Son of God, Michael the archangel, and a god. Jesus paid only for Adam's sin, and thereby only cleaned the slate, so that we could have a chance to do good works to earn our own salvation today.
3. JWs can't pray to Jesus. If they are found guilty of worshipping Him, they are "disfellowshipped" and ostracized by JW family and friends.
4. The Holy Spirit is a force, but He is impersonal.
5. Only 144,000 people will go to heaven and 9,000 of these are living on the earth today. JWs who do not belong to the 144,000 will live in a restored paradise on earth.
6. The "Good News" is that in 1914, Jesus became the invisible ruler of God's Kingdom in Heaven, with the Watchtower Society



headquartered in Brooklyn, NY as his visible agency on earth.

7. We who do not believe in the special revelation of the JW religion belong to the devil's organization and will be annihilated at Armageddon.
8. There is no salvation outside the Watchtower Society.

I think that all those of us who go to catechism lessons and Bible studies can already see that the above points are wrong and unscriptural and we can see what is wrong with them. (At least I hope that you can see what is wrong with these points! If not, maybe you can talk about it at Bible study. . . )

Then we can also see what comfort we have as Reformed Christians! We know that we are so sinful and totally unable to do anything at all for our salvation. No amount of door knocking that we do and no amount of meetings we attend will ever be enough for our salvation! But we do know that Jesus, who is true God, has come to this earth and delivered us from sin and has taken away all our burdens for us. We are again free to worship Him and to live thankful lives before Him. And we have the help of the Holy Spirit, who truly is personal – He dwells in our hearts – to make us holy again and to encourage us in thankful obedience.

So what do we do when a Jehovah's Witness knocks on our door? First pray to God for help and then witness of the greatness of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Here are a few pointers for conversations with JWs:

1. Say that you trust in Jesus and not in an organization (John 3:16).
2. Emphasize that you know for sure that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13) and that you will be with Christ Jesus forever (John 14:1-6).

3. Point out that you are not saved by the things that you do and do good works only out of love for God (Ephesians 2:8-10).
4. Say that you'll pray that they know the peace and joy you experience (Romans 5:1 and CD V). Prayer has greater impact than you think.
5. Encourage JWs to read the Bible and go without Watchtower magazines for a time.
6. Plant seeds of doubt in their mind about their religion.
7. JWs are trained to talk about doctrine, so don't get into detailed discussions about doctrines if you don't know the answers.
8. Discuss Bible verses thoroughly within their contexts.

9. Try not to accept Watchtower magazines or literature. This communicates that you don't want anything to do with the Watchtower Society and reiterates your point about the Bible being the only source of knowledge for salvation.

Let us, who have the truths and comforts of God's Word, be truly informed about the JW religion so that we can confront this unchristian cult. We are called to be lights in the world around us, so when we hear that knocking on the door, let us communicate those wonderful riches that we have been given.

Recommended reading: Herbert Kern, *How to Respond: Jehovah's Witnesses* (Concordia Publishing House, 2004).



*No amount of door knocking that we do will ever be enough for our salvation!*



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# To Think or Not to Think? (Part 1 of 2)

Can you ever just do things?  
Or do you have to always think  
about the implications of what you  
are doing?

I believe that the teaching of the Bible tells us that we need to know why we do what we do, whether it is big or small. The form for the Lord's Supper reinforces this in the invitation and admonition. To me that means we must always be thinking about the implications of doing what we do. When we begin to "just do it," as the famous slogan of Nike advises, we head down the so-called slippery slope; this slope is often a much lower angle but slipperier slope than we think it is!

## Stages of schools

At the biennial National Principal's Conference that I attended in September, one of the main speakers, Daniel Vander Ark, referred to some research done by George Marsden, an American historian who is also a Christian. Marsden wrote a book about this, called *The Soul of the American University*. Vander Ark summed up Marsden's findings by identifying five stages that many, if not most, famous North American universities went through. In this book he researched the history and present of over 100 prominent North American universities. Almost every one of them started as a

Christian institution but almost none of them are Christian today; in fact many are hostile to Christianity.

Here follows an italicized description of the five stages as Vander Ark sees them applying to K-12 Christian schools.

*Stage 1: A church forms an extended church school, meant to protect the children and to teach them the Bible, heavy on pious acts (prayer, singing, Bible memorization), and little contact with the general culture. Special revelation is large; general revelation is small. Academically, the school is poor. Parents who participate often view intellectual activity as leading their children away from a dependence on God.*

*Stage 2: The school has a slight decrease in piety; there is an opening of the door to the general culture, with teachers required to teach subjects from a biblical perspective (which usually means Bible verses describing attitudes toward culture); the schools are better academically but no rival to the public schools. Many teachers are strong in faith but weak in academic prowess and in their ability to integrate faith with learning.*

*Stage 3: The school grows in academic strength, now looking*

*carefully at all of culture. In every subject, teachers teach a discernible Christian perspective. The number of pious acts are few, often reserved for a chapel or daily rituals of opening and closing prayer. Neighbours think of the school as equal to the public schools. The academic credentials of the faculty are the equal of the public schools.*

*Stage 4: The school is now strong academically, attractive as a better alternative than the public schools. Pious acts are infrequent, perhaps a weekly chapel which is more educational than devotional. The Christian perspective on culture is written in foundational statements but seldom discernible in classrooms or in student assessments. Most participants celebrate the school's Christian tradition.*

*Stage 5: The school has a wide reputation as being an excellent academic institution clearly superior to government schools. Pious acts are non-existent; the chapel is a place more than an event, now used for graduations and discussions. The Christian tradition is still mentioned occasionally, but it has no influence on decisions. If there has been a religious word in the school's name, it is now gone.*

*Darlington Christian Academy becomes Darlington Academy.*

Daniel Vander Ark qualifies these stages with the following comment: "These stages are certainly not exclusive nor are all characteristics present for a given school in any one stage."

As Daniel Vander Ark talked about this at the conference I could not help but try and apply it to the school I teach at. Assuming these stages are accurate reflections of reality a host of questions swarmed into my mind. Do the five stages apply to us? If not, why not? If so, where are we on the five stages? Where is the best place to be on the five stages? What can a school do to prevent themselves from moving past the ideal point? What role does the board, the principal, the staff, and the membership play in keeping the school on track?

### **Ebenezer application**

When I look at Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School (ECRS) and think about what people have told me and what I have read about the school's history, I think that I see some truth to the stages for us. Which stage we are at is up for debate, I think. It is not, to my mind, clear that any one stage is the best stage. More important, maybe, are the questions of what are we doing to ensure that we do not move through all five stages? How do we ensure that we stay in the proper place? Do we know what the proper place is? Is any one stage the stage to be? Are pious acts on their own enough? (Of course not. The absence of them can be telling though.)

This is where our vision statement becomes a powerful tool. Through repeated, dogged testing of all our actions against the school vision statement, we can, Lord willing, hold our ground. It does mean we need people who are willing to ask over and over again, "How does this decision square with the vision statement?" This is not a question that only one person should be asking but all members, staff, and students. In that way we can hold on to what is good and leave aside whatever is distracting to our purpose, our vision. To me the greatest responsibility that I have as principal is the responsibility to ensure the actions that the school takes adhere to the vision statement.

### *Assuming these stages are accurate reflections of reality, a host of questions swarmed into my mind*

I wrestled with this very thought while dealing with the matter of the senior boys single A provincials which were held in Smithers in December, 2007. I was asked by several people if it would be possible to have the students excused from class to watch our school team play. It would have been very easy to say, "Sure, of course!" and never think any further about the question. (As you read you will see I did not do that!) It is a rare event, after all, that provincials are in Smithers and that one of our teams is involved in those same provincials.

# Church News

Called by the church of Abbotsford, British Columbia:

**Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen**

of the Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland (Vrij.) at Hoek, The Netherlands.

Called by the church of Lincoln, Ontario:

**Rev. R. Wynia**

of the United Reformed Churches in North America at Wyoming, Ontario.

On May 20, 2008, at McMaster University, ON, Prof. Gerhard H. Visscher successfully defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Abraham, Faith, and Works: The role of Romans 4 in the Discussion concerning the New Perspective on Paul* and therewith completed all the requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

On the other hand, different parts of me (parent, principal, teacher, church member) right away asked all sorts of questions like: "Why should the school go and watch? Is there any curricular purpose to attending? Does there need to be? Why should students all be taken out of class to attend an event that they might not even care about (leaving aside the "at least we got out of class" feeling)? What impact will this have on students with regards to what they perceive the school as valuing? Are sports gaining too prominent a role in our school? In schools in general? In our congregation? How is going to watch consistent with the vision statement? Does a decision to go or not go, say anything about where we are on the five stages?"

*(To be continued in the next issue)*



# Hamilton Blessed with a New Pastor

## Arrival

On Tuesday, March 4, two PENSKE moving trucks rolled down the Linc and into Hamilton at about the supper hour. The DeJong family had finally arrived from Kansas City, Missouri and not a half an hour too soon! Right behind them, and blowing in from the same direction, came a snowstorm that dumped another twenty centimetres of ice pellets and snow on the Hamilton and Niagara regions. Despite the temperature, however, the band of volunteers that showed up to empty those two trucks was warm and welcoming.

In a matter of days, Rev. DeJong had no less than sixty boxes of books unloaded and stacked on the shelves of his new office in the Cornerstone Church building. The four boys enjoyed the snow in their backyard and in the park across the road from their new home. Over the course of the two-week March break, the family could settle in and Rev. DeJong could prepare for his Colloquium, to be held at Classis on March 26.

## Installation

Sunday, March 30 was to be the day of installation and inauguration. As Cornerstone's counselor during her vacancy, Dr. DeVisser had been asked to lead the installation service. And what a beautiful service it was. He chose as text Paul's charge to Timothy as

we read it in 2 Timothy 4:1, 2. But before he got to the meat of the text, Dr. DeVisser gave a brief historical overview of the history of Cornerstone, noting that we had been served faithfully by three previous ministers: Rev. Loopstra (1954-1971), Rev. Huizinga (1976-1986), and Rev. Stam (1988-2004). "What is the significance of this?" asked Dr. DeVisser. "Well at the very least it suggests that if you become a minister in Hamilton, you will stay for a minimum of ten years!" Furthermore (and more seriously), it suggests God's faithfulness in passing the baton of the gospel from one generation to the next.

And that is exactly what we found in our text. Paul, at the end of his ministry, sent words of encouragement and a stern charge

to the young and newly ordained Timothy:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction (1 Tim 4:2).

The heart of the passage is clearly the command, "Preach the Word," and the enormity of the task is underlined by the fact that this is a "charge" given in view of Christ appearing as judge. This is no soft message, for it is a matter of eternal life and death. Hence the task calls for a pastor who is no "softie," but one who labours for the salvation of the elect both in season and out of season.





As congregation we were reminded that we live not only in a congregation of 500, but in a city of 500,000, many of whom have not been won for Christ. If we take the coming judgment seriously, said Dr. DeVisser (a true missionary at heart), it should be a troubling thought for us that many of our neighbours, unless they accept the gospel of Christ, are destined for hell. Hence the hope that the preaching of our new pastor goes beyond the walls of Cornerstone and that the church at Hamilton can indeed be a light in this world.

Dr. DeVisser concluded his sermon with the words of Paul at the end of his letter to Timothy: "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." Rev. DeJong was then installed as minister of Cornerstone Church. The joyful singing that followed and the words and letters of congratulations from delegates of the neighbouring congregations at Glanbrook, Providence, Ancaster, Rehoboth (URCNA), and London were an indication that this day was indeed a reason for gratitude, a joyous beginning of a new era in our congregational history.

### **Inaugural sermon**

Rev. DeJong preached his inaugural sermon in the afternoon

service on the same Sunday. His text was from the prophecies of Isaiah where in chapter 62 we see that "the Lord enlists relentless preachers for Zion's glory." The preacher's burden, said Rev. DeJong, is to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ, to do so relentlessly for the glory of Zion. He is to preach, to teach, to read, and to write that message day in and day out, for that was also the work of Christ, our chief pastor and teacher. The message is one of glory and celebration, the story of a marriage – a happy one only because Christ made it so by his death and satisfaction. In 62:7, 8 we see the Lord's encouragement, namely that He posts watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem to work day and night for the salvation of his people. There is hope and promise and encouragement in this task, for behind a relentless preacher is a God who does not sleep or slumber until the salvation of his people is complete.

### **Welcome**

On Saturday of the same week, the congregation met together in the gym at Guido de Bres High School to celebrate the beginning of this new era in our congregational history. Despite its size, the room could hardly contain us all, for the turnout was huge and the atmosphere festive. The DeJong family sat in the centre of the gym, together with our emeritus minister, Rev. Stam, his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Albert and Liz DeJong, Pastor Bill's parents. Songs of praise, games, a history lesson, a fashion show, skits, and presentations enabled the congregation to introduce themselves to our new minister, his

wife, Kim, and their four sons, Calvin, Alex, Jacob, and Ian. Some of the highlights: a stage packed with school-age children sang of the Steel City as "the place to be"; the Youth Group quizzed the minister and his wife (recent immigrants from south of the border, of course) on important sports and ecclesiastical trivia of the region; a fashion show gave the DeJong family pointers on how to dress their boys here in Canada, with hockey, Tim Hortons, and Shoppers Drug Mart as major influences on the wardrobe; our welcome committee presented the DeJong family with a thick scrapbook featuring pictures and captions introducing the members of the congregation.

Pastor DeJong closed the celebrations with a word of thanks on behalf of his wife and family, grateful for the warm welcome. And so we were able to enjoy, in the space of a week, the fellowship of worship and the laughter of a banquet. As congregation we give thanks to the God and Father who graciously grants both and we look forward to a blessed time with our new minister and his family.





# Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church – Planning in Hope; Building in Trust

The Aldergrove Canadian Reformed Church had its origins in Langley, B.C. On January 2, 1994 we began worshipping separately from the Langley Canadian Reformed Church where we were members until we were instituted as a new church congregation. As part of the separation agreement, we were given a generous portion of funds that we used to purchase a piece of property in Aldergrove where we eventually hoped to build a church of our own.

The property had an older house on it that proved to be unsuitable as a manse and so it was rented out instead. For our first minister, Rev. J. Boersma, we rented a house in Aldergrove until the time of his departure.

When our second minister, Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, arrived in October of 1999, his family first lived in a rented house in Abbotsford until we built a new manse for them in Aldergrove on a separate property. This work was done with a lot of volunteer labour which kept the costs down considerably. Since we also had to buy a new lot, there was a considerable debt that had to be repaid. This was done over a three year period through much effort and fundraising by the congregation.

When Rev. Holtvlüwer took a call to Carman East, MB in 2005,



we had to make some serious decisions. We decided to sell the manse and at the same time we decided to sell the property we had since we instituted. It turned out that this property was not the most suitable for a church building. There happened to be a property next door to it on a corner lot that the Langley Township felt was much more suited for a church. The result was that we sold two properties and ended up with one new one that could accommodate a church as well as a manse. We now owned this property outright and had no existing debt. This put us in a much better position to start planning for an actual church building of our own after many

years of renting other facilities such as community halls, school gyms, and currently a United Church facility in town.

A Church Development Committee was struck and the work began in earnest to plan for the building and financing of a new church. With the arrival of our new minister, Rev. R. Schouten, from Abbotsford on January 1, 2007, we once again had to turn our attention to building another manse, this time on our new property. There was a little less pressure this time because our minister could continue to stay in the manse of the Abbotsford church which was only a fifteen to twenty minute drive away.



Work soon began on the building of the manse, again with the help of much volunteer labour, so that today there is a house ready for occupancy, waiting only for servicing to be completed. Expected occupancy is sometime this spring (as you know that comes early in B.C.)!

In the meantime, much planning also went into getting the necessary rezoning of the church property, fulfilling the various requirements associated with that and developing the plans for the building. Anyone who's ever been through this type of project knows how many meetings are involved in such an enterprise and how many cups of coffee are consumed in the process.

Preliminary plans were presented to the congregation in February of 2007 and by the time you read this, more complete plans will have been presented to the congregation once again for their input and approval. This occurred

earlier this year. The accompanying illustrations and floor plans will give you some idea of what we hope the church will look like. For a more complete look at what the plans are, please check out our church's website: [www.AldergroveChurch.com](http://www.AldergroveChurch.com).

How much is all of this going to cost, you're wondering? The estimated cost for the actual building is \$1.8 million dollars (roughly the cost of three new houses in our area).

What have we done thus far to make this all possible? We have had a building fund drive for a number of years (when we weren't busy paying off our other debts) as well as numerous fundraisers, everything from bottle drives to curling bonspiels to silent (and not so silent) auctions. Everyone, from young to older, has been involved in one or another for a number of years already. Here's where we stand financially at this time: we have bought and paid for a piece of

property worth \$700,000 at the time of purchase. Our congregation has committed to raise \$1 million dollars cash by summer of 2009. We are presently at eighty percent of our goal. The remaining funds need to be either borrowed or raised via our "Buy a Brick" campaign.

Part of what goes into a church is musical instruments for the accompaniment of the singing by the congregation. We are a congregation that likes to sing and make music. For that reason, we were fortunate to be able to acquire a suitable organ for our church (check out more details on our church website). Realizing that funds would be limited, a small group took it upon themselves to raise funds for the purchase of the organ, so only the amount needed for installation (a modest \$50,000) would need to be included as part of the church building budget.

This is where you, dear reader, come into the picture. We are happy to share our history and our plans with you in hopes that you may feel inspired to contribute to this church building project. For some time you may have seen our ad in this magazine promoting the "Buy-a-Brick" campaign for our church. We encourage you to check that out once more or go online to [www.AldergroveChurch.com](http://www.AldergroveChurch.com) and consider making a tax receiptable donation to this worthwhile cause. If you have a soft spot for organs and church music, you can make a donation there as well.

For those of you unfamiliar with Aldergrove, it is part of Langley Township, which is located between Langley City and Abbotsford. While the core of the membership lives in the town of



Aldergrove, we draw from the fringes of both neighbouring communities as well. Until recent times, housing was somewhat cheaper here and so it was a good place for many younger families to start out here. This also accounts for the demographics of the congregation as well as a fluctuating membership. In 2004, we reached a tipping point: for the first time, the number of

communicant members equalled the number of non-communicant members. We currently have a membership of 277, with 142 communicant and 135 non-communicant members (58 families). The average age of the congregation is 23.1. As a church community, we desire to establish a physical presence here and thus enable us to worship in our own building as well as carry on the

various activities that now are scattered in homes, office buildings, and elsewhere.

We hope you will prayerfully consider lending your financial support to this project and be part of our permanent and visible establishment as a church of our Lord Jesus Christ in Aldergrove. Even more importantly, we hope you will remember us in your prayers before the throne of grace.

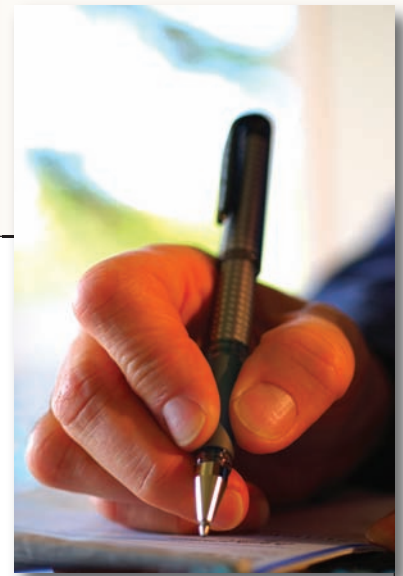
## Aldergrove Buy-A-Brick Campaign

After renting a place of worship for the past 13 years, the Canadian Reformed Church of Aldergrove, BC has come up with exciting plans to build our own church building!

We currently own suitable land on which to build, and hope to move forward to the next stage of this project as soon as financially possible.

We invite everyone young and old to assist us in the building process by purchasing a brick(s). Please visit our website at [www.Aldergrovechurch.com](http://www.Aldergrovechurch.com) to support this important cause. Donations can also be mailed to: PO Box 809, Aldergrove, BC V4W 2V1.





### To the editor – re: “No Apologies”

The website operated by the EPC Center ([www.noapologies.ca](http://www.noapologies.ca)) received the endorsement of Dr. Van Dam in a recent issue of *Clarion* (April 25, 2008). As a resource for providing news overlooked by the mainstream media, I can certainly understand the enthusiasm. I share it. However, it is important to balance it with a few words of concern over mandate and tactics. The website promises to advance consistent social conservative thought and values, with a very direct and aggressive communication style. From the several opinion pieces I have read, I have observed that the contributors occasionally fall prey to the temptation of such a mindset. “Social conservatism” has much going for it, but it isn’t the full expression of a Christian’s life in the public square. The website is in danger of too narrow a focus. Consider how many of their postings focus on human rights and how little time is spent on issues usually associated with a liberal agenda that Christians would do well to consider (two examples: world hunger, the dangers of capitalism).

Maybe I need to dig a little deeper to get to the other topics. If they are not to be found, maybe we could excuse them for this. The issues they raise certainly are important. After all, you can’t be “all things to all people.” But in the digging I’ve done, I see a greater danger in their use of tactics approaching those used by Ann Coulter, Ezra Levant, and the like. This “hard hitting” approach easily descends into baiting and mockery. It occurs in [www.noapologies.ca](http://www.noapologies.ca) and especially in the recommended blogs on the site, where it quickly turns into insults. Tristan Emmanuel stands by the “direct” approach and bristles at the very idea of modesty and politeness. One Christian service we can offer the authors is diligently pointing out when their temper appears to get the better of them. It is good for all of us to use the spoken or written word

carefully, especially in our leadership positions! We could all share stories of when passion trumped sensibility in our public discourse. Proverbs has some words of instruction for us on this: “Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended. He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend” (Prov 22:10, 11).

I admire what this group is trying to achieve and I support them. But if they want to use strong and arresting words as a tool, we have an excellent model in the pure Word of God. By simply bearing witness to it in a manner that draws attention to the Word itself and not the deliverer, we wield a two-edged sword. Let’s assist these well-motivated and gifted authors by pointing out the dangers they face in the methods they use.

*Dave Schriemer*

### Reply:

Thank you, brother, for your contribution. The concerns you raise are important and, as Tristan Emmanuel knows, I agree with much of your critique. However, in introducing this initiative I wanted to give it a positive press and encourage readers of *Clarion* to make use of it and also to respond as they see fit to what is offered there. The site is interactive and I trust that you will also post your critique there. I am hopeful that [www.noapologies.ca](http://www.noapologies.ca) will continue to evolve into an effective tool to raise awareness, also among us, as to what is happening in our culture.

*Cornelis Van Dam*

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.*

*Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*



Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

Rev. W. L. Bredenhof is co-pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia  
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***The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment, Jeremiah Burroughs (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998).***

**Additional Information:  
Paperback, 228 pages, \$7.99**

Try this experiment sometime: go to your average vanilla Christian bookstore and ask for a book on contentment. Chances are they won't be able to help you. And if you go on-line and look for books on the subject, there are a few modern titles, but not very many. Unfortunately, the health, wealth and prosperity "gospel" is far more popular and it's way easier to find books by the likes of Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer. Contentment is out of style – it is indeed a "rare jewel." To learn from the Scriptures on this important topic, we're best advised to go back four centuries to Jeremiah Burroughs, an English Puritan.

Now I know that when some of you hear or read "Puritan," you're tuned out. How can a Puritan still speak to us today? Weren't the

Puritans legalists? Aren't they impossible to understand? I'll be the first to admit that there are some Puritan works which are difficult reading, but let me assure you that Burroughs writes in a style that's fairly easy to understand. If that weren't enough, this edition has been edited slightly for language and punctuation. Moreover, forget all that you've heard about the Puritans. Read one for yourself. See what you've been missing.

Burroughs tackles the subject of contentment with an eye on the gospel. He insists that contentment begins with a believer fixing his eyes on the promises of the covenant of grace, those promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And flowing from that are many practical applications! For instance, he explains that contentment comes not from addition but from subtraction (p 45). One does not become happier by adding things, but by taking away from sinful desires. Furthermore, Burroughs gives the biblical warnings about prosperity and riches that we still need to hear

today. He outlines the many excellent blessings that come from contentment with God's provision. Like a surgeon, he gets to the heart and exposes the excuses that we make for our discontentedness and how evil it truly is. He concludes with two chapters on "How to Attain Contentment."

Christian bookstores are full of volumes on "Christian living." Sad to say, a lot of it is spiritual junk food – it tastes great but it will not truly nourish. Burroughs may not be modern, but he knew the Bible and he knew how to apply the Bible to the hearts and lives of his listeners. He gives true, nourishing soul food. This is devotional reading through which you'll grow as a believer. Highly recommended.

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For further reading on the Puritans, I can also recommend: *A Quest for Godliness: the Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, J. I. Packer (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990); *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, Leland Ryken (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986).



**Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the Board and Committee of Administration, Inter-League Publication Board, held April 23, 2008 in Fergus, Ontario**



The chairman of the Board, Dan VanDelden, opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer and welcomed everyone. The agenda was established.

Roll call: For the Board – representing the League of Men’s Societies in Ontario, Dick Nyenhuis and Dan VanDelden. Representing the League of Women’s Societies in Ontario, Mary DeBoer and Betsy Kingma. For the Committee of Administration (CoA) – Paul DeBoer as chairman, Cathy Jonker as administrator, Annette Nobel as secretary, Debbie Swaving for sales, and Theresa Westrik for marketing. The treasurer, Brian Jager, was unable to attend.

**Progress Report**

A print-out was distributed showing the progress of all books being worked on. *Response to your Baptism* by K. Deddens, *Call Upon Me* by J. Westerink, and *Submitting to One Another Out of Reverence for Christ* by P. G. Feenstra have all been re-printed and continue to be available for purchase. Three new books are in progress.

**Marketing Report**

Since the last meeting, the second annual book sale was held. The ILPB representatives are regularly updated on new developments and publications so that they can notify their respective congregations.

**Financial Report**

The balance sheet and income statement were reviewed. There are sufficient funds available to print more books. The CoA will review remunerations made to editors and translators. Arrangements will be made for an audit to be done.

**Sales Report**

Sales have been steady; down slightly, but still good.

**Website**

The website, [www.ilpb.ca](http://www.ilpb.ca) is fully functional and is still being refined. Any visitors to the site can e-mail orders directly to the ILPB.

**Board updates**

The CoA was informed of the progress of new books being investigated or written. The board gave the CoA a list of new books being worked on by ProEcclesia in Australia and the CoA will get copies when they are available so that we can make them available in Canada. Some discussion was held as to the overall organization of the ILPB and marketing possibilities.

**General**

General question period was held and the press release approved. Paul DeBoer closed the meeting with prayer.

