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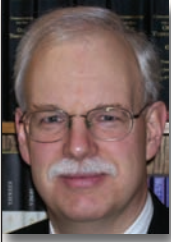
*Children of believers
are called Christians
by divine calling*



Inside this issue

- Are Children of Believers Christians?
- Saluted by God!
- Evangelism in Practice





E. Kampen

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Are Children of Believers Christians?

Evangelicals agree that only upon conversion is one justified and only through conversion does a person become a Christian

Sooner or later we are going to be faced with the question which serves as the title for this editorial. It will show up especially in our interaction with what is popularly known as Evangelical Christianity. Evangelicalism is hard to define, as it is a mindset that transcends denominations. It is commonly understood that one of the four defining characteristics of Evangelicalism is conversionism.¹ While there is disagreement among those who see themselves as evangelical as to whether conversion is gradual or a distinct, datable event in one's life, it is agreed that only upon conversion is one justified and only through conversion does a person become a Christian.² You can well understand that if it is true that you only become a Christian upon conversion, then you cannot consider children born to believers as Christians. Simply put, infants cannot yet believe. Children must come to a certain age before one can expect them to consciously believe the gospel.

Justified by faith

When you first hear this reasoning, it seems to make good sense. After all, does it not do justice to one of the cherished truths of the Reformation, namely, that we are justified by faith? Further, it seems to be supported by a passage like Ephesians 1:13, 14 where we read, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. . . ."

One could even argue that our Reformed Confessions teach this, for example in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, where it reads,

Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin and pursue righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works. Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life. They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him. It is obvious that infants and little children born to believers cannot do this. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that children of believers cannot be called Christians.

Infant or believer baptism

It is not surprising that this emphasis on conversion as the decisive moment for becoming a Christian has put the practice of baptizing infants of believers into question. The reasoning is that baptism is only for believers. Since children cannot believe, they should not be baptized. It did so in the Anglican Church in the nineteenth century, especially since the Anglican baptismal formula was open to being interpreted as promoting baptismal regeneration. In the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands it played itself out in a different, yet fundamentally similar, way in the discussion that arose late in the nineteenth century about the basis for baptizing children. Abraham Kuyper saw a close connection between regeneration or conversion and baptism. He taught that children of believers were to be presumed regenerated. Based on presumed regeneration they



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should be baptized. If it became apparent later in life that they were not, it was concluded their baptism had not been a real baptism.

While there are many who consider themselves evangelical who will still practice infant baptism, it is clear that, logically, conversionism leads to believer baptism. From what has been said so far, it would seem that there is an irrefutable argument, supported by Scripture and even the Reformed confessions: children of believers may not be called Christians till there is evidence of conversion. As airtight as the argument may seem, however, there are two critical issues that must be considered. First, is it true that conversion is the decisive moment in becoming a Christian? Second, does Scripture say anything about the status of the children of believers?

Conversionism

With respect to the first issue, the stress on conversion as being decisive has the effect of turning the church into a voluntary society. To be sure, talk of conversion will include talk of the prevenient grace of God. Yet, it is striking that conversionism flourishes best in the context of Arminian theology. With all the talk about prevenient grace, the stress on conversion and the pressure to convert has man in the centre. It should not be overlooked that within the context of conversionism there developed various revival techniques which at times almost eliminated the need for the Spirit.³ All you needed was the right method. To this day, various evangelism programs are measured by their success rate, which amounts to applying a purely human measuring stick to the work of the Spirit.

Over against this talk of conversionism, with its inevitable man-centeredness, we must place the God-centered approach which speaks of God's call. For a simple example, Abraham's relationship with the Lord began not when he was converted but when God called him. We see a similar emphasis on God's call in the opening of various New Testament letters (see Romans 1:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Jude 1:1). The readers are not addressed as the converted but as the called.⁴

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Children of believers

With respect to the second issue, Scripture does speak specifically about the children of believers. There is the pivotal passage in Genesis 17 where the Lord established his covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He would be their God and they would be his people. David, in Psalm 22 sang, "From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God" (v. 10). In Ezekiel 16:21 we hear the Lord accuse Israel of sacrificing "my children." David in his mother's womb, and the children sacrificed, could not yet convert to God and confess his name yet they belonged to Him.

It is not surprising that this emphasis on conversion has put the practice of baptizing infants of believers into question

This pattern of including the children is continued in the New Testament. One explicit reference is 1 Corinthians 7:14. Paul wrote that in a marriage where only one of the parents was a believer, the children were still holy, that is, special to God. Another explicit reference is the way Paul addressed the children of

the congregation in Ephesus, calling them to honour the command to honour their father and their mother (Eph 6:1-3). To be sure, the children are not specifically called Christians, but they are included as members of the church.

As the Scriptures can speak of being justified by faith and at the same time include the children of believers as belonging to God's people and being Christians, the same holds true for the Reformed confessions. After all, the same confessions that speak of Christians as being those who believe in Jesus Christ also speak of the children of believers as belonging to God's covenant and congregation (see BC 34 and HC 27:74). This is a recognition of the special status bestowed on the children of believers out of grace.

They are Christians by divine calling

When we listen to the Scriptures, we can conclude that the children of believers are entitled to being called Christians. This is so despite the fact that they cannot convert to God due to their youth. We may call them Christians not because we presume they are, but because that is what they are by divine calling. It is the privilege and responsibility of parents to make their children aware of that calling and to pray for them that they may respond to that calling.

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.

¹ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 1992nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman/Routledge, 1989), 4. The other three are activism, Biblicism, and crucicentrism.

² *Ibid.*, 7-10

³ *Ibid.*, 8

⁴ For an excellent discussion of the Church as the "called" community, in contrast to the "converted" or "confessing" community, see: James V. Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism: An Introduction to Baptism in Scripture and the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2007), especially chapters 3 and 22.





MATTHEW 13:52

Saluted by God!

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“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 1:3

At the beginning of every worship service, we rise and stand at attention. We are in the presence of our King; we are assembled together as God’s army. The first thing that we do is make a statement that every other army would consider outlandish: we acknowledge that we are weak and in need of help! In this spiritual warfare we confess that “our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Having made this confession, we are immediately confronted with the salutation of the Lord. He our God, the Supreme Commander, does not turn around and say, “You’re right! You’re not much of an army. Dismissed!” Rather, the Maker of heaven and earth acknowledges us. He salutes us with these words, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” When the minister raises his right hand, he speaks on the Lord’s behalf the very powerful words that we might take for granted.

The words of the salutation are spoken in the context of war, the antithesis between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. In general we are not fond of talking about God’s war on sin and the fact that He is angered by our sin. Why should we trouble our minds thinking about God’s punishment of sin when we could think about happier and more positive things?

But as we stand up to confess our need for help and as we receive the salutation, we are reminded that God does not take sin lightly. We have peace with God only through Jesus Christ, who has removed the curse from us! While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. The salutation reminds us that God does not gloss over sin, but has punished it by the bitter and shameful death of Christ. The salutation is the royal salute of our King whereby we receive the assurance that we can continue with worship; the wrath and punishment that we deserve have been lifted from us.

From ancient times a soldier would carry his weapon (a sword or spear) in his right hand. When saluting with his right hand, he was showing friendship and confidence. He was coming on peaceful terms; there was and there could be no weapon in his hand. And if a soldier had his hand up to salute you, he couldn’t quickly pull out his weapon to harm you.

Think again of the salutation we hear every Lord’s Day: we receive a salutation from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time the minister raises his hand for the salutation you are given far more than a simple greeting. There is nothing meaningless or trite about what is being said. When we gather for worship, we may do so in the assurance and confidence that we

are at peace with God. We do not deserve to see an empty right hand being lifted up to salute us, but we deserve the glittering sword of the Lord’s wrath. Yet in the finest military style God salutes us and tells us that He does not stand hostile over against us.

More than anyone else, our first parents Adam and Eve would have noticed the sharp contrast between the way things were in Paradise – living in perfect harmony, peace and communion with the God – and the way it became after the fall: the enmity, animosity, and disunity they caused by their sin. They saw the glittering sword of the cherubim which the Lord stationed in the garden to guard the way to the tree of life.

All that we learn from Genesis to Revelation regarding our sins and God’s salvation should make us all the more zealous to stand at attention in the covenant meeting between the Lord and his people. Every time we hear “grace and peace to you,” the shivers of joy should be running down our spines. The salutation reminds us that we do not deserve to be greeted and that we do not deserve what is given to us freely by our God. Yet you and I receive grace and mercy and all things necessary to live at peace with God and with one another, for we have been saluted by our Father and by our eternal Lord and King, Jesus Christ!





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Evangelism in Practice

(Part 3 of 3)

In previous articles we looked at evangelism from a biblical and historical perspective. In the present article I would like to offer some suggestions for the practice of evangelism.

We need to start with something that may seem obvious but is easily forgotten: a congregation can be “successful” in evangelism only if it really believes what it professes to believe. If we do not seriously believe that unbelievers are under the wrath of God and that we ourselves have been saved from eternal judgment by the death of Christ, we will not be greatly motivated to proclaim the gospel of salvation to others.

Related to this, a congregation can hardly be successful in evangelism if it is not a *living congregation*. A church that has forsaken its first love like the church in Ephesus (Rev 2:4) or a church that has become lukewarm like the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:16) will struggle to attract outsiders. However, if believers are strong in their faith the congregation may “win the respect of outsiders” (1 Thess 4:12) and some of those outsiders may realize their position before the face of God and seek salvation.

People who are thinking of becoming Christians look at Christian believers to see whether they are serious and sincere in what they are doing. Imagine an unbeliever visiting a worship service of your congregation. If such a visitor senses no real warmth and enthusiasm, why would he take the Christian faith seriously? He will simply conclude that Christians do not believe in what they are doing. On the other hand, if the gospel is preached effectively and there is commitment, warmth, and love among the believers, the visitor may be impressed and led to conclude: “God is really among you!” (1 Cor 14:25)

Similar things could be said about the reputation which a congregation has in the broader community. If church members are known to be honest and reliable people who live respectable lives, this will serve to support evangelistic efforts. But if some members of the church are known to be corrupt businessmen or womanizers or drunkards, that will seriously undermine any evangelistic projects (unless it is known that discipline is exercised in such cases).

In short: it is hard for an unbeliever to find new life in a church that is spiritually dead. In order for people to come to faith and be born again, it is important that they have opportunities to be among Christians who are strong in faith and live their lives with integrity. This is the main factor which determines whether a church is “successful” in evangelism or not. If a church fails to draw others to church, the problem is usually not that there are no resources or man-power, but rather that the first love has grown weak.

Congregation-wide commitment

In addition to this, it is important that the whole congregation (not just a few individuals) should share the desire that unbelievers might be saved and join the congregation. Such a desire will only be found among believers who understand the principle of *sola gratia*, who realize that they have been saved only by the grace of God. Everyone in the congregation should desire that God would receive glory and honour by means of the addition of more people to the number of those who are saved.

The more we live in this faith, the easier it will be to use opportunities and speak to unbelievers. The best method of spreading the gospel is using personal contacts. Research has shown that for about seventy percent of converts to Christianity the most important factor in the process of their coming to faith was a relationship with a Christian friend, relative, colleague, or neighbour.

Ideally, members of the congregation would use their contacts in the broader society to talk about the gospel and invite people to come along to church. The congregation should then be ready and prepared to receive such people warmly. There should be programs in place for instructing newcomers to the faith. It is important, however, that such programs do not occupy an isolated place somewhere at the fringes of church life, but are carried by the support and the prayers of the whole congregation.

Missionary flavour

In the third place it is important that the church's activities be characterized by a *missionary flavour*. If our missionary endeavour is restricted to an annual Vacation Bible School (VBS) we should not be surprised if we struggle to attract unchurched people. A VBS can be a wonderful evangelistic tool, but if it is an isolated activity which is not integrated in congregational life, its effectiveness is seriously hampered.

What is needed is a missionary flavour to characterize regular church activities. Take for example the worship service. While the

minister addresses his sermon to the congregation of the Lord in the first place, he should be mindful that there are visitors in church. This will give his sermon a missionary flavour.

If a visitor senses no real warmth and enthusiasm, why would he take the Christian faith seriously?

The same applies to congregational activities such as Bible study meetings. It can be a challenge for a Bible study group if there are a few guests present who want to know more about the gospel. Of course, you don't want to bring in enemies of the gospel.

But if you have a friend or colleague who wants to know more about the gospel, why not take him along to the regular Bible study? You may find that the presence of such a guest adds a new and exciting dimension to the Bible study meeting.

During my time as a missionary in South Africa I often taught mixed groups of catechism students. I would encourage the young people of the mission congregation to take friends along to catechism class. The only condition was that these friends had to be willing to function in a positive way and do the homework, including memorizing parts of the Catechism. I can testify that the Lord blessed this approach and that over the years many young people came to faith through this avenue.



Office-bearers

In the previous article I made a few critical remarks about the expectation within the Canadian Reformed tradition that ministers and elders would work strictly within the congregation. It is unfortunate that ministers in the CanRC tradition have been discouraged from developing contacts with people outside the church. It would be more in line with the tradition of the early church, the Reformation, and the Secession, if we encouraged our office-bearers to do what the old ecclesiastical forms stipulated: “. . .also to exhort others to the Christian faith.”

The best method of spreading the gospel is using personal contacts

How this is put into practice may vary from place to place. The size of the congregation and the workload of the minister will play a role in this. Generally speaking it would be good if consistories expected their ministers to devote part of their time to evangelistic activity. A consistory could tell the minister, for example, that out of every ten home visits he should do two or three visits with unbelievers and report about them at consistory meetings. The minister should also generally be the one who teaches the new members' group. As we have argued in the previous article, the minister and the elders should visibly support

evangelistic activities. In this way, the congregation will understand that evangelism is an important ministry.

Church planting

So far, I have discussed evangelism from the perspective of a local congregation. But sometimes there is no local congregation where new believers can join. It is important, therefore, that we should also consider *church planting*.

The Canadian Reformed churches have been blessed by continuous growth over the past fifty years. On average one new church has been instituted per year. This is great and we recognize the Lord's blessing in this. At the same time, we know that most of the growth came from within. When a congregation outgrew the church building, the congregation would split in two and a new congregation would be formed at some distance (usually not too far away).

While there is nothing wrong with this form of growth, I suggest that the Canadian Reformed churches could adopt a bolder approach and consider sending missionaries or evangelists to plant churches in new areas. Why not plant churches in places such as Saskatoon, Regina, and Kitchener-Waterloo? Fast-growing urban areas are usually good places to start a new church. Other target groups which could be considered are immigrant communities (Muslims, Hindus).

In the previous article I mentioned that the Secession

churches in The Netherlands (nineteenth century) discussed evangelism at all levels of church life including the major assemblies. We can learn from this. It would be wonderful if evangelism was a regular item on the agenda of classis meetings.

Let me end with a very practical suggestion: there are eight classes in the federation of the Canadian Reformed churches. It should be possible for every classis to initiate and support at least one new church plant in Canada. If every classis did this, we would have eight church plants on the go within a few years. Is this impossible? I don't think so. We have the structures and the finances. We will probably have men who can be sent out to do this. We do, however, need the vision and desire to initiate this.

What is needed is a missionary flavour to characterize regular church activities

God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). May we so love our God and so love our neighbour that we use our opportunities and resources to spread the gospel of salvation here in North America. And may we be bold and creative in finding effective ways to do this.



Forty-seventh Annual League Day



We headed to our forty-seventh annual League Day in Ontario, on a chilly overcast Wednesday morning. But once you walked into Grand Olympia you were greeted with the chatter of many ladies eager to meet up with past acquaintances and new friends. Like in past years, although under a new name, Grand Olympia was nicely decorated. Large round tables were adorned with white table cloths, potted flowers, and some beautiful fall coloured leaves.

We began our eventful day by singing Psalm 92:1, 26 which was introduced to us by our League President, Jane Oosterhoff and was accompanied on the piano by the talent of Elly Hutten. Following the singing Jane led in prayer and read Luke 12:22-34. Jane went on to

report that at the recent League Board meeting a decision was reached to give the hosting society the option of offering workshops or two speeches. And it wouldn't do justice to the report if I didn't mention the game we played! Yes, Jane started us off with a game. Everyone was asked to dig into their purses and take out their cell phone or pager and hold it up high. Once that was done and the majority of people's hands were in the air, Jane promptly said, *"Turn it off!!"*

A bit of general business was mentioned, mainly that Benita Broersma will now be the recording secretary, and a word of thanks was given to Bea Lof for her work. It is with thanksgiving to God that we could mention that 403 ladies had registered for League Day. All congregations in Ontario were somehow represented. We also had one lady from the ERQ Church in Quebec, one from The Netherlands, one from out west; three joined us from the United Reformed Church, one from the Christian Reformed Church, two from Papua New Guinea, and one lady from Australia.

We again lifted our voices to God by singing our League Song, "Sing God's Glory." Following that we read 1 Timothy 6:3-21

Jane gave a brief introduction to Rev. VandeBurgt, who would be our morning speaker. We sang Psalm 24:1-3, followed by a very enjoyable

and informative speech by Rev. VandeBurgt. Yes, it had three points like a sermon, but that is what you get when you ask a minister to speak, right?!

Rev. VandeBurgt spoke about storing up treasures in heaven. In order to store up treasures in heaven we have to give away our treasures on earth. We store up things on earth. Is Jesus against us having stuff? Not necessarily, but He is if our possessions keep us from the purpose He has for us. We must use our wealth as an opportunity not to increase the standard of living, but to increase the standard of giving. We are to excel in the grace of giving and by doing so we show to God and to others where our heart is. After the





conclusion of his speech, on behalf of all ladies at League Day, Jane thanked Rev. VandeBurgt for his speech. We sang Psalm 37:9, 11 and began the collection for Canadian World Relief Fund.

We then broke off into round table discussions and were asked to write down any questions for Rev. VandeBurgt. After questions were answered Rev. VandeBurgt was thanked again. Lunch was explained with the words, "You are women, you are smart, and you'll figure it out." Thanks Jane! We sang Hymn 60:1-3 and Karen

Schuurman prepared us for the lunch meal with a word of prayer. After a delicious lunch we re-opened the day by singing O Canada, followed by prayer.

We were treated to a poem read by Trish Gelms and the singing of a hymn by Alison VanderWoude. Then we all joined in song by singing Psalm 139:1 and 13. We read Colossians 3:1-17 and Tamara DenHollander was introduced as our afternoon speaker.

Tamara focused on how we treat each other and that we are to treat each other as holy, treat each other the way God treats us! It was stressed that without holiness we will not see the Lord. Life is to be characterized by joy. Jesus, others, and then yourself. To conclude it was mentioned that we should pray, "Show me how to treasure those around me." A word of thanks was given to Tamara for her speech and we sang Hymn 4:1-4 and time was made available for table discussions.

General business was next on our agenda for the day. Thanks were given to our speakers for the

day and a lady from the audience then challenged every woman to take the responsibility of church deficits and get them cleared up by the end of 2008! What a concrete way that we can show that we are givers!

It was with thankfulness to the Lord for blessing us financially that we could give financially and therefore we were able to collect \$2 185.00 for CRWRF.

Elly Hutten was thanked for her talents on the piano and Glanbrook was thanked for their hard work in organizing League Day 2008! Glanbrook then willingly passed on the torch of organizing League Day to Guelph for 2009.

We closed the day by singing "Great is Thy Faithfulness" followed by Jane ending the day in prayer. It was truly a blessing to be together with so many women, praising the Lord and learning how to serve Him and others better in our day to day life. May we all take what we learned that day and apply it to our lives! How Great God is!



Reviewed by T. Van Raalte

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***The Life and Thought of David Craig, 1937-2001* by Jason Zuidema. (Toronto: Clements Academic, 2008)**

**Additional Information:
Paperback, 219 pages, \$24.95**

La belle province – Quebec – has come onto the Canadian Reformed radar screen quite significantly since the establishment of *L'Église Réformée du Québec* (ERQ). Rev. Jason Zuidema, ERQ pastor in Repentigny, has now provided us with some essential reading on the history of this young federation by presenting the life and thought of Rev. David Craig, a man who was a driving force behind the organization of these churches, and who was suddenly taken by the Lord in 2001 with a massive heart attack at the age of 63.

The book is divided into two major sections, with six pages of photos to mark the division. In Part I Zuidema takes 138 pages to tell us the fascinating life story of David (the name Zuidema employs) while Part II neatly summarizes David's thought in one chapter, followed by five chapters of selected texts from David's own hand. With this format the book fulfils the expectations of the series it belongs to: "Texts and Studies in Protestant History and Thought in Quebec." Another volume in the series, on Charles Chiniquy of *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome* fame, is due out in January 2009. Note that Zuidema's book is being launched simultaneously in both English and French.

David's childhood was spent in Guelph, Ontario, where he was raised in a God-fearing family that belonged to the Brethren movement. He took his education at what is now Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario (B.A.) and, having become Presbyterian while there, he chose the Presbyterian College in Montreal (B.D.) for his seminary education (the degrees are explained on page 15). From there he also received his wife Nancy. The link to Quebec would prove to be lifelong.

While every pastor's life has its noteworthy events, David's life was truly remarkable. Let me only say that chapter 4 is actually a reprint of an article from *Weekend Magazine* of January 27, 1968, describing the miraculous divine protection David received when as a missionary to Nigeria, determined to stay with the people he loved, he remained in the country in the midst of a civil war only to face a circle of FN-C1 rifles in a blood-smeared military compound.

From mission work in Nigeria, to post-graduate studies in Switzerland, and then on to Quebec where he would remain, David Craig was a tireless worker of the Lord. Zuidema describes David's loyalty to the gospel, his love for the church, his humor and joy, as well as the most difficult part of his ministry – the unsuccessful struggle to maintain the tie of the ERQ to the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Through the lens of David's life, Canadian Reformed readers will gain much insight into the beginnings of the ERQ. For this

reason alone – for the sake of our support of the progress of the gospel in Quebec – I highly recommend this book.

Let this not lead readers to think that Zuidema's account amounts to a rarified treatise on church polity or mission principles for elders only. Far from it! While these topics are explored, this book is highly readable by anyone age fourteen and up. My son (age twelve) has already read five chapters and we have had several good discussions about it. From the start Zuidema aimed his account at Christian youth. He writes, "Originally, my goal in writing this book was to provide a model of sorts for the young Christians in my church to help them form their identity as Christians. . . Throughout the project this goal has not changed. It is for this reason that I dedicate this book to all the young Christians growing up in *la belle province*" (xiii). As for myself, as a Canadian Reformed pastor, I pray that we English-speaking believers increase our reading, that each generation makes the faith its own and engages the issues of the day armed with a solid knowledge of the past. Reading this book would greatly help us provide meaningful support to the ERQ in prayer, finances, and manpower. Some of our youth whose French is good enough ought to look into FAREL Reformed Theological Seminary for some education (it used to be called *Institut Farel*). They just might find themselves in love with Quebec, like David Craig was. Check <http://www.farel.net/>

A few final comments about the author and the quality of the book. First of all, our Lord has richly blessed Jason Zuidema with energy and intelligence. Still a very young man, he has already earned his Ph.D., published his dissertation, taught at Institut Farel and McGill University, pastored the Repentigny congregation for several years, and somewhere found time to write this book as well. It's clear

from the extensive footnotes that he has probably read every sermon David preached, hundreds of church bulletins, personal letters, articles, and curricula. Zuidema's research also took him to archives in Montreal and Toronto. Somehow, Zuidema also managed to write the book without inserting his own views; he truly gives us David Craig. All in all, this book was extremely well researched and is very

readable. I noted about twenty items that were missed in copy editing, but nothing that would throw off a careful reader (I understand these will be corrected in the next printing).

In short, I highly recommend this book as a stimulus to our youth, as a primer on the history of the ERQ, and as a reason to pray that the Lord continue to raise up David Craigs in our day.



News from the Women's Savings Action

Collection

With great gratitude to the Lord who made it all possible, we may tell you that during the book year 2007/2008 an amount of \$37,998.44 was collected, an increase of \$4,000 compared to last year. Because of this significant increase in contributions, it was possible to pledge \$35,000 for the library of the Theological College when we made our presentation at the College Evening in September 2008. In the previous three years we pledged \$30,000, so this was a nice increase.

Continuity

The theme of the College Evening presentation was the continuity in the work of the Women's Savings Action. A local representative may retire, but there is always somebody else to take over the job. A new congregation is founded and there is always somebody to take on the

job. Next year we hope to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Women's Savings Action. Through all those years representatives have come and gone, but the work has continued, even grown. Many of you will remember the time of the little cans that actually had to be opened with a can opener to take the money out. After that, many other containers and bags came: half pound margarine tubs, the bigger yoghurt tubs, the even bigger two pound margarine tubs, candy bags, Ziploc bags, shopping bags. When I was a representative in Ancaster in the nineties, we used to have one counting evening, where we worked with three or four people to get all the change counted. Once we even had to meet again the following morning to finish it off. Then I would put all the change in back packs and shopping bags, load them and five kids in the station

wagon and there we went for the annual trip to the bank. The children were perfectly able to stay at home for an hour or so, but I needed them to carry all that money inside. Once there, the teller had to count and recount all those rolls of coins. I was not popular with the other customers then.

Conclusion

These days many people give bills or a cheque. But the counting of coins is still part of the work. In whatever form or amount, the money all adds up to an impressive sum. For almost forty years, all that money has gone to the library of the Theological College. Many, many people have made use of the wealth of study material there. It is our prayer that in whatever form, the work of the Women's Savings Action may continue in the service of the Lord of the church.

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Women's Savings Action

Contributions for the year July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008

(With comparative figures for the previous year)

Congregation	2008	2007	Congregation	2008	2007
Abbotsford	1580.00	—	Hamilton/Cornerstone	1659.42	1779.93
Aldergrove	1385.00	1350.00	Hamilton/Providence	200.00	—
Ancaster	1091.37	1348.85	Houston	—	265.00
Attercliffe	745.00	807.00	Kerwood	785.00	290.00
Barrhead	572.50	220.00	Langley	1985.00	2080.00
Brampton	260.00	415.50	Lincoln	1165.77	690.00
Burlington/Ebenezer	1253.00	1131.20	London	—	—
Burlington/Fellowship	125.00	335.00	Lynden	874.90	652.52
Burlington/Waterdown	815.00	830.00	Neerlandia	260.00	—
Calgary	930.61	—	Orangeville	369.95	91.50
Carman/East	500.00	405.00	Ottawa	150.00	150.00
Carman/West	575.00	442.00	Owen Sound	770.00	1310.00
Chatham	694.50	620.00	Smithers	432.60	795.00
Chilliwack	608.00	573.00	Smithville	1567.00	1360.70
Cloverdale	240.00	1280.00	Spring Creek	773.00	—
Coaldale	807.50	615.00	St. Albert	1640.00	1510.32
Dunnville/Wainfleet	316.00	805.50	Surrey	828.00	432.50
Edmonton/Immanuel	2657.50	1462.50	Taber	—	285.00
Edmonton/Providence	1017.00	1085.00	Toronto	337.00	616.90
Elora	591.70	326.75	Vernon	262.00	534.75
Fergus/North	146.61	99.05	Willoughby Heights	1316.00	960.00
Fergus/South(Maranatha)	536.00	473.00	Winnipeg/Grace	510.00	671.00
Flamborough	—	—	Winnipeg/Redeemer	1240.00	1073.87
Glanbrook	988.94	693.20	Yarrow	85.00	—
Grand Rapids	—	—	Australia	—	1217.70
Grand Valley	341.29	238.61	Royalties Selles	—	—
Grassie	454.75	478.90			
Guelph	1555.53	1176.00	Total Collected	37998.44	33977.75



In his article entitled "IPB" (Vol. 57, No. 24), Rev. Cl. Stam broaches an important topic, namely, the mission work in Brazil. At one point in his editorial, he wonders out loud whether "we may have to search for an honourable exit strategy." The main point of my letter is that, under the Lord's blessing, the time for an honourable exit strategy may come at some point in the future, but at present the reality on the mission field in NE Brazil compels us to stay fully involved there for the foreseeable future.

To begin with, let me briefly reiterate a point that Rev. Stam makes and with which I agree. On May 31, 2008 our Dutch sister churches decided to establish a sister church relationship with the *Igreja Presbyteriana do Brasil* (IPB). Only two weeks prior to this, at the Synod of the federation which has resulted from the Dutch and Canadian mission work, the *Igreja Reformada do Brasil* (IRB), another decision was taken concerning the IPB. The IRB's decision was "to suspend for the time being [at least until 2010] our initial contacts with IPB" (Press Release Synod Unai, May 12-16). Sometimes they say that children run ahead of their parents, but in this case it appears that one of the "mother" churches is running far ahead of one of her "children." However, since the IRB lives and breathes the ecclesiastical situation in Brazil on a daily basis, the Dutch churches would have done well to follow more closely the direction in which, and the speed at which, the IRB is moving in its relations with the IPB. As Br. Stam rightly says, one of the weakest points of the Dutch decision is that apparently they did not consult with the IRB.

However, I respectfully disagree with him that we might now be caught up in a domino effect such that since the Dutch have pulled their missionaries out of Brazil, therefore, the Canadians might soon have to do the same. Instead, I suggest that we do exactly what the Dutch churches apparently have not done: *consult the IRB on this matter*. Let us suppose for a moment that we (Canadian churches involved in Mission Brazil) would pose the question directly to our brothers and sisters in Brazil: "Do you still benefit from the work of our missionaries? Or are they quickly becoming superfluous in your midst?" What would their answer be? I cannot speak for the Hamilton Mission Board, but having served on the Surrey Maranatha Mission Board since 2004, there is one consistent and repeated plea that I hear from the IRB: "Please. . . please keep your missionaries here, and if you could possibly send more, please do that as well!"

The brotherhood in Brazil makes this plea with good reason. Even though they have an independent federation, officially it only consists of three instituted congregations at this point: Unai,

Maragogi, and Recife. Thus, it is still very much a fledgling and fragile federation. A case in point is Sao Jose. It is the first congregation which grew out of Canada's mission work in Brazil, but some years ago it could no longer sustain its status as an instituted congregation because of a lack of office bearers. Another example of the need in Brazil is the growing list of congregations that are slowly but surely embracing the Reformed faith. By the providence and grace of God, they are now seeking out the IRB and requesting to join the federation. So far that list includes Cabo Frio, Fortaleza, and Esperança, among others. In short, there is so much work to be done in preaching, teaching, office bearer training, and all-around ecclesiastical support for this small federation that our missionaries can be productively busy there for the foreseeable future.

In closing, I fully agree with Br. Stam that "it is imperative that sending churches [to Brazil] have much contact with each other and have a plan that is mutually acceptable." However, it should not involve planning for "an honourable exit strategy." On the contrary, the great and present need in Brazil compels us to plan for staying the course and, should the Lord provide us with the means, perhaps even expanding the work.

Rev. J. Van Vliet
Surrey, BC

Response

Once again I am thankful for a reply to an editorial, this one about the mission work in Brazil.

I agree with Rev. Van Vliet that the Dutch churches should not dictate our agenda. But Dutch decisions do have consequences for us in Canada and Brazil. It affects how the C3 committee works and whether there is financial support for important projects. It also complicates matters at the ICRC.

I have served on our Mission Board since 1988 and saw the Dutch move being prepared and executed. The Mission Board and consistory of Hamilton have unsuccessfully sought to convince the Dutch churches to stay the course in Brazil. I am thankful for Rev. Van Vliet's assurance of ongoing support for the work in Brazil. That's what we need. Only Hamilton and Surrey still do mission work in Brazil. It would have been a blessing to have a base also in the more affluent south of Brazil (Curitiba). But like Leif Erickson said: we'll row with the oars that we have.

Cl. Stam

Press Release of Regional Synod West of the Canadian Reformed Churches, held November 4, AD 2008 in Carman, MB

1. Opening
 - a. On behalf of the convening church of Carman East, Rev. Holtvlüwer welcomed all delegates and guests. In the audience were the high school students and teachers of Dufferin Christian School as well as two local retired ministers. Rev. Holtvlüwer requested the assembly to sing Psalm 135:1, 2, 7, and 9, read Proverbs 11:1-14, and led in prayer.
2. Examination of the Credentials & Constitution of Synod
 - a. Representatives from the convening church inspected the credentials and reported that all *primi* delegates were present with proper credentials. Regional Synod West was then declared constituted.
3. Election of Officers
 - a. After a number of rounds of voting by the delegates, the following moderamen were appointed: Chairman – Rev. C. Bouwman; Vice-chairman – Rev. P. H. Holtvlüwer; Clerk – Rev. R. Bredenhof. The chairman spoke words of appreciation for the trust placed in the moderamen by the assembly. He also thanked the convening church for all the work done to host the delegates and convene Regional Synod.
4. Adoption of the Agenda
 - a. The provisional agenda was adopted with the addition of one more piece of incoming mail.
5. Correspondence Received
 - a. A proposal was received from Classis Manitoba September 12, 2008 to amend the regulations of regional synod west. The proposal concerns who is to submit names to a regional synod to stand for nomination as elder delegates to a general synod and whether a regional synod is free to add to or subtract names from this pool when it does the selecting. Classis Manitoba proposed that the classes submit names and that delegates at regional synod not be free to add names to this pool. All churches were sent a copy of this proposal and two churches sent responses that were in basic agreement. Regional Synod amended the proposal and formulated a new regulation stipulating that the churches (as opposed to the classes) are to be asked by the convening church to submit names of elders for nomination and that the regional synod is to, as a rule, draw names for delegates to general synod from only this pool.
 - b. An appeal was received from a person who had been excommunicated from one of the churches several years ago. In closed session, the appeal was declared inadmissible because it is not a specific appeal of this person's excommunication. Further, the individual does not appeal a decision of a classis.
 - c. Three appeals against decisions of Classis Pacific East were received from a brother. As they deal with decisions of a classis and were received in time, they were declared admissible. In closed session, Regional Synod formulated replies to all three appeals in which each was denied.
6. Overtures/Instructions
 - a. There were no overtures or instructions.
7. Reports:
 - a. Three written reports from the deputies of Regional Synod as per Art. 48 CO were received with thanksgiving.
 - b. A report from the treasurer for Regional Synod West, Br. J. Moedt, was received with thanksgiving. A positive audit of that report was also received with thanks.
 - c. A report from the Church for the Inspection of the Archives (Edmonton Immanuel) was received with thanksgiving. The archives were found to be in good order.
8. Appointments:
 - a. Regional Synod West made the following appointments:
 - i. Treasurer – Br. J. Moedt. At the same time the kilometre reimbursement rate for delegates to Regional Synod West is set at forty-five cents per kilometre up to a maximum of the cost of an airline ticket from the delegate's home city.
 - ii. Church for Auditing the books of the Treasurer – Taber
 - iii. Church for the Archives – Edmonton Providence

- iv. Church for the Inspection of the Archives – Edmonton Immanuel
- v. Deputies ad Article 48, CO:
 - 1. Classis Pacific West – J. Visscher; 1st Alternate – A. Souman; 2nd Alternate – J. Slaa
 - 2. Classis Pacific East – J. Moesker; 1st Alternate – W. M. Wielenga; 2nd Alternate – C. Bouwman
 - 3. Alberta – R. Aasman; 1st Alternate – J. Louwerse; 2nd Alternate – W. Slomp
 - 4. Manitoba – A. J. Pol; 1st Alternate – P. H. Holtvlüwer; 2nd Alternate – J. Poppe
- 9. The church at Abbotsford was appointed to convene the next regional synod west on Tuesday, November 3, 2009 in Abbotsford, BC.
- 10. Closing
 - α. Question Period was made use of. The chairman noted with gratitude that censure ad Art. 34 CO was not necessary and instead spoke words of commendation in relation to the good cooperation experienced among the delegates present at the meeting. Synod decided that both the Acts of Regional Synod and the press release shall be finalized by the moderamen. After a song of praise and final prayer, the chairman declared Regional Synod west to be closed.

*For Regional Synod West
November 4, 2008,
Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer
(vice-chairman at that time)*

Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the Board and Committee of Administration, Inter-League Publication Board, November 10, 2008, Fergus, ON

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, Brian Jager as treasurer, and Debbie Swaving for sales. The marketing representative, Theresa Westrik, was absent with notification.

Progress Report

A new book entitled *Encourage One Another*, by B. Vegter, has been printed and is ready for sale. This spiral-bound workbook is a topical Bible study on how we as Christians can encourage each other in our day-to-day walk of life. It is an excellent resource for personal and group studies. Five other books are being worked on to be printed or re-printed.

Marketing Report

The meeting was updated on efforts to promote the I.L.P.B., including bulletin and *Clarion* ads and a book sale. The following books are on sale at forty percent off until February: *Believe & Confess, Vol. 1 & 2*, by C. G. Bos,



What is Your Answer, by M.H. Sliggers, and *Lord and Giver of Life*, by A.N. Hendriks.

Financial Report

The most recent financial statements were presented and reviewed. The financial situation is good, with adequate funds to continue publishing. Remunerations for translating, editing, proof-reading, typesetting, and mileage were reviewed and updated.

Sales Report

Sales remain steady, with a very good response at the latest Women’s League Day in Ontario.

Website

The website, www.ilpb.ca is fully functional and each book available is pictured with all pertinent details.

Board updates

The Board informed the CoA about efforts being made to get manuscripts of books that could be published. The Board is reviewing the way it obtains materials for publication and will send a questionnaire to as many Bible study societies as possible to determine how the study needs of the societies can be met. The mandate was reviewed and discussion held as to how to best fulfill the mandate.

General

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

