

*You need not
Christ has set
us free. . .*

John 8:51



Annus Domini 1994 Comes to an End

WHAT ABOUT FREEDOM?



he year 1994 is coming to an end. Soon we shall write 1995. During the past year we have heard many words about freedom. We shall hear them again in 1995. We live about half a century after the Second World War.

Fifty years ago the battle for freedom in the world was slowly being won both in the west and in the east, from D-Day to V-Day, that is, from Decision Day in 1944 to Victory Day in 1945.

This past year we did not just have Remembrance Day in November to remember that many gave their life for the freedom of others during this century's two World Wars. Throughout the year we remembered events that took place fifty years ago, in this last year of the Second World War. We remembered June 6, 1944 as D-Day, when the Allied Forces got a foothold in Normandy in France. The defeat of the Germans there and then was decisive for the outcome of the Second World War. We also remembered that in September 1944 a bridge in the region of Arnhem appeared too far for the Allies. It meant that the war went on. More people were murdered in a meaningless slaughter. More people suffered. More people mourned. Many sighed and moaned and prayed and fought for freedom.

In the coming year we shall remember that freedom was regained through this war. As Christians we confess that God restored freedom, in His undeserved goodness, now fifty years ago. We shall thank Him again that a large part of the world, especially the western world, has enjoyed this freedom for half a century. We shall also recall that during this time in many parts of our modern world this freedom was often shattered through revolutionary conquests and through civil wars. Small groups grasped totalitarian power over whole nations. And majorities oppressed minorities.

Although the totalitarian regime of communism has broken down in eastern Europe, it still kept its grip on nations in some other areas during the past year. In Africa, in particular in Rwanda, tribal wars caused much senseless suffering. In south eastern Europe different groups of people are still trying to slaughter each other from the face of the earth.

Freedom is a treasure. It is a gift of God's goodness. Why do people all over the earth take away freedom and life from others? Is it because we in North America are less sinful than people elsewhere? Thinking in this way would be deceiving ourselves. We are just as sinful as others.

Besides, at home dark clouds of political and spiritual oppression appear on the horizon. As for our country, we hear that in the Liberal caucus the Prime Minister wants to shut the mouth of those who speak against homosexuality. Words like "intolerance" and "hate mongering" are used to characterize these opponents. In fact, this means that in Canada a person is no longer allowed the public freedom of conviction and speech when it comes to being against a homosexual life style. In other words, here is oppression and suffering for those who publicly dare to oppose the party line.

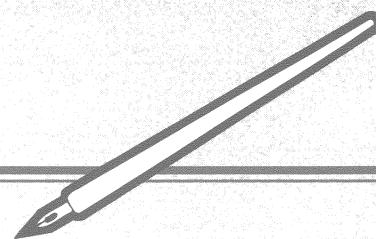
Now it is in particular Christian believers who will see this freedom of conviction and public expression taken away from them by the humanistic majority. For the socialist's and the secular humanist's definition of freedom differs from that of the Christian. As do other religions.

Freedom in a Muslim or Hindu country is often a privilege for those who belong to the group. The freedom of communism is restricted to those who submit to its rule. The freedom of modern secular humanism with its human rights is there for those who submit to its philosophy. In these systems there is no real freedom for a dissenting minority.

This past year we could read time and again about oppression, death, and suffering of Christian believers. So it was in communist China and in many Muslim countries. Even though those who are Christians by birth are tolerated to some extent, those who were Muslim or Hindu and became Christians are considered traitors and, for that reason, persecuted. For them there is no freedom.

From a purely human point of view, one could say that there is a parallel here with Christians. When a Christian becomes a Muslim or Buddhist, he, too, is regarded as a deserter and traitor. And it must be admitted that Christians have not always treated those who left the church in a Christian way. We sometimes forget that the church's tool for the

"The two keys of the kingdom of God, the preaching of the gospel and church discipline, are spiritual, being weapons of the Holy Spirit."



punishment of the unfaithful is spiritual. The two keys of the kingdom of God, the preaching of the gospel and church discipline, are spiritual, being weapons of the Holy Spirit. For punishment the civil government may use the sword of steel. The church uses God's Word. Therefore, it was wrong when in the past armies of Christian leaders conquered pagan nations and tribes first with the sword of steel and then also tried to do it with the sword of the gospel.

We admit this. For we want to look at all things through the eyes of God, that is, as God tells us in His Word. God's Word is the truth. This Word teaches us also that all mankind is called to acknowledge God and serve Him through faith in Christ. This is why a Christian who turns away from the only true God and from His Christ to a different religion and a different god, is a traitor, indeed. And this is why he who turns from another religion back to the triune God, back to the Maker of heaven and earth, Who is also the Redeemer, is no longer a traitor, but one who turns back from rebellion to the truth and to walking in the truth. He walks in the true freedom that God gives in Christ Jesus.

We thank God that in 1994 this freedom did exist in many places in our world. We thank Him that the call to come to this freedom with repentance from the sin of rebellion this world together with the call to repent from the rebellion of refusing continued to go out to the nations. We thank Him that, for instance through MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship), the gospel was proclaimed in Muslim countries in the Middle East, and that, in spite of the killing of faithful Christian leaders in this area, the Lord works faith and strengthens in faith through the gospel. We thank Him that throughout the world our Lord continues to save from unbelief and so from God's coming wrath.

We thank Him that again in the past year our Canadian nation, too, could hear about this true freedom: the freedom that comes from God through Christ. For a freedom based on human rights as these are defined by man apart from God is no freedom but is deceit from the deceiver and murderer from the beginning. These human rights that do not reckon with the rights of the Creator can only destroy nations, also our own (Prov. 14:34).

We are about, the LORD willing, to celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus. Through His eternal Son, God created the world. The world rebelled against God. It turned away from its Creator. But God so loved this rebellious, hostile, and lost world, that He "gave His only Son in order that every one who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." God's Son partook of our human flesh and blood in order to die at the cross for our sins. In this way God brought about redemption, freedom, through Him. This is the meaning of Christmas.

May this gospel continue to go out to the world, also to our Canadian nation. May God grant our brotherhood in a Muslim neighbourhood or under a communist regime faithfulness in openly confessing Christ as the only and true Saviour. May our God find us faithful in confessing His truth, His gospel in our post-Christian situation. May He make us His light in our secular humanistic surrounding, even more in 1995 than in 1994. Do we show God's care for a modern world lost in its sin? God's Son took upon Him our human nature and was willing to die for this lost world. Are we willing to suffer for this world in His service, praying and working for the coming of His glorious Kingdom? **C**

As Editorial Staff of Clarion, thankful to the Lord that He has enabled us to serve the readers in and outside the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, we wish all who read this a blessed new year in the service of the Lord.

Prof. Rev. J. Geertsema, editor-in-chief

Rev. R.A. Schouten, assisting co-editor

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, coordinating co-editor

Dr. J. De Jong, co-editor

Dr. C. Van Dam, co-editor





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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: *J. Geertsema*

Coditors: *J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten, C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta*

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
P.O. Box 1121
Taber, AB T0K 2G0

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
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The Virgin Birth: STUMBLING BLOCK FOR FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Mary in feminist theology



feminist theology has become a force to be reckoned with in the world of theology. A feminist approach to theology is now taught all over America and Europe. It can be found in the Roman Catholic Church as well as in the Protestant churches. Everywhere, women are studying how the Bible can be related to issues that are liberating for them. One of the main sources for inspiration are the women portrayed in Scripture. When they see how these women, in their time, stood up for their rights they are encouraged to continue their struggle for recognition of their place and right. At stake is nothing less than liberation after centuries of oppression.

Mary, the mother of the Lord, is one of the women looked to for inspiration. That led to a disappointment, however. Mary appeared too submissive; she appeared unsuitable to be used in the context of feminism. In fact, Mary was rejected by early feminist theologians as a possible identification figure.¹

In feminist circles today, however, the attitude toward Mary is more positive. They now see that Mary was not at all a passive and meek person; rather, she was a heroine. Lavinia Byrne points out that Mary supported her son during his crucifixion, when all his male disciples had fled. Mary followed her son's adventurous life, says Ivone Leal. Even though she realized that Jesus' attempt was doomed to failure Mary continued to support him. And another theologian, Mary O'Driscoll, refers to Mary's song to prove that Mary stood up for the poor and the oppressed.²

Together with other women, Mary is now used as an example to be followed

by women today. At this point we have to resist the temptation to deal with the exemplaric character of this explanation and show the importance of the redemptive historical approach.³ There is something else that deserves our attention. The best known part of Mary's life remains unmentioned. It is that part which caused her name to be included in the Apostles' Creed, the virgin birth. Mary herself said:

"For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed For He who is mighty has done great things for me," (Luke 1:48f) but many women feel they cannot call the Mary of the virgin birth blessed.

The question arises why this most important part of Mary's life does not function in feminist theology.

Two problems

The reason why the virgin birth is neglected is that at this point of her life Mary provides no inspiration whatsoever for women. Feminist theology, as a variation of liberation theology, wants to liberate women from the subservient position they have occupied in society and church for many centuries. Women were under male dominance and therefore were unable to be themselves. Feminist theology attempts to free women from their traditional submissive position. Women should be allowed to establish their own identity. Their outlook and approach should be recognized as legitimate. They should be recognized as themselves, and not as some man's wife or somebody's mother.

From this perspective Mary, in particular the Mary of the virgin birth, must appear as a hindrance, rather than an asset. She occurs at this point in the Bible only in connection with Jesus. She is not described in her own right but as the mother of Jesus. As long as Mary is

only pointing toward Jesus, as long as she is the receptive woman in contrast to her son who is the creative person, she cannot inspire women.⁴

Another problem for feminist theology is the emphasis on Mary as mother. This leads to a glorification of motherhood, as if that is the only real destination of women. The story of the virgin birth is yet another example of a story about women who are no more than homebodies, women who have no influence in a male dominated society. Roman Catholic theology is seen as even worse than Protestant theology since it emphasizes that Mary is the ever-virgin. This is seen as a denial of female sexuality.⁵ For feminist theology it is imperative to do away with the virgin birth, for the reason that it hinders the liberation of women.

Two solutions

Several attempts have been made to remove this offensive part of Christian theology. The less disruptive solution is to reinterpret its meaning. The virgin birth should be interpreted from the last words of Mary: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). These words show that Mary is not just the simple handmaiden who meekly submits to whatever is happening to her. She is active in her response to God's offer. If there is a dependence, says Halkes, it is on the side of God. God has made Himself dependent on a person who was receptive to Him. What Mary does is not passive submission but active receptivity.⁶ It is noteworthy that feminist theology here approaches Roman Catholic theology with its idea that in Mary humanity participated in the work of salvation by bringing forth the Saviour.

The text itself contradicts this explanation. The word "handmaid" or "servant" in which Mary summarizes her position indicates her submission to God. The words indicate Mary's humble acceptance of the will of God.⁷ There is no indication that God made Himself dependent and asked for Mary's permission. The angel did not wait for Mary to consent that a son would be born from her; he announced that she would give birth to a son (Luke 1:31). It would, however, not bother many feminist interpreters that their interpretation is not given in the text. They are not in the first place interested in what the Bible says, but in what they can use for their feminist agenda.

For other theologians, the explanation that Mary gives permission to the angel is not sufficient to accept this story. Mary would still be secondary; her importance depends on the importance of her Son. More radical measures are needed. They come with the following reasoning. The virgin birth is mentioned only in two passages in the Bible, in the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke. These chapters do not record historical events, they are added to the story of Jesus at a later time. They were "included because it was felt necessary to reflect in faith about the mystery of the incarnation."⁸ In plain words this means that no angel appeared to Mary. He did not announce to Mary that a son would be born to her. Neither did he make known the mystery that the Holy Spirit would work the miracle of the virgin birth. The early church added all these elements to the greater glory of Jesus.

As if that is not enough, the virgin birth takes on a new meaning. Halkes appeals to the results of the study of comparative religion. According to her, the veneration of Mary should be explained against the background of the worship of the virgin goddess. "The dogma of Mary's virginity is connected with the very early mystery of the great goddess who was a virgin." This goddess is independent and self-contained. She does bear children but is not dependent on a man.⁹ The virgin birth becomes the story of the independent woman who does not need a man, not even for child birth.

The necessity

This is, of course, a bizarre interpretation. It is utter nonsense to explain the biblical story of the virgin birth as a variation on the theme of the great goddess mother earth, giving birth to every living

thing. If one wants to believe in a fertility goddess, why not reject the record of the virgin birth altogether, rather than going to such ridiculous lengths in reinterpreting the biblical story.

We should do more, however, than shrug this off. We have to ask the question why the feminist theologians cannot accept the biblical account of the virgin birth as it is recorded. We have to go back to the beginning. What do these theologians use the Bible for? They only seek support for their opinion that women should be liberated from their position of submission. In their quest they come across one of the most prominent women in the Bible: Mary, and the central event in her life: the virgin birth. This story does not help them, however, in their pursuit of realizing liberation for women. That is the reason why the story of the virgin birth had to be reinterpreted, excised or turned into its opposite: the affirmation of female sexuality.

The root of their difficulties with the virgin birth is that feminist theology has identified the wrong problem. According to these theologians the basic problem of humankind is female oppression and submission. When that problem is solved the world will be a better place to live. The real problem of this world, however, is sin, sin in men as well as in women.

And since the feminist theologians begin with the wrong problem, they also come with the wrong solution. For the real solution is not the liberation of women but the removal of sins. Men as well as women have sinned and stand condemned before God and mankind is unable to solve this problem. The solution has to come from the outside. The Son of God has to come into this world for the salvation of sinners. The story of the virgin birth does not concentrate on Mary who brings a child into the world, but on God who uses her to bring the Saviour into this world.

Feminist theologians stumble over the story of the virgin birth for the very reason that they want to bring about their own salvation. But the story of the virgin birth shows us, rather, that salvation for men as well as for women, is from God. We can only reject the virgin birth at the cost of cutting the heart of God's grace out of the gospel.

We will call Mary blessed (Luke 1:48), not because she stood up for herself, but because God has done great things for her. She fulfilled that small but glorious task in the history of God's sal-

vation work: to become the mother of our Saviour. **C**

¹See C. Halkes, "Mary and Women" in H. Küng, J. Moltmann (eds.), *Mary in the Churches* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983) 66

²These examples are taken from R.N. Ostling's article "Handmaid or Feminist? More and more people around the world are worshipping Mary – and it's lead to a holy struggle over what she stands for," in *Time* magazine, December 30, 1991, 55.

³See for this e.g., H.J. Schilder, "Praesidium libertatis" in *De Reformatie*, 51, 121ff. (CHECK).

⁴See C. Halkes, "Mary and Women" 68f.

⁵Uta Hanke-Heinemann, a feminist theologian from Germany states that the perpetual virginity of Mary was an invention of a celibate clergy that demeaned women by robbing Mary of sexuality and normal motherhood, see "Handmaid or Feminist," 56.

⁶C. Halkes, "Mary and Women," 68f

⁷See J. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 72.

⁸C. Halkes, "Mary and Women," 67; see also R.N. Ostling, "Handmaid or Feminist," 55f.

⁹C. Halkes, "Mary and Women," 72.

*"...she will bear
a son, and you
shall call His
name Jesus, for
He will save
His people from
their sins."*

Matthew 1:21

The King is Born

*He...will be called the Son of the Most High;
and the LORD God will give to Him the throne
of His father David. Luke 1:32*



elebrating Christmas is celebrating the birth of the King. When the angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary in Nazareth about two thousand years ago, he announced to her that she would bear a son. About this Son Gabriel told her two very special things. This Son of hers would be called 'the Son of the Most High,' and the LORD God would give to Him "the throne of His father David." In what follows we shall give attention to this second characterization of Mary's Son. Only one remark is to be made regarding the first characterization. The angel said that Mary's Son would "be called the Son of the Most High." Being called "Son of the Most High" means in the first place that He is exactly what this name indicates: God's only true, eternal, divine Son. In the second place, being called by this name points to the fact that He is acknowledged as God's Son. People will believe in Him and submit to Him as their Lord and their God.

The angel's words that "the LORD God will give to Him the throne of His father David" must be connected with God's promise to David as this is found in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. When David wanted to build a house for the LORD in Jerusalem, the LORD promised Him that, instead, He would make David a house. When David dies the LORD will give his throne to a son of David. God promises to be his Father and he shall be God's son. So it will continue from generation to generation. "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever be-

fore Me; your throne shall be established forever," the LORD said.

David was Israel's God-given redeemer. He delivered Israel from the oppressing enemies and was their good shepherd. Therefore, this promise of God for David is, at the same time, a promise of deliverance and salvation for God's people. We see this in the LORD's promises regarding this coming king in David's house as the prophets gave them to the people. I may refer the reader to the following examples: Isa. 49:6, 55:3, Jer. 23:5-6, Ezek. 34:22-24, 37:24-28, Hos. 3:5, Amos 9:11, Micah 5:2-4; and further Ps. 89:3-4 with 15-18 and 19-37, as well as Ps. 132.

Restricting ourselves to the prophecies of Isaiah, we read (55:3) how Isaiah admonished God's people to return to the LORD their God and listen to Him. "And," said the LORD, through Isaiah, "I will make with you an everlasting covenant, My steadfast, sure love for David." The LORD added, "Behold, I make him (David, that is David's Son, the Servant of the LORD) a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples" (v. 4). Of this Servant the LORD said also through Isaiah (49:6), "It is too light a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." In other words, in this Servant, this Son of David, whose birthday we celebrate again, God's covenant with David and with David's people comes to fulfillment. However, the same is true with regard to God's covenant with Abraham. God promised that Abraham would become the "fa-

ther of many nations" (Gen. 12:3, 17:4, 22:18). In and through this Son of David and of Abraham, this Servant and Son of God, now the nations will share in God's salvation. Indeed, also God's covenant with Abraham comes to fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

That God's people benefit from the fulfillment of God's covenant (promise) to David is evident also in that well-known word in Isa. 9:6-7, "For to us (the people!) a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, *upon the throne of David*, and over his kingdom." Also in the verses 2-3 of this chapter the people of the Lord are mentioned. They "walked in the darkness" but "have seen a great light;" God has increased the people's joy, for He has taken away the burden of oppression from them. All this is linked to this Son that is born.

It is in line with all this that in the New Testament Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, expresses his jubilant joy in the LORD when he sings, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, for He has redeemed and visited His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old" (Luke 1:68-70). The birth of this Son of David means true salvation for the people of God. We hear the same gospel in the words of the angel who appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem's field, when David's greatest Son was born. He said to the shepherds,

"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The King is born for the people to save them. Who will not rejoice, indeed?

The angel Gabriel said to Mary that her Son would "be called Son of the Most High." It was remarked above that "calling" Him so implied acknowledging Him as God's Son. When God fulfils His promises and gives His Son as the great Redeemer-King in David's house to His people, this, too, implies the calling for the people to acknowledge and honour this Son of the Most High as their Redeemer-King. Anything less is an offence for both God and His Son.

The New Testament gives us a picture of this recognition but also of the refusal to do so. In Matthew 9:27 and 20:30-31 we read how some sufferers among God's people cried out to the Lord Jesus in their misery, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." And they were helped. The Lord delivered them from their blindness. At Pentecost Peter proclaimed to the people that, in accordance with David's prophecy in Ps. 16, Christ Jesus, David's offspring, was exalted to the heavenly throne and had sent God's Holy Spirit upon His church (Ac. 2:30-33). Later Paul, referring to the same Psalm, said to the people in Antioch of Pisidia that of David's "posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as He promised" (13:23). See also Rom. 1:3, 2 Tim. 2:8, and Rev. 22:16.

This recognition of Christ Jesus as the great Son of God and Son of David in one person is also proclaimed forcefully in the epistle to the Hebrews. This epistle works with God's Word in Ps. 110. In v. 1 David prophesies, "The LORD says to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool'." This word is quoted or referred to in Heb. 1:3, 13, 8:1, 10:12, and 12:2. The author exhorts his readers, in their struggle against sin, to keep "looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:22). This epistle to the Hebrews proclaims the human baby of Christmas as the Son of God who took upon Himself our blood and flesh. He is the great and almighty King of glory on the heavenly throne, mighty to save, mighty to help those in misery and need, those op-

pressed and tempted. He is the King-Priest, so full of mercy and compassion and faithfulness for those who believe in Him.

However, for those who refuse to acknowledge Him as their Saviour-King and do not want to submit to Him, He becomes a stone over which they fall and which will crush them when they harden in their disobedient unbelief. The New Testament shows this in the many warnings of God's wrath and judgment. We read about this in every chapter in Hebrews. We read about this in Christ's announcement of judgment over unbelieving Jerusalem (Mat. 24) and in the Book of Revelation, to mention only these. For those who spurn David's great Son God will be a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29).

It is Christmas 1994. Again this Son of God, born as the promised and long expected Son of David, comes to us and to the whole world. No, He does not

come to us today as a little innocent baby in the manger. He comes to us as the mighty King on the throne in heaven. In the proclamation of the gospel, in whatever form, the LORD God still gives His Son to us and to all mankind as the great Redeemer-King. But He does so with the command to all and everyone: acknowledge Him, My Son, the Son of David, as your King-Priest. Believe in Him. Through faith in His royal, glorious strength, turn away from unbelief and sin, and fight against it. For those who do not acknowledge Him as their God-given King-Priest and in that way despise His compassion and mercy, will kindle His wrath and perish on their way (Ps. 2:11, Rev. 19:15).

But "blessed are all who take their refuge in Him!" (Ps. 2:11).

Do you, reader, look at Him as the apostle and high priest of your confession in your struggle against sin, daily?

C

*"O come, O come, Emmanuel.
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel."*

*O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's stem,
Regard Thine own and rescue them;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel."*

**Hymn
12:1,3
Book of
Praise**

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Looking Forward

Long ago, when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, the Jews were looking forward to a Saviour. Most of them were expecting great political changes with the Messiah's appearance. Few awaited the spiritual Saviour. But Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon, and Anna testified to the hope within them. Already in Genesis 3:15, after the fall in paradise, the Lord provided that the seed of a woman would come forth to destroy the works of the evil one. This hope of salvation strengthened the people of God in the Old Testament. Now that the Lord has come and ascended into heaven, we are still looking forward: to His second coming. We are eagerly waiting for the day wherein He will be all in all.

Thus in remembering and celebrating His birth, our thoughts progress to His suffering, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His return. The Lord closes the Scriptures with the words: "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

FORWARD-LOOKING EDITORIAL TEAM

At the last meeting of the editorial committee with the publisher, it was decided that *Clarion* was due for a slight changeover and makeover. The new editorial team (described below), whose responsibilities go into effect on January 1, 1995, will strive for a more structured and cohesive approach in *Clarion*. Assisted by computer, modem, and fax technology, we look forward to considerable improvements in the manner in which *Clarion* is produced.

Prof. J. Geertsema will remain editor-in-chief.

Rev. R.A. Schouten will become an assistant to the editor, while Rev. G.Ph. van Popta will become the overall coordinator. Both willingly accepted their appointment to work together in procuring, editing, and assembling for production all *Clarion* articles. All submissions for the magazine should be directed to Rev. G.Ph. van Popta. His address can be found in the *Clarion* masthead.

Rev. W.W.J. VanOene has already indicated that he will no longer provide News Medleys. From time to time he will still contribute articles of interest.

Under a different format, Rev. C. Van Spronsen will relate interesting news from the churches.

To complement this new organizational direction, the physical appearance of *Clarion* will undergo somewhat of a transformation as well. The landscape scenes that presently grace the front covers are to be replaced by a standard, identifying *Clarion* cover which will be printed in two colours. In order that the photographic images and the type display a greater crispness, the paper quality will be upgraded. We hope these changes will further stimulate older and younger people alike to pick up and read *Clarion* with pleasure.

We thank our editorial team: Prof. J. Geertsema, Prof. J. De Jong, Prof. C. Van Dam, Rev. R.A. Schouten, and Rev. G. Ph. van Popta for their diligent labours in the past year. Once again we sincerely thank Rev. W.W.J. VanOene for his longtime service, first for *CRM* (*Canadian Reformed Magazine*), then twenty-two years for *Clarion*. No small contribution to our Reformed church life! Many others help us faithfully in ensuring that *Clarion* regularly arrives at your homes, and we thank them all for their time and effort. To you who subscribe and advertise, we express our sincere appreciation as well.

NEW RATES

For approximately three years now, the subscription rates have remained the same. However, the increase in postage – past and future – necessitates a subscription rate increase of at least 3% as of January 1, 1995. Especially with regard to the U.S.A. and countries abroad, we no longer enjoy favourable postage charges. Please refer to the masthead for pertinent rates.

The advertising rate will increase to \$7.00 per column inch. The last increase dates from 1991.

BEST WISHES

As you remember and celebrate the birth of Christ and the work of our Lord in the year 1994, may you and your family be blessed with the hope that is set before you in Christ, also in 1995.

W. Gortemaker

By G. Ph. van Popta

Meditation

Read Acts 2:40-47

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching . . ."

AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH



In the Nicene Creed we confess that we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church. What is an apostolic church? An apostolic church is one which is devoted to the apostles' teaching.

The apostle Peter had preached a stirring sermon on the day of Pentecost. He had convicted his audience of their sin and had held out the gospel of free grace in Jesus Christ. Three thousand people had responded in faith to this preaching. They were baptized and added to the church. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. The apostles taught. The members learned.

Today a church is apostolic if it continues in this teaching of the apostles. We have the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament. The writings of the apostles have authority because these men spoke from God. As the apostle Peter wrote: "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." We do well to pay attention to the words of the apostles as we would to a lamp shining in a dark place.

If the church would remain apostolic, it will preach the apostolic doctrine. It will proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. This church will call sinners to repentance and to faith. It will announce the washing away of sin. It will call people to new obedience to the law of God. Furthermore, it will do so with conviction and authority. The apostolic church takes seriously what Paul wrote to Timothy: "And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Today many are offended by some of the things the apostles wrote. The apostles are seen to be hopelessly outdated. Their ideas are quaint but irrelevant for us sophisticated twentieth century people. Paul is usually singled out to serve as the scapegoat of these conceited musings. For instance, what he said about the role of men and women in the church and in the home is said to be impossible to apply in our time and culture. We are told to reject what he says. Many go so far as to declare Paul a woman hater.

If the church lets go of apostolic teaching because it finds it offensive, then the church is no longer apostolic. If the church can no longer believe certain aspects of the apostolic doctrine of the New Testament, then the church is no longer the apostolic church. It can recite the Nicene Creed with grave dignity but its confession has become a lie.

Let the church be a teaching church. Let it hand down the teaching of the apostles. Let it proclaim the pure gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Let it call all people to repent of sin, believe in the Saviour, and obey the law of God. Let it not compromise.

An apostolic church is a teaching church. It is also a learning church. The believers of Acts 2 devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

Let us be learning people devoted to the apostolic teaching. Whether in the public worship service, in the catechism room, in congregational Bible studies, in family or private worship, let us devote ourselves to this teaching. Then the confession we make about the church in the Nicene Creed will not be empty.

C

“Fellow Workers” and “Beginners”⁴



C. Trimp is Professor of Diaconiology, emeritus at the Theological University in Kampen. This article originally appeared in *De Reformatie*, 20 November 1993 and has been translated by Dr. H. Boersma.

K. Schilder and Lord’s Day 44

In connection with Schilder’s characteristic emphases in his struggle for the unity of the church (namely, commandment, obedience, responsibility, man as fellow worker of God), the question has recently been raised whether we should not take the contents of HC Lord’s Day 44 more seriously in our thinking about the difficult ecclesiastical problems. There we confess that even “the holiest” have only a “small beginning” of the new obedience (answer 114).¹ In other words, should we not consider the arduous search for church unity in light of the entire human struggle to live before God’s eyes in new obedience?

Undoubtedly, this question is of importance to us all. In our view, Schilder’s instruction contains important starting points also for this matter. He placed the ecclesiastical struggle in the framework of the sanctification of life, and he himself spoke in this connection about the “small beginning.” Moreover, from his strong emphasis on the unequivocal command of God stemmed his realization of the humbling truth that God asks in his law what man cannot do. In this way, God teaches man to call for grace. Because the church is an article of faith, also the “stumbling block” and the “foolishness” of this doctrine will not be removed.²

“Starting point” is the word we just used. We also mean with this that Schilder did not present us with an ex-

tensive elaboration. It seems to me that it has been correctly pointed out that there is a calling here for our generation. To stimulate further thinking about this, I would like to ask attention for the following four points.

1. Praising the Law

Lord’s Day 44 gives us a backward glance at God’s law, the ten words of the covenant. Our confession (particularly answers 114 and 115) stands in the framework of the confrontation of our life with the high, holy will of God. It is not just a matter of sadly ascertaining that “man” cannot do what God requires from him (LD 4, Q. 9), but also that even “those who have turned to God” still only come up with fragmentary work. In this way, the Reformed confession urges us to a deep humiliation which is fed by an awareness of the high normative standards.

Schilder has protested the ease with which people were at peace with the division between the churches. He did so in the name of God’s law. His respect for God made him wholeheartedly reject the “escape route” theory of the pluriuniformity of the church and (in connection with it) the manner in which the confession was not taken seriously. That is also what gave him the drive to oppose the “every-day” kind of talk with which people managed to minimize God’s commandment, only to continue ecclesiastical life in reasonable quietude. (“It will never be anything anyway with that church unity; it’s better to live beside each other as good neighbors than together in one house with dispute and discord.”)³

This is how Schilder asked for repentance and purification of the awareness of our normativity. Unity in the knowledge of our misery would mean great gain also in ecclesiastical rela-

tions. Such unity is only found in an honest confrontation with God’s commandment, – even if, for the rest, we would still think differently about the concrete application of that commandment (I.115).

Actually, Lord’s Day 44 wants to ask our attention for the apostolic instruction of Romans 7. Precisely there do we learn that our deep complaint about our own human inability is originated and borne by praise of the law and the commandment (Rom 7:7, 12, 14). Yes, we must delight in the law of God “in our inmost selves” (7:22). Why should that not hold for the command for church unity? Does that perhaps not belong to the blessing of the new obedience which must be applied to us?⁴ After all, it is exactly a mark of those who repent to God that they stop selecting among God’s commandments (answer 114).

We sometimes talk about our weak limbs and our limping on the path of new obedience, and we breathe our appropriate sighs (“we are all after all human” etc.). But Schilder addressed us all – Reformed, Christian Reformed (“Christelijk Gereformeerd”), and Dutch Reformed – about the way on which God has placed us: the small road which leads to life. May it, also in this regard, be granted to us all that we be saved from our selfish interests, and receive an eye for the road which God’s good commandment opens up for us. It is better to limp along this path than to dash with all speed outside it (Calvin, *Inst. I.vi.3*).

That is the reason why, above all else, Schilder wanted us to open our eyes for the path, and thus to come to his complaint about our faltering progress. In doing so, he certainly did not look just to one side. At the commemoration in 1934 he said to the

Dutch Reformed "confessionelen": the act of obedience for ecclesiastically Reformed people is "to be open, every day, for every well-founded attempt for reunion with those believers of other church formations who repent to obey in instituting; and continuously correcting one's own church life."⁵

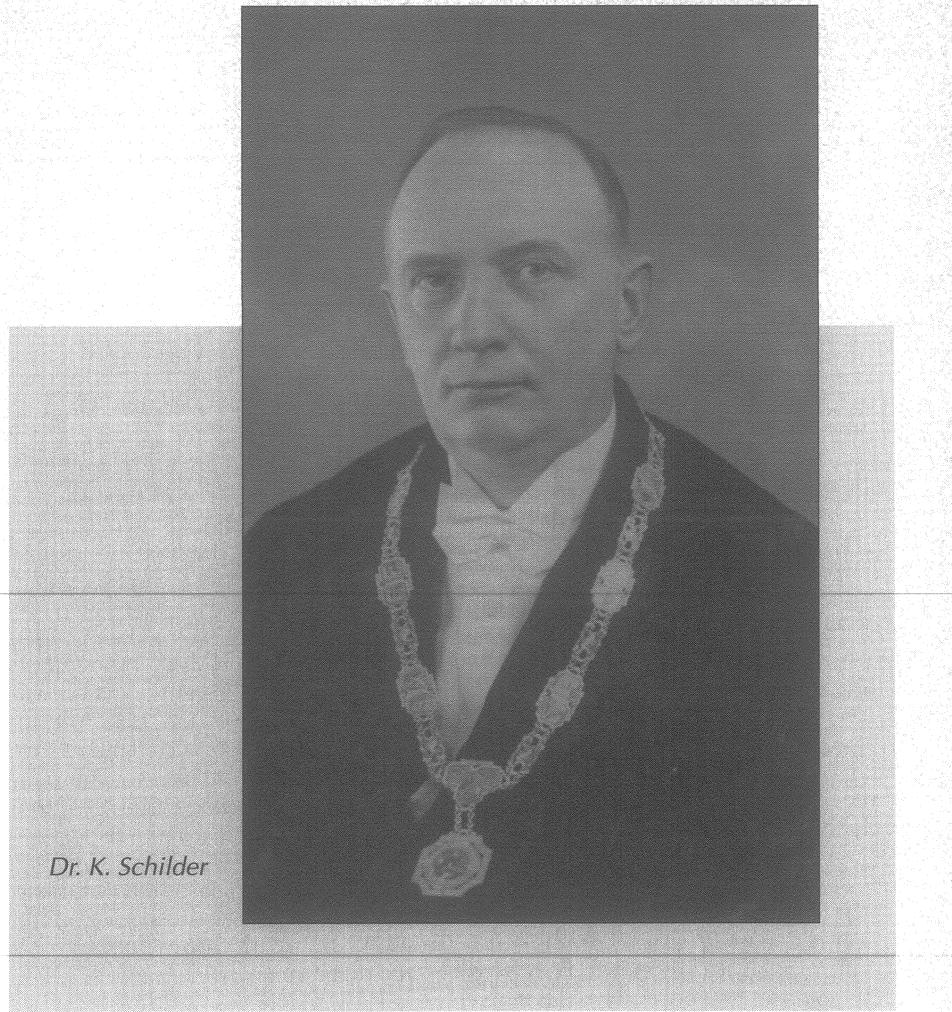
2. Growing in Knowledge of Misery, Redemption, and Thankfulness

It is clear that by taking Lord's Day 44 as the starting point in our thoughts about the ecclesiastical situation our eyes will also be opened for our own shortcomings in God's service. Answer 115 follows answer 114: "more and more become aware of our sinful nature and therefore seek more eagerly the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ." This means that all striving for unity must be marked by modesty. Someone who uses big words about God's commandment will have to speak to his neighbor with love, patience, and humility.

The apostle admonishes us that we must be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But he adds that we must do that "with patience, forbearing one another in love" (Eph 4:2-3). Here a person receives the necessary space needed for the communal confession of guilt of which K. Schilder, in the footsteps of A. Kuyper, gave us an example in the moving conclusion to his *Ons aller moeder* (Mother of Us All) (94-96; II.233f.). The commandment urges us to prayer. That's what answer 115 says (and Canons of Dort III/IV.5 and 6). Precisely under the law, the Spirit wants to ignite the passion in us to pray to God for his grace: "Please, let us more and more turn into that which Thou intendest with our creation and wanted to restore by our repentance: to be the image of God in new obedience."

People who work and pray in such a way may live their earthly lives in the expectation that after this life they will obtain their goal, namely, perfection. This is a marvelous perspective which, in the midst of the trials concerning our personal and communal failure and in the depth of our experience, may refresh us in all of our existence! Is this ever far removed from any kind of ecclesiastical self-mindedness and triumphalism!¹⁶

It is precisely Lord's Day 44 which wants to free us from all passivity and fatalism and wants to encourage us to



Dr. K. Schilder

have Christian steadfastness and perseverance. One of the essential notions of Schilder's theology (in particular with regard to culture and church) is the characterization of man as "fellow worker of God."¹⁷ Man, who may receive this appellation, receives with the lustre of Christ's work of redemption – which gives us a renewed understanding of God's intention with his creation. That idea also formed the strong drive behind Schilder's struggle to make the people of his own time (his "generation," cf. Acts 13:36) understand its ecclesiastical responsibility. When we compare Schilder's touching confrontation with God's law, as he placed it before his contemporaries, with HC Lord's Day 44, then we can only be amazed. Apparently, our God has the ability to choose his "fellow workers" from people who are only "students in the new obedience" and who will at the most make it as far as "beginners" (answer 114).

It is precisely by means of the sharp preaching of the law that the Holy Spir-

it will make us progress and will give us the spiritual growth which characterizes the relation with God. That is how we will grow in the knowledge of our misery, our redemption, and our thankfulness. Three times in a row, answer 115 uses the words "more and more" (cf. also answer 123). *That* is the invincible victory of the Holy Spirit in our lives. There is no reason why these weighty words should not hold for our ecclesiastical living together which may continuously dwell under the preaching of God's good commandments. Here it concerns the same victory of which the HC speaks so triumphantly in answer 54, in those very personal words: "And I believe that I am and *forever shall remain* a living member of it. This confession has been called a "high point of the Reformation."¹⁸ It is the confession of us all regarding the holy, catholic, Christian church, and it lifts us high above all dejection, passivity, and triumphalism.

3. "Sinner and Righteous, – At the Same Time"

In our recent discussion of BC art. 27 we saw that in the "definition" of the church the preaching of Christ's righteousness ("righteousness by faith alone") characterizes the Christian church. There appeared to be a strong connection between BC articles 22 and 23 and article 27. For the latter speaks of "true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ."

It is *this* preaching which opens our eyes for the "sinner (in ourselves) and righteous (in Christ)," as Rom 7:24-8:4 speaks about it. That is why the church cannot miss the wisdom of HC Lord's Day 44 in its thinking and speaking about its own nature. Redeemed from all triumphalism and set free with an eye to the spiritual understanding of God's ways with his people in this country, we will be able to say more to our fellow believers than just, "Let us with one accord go to the temple of the Lord." For that festive psalm line only holds true if we have first come to know Christ as our righteousness and holiness (1 Cor 1:30). Only then are we immune from church political calculation or self-congratulatory satisfaction.

Our thankfulness for God's church historical way with us will not be able to obfuscate our insight into our own defective functioning. This will only happen if we did not meet *God* in our own history, if we have only seen *people*: ourselves and our ancestors. Why does everybody have to come with us to the temple of the Lord? Because we are operators of a model farm? Or because on our way we met Christ in our own

lives and in the lives of those who shared the road with us? In that case, let us not just say, "Come *with us*," but also "we shall go *with you*, for we have heard that God is with you." In that case, we go together, – not because we get along so well together, but because Christ wants to see us appear before him together at the place of the administration of redemption, and because that is where we ought to praise his mercy over us all. Isn't the righteousness of us all in him?

4. Believing the Forgiveness of Sins

We want to make a final comment. We have heard Schilder speak about the institution of the church, which as such is a provisional institution. Schilder stated this out of his conviction that the church is "becoming" and that the active Christ is able to surprise us every day.

It is of the greatest significance to always reconsider in faith this provisional character of the institution. It is precisely the contents of our confession in Lord's Day 44 which will make us understand even more that, as a community, we are lost as soon as Christ, the Righteous One, would leave us to ourselves or each other. The basis for any speaking about "provisionality" also lies in the inability of each one of us to function as an upstanding member of Christ's church.

Christ's nearness and activity in gathering is led by his energetic "defense" and "preservation" of the congregation by the Holy Spirit (HC answer 54). It characterizes this church that *despite itself* it may be called a "holy" congregation (BC art. 27). For Scripture says: "God is light and in him is no dark-

ness at all. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:5, 7). That's what the Holy Spirit says in the proclamation. And Christ's church has caught and confessed these words: we believe "one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins" (Nicene Creed). That is the only reason we can move on, – together with God and with each other. There is no church without a baptismal font.

¹H.J.D. Smit, *Aspecten*, p. 84; M. te Velde, *De Reformatie*, 68 (1992-93) 746.

²See *De Reformatie*, 7 (1926-27) 388; 8 (1927-28) 132 (the citations are mentioned by G. Harinck, *Op. cit.*, pp. 146, 149). See further I, 267 (1933), 354 (1934); II, 86f. (1934); III, 249-51 (1948). See also the "attempting" in Schilder's last article about this matter (III, 492; Feb 23, 1952).

³This is the context in which we must understand Schilder's words: "God's commandment, and that's it." See I, 356 (1934). Regarding this point, therefore, we take some distance from Smit's interpretation (*Aspecten*, pp. 74, 83).

⁴Cf. J. Kamphuis, *De Reformatie*, 65 (1989-90) 452f.

⁵Ons aller moeder (Kampen, 1935), p. 65; II, 208.

⁶See G.C. Berkouwer, *De kerk* (Kampen: Kok, 1972), II, 161-82.

⁷J. Veenhof gives a nice overview in his essay "Medewerkers van God: K. Schilder over plaats en taak van de mens in het handelen van God," in W.F. de Gaay Fortman, et al., eds., "Achter den tijd" (festschrift for G. Puchinger) (Haarlem, 1968), pp. 139-54.

⁸G.C. Berkouwer, at the end of his essay on "Simul peccator et justus," *Gereformeerde Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 47 (1947) 33. C

*Blest are the people who acclaim Thee as their King,
Who know the festal shout and of Thy mercies sing.
They see Thy holy face and walk in light before Thee,
Exulting all the day in Thy great Name and glory.
Thy wondrous grace they laud, Thy righteousness recalling;
They go their way with Joy, Thy steadfast love extolling.*

Psalm
89:7
Book of
Praise

The Future of the Independent Churches



The title above this report reflects the content of a speech delivered by Dr. C. Venema on Oct. 28th in Calgary, AB. Dr. Venema, professor of doctrinal studies at Mid-American Reformed Seminary, was the speaker at a conference organized by the council of Bethel Ind. Christian Reformed Church in Calgary in co-operation with the council of Trinity Reformed Church at Lethbridge, AB. Approximately 150 people were in attendance, including a sprinkling of Can. Reformed folks from across Alberta.

It was not Dr. Venema's desire on this evening to be prophetic. Rather than attempting prediction of the future of Reformed churches, he addressed the present situation of the Independent churches and how they must be faithful in their calling.

Although his remarks were largely addressed to the Independent churches, they have interest also for the Can. Reformed readers of *Clarion*. Therefore, I am passing on some of the highlights of this talk.

Dr. Venema warned the Independent churches not to be reactive in their development as churches. The danger exists that Independent churches allow the issues in the Christian Reformed Church to dominate their own agenda. Those who have left the CRC need not constantly justify their departure with reference to particular issues, but should get on with a positive church life in faithfulness to the Confession. For example, the women-in-office issue must not become a defining preoccupation of the Independents. In this respect Dr. Venema quoted some remarks of Dr. Robert Godfrey who stated that seceding churches always have to be aware of the peril of eccentricity. Following

the struggles of secession, it can easily happen that seceding churches so much emphasize one or more points of doctrine or practice that Christian life loses its balance.

The Independent churches were also encouraged to test the practices and traditions which they have taken over from the Christian Reformed Church. As an example, Dr. Venema mentioned the normal practice of having a fixed number of elders and deacons in a local church. The danger of a fixed number is the ordination of men who are perhaps not qualified for office. Dr. Venema also exhorted the Independent church to be faithful in church discipline. According to him, the neglect of church discipline is one of the chief causes of decline in the CRC.

While he did promote testing of practices and traditions, Dr. Venema also reminded his listeners that there was no need to start from scratch in building Reformed church life. There is a Reformed inheritance on which the newly seceded churches must not lose their grip. Dr. Venema had the impression the Independent churches were in some cases "flying by the seat of their pants" when it came to matters of Church Order. He urged them to become self-conscious of the Church Order which was theirs when they were in the CRC.

Another challenge facing the Independent churches is the need to live up to their own confession about the church and about the relationship of a local church to sister churches. While stressing the completeness and priority of the local church in its concrete, visible life, fellowship and ministry, Dr. Venema did point to the duty of such local churches to seek out fellowship with other faithful churches.

In fact, the speaker went on to suggest that the primary issue before the Independents is their relationship with other true churches on the basis of a common confession. How will this relationship be structured? Some Independents appear to be saying that they should never enter into a federation in which authority is ceded to a broader assembly. Others want a federative life not much different than that presently found, for example, among the Canadian Reformed churches. Dr. Venema wondered whether meaningful fellowship between churches is even possible if there is no submission to broader assemblies. He asked how it would be possible to have meaningful confessional unity if there is no obligation upon churches to accept the decisions of broader assemblies. In what other manner could the churches be doctrinally accountable to each other?

Given that the Reformed Confession directs the churches to seek unity and fellowship with other faithful churches, the next point concerned the extent of this fellowship. Some of the Independents seek a realignment of faithful churches of both Reformed and Presbyterian origin in a United Ref/Pres. federation. Other Independents feel it is best to start close to home by seeking contact with churches of similar reformed background. Dr. Venema did not state his preference in this matter.

In response to a question, Dr. Venema stated his conviction that there are no insuperable obstacles to federative unity between Independent Reformed churches and Canadian Reformed churches. He encouraged Independent churches to take up contact with local Canadian Reformed churches. These two groups of churches share the Three Forms of Unity to which their officer-bearers make a vow of subscription. Furthermore, the

Canadian Reformed churches have a Church Order which until recently was the common property of those now organized as Independents.

Dr. Venema did state, however, that a federation consisting of formerly Independent Reformed churches, Canadian Reformed churches and possible others as well, would be possible only with a somewhat less prescriptive Church Order than is presently used among the Canadian Reformed. It would be best if a Church Order prescribed nothing beyond expressed Biblical requirements. Some examples of Articles of the Church Order that should perhaps be reconsidered include those pertaining to a common Psalter or Hymnal, a common Bible translation, days of commemoration (Good Friday, Easter, etc.) and terms of office. According to the speaker, these are examples of matters perhaps best left in the control of local councils.

As far as obstacles on the Canadian Reformed side are concerned, Dr. Venema stated the concern of some Inde-

pendents that they have no credibility with the Canadian Reformed unless united with them in federation. In the minds of some Independents, the Canadian Reformed have created a fourth mark of a true church: federation.

While Dr. Venema clearly hoped for eventual church unity among all those who are confessionally Reformed, he did also address the possible failure of such a venture. Even if no federative unity emerges, not all is lost. Even without federation, local churches can do their ecumenical work. Even if federative unity is impossible, Dr. Venema felt it appropriate for such local churches to acknowledge each other and to live as closely together as possible, accepting each other's membership and ministry (let's call this plan B).

As a Canadian Reformed observer, one could be thankful for the presentation of Dr. Venema. There was great sensitivity to Reformed history and a willingness to listen to the obligations of the Reformed Confession about church unity. The matter of a somewhat pared

down Church Order certainly deserves thought by all Canadian Reformed councils presently in dialogue with Independent churches. Unity of faith need not imply uniformity of practice and worship.

Our only regret is that Dr. Venema already seriously considered the failure of Church Unity and showed a readiness to live with far less than the ideal. From the perspective of this scribe, plan B is unnecessary, premature, and ecclesiastically awkward. Canadian Reformed churches would find it impossible to have a variety of local relationships, including pulpit exchanges, joint worship services and inter-communion without the larger involvement of their federation and without a commitment on the part of the other churches to work for real unity. If that commitment to work for real unity is lacking, whether on the part of the Canadian Reformed or the Independent Reformed, the question must eventually arise: is there in fact unity of doctrine? C

WATFORD'S SUMMER FUN DAY

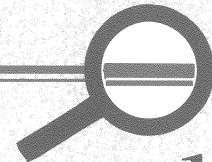


"You see how I do it?"

A group of children enjoying a watery, bottlefilling game.



By C. Van Dam



Reformed Work in the Ukraine and Russia



The Reformed Church (Liberated) in Hattem, the Netherlands and the North American organization, "Christ for Russia," continue their (sometimes joint) efforts for the Reformed faith in the Ukraine and Russia.

The Ukraine

Rev. M. Nap has completed seven orientation trips through the Ukraine in an effort to determine where he could best establish himself and be of service for the Reformed faith in that country. Talks have also been held with government representatives and churches. A decision on where Nap will begin his work appears to be expected soon.

In the Hungarian speaking part of the Ukraine, the southwest, called the Carpatho-Ukraine, there is a Reformed federation of churches with 92 congregations and 24 ministers. They are in the process of establishing a training centre for ministers and missionaries. Mr. Ben van der Lught (also sent out by Hattem) is involved as advisor for setting up the educational program and also in teaching.

This new seminary is in Tivardarfalva in the region of Beregovo, close to the Hungarian-Ukraine border. After some delays due to lack of adequate staffing and the slow pace of transferring property that had once been communist, this school could be opened on October 10. They have 100 students! Because of difficulties in getting Hungarian teachers, Drs. J.J.A. Colijn who had previously taught for two years at Debrecen will be helping out. He also teaches church history in a Reformed college in nearby Romania.

In eastern Ukraine, the organization "Christ for Russia" is supporting the establishment of a seminary in the Donets



A meeting in Debrecen on May 2, 1993 where much planning took place. Seated in front, left to right, Bishop Gulacsy Lajos; Rev. Oraczi Pal, leader of 5 churches; and the contractor for building the seminary and dormitory in Tivardarfalva; standing, left to right, Nacy Bela; Mr. Kuipers, president of the Ukrainian Committee in Hattem; Drs. J. Colijn; Rev. M. Nap; an unknown person; Rev. N. Vogelzang, director of "Christ for Russia" who is now retiring; Rev. Oosterhuis; and the furthest right is Mr. P. Van Dijk, secretary of the Ukrainian Committee in Hattem.

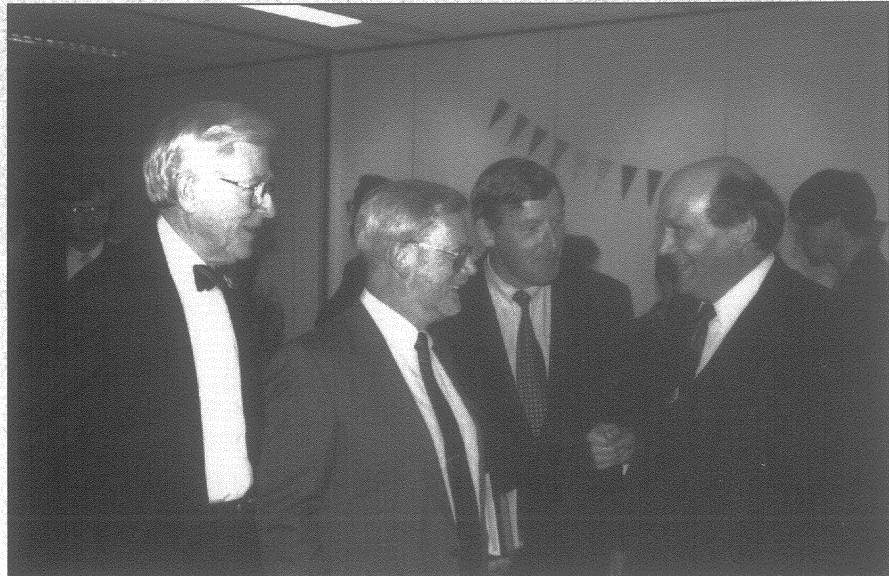
Basin. For ten years, miners in the area had been listening to the Back to God Hour and 150 churches sent an urgent request to "Christ for Russia" requesting their aid for establishing a training school for ministers. There is a great need with many vacant churches. "Christ for Russia" has sent Rev. W. Ribbens of Virginia to help. The response has been beyond expectation. His courses attracted 100-200 people.

He has also spoken to scientists at the urging of the mayor.

Besides the above activities, the work of mercy also has the attention of the Dutch churches and "Christ for Russia." The former are in the process of planning and organizing diaconal help and the latter has stimulated a prominent Christian medical society (The Luke Society) to send Dr. P. Boelens to the Ukraine to establish a medical clinic near the seminary in the Beregovo area.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Galatians
4:4,5



At the installation of Rev. M. Nap as missionary to the Ukraine. On the far left, Rev. N. Vogelzang, director of "Christ for Russia," and on the far right, Rev. M. Nap who is speaking to Mr. Kuipers, president of the Ukrainian Committee in Hattem.

Russia

Not just the Ukraine, but also Russia has the attention of our Dutch brothers and sisters and, of course, it has the attention of "Christ for Russia" as well. The church at Wezep produced a compact disc of congregational singing so that proceeds from selling it can be used to support a Reformed house congregation in Moscow which Rev. Nap had visited. This congregation which has been meeting up to now in the home of their minister, Rev. Lotsmanov, needs a new meeting place. They are not able to sing because of the close proximity of neighbours. Wezep has, therefore, pledged to help them find a new place to worship where they can sing! It seems appropriate that the selling of CDs of singing is used to raise money to achieve this goal.

"Christ for Russia" is sending three men to Russia to teach and to fact find, among whom is Dr. D. Clair Davis of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. The distribution of good literature is also a high priority of "Christ for Russia." Two hundred thousand copies of a 40-page, 20-lesson, English-Russian Catechism Diglot are being distributed. Since there is a hunger to learn English, it is the hope that this booklet will help satisfy both a spiritual need, as well as, the desire to learn English. To help the large Muslim population in Russia, Rev. B. Madany's *The Bible and Islam* has been translated and is being readied for print. Louis Berkhof's *Summary of Christian Doctrine* is likewise ready for being printed in Russian and distributed.



Dr. D. Claire Davis

Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion is also being prepared for publication in Russian by Christian Reformed World Literature Missions. One of Russia's most prestigious state universities has offered its publishing services for the project.

The fields are ripe for harvest! May the Lord bless the efforts for the true gospel in the former Soviet Union!

Compiled from reports in Nederlands Dagblad, The Banner, and information provided by "Christ for Russia." C

OPC and Canadian Reformed – What Now?

The present dilemma



After almost thirty years of contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the relationship between the OPC and the Canadian Reformed churches seems to be at an impasse. This is most unfortunate, especially considering the fact that Synod Lincoln (1992) decided that there were only three matters that needed resolution between the two churches (issues of confessional membership, supervision of the Lord's Table, and the relationship with the Christian Reformed Church). This same Synod also expressed "the fervent wish that these matters may be resolved so that the way to ecclesiastical fellowship, in accordance with the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, may be realized" (Acts, Art. 72.V).

However, Synod Lincoln also did something which has surprised and troubled the OPC. Although it did not establish a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC, it did do so with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, Kosin, and offered the same relationship to the Free Church of Scotland (which church has since accepted this offer) (Acts, Art. 111.IV; 129.IV). The perplexity in OPC circles is due to the fact that in their view these churches have essentially the same positions as the OPC on the supervision of the Lord's Table and confessional membership. These sentiments were conveyed by the Committee on Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Relations of the OPC to their General Assemblies in 1993 and 1994. In the view of the Committee of the OPC there are no divergencies remaining that would bar full ecclesiastical fellowship.

How should one respond to all this? It is impossible and unnecessary to say

everything in an article in *Clarion*, but let us note the following.

The key issue

One of the unfortunate aspects of our almost thirty-year contract with the OPC is that in the course of these rather drawn out discussions, one can easily lose perspective so that secondary matters become the most important and the most important are all but forgotten. In our contact with the OPC the most important matter is that after twelve years of study, the Synod of Coaldale (1977) could decide "with thankfulness to recognize the OPC as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as confessed in Article 29 of the Belgic Confessions" (Acts, Art. 91). This decision leaves no room for ambiguity or for downplaying the decision as if something less than what was said was meant. After all, Art. 29 is quite clear.

This decision means that we have officially acknowledged that the OPC practices the pure preaching of the gospel. It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It exercises church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head. This is how Art. 29 describes the marks of the true church.

Unfortunately, Synod Coaldale could go no further than "to offer to the OPC a temporary relationship called 'ecclesiastical contact'." This "contact" was to be used "for the purpose of reaching full correspondence" (Acts, Art. 91). We are now sixteen years later and the "temporary relationship" has become less and less temporary with each passing year. All types of issues were addressed and resolved. Only three issues are now left for resolution

so that the way for ecclesiastical fellowship may be realized. They are the matters of confessional membership, of supervision of the Lord's Table and of the relationship with the CRC. Let us consider them one by one.

Confessional membership

The issue of confessional membership simply stated is that the Canadian Reformed churches explicitly ask those who publicly profess their faith whether they "wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions, and taught here in this Christian Church" (*Book of Praise*, p. 593). The OPC does not specifically mention the confessions, but does speak of the "doctrine of salvation." The question asked is whether "you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation" (*Directory of Worship of the OPC*, V.5).

The OPC brothers informed our committee that the difference on this matter was in formulation, not in substance (Acts 1992, p. 169). It is, however, a fact that those coming from outside to join the OPC do not always have a full grasp of all the doctrines taught in the confessions and, therefore, those who may still have questions, but are willing to be instructed, are admitted into the church.

But, is the OPC position really so different from that of the Canadian Reformed churches? Not that long ago, the question we addressed to those who wished to profess their faith did not include a specific reference to the confessions, but only to "the articles of the Christian faith" which refer to the articles of the Apostles Creed (Cf. Acts 1986, Art. 144 and Acts 1989, Art.

161). Thus there was an implicit reference to the confessions (through the word "doctrine"), just as in the present OPC formulation. Also, is the practice in the Canadian Reformed churches really principally different from that in the OPC? Consider the following written by Rev. G. I. Williamson in *Ordained Servant* (Jan. 1994), an official publication of the OPC. Williamson wrote this article after having heard Prof. J. Kamphuis' speech "Remarks on Church and Toleration" which he had delivered at the 1993 ICRC. This speech was printed in this issue of *Ordained Servant*. Rev. Williamson wrote:

Among the issues raised in the discussions which have taken place between representatives of the Canadian Reformed churches and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is that of the terms for communicant church membership. On the one hand it is said that the OPC 'only' requires people to make a credible profession of faith. It does not, in other words, require that every communicant member directly affirm adherence to the Westminster Standards. The Canadian Reformed churches, on the other hand, include within their first membership vow a direct reference to the Reformed Confessions. . . . Because of my involvement in some of these ecumenical discussions I was very much impressed, when I heard the lecture by Professor Kamphuis with its relevance to this matter. It is my conviction, after hearing what he had to say, that there is very little difference between us. Anyone who answers the four membership vows of the OPC in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible. And the doctrine of the Bible is the doctrine summarized in our confessions. It has never been my understanding, therefore, that we can receive people into membership in the OPC who are in fundamental and conscious opposition to the doctrine of our Confession.

Rev. Williamson then goes on to note how the OPC admits those into the church who may not be able to fully comprehend all the doctrines of salvation and are not able to assent with sufficient understanding to the Westminster Standards. Yet it would be wrong to deny such individuals membership in the church.



In discussing this matter with some of the pastors and elders of the Canadian Reformed churches I get the distinct impression that there is hardly any difference at all *when it comes to actual practice*. They too are able to find a way of allowing even mentally handicapped people to become communicant members of their churches . . . they will also labor – sometimes for many years – with a brother or a sister (who is already a communicant member) who just can't see that infant baptism is required in the Bible. They tolerate, in other words – at least for a time – a degree of deviation from strict adherence to the confessions on the part of communicant church members in very much the same pastoral way that we do. And it is right here that I found Professor Kamphuis' paper so helpful, because he too draws the line of distinction that I believe we both need to clarify and adhere to. More is required of the ministers, elders and deacons of the church than is required of the other members. And one of the primary differences is

found in the sphere of subscription. What is tolerable with respect to the one is not with respect to the other. It is my hope that Professor Kamphuis' paper will help in this important discussion.¹

When the above is considered and reflected on, it seems difficult to understand that this issue is one which should keep two true churches from exercising a normal relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. Both churches want to be Reformed and guard the Reformed character of the church by demanding adherence to the doctrine of salvation, which in this context is clearly the Reformed doctrine as expressed in the respective standards. Surely acknowledging this basic fact will also answer the wishes of Synod 1992 (Acts 1992, Art. 72 IV). If there are aspects that are deemed to require further dialogue, such discussion can take place within the framework of an existing ecclesiastical fellowship.

Supervision of the Lord's Table

The Canadian Reformed churches have expressed concern whether the purity of the Lord's table is sufficiently

safeguarded in the OPC. Both the OPC and the Canadian Reformed churches agree that the table of the Lord needs to be supervised and kept holy. The difference between the two churches is how this is best done when it comes to receiving visitors from outside one's congregation. Although there is a certain measure of freedom in the Canadian Reformed churches to admit guests from a non-sister church, these are exceptional cases.² Normally only those from sister churches are admitted and that is normally done on the basis of a good attestation from such a person's home church (Art. 61 of the Church Order). In the OPC, no set procedure of admitting guests from outside one's congregation is in place. Guests are invited to participate after they have heard the warning from the pulpit. A text of such a warning is found in the *Directory for the Public Worship*. "It is my solemn duty to warn the uninstructed, the profane, the scandalous, and those who secretly and impenitently live in any sin, not to approach the holy table lest they partake unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, and so eat and drink condemnation to themselves." The OPC admit that their way of fencing the table is not the only way, but they argue that it is defensible.

The question arises whether the precise manner of fencing the table of the Lord has to be agreed upon before a normal relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship can be put in place between two faithful churches of the Lord. The answer would appear to be no. After all both churches agree that the table should be fenced and be kept holy and both agree that the celebration of the Lord's Supper must take place under the oversight of the consistory or session.³ They only differ as to how this can best be done.

Now one could go into great lengths and explain why precisely the OPC does it their way and why our way is better. Indeed we may even have good reason to disagree with the way the OPC implements their conviction that the table of the Lord should be fenced. These discussions can be useful for both parties and make us aware of potential shortcomings in the method in which either church protects the table of the Lord. But is it necessary to have agreement in detail on this point before having a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship? I do not see that this is necessary. By our actions at the last Synod, the Canadian Reformed churches apparently also do

not really think that it is necessary. After all the last synod established a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, Kosin. Now I do not know precisely how the Lord's table is fenced in that church, but it would surprise me greatly if it were materially different from what is done in the OPC. After all, Presbyterian churches in Korea have their roots in American Presbyterianism.

The OPC relationship with the CRC

The present relationship of the OPC to the CRC should not be a hindrance towards normalizing the relationship between the OPC and the Canadian Reformed churches. The OPC is clearly showing that they use their relationship with the CRC to warn and show the CRC the Biblical way overagainst the

liberal tendencies in the CRC. We should not simply regard third party relationships in a static way but see how they function. The OPC relationship with the CRC functions in a way that we can be happy with. They seek the good of the CRC and are quite concerned about negative trends and are on guard against them. Most recently, the 1994 General Assembly decided to confront the CRC with their concerns about what the OPC perceives to be the CRC's "sinful conduct."⁴ Given the integrity which the OPC has shown in confronting the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (later called the Reformed Ecumenical Council) with their deviations and their leaving this organization in 1988 and joining the ICRC in 1993, there is no reason to doubt the OPC's genuine concern with the CRC as well and their intention to do something about it.

What now?

We as Canadian Reformed churches must recognize more forthrightly than we have that the outstanding issues that exist between the OPC and us are not "make or break" concerns. In other words, the existence of these issues does not change the identity of the OPC from being a true church of Christ into a false church. Now we implicitly have said this by maintaining our decision that the OPC is a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, however, time to act on the obvious consequences of this decision and normalize relations between the two churches by having ecclesiastical fellowship with them.

In coming to such a decision, we should also recognize something else. The fact that the contact with the OPC

has a life of its own (with its own committee and agenda) means that developments in our relationship with other Presbyterian churches are not reflected in our relationship with the OPC. It is time for that to change and to put our house in order in this respect. To be concrete, this means that the issues of the OPC, the Free Church of Scotland, and the Presbyterian Church of Korea, Kosin, should all be handled by one and the same committee and all should be treated alike.

I am not suggesting that we rethink our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland the Presbyterian Church of Korea, Kosin. There is no reason for that. Indeed, we can be happy to have a closer relationship with these churches. It is a great privilege and can work for mutual blessing to be more closely associated with churches which have suffered for the cause of Christ in their history and have persevered in being faithful to their Lord and our Lord. The OPC has similarly shown its commitment to the faith delivered to the saints in its relatively short but moving history. It would be good if we could have a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship also with the OPC.

When that should happen, I do not expect that all that much would change in the life of our individual churches. We are clearly not at that stage when we can talk about the OPC and the Canadian Reformed churches becoming one church. Basically the OPC is a foreign (American) church for our federation and more importantly, its Presbyterian background is rather different from our Reformed one. This observation should, however, never be an excuse to abandon the pursuit of unity as a long term goal. But surely we can best grow towards each other when we are in a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with each other and fully accept each other for what we have acknowledged each other to be, churches of the same Lord and Saviour.

C

²Kamphuis' paper has also been published in *Clarion* 43:4 (1994), as well as in the *Proceedings of the ICRC 1993*.

³See, e.g. G. Ph. Van Popta, "Admission of Guests to the Lord's Table," *Clarion* (October 8, 1993) 423-425.

⁴See for the OPC, the general provisions for the celebration of the Sacraments in *The Directory for the Public Worship*, IV, 1, 3.

⁵See. J.W. Mahaffy, "The 1994 General Assembly," *New Horizons* (August/September 1994), 7.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta



ou shall not kill!" said God. Susan Smith, a mother living in Union, South Carolina, killed her two baby boys.

We were shocked when we heard her story that an armed gunman had forced her out of her car and had abducted her two sons. We listened and watched with anguish as the desperate mother cried on the news and asked her two boys to "be strong" and told them that "they are the most loved little children on this earth." But even those who doubted the stranger-abduction story from the first were struck dumb by the horrifying truth. How could a mother drive her car into a lake with her two little boys strapped into their car seats? Because murder is a capital crime in South Carolina, Susan Smith may pay for her crime with her own life.

"You shall not kill!" said God. Robert Latimer, a father living in Wilkie, Saskatchewan, killed his little daughter. Tracy, twelve years old, suffered from Cerebral Palsy. She could not walk, talk, or feed herself. She weighed only 38 pounds and wore diapers. Tracy suffered much pain. In October of 1993, her father, Robert Latimer, put Tracy in the cab of his truck and pumped in exhaust fumes with a hose. Tracy died of carbon monoxide poisoning. He claimed to have been motivated by pity. He could no longer stand to see his daughter suffer pain. Recently, a jury of his peers found Robert Latimer guilty of second-degree murder. Justice Ross Wimmer sentenced Latimer to life in prison without eligibility for parole for 10 years. After all, you are not allowed to take the life of another person intentionally.

We ask: How could a mother drown her baby boys? How could a father kill his little daughter? Parents killing children? It's unbelievable.

The media has labeled Susan Smith what psychiatrists call a sociopath, a

person who looks and sound perfectly normal but who is missing a key component of the human character: a conscience. Her lack of conscience was there for all to see. She was able to lie convincingly and to imitate the normal emotions of other people. She blamed the "abduction" on a black man. Meanwhile, she had murdered her children. It was an impressive performance. "Has she no conscience?" we ask.

Anger

You've read the papers. You've seen and heard the news reports. You talked about it in your schools. You expressed your rage that a mother could kill her sons and that a father could kill his daughter. You declared Susan Smith's actions completely hateful. Although you may have felt a brief twinge of compassion for Robert Latimer, you said: "It's not right! God said: 'You shall not kill!' That's the bottom line."

Your anger is understandable, even appropriate. Both Smith and Latimer are guilty of terrible crimes, their differing circumstances notwithstanding. But let's rein in our rage for a moment. Or, let's extend it to millions of others. For Susan Smith and Robert Latimer are not the only parents to have killed their children lately. Millions, on both sides of the Forty-Ninth parallel, have killed their children lately. The media scream at Susan Smith and declare her a sociopath. If Smith is a sociopath, then there are millions of sociopaths in Canada and the United States of America. Millions of North Americans look and sound perfectly normal but are missing a key component of the human character: a conscience. The killing of defenseless babies is a daily occurrence on both sides of the world's longest undefended border. Mother's wombs are the killing fields. And the murder of these children is more cruel than the killing of Tracy Latimer and the Smith babies.

Where is the rage? Where is the indignation? The media is silent. The courts approve. Any person with an IQ higher than that of a hammer knows that the "cellular tissue" growing inside the womb of a woman is a baby. No woman has yet given birth to a grapefruit or a pet rock. Women only give birth to human babies.

Hypocrisy

Have we been taken in by the hypocrisy? Has the media, the world, desensitized us so badly that we are shocked by Susan Smith but no longer flinch when we hear that 100,000 babies were aborted in Canada last year? Let's be cold about it! What are two babies compared to 100,000? We seethe and fume at the Susan Smith story. We think that Tracy's father got off easy with 10 years. Meanwhile, even respectable Christian women visit Everywoman's Health Clinic to have the fruit of their womb murdered by "birth regulators" and "reproductive health providers."

"You shall not kill!" said God. God's commandment to preserve life protects all children, born and unborn. Our God is not arbitrary. His command which protects a person outside the womb protects that same person inside the womb just as well. How strange God would be and how useless His law if His commandments shielded a person only because he had emerged from his mother's womb! In Exodus 21:23, God pronounced the death penalty on any man who caused an unborn child to die. The Jewish abortionist Henry Morgentaler ought to read his Old Testament! But then, a sociopath has no conscience.

We feel anger at Susan Smith and Robert Latimer. But let's save some indignation for the murder which goes on unabated in our cities and towns. Remember your Creator and the God who created life and who protects life with His law.

C

When Parents Kill Children

1994 In Review



It is hard to believe that we have come to the end of a whole year and that another review is in order. Still, it is true. The clock and the calendar do not lie. Often we may wish that they would. When we are young we cannot wait for time to pass quickly because we want to get on with life. We want to turn sixteen and apply for our driver's license, or we want to be of an age where we can date and marry. Of course, later when we are older our whole perspective shifts. We see the days and weeks flying by and we wish that we could somehow slow down the whole process. We look at the young, who have no idea of the value of time, with a jaundiced eye.

In any case, no matter where we stand on the subject of time, the fact of the matter is that the calendar does not lie. And when you come right down to it that should not really disturb us greatly, for as believers we stand on the conviction that time is something that God

has created and that God controls. He has given us another year and He is about to give us a new year.

Still, it is not my calling to prophecy in this article about the future but to bring together the main events that have occurred in our federation of churches during 1994.

Churches and ministers

Looking at the situation of our churches generally, we see that the overall number of churches did not change but remained at 45. Nevertheless, within that number there have been some changes. The Church at Lower Sackville decided to leave the federation after a very small and narrow vote was taken. Seeing that I am not aware of all of the details concerning this withdrawal, I shall refrain from further comment and leave it to others who are "in the know." In addition, I have been told that the Church of Laurel is now, or is soon to become, a "house congregation" under the auspices of the Church at Blue Bell. Join-

ing the federation are the churches at Aldergrove, B.C. and Denver, Colorado.

Statistically, our new Yearbook will no doubt show a total membership of 14,150, or about a 3% increase. In other words, we continue to increase annually at the rate of a good size and viable congregation.

Moving through the local churches from east to west a number of changes can be noted. The Church of Toronto became vacant after the Rev. R.N. Gleason decided to leave the federation and accept a call to an independent church in California. The Rehoboth Church of Burlington continued its steady growth and was busy trying to sort out what to do with its large membership base. Should its boundaries be adjusted or should a second minister be called? It would appear that a decision will have to be made soon, perhaps in 1995. The Church of Guelph received a new minister in the Rev. A.J. Pol, who came all the way from Indonesia, where he was busy teaching theology on behalf of some of our sister churches in the Netherlands. The Church of Grand Rapids received a new minister in the person of the Rev. B.R. Hofford, formerly of Laurel, Maryland.

Crossing into what is considered to be the west, the Church at Winnipeg has a building that is too small to accommodate the whole congregation with the result that four worship services are being held every Sunday. Perhaps it is a prelude to the institution of a new congregation. In the meantime it is appropriate to wish the Rev. Jonker well as he is called upon to do extra duty. Someone informed me that the Church of Carman does not have an abundance of extra space either.

In the province of Alberta the Church of Taber bought property for a



Church building of the Canadian Reformed Church, Elora, Ontario

future building. In addition the Church of Neerlandia received quite a number of new members with the arrival of the Rev. W.B. Slomp and his family. He may well hold the distinction of serving in the most northern of our churches.

Of all the churches one can argue that the most change came to the Church of Aldergrove. In the first place it was instituted on the second day of 1994 and in the second it received its first pastor near the end of the year in the person of the Rev. Dr. J. Boersma. The Church of Houston also has a new face to look at every Sunday, due to the fact that Candidate J. Louwerve accepted its call and was ordained as its new minister.

As far as vacant churches are concerned, the churches at Abbotsford, Edmonton (Immanuel), Smithers and Toronto all extended calls to various ministers but without success. May the Lord see fit to bless their calling efforts in 1995.

Retired ministers and professors

During this past year many of our retired ministers and professors led busy lives. Professor J. Faber made a trip to Florida in order to thaw out from a rather cold Ontario winter and went to one of my favourite cities, Edinburgh, Scotland, where he spoke at a Calvin Symposium. Prof. K. Deddens made what is becoming an annual visit to B.C. where he visited his children, preached, gave speeches and attended the Western Canada Ministerial Conference in Coaldale. Obviously there is no moss growing under his feet. The same can also be said of the Rev. M. van Beveren, who looks as youthful as ever, and was found willing and able to represent our churches in Australia.

The health of the Revs. D. VanderBoom, M. van Beveren, M. VanderWel, G. VanDooren, W.W.J. VanOene, and J. VanRietschoten remained good as is evidenced by the fact that on Sundays you could find them occupying a vacant pulpit somewhere in the land or busy with one or other church duty. At the same time the Revs. D. DeJong in the Netherlands and J. Mulder in Burlington remained active and were doing well, although they need to pace themselves. The only colleague that I know of who continued to suffer from ill health and is in need of our prayers is the Rev. P. Kingma.

In addition it should also be remembered that Sr. M. Stel, the wife of the late Rev. H.A. Stel, passed on to the Lord. Together with her husband she be-

longed to the pioneer ministerial families and helped him during his service in the churches, both in the Netherlands and in the churches of Houston and Winnipeg. Our condolences go out to her children and grandchildren.

The year 1994 also saw a ministerial celebration in Langley where the Rev. D. VanderBoom was congratulated on his 40 years of service in the ministry.

Missionaries and mission workers

No Year-End Review would be complete without attention being paid to those who work on the mission fields.

problems; however, his condition stabilized in 1994 and he was able to do his work, albeit with some special assistance. Rev. Meijer continued with his translation and developmental work and together with his family was getting ready to return to the Netherlands. Rev. Venema, as a missionary, took up resident in São José and became more and more involved in the work there.

As for Br. and Sr. J. Kuik, they continued with their work of Mission Aid, much of it centering on the new nursery building. They also received a visit in April from the Brs. K. VanderPloeg



In a village near São José da Coroa Grande, Brazil

During 1994 Rev. H. Versteeg continued to work hard on preparing the churches in Irian Jaya for the day of his repatriation. Together with his family he was also able to travel more extensively in Indonesia and see some of the great natural beauty and religious diversity of that vast country.

While the Versteeg family was preparing to leave Indonesia, another family arrived there. Br. and Sr. C. Togeretz, together with their two children, have settled in Java where he will be working as a pilot for Mission Aviation Fellowship. MAF, as it is called, has for many years supplied an essential service for our missionaries in Irian Jaya and for missionaries in many other very inaccessible places in the world.

From Indonesia we travel to Brazil, where most of our missionaries are based. In the north the Revs. R.F. Boersema, P.K. Meijer and E. Venema continued to do their work. For a time in 1993 it appeared as if Rev. Boersema would have no choice but to request early retirement because of his eye

and H. VanderHorst as members of the Mission Aid Board.

Further to the south the Church of Hamilton, along with its supporting churches, was busy with mission work too. Both the Revs. J. Kroeze and R. Sietsma live in the city of Maceió and worked hard on establishing congregations there. In the early part of the year the Kroeze family was on furlough, spending time both in Australia and Canada. Needless to say, this put extra pressure on the Sietsma family, also seeing that they were still in the process of adapting to their new surroundings.

Later on in the year, a Latin American Missionary Conference was organized and present were not only the missionaries of our churches but also those of our Dutch sister churches. In addition, the churches of Hamilton and Surrey, as sending churches were also represented by the Revs. D. Agema, Cl. Stam and C. VanSpronken, as well as Br. L. Stam. Together both delegations had many meetings with their missionaries, as well as considerable joint consultations. No

doubt reports of this visit will soon be circulating in the supporting churches.

Still on the subject of mission work, but then in Canada, we can note that during the last year the work done by the Church of Smithers, among the native population in the northern part of B.C., continued. Br. D. Boersema was appointed as the temporary mission worker, seeing that there is currently no missionary. Given his skills and interests, he has been doing a very commendable job with the result that many of the activities could either be maintained or be re-started.

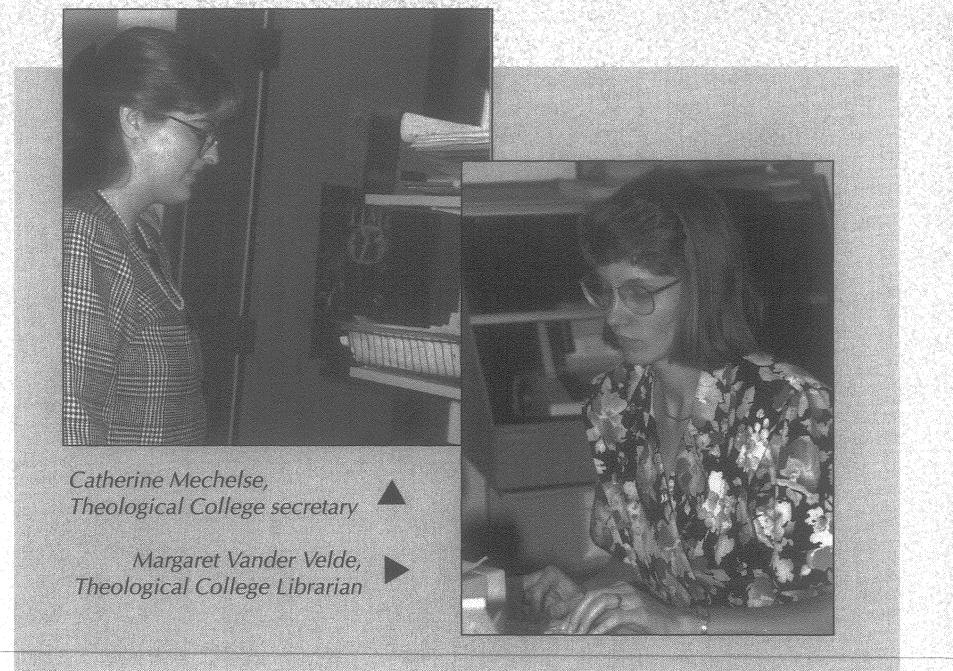
Under this heading it is also appropriate to mention that last summer the Rev. Cl. Stam spent a couple of weeks in Cyprus where he lectured for MERF.. From the reports printed in this magazine, it would appear that he thoroughly enjoyed this experience and was able to contribute to the vital work of training them to spread the Gospel in Islamic countries.

Theological College

Nineteen-ninety-four was a year of on-going activity at our Theological College in Hamilton. In September two students graduated, namely, Mr. John Challies and Mr. John Louwerse. As well, four new students were enrolled: Mr. Yonson Gibeon Dathan from Timor, Indonesia, Mr. Marc Jagt from Burlington, Ontario, Mr. James Smith from Fergus, Ontario, and Mr. Doug VandeBurgt from Langley, B.C. The total enrollment stood at 15 students.

The professors at our College were able to do their work without serious illness or interruption. In addition to their teaching load, they also performed other tasks. Dr. N.H. Gootjes traveled to the churches in B.C. and spoke to the congregations and ministers on a number of different topics. Dr. J. DeJong addressed a Church History Conference in Hamilton. Prof. J. Geertsema went to Manitoba and the Netherlands. In the former place he held several speeches and in the latter he led a workshop at a conference on Reformed theology. Dr. C. Van Dam, who travelled to Alberta in 1993 on behalf of the College, went to the meeting of the Alliance of Reformed churches in Chicago in the fall of 1994 in his capacity as a member of the Committee on Ecclesiastical Unity, appointed by General Synod.

Making sure that the College ran smoothly on a daily basis, Sr. C. Mechelse acted as the secretary and Sr. M. Van



Catherine Mechelse,
Theological College secretary

Margaret Vander Velde,
Theological College Librarian

derVelde as the librarian. Together they did a great job.

Seeing that we are dealing with seminary education, it should also be mentioned that this past year saw the rise of some talk about a future over-supply of students and ministers. Members took note of the fact that there were only four vacancies and more than a dozen students. While such talk is to be expected, some further reflection was, and remains, in order. If one considers the present vacancies in Canada and Australia, missionary vacancies, new churches being instituted, ministers retiring, and new opportunities being considered, one can only come to the conclusion that talk of surplus remains premature.

Ecclesiastical meetings

The last twelve months also saw meetings of various ecclesiastical assemblies. Consistories, church councils, classes, and regional synods met and consumed a considerable amount of time and expense. Toward the end of the year regional synods in both east and west chose delegates for the 1995 general synod that will be held in Abbotsford, B.C.

Looking at the classes that were held in various parts of the country, one could also note an increase in the number of delegates, with more than twenty sitting around each table. At the same time the general synod that is due to meet in the new year will have a maximum of sixteen delegates and it represents a number that has remained unchanged for decades. Perhaps the

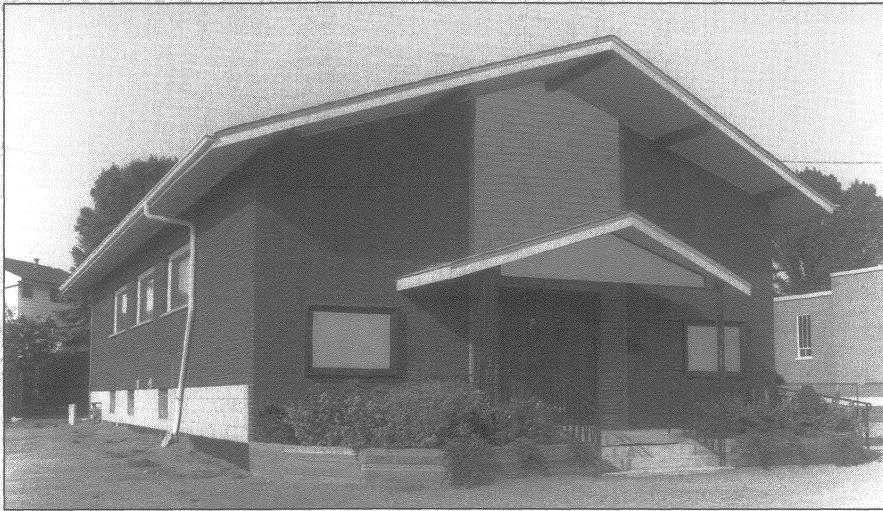
time has come to give serious consideration to increasing the number of delegates to twenty-four, namely six ministers and six elders from each regional synod area.

Relations with other churches

During 1994 there was evidence that our churches also continued to be involved with other churches in different parts of Canada and the world. In Canada itself, the Church of Ottawa had a series of meetings with the Reformed churches in Quebec. Two of our ministers, namely the Revs. C. Bosch and J.L. VanPopta also attended their synod. An overture to general synod about these churches was prepared and was also submitted to Classis Ontario-North for its reactions and endorsement.

In the other end of the country, the churches of Aldergrove, Chilliwack and Langley continued their meetings with the Free Reformed churches of Abbotsford and Chilliwack. A number of different topics were dealt with and a growing consensus emerged on our side that there exist no real biblical or confessional obstacles to unity. The major stumbling block would appear to be in the area of perceptions, misinformation and a lack of understanding.

In various parts of the country informal discussions also continued with those churches that have left the Christian Reformed Church. Here and there very good contact was established for the first time and elsewhere existing ties were strengthened. In some places, however, very little interaction could be noted.



Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College

On a more international level, this last year saw the Revs. E. Kampen and M. van Beveren travel to Australia. Seeing that our sister churches there were facing a very difficult synod, a request was received for our churches to be represented in person. The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, which has for years had a mandate from the synods to send such a delegation, decided that this request could not be turned down. So for the first time in our respective histories, an official delegation was sent and contributed to the discussions down under.

The same Committee also sent an observer to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the U.S. held in Wisconsin. Synod 1992 mandated the Committee to enter into discussions with the RCUS and it was decided to send Mr. A. Nap, a committee member. As mentioned earlier our churches were also present as observers at the Alliance meetings that were held in Lynnwood, Illinois.

Education

Turning now from life in the churches to life in the schools, we can see that in 1994 the education of our covenant youth did not stand still. In such places as Calgary, Chatsworth, Denver and Vernon, new schools were started. As far as I know, all of them are rather small schools that require a lot of effort and involvement from the supporting community. In addition a lot of effort is also required of those teachers who have been found both willing and able to teach any number of different grades. Our hats are off to their dedication and commitment.

Because education in Canada remains a provincial area of jurisdiction, each province has its own educational requirements and levels of financial

support. Some provincial governments are generous with their monies and others insist on acting like Scrooge. The result is that the financial burden on

parents varies. In Ontario, where no support is forthcoming, the burden is extremely heavy. In Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba, there is still a burden, because no province finances capital costs and expenditures, but it may well be half of what parents pay in Ontario. This past year saw no change in that situation and realistically speaking, no improvement is in sight. If anything, the size of provincial deficits and the down-loading of federal debt, will guarantee that Ontario continues its present approach and that other provinces may review theirs.

In spite of the financial constraints, however, our schools were able to function and provide a quality education for our children. In various parts of the country, teachers' conventions were organized, and teachers received an opportunity to interact with their colleagues, as well as to sharpen each other's skills. A conference for principals was also held in Burlington, Ontario, and this provided some much needed opportunities for our educational leaders to compare notes and discuss substantive issues.

Some time ago I was asked, "what is the toughest job in our community?" No doubt the person doing the asking was expecting me to reply, "Being a minister." Instead, I replied, "Being a principal in one of our Christian schools." Why did I say that? Because it can be argued that while the minister may have his difficult moments, he at least is viewed by most as having a special office and standing in the community. He is not treated as if he were common property. Principals, on the other hand, are hired by the community and are of-

ten considered to be community property. In addition, they are frequently caught in the middle between students, parents, teachers and board. In short, it is no easy thing to satisfy the expectations and demands of so many parties. Hence, I have the utmost respect for the principals in our schools and pray that they will receive every help and blessing from the Lord in what at times becomes an almost impossible task.

At Covenant Teachers' College in Hamilton, the work of moulding future teachers, as well as serving the educational needs of our schools in different ways, went on. Many of our schools could also assist the College by allowing students to practice teach in their classrooms. At the same time the physical plant of the College needs expansion and the Board is looking at a number of different options. Stay tuned!

In closing

Needless to say many other activities and organizations could be mentioned in this Review. Hopefully, I have covered all of the major highlights. You should understand that it is becoming an increasingly difficult task to stay on top of all of the things that are happening in our Canadian Reformed community. There is no shortage of meetings, organizations, events, happenings, etc.

On the one hand, that may be considered a good and beneficial thing. It shows that there is life and vitality in our circles. On the other hand, we should also realize that the health of our community should not be measured solely in terms of its "busyness;" it has to be measured in terms of its spiritual commitment and dedication to the Lord. The Church of Ephesus was commended for its deeds, hard work and perseverance, but it was also condemned for having forsaken its first love. That should serve as a reminder and warning to us too. By all means be active in church and kingdom, but do it for the right reason and that means not out of compulsion but out of love and gratitude to the Lord.

So as we come to the end of 1994 may it be so that the Lord our God, who sees and knows all things, bestows a blessing on our labours because our motivation was directly related to Him and to His service. C

RAY OF SUNSINE

By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.

Luke 1:31

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

 It is the time of the year again that we pay special attention to the birth of our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not something that is only important to us in the month of December. We confess it in the Apostles' Creed. Every Sunday in church we hear the words "Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary." That is the whole Christmas story in a nutshell.

Why is this "story" so important to us? Why do we have to be reminded of it every week? Is it really so special that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and that He grew up to be our Saviour? Yes, it is very important. The Bible tells us the story very carefully in Matthew and Luke. We can read there about the overwhelming message that Mary received. It was difficult for her to understand it all. Yet she entrusted herself to the Lord. And so the Lord made it all happen according to His plan.

The "story" of Christmas can only get real meaning in our lives when we see Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Not as a little baby in Bethlehem, so sweet and cute. That Baby was our Lord. He humbled Himself to become a baby, completely depending on a mother who had to take care of Him. He was true God, yet at the same time He became true man. He agreed to do that for us, it was His own choice. It was very humiliating for the Lord to go that road for us. He also knew what was lying ahead of Him: more humiliation, and much suffering. But He took it upon Himself to work out the plan of His Father. He did it, because He knew that it was the only way for us. Without God's plan of salvation we would have been lost.

With Jesus' birth in Bethlehem the Lord made a new beginning for us. We cannot explain and understand all the details. But that is not necessary. We only have to know that Jesus Christ is a gift from God to us. All we have to do is accept that gift, be happy with it, praise and thank God for it. Even though it is a mystery to us, we have to believe it. It is the proof of God's amazing love for a world lost in sin. God Himself has restored the connection between us sinners and Himself through Jesus Christ.

Does that solve all our problems then? No, and Yes! As a result of the fall into sin in Paradise, we are daily confronted with its consequences. So much in our lives does not belong to Christ. There is also much suffering, and many other things that make us worried and unhappy. It is a constant struggle to believe in the Lord, and to let Him control our lives. But there is a solution to those problems. For Jesus Christ, as man, experienced all those same difficulties too. He knows what we are

going through, for what He suffered for us was much more difficult yet. But He did not only start a new beginning for us, He finished it for us, and He will restore our lives with the Lord completely. We are waiting for that day, when He will return on the clouds. Until then we just have to believe, and ask His help in our daily struggles. He will not stop until He has made everything completely new for us.

So, yes, it is important to remember the birth of our Saviour. But only when we give Him thanks for what He did for us. Not only at His birth, but also at His death and resurrection, and when He poured out His Holy Spirit. Not the beginning of His task would have helped us any. Only God's plan for us fulfilled in all the details enables us to rejoice in His great deeds. Let us praise and thank the Lord for ever and ever.

*The stone the builders had rejected
Was chosen as the cornerstone.
This marvellous act, most unexpected,
The doing is of God alone.
This is the day the Lord created;
Now let us sing with joyful tones.
Grant us prosperity, we pray Thee;
O LORD, save those who are Thy own.*

Psalm 118:6

Birthdays in January:

2: **Liz Koning,**
Dicken's Field, Extended Care Centre, Room 210,
14225-94th St., Edmonton, AB T8E 6C6

7: **Christine Breukelman,**
2225-19 St., Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

10: **Robert Wierenga,**
Box 115, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

17: **Henry Driegent,**
72 Ross Rd. RR 1
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1M3

17: **Grace Homan,**
"ANCHOR" Home, 361 30 Rd., RR 2,
Beamsdale, ON L0R 1B0

19: **Janine Smid,**
"ANCHOR" Home, 361 30 Rd., RR 2,
Beamsdale, ON L0R 1B0

27: **Hank Orsel,**
705 Surrey Lane, Apt. 1201,
Burlington, ON L7T 3Z4

I wish you all a happy birthday, and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen,
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

C

Manitowoc (WISCONSIN) and Lubumbashi (ZAIRE)



fter a nod from the school board and best wishes for a "nice break" from my colleagues at the William of Orange Christian School, I left for Manitowoc, Wisconsin. I was asked to represent the Canadian Reformed churches at the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, to be held in Manitowoc from May 16 - 19, 1994.

It was easy to feel at home at the synod of the R.C.U.S. Those feelings were not primarily the result of excellent Bratwurst, Sauerkraut, und Hochzeits Kartöffeln.

The first synod of these Reformed, German emigrants was held in 1746. The Manitowoc synod was their 248th!

Rev. Pollema, the chairman of the synod said in a part of his report on the state of the church:

"The commitment to the Reformed faith is evident in all of the reports. Such commitment is further demonstrated in the proposal to adopt the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort as additional confessional standards. Adopting these creeds would be contrary to the modern trend which is to revise or abandon the historic creeds. The Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, along with the Heidelberg Catechism, have served to identify, strengthen, preserve, and unify the Reformed faith. They reflect the faith of our fathers, 'the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3). A confession was recognized as a form of unity because it was an expression of a common faith. The three together have come to be known as the 'Three Forms of Unity'."

During the four days at the synod, I not only witnessed healthy, Reformed vigi-

lance, but also noticed deep appreciation for being Reformed, a gift of God.

I felt that the brothers dealt sincerely with questions arising from their contacts with the Canadian Reformed churches initiated by Carman, and with the G.K.N. (Reformed churches in the Netherlands). The R.C.U.S. and the G.K.N. have established a sister church relationship, a direct result from joint mission work in Zaire. A synodical committee was struck so that those questions about ecclesiology and church government could be dealt with properly. Rev. J. Merica expects that this committee work will take another year. I am convinced that the study results of this committee will be apologetic in character and helpful for further discussion of outstanding issues, such as: views of the church, church government, and the Lord's Supper.

On day three visitors received (a bit of) time to address the members of synod. I touched upon some key moments from the last four years.

- 1990: A sister church relationship is established between the R.C.U.S. and the G.K.N.
- 1991: The R.C.U.S. invites the Canadian Reformed churches to establish a fraternal relationship.
- 1992: The Canadian Reformed churches answers positively. The synod Lincoln mandates its committee for relations with churches abroad to establish contacts. Rev. F. Walker visits the synod Lincoln.
- 1993: Rev. E. Kampen visits the synod of the R.C.U.S.

After this I said:

"You have old German roots, we have Dutch roots. For us the events of 1944, the Liberation of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, are very important. We

learned a lot, but have a lot to learn too. Canadian Reformed speakers and writers often maneuver themselves in less apologetic positions when they discuss the articles 27, 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession. We suffer from sloganism when we present the rich contents of those articles in a reduction formula. The contents of those profound articles is improperly reduced in statements like: "There is only one true church in one place." When we use such slogans it does not take long before we hear the loaded question: "Is, in your mind, the Canadian Reformed church the only true church?" After this begins the tiring task of explaining away these self-inflicted misunderstandings. The Canadian Reformed churches are accountable to the complete contents of those articles, to nothing more, to nothing less."

On the last day of synod the discussion about the proposal to adopt the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort began. Interesting questions were asked: Does having the Three Forms of Unity protect the R.C.U.S. better? Some churches with those confessions are not better protected against liberalism. Does acceptance of additional confessions reduce the importance of the Heidelberg Catechism? Is the H.C. first in order of importance? Do we swear an oath of allegiance to every word of those new confessions? Did Paul indeed write Hebrews? The answers given to those questions were very stimulating. When the question was asked why these changes were necessary, several answers were given. "We use them in our mission work." "This is a return to what we adopted at our first synod in 1746."

Before I report further on those discussions I have to pause for a moment.

Lubumbashi

The R.C.U.S. supports Reformed mission work in Zaire. On Monday, May 19, it was announced the Rev. Kishimba from Lubumbashi, Zaire, would visit the synod. Rev. Kishimba speaks French, the official language of Zaire. However, the translator whose services the synod was going to use, could not come. I hesitated to offer my services since my French is covered under layers of Portuguese. It became a wonderful experience. Through God's providence, I was allowed to translate an amazing story about the wondrous works of the Lord.

When he was young, Rev. Kishimba listened to the Reformed mission programs from the "Back to God Hour." That same organization made it possible for him to study theology for 4 years in Aix-en-Provence, France. Student

Kishimba's wife and two children stayed behind in Zaire.

About 10 years ago Rev. Kishimba started his work as a minister in Zaire. Now there are 250 congregations (100,000 [?] members). Those 250 congregations have only two ministers. So the training of ministers is of utmost importance. The G.K.N. (Spakenburg) have already sent two missionaries for the training of ministers. Soon a third and a possible fourth will follow. The Dutch Mission Aid organization also has a worker in Zaire.

At this moment Zaire experiences a famine. Rev. Kishimba spoke about suffering congregation members as well as about another threat the famine poses to the young churches in Zaire. It is the question: How can a sovereign God allow this to happen? Is He really sovereign?

Since many people in Zaire do not speak French, the Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into three different languages.

Adopted

We have to go back to the synodical discussions about the confessions for a moment. You should have seen how the eyes of Rev. Kishimba lit up when I translated the results of the final vote: 39 yeas, 13 nays.

He told me:

"In Zaire, many years ago, before the help from the U.S.A. and Holland, someone said: 'Not every church that calls itself Reformed is really Reformed. But I can recommend the R.C.U.S. They have the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession."

After telling me this we agreed that the R.C.U.S. followed the good example of the Zairian churches.

On May 20 I flew home. After all it was a nice break indeed. A break in which I learned a lot about the providence of God.

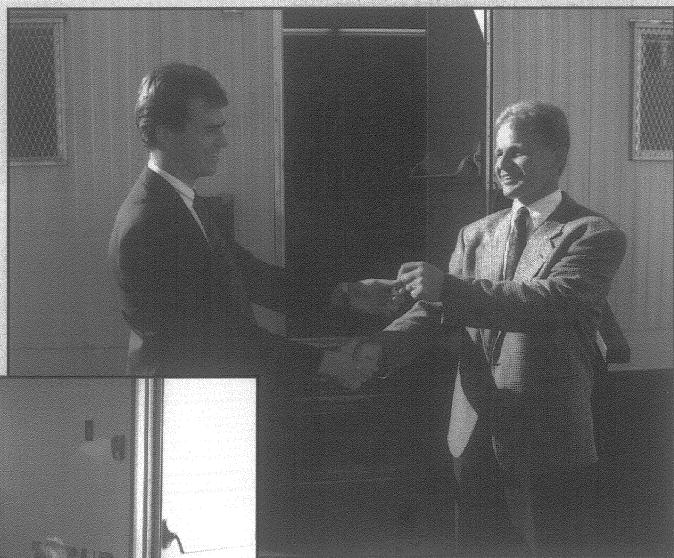
Let us praise His name for all His wondrous works.

C

School Opening

CALGARY, ALBERTA

The Chairman, Mr. Eric Vanderveen ►
hands over the keys of the school to
the principal, Mr. Otto Bouwman.



◀ *Grades 1 through 5 listening
attentively to their new
teacher.*

Houston Receives a New Minister



or both the congregation and the new minister of Houston, B.C., Sunday, October 16, 1994 was a special day indeed. In the morning Rev. J. Louwerse was ordained as minister of the Word, in the afternoon he delivered his inaugural sermon, and in the evening he was welcomed by congregation and guests alike.

Rev. J. Moesker chose as text 1 Peter 1:23. The theme of the sermon was "The great importance of the preaching of the Word." The first point dealt with "That Word which gives new birth" and emphasized the preaching of the Word as an instrument of the Holy Spirit to bring about regeneration. This makes the task of a minister a beautiful task but also one that carries much responsibility. His second point "That Word gives growth to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2) dealt with the members of the church (using the image of a newborn who cries for milk), who should long for the pure milk of the gospel and who should spiritually grow by it.

Towards the end of the service the form for ordination was read and answered, the laying on of hands took place, and Candidate Louwerse became Reverend Louwerse.

Our new minister chose as text for his sermon Ezekiel 33:10, 11a. The theme was "By the watch of His watchmen our sovereign Lord directs His people to the one way of escape." We looked at the first point, "the bearer of the message" who will have to give account even though the message he (Ezekiel) proclaims is not popular to the people. The second point, "the necessity of this message" for both saint and sinner since both must heed the watchman's warning to bring life eternal, the way of escape. The third point "the re-



Rev. J. Louwerse

sponse to this message" was a calling to us as His children to live in the fullness of the promises laid out to us at baptism; this also included the covenant demands. We are to be directed through the preaching to a life of fellowship with God, but we cannot do it alone. It is done only through faith in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That evening at 8:00 the welcome evening began with Br. R. Fennema, as chairman of the consistory, presiding. He opened the meeting, we sang from Psalm 84:1, 6 and read the same Psalm after which he lead in prayer and welcomed all present. He noted with gratitude that Houston after a vacancy of only three months is again blessed with a minister of the Word. He also thanked Rev. Moesker for conducting the ordination service as well as for

serving as Houston's counsellor during the vacancy.

Sr. Linda Koopmans welcomed Rev. Louwerse on behalf of the Ladies Aid. Br. H. Fennema extended a welcome on behalf of the Men's and Women's Society.

The children of the congregation each presented a useful or interesting gift together with a short poem representing the letters of the alphabet.

We were treated to a musical performance by "Chris Vandenhoeck and the Dykstras" featuring stringed instruments together with the organ.

The senior boys' and girls' club issued a room-wide gift certificate entitling the holder to ten Saturdays of help around the yard.

Representing our neighbouring congregation of Smithers, Br. Fred Hof-sink congratulated the Houston church



and wished Rev. Louwerse well in his ministry.

Representing Classis Pacific, Rev. Moesker then congratulated both Houston and its new minister. As advice to the minister he read from 1 Corinthians 4:6 "do not go beyond what is written."

Letters were read from two of our former ministers, Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. W.B. Slomp who, together with their wives, wished both Houston and Rev. Louwerse the Lord's blessing. A letter was also read from his former colleagues at the Theological College wishing him well in his ministry and taking note that the manse is very large indeed for a single man. This could make it very appealing for them to come and visit for awhile (or perhaps longer).

On behalf of the Tuesday Morning Bible study, Sr. Aly Meints gave us a small quiz to give us a taste of Rev. Louwerse's recent "grilling" by the delegates at his peremptory examination.

Sr. Clarinda Meints and Sr. Bonnie Leffers presented a number of useful and interesting gifts with a "Characteristically Northern Flair" on behalf of the different families in the congregation.

Br. Geoff Meints welcomed the minister on behalf of the Young People's Society.

A poem was read by Sr. Anne Vandenhoek entitled "What shall I say?"

After the program the congregation sang Psalm 150:1, 3 and Rev. Louwerse expressed his gratitude for all that had been done for him by the congregation and the warm welcome he received. He then led in thanksgiving prayer.

To end this blessed and eventful day everyone was invited downstairs for a relaxing hour of refreshments and fellowship. This was a day which will surely be remembered for some time to come.

H. Dykstra

C

*For unto us a
Child is born,*

*To us a Son
is given,*

*And on His
shoulders He
shall bear*

*All power in
earth and
heaven.*

*The Wonderful,
the Counsellor,*

*The Mighty
God is He;*

*Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace*

*His holy Name
shall be.*

Hymn
15:3
Book of
Praise

Zion, Your God Reigns

ORDINATION OF CANDIDATE DR. J. BOERSMA



In Sunday, November 6, the congregation of Aldergrove rejoiced as it received its first shepherd, Dr. J. Boersma. The ordination was led by the Rev. Tj. Boersma of Drachten, the Netherlands. It was a great privilege for "the father" to ordain "the son." The Rev. Tj. Boersma chose as text Isaiah 52:7.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings . . . who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

The congregation was instructed to look beyond our new pastor to the Lord who came to redeem His people. In the text we saw how messengers brought "great" tidings. Had the kingship of God seemed bleak during the time of exile, now the messengers call out from afar, ***"Zion, Your God reigns."***

Today this message is still "great." Christ came to break the power of the devil, proclaimed salvation, and forgiveness of sins. These are the rich treasures that come to us via our pastors. They are heralds of good tidings. "How are we to hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14).

Christ is in control. Great is the joy among God's people. Today, God still rules amidst His enemies. The devil has been defeated. Weekly, the pastor will proclaim "the sounds of victory." He reigns, and He will put his enemies to shame.

The form for the ordination of ministers was read. The elders then, together with the Rev. Dr. J. Visscher, joined in the laying on of hands. The congregation responded with the beautiful words of Psalm 121:3 and 4.



Rev. Dr. J. and Mrs. Boersma

After the service the chairman of council, Br. P. VanderPol welcomed Pastor J. Boersma as our first minister in order that "he may help us prepare our hearts to receive Him."

On behalf of Classis Pacific, Rev. J. Visscher spoke a few words, welcoming Br. Boersma as the tenth pastor in Classis Pacific.

Br. VanderPol thanked Rev. Visscher for his work as our previous pastor and counsellor in the time of vacancy.

Br. T. VanPopta spoke on behalf of the church at Langley. He noted that Langley, the "mother church," had a keen interest in the affairs of her "daughter."

Not to be outdone, Br. A. Nap spoke on behalf of "grandmother," the church at Cloverdale. He urged Br. Boersma to preach and practise piety as a carrier of light.

On behalf of Lynden, Dr. W. Meester conveyed his congratulations, reminiscing about the growth of the Canadian Reformed churches in the Valley. Br. P. Torenvliet of Abbotsford encouraged us to pray that God's will indeed might reign in our hearts, in order that Aldergrove may be a light on a lampstand.

In the afternoon, Dr. J. Boersma held his inaugural sermon on 1 Cor. 1:4-9, where the apostle Paul gives thanks for God's grace among the Corinthians. It was pointed out that the believers of Corinth had received many gifts. However, the problem lay in how they used those gifts. They were boasting, thereby making "the word of the cross" empty. These special gifts were meant to be used for the upbuilding of the church.

It is not hard to see parallels with today's situation. Our gifts are gifts from God, given in Christ. We are not self-sufficient. We are in need of Christ and we should express our thankfulness to Him. The congregation was urged to pray for humility, always acknowledging the source of our riches. God is faithful. He shall perfect the good work begun in us. Hymn 38:2 sums it up:

*He on the Church of Christ our Lord
His many varied gifts outpoured,
That, without pride or malice, we
Might one another's members be.*

Welcome evening

The following evening, the congregation hosted a welcome evening for the new pastor and his family. With Henk Berends as the MC, (almost) everything was well organized and ran smoothly. Under Heather Aikema's direction, the children's choir sang a few beautiful selections. Wiea Welfing described the Aldergrove congregation, where everyone seems related, even the

new pastor and his family. They were reminded that if ever they had a free Sunday, they could always invite one of their "new relatives."

Words of welcome and gifts also came on behalf of the Men's Society and Evangelism Committee. The Women's Society did a skit showing a typical Canadian Reformed family on a Sunday morning. The Young People Society introduced themselves as new and unique ice cream flavors. Rev. Boersma was compared to a lighthouse keeper, chosen by God to keep the light in Aldergrove burning brightly. The Adult Bible Study Club presented a humorous poem on the Boersmas move to B.C. (in a helicopter?), and then involved the Boersmas in a matching game of parents and their children. The Boersmas passed with flying colours!

Bill VanderPol sang a song and presented "the new family" in a photo album. Each family had prepared a page in this album. The council presented the new pastor with a comfortable chair for his study, with wheels large enough to wheel himself around, but too small to leave Aldergrove.

Rev. J. Visscher of Langley wished us as congregation the Lord's blessing

and many fruitful years together. Harold Ludwig accompanied us "in song and solo."

At the end of the evening, Rev. Boersma expressed his deep appreciation, also on behalf of his family. They certainly felt welcome and part of "the family." He expressed the wish that as

pastor and congregation in Aldergrove we may use the gifts that God has given us, to build each other up and to grow in God's service. May we all thank the Lord for His faithfulness.

On behalf of the Aldergrove congregation,
Janet and Bert VanGoolen

C



Gym of Betty Gilbert Elementary School, Aldergrove, where we hold services each Sunday.

AMERICAN REFORMED FELLOWSHIP

The American Reformed Fellowship invites you to worship with us in Florida. Each Sunday from December 4, 1994 to April 1995, we meet at Palmview First Baptist Church, 49th Street at U.S. 41 across from Skyway Village in Palmetto. Our public gatherings are at 11:15 AM and 2:30 PM. Bring your lunch and enjoy a social hour between the services.

During January, February and March 1995, Rev. J. VanRietschoten and Prof. Dr. J. Faber will be our "guest ministers" for shorter or longer periods. If no minister is available from one of the American or Canadian Reformed churches, we will listen to taped services or have a reading service. A collection is held for general expenses.

For information in Florida please call (813) 729-4863 or (813) 739-1306 even before December 5, 1994. In Ontario, please call (905) 563-8383. Our mailing address is c/o Mr. M. VanderVelde, 4219 Mountainview Rd., Beamsville, Ontario, Canada L0R 1B2.

CHURCH NEWS



DECLINED to Byford, Western Australia

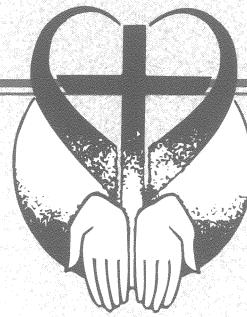
Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer
of Carman, MB

Our Cover

Image provided by
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Malawi

THE CHALLENGE



The development program which C.R.W.R.F. supports in central Malawi is run through the church, unfettered by government restrictions. It assists the very poor via programs in literacy, primary health care, income generation, women's projects, and agriculture. Although still in its infancy, the program has made inroads into 32 villages, affecting in some measure, the lives of about 1,000 individuals. This article looks briefly at the country in which "we" work and the challenges facing it.

A small, landlocked country, Malawi was called Nyasaland from 1891 until independence from Britain in 1964. Even though the country lies near the equator, high altitude keeps the climate fairly pleasant. Its population of nine million is largely agrarian – over 90% make their living from the land. Though fertile soil does exist in some regions, Malawians generally are able to eke out only a very marginal income.

Land holdings are minute: an acre or two per family. Fertilizer is too expensive for many, so the crops produced are often barely enough. When food stores run out, families endure a hungry month or even several before the new harvest ripens. This is when the "kwash" unit of the local hospital is most active, feeding many young, malnourished children who otherwise would starve.

This is also the need our development staff seek to address by, for example, providing farmers with fertilizer to increase crop yields, by promoting intercropping, and by encouraging small income-generating projects so that funds will be available to buy food and other necessities during the lean months.



Future plans include more promotion of hybrid chickens and goats, tree planting, and the construction of small wells so that women, freed from long hours spent hauling water and firewood, may have more time for literacy classes and other endeavours.

Poverty has been blamed by some on the policies and personal greed of Banda, until recently head of the Malawi

Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

**Canadian Reformed
World Relief Fund**

PO BOX 85225
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Congress Party and sole ruler of this tiny country. Certainly he must bear a share of blame, for under his rule major problems such as malnutrition and AIDS were often neglected or kept out of the news through censorship. The "ostrich" approach unfortunately rarely solves things.

Named President-for-life in 1971, Banda was in his 90s when finally ousted in May of this year. He had held a tight grip for more than two decades, but in response to pressure by foreign donors, finally allowed a referendum in 1993. This liberalization and the election it resulted in generated much excitement. People felt there was a possibility of real change and were energized by the prospect of true democracy.

The political climate when we visited (March '94) was already much more open than even a year previously.

Then any public criticism of the President would have meant incarceration. International pressure had definitely brought more freedom on speech. We were sitting in a tearoom and the discussion ranged from poverty issues to AIDS and recent government acknowledgment that the problems exists. A national member of our party commented that such a public discussion would simply not have happened a year ago.

Still, in spite of greater freedom of speech, respect for His Excellency was always carefully maintained. In any media reference, the President was unfailingly referred to as "His Excellency the President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda," never an abbreviated title. His trademark bowler hat and cane and his Queen's English spoke of his respect for British traditions and these he carefully maintained. Though undoubtedly he did much for the country, particularly in early years following independence, he was criticized by some as viewing himself as a kind of philosopher-king, above the populace, and above reproach, ruling by divine right. Noting that the opposition was splintered, many, however, expected Banda to be returned to power in the May elections.

That, at least, did not happen. After thirty years at the helm, Banda was voted out and Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front given the task of forming the new government. The elec-



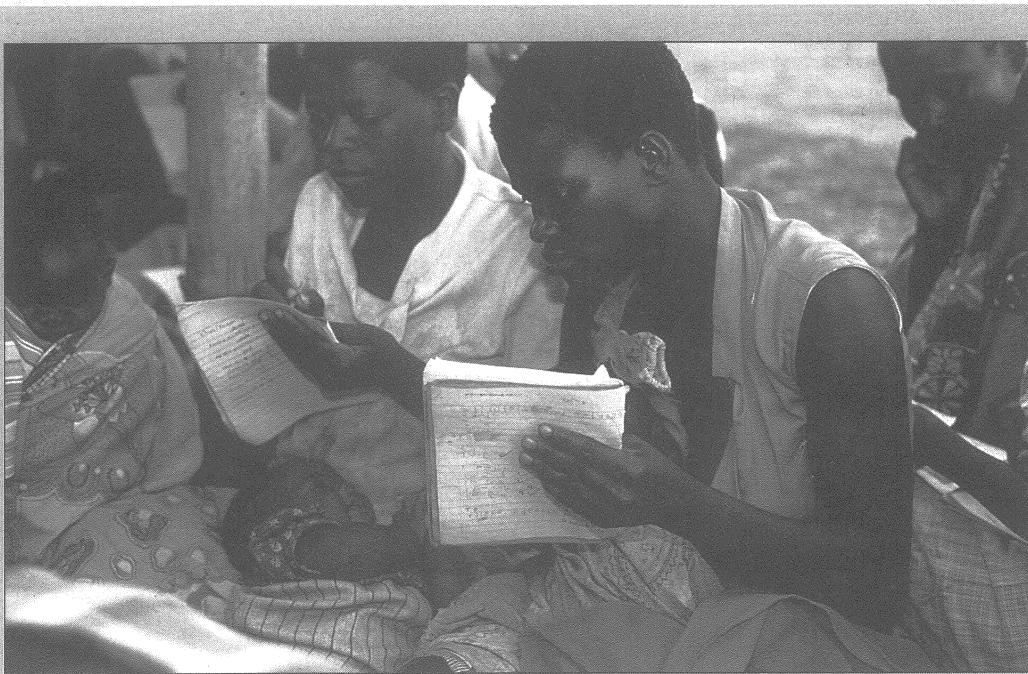
Growth monitoring of infants and toddlers is one of the best ways to assess health.

tions thankfully were, peaceful, though they clearly exposed regional divisions.

Not enough time has yet lapsed to judge whether significant change will result. The new government, we are told, has stated objectives on poverty alleviation, a positive sign to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Malawi. Optimism, however, is

tempered with concern that the present administration is being unrealistic, promising a plethora of new roads, hospitals, etc. when in truth there is little money for these.

Certainly the challenges facing the new government are enormous. At present, twenty-five percent of Malawi's children do not reach their fifth birth-



Literacy classes – a vital part of development.



A recent groundnuts (=peanuts) pilot project gave participants 5 kg. each. Out of the approximately 40 kg. harvested, the 5 kg. was returned (shown here). The rest was eaten or sold to purchase necessities.

day. Poverty is a way of life, health care is minimal, life is hard. The average life expectancy is only 46 years.

Only 1% of Malawians graduate from university and less than 10% attend secondary school. An estimated 50% of primary-school age children attend. The rest help care for siblings, tend goats, etc. In Lelongwe, the capital, one is besieged by 8-12 year olds hoping to make a "kwacha" (about 16 cents) by watching the car or selling a plastic grocery-type bag to hold purchases. Their families obviously cannot afford to schooling. The present government has promised to supply schools with notebooks and pencils – a small but hopeful step. In the past, some could not afford such basics, and stayed away.

Illiteracy is undoubtedly a problem contributing to many others. Health for



Intercropping (here maize with squash) can greatly increase the land's yield.

example. Most people know only of curative health, having little awareness of preventative measures. A United Nations study done in 46 countries determined that a one percent rise in literacy is three times as effective in lowering infant mortality as a one percent rise in the number of doctors.

So schooling needs addressing. (The project we support also seeks to address

this via literacy classes, which at present have close to 700 students enroled.) Hopefully the present government can avoid such incidents as the recent teacher's strike in which teachers protested their appalling wages. A local leader sadly commented that "when two elephants fight, the grass gets trampled." Certainly students did not benefit from several weeks without instruction.

Government in the past, in co-operation with NGOs, has tried to address Malawi's problems. However, lack of recognition that certain problems even exist was a major hindrance. Formally recognizing the problems, as the new administration does, promises a greater chance of success.

In Malawi, as in much of Africa, democracy is a new and uncertain path. Many guideposts are needed and the road is not likely to be paved. Western-style democracy, having no real roots in Africa, is fragile, its future uncertain.

We need to pray for Malawi, recognizing the problems and asking that

government leaders, in dependence on God, be freed from self-service and enabled to meet the needs of the people they represent with efficacy. May governments and leaders everywhere turn from the deceptive glories of self or strife, and realize that there is sufficient glory to be had in working peacefully together to fight the real enemies of poverty, ignorance and disease. **C**

Church Pluriformity versus Confessional Unity

In his letter to the editor of *Clarion* dated October 21, 1994, Rev. J.D. Wielenga raises an interesting point. The point and question he raises is whether church pluriformity is really such a serious theological deviation that we must reject those who hold to this view. Apparently he is not the only one who has raised this point, for he writes, "The published 'discussion paper' of the deputies for ecclesiastical unity refers to Schilder's conviction that he could have church-unity with men who propagated the concept of the pluriformity of the church, although he would fight their dogmatic views in this respect wherever he could." Rev. Wielenga implies that we are not to make the same error made during the liberation by which the churches were bound to some theological views. In other words, it was wrong for the churches to be bound to a "Kuyperian presumptive regeneration theory" and it will be just as wrong to bind the churches to a "Schilderian anti-church pluriformity theory." There are others, who in private conversation, have asked the same thing. Some add that we do not reject this theory anywhere in our confessions and there are other Churches which hold to the *Three Forms of Unity* and have proven to be very church pluriform in their thinking. This is not only an interesting point, but also an important one.

The problem of church pluriformity

To show why church pluriformity is a problem, it is helpful to briefly review what church pluriformity is all about. It begins with speaking about

one holy catholic church. This is considered to be *the church*. It is often labelled the *invisible church*. This holy catholic church, it is said, manifests itself in local churches. This manifestation can take on different forms, thus, *pluri-form*. The local churches are referred to as the *visible church(es)*. The visible church, it is reasoned, could be more or less pure. The believers have the task to be joined to the most pure one. It should not be necessary to prove from scripture where this reasoning goes wrong because we all generally agree that this theory should be rejected. However, attention will be given to what happens when this theory is put into practice.

Suppose a member of a Canadian Reformed Church in town A finds a job in town B some miles away. He moves there. It is kind of far to travel back and forth to where he used to live. Seeing that these are the circumstances, he looks for a church in town B which is quite close to what he was used to. He would reason that even though the visible church where he used to live was better, the church in the place where he has moved will do. It does not really matter because the holy catholic church is manifested in different ways at different places. The question of which confessions this church keeps hardly comes into the picture. Whether this church maintains its confessions is hardly questioned either. The only thing that really seems to matter is whether the church in town B is a Christ believing church. Suppose that the church this member found is a Baptist Church. If the Canadian Reformed Church in town A practised church pluriformity, it would give an attestation or a certificate of membership so that he can take it to

the Baptist Church in town B. The Canadian Reformed Church in town A still maintains that infant baptism should take place, but by its actions has undermined what we confess in Lord's Day 27, Q.A. 74 about infant baptism. By its actions, the Canadian Reformed Church at town A does not consider infant baptism an essential point within the confessions.

This was just an example to show what happens when a church practices church pluriformity. The point is that even though a church claims to maintain its confessions, as soon as it practices church pluriformity, it has, in fact, undermined its own confessions.

The same thing happens should church pluriformity be practised in another way. Suppose that the Canadian Reformed Church at town A with the same argument used above permits a member of the Baptist Church from town B as guest at its celebration of the Lord's Supper. If the Canadian Reformed Church at town A practices church pluriformity, it will argue that this person of the Baptist Church is wrong in some points, but he is still a member of the holy catholic (or invisible) church and should therefore not be refused as guest. This situation, practically speaking, would be very strange. On the one hand, the members of the Canadian Reformed Church at town A are expected to promise adherence to their confessions before attending the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, it does not matter whether this guest promises adherence to these confessions or not. The result is a double standard. In fact, this is the kind of situation that the Church at Laurel had run into and this, in part, is the argument they used at the time. By this practice the Canadian Reformed Church

at town A shows that it really does not matter before the Lord whether one holds to these confessions or not. There may still be a preference to hold onto the things confessed, but in practice it really does not matter anymore. It is little wonder that the question of "confessional membership" (i.e. whether the members are bound to the confessions) has come to the fore in the context of speaking to those who practice church pluriformity. Does the first question of the *Form for the Public Profession of Faith* . . . do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in the Christian Church? apply only to members of the church while "outsiders" of other churches can be recognized as believers just as well without it?

One could think of more examples to show that as soon as church pluriformity is practised, confessional binding is lost. In fact, it would be pretty difficult and probably impossible to find an example of practising church pluriformity without undermining the confessions. Even if it were true that our confessions do not insist that we must reject church pluriformity, it must be rejected because as soon as it is put to practice the very fact of being bound to confessions is undermined. Perhaps, and this is said very carefully, one could live with someone who holds to the theory of church pluriformity so long as it only remains a *theory*. Because we must maintain our confessions, it must be rejected as soon as it is put into *practice*.

There is not much point in entering a debate concerning exactly what Dr. Schilder said in the article to which the deputies for the *Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity* refer. He wrote about showing patience to members who hold different views, for example, the church pluriformity "theory." In the end he insists that the confessional formulations

are decisive in all questions. It is clear that Dr. Schilder knows that we are bound to the confessions and the point here is that we may not let the practice of church pluriformity undermine the fact of this binding.

Maintaining the confessions

Till now much emphasis has been given to being bound to the confessions. For some, this may have given the impression of confessionalism as if, being bound to the confessions is more important than being bound to God's Word. Whoever places, "being bound to God's Word" and "being bound to the confessions" over against one another has made a wrong dilemma. The confessions are a *tool* or an *instrument* by which the churches bind themselves to God's Word. By it, we altogether an-

swer "yes" and "amen" to God's Word. That we do so together as the assembly of God's people is scriptural. See, for example, Deuteronomy 27. With our confessions we all together insist from God's Word that various doctrines deviate too far from God's Word. For example, we all agree on the basis of God's Word, in Lord's Day 31, that the papal mass is "a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry." Likewise, we maintain from God's Word, Lord's Day 27, that "infants should be baptized." When formulating these points in our confessions, we, all together as members of Christ's church insist that those who practice mass or refuse to have infants baptized, have deviated too far from God's Word. Those who maintain these false doctrines and practices must be called to repentance. They will not be received into the assembly of the Lord's people so long as they refuse to obey the Lord in these things.

Is this too strict? Are we asking too much? This is not just Rev. de Boer's opinion. This is what we actually do!

Before we participate in the sacraments, we publicly say that we "wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian Church." Office-bearers sign a *Subscription Form* promising that they will not privately nor publicly teach anything contrary to these confessions. Is this confessionalism? No! It is to keep the Lord's command to keep His Word. It is because we want to hold onto God's Word that we also question other churches with whom we have contact about the kind of commitment the members and office-bearers make to keep their confessions. For office-bearers to agree to "a system of doctrine" instead of being bound to the confessions is not good enough. It reminds us of how in the past some have undermined the binding to God's Word when claiming to be bound to the confessions "in so far as" they are in agreement to scripture. Remember how at the time we rightly insisted that we bind ourselves to the confessions, not "in as far as," but "because" they are in agreement with scripture.

Moreover, if anyone thinks that there are points in the confessions which could and should be left open to differing opinions, there is a way open. They can appeal to the ecclesiastical assemblies. Historically, the churches have shown that they are capable of listening and making adjustments to the confessions. For example, we no longer confessionally maintain in Article 4 of the *Belgic Confession* that the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews. He may have written this letter, but by this change in the confessions we agree that office-bearers are not bound to this opinion. Likewise, the General Synod of 1905 deleted the well-known phrase of Article 36 of the *Belgic Confession*. By deleting these words the churches leave it an open question whether it is the task of the civil government to remove all idolatry and false worship. In short, if anyone is convinced that a point of God's Word made binding by the confessions is out of order, let him appeal. In his appeal let him prove from God's Word that what we confess is spiritually questionable. If he cannot prove it, let us insist that he bind himself to God's revealed will.

If we do not insist on confessional binding, the doors are open to any kind of false teaching. The scripture is clear enough that we as members of the church and especially the office-bearers

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Luke 2:14

must reject every false teaching. By being bound to confessions we maintain the unity of which Ephesians 4 speaks. There we are called to "the one hope that belongs to our call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." The unity of the church rests on maintaining the true confession of God's Word. Being bound to the confessions is to listen to the one non-contradicting voice of the Good Shepherd. It is with good reason that we often refer to the three confessions, including the three creeds, as the *Three Forms of Unity*.

Conclusion

In this article it was first shown that as soon a church pluriformity is practised, the fact of confessional binding is lost. The need for confessional binding was then shown. We could perhaps live with the church pluriformity theory, so long as it only remains a theory and the confessions are still maintained. However, as soon as this theory is put into practice, the whole fact of confessing God's Word and maintaining it, is lost. The practice of church pluriformity nullifies confessional unity. It is either the one or the other. It cannot be both. Let us continue to uphold God's Word by maintaining confessional unity.

P.S. Just to set the record straight about the consideration of Classis AB/MB to which Rev. Wielenga says I inconsistently gave my consent; he knows from private conversation that I am not happy with the consideration to which he refers, but —

1. *does agreement with a decision necessarily mean agreement with all the considerations? — this is not simply to let the ends justify the means — but*
2. *the consideration to which he refers accurately reflects the decisions of our General Synods by which the OPC is said to be a true church but this is not put into practice.*

Rev. Wielenga also knows that the decision of 1977 to recognize the OPC as a true church has been appealed. The inconsistencies are due to how the General Synods have not given clear answers. The Synods should give clear answers, but in the mean time we have been given much time to show the OPC the problem of church pluriformity, especially when it is put to practice. Let us continue to do so. **C**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Prof. Geertsema,



In the October 7 issue of *Clarion*, Rev. G. van Popta mentions the statement of the philosopher, Epimenides, as quoted by the Apostle Paul in Titus 1:12.

Epimenides, himself a Crete, is stating a paradox by declaring that "Cretans are always liars." If his statement is true, then it is a lie; and conversely, if it is a lie, then it may be true.

The Apostle, in quoting this paradox, is cautioning against "mere talkers and deceivers." His intent is not to categorically declare all Cretans to be liars, which would be inconsistent with the first part of this chapter, as well as with his other letters.

Sincerely,
Harry Harsevoort

Esteemed Brothers,



It is out of concern for our churches, and such with regard to our relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches, that I address this letter to you.

When I read in *Clarion* what different members and ministers write about this matter I get the strong impression that, because we have at one time recognized the OPC as true churches of Jesus Christ, we are now aiming at coming to full sister-church-relationship by the time the next Synod comes around. And this is, indeed, what we should be working towards, but **not** regardless the practices of the OPC as far as the fencing of the Lord's Supper table is concerned. If we would do this, the consequence would be that we would allow a wide

array of people to participate at our celebration of the Lord's Supper and have ministers in our pulpits other than from our sister churches.

Yes, the Lord commands us to seek unity, and we should not regard ourselves to be "better" than others; but when the Lord Jesus prayed for this unity He added, "even as we (Father and Son) are one" (Jn. 17:11). Christ always obeyed God's command to love God *first* and the neighbour *second*. When we proceed to become one with the OPC without the proper basis for unity, we could very well become idealists — which reminds me of what Rev. van Nieuwkoop once said in a sermon, "An idealist is like a sheep that wants to convert a wolf, and it doesn't even notice that it gets eaten by the wolf." If we want to work **first of all** according to the **second** commandment (to love our neighbour, in this case the OPC), then our obedience to the *first* commandment (to love our God above all) could easily fall by the wayside.

At the moment the situation is this, that we from our side seem quite anxious to come to unity with the OPC, while from their side there is little or no such effort, and in the meantime we read of their contacts with other churches. It reminds me of a boy dating a girl, while at the same time the girl is dating other boys.

As it is now I think that we have a greater duty towards those who have left the apostate Christian Reformed Church for very much the same reasons we had when we were led out fifty years ago.

I hope that one of you will respond to this letter and, hopefully, show me that my concerns are misplaced.

Yours in Christ
W. Kanis **C**



Guido de Brès High School

COMMENCEMENT OCTOBER 14, 1994



morning just like any other morning? No, for there was something in the air. Excitement was building up. It was the day of graduation for fifty-eight former Grade 12 students of Guido de Brès High School in Hamilton, Ontario. After so many weeks of anticipation, each of them surely greeted this day with special thanks, and with special trepidation, and maybe even a butterfly or two.

How many shopping trips before that special dress was chosen? How many hours of primping were involved before the young lady or young man would step out into the world to be seen by all? Or, maybe some would never want to admit it, but it was going to be a special day, a milestone in the lives of those who were able to attend.

Talking about the various preparations we shouldn't forget to mention the hours involved in decorating the gymnasium/auditorium in a fall motif. The dinner itself also involved much prior planning and arranging, and it, too, was a great success. In the opening devotions it was mentioned with thankfulness that this year's graduation ceremony was the eighteenth in the history of Guido de Brès High School. During the dinner the graduands were treated to a medley of songs dedicated to various groups of students and sung by the teachers in both serious and hilarious fashion.

With these songs still echoing through the auditorium, the guests all ventured to the assembly hall at Redeemer College, some twenty minutes drive. Here you could also sense the eager anticipation as a thousand people scurried about finding a place to sit.

The chairman of the Board, Mr. J. VanderHoeven, opened the evening with the reading of the beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-16. The request was made that the students would be enabled to fulfil their calling in a life of service. An introductory welcome was also extended to the graduands by the Principal, Mr. J.G. VanDooren, who explained that the word "commencement" points to a new beginning, a brand new start. He expressed the hope that each graduand would keep up the good fight of faith and that the work done in the past four years would serve to equip them to stand strong.

After this, the Vice-Principal declared that the time had come for the graduands officially to become graduates. To see them all come forward to receive their diplomas and stand together on the podium was a grand scene. There was something in this that portrayed the youth of the covenant standing proudly together equipped with a vision to the future. Not only a material future of many opportunities but also a perspective to the eternal future was symbolically shown in their standing

together. After a round of applause and much picture-taking, the graduates resume their appointed seats and enjoyed a solo by Alison VanStraten.

The main address to the graduates was given by Rev. J. Ludwig, himself a former student of Guido de Brès High School. He began by saying that congratulations were due to students graduating from a high school whose entire curriculum is based on the perspective of the true faith. Posing the question, "Where do you go from here?" he continued, "What you are will influence what you do. You are the salt of the earth." The quoted part of the Sermon on the Mount was then explained and applied as follows. As children of the kingdom, the graduates will face increasing hostility. How are we to make an impact on the world? Saying that we are the salt of the earth is stating a fact. As salt, Christians should counteract spiritual decay and have a preserving impact on society and on each other as they share in the anointing of Christ. As the day is drawing near, we have to be transformed in the renewal of our minds. It is, therefore, very important what we do in our own corner of the world. It is by our godly walk that our neighbours may be won for Christ. Rev. Ludwig closed with the hope that the graduates would remain constant in prayer and diligent in their continuing study of God's Word. C





Rev. J. Ludwig addressing
the class of '94

Tim Sieders – this year's
valedictorian



Guido de Brès High School - Commencement 1994

Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| Wim Aalbers | Jack Scholtens |
| Tom Alkema | Chris Schulenberg |
| Anita Bartels | Justin Schutten |
| Tonya Beintema | Tim Sieders |
| Leslie Boersema | John Smid |
| Winston Bosch | Anco Snip |
| Elaine Bosscher | Leanne Spithoff |
| Joanne DeBoer | Chris Spoelstra |
| Carl DeBoer | Alex Stulp |
| Teun DeGelder | Rodney Tenhage |
| Nathan Diek | Cathie Torenvliet |
| John Harsevoort | Geoff VanderDeen |
| Brian Hart | Jay VanderHoeven |
| Lois Helder | Teresa VanderWal |
| Amy Hofsink | Edward VanderWoude |
| Gus Hopman | Mark VanDooren |
| Johanna Hulleman | Karen VanEerden |
| Rachel Jagt | Peter VanEgmond |
| Mike Jans | Karin VanHof |
| Marcel Kampen | Henry Vanperen |
| James Linde | Mike VanMeeteren |
| John Lof | Graig VanVeen |
| Ed Ludwig | William VanWoudenberg |
| Rob Malda | Kim Vis |
| Mike Nederveen | Ralph Vis |
| Rob Oostdyk | Lisa Woudenberg |
| Alwin Plug | Tim Wray |
| Kerry Roodzant | Jared Zietsma |
| Stuart Schenkel | David Zietsma |

The Harry Aasman Memorial Scholarship

John Smid

The George DeBoer Memorial Scholarship

Anco Snip

The Guido de Brès Alumni Scholarships

Amy Hofsink
Rachel Jagt
Teresa VanderWal
Mark VanDooren
Karin VanHof

The Edward M. Stam Memorial Scholarship

Gus Hopman

The Premier Agendas Ltd. Scholarships

Joanne DeBoer
Brian Hart
Kerry Roodzant

The Governor-General's Bronze Medal

Anco Snip

The Guido de Brès High School Participation Awards

Carl DeBoer
Dan Hulleman
Rachel Jagt
James Linde
Tim Sieders
John Smid
Leanne Spithoff
Cathie Torenvliet
Lisa Woudenberg
Tim Wray
Jared Zietsma

The Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award

James Linde

Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord

SCHOOL OPENING IN THE OWEN SOUND AREA



Early in 1991 in the House congregation of Chatsworth the desire to start a Canadian Reformed School in the Owen Sound Area was expressed. The object and foundation of such a school is as the constitution reads "to establish, maintain and conduct . . . a school for the general instruction and education of the children . . . in accordance with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt." A board was duly elected and work began on a constitution and by-laws for the Society. The constitution

was approved in March 1992 and the board mandated to pursue the feasibility of starting a school. Much work was done and beginning a school was determined to be feasible if only the right teacher could be found. Advertising began immediately. Jan. 1994, in our second year of searching, our prayers were answered and Mrs. D. Jonker was hired as teacher/principal for our new 1 room school.

Mrs. Jonker brings along with her 23 year teaching experience; 3 years at Calvin Christian School in Drayton, Ontario and 20 years at Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, Ontario. Through these years she has gained

experience in all of the 8 grade levels. She has also been involved with committees such as The Canadian Reformed Teacher's Association and Curriculum Assistance to Reformed Education.

With Sept approaching rapidly, our hopes in finding a rental facility were diminishing, until finally a local church was found willing to rent. With much hard work from Mrs. Jonker, the Board and many volunteers this facility was soon transformed into a brightly decorated classroom.

On September 6, 1994 the doors of the school opened wide to 20 eager children, as well as the teacher, parents and guests. The chairman of the board



► First day of school opening exercises with parents in background

► Official opening of school on October 7, 1994

► Grades 1-8 with Mrs. D. Jonker

Mr. H. DeVries opened the day with singing, Bible reading and prayer. A brief introduction and welcome was given, and after good-byes were said the school day/year had begun.

On Oct. 7, 1994 an official opening assembly was held at the school. Mr. DeVries opened and gave a short list of all the events leading up to this day. He then introduced the teacher, Mrs. Jonker.

Mrs. Jonker spoke and noted how appropriate it was that here on the thanksgiving weekend, we were expressing our thankfulness to God for the opening of our new school. She expressed joy in seeing the increasing co-operation and growth taking place among these young covenant children, in the classroom. Here already can be seen the communion of saints at work. A brief overview of the day to day teaching was given explaining how 8 grades are taught in 1 classroom. Together with 6 dedicated helpers, Mrs. Jonker guides the students through their lessons quite competently and skilfully. She expressed the hope for the Lord's continued blessing and guidance on the school, that it may operate according to *His* will and that the children may learn *His* ways.

A short report was given by the Education Committee after which Rev. Feenstra spoke.

Rev. Feenstra indicated that before the institution of the church there was already strong desire for Canadian Reformed education. This was not motivated by a sense of isolationism, or by the sense that non-Canadian Reformed isn't good enough, but by a desire to have education, which does not contradict what is preached in the church, and taught at the home. He pointed out how Reformed education is different from other education in that the children are not taught that things are governed by the laws of nature, but by God's divine order of all created things. In science children are shown that what they are studying is God's handiworks in creation. In all subjects children are shown, through the glasses of God's Word, how things fit into his created world. In every subject they are taught to praise and confess the glory and greatness of God as He has revealed himself in His Word. They are also taught to trust in God's promises in every situation of life no matter how difficult. This school was compared to the way God schooled Israel in the wilderness for 40 years, to prepare them for the promised land. So too our children will use what they have



learned in this school for the rest of their lives. Reformed education is not just regular school with Bible and Church History added, but education with God's Word and works interwoven into every subject.

Lastly Rev. Feenstra reminded us that the only way to ensure the Lord's blessing on this effort is to be guided by His Word only. What is taught must be in complete agreement with His Word, or it will serve no purpose at all. Only by following His command will this work bear fruit.

A key was presented to Mrs. Jonker by Mr. H. Bosscher on behalf of the board. This key was symbolic as a welcome, but also of the task she has through the teaching to open the minds of the children to God's works and wonders in all things.

Letters of congratulations were read and representatives from various school societies spoke. The guests included Mr. H. DeBoer from the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies, Mrs. J. Kingma from Smithville, Mr. B. Wildboer from Dufferin Area Christian School, Mr. O. Bouwman from Cal-

gary, and Mr. T. Vanderven from the Teacher's College. These guests spoke words of congratulations, as well as encouragement to maintain what was now started. We would like to express appreciation for all who showed their support in what was said.

Following the meeting all were invited downstairs to the classroom to enjoy refreshments and to view the classroom. Much to our surprise we found that the students had made a dummy of themselves with their own clothing on and seated it in the proper desk. This way parents soon found where their children sat.

We as a school society are thankful that the Lord has given us this opportunity to provide our children with true covenantal education, and that we have been blessed so abundantly in receiving a teacher and all the other things necessary to operate this school. We pray that we may be blessed in this work and be given the means necessary to continue this work for many years to come. To his Name alone be all the glory.

For the board
H. Bosscher

C

SCHOOL CROSSING

By T.M.P. Vanderven

• Owen Sound • Time Management • Our Schools and the Government



OWEN SOUND. Another apology is called for. In the Previous *School Crossing* I welcomed as the youngest members of our school family the schools in Denver and Chatsworth. In fact, that makes only half of the number of school siblings which arrived on the scene in September of 1994. A one-teacher school was opened in Calgary, and the school association of Vernon saw its efforts crowned with the opening of their school in the beautiful Okanagan Valley. Four school openings in one year – almost a new reformed education record! (*)

It was a pleasure to be able to attend the official opening celebrations of the *Canadian Reformed School of Owen Sound* on Friday, October 7, 1994. Parents and children, with a number of guests including the principal of the new school in Calgary (Mr. Otto Bouwman, principal of Tyndale Christian School), shared a joyful evening of thanksgiving to our heavenly Father who motivates us to action and enables us to bring our plans to fruition. The chairman, Mr. H. DeVries, spoke of this in his opening address; Rev. P.G. Feenstra expounded on this theme in his meditation; and the principal, Mrs. Diane Jonker, spoke of this also. How beautiful are these moments in which we may experience the concrete grace of the Lord as He blesses the labours of our hands!

The twenty students made their own contribution in song and poem (well done!), bringing to life the school's theme, *Teach us Thy ways*. It took three years of preparation, count-

less meetings, and the contributions of many to enable this little school to open its doors. Five helpers assist the principal/teacher in her daily task – necessary assistance because of the twenty children divided over eight grades, and making effective use of the close bond between a reformed school and the families it serves. Rev. Feenstra teaches Church History to the senior students, thus claiming the status of volunteer as well.

Five individuals made use of the opportunity to congratulate the students, parents and principal with this event, and encouraging the school society to continue the work of reformed education. It takes the courage of faith to begin such a little basement school. It was good to hear how already in these first few weeks the students participated in local activities, distinguishing themselves with honour in various activities of the Owen Sound Fair. The senior students even had the opportunity to contribute to the success of the elementary school soccer tournament in Burlington.

Moments such as these are not only memorable for those directly involved, but also for all those who love reformed education as we all are encouraged to continue our efforts to maintain, and where possible expand, reformed education. We hope that others will report on the opening festivities of the other fledgling schools.

(*) The record year was 1977: three new schools and three high school expansions: *Covenant Canadian Reformed School* in *Neelandia* (Alberta), *Parkland Immanuel Christian School*, *Edmonton* (Alberta), *Emmanuel Christian High School*, *Guelph/Fergus* (Ontario), Dr. K.

Schilder American Reformed School, Grand Rapids (Michigan) John Calvin High School, Armadale (Western Australia), John Calvin School (secondary), Launceston (Tasmania, Australia).



TIME MANAGEMENT remains an important topic for all of us. Throughout the year there are many concerns that vie for our attention. This is also the case with our students. Regularly, principals will point out the importance of a regular study schedule, not only at the high school level, but also at the elementary level. One principal recently wrote about this in this manner:

*Time management always has been but is becoming an increasingly important skill. Procrastination is a common human failing that we all have to struggle against to a greater or lesser degree. In the past we have encouraged our students in the grades 7 & 8 level, going so far as to make our own booklets for such use last year. This year, we are investing in the commercial product offered by . . . (of course, we are not allowed to advertise in *School Crossing* on behalf of this well-known company) at a very good rate. They will be introduced to Grades 6 - 8 inclusive and will be used on a daily basis. These offer an excellent design, even making provision for daily parent involvement. We plan to use these as tools to teach time and task management which we believe will be a life-long*

benefit for those who learn the lessons well.

Excellent, an agenda is a useful time management tool. Thoughtfully used, an agenda can become an effective way to facilitate communication between teacher and student, student and parents, and parent and teacher. However, as with so many things, merely making this tool available is not sufficient; it ought to become a teaching tool. Young people need not just be *told* to use their agenda, they need to *learn* how to use it. This learning takes place best when the significant adults in their lives *model* responsible time management skills themselves. In other words, as parents and teachers we should not only *set* priorities for our children, but we should also *live* these priorities.

This makes me think of our high school principals who all too often are forced to complain that their students seem to have difficulty setting priorities in their lives. It seems that some students think social activities more important than school work and academic pursuits. Giving students an agenda to organize their homework has no effect if the study is not valued in the way it should. Also in this regard is the school very much dependent on the model set by the parents, and their co-operation is essential to the learning success of their children. The old saying, that a school is as good as the families it serves, remains true. Therefore, support your teachers by showing your children how much you value reformed education.

UR SCHOOLS AND THE GOVERNMENT. In Alberta, our schools are members of the provincial organization of private schools, AISCA (Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta). This association made the following resolution:

AISCA recommends that the government should affirm the intent to deal equitably with all children in schools which meet the educational standards of the province, including independent schools.

The Alberta minister of education, the Hon. Mr. Jonson, replied as follows:

The government supports alternatives in education, such as independent schools, so that parents can choose the type of education their children will receive. Permitting choice is part of our democrat-

ic way of life. However, independent schools are an alternative, and making such a personal choice for their children may involve some direct costs to parents, such as tuition fees. ()*

*In other words, the right of choice for individual students and families must be balanced against the right of access to high quality education for all. (**) The government must provide full support for public schools. The public system of education is also vitally important to our democratic way of life. If we do not give all Albertans(***) a chance to receive a good education, at no cost to themselves or their families, we will not have citizens who can make informed decisions. Consequently, our government's policies and funding programs are directed toward ensuring that our public schools are able to serve all Albertans (****)*

The editor of AISCA's Action Bulletin: Choices for Children, tries to read in between the lines of this ministerial statement:

- (*) Government provides some support for alternatives so that parents can choose. Children whose parents choose alternatives do not deserve to be fully supported. The savings are for children whose parents don't make "personal" choices.
- (**) How does the right of choice threaten the right of access to high quality education for all?
- (***) "All Albertans" does not apply to independent school children.
- (****) All young Albertans should be in our public schools.

Those of us who remember the lessons of history will hear echoes of the school struggle fought for the recognition of Christian education in the decades

around the turn of the century in the Netherlands. Our reformed schools are considered by our governments at best as forms of alternative education, with the unspoken assessment: certainly socially inferior. This assessment contains a strong accusatory hint that our reformed schools are also politically undesirable since they remove their students from the larger umbrella of citizenship.

A recent curriculum document published by the Ministry of Education in Ontario took this argument a step further yet, from the political to the instructional realm, when it declared that *Learning involves values as well as knowledge and skills*; at first glance perhaps an encouraging statement: the ministry admits that schools cannot be value free. However, there is poison here:

The values that form the foundation of the curriculum described in this document are those that the majority of Canadians hold and regard as essential to the well-being of their society. These values transcend cultures and faiths, reinforce democratic rights and responsibilities, and are based on a fundamental belief in the worth of all persons and a recognition of interdependence of all human beings. (The Common Curriculum, 1993, MoE, ON.)

I believe that we ought to be actively involved in seeking full recognition for our reformed schools. Our schools are not mere alternative forms of education which are allowed to operate by the government's gracious (annual) permission. At the same time, we must continue to be watchful that the price of government recognition and attending government funding will not harm the identity of our schools.

Also this is a lesson which can be learned from the history of the Christian schools in the Netherlands. C

*Let every tongue confess that Christ is King,
For He is Lord of all created things.
So to the praise of God the Father sing:
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

**Hymn
19:6
Book of
Praise**

BOOK REVIEW

By C. Van Dam

Calvin on Ezekiel

John Calvin. *Ezekiel 1 (Chapters 1-12)*. Translated by D. Foxgrov and D. Martin. Eerdmans 1994.

(321 pages. paperback \$ 24.99 US and cloth \$ 34.99 US).



Finally another volume in the Rutherford House series of a new translation of Calvin's Old Testament commentaries has appeared. Competently translated from the original Latin lectures into modern English (and furnished with appropriate indexes), this fresh rendition allows us to hear anew God's great gift to His church, John Calvin, "servant of the Word of God."

The Book of Ezekiel has many difficult passages, but Calvin's interpretation is direct and to the point without down playing the problems he encounters. He carefully explains the text, being most scrupulous to stick to the passage at hand and not to come with all kinds of ideas which cannot be based on Scripture. This fidelity to the text and his directness in dealing with the material at hand makes Calvin so useable also today by all members of the church and most just by ministers and theologians.

Calvin's care is seen right from the outset when he explains Ezekiel 1:1,2, a passage with its own problems. Clearly and meticulously Calvin gives his interpretation that, for example, the date of the book at the thirtieth year refers to the thirtieth year since the last Jubilee was celebrated in the days of Josiah. One may disagree, but then one will have to take account of Calvin's arguments.

Calvin's treatment of the vision of Ezekiel 1 is likewise instructive. Calmly he notes:

Now we must analyze the vision, whose obscurity so frightened the

Jews that they forbade anyone to undertake, or even attempt, its explanation. But either God appeared in his prophet in vain or to some benefit. To affirm the former would be very absurd. If the vision is to be useful to us, we must understand it at least in part. If someone objects that it was offered to the prophet and not to others, that quibble is easily dismissed, because the prophet wrote what we read here for the common use of the entire church. (p. 22)

Calvin then attempts to understand this vision of the divine glory with its four living creatures and wheels intersecting wheels and make it as clear as possible for God's people. This is not to suggest that Calvin thinks that he can fully understand God as he reveals himself. His prayer at the end of his first lecture on this vision is telling.

Almighty God, we are so fixed on the earth by our dullness that even when you stretch forth your hand to us, we are unable to reach you. Grant that, having been aroused from above by your Spirit, we might learn to raise our senses to you and struggle against our laziness until in drawing closer you become so intimately known by us that we at last may arrive at the enjoyment of full and perfect glory, which is kept for us in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord (p. 30).

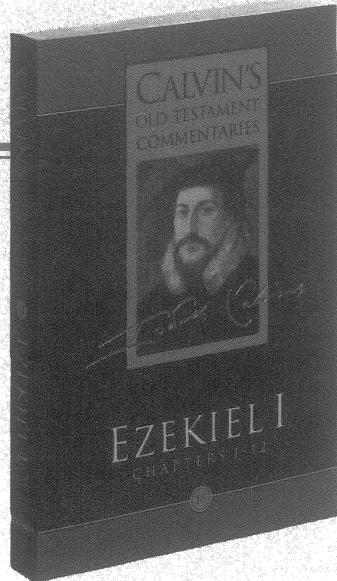
Calvin's commentary is also full of pastoral direction and godly comfort, for the period in which he wrote but also for today. For example, when dealing with the first vision one of the applications of 1:19 is that "God directs all things in accord with his incomprehensible wisdom, so that nothing happens except by his inspiration, hidden and imperceptible to our eyes" (p. 41). Thus "When we see people devising many

schemes to disturb the whole world, when we see numerous conspiracies and everything prepared to carry them out, let us know that all these matters are governed by God but in a secret way that surpasses all our senses" (p.42). Another example, when commenting on Ezek. 11:14-16, Calvin reminds his audience that as God preserved the church through the exiles in Babylon, so God today can preserve for himself the church where people think that none exists (pp. 265-266).

After the passage of so many years since its first publication in 1565, this commentary is still worth pondering and studying. This is not to say that one always has to agree with Calvin. But one will always be enriched in considering the arguments and being stimulated by them to try to understand and apply the living Word of God.

Calvin's lectures on Ezekiel were his last. He did not finish explaining this book, much to the sorrow of those who were left behind, for it is a difficult part of Scripture. Calvin literally wrote his last words on his death bed. In one of the prefaces included with this commentary, Theodore Beza relates to Caspar de Coligny, Grand Admiral of France, something of the deep grief experienced by those mourning Calvin's death, but comforts himself and others with the fact that Calvin was allowed by the Lord to leave so much behind for posterity.

Calvin always began his lectures with the prayer: "May the Lord grant that we might meditate upon the heavenly mysteries of wisdom and progress in true piety, to his glory and to our edification." May this reissue of Calvin in modern English be a means for that prayer to be answered. Though he has died, he continues to speak through his books. C



News from the Women's Savings Action

Presentation at the College Evening



In the College evening at which we were privileged to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Theological College and also of the Women's Savings Action, Mrs. Jannie Jans from Burlington handed over a pledge of **\$25,000** to be used to purchase books and periodicals during this fiscal year. During the last 25 years the dedicated efforts of many sisters have made the work of the Women's Savings Action

possible. In recognition of this fact Mrs. Jans was asked to make the presentation. As far as we were informed, there are three sisters who have been actively involved in collecting for the Women's Savings Action for 25 years. They are Mrs. Jans from Burlington, Mrs. Jean Breukelman and Mrs. Jean Selles from Abbotsford. Mrs. A. VanderBurgt from Abbotsford was involved from the beginning until her death in 1991. The whole College community is deeply appreciative of the contribution made by the Women's Savings Action. Rest assured that it is never simply taken for granted!

Theological College Women's Savings Action Contributions June 1, 1993 to June 30, 1994

| | | | |
|------------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| ABBOTSFORD | \$2,211.40 | LONDON | |
| ANCASTER | 693.47 | LYNDEN, WASH. | 716.25 |
| ATTERCLIFFE | 879.90 | NEERLANDIA | |
| BARRHEAD | 458.00 | ORANGEVILLE | 232.00 |
| BRAMPTON | 157.50 | OTTAWA | 170.00 |
| BURLINGTON EAST | 1,261.00 | PORT KELLS | 1,834.00 |
| BURLINGTON SOUTH | 714.42 | ROCKWAY | 146.01 |
| BURLINGTON WEST | 1,160.00 | SMITHERS | 765.45 |
| CALGARY | | SMITHVILLE | 1,143.70 |
| CARMAN | 667.47 | SURREY | 1,049.50 |
| CHATHAM | 516.65 | TABER | 470.00 |
| CHILLIWACK | | TORONTO | 242.80 |
| CLOVERDALE | 1,555.00 | VERNON | 700.00 |
| COALDALE | 2,130.00 | WATFORD | 200.00 |
| EDMONTON, IMM. | 847.08 | WINNIPEG | 1,176.65 |
| EDMONTON, PROV. | 1,574.28 | Misc. (Selles) | 22.00 |
| ELORA | 211.00 | Royalties (Selles) | 397.81 |
| FERGUS | 292.50 | | |
| GRAND RAPIDS | 196.15 | | |
| GRAND VALLEY | 178.40 | | |
| GUELPH | 300.74 | | |
| HAMILTON | | | |
| HOUSTON | | | |
| LANGLEY | 1,122.00 | | |
| LINCOLN | 2,244.00 | | |
| | 162.50 | | |
| | | Total Collected | \$28,799.63 |

Please note: Our fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Any contributions which came in after June 30 will appear on the financial statement next year.

Contributions

During this past fiscal year a total of **\$28,799.63** was collected. We have come a long way since 1970 when the total collected during the first year was \$2,544.46. It is very gratifying to see how the amount collected has grown steadily year by year. We are thankful to the Selles family that they decided to give royalties from the sale of ILPB books written by Prof. L. Selles to the Women's Savings Action.

College library

During this past year approximately 430 books were added to the College library; this number includes some gifts from other sources. However, most were purchased with funds provided by the Women's Savings Action. This puts the **average cost** of a book at about **\$45**. The exchange rate for the Canadian dollar which was bad the last number of years has become even much worse during this past year. Most books have to come from the United States and the Netherlands, so that the exchange rate has a tremendous bearing on our buying power.

Funds for bookcases and computer

Besides our regular contribution for books and periodicals this past year, we once again also provided funds (\$3,350) for new **bookcases**. Eleven new bookcases were purchased, allowing the staff to space the books out in a more manageable way. As well, the **computer system** for the library (costing \$2,730.10) was upgraded so that it has become very efficient and up-to-date.

Tax receipts

During this past year many tax receipts could again be given out; we are very thankful that we do receive so

many donations of \$10.00 and more. An organization as small as ours has to set a minimum limit of \$10.00 because of the costs involved in the printing and mailing of receipts.

Thank You

Our **heartfelt thanks** to all the representatives of the Women's Savings Action and their "teams" for their commitment and participation. Without it we could not carry on. **Thank you** to each and everyone of you for your donations. Your efforts have made the library of the Theological College what it is today – a respectable collection of scholarly works which are used everyday again by professors and students.

Need for continued support

This library needs to be kept up-to-date; we cannot lag behind. Sometimes the question arises: why not simply have the cost of books and periodicals part of the regular budget of the Theological College. The Finance and Property Committee already has the regular maintenance of the Theological College as their concern and they appreciate the fact that the needed funds for the library can come via the Women's Savings Action. Otherwise, the assessment for the churches would be even higher. Everyone can donate to the Women's Savings Action in accordance with the way in which they have been blessed; everyone can be involved in his or her own way. It is a labour of love. And the past 25 years have shown that it works and works well.

Above all, we remember that all our work would be in vain, if not blessed by our heavenly Father. We would like to repeat what it says in 1 Chronicles 29:14b: "All things come from Thee, and of Thy own have we given Thee." To Him be the glory.

Chair Mrs. E. Mulder
2372 Cavendish Drive
Burlington, ON
L7P 3B8
(905) 332-3285

Secretary Mrs. J. Van Dam
642 Ramsgate Road
Burlington, ON
L7N 2Y1
(905) 634-0593

Treasurer Mrs. C. Zietsma
54 Como Place
Hamilton, ON
L9B 1Y4
(905) 389-8314



PRESS RELEASES



Press Release of Regional Synod East, November 16 and 17, 1994, held in Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church, London, ON

1. On behalf of the convening Church at Watford the Rev. J. VanWoudenberg called the meeting to order. He requested to sing Ps. 48:1,4, read Revelation 1:9-20 and led in prayer. He then welcomed the delegates, and mentioned as memorabilia the vacancy in the Church at Toronto, as well as the fact that the Church at Laurel is now a house-congregation under the supervision of Blue Bell, and that the Church at Lower Sackville is no longer part of the federation.
2. The credentials were examined by the Brs. A. Koster and J. Van Woudenberg and were found to be in good order. The attendance list had been properly signed and showed that both Classes were legally represented by all the primi-delegates.
3. The following officers were chosen: as chairman: Rev. W. DenHollander, as vice-chairman: Rev. J. DeGelder, and as clerk: Rev. G.H. Visscher. Regional Synod East 1994 was then declared to be constituted.
4. The chairman thanked the Church at Watford for the preparation and Rev. VanWoudenberg for the opening of Regional Synod. The proposed agenda was adopted with a minor change.
5. Four committees were then appointed to prepare proposals to enable synod to deal with five appeals.
6. Synod was adjourned for committee work.
7. After the necessary preparatory work of the various advisory committees, synod was reopened.
8. The Church at Chatsworth appealed the decision of Classis Ontario North of November 5, 1993, Acts Art. 6 and 9. The appeal was denied.
9. The Church at Fergus presented an appeal against the decision of Clas-
- sis Ontario North of March 12, 1993, to invite two office-bearers of the Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland in Canada, as official observers. The appeal was declared to be admissible as an appeal against a decision of a minor assembly. Synod decided to deny the appeal on the following grounds:
 1. Every classis has the right to admit as observers to its meeting those whom they deem acceptable.
 2. Fergus' reference to the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship is irrelevant, since the matter of Classis Ontario-North does not pertain to participating delegates, but to observers.
10. Synod dealt with two other appeals in closed session.
11. The chairman asked Psalm 26:1, 2 to be sung and closed in prayer. The meeting was adjourned.
12. The next morning Regional Synod was reopened. The chairman read 2 Corinthians 6:1-13, requested to sing Psalm 101:1,2 and led in prayer. Roll call was held, and showed that all brothers were present.
13. The Presbytery of the Mid Atlantic of the OPC appealed a decision of Classis Ontario-South of March 9, 1994, to declare its appeal against Tri-County Reformed Church at Laurel, dated November 17, 1993 not admissible. The appeal was declared admissible as an appeal against a decision of a minor assembly. Regional Synod decides:
 1. that Classis of March 9, 1994, was incorrect, when, on the basis of the grounds it presented, it declared the appeal of the Presbytery of the Mid Atlantic of the OPC inadmissible;
 2. that, since Classis did not deal with the appeal as such, Regional Synod cannot now make a judgment as to whether the appeal was "correct and should be sustained;"
 3. that copies of this decision should be sent to all parties involved.
14. Regional Synod adopted the following proposal, tabled by the

Church at Burlington-West, without taking over the suggested grounds: "Regional Synod agrees to compensate delegates to General Synod, who need to be remunerated for loss of wages, up to the maximum amount of \$200 per day."

15. The deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. reported that they were not called to act in this capacity.

16. The report of the treasurer of Regional Synod, Br. D. VanAmerongen was tabled and discussed as well as the report of the brothers from the Church at Lincoln, who audited the books of the treasurer. Regional Synod thankfully received these reports, discharged the treasurer for the period November 1, 1993 - October 31, 1994, and kept the assessment for 1995 at \$1.00 per communicant member.

17. The Church at Brampton checked the archives of Regional Synod, maintained by the Church at Toronto, and reported that the archives were complete and in good order.

18. Regional Synod made the following appointments:

- * Deputies Art. 48 C.O: from Classis Ontario-South: Revs. D.G.J. Agema and Cl. Stam (substitute Rev. G.A. Snip), from Classis Ontario-North: Revs. P.G. Feenstra and G. Nederveen (substitute Rev. W. DenHollander).
- * Treasurer: Br. D. VanAmerongen, Grimsby.
- * Church to audit the books of the treasurer: The Church at Lincoln.
- * Church to maintain the archives: The Church at Toronto.
- * Church to check the archives: The Church at Brampton.
- * Convening church for the next Regional Synod East: The Church at Toronto.
- * Proposed date for the next Regional Synod East: November 15, 1995.

Regional Synod nominated the following brothers to be (re)appointed by General Synod as Governors of the Theological College:

The Revs. D.G.J. Agema, P.G. Feenstra and W. DenHollander, with alternates the Revs. G. Nederveen, P. Aasman, and C. Bosch.

The following brothers are chosen by Regional Synod as delegates to

General Synod Abbotsford 1995: Ministers: D.G.J. Agema, J. DeGelder, W. DenHollander, and P.G. Feenstra; alternates: G.H. Visscher, J. Huygen, Cl. Stam, and C. Bosch (in that order).

Elders: J. Boot, G.J. Nordeman, A. Ruggi and G. VanWoudenberg; alternates: H.T. VanderVelde, J. Medemblik, A. DeJong, and L. Sipkema (in that order).

19. Question Period was made use of.

20. The chairman ruled that there has been no reason to apply censure ad Art. 34 C.O.

21. The Acts were read and adopted, and the Press Release was read and approved for publication.

22. The vice-chairman led in thanksgiving and the chairman closed Regional Synod East 1994.

*J. DeGelder,
e.t. vice-chairman of
Regional Synod East 1994*



ress Release of the Board of Governors of the Theological Col- lege of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Subject: Meeting of the Board of Governors held on September 8, 1994

Opening

The meeting is opened by the chairman, Dr. J. Visscher with the reading of 1 Peter 2:1-8 and prayer.

Roll Call

All Board members are present, together with the principal Prof. J. Geertsma.

Election of Officers

The following governors are re-appointed as officers of the Board:

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Chairman | Dr. J. Visscher |
| Vice-Chairman | Karl J. Veldkamp |
| Secretary | Rev. D.G. Agema |
| Treasurer | Caspar Heeringa |

Minutes

The minutes of the Board meetings held on September 9, 1993 and February 22, 1994 are approved.

Report of the Executive

The Executive reports on an executive meeting held in June of 1994.

Report of the Academic Committee

The committee reports on their annual meeting held on September 7, 1994.

Report of the Property and Finance Committee

The committee presents their twelfth annual report and are pleased to report that the regular matters of the College continue. It is noted with thankfulness that the Lord continues to bless the College abundantly and that the support of the churches continues unabated. The audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending May 31, 1994, together with the budget for the fiscal year June 1, 1994, through and including May 31, 1995, are presented and approved. Aafke Spithof, C.A. is re-appointed as the auditor of the College. The Board authorizes the Finance and Property Committee to prepare a proposal with respect to the expansion of the College facilities, with an emphasis on the Library. A proposal which would include the retention of professional advisors will be provided in February of 1995. The intent is that the approval of Synod Abbotsford, 1995 is obtained in principle which would permit, if deemed prudent and appropriate, to proceed with expansion prior to Synod 1998.

Survey Committee Report

On recommendation of the Executive the Board appoints a study committee consisting of the Principal, the Professor of Diaconiology and two members of the Academic Committee (Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. DenHollander) to:

1. Evaluate moving from the present history-oriented approach to a more practice-oriented approach in certain courses in the diaconological department; and
2. Consider the suggestions from the ministers and churches regarding the practical aspect of the training. For example, catechism teaching, speaking an edifying word, involving experienced ministers and guest lecturers, the use of workshops and seminars.

Reports

The reports of the Convocation committee, visits to the lectures, the Senate, the Principal, the reports of the visits to the churches (Dr. C. Van Dam - Fall of 1993 and Dr. N.H. Gootjes - March of 1994), report of the Principal



of attendance at the International Conference on the Vitality of Reformed Theology and the Librarian are received, discussed and commented upon where appropriate.

Report of the Registrar

The Registrar's report for the 1993-94 academic year is received. The reports on the interviews with the new students for the 1994-95 academic year are provided and the Board approves the following students: Marcel Jagt, Doug Vandeburgt and James (John) Smith for the Freshman year, and Yonson Dethan at the Sophomore level.

Visitor's Schedule for Academic year 1994-95

The schedule of the Visitor's to the lectures of the College is set as follows: Fall 1994 – Rev. DenHollander and

Rev. Berends
Spring 1995 – Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. Van Spronsen

Acknowledgement of Prof. J. Geertsema

The Board gratefully acknowledges the receipt of correspondence from Prof. J. Geertsema wherein he expresses his thankfulness for the celebration in his honour in December of 1993 and the opportunity to attend the Conference on the Vitality of Reformed Theology in the Netherlands.

College Convocation Videotaping

The Board authorizes the development of a videotape which would provide a summary of the College convocation evening, facility and activities for viewing by those interested in the College and for information for those who are unable to attend the College due to distance.

Press Release

The press release is read and approved.

Closing

The meeting is closed in the usual Christian manner.

Press Release of the Meeting of the Inter-League Publication Board with the Administration Committee, held on September 30, 1994, at Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church, Hamilton, ON.

Present at the meeting:
George Helder and Keith Sikkema
for the Men's League.

Lies Schutten and Jane Oosterhoff for the Women's League.

Ted VanRaalte and John Smith for the Young People's League.

Administration Committee: Pete Engbers, Irene Boeringa, Bonita VanderLinde, Rennie Pieterman, Linda Schouten, and Elaine Spiersma.

- The chairman, George Helder, opened the meeting by reading Ephesians 2, he led in prayer, we sang Ps. 110:2 & 5 and all were welcomed, especially John Smith, new representative for Young People's League.
- The agenda was adopted.
- Minutes of the Board meeting of September 16, 1994 were read and corrected.
- AdHoc committee will continue its

work in long term planning. T. VanRaalte hopes to be able to continue as a member of AdHoc committee. An offer for assistance with budget set up was gratefully accepted.

- We reviewed *De Volharding van Job*, ds. P. deJong. We agreed that it is worthwhile to investigate further. Contacts will be made about translating.
- Minutes of Administration Committee meeting, August 30, 1994 were reviewed.
- John Smith is the new representative for Young People's League. An additional delegate will be at the next meeting. Ted VanRaalte and Cynthia Vander Laan are retired from the Board.
- Reports from Administration Committee:

a) Progress Report:

Both in Life and in Death, Dr. Gootjes, ready since summer 1994

Christ in the Family may be ready by Christmas.

– Books in Progress:

Daniel, Redeemer vs. Destroyer, Bremmer, (reprint)

Colossians, DeVries (reprint)

Luke Vol. 1, C. Hagens

Luke Vol. 2, C. Hagens

Luke Vol. 3, C. Hagens

Acts Vol. 1, VanderBerg

Acts Vol. 2, VanderBerg

1 Corinthians, L. Selles

2 Corinthians, L. Selles

Believe and Confess Vol. 1, C.G.

Bos

Believe and Confess Vol. 2, C.G.

Bos

James, 1 & 2 Peter, Vanherksen, Smelik, (reprint)

The Church Art. 27-29, Rev. de Wolf, (reprint)

Wat is hierop us antwoord, M.H. Sliggers

Call Upon Me, J. Westeink, (reprint)

Infant Baptism and Conversion, Dr. J. Douma, (reprint)

You . . . His Guest & You . . . God's Child, P.C. VanWijk (reprint)

(b) Sales Report:

Report was presented. *Both in Life and in Death* is selling well. I.L.P.B. has a good increase in sales over the same period last year.

(c) Marketing Report

Report was presented. Response to the questionnaires was discussed and will be worked on further.

(d) Financial Report

Reports were presented and reviewed. There was a positive balance. Auditors report was read. They suggested that we should be using a computerized bookkeeping system. This will be done soon.

• General Discussion

- Book table for Women's League Day will be looked after by ladies of Rockway/Lincoln.
- Consistories should receive a list of books suitable to present for members who have done profession of faith.
- We will consider *Klank en Weerklank*, Dr. C. Trimp. Will be reviewed before next meeting.

Next Meeting

- January 13, 1995 will be the next Board meeting.
- March 10, 1995 will be the next combined meeting, London, at 7:30 p.m.

Closing

Mrs. G. Schutten's term for I.L.P.B. is complete. She was thanked for the time and effort she contributed in the last 5 years.

Ted VanRaalte's term is also complete. He was also thanked for all he has done for I.L.P.B. He hopes to continue to assist on AdHoc Committee and he was thanked as well.

Keith Sikkema led in closing prayer.

Jane Oosterhoff,
Secretary, I.L.P.B. C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,



Are you ready for Christmas?" You probably hear the question every time you meet a person on the street, or in a store. All the stores are full of red bows, trees, presents to buy, and of course, a Santa Claus. Christmas music is played everywhere, and everyone is counting down 'til the Big Day.

But how do Christians get ready for Christmas? (Do you see the same word in those two words?) Do we get ready the same way that everyone else does?

Well, let's think about what we celebrate at Christmas. We remember that our Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and was born as a human baby.

What's so special about that? Jesus Christ came to earth so that He could be our Saviour. So that He could be a man, just like all of us, but then He would die and take away God's anger at our sin. That's very special! I'm glad we celebrate this happening every year!

We read the part of the Bible that tells us what happened. How Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem, how the shepherds heard the choirs of angels singing, how the wise men worshipped a small baby as a King!

So what's different at Christmas time for us, who believe their Saviour was born on Christmas Day?

Well, you can probably answer that easily now!

It's such a special time because we can celebrate that we are free. Because of the little baby who was born to be our Saviour! He freed us from our sins! And that's a lot to celebrate about.

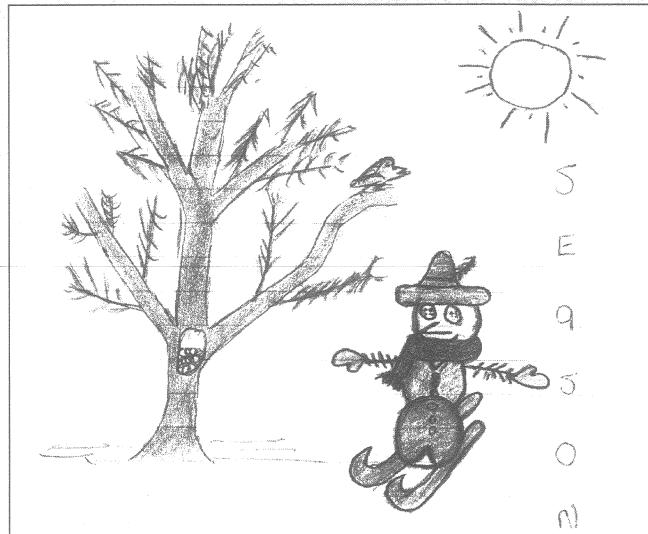
And so we do things differently from the worldly people. We go to church on Christmas morning, maybe sing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve, and we talk about Jesus, our Saviour, born many years ago. And we live in freedom, because Jesus freed us from our sins.

So let's say to each other, "Blessed Christmas!"



WINTER

by Busy Beaver Tetsje Riedstra



Quiz Time!

TRUE-FALSE CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Answer true or false to each of the following sentences.

1. Mary and Joseph travelled by donkey to Bethlehem. Luke 2: 3-5
2. Jesus was laid in a manger. Luke 2:7
3. The cattle kept Joseph and Mary company in the stable. Luke 2:7.
4. The shepherds were told to follow a star. Luke 2:11-12.
5. Angels told the shepherds of Jesus' birth. Luke 2:11.
6. Three Wise Men visited Jesus. Matthew 2:1.
7. The Wise Men found Jesus in a house. Matt. 2:11.
8. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the Highest." Luke 2:13-14.
9. The Wise Men were kings who rode on camels. Matt. 2:1-2.
10. Herod wanted to find Jesus to worship Him. Matt. 2: 8,12.
11. The Wise Men presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matt. 2:11.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Each of the following people or groups had something to do with the story of the birth of Jesus. Match the people with the statement concerning them.

1. Caesar Augustus, Luke 2:1
2. Joseph, Luke 2:4
3. Mary, Luke 2:5
4. Angel, Luke 2:8-11
5. Shepherds, Luke 2:17
6. Those who heard, Luke 2:18
7. Herod, Matt. 2:7-8
8. Heavenly host, Luke 2:13-14
9. Wise Men, Matt. 2:11
10. God, Matt. 2:12

- a. went to see Jesus, then told others about Him.
- b. Announced Jesus' birth to shepherds.
- c. issued a decree.
- d. went with her husband to Bethlehem.
- e. went to Bethlehem to be taxed.
- f. wondered at what they were told.
- g. said "Glory to God in the Highest."
- h. presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- i. warned the Wise Men of Herod's evil plan.
- j. pretended to want to worship Jesus.



CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Jaclyn DeHaas

Find:

church
Christmas Eve
Christmas
Jesus Christ
heaven
tree
manger
lights
New Year's Eve
New Year's Day
angels
Lord Jesus
Mary
Joseph
stable
decorations

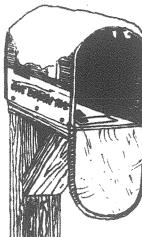
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| H | E | H | L | A | T | M | N | M | E | T | T | A |
| R | H | Z | E | W | V | A | G | A | D | S | R | N |
| I | I | X | S | A | I | N | E | R | W | I | E | G |
| S | C | Y | C | S | V | G | L | Y | T | R | E | E |
| T | T | W | H | O | O | E | S | L | L | H | A | R |
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| U | E | S | E | N | H | O | T | G | A | S | E | N |
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| C | R | T | T | J | B | R | O | T | T | J | R | E |
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| U | E | R | O | L | T | J | W | P | P | O | A | R |
| R | Y | Q | U | B | M | E | E | S | D | M | S | |
| C | W | C | E | A | H | S | O | S | A | L | D | D |
| H | E | E | J | T | P | U | S | O | D | E | Y | A |
| A | N | D | S | S | O | S | J | J | Y | R | I | Y |

CHRISTMAS NUMBER CODED MESSAGE

by Busy Beaver Jaclyn DeHaas

| | | | | |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| A - 1 | F - 6 | K - 11 | P - 16 | U - 21 |
| B - 2 | G - 7 | L - 12 | Q - 17 | V - 22 |
| C - 3 | H - 8 | M - 13 | R - 18 | W - 23 |
| D - 4 | I - 9 | N - 14 | S - 19 | X - 24 |
| E - 5 | J - 10 | O - 15 | T - 20 | Y - 25 |
| | | | | Z - 26 |

7 12 15 18 25 20 15 7 15 4
 9 14 20 8 5 8 9 7 8 5 19 20,
 1 14 4 16 5 1 3 5 15 14!
 5 1 18 20 8 20 15 13 5 14!



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Sarah Schulenberg. When is your birthday? Where did you used to live? Did you help clean up the leaves this fall, like it shows in your picture? Hope to hear from you soon, Sarah, Bye.

Hi, Marja Vandekamp. It was nice to have a letter from you again. How old are your sisters? You said in your letter that your mom surprises you when you get home from school. Does she have warm muffins ready for you to eat? Do you have choir in school? Bye, Marja.

Hi, Tamara DeJong. Your letter was quite interesting. You said you have rabbits. What do you feed them? And what grade are you in? What did you do when your cousins visited? Maybe I'll hear from you soon? Bye, Tamara.

Hi, Deanna Wierenga. Wow! You sure have done a lot of exciting things in the last little while! Thanks for the interesting letter. I hope your cat is doing well. Bye, Deanna.

To all Busy Beavers: Have a wonderful Christmas holiday! Love to you all from

Aunt Betty
c/o The Busy Beaver Club
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

Aunt Betty

C

