

# Clarion

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# Calvin Studies

One of the pleasures in the life of an editor is to receive books and to read or at least to scan them; one of his cumbersome tasks is to review them. At least this is my experience; but a vague feeling of uneasiness with respect to the eighth commandment drives me to discharge some of my duties as reviewer. On my desk I have three books all published by Baker's Book House of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the printer will certainly not be offended, when we take these books together. They all are related to Calvin and Calvinism anyway.

While two of them are reprints, one is a completely new publication and as such it deserves priority. It is the book written by Ford Lewis Battles, assisted by John Walchenbach, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin*. The author, who at the end of his life was professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, died shortly after he had prepared this publication; the introduction is dated April 1979. Ford Lewis Battles was a scholar who gained recognition with all those who in English-speaking countries study Calvin's main work, the *Institutes*. We have the Allen or Beveridge translation and the Battles translation. This last translation is found in Volumes 20 and 21 of the Library of Christian Classics, edited by John T. McNeill. Translator and editor did an excellent job; it is a delight to read Calvin in lucid, contemporary English and to study the elaborate notes in what was rightly heralded as the definitive English language edition of one of the monumental works of the Christian church. Ford Lewis Battles was now exactly the right person to give us an *Analysis of the Institutes*. During the late sixties and seventies he gave seminars on Calvin's standard work and one of the requirements of the course was to read the entire 1559 edition of the *Institutes*. A teacher who makes his students undertake a spiritual journey through such a vast land, acts wisely when he provides them with a road map. This is the character of the book of Ford Lewis Battles: in no more than 400 pages he gives a survey of the four books of Calvin's *Institutes*. The analysis is interspersed with a few diagrams, e.g., Freedom of Will from Paul to Calvin (p. 91), or Faith and Salvation: From Pelagius to the Council of Orange (p. 102). In studying these diagrams I felt myself in the classroom and saw a blackboard in front of me and an enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher wielding his chalk and drawing some lines in order to make an intricate matter as simple as possible. In his introduction Ford Lewis Battles tells the life story of the *Institutes* (1536-1559): from six to eighty chapters. His charts of the shifts and additions of material in the five chief Latin editions and of the relation of contents between the Institution of 1536, the Catechism of 1538, and the Institution of 1539, come in very handy. They can prevent much puzzling research by others. Interesting is also the characterization of the *Institutes* as a book of antitheses. Our Dutch readers who know C. Vonk's explanation of the Belgic Confession, are well-acquainted with the two fronts on which Calvin and De Brès waged their spiritual war, the Romanists and the Anabaptists. Battles, however, expanded this approach and gave a tabular

analysis, entitled "The Antithetical Structure of the Institutes," pp. 19-23. It shows, at least, that our language about true versus false church is deeply embedded in Calvin's thought. I am less enthusiastic about Battles' characterization of the *Institutes* as "Spiritual Biography in Systematic Form" (pp. 14-18). I never discovered too much of "that autobiographical character of this book." I also put a question mark behind the sentence that every Christian must experience the salvation history for himself (p. 19). But I am not going to elaborate on critical remarks; my respect for Dr. Ford Lewis Battles and the tremendous amount of work that he did to keep Calvin's *Institutes* approachable in this twentieth century is too great for carping. While he warned, "Do not become a Calvinist of the first five chapters or of the first book," I may warn not to become a Calvinist of an *Analysis* as such. The synoptic view is meant to facilitate your reading of the *Institutes* rather than to replace it.

The second book that draws our attention in this review article on Calvin studies is a reprint in Baker's Twin Brooks Series. It is entitled *The Theology of Calvin*, written by Wilhelm Niesel and translated by Harold Knight. The book was published in German in 1938 and the English translation first appeared in 1956. Wilhelm Niesel gave a concise exposition of Calvin's views on the knowledge of God, the Trinity, creation and providence, sin, the law, the two testaments, the Mediator, His grace within us, the Christian life, prayer, divine election, the church, the sacraments, and secular government. It has rightly obtained a place among the detailed surveys of Calvin's theological system. Although it can be used as a companion volume to the *Institutes* in a manner similar to the usage of Ford Lewis Battles' *Analysis*, Niesel's book is more than a skeleton of the *Institutes*. It is also based on Calvin's commentaries and other publications and offers a more reasoned resume of Calvin's teaching. I compared this English translation of Niesel's *The Theology of Calvin* with the second German edition of 1957. The first chapter deals with the present state of critical studies but a part of it has been relegated to a supplement that gives a survey of recent studies of Calvin's theology. As far as I can see, the latest work quoted in Niesel's survey is from 1956. It is clear that Calvin students do well to consult the excellent bibliographies, published since 1971 in *Calvin Theological Journal*, and to read a survey essay by D. Nauta in *Calvinus Theologus*, the report of the 1974 European Congress on Calvin Research. For most of our readers, however, it is sufficient to know that Wilhelm Niesel's book gives a clear and captivating resumé of the theology of Calvin. Again, I could make some critical remarks or ask some questions. The thesis of the book immediately comes to mind. The theological norm or central thread that helps explain why Calvin developed his theology as he did is not a particular doctrine like divine sovereignty, contends the author, but Christology: "Jesus Christ controls not only the context but also the form of Calvinistic thought" (p. 247). One wonders whether this thesis written in German in 1938, is not more influenced

by Karl Barth's christomonism than by the structure of Calvin's theology itself. Connected with this point is my criticism on the foundational section on "Theology and Holy Scripture." Niesel states that Calvin, in writing his theology, is concerned about something far deeper than an exposition of Scriptural truths apprehended by faith. The ultimate purpose is the same as that of the Bible itself: our Lord Jesus Christ. "Calvin in his theology is concerned fundamentally about this living Lord; not about certain doctrines which he has extracted from Scripture" (p. 28). But is that not a false dilemma — "niet de leer, maar de Heer," not doctrine but the Lord — and as such alien to Calvin's thought? Niesel says that Calvin "considers the word of the Bible as a dead and ineffectual thing for us, if it is not divinely vivified" (p. 32). But did Calvin ever consider the living Word of God as dead and ineffectual? And is it really misleading to regard Calvin as the exponent of a literal theory of inspiration (p. 33)? In this context I must make a remark about the translation. On page 35 we read that "Calvin neither championed the idea of the demonstrable mechanical inspiration of the Bible nor did he believe in its inspired literal inerrancy." The German text, however, does not speak about a *mechanical* inspiration (who defends such inspiration today?) but about a *graphic* inspiration and *verbal* inspiration. Niesel, probably under influence of Karl Barth, rejects this concept of graphic and verbal inspiration. Again he creates a false dilemma when he wants Calvin's remarks about the divine inspiration in no case to be interpreted to mean "that Scripture as such is identical with the truth of God. No; the truth of God is Jesus Christ . . ." (p. 36). The Dutch dissertation of D.J. de Groot and an English treatise by John Murray, *Calvin on Scripture . . .*, have made clear, that Niesel's interpretation of Calvin's theology is inadequate as far as the doctrine of Scripture is concerned.

Although I regret that Niesel's study is marred by this Barthian preoccupation, it is undoubtedly an indispensable tool for the serious and discerning student of Calvin's writings.

The third book, that I would like to announce, is also a reprint in Baker's Twin Brook Series, *Calvin and the Reformation* edited by William Park Armstrong. It comprises four studies by Emile Doumergue, August Lang, Herman Bavinck, and Benjamin B. Warfield. The names make it clear that we have to do with some older publications. The four studies which make up this book were prepared for "The Princeton Theological Review" and published in 1909, as a contribution to the celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Calvin.

Doumergue wrote an essay entitled "Calvin: Epigone or Creator?" in which he attacked theses of Ritschl, Troeltsch, and Max Weber. The German Lutheran Theological Ritschl had asserted: "So far as the ideal of Calvinism is anti-Catholic, this is due to the instigation of Luther; so far as it departs from Luther, it goes back to the ideal of the Franciscans and Anabaptists." What Ritschl had said against Calvin, Troeltsch maintained must be applied equally to Luther. Both Luther and Calvin were, basically, two monastic ascetics, according to Troeltsch, who not only broadened Ritschl's thesis, but also borrowed from Max Weber the conception of intramundane asceticism. At the beginning of this century Max Weber had published his famous study on Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism. In our time, Weber's thesis is still discussed and new attention is given to the historian Troeltsch. It is,

therefore, a pleasure to read the spirited essay of the famous French Calvin scholar Emile Doumergue. He especially deals with the pretended asceticism of Calvin, and scores several points, e.g., when he writes that self-denial for Calvin is the great means of Christian activity in the world. But one sometimes wonders whether Doumergue does not overstate his case and in his apology for Calvin tries to defend what really should be abandoned. When Calvin in his meditation on the life to come speaks of condemning the present life, he uses strong expressions: "Indeed there is no middle ground between these two: either the world must become worthless to us or hold us bound by intemperate love of it" (*Institutes* III, 9,2). In the same context we read that heaven is our homeland and earth nothing but our place of exile. "If departure from the world is entry into life, what else is the world but a sepulchre? . . . If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison?" Such words of Calvin remind me more of Plato than of Paul. Why should we not criticize them stronger than Doumergue did, who only spoke of Calvin's "extravagant way of speaking"?

Nevertheless, I heartily agree with Doumergue's conclusion that Calvin was no epigone and that the Reformation in general, and Calvinism in particular, closed the Middle Ages and opened modern times.

The second study is by August Lang, "The Reformation and Natural Law," the third is by Herman Bavinck, "Calvin and Common Grace," and the last essay in this booklet is by Benjamin B. Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God."

It would take too much space now to enter into a discussion of these topics. The titles already make clear that they deal with issues that are still in debate. We experience a revival of natural theology and I read with interest Lang's statement, "Even less than Luther does Calvin show himself a friend of natural law" (p. 68/9). My Kampen colleague, Dr. J. Douma, dealt with the concept of natural law, and his dissertation was about the concept of common grace. Dr. Douma compared Kuyper, Schilder and Calvin, while in an English thesis of 1928 Dr. H. Kuiper had written on *Calvin on Common Grace*.

Let me end with the remark that those who study Niesel's book will do well to take special note of Warfield's exposition of Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God, especially the part dealing with the inspiration of Scripture (p. 159-166). The many quotations give evidence of another Calvin than the "Barthian" one.

It is still winter time, an excellent opportunity for reading and study, and Calvin's writings always lead to the source of all Christian knowledge, the Word of our God.

J. FABER

Ford Lewis Battles, assisted by John Walchenbach, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, tr. Harold Knight (Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1980).

William Park Armstrong (ed.), *Calvin and the Reformation. Four Studies by Emile Doumergue, August Lang, Herman Bavinck, and Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1980).

#### OUR COVER

*Winterlude in Ottawa, February 6-15.*  
*"World's Longest Skating Rink" (8.7 km long), with prominent buildings in the background. (Photo Courtesy of the Ministry of Tourism and Industry, Government of Ontario.)*

# For the Sake of True Ecumenicity<sup>3</sup>

Even more candidly Drs. Baarda stated his views. In his book *The Reliability of the Gospels* he wrote:

The rough outline, which we gave in the preceding chapter, was meant to give an impression of the complex history that lies between what occurred and what is told us in the gospels. That history of course might be written in other ways, but in what manner one might like to do so, the conclusion cannot be escaped that there must have been a history full of events between the occurrence and the story about what happened; a history which has left its imprint upon that which is finally narrated. Therefore the conclusion that we would like to draw from the preceding considerations is: "there is written" does not consequently mean "it occurred" or "it has been said."<sup>28</sup>

Drs. Baarda also wrote:

In the preceding chapter we have already suggested a couple of times that also the "rumor" and the "saga" may have influenced the development of tradition. Now it is true and also understandable that in our midst people have been on their guard against statements like these. But I doubt whether it will do to rule them out entirely. There are narratives in the gospels that have something of a legendary character, as for instance the one about the cursing of the fig tree (Matthew 21:18-20 and parallel places), or, and even more so, the story of the resurrection of the dead at the hour that Jesus died (Matthew 27:52, 53). Wouldn't it be possible that in these cases certain apocalyptic words have been dramatized in the rumor or in the saga?"<sup>29</sup>

Some pages further we read:

. . . to the man, who is seeking and who desires to find, there is in these gospels the voice of the message that will help him start out on his way and set him in motion. Then these stories possibly may render something less of history in the usual sense of the word, but to him, who listens and really wants to hear, it may happen that history in its true sense will be made in his life as well as in his surroundings.<sup>30</sup>

These then were voices heard before 1967. Since then things have definitely taken a turn for the worse. We will quote another author to prove this. However, before doing so, we must state that it was a general synod of the synodical churches, which opened wide the gate for the now prevailing attitude of criticism of the reliability of the Word of God.

At the synod of Amsterdam-Lunteren 1967 one Rev. Delleman received the answer to his question to the synod of Apeldoorn 1961/1962, whether or not the decision of the synod of Assen 1926 was to be considered still binding. This decision was made with regard to the case of Dr. Geelkerken. This Dr. Geelkerken in a sermon on Lord's Day 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism had said that he wanted to leave open the possibility that the speaking of the serpent to Eve should be understood as a symbolic manner of presenting the fact of the falling of mankind in sin.

The synod of Assen then declared:

that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent and its speaking and the tree of life, according to the evident intention of the narrative of Scripture in Genesis 2 and 3, should be understood in the actual and literal meaning of the words, and that therefore they were realities subject to sense-perception.

It concluded from this:

that . . . the view of Dr. Geelkerken, being that without coming into conflict with the Articles 4 and 5 of the Belgic Confession, the possibility could be left open that these things and facts were not subject to sense-perception, should be rejected.<sup>31</sup>

This certainly was a faithful confession of the infallibility of Scripture.

What did the general synod of Amsterdam-Lunteren 1967 answer to the suggestion to set aside this truly Scriptural and Reformed pronouncement? Under the pressure, exerted by the new liberalism within its own company, it indeed did away with it. It did so in words which provide the clear evidence of its incapability of confessional loyalty. The Synod declared:

that it did not consider itself qualified to express an opinion with regard to the specific nature of the narrative of Scripture in Genesis 2 and 3, and therefore could not stand by the exclusive way of speaking of the synod of Assen with respect to the evident significance of some particular details of this narrative.<sup>32</sup>

After this word of the synod of 1967 had been spoken, the criticism of Scripture took on, as might be expected, an air of impertinence unheard of before. As we cannot quote all those who recently made evident this sad

course of events, we will to some length listen to one of them: Drs. B. Boelens.

In his book *Tussen mens en onmens*<sup>33</sup> he writes, when dealing with the Bible:

No aberration without verification, the proverb says.<sup>34</sup>

Evidently with the Bible one can do whatever one likes. That is not only due to the fact that people are different in every respect, and therefore respond differently to what the Bible says. It is also due to the Bible itself. In it different people say different things. There is ample evidence from church-history that attempts have been made to get rid of the differences by making them agree. These attempts were made because people were of the opinion that the Bible "as the Word of God" can never contradict itself. Indeed, God does not contradict himself, but the belief that therefore the Bible does not contradict itself is due to a misunderstanding that does not do justice to the authors of the Bible. He, who tries by hook and by crook to make these authors agree will nearly always make one of them ventriloquize or even both.<sup>35</sup>

He also makes clear that he rejects the doctrine of inspiration, held by the church of all ages, as is evident from the following quotation:

Among christians the Bible is called the Word of God. This usage has become so current, that with many christians it is a fundamental part of christian faith. He, who dares to criticize here is in the eyes of many attacking christianity.

For two reasons that is a definitely wrong and even dangerous state of affairs. In the first place this statement that the Bible is the Word of God is very deceptive. A more fatal misunderstanding is hardly possible in the world of christian faith. It makes men gods. It is idolatry. It lifts up a book to a status it never can nor is allowed to have and, for that matter, not wishes to have. Calling the Bible the Word of God is also, in spite of every good intention, in fundamental conflict with . . . christian faith itself. Christian faith knows itself spoken to by God not in a book but in a man — Jesus! By calling a book the Word of God we actually — of course unknowingly and without intention to do so — fall short of doing justice to Jesus, which is the last thing christian faith should do to him.<sup>36</sup>

Still writing on the same topic he also writes:

The Bible was written by human beings. That is a truth which no sensible man will deny. To say that the Bible was written by God is simply a crazy assertion. What or who God may be, He writes no books, for that is what theologians do, but not God.

The consequences of the fact that the Bible was written by human beings we should permit to penetrate into our



hearts. Man is marked by restrictions. He is always limited by time and culture. We all have our own dispositions, opinions, status, wisdom or unwisdom, personal circumstances, etc. When man is speaking or writing, all these things become involved. Words, spoken or written, are in the nature of things never absolute, but subject to limitations, defective and fallible.

With regard to the Bible this means that it indeed is a unique book, the only book that makes us understand Jesus, but it is not an infallible book.<sup>37</sup>

In other chapters of his book too Drs. Boelens proceeds along the same track of denying the inspiration of the Bible, as is evident from the following quotations:

Through Jesus the Christians have recognized God as the God of Israel, as the God of the authors of the Old Testament. In the light of Jesus it is unmistakably clear that these authors have said wrong things about God, in the same manner as every human being said wrong things about Him. In the Old Testament sometimes a role is imposed on God, which He, according to his revelation in Jesus, would not wish to assume. But, for that matter, don't we sometimes do the same thing to Him?<sup>38</sup>

God is a God of action. If He was not we would do better to let Him slip from our minds. That much already the authors of the Old Testament knew about Him . . . . They indeed sometimes attributed actions to God which they had on their own record. That is what we all do. That is the way we are. God has to take on himself our performances, and particularly so our pious performances . . . .<sup>39</sup>

Also after 1967 — in 1971 — Dr. H. Wiersinga published his dissertation *Verzoening in de theologische discussie*.<sup>40</sup>

The tendency of this and later works of Dr. Wiersinga is well-known. In all these works the heart of the Gospel is attacked.

Many readers have asked themselves the question how Dr. Wiersinga could come to conclusions so entirely contrary to Scriptural teaching. What about all those places where the substitutionary nature of Christ's suffering and death is clearly taught? How did he manage to get rid of them?

To be sure, Wiersinga could do this only because he denied the biblical truth that God requires punishment for the sins committed. But how could he deny that truth? He could do so because he had wrong notions of Scripture. And do not forget: for wrong notions of Scripture the general synod of 1967 had opened the door.

Wiersinga discovers in the Bible two "layers."<sup>41</sup>

By means of this distinction he sets aside everything in Scripture that contradicts his position. He simply declares it to belong to that "layer" of the Bible which should not be valued as true revelation of God.

Wiersinga was criticized with regard to his errors. But does he keep silent now? The Interim Committee did not give an answer to this question, which of course should be asked. By its silence it in a way suggests that Wiersinga does not propagate his views any longer. But this is not the true state of affairs.

In a booklet by D. Aalbers, *De Man in Kwestie — Gesprekken met Herman Wiersinga, 1978*, Wiersinga himself puts down his present position concerning most of the views presented by him in the past. Apparently he did not change. Of the Bible he says:<sup>42</sup>

In the Bible I find all kinds of things which I cannot reconcile with the cardinal message of the Gospel of Jesus. In my dissertation and in *Verzoening met het lijden*?<sup>43</sup> I therefore referred to two layers in the Bible . . . . The first layer Israel shares with the surrounding nations: a chain-reaction of sin and punishment, of guilt and suffering. The second layer presents to view the true God. In this layer the chain-reaction is broken and it opens the surprising view of the God of forgiveness, who does not maintain retaliation and interruption.<sup>44</sup>

Essentially the conflict with Dr. Wiersinga is not about the question: What does Scripture say? It is first of all a controversy on the issue: What is Scripture?

Wiersinga's error concerning the doctrine of reconciliation is not the result of exegesis, of interpretation of Scripture, but of his rejection of everything in Scripture that does not support his erroneous opinion.

Although the deviation from the Reformed doctrine of reconciliation features prominently today, other Reformed doctrines are also suffering from attacks launched against them. Prof. Kuitert's works provide ample evidence that almost everything is turned upside down.

We would, however, do no justice to Kuitert and Wiersinga if we forget that others have paved the way for these men. As early as in the fifties prominent scholars in the synodical churches bade farewell to the Canons of Dordt. In 1955 Prof. Berkouwer wrote a book *De Verkiezing Gods*. In 1959 Prof. H.N. Ridderbos published his commentary *Aan de Romeinen*. In both books it was denied that in

Romans 9 Paul teaches a double predestination.

In 1966 Prof. H.N. Ridderbos published *Paulus*. In this book he denies that Paul ever taught a definite number of elect in the counsel of God.<sup>45</sup>

In the bundle *Ex Auditu Verbi* Prof. A.D.R. Polman supports the view of Prof. Berkouwer. He writes:

The Bible does not know about a decree before the beginning of time, by which all things were determined and casually conditioned, but contrary to this, the Bible speaks of a merciful election by God in Christ before the foundation of the world and a reprobation in history, in which is revealed the reaction of God against our rebellion and resistance . . . . In Scripture reprobation is always the judgment of God taking effect against unbelief and a call to repentance.<sup>46</sup>

In less than fifteen years the synodical churches followed these leading men. This was done at the synod of 1969/1970. An appeal extended against the doctrine of divine reprobation, Canons



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of Dordt I, 15, and Rejection of Errors I, 8, was accepted!<sup>47</sup>

Thus the binding power of the confessional standards was disposed of. It is not surprising that consequently the old form of subscription was replaced by another, less obligatory form.

There is more here that attention should be given to. From its consultations with the moderamen of the general synod of the synodical churches the Interim Committee concluded that these churches have faithfully exercised discipline in the case of Dr. Wiersinga. The Interim Committee reports that it "is not able to say that the disciplinary process has not been followed with all due haste."

We must say that we cannot understand how this assertion can be made. In 1944 in many cases faithful office-bearers were suspended and deposed in less than four weeks. In the case of Dr. Wiersinga, a downright heretic, eight years elapsed since he published his notorious dissertation. His views are unchanged. Only four years ago, in 1975, he wrote to the general synod:

The difference between the synod and me is in the manner in which we have to conceive of the reconciliation through Christ . . . The confessional standards emphasize that Christ bore the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race; that because of the guilt and punishment, deserved by mankind, He had to make "satisfaction" before God; and that God punished Him with the severe judgment under which we should have perished. According to this view the Father turns against the Son, in the darkness of Golgotha.

As I see it now I think I have to deny the necessity and the actuality of this way of reconciliation. And I do so on the basis of grounds I take with a good conscience from Holy Scripture. In addition to this the conception of the confessional standards (the Father turns against the Son) throws an unnecessary and dangerous shadow upon the image of God, even though it is emphasized that we have to proceed from the all-encompassing love of the Father.<sup>48</sup>

In the same letter he also writes:

I, as far as I can see, would have to take on myself a burden too heavy to bear, if you would ask me simply to keep silent, in my work as an office-bearer, about the existing difference of views.<sup>49</sup>

It is inconceivable that the moderamen of the general synod, which had its consultations with the Interim Committee, would not have known that Dr. Wiersinga only two years ago — in 1977 — publicly held to everything he

had written in the past.

He did so in the booklet of Aalbers, *De Man in Kwestie*.

In answer to a question of the journalist who interviewed him, Wiersinga says about the sacrifice of the Saviour on the cross:

The New Testament then speaks of a ransom and of "to pay a price," but this figure of speech is overcharged when it is interpreted as a satisfaction or a payment to God.

Sacrifices and blood bring about a shock, they make us wake up, bring about a change. I call that the "shock-effect" of the cross. God did not need it — He doesn't want to see blood — but it was necessary for us to make us retire into ourselves and to transform us.<sup>50</sup>

Wiersinga also discussed with Aalbers the expectation of the synod that he would not propagate his views. He told him:

I want to make sure that the synod knows where I stand: I cannot keep silent. There should be no doubt about that. To promise this would mean that, when I come with a book or an article or an interview, they would say: but you promised to keep your mouth shut! And that I don't want.<sup>51</sup>

This he said in 1977, but that Wiersinga would not be silenced was made public by him already immediately after the general synod of Maastricht, which rejected his views. March 1976 Wiersinga attended a meeting of fellow student-pastors. There he made an address: "What it matters to me." This address was published together with others of his colleagues in a booklet called: *Eerlijk voor elkaar*. From this speech of his it became clear that he had a program including more attacks on confessional doctrines. He made, among others, the following statement:

Faith is nowadays seriously hampered by traditional notions, both by such with a confessional stamp and by others of caricaturing nature. It has caused much trouble to reformed theologians to lift the biblical idea of *election* from the scholastical framework of the Canons of Dordt, in order that it might be understood again as a word signifying deliverance and service. With regard to election the traditional notion was a heavy burden and the changing of it meant to many no less than a liberation.

I don't have to elaborate on the necessity to arrive at another presentation of the *providence* of God. In how many announcements in the papers the hand of God is too closely connected with dreadful occurrences.

Also in connection with *reconciliation* God is pictured too often as a God who desires the death of his Son. Men who

were once christians denounce this view in novels, plays and films. This traditional notion can do and does so much damage that another presentation seems to me much needed.<sup>52</sup>

The moderamen of the general synod also told the Interim Committee "that no one is known to agree with Dr. Wiersinga's views that Christ did not bear the wrath of God in our place and that His death on the cross was important primarily because of the shock effect it had upon the disciples."<sup>53</sup>

With respect to this assertion we can but say: the moderamen certainly was badly informed.

We will not quote from all that was written in recent publications, but ask attention for a book already mentioned before: *Tussen mens en onmens* by Drs. Boelens. In a chapter on the subject of reconciliation he made the following clear statements:

Neither were the suffering and death of Jesus unavoidable in this sense that God wanted him to suffer and die. God wants the suffering and death of no one. He is a God of salvation and not of damnation. He did not want his beloved Son to die! On the contrary: They will respect my Son (Matthew 21:37).<sup>54</sup>

Many christians are in the habit of saying that the suffering and death of Jesus was a substitutionary suffering and death. If that means that Jesus suffered and died in the place of others, so that they did not suffer and die anymore — when this is meant: he suffered and died, and we do not, then this is an evident — contradiction to the actual state of affairs.

We do suffer. And we do die.

Jesus did not suffer and die *in* our place, that we would be free of death and suffering, but he suffered and died *on* our place. He stood where other people also stand. He was our fellow-man, man-with-others, solidary with them unto death. Our griefs he has borne.<sup>55</sup>

Likewise it is no christian position to say that Jesus made the sacrifice that appeases the wrath of God. For in the first place: the wrath of God is not something to be appeased. Where there are human beings, who do not act humanly, there it is all-out hell, from bedroom to living room and from consistory-room to world-room.

When we say that God's wrath should be appeased, we create the impression that God is a God who acts like a petty king, who, when insulted, demands expiation to procure justice, before he will be able to show his love. Satisfaction should be given!

This idea of satisfaction is unmistakably a mediaeval, feudal corruption of the gospel, of western theology and, for that matter, of confession, smuggled in by Anselmus . . . . But this is not the way God is. The gods are like that but not

## ANNOUNCEMENT

A Foundation for the establishment of a Reformed Political-Social Magazine has recently been formed. The Board of this Foundation consists of the following members: Dr. C. Poppe, Chairman; T. Veenendaal, Vice-Chairman; C. Meliefste, Secretary; A. Van Abbema, Treasurer; G. Kuik, Executive Director; Rev. B.J. Berends, Advisor.

The correspondence address of the Foundation is: C. Meliefste, Box 1098, Carman, Manitoba, Canada R0G 0J0.

The purpose of the Foundation is to publish an internationally-oriented magazine in the English language which propagates the Reformed point of view on matters relating to church, state, and society. Such a venture could be of great significance for the continuation of Christ's church-gathering work. To gather funds for this undertaking a drive will be held among our people in Canada as well as in The Netherlands.

For more information on this venture and its purpose, please read the 1980 year-end issue of *Clarion*, pp. 584-587.

Although most of the Churches in Eastern Canada have been visited, such is not the case with many of the Western Canadian Churches. Br. G. Kuik and Rev. B.J. Berends have been found willing to visit the churches in Western Canada and would like to suggest the following schedule:

**Tuesday, Feb. 17:** Houston, Smithers  
**Wednesday, Feb. 18:** Fraser Valley West  
 (Cloverdale, Langley, Surrey)  
**Thursday, Feb. 19:** Fraser Valley East  
 (Abbotsford, Chilliwack)  
**Saturday, Feb. 21:** Edmonton  
**Sunday, Feb. 22:** Barrhead, Neerlandia  
**Monday, Feb. 23:** Coaldale, Calgary

## OKANAGAN VALLEY B.C. CANADA'S HAWAII

*Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.*

*II Timothy 4:2*

For some time two families of the Canadian Reformed Church (12 people) have been worshipping the Lord together on Sundays in the Okanagan Valley. We would like to know whether there are any other families at present living in the Valley who would like to worship with us, or whether there are others contemplating a move to Canada's most beautiful climate and four-seasons playground and who would like information on this area. Please contact us and help us establish a Canadian Reformed Church in this Valley. Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton, and surrounding communities (The Okanagan Valley) have a health economy and are experiencing a building boom, with related and small business doing very well.

If you have any questions regarding the above, or would like to worship with us according to God's Word,

### PLEASE CONTACT

<i>Kelowna</i>	<i>Vernon</i>
John Luhoff Fam.	G. Deters Fam.
R.R. 1, Site 6, Comp. 5,	R.R. 4, Site 15, Comp. 59,
Jennens Road,	Garnet Drive,
Westbank, B.C. V0H 2A0	Vernon, B.C. V1T 6L7
Phone: (604) 768-3987	Phone: (604) 542-9352

### ECUMENICITY — *Continued.*

God. He doesn't stand on His rights. That is what the Bible calls "grace."<sup>56</sup>

Isn't this Wiersinga's error?

No one can deny that it is, though it is put down in words much more blunt and harsh than used by the man who originally came up with the mistaken idea. Here also, however, all humbleness toward the Holy One is done away with. A man, who is nothing but a creature, is passing judgment on God, as He has revealed Himself in our Lord Jesus Christ and as we know Him from His own and divine Word.

It can be no great surprise any more that, this being the situation, all the foundations are destroyed. Thus,

for instance, also the doctrine of God's providence has to endure attacks.

*Conclusion next issue.*

### FOOTNOTES:

- <sup>27</sup> *Verhaal en feit*, pp. 51, 52.  
<sup>28</sup> *De Betrouwbaarheid*, p. 80.  
<sup>29</sup> *De Betrouwbaarheid*, p. 84.  
<sup>30</sup> *De Betrouwbaarheid*, pp. 86, 87.  
<sup>31</sup> Acts Synod of Assen 1926, Art. 149.  
<sup>32</sup> Acts Amsterdam-Lunteren, Art. 346.  
<sup>33</sup> Freely translated into English: Between human and inhuman.  
<sup>34</sup> Free translation from the Dutch proverb: iedere ketter heeft zijn letter.  
<sup>35</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, p. 14.  
<sup>36</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, pp. 41, 42.  
<sup>37</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, p. 44.  
<sup>38</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, p. 66.  
<sup>39</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, p. 73.  
<sup>40</sup> In English: *Reconciliation in the theological discussion.*

<sup>41</sup> See quotation below.

<sup>42</sup> In English the title of the book would read: *The Man in Dispute — Talks with Herman Wiersinga.*

<sup>43</sup> In English: *Reconciliation with Suffering?*

<sup>44</sup> *De Man in Kwestie*, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> *Paulus*, pp. 380-394.

<sup>46</sup> *Ex Auditū Verbi*, p. 190.

<sup>47</sup> Acts 1969/1970, Art. 367.

<sup>48</sup> Letter of Dr. Wiersinga to the general synod, printed in *De Man in Kwestie*, p. 120.

<sup>49</sup> Same letter, p. 123.

<sup>50</sup> *De Man in Kwestie*, p. 37.

<sup>51</sup> *De Man in Kwestie*, p. 103.

<sup>52</sup> *Eerlijk voor elkaar* (in English: Honest one to another), p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Report Interim Committee, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, p. 95.

<sup>55</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, p. 96.

<sup>56</sup> *Tussen mens en onmens*, pp. 98, 99.

# Our Confession Concerning the Church

*A clear Confession with clear consequences.*

*From the Rev. D. DeJong we received a reaction to the articles written by the Rev. Cl. Stam on the confession concerning the Church. Although this reaction is rather lengthy for a "Letter-to-the-Editor" we do publish it because of the importance of the material dealt with. For that same reason we do not publish it under "Letters-to-the-Editor" but give it a separate place in this issue. vO*

"Is it so that our Confession concerning the Church is unclear so that controversy is inevitable? . . . Or is it rather a case of not wanting to accept the *clear consequences* of our confession regarding the Church?" Rev. C. Stam, who put these questions in *Clarion* of October 18, 1980 (a few weeks before the General Synod!), feels that it is indeed the latter. I agree. It was against the denial among us of the clear consequences of our confession concerning the Church that I directed myself in my published sermons on Lord's Day 21 (54, 55).

In his articles Rev. Stam deals, among other things, with these sermons of mine. Apparently he does not like the clear consequences of our confession as shown by me. This is his good right, if he can and does show that these consequences are wrong. However, in his first reference to my sermons he begins to maltreat what I wrote. I spoke about the Church "under construction," and Rev. Stam, referring to that (in a note mentioning page 11ff.), remarks: "But I would not like to conclude with him that it *therefore* is 'quite a mess,' like on every construction site." The words, "quite a mess," are the only quotation given, and since my published sermons are not generally in the possession of *Clarion*-readers, it is for most of them not easy to look them up in the context.

Let me tell you that you neither will find the word "*therefore*" (which Rev. Stam even emphasizes), nor something else with that meaning. What I did is exactly what Rev. Stam alleges that I did *not* do: refer to the fact that the one "holds on to a pious life apart from the Church," and "the other one blinds his eyes by only seeing his own church-institute." Part of page 10 and the greater part of page 11 is used for that, and right

after that I wrote: "The church is still under construction, and when you look at the results today you are inclined to say: what a mess."

While quoting falsely, Rev. Stam construes a false contrast between Prof. Dr. K. Schilder's and my speaking of a "mess," saying: Prof. Schilder "did not refer to its 'unfinished' state but to the fact that many lack the desire for true communion," etc. That is not true either. Schilder *did* refer to its "unfinished" state on the previous pages, up to page 230. He does not use the word "unfinished state" there, but he continues to speak about that, *also* on page 230 *and* on the following page. For Rev. Stam it is a matter of: not this but that; for Schilder and me it is a matter of things which go together: the church is unfinished yet; you see it, among others, also in the many miserable things which still defile her. Nevertheless, there is the conclusion of *faith* which says (as I put it right after speaking about the "mess"): "Yes, the Church is God's work, and therefore we believe the Church, and in spite of the mess which we and others have made of it; if only we look at the Church in the light of God's Word only, then in and through the mess we may, we can, and we *must* recognize the *style* of the building."

But also this conclusion of faith draws Rev. Stam's criticism. He refers to the duty of joining the true Church, confessed in Art. 28 B.C., and says: "That is more than merely recognizing the 'style of Christ's construction work.'" For this quote he refers to pages 12 and 13 of my sermons, and then points to Art. 28 B.C.'s saying "that outside of this gathering there is no salvation, and this is a serious matter indeed!"

Of course this is so, but the reader of his article must surely get the impression that I fell far short by neglecting this serious matter in merely speaking of recognizing the "style of Christ's construction work." Is that so? I spent 1½ pages on this "style," concluding: "That's quite important, brothers and sisters, for this also has something to do with our salvation!!"

Right after that I started my third point, *dealing with the matter con-*

*fessed in Art. 28 B.C.!* Let me give some (I could give more) quotations, apparently "overlooked" by Rev. Stam: "So it is with the Church. If we want to live eternally in Christ's House with its many dwelling places, its many residences, then we must be His construction workers, and here and now already, live with Him in His House as far as it has been completed." "Those who say, and act accordingly, that it doesn't matter how the Church is instituted and Christ's rules are maintained, they risk their salvation. For indeed, outside the Church which our Lord Jesus Christ gathers and builds there is no salvation" (pages 14 and 15 of my sermons).

Rev. Stam's second article appeared in *Clarion* of November 1, 1980 (dated 3 days before Synod!).

I will bypass his introduction about history in his first paragraph, except for two remarks. The first is that what "we" spoke (about "false church"), "we" learned (about cooperation), and "we" accepted (specific consequences) is merely based (see the notes) on what Rev. G. Visee once wrote. Who are those "we"? Was Rev. Visee the only authoritative teacher in 1949, and did all (Liberated) Reformed people (have to) follow his teachings in this respect? This, and also his references to Rev. B.A. Bos and Rev. B.J.T. Schoep, must pave the way for dealing with the next one (as if they are spiritually related): the undersigned. This is in itself quite a suggestion already.

Rev. Stam states that the question is: "Is each believer by that fact [of being a believer, DJ] a member of the true Church . . . of which Art. 28 speaks," and "do we have 'communion' with these believers which are not members of the true Church of Christ?" He rejects "automatism" in this respect. I do too. But he bases this on something of which he says that it is in Art. 28 ("that we *must be* members"), while Art. 28 in reality does *not* say that. It says, that "*as members*" they *must do* all the things mentioned here (compare the Dutch and French text, although the English text *is* clear enough). That's also in agreement with Q and A 55 of the Catechism. That's also the only defence against automatism, as if *being* a member means that you have done and do all these things automatically and completely. No, says Art. 28, "and that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers . . ." etc. And then the

*Continued on page 36.*





News items are published with a view to their importance for the Reformed Churches. Selection of an item does not necessarily imply agreement with its contents.

#### TULSA, OKLA. (RNS)

Although the California attorney general has dropped an investigation of the World-wide Church of God, that has not stopped people from making charges against the church's aged leader.

David R. Robinson, 56, a former top administrator in the church, recently won a court fight over his right to publish a book about the self-styled "only Apostle for the twentieth century." The book is entitled *Herbert Armstrong's Tangled Web*.

Mr. Robinson, a church member for 30 years, spent the last 10 years in the inner circle of church leadership and said he knew Mr. Armstrong and his heir apparent, Stanley Rader, quite well.

The 268-page paperback published here by John Haddon Publishers offers a picture of lush and sensual living, allegedly all with church funds, by the 88-year old Mr. Armstrong. (CN)

\* \* \*

#### LEMMON, S.C. (RNS)

Lloyd Dale wanted to offer his high school sophomore biology students an alternative to evolution by teaching them that a superb being, perhaps God, could have created life.

His insistence on providing that alternative — the theory of scientific creation — is what got him fired by the school board after teaching in the local school for 17 years, he says.

Even though he was described as an excellent teacher, had once been named teacher of the year and was past president of the South Dakota Education Association, the

board decided it had no alternative but to fire him. (CN)

\* \* \*

Baarda at Calvin Seminary. (*The Outlook*, Peter De Jong) — "Professor Tjitze Baarda is professor of New Testament in the Theological Faculty of the Free University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He has gained an international reputation in New Testament studies and his extensive work in the study of the Gospels will be reflected in "a lecture in the Calvin Theological Seminary Auditorium on September 16, 1980. With this announcement we were invited to hear Professor Baarda lecture on "The Call of Nathanael (John 1:45-51)."

Unlike a number of New Testament scholars, the lecturer informed us, he thought that Nathanael may have been a historical figure and that many of the words in the account were the words of Jesus, but that John was making a commentary on them. John's account is not so much historical narrative as John's theology. Some of John's characteristic emphases and expressions appear in the story: "King of Israel," etc. John was taking source material and elaborating in his own way. He had a way of telling stories, especially of making "dialog."

The professor regarded John's ideas as not original; he saw in John's gospel the influence of the kind of pagan philosophy called Gnosticism, observing that such ideas were also current among the Jews. John's gospel was a hermeneutic attempt to bring the gospel to people who had become accustomed to a Gnostic way of thinking.

The concluding joke in the lecture was the observation that in this field a scholar brings confusion or embarrassment about the text to a higher level, and the lecturer expressed the hope that he had succeeded in achieving this objective.

With such guidance, it is surprising that students, ministers, and churches become confused?

\* \* \*

Orthodox Christians in Azerbaijan want to know why all their churches — there are at least 50 — have been closed while mosques are permitted to remain open. Keston College in England received a copy of a petition to patriarch Pimen, signed by more than 400 Orthodox Georgians and Russians from three regions in the Azerbaijan Republic of the Soviet Union. They said they represent up to 23,000 Orthodox believers in the area, and appealed for help

in their quest to open one church for worship. (CT)

\* \* \*

The first Mormon temple in a "non-Christian" nation has been dedicated in Tokyo, Japan. The \$10 million temple is the eighteenth operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints worldwide. Mormon President Spencer W. Kimball dedicated the structure, built for special sacred ceremonies, including baptism for the dead, and marriage and "sealing" ordinances. (CT)

\* \* \*

Big business is finding that "Jesus Sells," the *Los Angeles Times* reports, citing such examples as Disneyland, which is now scheduling two Christian-oriented nights each year, and fast-selling Christian T-shirts. Additional secular companies, such as Scott, Foresman & Company, and MCA Records, are buying into the lucrative Christian book and music industry. The American Research Company last spring commissioned a George Gallup Poll of Christian buying habits: ARC officials say about 150 clients paid up to \$1,250 for the lengthy "Profile of the Christian Marketplace 1980," based on Gallup's studies. The emergence of Christianity as a marketing factor is more noticeable in southern California than elsewhere nationwide, said the *Times*. (CT)

\* \* \*

#### YOGYAKARTA

Women are no longer barred from the office of ministry in the Christian Church of Sumba (GKS), a member church of the RES in Indonesia. The decision was taken at the 30th Synod of the GKS, held on 20-29 August, 1980. This action is seen as an important step forward by the *Berita Oikumen*, the official magazine of the Indonesian Council of Churches. Sumba is an island to the east of Java and close to Bali.

The GKS has been struggling with this problem for several years without coming to a definite decision. The 30th Synod finally concluded that no biblical ground can be found to deny the office to women. The place of women is now fully acknowledged in the church without restriction.

Another important decision taken by the Synod concerns the implementation of presbyterian church government. There is as yet no permanent executive body of the Synod. Instead, a number of commissions

*Continued on page 35.*

# news medley

Believe it or not, but this time I don't have anything to mention about any of the Churches in the East. I could, of course, elaborate on the celebration which we had in Fergus on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its institution, but I do not think that I should do that in a medley. It deserves a special heading and separate treatment. Perhaps we shall have such a report also about the celebration which the Brampton Church had on January 17th. We had it on January 15th, the exact date; but I am glad that we did not celebrate on the same evening. Now we could meet each other and shake hands, congratulating each other on the anniversary. But let me not take off in spite of a statement to the contrary made above. Only this one more thing: an attractive booklet has been printed with quite a few pictures from those first years and also of events later on. They are still available for \$1.25 each, and if there is any ex-Fergus-member who would wish to have one, he may know that there are still a few copies left for that purpose. Perhaps I am accused now of abusing my position as writer of the medleys, but I'll take that. Besides, I did help others more than once via these columns; let those interested in our affairs benefit from it as well this time. Maybe we'll even be able to add a few pictures with a report. It all depends on how they turn out. Just wait and see.

Taking off for the West, we reach Carman first of all. The report on the progress with the erection of a new Church building is quite enthusiastic, and the expectation that the building may be ready for occupancy and use towards the end of this month seems not unwarranted.

Financing the whole project is always one of the more difficult aspects of such an undertaking. However, members of the Church have come to the rescue, so to speak. From some members a total of \$50,000 can be borrowed at an interest of 12½%. That saves the Church quite a bit of interest not just in the course of one year but in the course of all the years the loan may be kept. If that could be done more, our Congregations would benefit greatly from it.

Our readers know that I find it useless and a waste of paper and effort to mention in the brief report on a Consistory meeting what all bills have come in and to whom they were given for payment. Those things should not even come to the Consistory table when there is a committee of administration, but be passed on right away. When you have a committee for certain things, you should also honour them as such and not as a Consistory do the things you have entrusted to a committee.

This time, however, I can well understand why the Carman Consistory mentioned a bill that they had received. "A bill has been received from Carman Granite and Marble Works. This bill was written out as 'Cornerstone lettered and delivered.' It was marked 'paid' by Mr. Billing. This gift to the Church is also very much appreciated."

With respect to the new building the Consistory also considered what should and what should not be done once they start using it. They made the wise decision,

"The Consistory decided that smoking shall not be permitted in the new Church building."

Meanwhile it is not so that the eyes in Carman are directed towards their own building and interests only. No, "A special entry was made for Home Mission for the amount of \$2,000. We hope to use this money in cooperation with Winnipeg for some radio broadcasting." I express the wish that the money may soon be put to use for which it has been set aside.

From Coaldale's bulletin I learned again a few things about what has been going on at General Synod. It is a strange feeling that you have to learn those things from various bulletins. We always were used to having quite a report in *Clarion*. When reading those bulletin reports I come to the conclusion that each and every minister gives his own version of the things that have been going on. And regarding the numbers from the Hymn Section which have been deleted or added I find confusing information. As soon as there is some more definite information, I'll pass things on to our readers and, perhaps, discuss a thing or two. That is always good in preparation for the next Synod which — as I learned from the *Church News* — will be held in Cloverdale, the Lord willing. That will be in 1983. The various committees will already have received their assignment from the second clerk, and they can start working. Much work will again have to be done in order to prepare the agenda for the next General Synod.

There is one thing to which I should like to draw the attention now already. Or rather, two things.

In the first place I repeat a request which was made more than once in the past, namely, to write every communication and report, every submission, on *letter-size* paper. Legal size sheets do not fit in the binders and it is utterly frustrating when you get different size paper. That in the first place.

In the second place I like to point out that remarks about the work of the committees should be sent to the committees. I understand that individual submissions were received by Synod about the work of some of our committees of which submissions those committees did not even receive a copy.

I wonder whether it is correct for individual Church members to write to Synod about committee reports or to come with proposals. I know that it was done in the past and that Synods even dealt with and made decisions about proposals made by individual Church members, but more and more I start to doubt the correctness of the one as well as of the other. I am not ready with the question, and pose it only as a question. What I am convinced of, however, is that it is wrong to send a letter to Synod about the work or report of a Committee without even sending a copy of it to the Committee concerned. If a Committee report reaches the Churches a few weeks before Synod convenes, I can understand such action; but when there was ample time to approach the Committee itself, I cannot but disapprove of writing to Synod behind the back of the Committee. Committees remain in function until discharged by Synod; they do not cease to exist as soon as their report has reached the Churches. Besides, what the Churches receive is only a *copy* of their report to Synod. Perhaps we can see some improvement in this point in the future.

We are still in Alberta, remember? Let's go up to Calgary.

Some time ago it was decided to investigate the possibility of having a Saturday School for the purpose of reaching other children with the Gospel. Apparently the

investigation had a negative result, for we read, "It was reported that the investigation into the possibility of setting up a Saturday Evangelization School had as result that there will be no Saturday Evangelization School at the moment."

Calgary also received word that, due to an increase in cost, the rent which is charged to them for use of the Church building they have services in will be increased to \$200.00 per month. That is too bad, but you still cannot own a building for that amount of money. And: there will be no other solution than to accept the higher charge and pay it. As far as that goes, the Church at Chilliwack has a great advantage.

"From the Seventh Day Adventist Church we received a notice of pending rent increase from \$250.00 to \$275.00 per month." I can well understand that the brethren at the Consistory meeting smiled condescendingly when they got that notice. Fine, I would say, you can increase it by as much as you like, but we won't pay it: On January 1st we are going to use our own Church building. That's what the brethren in Chilliwack did. No, I don't mean that they said that — perhaps they thought it! — but I mean that they did use their own Church building on January 1st for the first time. Now they also can have all the activities of the Congregation under one roof. On Sunday evenings alone, Rev. Tiggelaar writes, there are four societies that come together. Congratulations again, now that I know for certain that your expectations have been fulfilled.

For the Congregation of Langley the end is in sight too. I mean, of course, the end of renting a building. It will take a little longer, but I would not be surprised when they can occupy their own building somewhere around the end of February or the beginning of March. Let's see how far I appear to be out.

We return for a minute to Alberta.

At the Classis of November 1960 — I still remember that vividly — there was a question what should be done with respect to the brethren and sisters in Barrhead. There was a desire in that place to have the Church instituted there. Classis advised the Consistory of Neerlandia to investigate the matter and to proceed according to their findings. The result was that on January 1, 1961, the institution took place. There were some fluctuations in

the membership, but especially during the last year there was quite some growth. We read about that, "On the date of institution the church had a membership of 58. With some ups and downs it came as low as 39 on January 1, 1979, to rise to 66 a year later and now as per January 1, 1981, it stands at 80, of which 45 communicant members." That is indeed encouraging; may the growth continue and then come from the larger congregations. That is most satisfactory.

We know that the Church at Smithers has much contact with descendants of the original inhabitants of North America, the Indians. Around Christmas time fifteen parcels were handed out to families. A party was also held. And in a brief postscript, as I would call it, the Rev. Van Spronsen gives a little evaluation of the whole effort. I should like to copy that piece in conclusion of this medley.

What do we accomplish by this, you may ask. Many things, in my opinion, even though you may not be seeing them attend Church or anything like that. First of all, that the Canadian Reformed Church is becoming known as a community of people who care for others, and who want to reach out also to the Indian population. We have regular contacts with people from Smithers, Telkwa, Moricetown. Secondly they can know that we come with a message for all people, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They heard it that evening, in their parcels they received the Gospel of Mark in Carrier language, the Gospel of John in English, a Special Christmas message, a copy of the Introduction Booklet to our Churches, and a personal handwritten letter from our community to theirs. In other words, the seed is sown! And the ground is prepared as well: they are far more likely to read from people whom they know and from whom they also receive tokens of friendship than from people who are unknown. That is also the reason why we do not hesitate to have entertainment, games, presents, etc. on our programs as well.

Whether it has lasting results we will perhaps never know, but what we will know is that we have not withheld from them what we received out of grace as well. May God bless the seed so that it will grow and bear fruit!  
vO

## INTERNATIONAL —

*Cont. from page 33*

are formed as Synod's executive agents. To coordinate the works of the various commissions, the Synod appointed a Coordinating Board whose members consist of the chairmen of all the commissions. This body is authorized to act on behalf of the Synod on crucial and urgent matters which emerge during the period between two Synodical meetings. (RES NE)

\* \* \*

## ROME

After ten years of discussion, the inter-confessional dialogue on the theology of marriage and the problems of mixed marriages by the Roman Catholic Church, the Luther-

an World Federation (LWF), and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), is deadlocked. A mutual unanimous statement was issued during an evaluation in Rome, October 27-31.

Theologians from all three global organizations agreed that a breakthrough can be reached only after the churches of the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church agree on the nature of the church and recognize each other without restrictions. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes only those marriages which are blessed by a priest.

Reactions to a final report sent to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences and member churches of the LWF and WARC for discussion and reflection served as the basis for a series of recommendations now

being studied by the three church families.

The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has been invited to study the personal and institutional aspect of mixed marriages. (RES NE)

\* \* \*

## LUNTEREN, THE NETHERLANDS

The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKN) [(Synod, vO)], rejected by a large majority a motion to withdraw from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. At the same time the Synod instructed their commission on ecumenical relations to investigate and press for a looser RES structure. Further, they will scrutinize whether membership involves sanctioning apartheid in South Africa. (RES NE)  
vO

**CONFESSION** — *Cont. from page 32*

Article concludes, *not* by saying that those who do not perform this duty are *no members*, but by saying that they “act contrary to the ordinance of God.”

Yes, that’s exactly what I teach in that part of my sermons which is correctly quoted from page 24 (referred to in note 23). But when Rev. Stam then, referring (in note 24) to page 30 but now not quoting, says what *in effect* I am teaching in his opinion, and then adds: “There lies the basis for cooperation in the Christian Schools,” I must complain again. For I did not write at all about *cooperation in schools or other organizations*, but I wrote on page 30 about speaking “with them about what is lacking; especially when in the matter of gathering the Church with Christ and in accordance with His will they fall short.”

The question cannot be suppressed: is Rev. Stam’s position concerning the Church so weak, that he *needs* to misquote me, and Art. 28 B.C., and *needs* to bring in things about which my sermon did not speak at all?

Rev. Stam concludes with stating his position in five points. With Point 1 I agree. As to Point 2, I agree with Prof. K. Schilder and Prof. Dr. C. Trimp, for that is exactly what I preached. And I ask: what is so “daring” about their statements? But Schilder does *not* say on the pages referred to (*De Kerk*, III, pages 249/50) what Rev. Stam suggests that he says, namely, that it is possible that someone believes in Christ but (yet) is not a member of His *true* Church!

To say it in words similar to Rev. Stam’s words: This is where the whole construction of Rev. C. Stam *falls!* He understands neither Art. 28, nor Prof. Dr. K. Schilder.

As to Point 3, one remark: I basically agree. If indeed we would not work and pray for that unity (but in the first place in the church, in worship!), yes, then we would act in a sectarian way. Ad Point 4: a thorough exegesis of I Corinthians 12 would require too much place right now. One question: Did Rev. Stam also read I Corinthians 1:2? I am quite sure that the authors of the Catechism did, when they referred to I Cor. 12:21. Anyway, in *Ursinus’* “Treasure-book” (*Schat-boek*, etc., edition Vanden-Honert, Gorinchem, 1736, page 518) there is a reference to I Corinthians 1:2, with the words: “To all the members of Christ the title of *saint* is

ascribed. Not only to those who triumph in heaven. But also to those who still struggle here on earth . . . I Corinthians 1:2.” (By the way, this “Treasure-book” contains many more treasures in its explanation of Lord’s Day 21!).

Further: “Paul does not say here: go and exercise communion with all who *claim* to be Christians.” Question: Did I? If “other members” in Answer 55 of the Catechism simply means those only in our local church and in all the Churches with which we have the same unity of faith, then Paul was wrong in I Corinthians 1:2, and the Belgic Confession in the last paragraph of Article 27, and the *Schatboek* in the above quotation.

Point 5: “We are told to go out and practice the communion of saints and to join ourselves in (what-ever?) endeavours with believers elsewhere.” *Who* told these things? You don’t find this in my sermons!

I am glad that I can agree with what Rev. Stam says in the last sentence under 5. But I am afraid that if

those others will notice his articles on the Church, they will function as a stumbling-block on their way. If that would happen, indeed, then Rev. Stam would break communion where it either is, or could have been established.

Rev. Stam’s last words are: “The existence of our Churches will be in the balance.” My last words are the comforting words of our confession of faith in Canons of Dort, II, 9, that God’s purpose will “still continue to be accomplished”; “so that . . . there never may be wanting a Church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ.”

November 29, 1980 D. DEJONG,  
Calgary

N.B.

The November 1st issue of *Clarion* was received in Calgary on November 20. My work prevented me from writing this before November 29. This was written at a time when the proceedings at Synod on this matter were not known to me. DJ

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## BRALECTAH

The word, stated above, stands for “*Braille Lector en andere hulp voor blinden.*” That means: Braille literature and other helps to the blinds.” It is a foundation in The Netherlands which takes care of the blind in sending them Braille literature and tapes. All kinds of books are available in Braille, and *De Reformatie*, het *Nederlands Dagblad*, and articles from many other Reformed periodicals are regularly put on tape and sent to the blind. This organization also receives support from our churches in Canada. Every year a letter has been received by all consistories with a request for a gift or a collection.

Up till now, this organization could only serve the members of the Canadian Reformed Churches as far as they understood the Dutch language. Recently a letter was sent to all our churches asking for names of blind or visually-handicapped people who would like to receive similar tapes in the English language. The Board of Bralectah decided to investigate the possibility of serving our brothers and sisters with tapes also in the English language, as long as there is not an independent “sister organization” here in Canada. Because I have been involved in this work of Bralectah in The Netherlands

for ten years already, as soon as my husband had accepted the call extended by the Church at Burlington-West, the Board of Bralectah asked me to look into this matter here in Canada, as soon as we would be settled.

Now I can tell you that we will start or, when you read this message, did already start this work at the beginning of 1981. For the time being it is done on behalf of, and financially covered by, “Stichting Bralectah” in The Netherlands. Every other week we will send out tapes to the blind in our churches. The biggest part of the tape will be *Clarion*. Further it is our intention also to put articles from *Mission News*, *In Holy Array*, and maybe other interesting things on these tapes. Mrs. M. van der Wel (nee Harsevoort) of Burlington-West is willing to help in reading, while her husband offered technical assistance in this matter.

If there are more visually-handicapped brothers and sisters who would like to make use of this service, please let me know.

On behalf of “Stichting Bralectah,”  
Mrs. W. Pouwelse,  
2232 Sandringham Drive,  
Burlington, Ontario L7P 1T9  
Phone (416) 335-2558

## Letters-to-the-Editor

Dear Mr. Editor:

In response to Br. A.J. Hordyk's letter (*Clarion*: year end issue 1980), it would only be reasonable to correct some of the misunderstanding and confusion that was presented about the position and intent of the Teachers College Association. Br. Hordyk starts by saying that he doesn't want to be accused of "opposing a good Reformed cause" and then proceeds to do exactly that, or the endeavours of the Teachers College are in his opinion not "a good Reformed cause." Br. Hordyk states that he has not joined this association and he gives two reasons: 1) the proposed set-up is not in the best interest of our schools, 2) he had never been asked to join other than by a flyer. With regards to point one, I am not at all surprised that anyone with a totally negative attitude towards a cause will not support it, and point two is rather childish. What kind of an invitation to join would one need? His remarks "that many suggestions to governors and members are being ignored" would have to be obvious, for the aim of the Teachers College Association is somewhat higher than to "function as a supplementary facility to our teachers." Br. Hordyk argues that "this College intends to deliver teachers, who by any educational standards of this country are unqualified." He is either misinformed or distorting the true intention and aim of the Teachers College Association. It is our aim to train teachers that are fully qualified to teach the children of the covenant. The goals that must be met are: a) these teachers must have full knowledge of God and His Word and all things related to this, b) must be able to teach the children of the covenant the academic aspects of education equal to or better than the standards set forth by the various government regulations in Canada. Of course, points (a) and (b) can never be separated from each other, but we must set the standards. Any teacher that does not have the ability mentioned in (a) and (b) is unqualified to teach in a Canadian/American Reformed school. The school with which I am familiar has had, for lack of others, five teachers in the past years who didn't have a government teacher's certificate. All five have worked out well on both point (a) and (b). From this we may conclude that these teachers were qualified although it took long hours and hard work on their part to perform these tasks. They didn't have to do it in their own strength, for here also the Lord equips to the task called.

Br. Hordyk talks about educational standards of this country. Does the government decide for us the standard of education? This is exactly the reason we started our independent schools. We have in the past received good Reformed teachers from secular universities. Many are staffing our schools today. This is not thanks to, but rather in spite of, the secu-

lar institutions of learning because of God's grace. However, if the Lord gives us the means to train our own teachers, then we will not have to have great expectations from people who turn their backs to it and rather seek to acquire *all* their knowledge from secular institutions of higher learning. My argument is not with the secular universities but with the attitude of scorning attempts to establish Reformed institutions.

Br. Hordyk mentioned the government grants, and he is afraid that "with unqualified staff we will never have a chance to be part of this." He probably means uncertified staff. Is that where we expect all our help from? Are we prepared to operate our schools by the grace of the governments? Has the government got greater recourses than the Lord? Is the Lord not able (if it pleases Him) to mould the decisions of the governments to give our college recognition in His time, or to give us what we need to maintain our schools? I know that to put our trust in the Lord is not easy because this calls for faith, and we often find it much easier to live by reason. I hope sincerely that Br. Hordyk is not a prophet when he states that "our high schools will never benefit from the Teachers College." This will remain to be seen, however.

At the end of his remarks, Br. Hordyk speaks about the extreme difficulty to retain the services of an unqualified teacher. He says, "There seems to develop a psychological barrier which separates him or her from the qualified staff with the result that many of these drop out of the teaching profession." I hope that Br. Hordyk judges the present situation wrongly and that his observations are mistaken. If not, then the problem lies not with a proposed Teachers College, but with the teachers of whom Br. Hordyk speaks, who, rather than lending all possible help and encouragement to the uncertified teachers in their already difficult task, act in a snobbish way toward them.

Yours in Christ's service,  
T.M. VEENENDAAL  
Carman, Manitoba

\* \* \*

Dear Sirs:

Re: The Confession Concerning  
the Church  
"Consensus and Confusion"

I read with great interest the two articles written by Rev. Cl. Stam, the first part (October 18) expounding to some degree the conflicting views which are now in discussion in our churches, with emphasis naturally on his view. In spite of the obvious confusion that Rev. Stam discusses, he continues to speak about consensus. How can we speak about consensus when there are opposing views? The second article emphasizes greatly the

views of Rev. D. DeJong, leaving the impression that he is the one that seeks confusion. Yet we know that there also is consensus with other members and ministers within our federation of churches. Neither Classis Alberta-Manitoba, nor Synod 1980, have been able to make a clear statement in this issue. To me it appears that much more study and discussion is needed before we can determine where the consensus should be.

Rev. Cl. Stam concludes: "Will we adhere to the simple consensus or give way to confusion?"

Every Christian must answer no to both. Rather, we must seek the truth as God has revealed it in his word. That becomes my challenge to all, but especially to our pastors. Search the Scriptures and test the spirits. Let us enter into a respectful discussion of both views, and only then can our church members and ecclesiastical meetings come to a consensus of the truth.

This magazine certainly has to become one of the vehicles for this discussion. Hopefully the editors will see their task to show both sides of the issue and allow for a meaningful dialogue to take place.

Yours in Christ,  
HENRY VAN DEN HOVEN  
Calgary, Alberta

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### Consulaat-Generaal Der Nederlanden CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

1 Dundas Street W.,  
Suite 2106, Box nr. 2,  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z3

#### OPSPORING ADRESSEN:

DE BRUIJN, Lambertus Henricus J.M.,  
geboren op 11-11-1953 te Ravenstein, laatst-  
bekende adres: Box 4, Grp. 18, Dugald,  
Manitoba.

VAN DOP, Leendert, geboren op 18-7-1925 te  
's Gravenzande, naar Canada vertrokken op  
13-6-1950.

VAN DIJK, Lieuwe, geboren op 2-3-1947. Naar  
Canada vertrokken op 1-11-1979, laatst-  
bekende adres: Westlandgracht 187 te Am-  
sterdam.

VAN ELSAKKER, W.C. geboren op 23-12-  
1915. Naar Canada vertrokken in 1965.

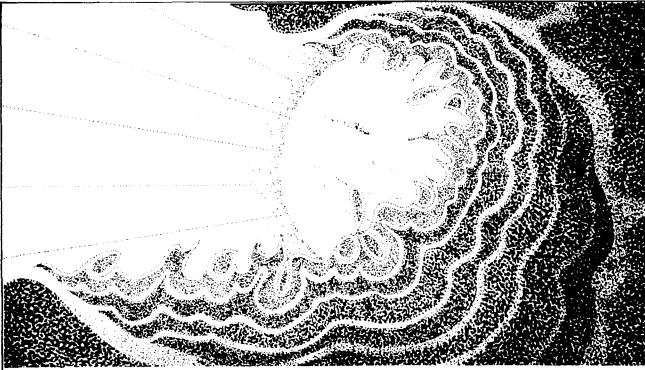
GEISTERFER, Paulus Karel, geboren op  
3-5-1929 te Malang. Naar Canada vertrokken  
op 8-5-1958, laatstbekende adres: Gemeente  
Amsterdam.

GEISTERFER, Arend Pieter, geboren op 21-11-  
1930 te Malang, naar Canada vertrokken op  
24-6-1953, laatstbekende adres: Gemeente  
Amsterdam.

DE GRAVE, Francois Adolf, geboren op 16-5-  
1934 te Djambi. Laatstbekende adres: 32  
Davis Bay, Thompson, Manitoba.

De Consul-Generaal, voor deze:-  
MW. G. SCHNITZLER





“Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.” Hebrews 12:3

*The only way we can survive troubles and afflictions, is by looking up to Christ. In many Scripture passages the apostles urge us to do so.*

*If we do not embrace Christ, what is there for us to hold on to? Is there anything stable in this world which will help us to continue the good fight of faith, which will prevent us from becoming discouraged at times?*

*In Hebrews 12 we are urged to take an example of that great cloud of witnesses who — although they did not receive what was promised — still looked to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith. We are urged to endure the cross, to consider what Christ endured from sinners, willingly enduring the cross, despising the shame, giving Himself up to death, so that we may live!*

*Christ our King and Mediator is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God in the heavenly Jerusalem with the innumerable angels in festal gathering. “Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees” (verse 12). Isaiah prophesied and comforted God’s people with these same words, and added, “Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, fear not! Behold your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.’” In chapter 35:8-10, Isaiah prophesied: “And a highway shall be there . . . the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”*

*What a glorious future we may look forward to! What a privilege to be able to read it in the Scriptures, and to be comforted by it!*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Fenny Kuik** sent us the following thank you note: *“It is four months ago that my name was in the CLARION, but I would still like to say ‘Thank you very much’ to everyone who sent me a card for my birthday. It was very nice to be remembered by so many friends. I was home for two months with my sore finger, and pasted all the cards which I received in 1977, 1978, and 1979 in two big albums. Now I have to do the 1980 ones yet.” Thank you brothers and sisters!*

\* \* \* \* \*

*I will pass on to you the following requests:*

**CONNY VAN AMERONGEN**

*Russ Road, R.R. 1,  
Grimsby, Ontario*

*Conny hopes to celebrate her sixteenth birthday on*

*February 12th, the Lord willing! She is physically handicapped and confined to a wheelchair. She loves to read!*

\* \* \* \* \*

**MEVR. T. TRENNING**

*Selwerderstraat 3,  
Groningen, The Netherlands*

*Our sister in Holland is in her eighties. She has been a widow since 1972. She does not get many visitors, and therefore would love to receive some mail. She has been in a convalescent home, but is home again now. Shall we send her some cheer across the ocean, brothers and sisters?*

\* \* \* \* \*

**ALBERT DORGELOOS**

*Holody Home,  
87 Silvercreek Parkway,  
Guelph, Ontario*

*The Lord willing, Albert hopes to celebrate his 22nd birthday on February 12th. He lives in “The Holody Home,” a home for “Special” people. He will read the CLARION, and I am sure that he will really appreciate receiving many cards for his birthday. Shall we send him lots of best wishes for his “Big Day,” brothers and sisters?*

\* \* \* \* \*

**FRED LUDWIG**

*Psychiatric Hospital,  
West Fifth and Fennell Ave.,  
Hamilton, Ontario*

*Fred lives in Smithville, but has been in and out of the Psychiatric Hospital in Hamilton several times. This time he will have to stay for a long period of time. He has emotional problems. The Lord willing Fred’s 29th birthday will be on February 24th. Brothers and sisters, can you think of a better way of encouraging our brother, than by sending him many best wishes for his birthday?*

\* \* \* \* \*

Give thanks to God, call on His name;  
To men His deeds make known.  
Sing ye to Him, sing psalms; proclaim  
His wondrous works each one.

To glory in His holy name  
Unite with one accord;  
And let the heart of every one  
Rejoice that seeks the Lord.

The Lord Almighty, and His strength.  
With steadfast hearts seek ye:  
His blessed and His gracious face  
Seek ye continually.

Remember all His wondrous works,  
The marvels He has done;  
The righteous judgements of His mouth  
Remember them each one.

Scottish Psalter 1650

*Send your requests to:*

**Mrs. J.K. Riemersma**  
*380 St. Andrew Street E.,  
Fergus, Ontario N1M 1R1*

# our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

Did you get a new book from "Santa Claus" last month? Or maybe for your birthday?

How did you like it?

Do you have another book you like better?

I wonder how many of you have a book that stays your favourite all the time.

Do YOU have a book like that?

Many Busy Beavers like to read, and I'm sure they would like to hear what YOUR favourite is!

Would you write and tell us about it?

Maybe some of the Busy Beavers remember we used to do this before.

We called it a BOOK LOOK!

First you write the TITLE and the AUTHOR of the book. Then you tell a little about the story. Last of all, tell us why you liked the book. Maybe you liked it because it was an exciting story, or because it told of children in other lands or times. Maybe you really enjoyed the pictures in the book!

I used to send the writer of each BOOK LOOK a little reward for his trouble, I remember. We could do that again.

So let's hear about YOUR favourite book!

\* \* \* \* \*

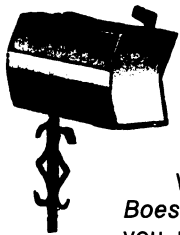
Time for birthday wishes!

To all the Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthday in February we wish a very happy day along with your family and friends. Also we wish you the Lord's blessing and guidance in the year ahead.

Many happy returns!

Frances De Boer	Feb. 1	Martin Doekes	Feb. 14
Diane Doesburg	1	Rosemary De Gelder	16
Judy Peet	2	John-Herbert Kobes	16
Brenda Beukema	4	Clara Barendregt	18
Sheila Klaver	6	Anita Meints	19
Cynthia Ludwig	6	Yvonne Van Amerongen	19
Greta Paize	6	Gerald Boes	21
Sonya Van Overbeeke	6	Betty Aikema	22
Alan Janssens	9	Jane Meints	24
Gary Sandink	11	Irene Van Grootheest	24
Joyce Van 't Land	12		

\* \* \* \* \*



## From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Gerald Boes*. We are happy to have you join us. Be sure you participate in all our Busy Beaver activities, *Gerald*. Write again soon.

And a big welcome to you, too, *Erica Blom*. Now that

you are a member of our Club you are a Busy Beaver, too! We keep busy reading Our Little Magazine, doing puzzles and quizzes. We often have a contest. Be sure to join in all our activities, *Erica*. Have you an idea for a BOOK LOOK?

Hello, *Anita De Vries*. How did you do on your recorders at your Christmas programme? Did you enjoy your holidays? Thanks for the poem, *Anita*.

I see you're a good puzzler, and a good skater, too, *Bernard Breukelman*. Keep up the good work! Bye for now. Write again soon.

I'm glad you had such a nice Christmas programme, *Mary-Ann Van Woudenberg*. Did you enjoy your holidays too? Thanks for the interesting quiz, *Mary-Ann*. That will keep the Busy Beavers busy for a while!

Hello, *Theodore Lodder*. You didn't write how you celebrated and enjoyed your birthday! Did you have a good time! I hope *Darlene* got better fast. Thanks for the good puzzle, *Theodore*. Bye for now.

*Diane Smith*, I see you've been a real Busy Beaver again. Maybe some of the other Busy Beavers would like to try your drawings too! Also thanks for the poem and puzzle, *Diane*.

Are you still skating a lot, *Wayne Breukelman*? I see you're a good puzzler, too. Did you enjoy your holidays? Write again soon.

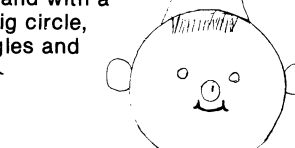
Hello, *Doane de Witt*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thanks for the puzzle. Did you have a good holiday with lots of snow and winter fun?

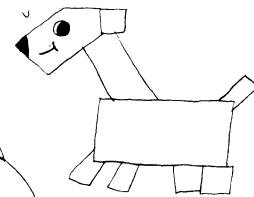
Congratulations on a good report, *Peter de Witt*. Now that you have a new fishing reel are you looking forward to using it this summer? Or are you enjoying lots of winter fun, too?

I'm glad your choir performance was so nice, *Mary Van de Burgt*. And I see you have lots to keep you busy this winter. Were you sorry the snow was gone so soon, *Mary*? I hope your little nephew got better fast. Write again soon, *Mary*.

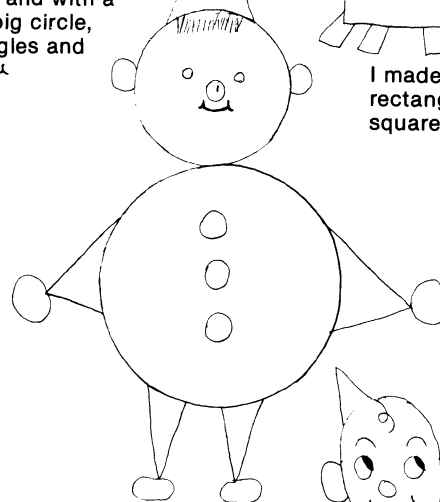
Busy Beaver *Diane Smith* has an idea you might like to try, too!

Don't copy her drawings, of course, just the idea! Have fun!

I made this man with a big circle and 13 small circles and with a great big circle, 5 triangles and this 



I made this dog with rectangles and squares.



Here is a happy clown