



Clarion

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Sectarian Smithville?

Although the Acts of the Synod Smithville 1980 have not yet reached the consistories and the families in the Canadian Reformed Churches, several reactions have already appeared in print. I, for one, had preferred to wait until the publication of the Acts before I make some comments, but I feel myself compelled, for the name of our churches, to respond to a commentary by the Rev. Jelle Tuininga in the magazine *Renewal*, published in Sioux Center, Iowa. He sent a photocopy of two pages, but I cannot discover the date of publication. It must have been after the closing of Synod Smithville, for we read the following:

It is with no malice or the desire to point a finger that I mention once again the Canadian Reformed Churches in Canada. But I see in this communion, though not everywhere or in equal measure, an example of the type of sectarian mentality which makes me shudder. After long and careful deliberation, the synod of these churches decided that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was a "true" church of Christ, with whom further contact was possible, hopefully resulting some time in union. However, the synod of the Can. Ref. Churches recently considered five appeals against the decision of their Synod which recognized the O.P.C. as a true church. Underlying these appeals, I am convinced, is a concept of the church which comes dangerously close to saying, "outside our particular church communion there is no salvation."

The Rev. Jelle Tuininga has a familiar name. I do not mean to point, tongue-in-cheek, to his beautiful, genuinely Frisian first name, but I think of his surname, well-known among Reformed pioneer families in Canada. He deserves a hearing, because the very fact of his continual writing about the Canadian Reformed churches already shows that he is not loose from us. And why should we not listen to voices that try to warn us for "the ugly spectrum of sectarianism"? The Rev. Tuininga makes the pithy remark that sectarianism is really not much better than inclusivistic ecumenism. Nevertheless, I have a few critical counter remarks.

In the first place, Canadian Reformed people do not speak about "the synod" — written with a small or a capital s — in the way Rev. Tuininga does. Not "the" synod but the synod of Coaldale 1977 decided with thankfulness to recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ, as confessed in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession. And not "the" synod recently considered appeals against this decision, but the synod of Smithville 1980. We do not have permanent broader assemblies in our Reformed church government, and the Rev. Tuininga could have distinguished more carefully successive synods; we indicated them by place or year, or both.

More important for our present topic is that the author does not clearly distinguish between the Canadian Reformed community as such and its individual members. He writes that there is more church-consciousness (*kerkbesef*) among the Canadian Reformed people than in the Christian Reformed Church.

But at the same time I find a mentality among some of our Canadian brothers and sisters that is not only unduly restrictive, but stifling, yes, sectarian. And with

all its talk about "true and false," and its emphasis on "sound doctrine," necessary as this is, I wonder how I Cor. 13 fares in that communion.

Again, I am willing to listen to every well-meant warning, and to listen, not for others, but for myself. "Let a good man strike or rebuke me in kindness," we pray with David in Psalm 141. However, when the Rev. Tuininga speaks about *its* talk about true and false and *its* emphasis on sound doctrine, he speaks about our Canadian Reformed communion. He shifts his attention from some of his Canadian Reformed brothers and sisters to that communion as such. Now his Confession of Faith even makes a distinction between hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though according to the body they are in it. The Confession, Art. 29, goes on to speak about the body and communion of the true Church that must be distinguished from all sects that call themselves the Church. Far be it from us to equate the brothers and sisters who were behind the appeals to Synod Smithville — there were even more than five — with hypocrites. Nevertheless, they are to be distinguished from the Canadian Reformed communion as such. For a moment I also thought of the conclusion of the Canons of Dordt in which this synod solemnly urged believers to judge the faith of the Reformed Churches, not on the basis of the calumnies which on every side are heaped upon it, nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but on the basis of public confessions of the Churches themselves. Private expressions are different from public confessions; appeals even by consistories are not identical with statements by the Canadian Reformed communion.

And, although the brothers who wrote those appeals are certainly able to speak for themselves, I would like to come to their defence, after I studied Article 97 of the Acts of Smithville. This synod declared that Synod Coaldale 1977 was incorrect in stating that the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church did not submit an evaluation of an important letter of the deputies of the O.P.C. The observation of Synod 1977 was a general statement, which, though true — an incomplete evaluation could not serve as a draft reply — did not do full justice to the work done by the Committee. Without investigating every detail now, I conclude that there was something incorrect in the dealing of Synod 1977 with the work of the Committee. Committees are servants, no rulers. Even though this Committee had not completed its mandate, it could at least have proposed to continue the contact with the O.P.C. and have asked for time to complete its mandate. But, on the other hand, it is understandable that the inaccurate wording of Synod Coaldale evoked some reaction and even some appeals. Every one who is no stranger in ecclesiastical Jerusalem could have expected this.

The following concession, now made by the synod of Smithville, reaches farther. It expressed regret that the evaluation of the divergencies was not explained in detail by Synod Coaldale 1977, before stating that these divergencies do not form an impediment to recognize the Or-

thodox Presbyterian Church as Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. This neglect may have given the impression in the Churches that this recognition was premature. A detailed evaluation should yet be provided for the benefit of our churches. This task has now been incorporated in the mandate of the Committee for Contact with the O.P.C.

Undersigned is not too enthused by this decision. In my opinion the detailed evaluation has already been given in the Report to Synod 1971, with the conclusion that the divergencies "are not of such a nature that they should prevent the Canadian Reformed Churches from recognizing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." Do we not needlessly duplicate the work, after more than ten years? Is there not a danger that our Committee will end up defending the weaknesses and imperfections in the Westminster Standards and Form of Government of the O.P.C.? Be this as it may, the opinion of some Canadian Reformed Churches that the decision of Synod Coaldale 1977 was premature should not immediately be labelled evidence of "sectarian mentality."

The Rev. J. Tuininga wonders how I Cor. 13 fares in the Canadian Reformed communion. When he studies the Acts of Smithville, he will find an indication in the many hours and many pages that are dedicated to these appeals and in the very decisions. Is here not something of the willingness to go in love two miles according to the demand of our Saviour, Matt. 5:41? May I modestly ask how I Cor. 13 fares in the Rev. Tuininga's own commentary? Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. The remarkable thing, however, is that Rev. Tuininga writes many words about the appeals, but he does not utter one word about the decision of Synod Smithville itself. What did this synod say? Let us listen.

This Synod did not retract the statement regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the line of previous synods it acknowledges "that the grace of God has also been given to these Churches (Gal. 2:9)." Is this sectarian, and does it make the Rev. Tuininga shudder? Instead thereof, should he not rejoice with us in the right? According to my opinion, this is a strong consideration. It reminds us of the manner in which the apostle Paul was treated by the churches of Christ in Judea and later by the apostles in Jerusalem. Those churches heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." How did they react? "And they glorified God because of me," the apostle Paul writes. Those churches recognized and acknowledged the grace of God given to him who calls himself the foremost of sinners, I Tim. 1:15. Should we then not be able to recognize and acknowledge the work of God's grace in this world? In Jerusalem they perceived the grace that was given to Paul, and they saw that he had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised. They observed what God had done. In a similar manner, the Canadian Reformed Churches had to find their way on a foreign continent and in a new era of the history of Christ's Church. If you speak about a sectarian mentality, *they* had been the victim of it in The Netherlands, and they became victim of it in their new country. They had been thrown out of the community of the synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands which had issued doctrinal statements and had taken church political measures that still may function as a prime example of sectarianism. The Christian Reformed Church sided with this sectarianism and did not even allow those immigrants to read sermons of the servants

of God who had edified them in the past. Does the Rev. Tuininga want a stronger example of sectarian mentality? Dr. Klaas Schilder was not allowed to climb a Christian Reformed pulpit, and, unheard, he was sent into the wilderness. Where did the ugly spectrum of sectarianism raise its head?

But let us listen further to the latest synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The Westminster Standards have traditionally been recognized as belonging to the Reformed Confessions. Also, our Sister-Churches in The Netherlands have since the Secession of 1834 recognized these Standards as Reformed and welcomed to their synods delegates whose Churches had the Westminster Standards as part of their creedal basis. The fact that a Church is called "a true Church according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession" does not mean that it is a "pure" or "perfect" Church (cf. Revelation 2 and 3). A true Church can still have weaknesses but yet fight the good fight of faith and listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

These and many more passages from Art. 97 of the Acts of Synod Smithville 1980 are to me eloquent evidence of a catholic approach to the intricate matter of church relations.

Let the Rev. Tuininga now honestly answer his own question. He wondered how with all its talk about "true" and "false" and its emphasis on "sound doctrine," I Cor. 13 fares in the Canadian Reformed community. Let him himself now also rejoice, not at wrong, but in the right. When he studies the matter — which he should have done before penning his commentary — he will also come across the following considerations:

It can not be denied that the fraternal relationship which the O.P.C. has with the Christian Reformed Church continues to pose a problem; however, this matter has been given to our Committee for contact with the O.P.C. for study and evaluation, a mandate which has yet to be completed.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that in the exercise of these relationships, there is no proof given that the O.P.C. fulfills its responsibilities in such a way so as to produce compromise in its Scriptural and confessional position.

The membership of the O.P.C. in the R.E.S. and its relationship with the Christian Reformed Church, while being a cause for concern and a reason for further discussion, is not of such a nature that it prevents us from calling the O.P.C. a true Church.

I quote these considerations for two reasons. In the first place, they again show a mild attitude and no trace of sectarianism. Love is patient and kind; it is not arrogant or rude. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. The second reason is this: Should the Rev. Tuininga not speak better things about the Canadian Reformed community in connection with I Cor. 13? And should he not consider how his *own* communion has become a stumbling block for the manifestation of the catholicity of the Church of Christ?

The synod of Smithville 1980 stated that ". . . our Churches have the calling to recognize the grace of our Lord and Saviour in gathering and preserving His Churches also outside our own federation, where that grace is at work. Our Churches must not deny this grace of our Lord on the basis of existing differences." Come, Rev. Tuininga, practice I Corinthians 13 that you preach. Rejoice with me, and acknowledge that Smithville 1980 was not sectarian, but catholic.

J. FABER

press review

PSYCHIC HEALING II

The previous time we read what Rev. Cl. Stam wrote in the Smithville bulletin about psychic healing, a topic which was being extensively discussed in the Smithville area: healings performed in the Philippines. The continuation and the outcome of the story came in the next bulletin. Also this I shall take over here almost completely again. He received material that shed new and better light on the subject. We read:

Besides receiving various newspaper clippings, I could make much use of a book titled, *Healing, A Doctor in Search of a Miracle* (with as subtitle, *The Startling World of Faith Healing and Psychic Surgery*), written by William A. Nolan, M.D. Dr. Nolan is Chief of Surgery at the Meeker County Hospital in the U.S.A. and has travelled extensively, also to the Philippines, to investigate this so-called "psychic healing." You might want to read this book yourself, but what follows is largely based on Dr. Nolan's findings. I now feel that in my previous article I gave these "psychic healers" too much the benefit of the doubt.

THE ESPIRITISTA CHURCH

This movement of operating through "psychic healing" seems to have originated in France around 1850. Yet it has only come to prominence in Brazil and the Philippines. It is also called "the gift of material healing" and is seen by "believers" as a sign of Christ's second coming. I could not find in Scripture where such a "sign" is indicated, but I do read of other, CALAMITOUS signs.

The word "espiritista" clearly means "spiritist," healing through the presence of spirits and other supernatural "powers." A man named Terte received this gift in 1943 in the Philippines, and the movement has grown ever since. It is not surprising, in my view, why this movement is so predominant in Brazil and the Philippines, for these are mainly impoverished countries where an impure Roman Catholicism is easily mixed with spiritism and superstition. (Just ask our missionaries in Brazil!) This confirms my earlier suspicions about SYNCRETISM, a mixing of Christian and heathen elements.

The most famous "psychic healer" is one Tony Agpaoa (to whom our people were scheduled to go). Spurred on by

his success, Tony has now left the Espiritista Church and founded his own "church," called "The Church of Science and Revelation." The original Espiritista Church now accuses Tony of "trickery" and quack medicine. There is always such rivalry among these heathen cults — a telling sign.

TECHNIQUES

We have by now all heard of the amazing techniques used by these healers. Most of them are able to heal only when in a "trance" under the guidance of a "protector" (mostly a "saint" or spirit), and while in a trance often act as a medium (someone able to receive "messages" from heaven or elsewhere). They also perform exorcism rites if necessary. This explains the use of the "mantra," the magical formulae used during or before treatments.

Dr. Nolan has seen many operations and considers them a hoax. The incisions are made by small bits of mica (a sharp stone) with quick hand-movements, so that the cutting is very shallow and only produces a trace of blood. The "surgeon" then folds his fingers so that these appear to go into the body. Cotton wads, soaked in animal blood or the juice of betel nuts, take on the form of tumors or bad tissue, and the "specimens," immediately after the operation, are doused with alcohol and burned. The tissues which have reached legitimate laboratories (for investigation) have been diagnosed as animal tissue or foreign matter, mostly cotton swabs. Some of the more sophisticated healers will use organs of dead animals as "proof" of their success (like the late Jimmy Jones did at the Peoples' Temple in San Francisco). During "eye operations" fake eyes are used, Dr. Nolan has found. Dr. Nolan has also let himself be "operated" upon by one of the best healers, Joe Mercado, and assures his readers that the healers hands never passed his abdominal muscles.

The fact that many are taken in by these operations is due to the lack of knowledge of real surgical techniques. Many patients cannot distinguish between real and false blood, between extracted organs and wads of cotton. Could you?

CHARITY OR BUSINESS?

We heard that the healers must be genuine because they accept only small donations up to \$100.00. Also

this myth must be dispelled. Do you know how much \$100.00 is worth in Philippine PESOS? Average pay for a day's work in the Philippines is 25 pesos (\$1.50). Philipinos earn an annual salary of approximately \$250.00. Imagine then what huge wages these healers earn! Instead of charity, it is an outrageous swindle.

It is estimated (by Philippine authorities) that Tony Agpaoa earns up to \$40,000 per month. If we take into account that his wife runs the travel agency which coordinates the flights to his healing centre, the dividends are even greater. That is why only group flights can be obtained. Dr. Tony is perhaps one of the wealthiest men in the Philippines, next to President Marcos.

The government of the Philippines does not oppose the "healers" because they bring in a valuable tourist revenue. The Philippines Airlines thrives on the droves of patients to be healed. Besides, since the accredited doctors cannot meet the needs of the growing population, these healers provide in the local needs, especially in the rural and remote areas.

And what about those spectacular photographs? The camera doesn't lie, but photography can be deceiving. Photos used in *Time* Magazine were treated with a special technique (called Kirlian photography) to create awesome effects.

THE GRAND DECEPTION

Why do sound and rational people fall for this? In a primitive culture as still exists in the Philippines, witchcraft, occultism, and spiritism are part of a way of life. The use of the name "Christ" or "God" is not for the local natives, but for the foreign patients who desire an "explanation." Many westerners are highly susceptible towards faith healing and succumb to the deception. Besides, actually seeing blood and tumors (or what is supposed to be so) seems to satisfy people. Since visitors are not accustomed to these things, they accept and believe it! What is more, upon returning home they even PROMOTE it. The best advertising is still by word of mouth. And via Tony's travel agencies "cured" patients round up groups of ailing people (who are generally at their wits' end and will try anything) and send them off to be healed as well. To counteract negative publicity, the Espiritista Church has even organized itself under a certain Joaquim Cunanon, who acts as public relations man and invites television crews from all over the world.

OUR COVER
Polar Bear, Churchill, Manitoba. (Photo Courtesy of the Manitoba Government, Department of Tourism and Recreation.)

THE CURES?

But what about those amazing cures? Some "patients" are indeed helped, but these are usually from neurotic ailments, cured by the power of suggestion. It's a good place for hypochondriacs. Others are temporarily helped by occult powers (mostly of hypnotic or magnetic origin). These very same "powers," however, may lead (and have led) later to severe depression, loss of physical and mental capacity, loss of faith, and even suicide.

Dr. Nolan did "follow-ups" on patients who, after having been "cured," returned to the United States. He found that many tried to "justify" spending over \$2,000 to seek a cure so far away. Most, however, were quite disgruntled and angry about having been deceived. More than one patient had died shortly after re-entry in the U.S. Those with diagnosed major diseases (like cancer) were not cured and had to be helped later along lines of conventional treatments. Even then, some believed so strongly in the cure of the psychics that it took much time and pain to convince them that they had not been healed in the Philippines. The power of deception is hard to break. Very little, if any, of the cures seem genuine and inexplicable.

Letters-to-the-Editor

Mr. Editor:

In the November 1, 1980 issue of *Clarion*, Rev. VanDooren's article "Question about Liturgy" touches upon the "Thou" or "You" in addressing the LORD. This is the second time I ever read anything in our magazine on this subject, and both times from Rev. VanDooren. I would like to hear from other people within our federation about this point.

My feeling is very strong in this matter, that we like to imitate the world and surroundings, also the danger of Horizontal religion, and liberal ideas are marching onward and we are not always on our guard.

It is my humble opinion that we under-estimate the Holiness and Greatness of our God. When I hear people address our God with "You" I get a funny feeling, and I hope the day will never come that we have to listen to a minister speaking thus.

Like I said before, let us not underestimate (onderschatten) the Greatness of our LORD. Hymn 4:3 says it beautifully:

Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide Thee, Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see, Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee, Perfect in power, in love and purity.

Sincerely yours,
HANK VEENEMA

CONCLUSION

What do we learn from this? Again, as I wrote in my first article: do not be taken in BEFORE thorough investigation. But we learn something more as well. The powers of deception are great, and are used by Satan to tempt us away from the Word of God.

We do believe in healing upon prayer. Why else do we at home and in the communion of saints pray for healing?

Rev. Stam then refers to James 5:14, 15. He adds:

We do not have to go for this [healing, J.G.] to the Philippines to psychic healers who deny Christ. The Lord can give this healing right here, in His way, in His time, upon our prayer.

Our Lord Himself warned us not to look for Christ everywhere, but there where the Word is preached in Truth and the saints unite to call upon the Name of the Lord.

And he concludes:

It is the Lord's grace that . . . He has opened our eyes anew for the wiles of Satan.

I may add this here: many people, especially in Pentecostal circles, say that God does not want illness. All illness comes from the devil. And if a person has enough faith, he can be healed. This is a denial of what the Scriptures teach us and of what we confess in Lord's Day 10 about God's providence: It is "the almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven, earth, and all creatures, and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, *health and sickness*, riches and poverty, yea, all things, come not by chance but by His fatherly hand."

It is such a comfort that God, our Father for Christ's sake Who bought us with His blood and made us His own and preserves us, will use hardships, including illness, and handicaps for our salvation and that of others. Hardships of whatever nature, also handicaps and illnesses, can be and often have been great spiritual blessings for God's children: for their own eternal salvation, and that of others, as well as for the glory of God. In John 9 we read about a man who suffered blindness from his birth. He was about forty years old when Christ healed him. He had to suffer, and his parents with him, for forty years, in order "that the works of God might be made manifest in him," said Christ Jesus. And those works of God can be a (miraculous) healing, but they can also be the manifestation of His power in a strong faith that can

accept hardship and suffering, maybe for many long years, out of God's fatherly hand: Lord, if Thou wantest to use me precisely in this situation of hardship, illness, or whatever need, for the furthering of Thy work, let me be Thy willing servant. Hallowed by Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. Make my health, or my illness, if that is better, serve the glory of Thy name, the coming of Thy kingdom, and the doing of Thy will. The Lord said to the apostle Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

I may refer here also to Psalm 73.

So, we have great comfort: we may serve our Father and be useful to Him in health, but not less in illness.

J. GEERTSEMA



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The Church: The Salt of the Earth

The following meditation was taken from GEREFORMEERDE KERKBODE of Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe, November 22, 1980. Translated.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

The Lord Jesus Christ reveals to His disciple-church here that she is the preserving power in a corrupt world. For, with the little word "you," the Saviour addresses not only the twelve disciples, but all those who submitted themselves to Christ's instruction then and there and who followed His teachings. All those, then, who acknowledge Him as the Messiah. We have here, then, the beginning of the New Testament church. This circle of disciples is the true Israel, the remnant of God's gracious election. Despite the uncertainty and lack of understanding there may be found with them yet, they *have*, by faith, learned to entrust themselves to the Saviour.

And now the Lord Jesus says to them, "You are the salt of the earth!"

What strikes us first of all in this metaphor is the *starting point*. Jesus proclaims His disciple-church to be the salt of the earth. Or, even more strongly, He states it as a fact. Christ does not say, "You *may* become the salt of the earth." Nor does He say, "You *must* become the salt of the earth," or "You *ought* to become the salt of the earth." Nothing of the sort! It is an established fact: "You *are* the salt of the earth." That is a characteristic inherent in her being church.

Time and again we may hear things like: "As church, we must be a salting salt in the world. We must have a salting influence on the sinful world." Such a remark, however, does not correspond with Matthew 5:13. There is no other possibility for the church as church of Christ than to be the salt of the earth.

Being church implies being salt. We will elaborate on this point later.

* * * * *

Before all else, we wonder what

the comparison between the church and salt implies. The point of comparison is *salt*. Well, salt is antiseptic, a preserving power. Salt makes food tasty. The emphasis must fall here on the antiseptic character of salt, for the church is not simply called salt, but salt of the *earth*.

Earth refers to the place of human society. That society is a complex of relationships and connections. We here on earth are tied to each other in that vast society by a thousand and one threads. As Christians we are also woven into the societal web from all sides. We cannot go out of the world.

This multi-coloured society on earth is not an evil in itself. The LORD made it, and then it was good. But man spoils God's beautiful work of creation. By the man of sin, this our society has become dishonourable and utterly corrupt. That is why the LORD no longer can enjoy this sinful society. That is why He has thrown salt into this decaying society.

For, when does one use salt? The answer must be: when the life-giving source is cut off and life comes to an end. There are many examples.

Meat is salted after the animal has been slaughtered, not while it is still walking in the pasture. Fish is salted when it is taken out of the water, out of its natural element. Vegetable dishes are salted, when the vegetables are no longer in the field. Salt, then, is used when the life-giving source is cut off and spoilage can, and actually does, begin.

Using the image of the church as being salt, Christ therefore passes a severe judgment on the earth, on human society. It has become subjected to spoilage, to corruption.

The late Dr. Kuyper Sr. repeatedly said that on account of "common grace" things are often not so bad with the world. But the Christ says, "Things are bad with the world." The LORD God loathes this filthy world. It is absolutely loathesome to Him. It is important that we realize this well, also with respect to our conduct in this society.

You as church are the salt that makes the world acceptable and

agreeable to Him again. Because you are the salt of the earth, the LORD does not do to it what He did to the world before the Flood: He does not destroy it but lets it continue to exist. That is why the sun continues to shine; that is why there is growth in nature; that is why people can marry, work, earn a living, and even sometimes enjoy great prosperity. That is all because you are the salt of the earth!

* * * * *

At this point the question must be asked: In what exactly does the fact that the church is the salt of the earth consist? How is she the preserving power that she is?

It is not in that the church is a society of sinless people. Rather, it is in that *the words of God have been entrusted to her*; in that the covenant of grace is in her; in that the treasures of Christ's work as Mediator are given to her; in that the new, resurrected life bubbles up in her. For that is where the LORD has commanded His blessing, which is life for evermore (Psalm 133).

The corruption caused by sin has "in essence" been removed from the church, through the purifying, saving, and renewing work of the Triune God. Right in the middle of this decaying society, you are the gathering of healthy, holy people who, in spite of the corruption surrounding them, become increasingly healthy and holy.

The disciples, both men and women, will have been astounded by Christ's Word! For the Pharisees and Scribes proclaimed all around that the common people were cursed, and that only the elite were salt.

Being the salt of the earth does not give one reason to boast, "We are salt!" It is grace, and it is accompanied by a great responsibility.

* * * * *

For, after this we read. "*But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?*" That means: that we as church are the salt of the earth depends on whether we remain church of Christ. There is alarming possibility that that salt (being church) loses its taste and power. Can that indeed happen? Yes; in Christ's days, salt had many impure elements, and therefore it could not be kept very long. It lost its taste and power, so that it no longer had a salting character. Though it still was

salt, it had become tasteless, powerless salt.

Christ therefore warns His congregation to remain church, for there is the alarming possibility that the church becomes tasteless and powerless. Our Belgic Confession calls that the *false church*.

When does that happen? And how does that happen?

That happens when impure elements get the upper hand. We must watch out for a common misconception with respect to this. Every once in a while, one hears, "As the salt of the earth, we must have a salting influence on society. That is our calling in all 'areas of life'; otherwise we will lose our taste and our power."

Here, in verse 13, however, we do not read, "You will lose your taste and power if you are not a salty influence on society." No, we read *the warning to preserve our being salt*, to keep, as church, our unique character (being church) and our unique power (being salt). If we do that, then that influence will be and is felt automatically. When salt is in meat, fish, and other dishes, it works automatically. Then, Reformed schools, Reformed social and political organizations, Reformed evangelism, etc. — just to mention something — will be established automatically, as it were. If we become tasteless and powerless, we will become indifferent about all such Reformed activities.

Our first concern and calling is *truly to remain church of Christ*. That means: to filter out all impure elements *in doctrine and life-style*; continually to resist anything that opposes the efficacious, fruit-bearing work of God's Spirit in us; to resist anything that attacks the church's pure confession; to resist anything that ruins the true government of the church; to resist anything that promotes world-conformity in our families; to resist anything that can draw our children away from the LORD, from His Church, and from His service, in their upbringing and education; to resist anything that alienates us from the LORD in our actions and walk of life. Positively stated: with all our hearts to live in the grace of Christ; to live in it in such a way that we, in a godly life, seek the honour of the LORD, the edification of His church, and the coming of His kingdom. This is the way in which we go out into this world as witnesses.

That we, then, with all our might strive for Reformed education for our children and allow the power of

Christ's Spirit to permeate all organizations, does not conflict with this. It is precisely in order to keep the grace of God and truly to be church of Christ that we need all those Reformed activities of our own. The Spirit of God directs and compels us thereto. Continuous sanctification, continuous conversion, continuous reformation — they all are the struggle in which the Spirit of God is engaged with us and our children in order that we truly remain church of Christ, and, in that way, salt.

It is in that light that you must see church history. God's Spirit has struggled with our fathers in the reformation of the sixteenth century, in "de Afscheiding," in "de Doleantie," and in the Liberation, and He continues to do so in order to keep us from becoming tasteless and powerless. This is the way in which we in our families, in catechism classes, and at school must teach our children to understand church history; but, first and foremost, in the preaching of the gospel.

We must watch and pray, for we become tasteless and powerless more quickly than we think. Satan is crafty! Let us be warned!

* * * * *

Just how serious all this is evident from the answer which the Christ Himself gives to the question which He Himself asked. The question is, "If salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltness be restored?"

The answer is: *Its saltness can in no way be restored*. Because it cannot receive new saltness, it is thrown onto the street so that it is trodden under foot by men. That is what was done in those days with useless salt.

What Christ portrays for us here is very serious: salt that is spoiled cannot become good again. The church that does not truly remain church cannot become good again. Once the church permits impure elements to spread, so that she loses her unique church-character, there is no longer any hope for her.

We have examples of this close at hand. Just think of the *Roman Catholic Church*. It shunned the reformation of the sixteenth century; it passed up the opportunity to regain its salt-power. What is more, it tried to smother the reformation in blood. Today, "Rome" is hardened in the sin of false doctrine and a false walk of life.

The *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*

(Netherlands Reformed Church) underwent a similar process. It shunned the reformation of 1834 and 1886. What is it today? A conglomeration of good and evil, a bunch of "modalities" fighting among each other.

It is no different in the *Synodaal-Gereformeerde Kerken* (Synodical Reformed Churches). It shunned the reformation of 1944. The result is that it is drifting further and further away in the sea of Scripture criticism, neglect of discipline, etc.

Of course, there are graduations in the process of becoming tasteless and powerless. What is determinant, however, is not the question how far the process of deformation has gone. No; determinant is whether that process of church deformation has striven, with all the power of God's Spirit and with the sword of God's Word, truly to remain church.

That is why we must look at ourselves, first of all. The actual question is, "What is it like in our midst?" There are all sorts of symptoms which indicate that the sins of the world are finding entrance among us more easily: divorce, entertainment, etc. The result is that God is hindered in bestowing His grace, and discipline and preaching become relaxed and weak. More than ever before, we need powerful preaching, in order that the promises, the demands, and the threats may be made very clear to us.

There is much for which we may be thankful. That is true. But there is just as much against which we have to fight. A great deal of self-examination — in the mirror of God's Word — is necessary, in order that true conversion may be seen with so many of us who are straying and are not very concerned about change and renewal.

Otherwise, the Lord Christ says, we will be trodden under foot by men, because we have become useless for earthly society. A spiritless, modernistic church cannot be used in the building of society. Wherever a church loses its members, the power of the Word has fled. A church that loses its church-character, loses its church-existence. It no longer is a preserving power. In the end, just as in Sodom, there are not even ten righteous people left. That church faces a terrible end.

Let us be warned by the LORD God.

JOH. FRANCKE
Emmen, Neth.



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.

AMERSFOORT

The Reformed Alliance (Gereformeerde Bond), a group within the large Netherlands Reformed Church (Hervormde Kerk), faces an enviable (?) problem: too many candidates for the ministry. The Alliance totals about 400,000 within the church's membership of three million. They are served by about 380 ministers.

At present virtually all churches which desire pastors are supplied. Yet this year some thirty theological students from Alliance churches expect to graduate from the universities and become available for call.

The major factor causing this surplus is the "popularization" of the university. Nowadays university study is much more accessible than formerly. Those wishing to study theology may be admitted without having followed the prior traditional classical training. There is also a greater spiritual awareness in the Alliance and this expresses itself in the desire of more young people to study for the ministry. (RES NE)

* * *

WELLINGTON, N.Z.

The Rev. G.I. Williamson, a minister of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and delegate from his denomination to the RES Nimes 1980, has stated that contact between his churches and The Netherlands Reformed Churches (liberated, NGK) in The Netherlands should be intensified. He expressed the hope that both churches will investigate whether official contacts are possible. (RES NE)

* * *

AMSTERDAM

The Board of the Association for

Scientific Education on a Reformed Basis (the ruling body of the Free University in Amsterdam) wants to delete the words "on a Reformed basis" from its name and to give to the society a broader, ecumenical basis. The name would then have to be changed to "Association for the Free University," and its ranks would have to be open for "all who wish to think along and to cooperate from out of an evangelical basis."

The board of the Association herewith backed the proposals of a work-group which — in connection with the centenary of the Free University — received the mandate to occupy itself with and to ponder the future of this university which was established by Dr. Abraham Kuyper in 1880.

As the main reason for the change of basis the work-group mentions the growing apart of the association and the academic community. For years already the "Reformed basis" has not been taken into account when appointments were made. And although most members of the Association still call themselves "Reformed," such has not been the case with the students for a long time already. The "Reformed" among them constitute a dwindling minority. Another aspect which plays a role is that the Free University fulfils more and more a regional function and draws its students mainly from North and South Holland. (ND)

* * *

BREUKELEN

An eventual joining the RES by The Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK) will have to be accompanied by an unambiguous statement on the position of these Churches regarding the developments within the (Syn.) Reformed Churches. That's what the committee for contact and discussion with other churches writes in an additional report on the RES, which is to serve at the forthcoming national assembly, to be held in Breukelen in March of this year. The committee had already advocated joining the RES in a previous report. The recent decisions of the (Syn.) Reformed Synod re membership in this organization, the statement on homosexuality, and the unanimous adoption of the report on the nature of the authority of the Scriptures prompted the committee to come with an additional report. As for the rest, the committee is of the opinion that these developments underline the more the necessity of joining the RES. "The appeal

by a number of member-churches of the RES mentioned in our report, to strengthen their ranks comes to us with the more urgency in the light of the above mentioned developments." (ND)

* * *

STUTT GART (ANP)

During the past year books of the Bible appeared in 27 languages in which no part of the Scriptures had been published thus far. That appears from the new statistics on translations of the World League of Bible Societies in Stuttgart.

At least part of the Bible can now be read in 1,710 languages. The complete Bible is available in 275 languages, the New Testament only in 497 languages. (ND)

* * *

President Ronald Reagan, in a written response to 15 wide-ranging questions the November 19th *Medical Tribune* posed to him, again stated his opposition to legalized abortion, "the taking of a human life." The question asked by *Medical Tribune* was, "Do you accept current law, making most abortions private matters between a woman and her physician?"

Reagan's response to the question on abortion affirmed, "I believe that interrupting a pregnancy is the taking of a human life and can be justified only in self-defense — that is, if the mother's own life is in danger.

The January 22nd, 1973 Supreme Court decision which overruled the historic role of the states in legislating in the areas concerning abortion took away virtually every protection previously accorded the unborn. Later decisions have intruded into the family structure through their denial of the parents' obligation and right to guide their minor children."

Asked, "Do you favour a constitutional amendment banning abortion?" Reagan replied, "I support enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the unborn child's right to life." *Medical Tribune* then queried, "If abortion remains legal, should poor women have access to public funding for the procedure?" Reagan answered, "I am opposed to using federal tax money to pay for abortions in cases where the mother's life is not in danger." (CN)

* * *

BERLIN (EPD)

The secretary-general of the Ethiopian Lutheran Mekane-Yesu-Church

who has been missing for many months is still alive. Gudina Tumsa is in a prison somewhere. His wife is being detained in a police building in Addis Ababa. That was the information given by Klaus Gruhn, director of a Berlin missionary organization who returned from a ten-day visit to Ethiopia.

Gruhn said that the Marxist government in Addis Ababa has stabilized its hold on the country and that the regular church work continues without hindrance. According to Gruhn the Mekane-Yesu-Church in Ethiopia is growing in spite of suppressive measures. (ND)

* * *

For the first time in the 351-year history of the Reformed Church in

America, the General Synod will meet in Canada.

The General Synod is scheduled to meet June 8-12 at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. At its meeting last year, the General Synod adopted a comprehensive 10-year plan for planning new churches and this plan is being carried out across Canada and the United States.

The Reformed Church also decided to establish a Canadian office on the grounds of camp Shalom in Cambridge, Ontario. (CC)

* * *

AKRON, PA (EP)

Bible study materials in Slavic languages are very limited. In re-

sponse to this need, Mennonite Central Committee and the Baptist World Alliance are cooperating to produce major Bible study books in the Russian language. Surprisingly, there is no complete Bible commentary available in the Russian language. The large Orthodox Church has the liturgy rather than the sermon at the centre of its worship services. The evangelical churches, for whom preaching from the Bible is central, have not had the time or opportunity in their much shorter history to produce one.

The commentary will be available to Russian-speaking people around the world. Soviet officials have been approached regarding permission to import the books into the USSR legally. (CC) vO

A Letter to My Daughter

Dear Jean,

Since you have not replied to my last letter up till now I assume that you are satisfied, at least for the time being. Therefore I want to draw your attention to something else for a change.

Some time ago I found an English translation of an old Dutch book, or at least part of that book. Since I did not have the book in the original language, I bought it and the other day I began to read it. It is Lecture XI of the book *Unbelief and Revolution* by G. Groen van Prinsterer. I was struck by the similarities between his time and ours.

The central thesis of Groen's book is (to say it in the words of the foreword to Lecture XI) "that the French Revolution of 1789 was prepared by the revolution in European thought during the preceding century, a revolution which the author contends was the fruit of unbelief." In 1847 when Groen wrote his book he had only two revolutions to consider, but today, more than 130 years later, we have even more experience than Groen. But the conclusion is not much different, if at all. The methods may differ but the principles are the same.

You see, the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church led to the Reformation of the sixteenth century,

but it also had a different result. There were more people than just the reformers who saw the foolishness of some things in the Roman Catholic teachings. And they also drove out the evil spirit, but this time, as the Lord said, the evil spirit came back in a different form and took along seven other spirits, worse than he, and the last of those people was worse than the first. Those people were not driven by a desire to serve the Lord to a Reformation, but by their unbelief they were driven to a "revolution in European thought," a new religion of faith in man (humanism) instead of faith in God. Although this humanistic thought was nothing new, it had always been tempered by a certain amount of the old religion. But then, in the 18th century, this was thrown out and the philosophers of that time made up their own religion. Voltaire and Rousseau are two well-known names which you may find in every history book.

Quite often you may hear that revolution is the struggle of the poor against the rich. Nothing is less true. Revolution starts in universities with the people who should know better, and it is transferred from the wise men to their students (usually not the poor, especially not at that time) who should also know better. Voltaire and Rousseau also had their students and disciples, and among those were

most of the princes and rulers in Europe. In that age of enlightenment they called themselves "enlightened despots," unaware of the fact that they were digging their own graves and in a short time would be enlightened even more by not only losing their crown but also in some cases their head.

But it was not my intention to copy a history book for you. You can read that all for yourself. We do have a repeat, however, for history always repeats itself. Our time shows the same general trend again. Unbelief and humanism, although present all the time, are on the upswing again and the cry "*Ni Dieu, ni maitre*" (neither God, nor master) may not exactly be heard, but it is practised so much the more. But we'd better leave that for next time.

Love,
Dad



Church News

DECLINED:
to Orangeville, Ontario:
REV. J. MULDER
of Toronto, Ontario.

school X crossing

Received from the Library Committee of the Canadian Reformed School Society at Neerlandia, Alberta.

After the congregation of Neerlandia built a new church building in 1969, the organ we were using was found to be too small for the new church building. The consistory then asked the Women's Society to find means to raise money for a new organ.

After a lot of discussion, the idea of a Birthday Fund came up. In this way, anyone who has a birthday receives an envelope the Sunday before his birthday, and it is hoped he or she will return this envelope . . . filled. Two ladies were asked to look after distributing the envelopes and collecting the money. Right now Mrs. J. Peters and Mrs. B. Wierenga are responsible for this.

The response to this Birthday Fund was very good, and it was not too long before we bought a second-hand electronic organ. But we did not shut down the Birthday Fund. We bought curtains, chairs, nursery equipment, and toys.

By that time we had our own day school, and in November 1977 we decided that in future we would buy library books. A library committee was set up, which presently consists of Mrs. A. Hamoen, Mrs. J. Hoekstra, and Mrs. B. Wierenga. These ladies are responsible for buying books with money collected through the Birthday Fund, although these are not the only books which are added to our library. Quite a number of books in our library have also been donated.

As everyone realizes, good, new books are expensive, so a lot of our books are good, second-hand books. We have a few good addresses for these. Every year we also go to the Library Sale in Barrhead. There we get hard-cover books for 25¢ each. The picture shows our choice of books on November 22, 1980. It happened that Mr. C. Aardappel and Mr. J. Jongsma, two of our teachers, were also browsing around at the sale. We had five big boxes of books and asked them to help us bring these boxes to the front. They then offered to help us sort out the books. After we had totalled up our books, the photographer for the local paper, the *Barrhead Leader*, came along and

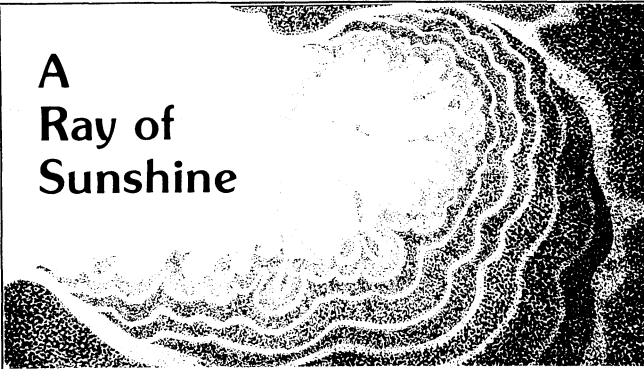
snapped a picture. The caption in the paper read: "Now what? These two unidentified gentlemen appear to be contemplating a purchase that would normally cost hundreds of dollars. At 25 cents each, these books probably went for less than \$50." Their estimate was very close. We bought a total of 271 books for which we paid \$50.80. Some small paperbacks were 10 cents each. We got sixty books

free (fifteen for each teacher in the school). The books were all in excellent shape. A few were paperbacks, but the rest were all hard-cover books, mostly with Library Binding. A real boost to our Library. A lot of the books are very nice books, now out of print, but certainly not outdated. We also managed to get quite a bit of research material.

The only people that could be complaining about this purchase would be the Building Committee. Before long we'll be running out of shelf space in the library, and they will have to build more shelves. But we have to keep them busy too, now that our gym is finished.



A Ray of Sunshine



For His steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 136:1

Have you ever noticed how many times the Bible speaks of God's steadfast love? The exclamation, "O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His steadfast love endures for ever!" is made by many of God's children who experienced this steadfast love.

In Psalm 136, the author combines praising God for His steadfast love with describing how great God is and what wonderful works He performs.

When we measure God's love in earthly terms, we are not able to comprehend the greatness of this love. Earthly love is unstable. It is influenced by feelings of emotion. Are we able to love someone if we experience that person's hostile attitude towards us?

It is not so with our God. He loves us because of His promise of redemption in Christ Jesus. Romans 5:8 says, "But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

In the Old Testament time, the psalmists were able to sing of God's steadfast, unchangeable love, because they saw God's wonderful works of redemption. We, who are living in the New Testament time, are able to give thanks to God, rejoicing, because we also may know that the Lord is good, and that His steadfast love endures forever. "Christ was nailed to the cross that He might fix thereon the handwriting of our sins; and so has taken the curse from us upon Himself; He humbled Himself unto the very deepest reproach and anguish of hell, in body and soul, on the tree of the cross . . . that we might be accepted of God, and nevermore be forsaken of Him" (from the Form for the Lord's Supper).

Does this not speak to us of God's immeasurable and steadfast love?

* * * * *

We have received the following thank you note: "We would like to thank everybody who did not forget our special child Grace, and who sent her a card on her birthday. They started coming already before the New Year and kept on rolling in the mailbox until a week after her birthday. They even came from Australia and Brazil. It was great! Thank you brothers and sisters, older and younger ones, who remembered our 'Royal' child. Grace really enjoyed it. May the Lord bless you all."

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Thomas O. Chisholm, 1866

* * * * *

On our birthday calendar we have:

DEREK KOK
377 Dominion Street,
Strathroy, Ontario N7G 3G9

The Lord willing, Derek hopes to celebrate his 11th birthday on April 2nd. As a baby Derek had meningitis, and as a result of that experienced brain damage. He is not able to write, but he would love to receive cards for his birthday. Derek is a happy boy and has a smile for everyone. Brothers and sisters, shall we make it a very happy day for him?

* * * * *

Last year we mentioned an elderly sister in our "Corner" who celebrated her birthday in February. I cannot put names in our "Corner" unless I receive the request, but I did send her a birthday card. From a letter I received in return, I perceived that she would have loved the extra attention. The winter time is for her "huisarrest." She also is not able to embroider as she used to do. She is a widow, and is not able to attend church during the cold winter months.

Brothers and sisters, I will pass her name on to you, to remember her during the winter months. Shall we extend our "rays of sunshine" her way?

MRS. L. RUITER
Box 346,
Carman, Manitoba R0G 0J0

If you know of anyone who would be strengthened and encouraged by some extra attention, please forward your request (with permission of the person involved) to:

MRS. J.K. RIEMERSMA
380 St. Andrew Street E.,
Fergus, Ontario N1M 1R1

news medley

More than once I spoke critical words regarding the postal service. This time I may speak a word of praise. Alas, it does not concern the Canadian service, but the one of the United States! I received a letter from a brother in connection with a few remarks which I made in the above mentioned matter, and he told me that the issue dated January 30, 1981, was received in the centre of Florida on February 4th. That is indeed fast work, even though the speed limit below the border is only 55 miles per hour.

We cannot say that we are so fortunate over here. More and more voices are raised here in Fergus to have all the issues shipped in bulk to one address and then by Purolator or some other trustworthy means of transportation. It may cost a little more, but most readers are wholly prepared to shell out a few extra dollars if it means that they receive their favourite magazine a few weeks earlier. Anyway, we are going to inquire into that.

The same brother asked me what I understood by "letter-size paper" which I mentioned in connection with submissions to ecclesiastical assemblies. He measured various available pads of writing paper, and came to different conclusions.

I thought that it was well-known that letter-size paper measures 8½ by 11. That is the size you get when you buy typewriter paper, letter-size. The legal size or foolscap is 8½ by 14. Will this suffice?

Let us turn to the news now. By telephone I was informed that Mrs. A. Vegter with her youngest child arrived safely in Toronto, and that the young brother has already been admitted to the hospital for examination and possible treatment. Since I received that special message, I thought that it should be included in our medley, so that we all can keep abreast of the developments.

Further personal news concerns the Rev. H. Scholten. In the Smithville bulletin *Family Post* I read that "Rev. Scholten's tests also gave reason for gratitude; it seems that the treatments were very beneficial." We are thankful for that, and I can assure you that our brother follows every development with great interest and that he certainly is not sitting down in a dejected state. As for the Rev. W. Loopstra, I have not heard anything new about him of late, and therefore suppose that he is making out alright as far as age and circumstances permit.

In faraway Australia another Church has been established. The Armadale Church grew so much that the decision was reached to split it into two. The new Church will be called the "Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott." For the building of that Church the commemorative stone was laid by the Rev. Dr. S.G. Huh. Yes, and here I have difficulty. I always thought that the name was S.G. Huh. In Hamilton's bulletin I read "Rev. Huk" and in *Una Sancta* it is consistently spelled as Rev. "Hur." Now I don't know it anymore, but perhaps our brother changed his name somewhat down under. Anyway, our readers will know whom I mean. He will be the minister of the new Church, whereas the Rev. K. Bruning remains the minister of the Church at Armadale.

We may assure the brotherhood in Western Australia that we are thankful with them for this expansion of the Church. Also for the mutual supervision and for the

value of a federation it is good when the number of Churches increases. I should mention that the text which is engraved in the commemorative stone is "Thy Word Is Truth."

After the Church services on New Year's eve the last congregational meeting of the undivided Church was held. There the following official statement was read.

Pursuant to a resolution of the Church council meeting of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale dated 26 May 1980, and subsequently testified by a meeting of that council with the Congregation dated 18 August 1980, we, the incumbent Church Council of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, hereby declare that as from the first day of January 1981, the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott is deemed to be instituted as a complete and autonomous church within the meaning of Article 37 of the Church Order of Dort.

I am happy that the term used is "autonomous" and not "independent." The latter term is historically tainted and should not be used among us. "Thus," *Una Sancta* writes, "the new year started with four congregations in the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia."

Well, let's return to Canada.

In order to work our way slowly towards Ontario, we start out in the far West.

The bulletin of the Bulkley Valley Churches contained some items which are worth to be repeated.

The following items were not quite clear to me.

Houston mentions that "Reports are made to the families . . . Some other disciplinary matters are also discussed." Was, e.g., the visit to the minister's family a "disciplinary matter too"?

Why not drop the custom of speaking of the "family so-and-so" and speak of the N. family? I pointed to that Dutchism many a time in the past, but there are still quite a few bulletins which betray the Dutch past of their writers. Come now, brethren, why not listen finally?

The Smithers part contained the following not so clear messages.

"Request to drop the telephone bell for the minister's personal phone calls. This is left to the Committee of Administration." Is that done in order that the minister may not be overheard and that no one should be aware of it that he has such a call?

"Request from an organist to expand the organ with a trimulant. Referred to the Organ Committee." I do not wish to be a querulous person, but the stop is called a "tremolo" to my knowledge. In Dutch it is called a "tremulant."

The final quote from the Smithers part:

"Request to change to the RSV Bible Translation. A change to the RSV will be made as of April 15, 1981." That is, perhaps, a result of a decision by the latest General Synod. I am happy with that decision. There are other decisions with which I am not happy at all, and I will come back on one specific decision later on in this medley.

We are not ready with Houston yet.

It was decided "that another drive to pay off the parsonage will *not* be held." Further it was decided "to also cease collecting separately for Mission and College, and to include these causes with collections and contributions for the Church." That is a big step into the right direction. The next big step (which will bring the brethren where they apparently wish to be in the long run) is to decide not to have separate collections for the Church, but to include all things in the regular voluntary contribu-

tions. But I understand that it may be better to take a series of small steps than to make one big jump.

With these words we make our way down south.

"On the evening of Friday, March 20th, Mr. Vander Ploeg will give a recital of original works he has composed himself. The performance will be given on the organ of the Maranatha Church and will begin at 8:00 p.m. (sharp!)." I believe that "sharp!" right away, knowing the organist a little. Anyone going to send me a cassette of that concert?

Another musical morsel: "If you consider that when we started five months ago we had only 11 members and that now we have almost thirty-two, we are happy with the enthusiasm." That was a sentence from an announcement by the Band. I still have my althorn, although I don't get around to playing it anymore; too many other things to do. However, you can spare the trouble asking for it, for I won't part with it for the time being. Maybe they'll start a band in Fergus, and then I might join it. Who knows!

Staying in the musical sphere: "Letter from the Organ Committee requesting \$5,000.00 to buy parts of a pipe organ available at the Church at Surrey. Adopted." That, as you may have guessed, was a decision by the Langley Consistory. I have been trying for years to sell those parts, and there were no takers. Now they stay right in the neighbourhood. I can say that Langley has a bargain, and the parts may as well stay in the Fraser Valley. If they came to a climate where in summer the moisture does not wish to get out of the air and where in winter there is no moisture in the air, the purchasers might run into many problems with shrinking and drying out. Langley will be happy with their acquisition, I am sure.

A last item comes from the Surrey Church. "Important matters pertaining to our membership that are remembered in our prayer during our worship services will be announced before prayer." Although I wonder why a specific decision by a Consistory is needed for that, I may say that I wholeheartedly agree with it. For many years I have had the custom of mentioning before the prayer on Sundays in the midst of the Congregation the names of those whom I was going to remember specifically in the prayer, with the reason why. There are exceptions. When something so shocking has happened that everyone's heart is full of it, it is obvious that we don't have to say beforehand, "In our prayer we shall remember especially brother N. who lost his wife this past week." Everyone knows and everyone expects that the one who conducts the service shall remember the brother by name before the throne of grace.

Our prayer should not be a bulletin board and we should never leave the Congregation in suspense and wondering who was meant by the minister. Nor should we announce things in our prayer, so that the Congregation starts thinking about the "case" and thereby is prevented from praying along.

Some time ago a colleague conducted a service in Fergus and in his prayer he remembered a brother from another Congregation who had passed away. He did not say beforehand that he was going to do it, nor did he mention any name. All the time during the prayer the people were wondering who that might be. Some thought — as they told me later on — that one of the ministers had died.

That is the wrong method. The Congregation should not have to wonder who is meant and why the person is mentioned; nor should they learn via the prayer that a

baby was born to a couple of parents in their midst, or that a brother has to go to the hospital tomorrow to undergo surgery. A prayer is a prayer and should remain that. And as a result of the Surrey decision I would again urge those colleagues who do not tell the Congregation beforehand whom they are going to mention by name or specifically, to do so as of now.

On February 1, 1981, the Carman Church conducted their first service in their new Church building. The official opening is set for March 6th (a memorable day!) and the following day there will be an "Open House."

In Winnipeg "provisional plans for the building of a manse were presented. A more definite plan will be submitted to the Consistory by the building committee. It will also be shown to the congregation in due time."

Thus we reach Ontario.

The Consistory of Brampton mentions the following. "Having Mission Aid on the Church budget has been received by the Consistory. The Consistory decides to leave it as is. It is recognized that Mission Aid can become completely separated from Mission, and then it would have no place on the budget of the church. Under the present set-up, where Mission Aid is so closely tied to the Mission, the consistory sees no reason to set up a separate collection agency."

Hymn 53:1, 2

Rendez à Dieu *Geneva, 1543/1551*



The hope of faith shall not deceive us;
The Saviour's words are true and sure.
Our friends on earth may fail and leave us,
But Jesus' faithfulness endures.
Who limits His dominion ever?
He rules creation from on high;
All that His love and grace endeavour
Shall Him His power not deny.

When I read that I was wondering what we have to make of that. Of course, a Consistory has the full right to include Mission Aid in the budget of the Church, even though I think that it is wrong to do so. But I cannot follow the argumentation. Will Mission Aid ever be separated from Mission? Then it ceases to be *Mission Aid* and becomes another form of World Relief. I hope that Mission Aid will never be completely separated from the Mission, for then I would discontinue my contribution to it and give that to the World Relief Fund instead. I can see no sense in that argument. Sorry.

Guelph decided to institute usher service. "Over 25 capable young men have been elected for the task." They have not all been informed as yet, but the task will not be too heavy, I understand, for they figure on having one usher per Sunday. That means that the capable young men will have to serve once every half year. No one can have objections to that except those who wish to develop their skills as usher: twice per year a practice doesn't give much experience, does it!

The Rehoboth Burlington Church is still growing. "Because of the constant growth of our congregation the need of increasing the number of elders is discussed. It is decided, in order to lighten the workload, and to have more overseable wards, to increase the number of elders from 12 to 14, and to create a seventh ward." Eight wards would render a division into two Churches easier, wouldn't it? Never thought of that?

The Timothy School in Hamilton is also growing and expanding. More classrooms are needed. That made the board decide to have a drive in order that the necessary \$50,000.00 may be brought together. After one quarter of the Congregation had been visited, the total amount pledged and/or collected was \$9,780.00 and hope was expressed that the rest of the Congregation would follow suit so that the amount needed might be there before the building activities begin.

We conclude our journey this time in Watford. "Seeing that the Hymns of the green book (except 2) have been approved by Synod Smithville, and the ones in the blue book have never been approved by a Synod, the only Hymns that will be sung in the worship services are those from the green book."

I think that Watford is not completely correct in its rendition of the Synodical decision. There is more to it than just Hymn 2. But I am thankful for the decision, for that gives me the opportunity to say something about that Synodical decision. I have refrained until now from commenting on it, for I had not seen the literal text of the decision, and then one has to be very careful. Until this past week my only sources of information were the various reminiscences of former members of Synod 1980, and they sometimes appeared to divergent that I did not know what actually had been decided. This past week, however, I saw the literal text of the decision re the Hymn Section. And it disturbed me to no small extent.

Surely, I realize that I should be careful, for it *might* make the impression as if I am a little piqued by it when I criticize. There is not a trace of personal insult or wounded pride in what I am going to say. I cannot prove that; you simply have to believe it when I say so. If anyone does not believe it, please don't read on.

Although I was secretary of the committee that prepared the revisions and reported to Synod, I have never received the request from Synod that the committee meet with the Advisory Committee of Synod to explain why certain rhymings were deleted, certain tunes were dropped, and others were inserted. If that had

happened and if our (late) committee had had the opportunity to elaborate on various points, Synod would in all probability have been spared the embarrassment of some obvious blunders.

In Considerations 4. j we read, e.g., "In Hymn 55 the word 'John's' should be replaced again by 'our.'"

Did it not occur to the brethren that the committee may have had good reasons for changing the "original" version? Is that really correct, to say "Lo, what a glorious sight appeared to our admiring eyes"??? Were we there? When did it appear to us? As the consideration wants it now, it is pure nonsense. The Apostle does not describe what appeared to us, but what *he* saw. I find an astounding lack of thoroughness in Synod's treatment of this song. The present tense of the "previous" version has been changed into the imperfect of our revised version. Obviously, neither the committee nor Synod itself saw that a change of "John's" into "ours" necessitated a complete overhaul of the first stanza. Unbelievable.

A simple exegesis of Hebrews 12:2, or even a simple look at the RSV (recommended by Synod) could have shown the brethren that the old King James version's "Author" is incorrect. The epistle refers here to the Lord Jesus as the One who preceded us, who went at the head of His own as a true Believer, and Who believed to the very end, to perfection. And if the Synod had looked at the meaning of Hebrews 12:2, it would not have made the mistake of ordering "Precursor" replaced by "Author."

What tops it all off, however, is the decision to replace new Hymn 2 by the old Hymn 46. There is in the first place this aspect, that the old Hymn 46 is not a correct rendition of the ancient Latin Hymn *Te Deum* and that the committee appointed in 1977 had good reasons to go back to the original. In the second place, however, it is obvious that the old Hymn 46 is a typical example of immigrant-English, so to speak. I looked at the remarks which we made when we discussed this hymn-version, and it is appalling that Synod decided that it should replace a correct version which shows none of the flaws and mistakes, the blemishes and incorrect constructions which the old hymn contains. But the advice of the committee that pondered it thoroughly and extensively was not needed: in one sweep the improved version was toppled and a version which shows many of the flaws which the committee in a labour of many years managed to weed out was enthroned. What a superficial and hasty way of dealing with things. For that the brethren had to meet more than four weeks?

I am glad that I am not a member of the new committee, for I would not feel free to comply with Synod's decisions, and for that reason I would rather resign from the committee than execute the decisions, even though it would mean that the Churches have to wait another three years for their definitive book. It would not have been so bad if another "trial-hymnal" were to be issued, but especially now that the definitive rhymings will be printed, one would have expected something more thorough, something better, and better-founded.

Of course, "room is left open for necessary changes in future editions," as Recommendation 1, b has it, but that does not take away that it is the definitive edition as far as the rhymings of Psalms and the Hymns are concerned.

I wish the committee much strength and wisdom; also much courage.

Well, that's enough to ponder for today, isn't it?
I'll leave you with it.

vO

Which Way Blows the Wind?

The following speech was delivered at the Office-bearers' Conference held in Burlington West on October 25, 1980. Please note that the aim of the speech was for general information only.

It is my privilege this morning to speak to you about the wind. The wind is a God-created, natural phenomenon which we cannot see. The same wind we can feel across our faces, hitting our bodies so that, if the gusts are strong enough, we may even be blown off our feet. Great damage can be wrought if the wind is strong enough. Floods may occur, buildings may blow down, wires may be downed causing electrical failures. Yet, we do not see the wind. We can hear and see only the effects the wind causes: from the slight stirring of a leaf attached to an intricately woven spider web to the roar of a viciously twisting tornado.

The wind may be an extremely useful part of nature also. It is used as a source of power for mills which, in the future, may create megawatts of electricity so that our oil dependency becomes less. It also may indicate a change in the weather pattern giving rain for the crops and water for our wells; or blow down old buildings which we wanted to tear down anyway.

"So," you say. "So what? We know all about the wind. If we want more information we can go to the encyclopedia and find out more about it."

Yes, that is true, brothers, but do you realize that this wind is YOU? You may be the ones who can cause benefits to come to pass and thankfulness to come about. Or . . . you may cause disappointment, frustration, or unhappiness. What effects do you bring about for others and yourselves?

I am not a minister, elder, nor deacon, and so I cannot speak from your side of a home visit as such. However, I would think that more than once you may have asked yourselves, "What could or may we have said to help these sheep of our flock who appear to have one or more particular problems relating to their children or close relatives?" Then you think, "Well, I'll look up some more information about this certain matter." You get home, possibly have a sleepless

night, go to work the next day, and then find out you don't have anymore time. The matter is stored deep in your memory bank somewhere in the depths of your brain.

So, I come today, hopefully, to be of some assistance with your special tasks. This does not mean that I will be able to give you practical solutions for the particular problems that may be in your wards. I can offer some insight into what some of the problems are in homes that have to cope on a day-to-day basis with various disabilities that children of adults may have.

To be or not to be — that is the question. The reality of the unreal and the unreality of the real. What should I do? Maybe this. Maybe that! This is basically the learning-disabled child. It is a child who sees change in front of his eyes. He may look at a letter C and, while he is looking at it, it may change into a G; a little *d* may look to him like a *b* and an *n* may look and change to a *u*. So . . . what letter is it? "I don't know," he says, and he doesn't know; so then he looks at other letters that may be in the word and finds out that the rest of the letters may end up in a pattern to look something like *d o g*. So he says, "Dog." He continues and reads some more words, goes beyond the period. The teacher says that if you come to a period you have to pause for a minute to think about what you have just read. But by the end of the sentence, the child has had so much trouble figuring out what the words are that he does not remember what the sentence is about anymore. He quickly looks back, but he cannot find the place where he started since he forgot his bookmark that morning which he puts under the words as he reads them.

Then he remembers that he left his bookmark in his bookbag that morning. From the bookbag he thinks about home and, consequently, he thinks about the former evening. A train had come by with so many cars on it he couldn't even count how many there had been. But he did remember one. There was a beautiful fiery red Datsun 280Z on it. It had two white stripes along the side and two huge, silver-coloured mufflers in the back. It was really interesting. When he can drive, he tells the teacher, he's

going to have one like it and make lots of noise when he zooms down the road. He'll go so fast that the "cops" won't be able to catch him. That's the most fun of all, to try to keep away from the cops even though they know he's speeding. As long as the cops don't get him. He doesn't consider that what he has done in the first place was incorrect and that the police are out to protect other people from reckless drivers and those who go at excessive speeds.

The reading is forgotten. It's too hard, too much work. Later he goes on with the work assigned and tries his best again, and the reading becomes better.

Or, the student may be very willing to work and he tries very hard. But when he wants to write something down, the lines seem to jiggle up and down so much and his hand just won't point the pencil at the right place on his paper, and so the letters that he attempts to write appear uncoordinated and go uphill and downhill on the paper. Lines are crooked, and lines that are supposed to go up, go down instead.

Inside his pocket he has a nail that he found on the road in the morning. He reaches into his other pocket and finds a bit of string. Hiding it inside his desk while the teacher is not looking, he winds the string around the nail and tries to cut the excess string with the point of his nail. That's a lot of fun. He can't write correctly anyway. It never is good enough. It's never like the others in his class! Reading, math, writing, spelling, and phys. ed. — he's never like the other boys. They won't ask him to play. It's much more fun doing things that he likes to do and can do . . . get into mischief. Then people will look at him and he can get a lot of attention.

At the end of a possibly highly-unsuccessful school day he goes home. He walks into the house, tells his mother, "I'm going to Peter's house." "O.K.," says his mother or father, and away he goes after being told that he has to be home by five o'clock.

Five o'clock rolls around. He doesn't show up, 5:15, 5:45. Still not home. Finally, around six o'clock he arrives. Parents, upset, ask, "Where have you been? Look at the time. When the little hand points at the five and the big hand at the twelve you have to be home. Didn't you look at the clock?" (His parents know that he cannot tell time at all yet, even though he is beyond Grade 2.)

"Yes, Mother. Yes, Dad."

"You have to go to bed early because of this."

Poor person. He doesn't do anything right in school. He doesn't do anything right at home. Everybody is angry with him, even his brother who shares his room, since he had played with something in the morning and the toy was not back in the right place. What is there in the world for him? Is there any satisfaction, any pleasure, except for possible mischief? Should he become more mischievous, or should he become quiet and let no attention be riveted on him?

The learning-disabled child. How frustrating it is for him to cope with the forces that are sometimes beyond his control. Something small may throw off his attention completely. He may be overly sensitive to the numerous details around him in the world, from a slight rustling of paper to a bird who happens to sing all the way in the back of the yard while he is trying to make something out of wood. He has a normal intelligence but cannot cope with the sensuous world. The world is of no structure to him. Everything is important, nothing is important. He needs structure all the time. Parents need to realize this and be ready for any mood that may occur due to something that may have happened which they do not realize may have been of such great importance to this covenant child. Yet, the child may not have all the world at his fingertips. He may not manipulate the other person. If a person/parent is very manipulatable, the world becomes more unstructured for him. Respect there should always be. Honour your father and your mother.

Parents are parents. They love their children. They try to bring them up showing respect for God and their neighbour. For a person of this nature, the child, God is far away. He cannot see Him. He cannot touch Him. His own world is the most important. Parents have weaknesses and shortcomings. It is only natural for them to be so. Maybe they have had a bad day also and wish to speak about their problems, and then this child comes home after a bad day and requires all the attention there is still to be had. There may have been fights between the children about something or other that appears trivial to the parents but of great importance to the children. So, what does the parent do?

There are three alternatives. First, the parent may let it go on and on and then suddenly get up and de-

mand quietness so that everybody shuts up. The problem is not solved.

Secondly, he may sit and listen and discuss quietly what has been going on and try to find the reason why things have happened. What has happened in school? How did things go? Briefly, be interested to the extent that his or her child may talk about his experiences and at least let out some frustrations, if any. Parents should become involved with their children in the school and not regard it as something that is for children only. They should not regard it as an end in itself, but as a means to the end. A means to make life also more bearable for themselves.

Thirdly, the parent may tell everyone that he has had a hard day and doesn't wish to be bothered with anything at this time. Save it till after supper. By the time supper is over, maybe glasses of milk have spilled — another upsetting experience — and the whole thing may be so in the background that no one wants to bring it up again. It lies simmering until the next time, when everything may break loose at once.

Parents will go through this day after day. What a strain this may be if the parent does not understand what the origins of the problems are and reacts to the consequences overly quickly. Then we should remember that "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly" (Prov. 14:29).

Why do children have these problems? Why do they not learn like the others, and why do special methods have to be developed in order for them to learn?

The study of learning disabilities has only started to come up in the past fifteen to twenty years, and the interest has accelerated very quickly in the past decade. A learning-disabled child is a child who may have what is called a Central Processing Deficit. Stimuli go into the brain — colours, objects, other details — and he has trouble sorting them out inside the brain due to the possibility that a pathway has been cut off. Part of the brain may be damaged. For this reason, a learning-disabled child is sometimes also called a child with minimal brain dysfunction/damage. He may receive information but may not be able to express himself in the way that he wishes, either through speaking or writing or doing. He may not know whether he is right-handed or left-handed. A different side of the brain appears to make the person go,

rather than the side of the brain that is used by the normal child. The individual will have to work with this possibility for the rest of his life. Can he do it? Will he be able to survive in a society geared for the academically oriented? Will his outlook in life be one of faithfulness to God and thankfulness for what God has made him able to do? This is a tremendous task for the parents and relatives of the children and also the teachers or others involved. Each of us has something to give. Do we do that, and then to the limits of non-interference with the upbringing considered appropriate by the fully-informed parent?

J.W. VAN DER JAGT

(To be continued)

**Consulaat-Generaal
Der Nederlanden
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VAN ARDENNEN, Johan, geboren op 5 februari 1916, te Hillegersberg naar Canada vertrokken op 26 juni 1954.

DE BOER, W. geboren op 5 juli 1916 te Oosthem gemeente Sneek, naar Canada vertrokken op 11 april 1957.

TEN BOKUM, Leonardus Philippus Gerhardus, geboren op 26 december 1938 te Den Haag, laatstbekende adres te Montreal, P.Q.

BOOM, Casper Johannes Albertus, geboren op 23 januari 1931 te Boskoop. Laatstbekende adres te Delhi, Ontario.

BREUKER, J.F. geboren 9 januari 1913, laatstbekende adres te Victoria, B.C.

CLAESSENS, J. geboren op 8 november 1948, laatstbekende adres te London, Ontario.

JANSEN, Anne Aalbert, geboren te Amsterdam op 6 mei 1916, naar Canada vertrokken op 8 mei 1957.

KROETS, Antonius Wilhelmus, geboren te Wisch op 18 februari 1916, naar Canada vertrokken op 29 juni 1954.

LUTJEHUIZEN-PIKAAR, K. geboren te Rotterdam op 1 april 1896, laatstbekende adres te Burlington, Ontario.

MESMAN, Cornelis Henricus, geboren op 20 april 1936, laatstbekende adres te Winnipeg, Manitoba.

MEIJER, Matheus, geboren te Mijdrecht op 17 mei 1916, naar Canada vertrokken op 16 mei 1956.

TERLOUW, Pleun, geboren op 12 februari 1916, naar Canada vertrokken in 1949.

VAN DE WOUW, G.M.A. geboren 31 mei 1948, laatstbekende adres te Hamilton, Ontario.

De Consul-Generaal, voor deze:
G. SCHNITZLER (Mrs.)

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

How are you all doing? Are you happy for a week's holiday?

I hope you'll all have lovely weather.

That way you can enjoy being outside.

By now some observant Busy Beaver will have spotted the first robin.

But it's not too late to watch for other signs of spring!

Have fun being good detectives!

* * * * *

A little while ago, you remember, I asked you Busy Beavers to tell each other about your favourite book in a BOOK LOOK.

This time Busy Beaver *Jane Meints* tells us about a book many of you will have read. That's great.

If you haven't read it, though, I hope you'll take Jane's advice!

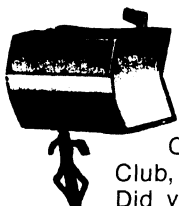
BOOK LOOK

The book is called "Little House on the Prairie."

The author is Laura Ingalls Wilder.

The book is about Laura Ingalls who has a mother and father and two sisters who are called Mary and Baby Carrie. The family wanted to go West because where they were living in the Big Woods it was crowded and there wouldn't be many animals left for them to eat in the winter. So they did go. While they were on the way they crossed a creek and then when they got across they couldn't find their dog Jack. They thought he was drowned or stayed on the other side — until one night they saw a pair of eyes in the dark night. They thought they were something else. But it was Jack! They built their house with their neighbour Mr. Edwards. One night there was a wolf pack surrounding their house. There were lots of Indians around where they lived and for some nights there was a horrible noise from the Indian camp. It was the Indian war-cry. That means they were thinking of having a war with the white settlers. But they didn't. An Indian convinced them not to. His name was "Soldat du Chêne." All the Indians rode away. The Ingall's neighbour Mr. Scott said soldiers were coming to take the white settlers away from Indian territory. But Mr. Ingalls and Mr. Edwards said they were going to move by themselves without the soldiers making them go. So they moved on.

I like this book because it was interesting and very exciting. I think you should read it some day because I skipped a lot of parts which were also very interesting. But I can't write the whole book down.



From the Mailbox

Of course you may join the Busy Beaver Club, *Pauline Leffers*. We are happy to have you. Did you read about our Book Looks and our

Contest a couple of issues back, *Pauline*? Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Gwendolyn Werkman*. What are your chores helping out on the farm? And did you have a good time on your birthday, *Gwendolyn*? Bye for now.

Hello *Joanne De Vries*. I see you've been very busy making up a big word search puzzle for us. I hope your friend is all better by now, *Joanne*. Write again soon.

You've been a real Busy Beaver, too, *Jane Meints*. Thanks for the Book Look and the puzzle, too. Keep up the good work!

Hello, *Arno Moeliker*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thanks for the Book Look, *Arno*. How do you like today's? Write again soon.

I'm glad you like riding the bus to school, *Gerald Boes*. How long are you on it each day? Did you have a good time on your birthday, *Gerald*? What did you do? Thanks for the puzzle!

I see you had a lot of winter fun, *Tammy Linde*. That's good. Do you practice your organ lessons every day? Thanks for the quiz, *Tammy*. Write again soon.

Thanks for your good wishes for the New Year, *Gwen Van Esch*. Did you find something nice for your brother's birthday? And did you have a good time? Thanks for the puzzles and the poems, *Gwen*. I'm sure everyone will enjoy them.

Sounds to me like an exciting book you've been reading, *Rosalinde Moeliker*. Thanks for the Book Look. Keep up the good work.

How did you do on your project, *Jolette Moeliker*? How I would love to hear you and your family play your different instruments! Do you often play together? What a shame about your neighbours new house, *Jolette*! I received your money order for the Birthday Fund last September. Thanks for your Book Look and quiz.

I think you liked your book about Baker Bumble, *Clarinda Meints*. And I like the story you wrote about it. Thanks for writing it for us, and thanks too, for your puzzle. Keep up the good work!

QUIZ TIME

BIBLE ALPHABET QUIZ

by Busy Beaver *Jolette Moeliker*

1. A _____
2. B _____
3. C _____
4. D _____
5. E _____
6. F _____
7. G _____
8. H _____
9. I _____
10. J _____
11. K _____
12. L _____
13. M _____
14. N _____