

General Synod Cloverdale 1983

Welcoming Address to Delegates

This is the Welcoming Address which the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, chairman of General Synod Cloverdale, spoke to the delegates of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, and of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

According to the Synodical Guidelines which will be discussed further this evening, it is the task of the chairman to welcome any guests that may merit special mention. As far as this is concerned, we do have some here who deserve this.

Present here from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is the Rev. Jack J. Peterson; and from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Rev. Dr. K. Deddens and the Rev. J. de Gelder. These brethren are here, having been invited to represent the communities that sent them. We are thankful for the fact that we are deemed worthy to be honoured with their presence. They are accustomed to far larger broadest assemblies than the one they are visiting right now. Although they are not *members* of this assembly, they are here, they are most welcome, and will attend our sessions for the time they are here in such a manner that we may benefit from their wisdom and insight. Their arrival has boosted our number by almost twenty per cent.

What is a group of sixteen or nineteen men in the eyes of the world? What impact on the life, on the weal and woe of country and nation, can this group have, representing a mere 10,000 people, half of whom are in the age-bracket of children, of babes and sucklings, and therefore do not rate?

When we realize that we are only a very small segment of the population, we appreciate it the more that there are others who do not think it below their standing to send some to bring greetings from afar. The only reason why they are doing this must be that they see something in us that others don't see. It is the grace bestowed upon us by our faithful God and Father, the grace by which we are allowed to be His people, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. If this had not

been the case, why would their communities have sent them, and why would the brethren have made the sacrifice of coming here? We thank our God for His grace upon us in your presence, brethren, and thank you for coming.

The relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is not the same as that with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. Our bonds with the latter are those of full sister churches, whereas the relation with the former is of a temporary nature. When the Synod of Coaldale 1977 dealt with the matter of contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, it decided to "offer the Orthodox Presbyterian Church a temporary relationship called 'ecclesiastical contact.'" The intention of a "temporary relationship" is that it becomes permanent or, if there are urgent reasons for doing so, that it is broken off.

We cannot deny that there are grave concerns on our part as far as this becoming permanent is concerned, and the Rev. Peterson will be even more aware of those points than we are. It will be of great interest to him to attend the discussion of the report of Committee II regarding the continuation of our contact. It is our sin-

cere wish that it may become very evident from all we say and decide that the purity of doctrine and the sanctity of life are our main concern. If the marks of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ can no longer be found with our communities, we have lost our reason for existing.

As for the brethren from The Netherlands, we have a special reason to welcome them. This reason is not in the first place a financial matter, although there is a financial aspect to it. We would have invited Dr. Deddens anyway to come over and meet us; now our Dutch sister churches were so kind as to foot the bill. It goes without saying that originally this was not their intention.

I do not know whether Dr. Deddens has already been appointed as our fourth full-time professor. I do know that we have instructed the Board of Governors to make this appointment. I do not know for sure whether Dr. Deddens, having received the appointment, has already accepted it. We would like to have your decision by November 25. What I do know is that personally I am looking forward to working with Dr. Deddens at our College. I did not know him personally before he



Seated between Rev. J. Geertsema and Rev. Cl. Stam, the Rev. and Mrs. VanOene receive special attention from Synod on their 40th Wedding Anniversary and his 40 years in the ministry

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came out here, but I may say that the contact we have had so far has been most pleasant.

Dr. Deddens, it will not be taken ill of me when I say that we are happy for your willingness to consider the appointment. There was — as everyone knows — some contact between you and the Faculty as well as between you and the Board of Governors prior to the proposal made to General Synod to appoint you at our College. This institution has the love of our heart; it is borne by the dedication and prayers of God's people, and it is as much an honour for you to be considered

for a professorate as it is for the College to have you teach at it. What we were looking for was someone who is academically qualified and who is absolutely faithful to the King of the Church adhering to the truth of God's Word, leaning neither to the left nor to the right, but going the straight path which our God has pointed out. We are convinced that we have found such a man in you, and it is our sincere wish and heartfelt prayer that the Lord our God may strengthen and encourage you to take up the task at our College once you have made your decision known to us.

I consider it a great honour that I may welcome you as our fourth professor-designate. In 1968, at the Synod of Orangeville, it was my equally great privilege to welcome and greet the first appointees for the College-to-be-established. We can only marvel at the goodness and mercy of our God who caused this College to become and remain a blessing to Christ's Churches. Him we praise.

May your work be a factor in the continuation of this institution and the Lord's blessing upon it.

W.W.J. VANOENE

Dr. K. Deddens' Address to the General Synod of Cloverdale

*Beloved Brothers in the Lord,
Delegates to this Synod!*

It is a great pleasure to me, Mr. Chairman, that you gave me the floor to address the Synod on behalf of your sister churches, "De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland."

It is in the name of my fellow-delegate, the Rev. J. de Gelder, as well that I convey to you the regards of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad.

In this connection I have to add that we feel sorry for not having delegates in 1977 and 1980, your Synod years, neither for Synod Coaldale, nor for Synod Smithville. So there is, unfortunately, an interval of nine years, because our first representation was that of the Rev. S.S. Cnossen at Synod Toronto 1974. There were several reasons for not sending delegates in the meantime, so all in all it was impossible to send anyone. We hope you will not follow this bad example! We highly appreciated your sending Prof. Dr. J. Faber as a delegate of your churches to Synod Kampen 1975 and to have met the Rev. M. vanBeveren as well at Synod Groningen-Zuid 1978. Please, do not return evil for evil and feel free to send one or more delegates to Synod Heemse

1984! Maybe it is "cold comfort," but we hope we have made it up again a little bit this time by sending two delegates, namely, the chairman and the secretary of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad.

What do we bring along with us, besides greetings and excuses? We come from The Netherlands with credentials. Our basis is just the same as yours: the infallible, trustworthy Word of God, the confessions of the church and the Reformed Church Order. We say this with great thankfulness and with deliberate intention. In this position and conviction we hope to participate in this Synod for some weeks. May the churches which sent us maintain this basis. That is not something natural, nor a matter of course, but it is only possible through the grace of the Lord Himself.

Looking around today it is apostasy that meets the eye everywhere. Satan is sly in his temptations. You can hear the cry, the slogan, in so-called Reformed churches: The truth should be looked upon as "relational." The development in the RES, the "Reformed Ecumenical Synod," is very disquieting and alarming, let alone the situation in the WCC, the "World Council of Churches"! In spite of all the commending words and all the

praises sung of the assembly just held in this area (Vancouver, 1983), we see the continuation of the theology of liberation and revolution, in fact nothing less than horizontalism! We wonder what is left of the adage *sola Scriptura*, the confession of the Reformation in the 16th century.

But praise the Lord! There are still churches whose strength is in the Lord, who persevere in listening to the Word of God and who defend it against the attacks of the father of all lies. We know that the church "sometimes for a while appears very small and in the eyes of men to be reduced to nothing." Nevertheless, we are thankful that the Lord has left us in The Netherlands 104,000 church members, 264 congregations and 216 ministers.

We are thankful for the Theological Seminary in Kampen with more than 100 students who are preparing for service in the church. We are thankful that you gave us one of the professors in Kampen, namely, Prof. H.M. Ohmann, which vacancy in Hamilton was filled again rather soon. The appointment of your own Synod Cloverdale looks like service in return, but I do not want to dwell upon that now!

We are thankful that we live in a free country, where we established our own schools, our own social league, our own

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political party, where we can give testimony in municipal councils, provincial states, even in the States General, and where we still have our Reformed daily newspaper. In spite of all that, we are a small minority and the spirit of the times threatens us as well. Therefore, we are very grateful that all over the world there are churches that have the same struggle and the same purpose: to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

After the internal struggle of the sixties for the strict adherence to the confession of the church and the Church Order, we could spread our wings in the seventies: several contacts and relations came within our range of vision on all continents.

And now, in the eighties, casting a glance at the churches we represent, we may mention the revision of our Church Book. General Synod Heemse 1984 hopefully can offer to the congregations a complete new Church Book, many parts of which have already been established in the last few years. I think we can draw a parallel between your churches and ours. Maybe we can learn from you in the matter of your *Book of Praise*, and we can tell something about our experience as the opportunity arises when the matter comes up for discussion during this Synod.

It is a remarkable thing that several of the items you have to deal with were also on the agenda of our Synods! Very important is the matter of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, the ICRC. We enjoyed meeting your delegates and many other Reformed and Presbyterian delegates at the constituent assembly of the ICRC in Groningen-Zuid last year. The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad proposes a motion to General Synod Heemse 1984 to join the ICRC and to send delegates to the first meeting of the ICRC in Edinburgh 1985. We are very pleased to hear that your Committee of Correspondence with Churches Abroad proposed a similar motion to your Synod. If you agree to this proposal, you can be proud that you will precede us and we will come after you! We are very thankful that our heavenly Father still gives us such opportunities to come together from all continents.

Our future is in His hands. When we look ahead to the future, we know: time is short. But we know too: our Lord Jesus

Christ walks among the seven golden candlesticks. He gathers His Church all over the world. In our apocalyptic times, many people join peace movements. The whole world seems to be dreaming of a paradise on earth. There is a peace-song today which tells us:

*"Tell it all over the world,
there is no doubt at all:
our sweet living earth
will never, never die!"*

We know better. It has been predicted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, for nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The love of many shall grow cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

In these very days, we are commemorating the five hundredth birthday of Martin Luther and the beginning of the Reformation as well. I remind your Synod of the four final theses of Luther:

• "Out of the way with all the prophets who say to the people of Christ: Peace, peace, and there is no peace!

- Blessed all the prophets, who say to the people of Christ: The cross, the cross, and there is no cross.
- The Christians are to be exhorted to follow Christ, their Head, dedicated in penitence, in mortifications and in tortures;
- and better trust to enter the Kingdom of heaven by many oppressions, than by security of peace."

Let us subscribe these words, all of us together and agree with one of the oldest confession songs, in its oldest form dating even from the end of the second century, called *Te Deum*:

*"Martyrs and prophets shall in all eternity
Together with Thy church of every tongue
and nation
Bring Thine immortal Name their boundless
admiration.
Safeguard Thine heritage, while still the
battle rages,
Till Thou shalt call Thy flock, the faithful of
all ages."*

Rev. J. Visscher's Response, on behalf of our Churches to Dr. K. Deddens' address

MR. CHAIRMAN, you have asked me to say a few words in response to the address given yesterday evening by the Rev. Dr. K. Deddens, one of the representatives of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the other being the Rev. J. deGelder. Now, to this request I will gladly comply.

I say "gladly" for a number of reasons. The first is that the relationship between the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Canadian Reformed Churches is in many ways a unique one. By and large our churches and their members trace their origin back to the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Some would say that we are really a daughter church of the GKN. I, however, being somewhat of an ecclesiastical nationalist would say that if we are a daughter, then at least it should be remarked that we consider ourselves a full-grown daughter who has severed the apron

strings, but not the bond of love, respect, and a common faith.

In addition, I may also remark that the relationship between our churches is influenced not only by matters of origin, but also by constantly rendering assistance to each other. Now it is true that this has for years been a rather one-sided affair. We have received from you many members, ministers (witness the fact that six of the ministers sitting here as members of Synod were trained in The Netherlands) as well as professors (Dr. J. Faber, Drs. H.M. Ohmann, and now you as well, Dr. K. Deddens). With all of this we are truly grateful, for this influx has made our existence possible in a sense and has enriched us immensely. For our part we have given you less in the way of concrete assistance, although we are so bold as to consider one of your professors, Drs. H.M. Ohmann, as almost one of our own and hence a Canadian export. Perhaps

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in the future, if our Theological College continues to supply graduates in numbers greater than we can assimilate, it may be possible to return the favour more fully.

Still, as churches we have more in common than just origin and assistance. We also seem to be concerned with many of the same issues. You are busy revising your Church Book and so are we. You have adopted a revised Church Order, and hopefully, we will be able to do the same. You have had to deal with the issue of women's voting rights, and we are called upon to deal with it as well. You have shown great interest in spreading the Reformed witness abroad and in making contacts with other churches around the world that share the Reformed faith, and we share much of that same interest — although it should be pointed out that our interest is on a lesser scale and that we do not involve ourselves in quite so many international Reformed "fishing expeditions" (some would add here, "alas").

In connection with this subject, the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was mentioned last night as well. We were made aware of the fact that your Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad has recommended to Synod Heemse 1984 that the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland should send delegates to the First Assembly of the ICRC that will meet, the Lord willing, in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1985. You ex-



Rev. Cl. Stam

press the hope that our Churches will precede yours in terms of membership in the ICRC. Now, it is too early to say what this General Synod will decide with respect to the ICRC, although the fact that no local church in our federation has written this Synod to object to the recommendation of the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad to join will hopefully count for something. On a personal note, also on behalf of the Rev. M. van Beveren, I would like as yet to thank your churches officially for the hospitality that you extended to us as delegates to the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC held in Groningen, The Netherlands. We would also like to express our appreciation here for the fact that your churches were so kind as to host that Assembly, with all the preparations and the expenses that this entailed.

Finally, you have remarked that your churches constitute only a small minority in your land. Well, our situation in this regard is that we are an even smaller minority here in Canada. In addition, we have a church life that is in several respects not nearly as developed and mature as yours. Nevertheless, with you we are convinced that numbers are of little consequence if the Lord is on our side. Our respective calling as churches is to live faithfully, fully and humbly according to the will of God as expressed in the Scriptures and in the subordinate standards of our churches, namely, the Belgic Confes-

sion, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. If we do that then truly our churches will receive His blessing, for He is faithful.

May the Lord be with your churches. May He work in you continually with His Word and Spirit. And may we always be a hand and a foot to each other, churches united together in the bond of the true faith and under the only Lord and Sovereign, Jesus Christ, the King of the Church. To Him be all praise and glory.

JAMES VISSCHER
(on behalf of Synod 1983)



Rev. J. Visscher

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In *Una Sancta*, Oct. 15, 1983, I found the translation of an article with the summary of a speech by Professor J. Kamphuis that appeared in *Nederlands Dagblad*, Sept. 27, 1983. The Rev. K. Brüning passed it on for the information of the sister-churches in Australia. I pass it on for the readers of *Clarion*. We must keep in mind that these are not Professor Kamphuis' own words, but a report of what he said in a lecture to Reformed students in Delft. The topic was: "Being Church in History." Here, now, is what Professor Kamphuis said:

Kamphuis emphasized how difficult it is with our restricted human knowledge to speak about Christ's Church gathering from many centuries ago or from far beyond the borders.

That Christ gathers His Church is a constant reality through the centuries; but He does it in various political and cultural situations.

If we want to look at the different forms in which the Church appears in the various situations, we can only see Christ's work in faith, so that we must use the norms of God's Word, because not all that presents itself as Church is also a true Church; an example is the Roman Catholic Curia of the Middle Ages.

And we want to speak about the many forms (the pluriformity) of the Church only within the true Church of Christ, in accordance with the Biblical norm (the distinction true and false Church regards the essence of the Church; the pluriformity refers to the form of the Church, as was stated by Prof. Greijdanus).

To talk and think about the pluriformity of the Church is hampered by barriers like the difference in time; if e.g. the second Helvetic Confession speaks about the sometimes-invisibility of the Church, we must not interpret it as the Kuyper-distinction between the visible and invisible Church. The above-mentioned Confession from the Reformation time stood up against the abundant visible luxury and pomp of the Roman Curia of that time.

The language barrier may also cause problems, for instance, to understand the ecclesiastical and liturgical documents from other countries.

A third problem: a communist government or a totally different ideological climate of thinking.

Caution is needed when we speak about and judge Churches in a situation which differs from ours.

The Reformed Churches have always rightly stated that at various points of Church Order and Church government the foreign Churches should not be condemned because of their different customs.

Every Church form from the past or from

foreign Churches must be judged (beoordeeld) with much patience and capability of understanding (inlevings-vermogen), in the context and situation in which she lives.

To stop the catechism preaching must, in the Dutch church situation, be seen as a decline; but it would testify of little understanding to expect from the foreign Churches that they should use our Catechism material for their preaching.

A danger that threatens every Church — whatever context she may have . . . also us — is the secularisation, an adjustment to the world in which she lives. This process happens in history all the time, as we can see.

Nevertheless, we must not be too hasty with our judgement; as long as Christ is active, we do injustice to Him if we ignore that.

The question is always: where in the present, topical situation is the Name of Christ confessed?

To talk about the Church in the many forms in which she lives is a difficult but not a desperate case. In all modesty we can sometimes see and say: there is a Church which is confessing the Name of Christ.

And that is the point, whatever the form may be in which that Church lives.

And here follows what the Rev. K. Brüning added:

Prof. Kamphuis spoke these words in a time in which many activities for Church unity are being launched. On the one side, we are confronted with the dangerous and false ecumenical actions of the W.C.C. and suchlike organisations which are *not based on, or stimulated by, a true unity in the Scriptures*; on the other hand, some true Reformed Churches *try to come closer to each other and to build up more understanding and relationship with one another in accordance with the will and Word of God*.

The words of Kamphuis exactly express the motive which was behind the plans and actions to come to the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

And the Synod of Kelmscott 1983 followed the same basic pattern. It said a firm *NO* to every form of false unity, because it maintained and confirmed, in all earnestness and in practice, the rich Reformed Confession and Church Order (etc.); but it gave a positive answer to the request and invitation to see and say: there is a Church which is confessing the Name of Christ.

That Synod could not ignore the worldwide work of Church gathering by the Lord as He reveals that in the different and various political and cultural situations.

It is a delightful fact that the Church, where you have your membership, is able and willing to say *NO* to a false unity idea, and to say *YES* to a Scriptural effort for true unity.

In other words: *One can only really live with a free conscience in a Church where both errors and dangers are seen and rejected: the danger to drift away towards the false Church, and the danger to float away into the corner of sectarianism.*

It is interesting that the Rev. K. Brüning speaks very critically about the Synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia in the same issue of *Una Sancta*. The Re-

formed Churches of Australia are a "daughter" of the Synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. Some (two?) years ago this "daughter" terminated the sister-church relationship with her "mother." That was because of the wrong direction which the synodical churches have taken. The relationship was replaced by a correspondence relationship. Here this term means: we only correspond (write) with each other yet. (When we speak about "correspondence," we mean a full sister-church relationship.) Now the Classis Western Australia of these Reformed Churches has sent an invitation to our sister-churches (the *Free Reformed Churches of Australia*) in which they ask for new contact. The letter will be on the table of the next Synod of the Free Reformed Churches. However, Rev. Brüning made some remarks. Among other things, he wrote:

It is valuable that the Reformed Synod of Adelaide is convinced of the detrimental development in the Dutch Reformed Churches. However, it is regrettable that the Australian Synod is very weak and obviously lacking positive elements in its reactions. The Synod-letter lacks Scriptural dignity, confessional earnestness, and prophetic power. It gives the impression that the Synod decided to a compromise formulation.

The letter of Synod Adelaide is the letter in which the Australian Reformed Churches explained to the synodical Reformed Church in The Netherlands why they terminated the sister-church relation. The Rev. Brüning says further:

The letter points to the development of theological thought; it mentions a considerable variety of theological opinion and ecclesiastical practice; it refers to confessional and kerugmatic uncertainty, etc.; but in this whole conflict and crisis-situation the Bible and the confession are not opened; a Scriptural testimony is not heard; the letter does not reach the level of Christian indignation and emotion which are clearly taught in the Word of God in similar circumstances. It speaks about uncertainty in the Dutch (synodical) Churches Reformed, but it fails to point to and warn against apostasy and false prophecy. No admonitions are given; a call for repentance and conversion is not passed on.

The whole matter remains in the atmosphere of debate and of difference of opinion.

The Rev. Brüning then asks:

What fruit can be expected in such a crisis-situation from an action in which the prophetic message of the Scriptures and the norms of the confession (e.g. Art. 27-29 of the Belgic Confession) are ignored?

We repeat: Shall we seek unity? The answer can be and must be: yes, but this unity must be a unity in Christ. That is a unity in His truth.

J. GEERTSEMA

PATRIMONY PROFILE²⁶

By Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

C. Between two Reformations

1. The Netherlands Reformed Church

Whenever there is a reformation and whenever a choice has to be made, there are church members who refuse to go along with such action. However many objections they may have and however many words of protest they may utter, they choose against it.

Such was the case after the Secession of 1834 as well. The men of the Reveil, e.g., remained under the organization of 1816 and continued there even though they did not remain inactive. However unsuccessful their efforts may have been, by their endeavours to bring about a change for the better, they kept alive the desire for a return to the old foundation and to the obedience to the Lord alone. Thus they paved the way for, and prepared the soil for the second reformation in the nineteenth century, the Doleantie of 1886.

However, there was at the same time a large measure of polarization within the Netherlands Reformed Church, a polarization which has prevailed until this day.

The Groningen School

Various schools exercised a considerable influence and contributed towards this polarization. There was in the first place the Groningen School, also called the Evangelical School. We should not let ourselves be fooled by the word "evangelical." The persons who formed this school wanted to express thereby that they did not wish to build up a theology from the whole Word of God, but only from the gospel of the New Covenant. They considered themselves the continuation of the old Dutch theology of prereformation times, which allegedly had been squeezed out by Calvinism.

The well-known professor J.J. van Oosterzee of Utrecht described their theology as follows: "Their concept of God was unitarian, their doctrine of sin semi-Pelagian, their Christology Arian-Apollinarian, their whole view of the gospel more pedagogically than soteriologically coloured, whereas the demonology is lacking and the eschatology is concluded with the doctrine of the restoration of all things."

One of the most prominent men at Groningen was professor P. Hofstede de Groot, de Cock's predecessor in Ulrum and later his adversary. Hofstede de Groot had been under the influence of P.W. van Heusde, professor in Utrecht from 1804-1849. Van Heusde had great admiration for ancient Greek and Roman thinking, and endeavoured to revive the old humanisms. Although he was professor in Utrecht, his influence was not limited to the University there or to the one in Groningen where some of his pupils were teaching.

J.H. Scholten occupied an important position at the Leiden university. Cousin, and pupil of van Heusde, Scholten became professor at the university of Leiden and

there began to undermine the very foundations of the Christian faith by his criticism. He may even be called the father of modern criticism. Although he dedicated his studies to the Reformed Systematic Theology, he did so only in order to make his own philosophical and un-Biblical thoughts appear the more acceptable. His works *New Testament Studies* and *The Doctrine of the Reformed Church in Its Fundamentals* were instrumental in spreading his pernicious ideas.

Some hope that the orthodox doctrine would be revived was vested in the University of Utrecht. There a few professors did start the battle against unbelief. The names of J.J. van Toornbergen, J.J. van Oosterzee, and J.I. Doedes are to be mentioned. They were not thoroughly Reformed scholars but at least they opposed the Groningen School, and Doedes, e.g. succeeded in causing the men of this school to admit that they deviated from the Holy Scriptures. Utrecht did more or less remain the source from which the more orthodox part of the Netherlands Reformed Church obtained its ministers. From Utrecht's University came those ministers who belonged to the Reformed Alliance (Gereformeerde Bond) within the Netherlands Reformed Church, and from Utrecht the battle against modernism was continued. It was there that Dr. A. Noordt zij, son of professor Maarten Noordt zij of the Theological Seminary of the Seceded Churches, taught Old Testament discipline for many years.

Organizational Changes

In the previous chapter we mentioned the political changes that took place in and after the year 1840. There were changes in ecclesiastical respect as well. These changes concerned in the first place the organization of the church. On July 1, 1842, the government declared that all changes in the existing Church Order, ought from now on, to come from the church itself, and that the state did not wish to exercise any further influence. In 1843, all legislative power was transferred to the general synod. And it was the 1848 revision of the Constitution which freed the church even more from the control of the State. Thus a revision of the Ecclesiastical Regulations was brought about and introduced in 1853. A general synod came about consisting of thirteen ministers and six elders, chosen by the provincial boards. It became the highest legislative, judicial, and governing body of the church.

In 1861 the Royal Collations were abrogated. The Department of Public Worship was abolished in 1863; from then on matters relating to religion came under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. The churches were pronounced free to administer their ecclesiastical property in 1866. In 1870 all restrictions and reservations were removed.

For the universities there came new regulations as well. The theological faculties at the universities were abolished. Since that time the Netherlands Reformed synod appointed two "ecclesiastical" professors at each of the State Universities who were to teach the specifically ecclesiastical disciplines, which later were dropped from the university program as a result of a new law regarding

higher education adopted on April 28, 1876. Only the discipline of religion was to be taught, but this could, of course, be done by a total unbeliever.

Maintaining the Doctrine

When, in 1848, the general synod started with the revision of the Regulation, it soon appeared that it did not have the desire to improve the situation but rather to revise certain articles which appeared too restrictive. In article IX the expression "maintaining the doctrine" was used. It was synod's intention to replace this by: "maintaining and recommending the evangelical confession." When this became known the alarm was sounded. A meeting was held in Amsterdam, attended by 300 persons. An address was drawn up and sent to the government with the request that no changes should be made in the organization without hearing the congregations. However, the government informed the signatories that they should approach the synod with these matters The only fruit of the meeting and its address was that in article XI of the revised Regulation the words "maintaining the doctrine of the Reformed Church" were retained.

As for the revision in general, it was done by the general synod which was a product of the organization imposed upon the church in 1816. With the final concept not the consistories but only the provincial boards were consulted, and the whole revised Regulation as it was approved by King William III in 1852 simply continued the organization of 1816 with a few minor changes. The decisions were still almost exclusively in the hands of classical, provincial, and general boards.

The Ethical Movement

The Reveil was unable to keep the believers together. When it came to the point, it only fostered and aided the polarization. The differences between the men of the Reveil were not only to be sought in the practical sphere: but also in regard to the doctrinal position. For the practical approach, da Costa's thesis was that a "medical approach" should be used: letting evil follow its own course, for in the long run it will destroy itself. Groen van Prinsterer, on the other hand, promoted the maintaining of right and justice. As long as no concrete actions and formulations were required, the brethren got along quite well and cooperated; but when concrete deeds were needed and more precise formulations were in order with a view to the development of things, their ways parted.

Groen van Prinsterer wished to base himself on the Three Forms of Unity, but found himself standing overagainst others, e.g. N. Beets, who did not wish to stand on that basis.

David Chantepie de la Saussaye, whose name betrays his Huguenot ancestry, was in his thinking more influenced by the philosophy of the German philosopher Schleiermacher, and by the emphasis on experience in religious matters as proclaimed by Alexandre Vinet, a Swiss theologian. He is the father of the *Ethical Movement*, whose characteristics are: The Christian truth should not be understood intellectually but ethically; the revelation

of God is not a proclamation of doctrine but impartition of life; the certainty of faith does not rest in Scripture but solely in the experience of faith; the congregation does not experience what it confesses, but, confesses what it experiences, and the dogma is the formulation of the experience. The Ethical Movement rejects the inspiration of Scripture, predestination, atonement, the very Person of Christ, and more fundamental truths.

One of the best-known pupils of De la Saussaye is Dr. J.H. Gunning.

The Modernist School

The Modernist School or Movement is the fruit of J.H. Scholten's theories, and the product of his pupils. Scholten differentiated between Scripture and the Word of God. He denied a special revelation of God. Revelation coincides with creation and upholding. God reveals Himself in all His works, in nature, in history, and above all in the man Jesus who, in His life and death shows us the true religion.

To this Modernist Movement belonged, among others, Dr. A. Pierson and Cd. Busken Huet. Both were for some years Wallonian ministers, respectively, in Belgium and in The Hague, but resigned their position later on. Dr. J.C. Zaalberg was one of the most brazen representatives of this movement. It is even rumoured, that on a certain Sunday, a group of Jews were waiting for Zaalberg, most upset because he had dragged Moses and the Prophets through the mud.

The Confessional Society

On October 12, 1864, a meeting was held in Utrecht to which many ministers, elders, and past elders had been invited. It was Groen van Prinsterer's suggestion that the theme should be: "According to the Confession or according to the Regulation? Has the Confessional Church been disbanded? Has it been dissolved into a purely Regulation-Church?" Almost seventy ministers and more than fifty non-ministers attended the meeting. A large majority was in favour of establishing the *Confessional Society*.

What was the Society's aim? It's aim was to achieve the maintenance of the confession, and the barring of modernistic preachers. No ecclesiastical board, it was stated, has or can have the power to give up the foundation of the church. The present provisions concerning the organization of the Netherlands Reformed Church which require *the maintenance of its doctrine*, oblige the church board to bar the unbelief, which reveals itself in these days in the denial of the supernatural in Christianity. If it appears that the Regulations of the Netherlands Reformed Church impede the barring of the radical unbelief which nowadays is being propagated in the church, its believing officebearers and members are in duty bound, setting aside that church order, to maintain their conviction of faith. They are not allowed, for the sake of the church order, to be a party to the destruction of the church, they may not recognize as leaders those who reject the apostolic witness concerning the Christ, and no longer leave the fellow-believer to the arbitrariness of the attacker that is protected by the Regulation.

— *To be continued.*

Divine Providence and Human Accountability¹

1. Confusing ambiguity

When we speak about the Will¹ of God, there seems to be a confusing ambiguity. On the one hand, we can notice a paralyzing fatalism with those who predict a world destruction. They do not believe in a God who rules all things, let alone that they trust in God's providence. If they believe in a sort of divine being, it is only to blame "him" for all the misery in this world. They believe in a mysterious power behind the scenes. No one knows what "he" will do. That is unpredictable. It is like a fate, a cause beyond human control that decides events. Their conclusion is: you cannot know and you shall never know what God's Will is!

On the other hand, we can hear the theory, proclaimed even by modern theologians, that we cannot know the Will of God, but it is worked out in a completely different direction. Adherents of this theory preach lawlessness, freedom, liberty, and an almost latitudinarian tolerance. We do not know the Will of God, and therefore we are free to do what we want. Let no one bother us with prohibitions and regulations. We do not know the Will of the Lord anyway. Good is what is good for mankind. Let no one pretend that he knows the Will of God for human life. This theory does not cause paralyzing fatalism, but rather freedom and lawlessness. Man becomes his own norm and law. Such people may talk about a "god" who exists, but to them it is a very transcendent god, a god far away, above and beyond human comprehension.

The remarkable thing is that the presumption in these two theories is the same: we do not know the Will of God. The result, however, is completely different.

Another aspect is whether we can oppose or resist the Will of God. The fatalists say: "No, we can't. What God has decided happens anyway. We do not know what it will be, but it will come upon us. No one can prevent it. It is like a fate." Others say: "We oppose the Will of God all the time. In our whole life we oppose His Will." Again: that is confusing and it seems contradictory.

In catechism classes I ask the question: "Do we know God's Will and can we resist His Will?" Different answers are given. Some say: "No, we do not know the Will of the Lord, but His Will shall be accomplished and no one can ever oppose His Will or prevent His Will from happening." Others say: "We know the Will of God, but we oftentimes ignore, deny, or oppose His Will by our transgressions." Both answers sound very convincing and are correct, although they seem to say just the opposite. Here again a confusing ambiguity comes to the surface as far as the expression "the Will of God" is concerned.

We find the same in our confession. The Belgic Confession says in Article XIII that God rules and governs all things according to His holy Will and that without the Will of our heavenly Father not a hair can fall to the ground. He so restrains the devil and all our enemies that without His Will and permission they cannot hurt us.

Lord's Day 10 says in Answer 28 that all creatures are so in God's hand that without His Will they cannot so much as move. This means that, although we do not know the Will of

the Lord, no one can oppose or change His Will. No creature can even move or do anything without or against the Will of God.

However, in Matthew 7:21 Jesus speaks about those who *do* the Will of the Father who is in heaven and in I John 2:17 we read that he who *does* the Will of God abides for ever. That means that we *know* the Will of God, that some *do* the Will of God and that others do *not* do God's Will, but oppose, deny, ignore, or transgress His Will.

We do not mention these things to cause confusion, but rather to show the confusing ambiguity which sometimes seems to exist. Aware of this, we may wonder, "How come?" The answer is that we use a word, an expression, without asking what it means. As a matter of fact there are two different meanings and we use them arbitrarily. That is why we first have to determine what the meaning is and which meaning we are referring to.

2. Two different meanings

In our language there are many words with two or more meanings. The verb "to lie" can indicate that someone is telling an untruth. It also can describe that someone is in a reclined, resting position. From the contexts it has to become clear which meaning is referred to.

Sometimes the meaning of a certain word can change in the course of time. Lord's Day XI, Answer 20, of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks about "welfare." In the time that the Heidelberg Catechism was written, or translated into English, the meaning of the word "welfare" was: "well-being, comfort, and happiness." Nowadays the word "welfare" is almost exclusively used for the system of additional government help for those who are in need. We all know what it means to be "on welfare," but sometimes the children do not rightly understand what is meant in Lord's Day XI by "seeking welfare of saints."

We always have to be careful when we use a word which has more than one meaning. We have to make sure that the meaning is rightly understood by the readers or listeners. In scientific literature the author oftentimes starts by giving a definition of some expressions to be used, especially of those which can be used in different ways. Oftentimes the question is not what the meaning of a certain word is. A word can very well have more than one meaning. The question is rather what the author means by it, which meaning of the word he refers to. There are words which can be used properly in different ways. In such cases sufficient attention should be paid to the question whether we are expressing ourselves in a clear and unambiguous way.

In the first paragraph I have used the word "Will" in two different ways without giving a definition or explanation of the meaning of the word. I have done so on purpose, not to cause confusion, but to show how confusion *can* be caused by the improper use of this word. In what follows I will show the two different meanings of this word. As soon as we realize what causes the confusion, it appears to be much easier to prevent it from happening.

In dogmatics many distinctions are made with respect to

the Will of God. We can read about the active Will of God and about His passive Will; we hear about His concealed Will and about His revealed Will; and even more distinctions are made. In this article I am not going to deal with dogmatic distinctions. Instead, I will try to explain the matter in the same way I do in catechism classes.

Speaking about the Will of the Lord we can distinguish between God's *plan* and God's *law*. God's plan and purpose is sometimes called His concealed Will. We do not know what the Lord is going to do tomorrow. We do not know what His plan is with our life and with respect to human history. But we know that His plan will be fulfilled. No one can oppose His plan or prevent it from happening.

God's law or His commandment is called His revealed Will. We know the law of the Lord. We have to submit to His commandments and we have to obey His law. But we see in everyday life that many do not obey the Will of the Lord but oppose and transgress His commandments.

When we keep in mind this distinction between God's revealed Will, expressed in His law, on the one hand, and God's concealed Will or His divine plan and purpose with this world, on the other, it becomes much easier to avoid the confusion mentioned above.

3. *Thy Will be done*

Let us now first consider the meaning of the expression "Thy Will" in the Lord's prayer. That will give us the opportunity to go into more detail with respect to this matter.

The third petition reads: "Thy Will be done." In which way is the word "Will" used here?

The expression "Thy Will be done" *can* be used in both ways in our prayer. It can refer to God's plan as well as to His law. It all depends on the place this clause has in our prayer: whether it is used at the beginning of our prayer or at the very end.

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He concluded His prayer with the words "My Father, if this (cup) cannot pass unless I drink it, Thy Will be done" (Matthew 26:42). Those are the same words as we find in the third petition. Still the meaning is completely different. At the end of the prayer

the expression "Thy Will be done" refers to God's concealed plan or purpose with our life. We do not know what the Lord's plan is. We do not know what will happen with us tomorrow. We do not know whether the Lord will grant our prayer for recovery of health, for finding a job, or for having healthy children. We know that the Lord takes care of us and that He will make all things subservient to our salvation. He knows what we need and He will supply us with everything. That is why we say: "Thy Will be done." We trust in Him and expect everything from Him, out of His hand. We have brought all our desires before Him, but not as we will, but as He wills it shall be. "Thy Will be done!"

In the third petition, however, these words are used in a different way. Here we do not confess in the first place that the Lord's plan and purpose will come true and will be fulfilled. Here we confess that it is our task to submit our whole life to the revealed Will of the Lord. We have to obey His law! In Lord's Day 49, Answer 124, we pray: "Grant that we and all men may renounce our own will and without gainsaying obey Thy Will, which alone is good." To obey without gainsaying refers clearly to a Will which is known to us. It refers to God's law. The third petition does *not* say — as these words at the end of our prayer indicate — "not as I will but as Thou wilt." No, it means: "Make us obedient to Thy law. Grant that we submit our whole life to Thy commandments."

Now we have seen the meaning, or even the different meanings of the expression "the Will of God." We also have heard how we can use the expression "Thy Will be done" in two different ways, depending on whether it is used at the beginning or at the very end of our prayer.

In the next installment we will see what this means for our personal life and for the way we deal with all kinds of special events in our life.

— *To be continued*
W. POUWELSE

Langley, BC

¹Because the word "Will" is a key word in these articles, the noun "Will," referring to God's will, is typed with a *capital w*, to distinguish it from the verb "to will."

PRESS RELEASE

Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Teachers College, held October 27th, 1983.

Br. C.J. Nobels, our acting chairman, opened the meeting by reading Romans 13 followed by prayer. Br. G. Nordeman, the chairman, was absent with notification. Minutes of the previous meeting were adopted. After a few changes the agenda was adopted.

Our treasurer, br. J. Gelderman, presented us with a monthly statement. After a brief report about our finances, he stressed, that he was somewhat worried about the slow receiving of membership fees. In connection with this report br. C. Hoff gave his drive report, with a copy for the newsletter, to be printed sometime in November. Br. J. Gelderman left the meeting.

The Building Committee reported on contact with the Theological College concerning the sharing of facilities. The principal reported

that things were running quite smoothly, and according to the calendar. He also had some literature on a photocopier. Seeing that we have not yet received the finances as we should, it was decided to leave this till a later date. He reported that the college has its own telephone and mailbox now: PO Box 4204, Station "D" Hamilton, ON L8V 4L6, Phone: (416) 385-0634.

A tentative date, February 11, 1984, was set for the Annual meeting.

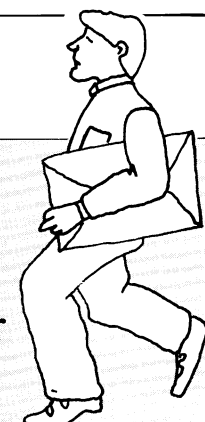
Two reports were made on visits to the college.

The next meeting is to be held on November 18, 1983, the Lord willing.

The principal reported that the courses given by Prof. J. Faber on Philosophical Foundation of Education, started on September 30th and will be running for ten weeks, until December 2, 1983 D.V.

Br. C. Hoff closed with prayer and the meeting was adjourned by the chairman.

For the executive,
JOHN JONKER



Did you remember to hand in your family greeting for our "Year End" issue?

“ANCHOR”

How do we tell It to our children?

Yes, that is correct; the word It is capitalized. That is because we are dealing with an immensely important question: the Biblical truth, the issues of faith, everything concerning the almighty God and His love for us whereby He did not spare even His Son, but gave Him up for us so that we and our children might one day enter into the kingdom of God.

Well-formulated as this may be, it is incomprehensible for many people; for small children in the first place, although they will eventually learn to understand it. However, it remains incomprehensible language for many who are mentally handicapped. Yet their parents also promised at the baptismal font that they would educate their children in the “aforesaid doctrine.”

But this is impossible in some cases. What then? Many parents are faced with a difficulty here and do not know how to deal with it. We realize that for a number of our handicapped all this will remain unintelligible. However, a majority can accept a great deal of this as long as it is taught in the right manner.

Many mothers, unfortunately, are not teachers, and, besides that, a somewhat different approach may be needed to acquaint the children with this topic. Although many may say, “But my child gets nothing out of it,” I would still like to suggest some possible means.

Let us begin by saying that we ourselves do not even understand much of it. Is faith not the evidence of things not seen and do we not see things as through a mirror dimly? One may easily be tempted not to take a mentally handicapped person to church, thinking he will understand nothing of it. Do your three- and four-year-olds understand it? Often the spiritual life of the mentally retarded is (like that of a child) not at all handicapped. Frequently I have seen among them a faith so strong that it puts ours to shame.

One mother told me, “After half a year of working with him he still does not know a psalm. The same with the Bible stories.” I do not know how this mother tried it, but I do know that the most effective method is singing the same song several times together with the child every evening before going to bed, repeating it over and over again. Perhaps it will bore you, but it is too confusing to try to teach a number of different songs at one time. Sing that one song while you are doing the dishes and the child is playing around you. Often the child will begin by hum-

ming the melody, and slowly but surely the sounds will follow. Possibly he will not learn all the words properly, but what does that matter? Just notice how happy the child is when the minister lets the congregation sing the very song he has learned with such difficulty. That stimulates him! Here I should like to include the ministers. Would it be too difficult to recall this certain child off and on? Do you know which psalm he has already learned? Could you not include that an extra time? This will assist the child in feeling that it also belongs. With such simple means help can be given.

We are happy to be acquainted with adjusted services. That does not mean services with all kinds of fuss and bother, or services only for the handicapped. No, a service which has been adjusted especially for them. That requires some preparation, i.e. by asking the parents or the Home what they know. You will see how happy they are to be able to participate with the congregation.

For that matter, are we not all happy if we can sing along with all our heart? Let us recall for a moment the function of the hymn boards. It sometimes happens, especially during the holidays, that the psalms are not indicated. Has it ever occurred to you that, as a result, many older people are unable to sing along because they must first look up the psalm and sometimes cannot find it quickly enough; perhaps they misunderstood when the psalm was announced. Hymn boards, according to me, should also announce what the Bible reading and text are. Otherwise the brothers and sisters with hearing problems can often not follow the sermon, because they do not know exactly what it is about. These are only small things, but they are of great importance.

I would urge all ministers and consistories to do their utmost to ensure that all the members experience the communion of saints. Is it not worth the trouble?

Next time we will continue with the telling of the Bible story.

Translation from the Dutch magazine, DIT KONINGSKIND.

OUR COVER

After a rain.
Mangelum, Irian Jaya, Indonesia.
Photo courtesy Bram Vegter.

PRESS RELEASE

of the meeting of the Executive Board of the Inter-League Publication Board held in London, November 10, 1983.

Opening: The chairman C. Hoff opened the meeting with the reading of Psalm 145:1-13 and led in prayer. A special welcome was extended to Mrs. Jenny Oostdyk who will be taking over the Public Relations Department. Mrs. Johanna Koolsbergen was thanked for the work she has done in this department.

Minutes: The minutes were read and approved after a minor change.

Matters Arising from the Minutes: We cannot be exempted from the 7% provincial sales tax for our equipment, however the books are provincial sales tax exempted.

Planning Department: Several books have been received from Holland. Some members of the Church have been asked to read and give their opinion on these books. A letter has been received from Australia, notifying us that there are no outlines being translated or printed. It was also suggested that we look into the possibility of publishing an article by Prof. Kamphuis of The Netherlands, called “Om Het Recht Van Het Verbond.” This will be looked into.

Public Relations: Letters were sent out to school boards. No replies as yet.

Sales: The selling of books has been running smoothly, however payments for some of these books have not been prompt. Reminders will be sent after thirty days. It was decided to grant individual membership at \$5.00 per year to people who cannot become a member through their society or Bible Study Club. We have received notice that 200 copies of *Bride's Treasure* by Dr. Faber et. al., have been shipped to us from Australia. As of yet we have not received them. Hopefully they will be available for purchase in the near future.

Projects: Work on James and Peter is almost complete, and this book should be available by November 30. Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus) and Philemon will be dealt with next. We expect Daniel will be ready for purchase at the end of December. The copyright agreement with “De Vuurbaak” re: *Roep Mij Aan* (Call Unto Me) has been received and two minor amendments have been proposed to the Vuurbaak.

The meeting was closed with prayer. The next meeting will be held on November 24 D.V., this meeting will be concerning the revised constitution of the I.L.P.B.

On behalf of the I.L.P.B.,
J. OOSTDYK

Church  News

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Rev. J. DeJong
600 Debora Crescent
Burlington, ON L7T 2N1

our little magazine

Hello Busy Beavers,

Today we have a poem and a story to share with you. Here is the poem written by Busy Beaver *Michelle DeHaas*.

Fall

In fall the leaves turn colours
Yellow, orange, and red.
"They make a very beautiful sight"
I happily said.

As I walked on through the woods
I looked all around me.
God's wonderful hand of creation
Was everywhere I could see.

And we have a story by Busy Beaver *Sylvia Van Bodegom*.

I had a fish. Its name was Goldylox. I had to feed it every other day. I got it when we went for a school trip to Hartz. It was a goldfish, a bright orange, gray and white one. My brothers had a goldfish, too. One of them didn't have one because he was way too small at the time. His name is Bradley. All the fish died later because sometimes we forgot to feed them or we gave them too much food. But we might get another pet next year.



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Michelle De Haas*. We hope you will really enjoy reading our Little Magazine, doing the puzzles and all our other "fun things to do" and, don't forget, joining in all our CONTESTS! But I see you're a real Busy Beaver already, Michelle, writing such a nice poem for us. Keep it up!

And a big welcome to you, too, *Cindy Huttema*. Sounds like you have a special family, Cindy, with 2 sets of twins! I do hope you'll get the pen pal you want, Cindy. Will you write and tell us about Heritage Valley across the street from your house? Thanks for the puzzle, Cindy.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Sylvia Sikkema*. We are happy to have you join us, and we hope you'll really enjoy being a Busy Beaver. Do you help look after the chickens and rabbits, and the gardens in summer, Sylvia?

And a big welcome to you, too, *Anthony Vis*. You're a real Busy Beaver already I see, sending us such a big puzzle. Keep up the good work, Anthony!

You are very welcome to join the Busy Beaver Club, *Michelle and Kerry Roodzant*. But you'll have to send me your address so that I can send you your membership cards, all right? Thank you very much for your pretty, colourful picture, Kerry. I really like it, especially the people and the robins.

Thanks very much for your riddles, *Marjorie Barendregt*. I'm glad you had such fun at another Busy Beaver's birthday party. I hope you'll keep practising that calligraphy, Marjorie.

That way you get better all the time! Send me some samples sometime, all right?

Hello, *Pearl Vandeburgt*. Thanks for all the riddles. I'm sure everybody likes them! Yes, I got your other letter, Pearl. And I answered it in the Aug. 12 *Clarion*. Do you get to play often with your new little cousin? I think she would like that!

Busy Beavers, we need a pen pal (about 11 yr. old) for:

Cindy Huttema
36226 Dawson Rd., RR 4
Abbotsford, BC V2S 4N4

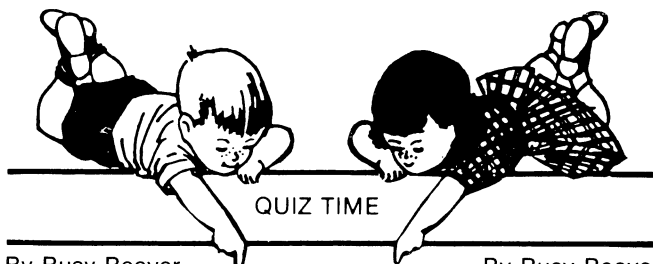
Riddle Fun

Lots of Busy Beavers sent in riddles for you to enjoy with your friends and family. These are from Busy Beavers *Janina Barendregt, Jeannie Barendregt and Debbie Jagt*.

1. Who can raise things without lifting them?
2. Why do bees hum?
3. Why is Santa Claus the best gardener?
4. What carries the heaviest weights?
5. What do you get if your cat eats a lemon?
6. How do you walk through a crowd of porcupines?
7. What falls but never breaks?
8. What bow is impossible to tie?

Answers: 1. a farmer 2. Because they don't know the words. 3. Because he loves to "Ho-ho-ho." 4. the crane 5. a sour puss 6. carefully 7. a waterfall 8. a rainbow.

Answers



QUIZ TIME

By Busy Beaver
Michelle Oostdyk

By Busy Beaver
Gwen Werkman

Tree Scramble

School Scramble

ako _____	acehtre _____
apmle _____	tetsudn _____
repa _____	keds _____
pelap _____	aabblrdkco _____
vreernege _____	oksbo _____
lapm _____	cujbest _____
hribc _____	fhesl _____
	patbaleh _____
	eppra _____
	ttse _____



NUMBER-LETTER QUIZ

By Busy Beaver *Chandra Meerstra*

1. Put the answers in the boxes under the questions.
2. Look at the Code.
3. Put the letters in the empty boxes underneath.
4. The extra letters will form a word.