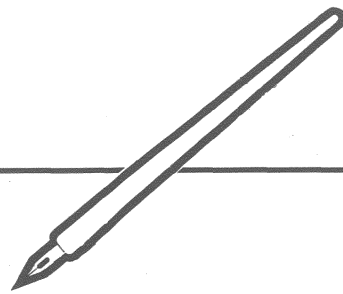




Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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Child abuse

1. Some statistics

Child abuse and child molestation are issues not too frequently discussed among our people. Most of us seem to think that it does not happen in our circles. It might be a danger, threatening our youngsters when they travel or when they come into obscure and dirty places, but such things do not happen in the secure and protected environment of a Christian family or a Christian society.

However, this idea is not correct. Recently many cases have come in the news. That does not necessarily mean that this phenomenon is on the increase. It can also be caused by the fact that people are speaking more openly about it. Especially the victims do have more opportunities to ask for help, to explain and discuss their problems with people who are willing to listen and to help.

Child abuse and molestation is not something that is restricted to the socially lower class or to the "outcast." It happens among all kinds of people, even in the highest ranks. It also happens among Christians.

Recent publications have given us a grim picture of reality. Among the people who have been convicted we find doctors, teachers, company directors and other highly respected people. Many of them are financially well off, generally known as nice, well-behaving people and sometimes fathers of respected families.

According to statistics one out of five American children have been molested in one way or another before they reach the age of 18 years; 90% of them are molested, not by strangers, but by good friends of the family or by members of the family. Most victims are molested in their own home.

These things do happen also among Christians. Although most cases will never come into the open, there is a lot of suffering because of this molestation. Children suffer oftentimes the most because they cannot talk or do not dare to talk about it with anybody. Statistics show that parents as well as pastors, teachers and church officials have been convicted of child molestation. According to some experts it seems that well-behaving and well-educated children are even more prone to become a victim. They say that especially the "good kids" are a rewarding target for child abusers. You might wonder why. We will try to explain this in the next section.

2. Who are the victims?

A police officer who is especially in charge of investigations in such crimes pointed to some very interesting and remarkable facts. Children in a Christian family are taught to respect and obey adults. They are not supposed to "talk back." Younger children have the impression that what adults do, say, or ask must be right, especially when they are highly respected persons. This might be a proper attitude for children, but it makes them also more vulnerable as victims of molestation. These children oftentimes have a highly developed sense for a code of honour: you are not allowed to break your promise. They can be put under pressure. The molester tells them: I

know what I am doing and you are not allowed to tell anyone about these things. They are forced to promise that they will never talk about it to others. And then they feel obliged to keep their promise. That makes well-educated and well-behaved children an easier target for child molesters.

There are some other aspects which have to be considered. A molester always looks for a victim who for one reason or another is "different" from others and therefore feels lonely, rejected, singled out or at least not completely accepted in the group of peers. Sometimes they are children who do not receive the love and affection they need and who are therefore eager to accept a relationship which offers him or her special attention and something they feel as love and affection.

Other frequent targets are physically precocious children, who for that reason do not feel at ease among their peers. They look older than they are, although they mentally still need the contact with children of their own age. The older children do not accept them because of their age and the younger ones do not see them as their equals and do not fully accept them for that reason. The molester oftentimes knows exactly how to explore these feelings and offers the comfort, the affection and the personal relationship they are missing and looking for. Such children are sometimes willing to endure the suffering, the physical harm and the stress they have to go through, in order to maintain the relationship and to receive the attention from someone who seems to care for them. They will even protect their molester, rather than try to escape his attack.

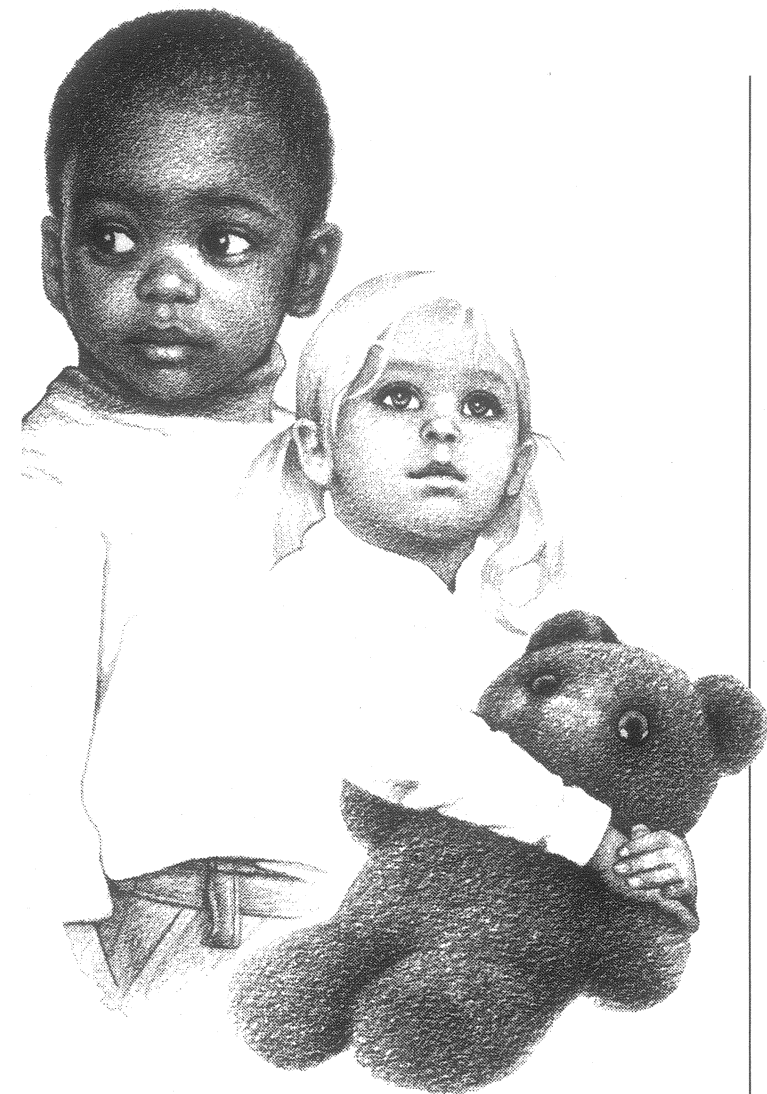
3. Who is the offender?

Some people seem to think that a child molester is a "bad looking guy," whom you can recognize right away by the way he looks at you, the way he is dressed, behaves, and talks. However, this picture is not correct. They are oftentimes well-behaving, highly respected persons. Among those who have been convicted we find babysitters, teachers, fathers, grandfathers, and other relatives.

In most cases no one was aware or would have expected such a relationship. However, that makes it even more dangerous. When children try to talk about it or to refer to it they are not believed or taken seriously.

Another problem is that children oftentimes cannot escape the relationship. When they are abused by their father or by a brother, they might feel terribly scared, but still they feel they have to live with their "secret" because they have a place in the family. If they would divulge the matter, they might get caught up in a tight squeeze. It might create a situation which seems to be even more embarrassing for them than the actual abuse. That is why so many children, victims of molestation, live with their "secret." They do not dare to speak about it, they do not want to divulge the matter and bring the relationship to an end until it is already too late.

The relationship might come to an end because they have come to maturity. But still the frustration lasts and the damage



is done. I have seen too many cases of people who could never get rid of their frustrations, not even when they had talked it out at a later time. Let us not underestimate the physical as well as the psychological damage caused. It happens quite often that problems arise in their own marriage because they have a completely wrong conception of what a real sexual relationship is all about. When a minister or another counsellor is confronted with marriage problems quite often the origin appears to be molestation of one of the partners during childhood. It is not the exception when such a molestation is performed by family members, either one of the parents, or of the brothers and sisters, a grandfather or another close relative or friend. It is extremely difficult to take away misconceptions and frustrations which have built up for many years, even from childhood until parenthood.

4. How to prevent child abuse

After what we have said in the previous sections, parents might wonder how they can prevent such things from happening. We have seen already that children are taught to respect and obey adults and to submit to authorities. That can make children more prone to become victims, but it would be a matter of putting the cart before the horse if we would try to avoid child abuse by teaching the children to disobey and reject the authority of adults. However, we have to teach them that there are limits on obedience.

We also have to teach children that they have to keep their promises, but that there are promises which never should be made and therefore, if made, should not be kept.

An important general rule, which parents have to instil in their children is: if someone asks you *not* to talk about something, and never to tell your father *and* your mother about it, it is probably wrong and therefore you *should* tell your parents.

Another thing is that the parents have to talk openly and frankly with their children about sexual matters. That does not mean that they have to discuss all kinds of details, which are not yet at the level of their children's comprehension. Neither does it mean a lack of respect for very intimate issues. On the contrary. It rather means that the children have to know that they always can discuss with their parents everything that bothers them or keeps them busy in their mind. The more openly the parents speak with their children, the less the molester has a chance to speculate on the curiousness of the children and their eagerness to get involved in "secret" matters.

The parents should not scare the children with all kinds of vague warnings against molesters or bad people. That can make them afraid and uneasy with every outsider. Parents should be as specific as possible. Very young children do not understand the real meaning of these things. Still they have to be warned. The best way is to teach them to say no if anyone tries to touch them in such a way that they feel uncomfortable. If that happens they should tell their parents about it. A general advice, given by some specialists in the field of child abuse is to tell the children to say no, to yell and to scream if anyone tries to touch them in the area covered by their bathing suit. Such incidents should always be reported to *both* parents.

Another point is that the parents should be aware of the fact that they have to *listen* to their children. When police officers or counsellors are confronted with such cases they often ask, "Why did you never talk about it with your parents?" Too often the answer is, "I tried once (or a few times) but they were too busy and they did not understand what I was talking about or referring to." We should realize that it is not easy for a child to start talking about such things, and when parents, through their attitude give a signal to the child: "Don't bother me, I am too busy with other things," the child will be very hesitant to try it again and rather keep the matter as a "secret" for himself, with all its devastating consequences.

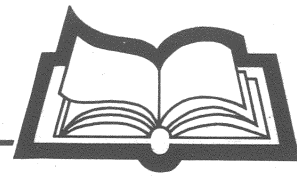
We are living in a time in which people talk everywhere about sexuality. Most of the time it is a lack of respect for sexuality as a gift of the Lord in human life. We do not correct this situation by avoiding conversations about these matters in our family life. It should not be considered as "dirty matters." On the contrary. It is in the family that the children should learn to have respect for and to talk respectfully about sexual life. If they know that these matters can be discussed openly with their parents, they will be less vulnerable and less prone to become a victim of child molestation.

Nowadays we hear about all kinds of civic actions and action centers, about child abuse clinics and emergency centers to assist, advise, and counsel victims. Sometimes it might be necessary to ask for professional help and counselling in cases of child molestation, to prevent lasting psychological and physical harm for the victims. However, this help should come from the parents in the first place. Professional help should, if at all possible, be given in close cooperation and at the request of the parents.

There are exceptions. In cases in which the parents themselves are the perpetrators of the molestation, intervention of the civil government, either via the Ministry of Human Resources or via the Ministry of Justice, might be necessary. However, also in this respect it is true that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Let the parents be on the alert.

W. POUWELSE

P.S. Some of the information for this article has been derived from *Focus on the Family*, November 1984.



“That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels.” I Cor. 11:10

With Veiled Faces

The apostle Paul’s admonition to the women of Corinth requiring them to wear a veil in public worship has been the focal point of much controversy and debate. Is it a rule for a specific time, or does it apply to all times, and ours as well? An element making the matter more complicated is Paul’s very deft, sleight-of-hand reference to the angels. Angels hardly function in the context; why are they mentioned here so abruptly? Some hold that Paul refers to the presence of angels in public worship. However, this explanation hardly satisfies, since the angels are mentioned here as the sole reason for wearing the veil.

We can make headway, however, if we recall some of the rich symbolism the Bible reveals with regard to the world of angels. We often read of two kinds of angels, *cherubim* and *seraphim*; the former are *guarding* angels who demonstrate God’s glory, power, and strength, and the latter are *servicing* angels who stand near the LORD’s throne and minister to him. And from Isaiah 6, we also learn that the seraphim appear before God’s throne with veiled faces, crying “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” The following verses also indicate that the seraphim have a unique role with regard to *prophecy*; one of them comes and touches Isaiah’s mouth, Isaiah 6:6.

Why do these angels appear with veiled faces? Clearly, the vision indicates that the brightness of the *glory* of the LORD explains the veils. Two elements are to be noted here; first, it shows the proximity of the seraphim to the glory of the Lord and His majesty; second, it shows the function that the seraphim have in the LORD’s presence. They are the noble angels, but their sole function is to *serve*. They take a position of lowliness, reverence and awe in the presence of the all-encompassing and all-surpassing glory of God.

This symbolism also finds remarkable parallels in the service and function of women in public worship. Throughout the Old Testament we read of women who *prophecy*, and we find the same at Corinth, I Cor. 11:5. But what so clearly marks their role in worship and office is *service*, *diakonia*. The law refers to the ministering women who ministered at the door of the tent of meeting,” Ex. 38:8. Who cannot but see a parallel here to the seraphim of Isaiah 6, who also stand “at the door”? And when He came who was to fulfil the law, Jesus Christ, we also find women who minister to Him, Luke 4:39, 8:3. So we also find women occupy functions of *ministry* in the early church, I Tim. 5:9ff.

But why is the veil so important? The heavenly parallel gives the answer. God is a God of order, and that order is also reflected in heavenly worship and doxology. Rank and place are also found among the angels, and in the world

of angels. And the seraphim, who are qualified by the *proximity* to God’s glory, mark the nobility of their place with a unique sign of modesty. They approach the throne of glory with veiled faces. And although they have a role in ushering prophecy, they may not see or fathom it all, I Peter 1:12b. Their very proximity to the heavenly glories gives them a place of greater modesty and a more withdrawn and lowly appearance.

Now the apostle Paul also wishes to see this heavenly decorum of worship exemplified and portrayed on earth. While both men and women took the role of prophecy in the early church, rank and distinction could not be ignored. In public worship, too, God is a God of order, I Cor. 14:33, 40. So Paul argues that as man is the image and glory of God, woman is the glory of man. As in the heavenly decorum, angels are *ministering* spirits to *man*, (Hebrew 1:14), so in the earthly counterpart, women display a role of service and ministering to men. And just as God is exalted in the creation and renewal of man, so man is honoured and exalted in the service of the ministering women.

Here we stand before the mystery of this order God has established. For in her very role of *diakonia*, ministry, the woman — although standing under the man, and withheld from teaching authority — still, as it were, “leads the way.” Indeed, how often in the history of revelation was not *she* the one to hear the good news first? How often does not — in her very service — her proximity to the divine glory appear? Indeed, both men and women prophesied in the early church; but women could well have prophesied more than men! And throughout we see her perform the central, important task in the church: ministry, service. For *ministry* is precisely the secret of *every* office in the church; *every* (male) office-bearer — minister, elder, or deacon — can only take his example from her, just as she gets it from the angels who minister before God’s throne.

Therefore, in the hidden and background role of her service, we see her — in a very real sense — lead the way. She stands closest to the heavenly example; she, more than anyone, patterns “what we will be,” I John 3:2. For we will be like the angels in heaven, Matthew 22:30, where with one accord, and each in his place, all will join in the great festal song of thanksgiving, the great liturgical service of praise, the unending worship service of thankfulness to our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Following her example, we all now must draw near with veiled faces, in reverence and awe. Isn’t that the correct appearance of a bride for her bridegroom? (Rev. 22:17). Then we know that at the last day we may stand with *unveiled* faces, II Cor. 3:18, beholding the glory of the Lord, fully renewed in His likeness.

J. DEJONG

Covenant and Election₁

A response to Prof. H.C. Hoeksema's critique

1. The Protestant Reformed Churches

In our August 10, 1984 issue we published an article, dealing with "Backgrounds of the Liberation." In that article we payed attention to the developments in The Netherlands. We also showed the similarity and the close relationship between the developments in the Old Country and on the American Continent. In this respect we referred to the Synod of Kalamazoo 1924 and the Synod of the PRC 1951. In the October 5 issue of *The Standard Bearer* the (Protestant Reformed) Prof. H.C. Hoeksema gives some comments on our article. We appreciate the fact that he is willing to pay attention to our writings and we are more than willing to give further clarification. The matter at stake is certainly worthy of discussion.

In the previous article we gave special attention to the similarity between the developments which caused the Liberation in The Netherlands and the situation on the American Continent.

Dealing with the PRC there are, of course, many other aspects which are worth discussing. There are not only similarities but also great differences, and in this article we will give more attention to specific points regarding our relations with the Protestant Reformed Churches. In our previous article we mentioned already that the late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder urged the emigrants to join the PRC. "Although he did not agree with everything going on in these churches, he was convinced that this was the only church where our people would feel at home right away and where they should go." After the decision of 1951 was mentioned we wrote, "The late Prof. Dr. K. Schilder who, in spite of some objections he had against the PRC, always had advised the emigrants to join these churches, stated at that time: "It is all over." We did not elaborate on his "objections against the PRC," because in the context it was less relevant. However, these differences are important enough to receive attention in a separate article. The main issue is the doctrine concerning the Covenant. What is the Covenant? Who are included in the

Covenant? What is the promise of the Covenant? Can the Covenant be broken? Is there a wrath of the Covenant? What is the relationship between the Covenant and the Election?

In what follows we will try to give attention to these points. In this way we hope to satisfy Prof. Hoeksema.

2. Distortion?

Prof. Hoeksema is not pleased with what we wrote about the PRC. According to him, our article is full of distortions. He speaks about "a first distortion," "the next distortion," "a fundamental distortion," "a following distortion," "the worst distortion of the whole article," "another distortion," and "the final distortion." Distortion means twisting out of the true meaning. The reader may wonder *why* we twisted so constantly the true meaning. It is, according to Prof. Hoeksema, because we simply depended on the distortion of the *Declaration* in the Rev. VanOene's book *Inheritance Preserved*. Later

he calls it even "the very distorted and partial presentation of the *Declaration of Principles* by the Rev. VanOene." We have heard many things about our esteemed colleague VanOene, who is a Lecturer in Church History at our Theological College in Hamilton, but we have never heard that he gives a "very distorted and partial presentation" of the facts. On the contrary. Some even say that he is too punctilious. Prof. Hoeksema complains that in the past, *Clarion* "has sometimes misrepresented the position of our Protestant Reformed Churches, the same as the magazine of the Liberated in The Netherlands, *De Reformatie*, has done, especially with respect to our covenant view." He asks for a correction but he has "little hope, in the light of past experiences, that his request will be heeded." Therefore he must be pleasantly surprised that we heed his request and respond to his remarks. We will try to quote him without any "distortion" and we hope that he will inform his readers about our response in the same way.



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3. Kalamazoo 1924

Let us begin with the "first distortion" and listen to what Prof. Hoeksema says.

The first distortion appears when Kalamazoo 1924 is referred to. The distortion is twofold. In the preaching Dr. Abraham Kuyper's theory of presumptive regeneration is discussed at length; and this is important. But then Mr. Pouwelse simply continues: "The theory of Dr. A. Kuyper crept in also in the Christian Reformed Churches in America. In 1924, the Synod of Kalamazoo made a statement, consisting of three points. They are therefore oftentimes called the "Three Points of Kalamazoo." And while later reference is made to "common grace," this statement in its context leaves the impression that Kalamazoo 1924 is related to Kuyper's presumptive regeneration, something with which it had nothing whatsoever to do. What is worse, however, is the fact that in citing the Three Points no reference whatsoever is made to "het puntje van het Eerste Punt" (the real point of the First Point), namely, the general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. And this has everything to do with the difference between the Protestant Reformed and the Liberated. This is true, in the first place, because the spiritual father of the doctrine of the general offer was none other than Prof. W. Heyns, the man who also defined the covenant in terms of a general, conditional promise. It is true, in the second place, because this Prof. Heyns was the very American theologian who was quoted in support of the Liberated covenant view on the front page of one of the first issues of *De Reformatie* to reach us after World War II.

Those who did not read the article in *Clarion* must draw the conclusion that the "twofold distortion" is:

1. The article suggested that Kalamazoo adopted the theory of presumptive regeneration, something with which it has nothing whatsoever to do.

2. The impression is given that the Synod of Kalamazoo dealt with the theory of Dr. Kuyper, while the Synod actually dealt with the doctrine of "the very American theologian" Prof. W. Heyns.

However, Prof. Hoeksema himself does not give a correct presentation of the facts. We did not suggest that Kalamazoo dealt with the theory of presumptive regeneration. We stated clearly, "The churches in this part of the world have had their own developments and their own history." Right after the summary of the "Three Points" we wrote, "These statements of Kalamazoo meant a full acceptance of the 'Common Grace' concept of Dr. A. Kuyper." Later, dealing with the developments in 1950 we wrote about the influence of Dr. Kuyper's theory, "this time *not* in the first place with respect to his 'common grace' concept but *now* more specifically his doctrine about 'presumptive regeneration.'" From this it

must be clear to every reader that Kalamazoo did *not* deal with the theory of presumptive regeneration *but* with the "common grace" concept of Dr. Kuyper.

So far the first part of the "twofold" distortion. Let us now have a closer look at the second part. Did Kalamazoo deal with the theory of Dr. Kuyper or with the doctrine of Prof. W. Heyns? It is undeniable that there are certain similarities between Kuyper and Heyns, although there are also differences, as we will see later. However, let us go to the "primary sources for this information." In the official Acts of Synod Kalamazoo, 26th ses-

"An important question is still whether the 'Three Points of Kalamazoo' represent the theory of Dr. A. Kuyper or the doctrine of Prof. W. Heyns."

sion, July 7, 1924, Article 132, I, A, B, C we find the "Three Points," referred to in our article. One of the reasons why we quoted via the Rev. VanOene's book is, that he gives a summary in the English language, while the Acts of Synod, which we have in our possession, are written in the Dutch language. To avoid every "distortion" we will now quote the pertinent points from the official Acts (Acta, Artikel 132, I, A, B, C.)

I. De Synode overwogen hebbende dat deel van het Advies der Commissie in het Algemeen, hetwelk voorkomt onder punt III onder het hoofd: Behandeling der drie Punten, komt tot de volgende conclusies:

A. Aangaande het eerste punt, rakende de gunstige gezindheid Gods jegens de menscheid in het algemeen, en niet jegens de uitverkorenen, spreekt de Synode uit dat volgens Schrift en Confessie het vaststaat, dat er, behalve de zaligmakende genade Gods bewezen alleen aan de uitverkorenen ten eeuwigen leven, ook een zekere gunst of genade Gods is, die Hij betoont aan de schepselen in het algemeen. Dit blijkt uit. . . ."

B. Aangaande het tweede punt, rakende de beteugeling der zonde in het leven van den enkelen mensch, en in de samenleving, verklaart de Synode dat er volgens Schrift en Confessie zulk een beteugeling der zonde is. Dit blijkt uit. . . ."

C. Aangaande het derde punt, rakende het doen van zoogenaamde burgerlijke gerechtigheid door de onwedergeborenen, verklaart de Synode dat volgens Schrift en Confessie

onwedergeborenen, hoewel onbekwaam tot enig zaligmakend goed (Dordtsche Leerregels, III, IV, 3), zulk burgerlijk goed kunnen doen. Dit blijkt uit. . . ."

So far the Dutch text of the official Acts of Synod. We have only taken over the decisions. After every point, reference is made to Scripture portions, mentioned in the Advisory Report and to other documents. Everyone who understands the Dutch language can see that the summary given by the Rev. VanOene in his book and quoted in our article, is a very exact rendering of what Synod decided. ("spreekt de Synode uit" and "verklaart

de Synode" can be translated as Synod decides or declares.) We cannot find any distortion or partial presentation whatsoever in the summary.

An important question is still whether these points represent the theory of Dr. A. Kuyper or the doctrine of Prof. W. Heyns. Again the answer has to come from the official Acts of Synod. After every point reference is made to "uitspraken van Gereformeerde schrijvers uit den bloeitijd der Gereformeerde theologie," that means statements of Reformed writers from the period of bloom in Reformed theology. Who were these *Reformed writers* to whom reference is made? In the Acts, Art. 132, we can find the names. First Synod rejects the teachings of two ministers who did *not* agree with the Three Points, and then refers in a positive way to the "monumental work" (Dutch: monumentaal werk) of Dr. Kuyper on *Gemeene Gratie* ("Common Grace") and Dr. Bavinck's comment on it in his *Dogmatiek*. To us this is clear evidence that Synod was dealing with Dr. Kuyper's "Common Grace" concept. We cannot see any distortion in that. On the contrary. We consider it a misrepresentation of the facts to state that Kalamazoo, in the first place, dealt with the doctrine of Prof. Heyns. His name is not even mentioned in Art. 132 of the Acts. So far about the "first and twofold distortion." Next time we will have a closer look at what follows in Prof. Hoeksema's article.

W. POUWELSE
(To be continued)



Knowing God's will. What is taught to Christian youth?

Probably no question is put to ministers more frequently than that of guidance: How can we know God's will, especially at critical points in our own lives? The query reflects not only the stress of decision-making but also the widespread confusion which prevails, mainly because evangelicalism has for long been bedevilled by a whole mythology of guidance. Young Christians hear constant references to such experiences as "being led," "feeling called," "the Lord laying a burden" and "Scripture speaking." Some believers seem to be told very directly whom to marry, others are given explicit instructions to go as missionaries to precisely designated areas and yet others are called to the ministry by unchallengeable voices from heaven.

Young Christians react to this ideology in two ways. Many quickly conclude that because they lack such experiences they are very poor Christians, if indeed they are Christians at all. Others, more impressionable, seek the experiences they hear so much of, adopt the canonical terminology and soon begin, like everyone else, to feel led and spoken to.

This is how Rev. Donald Macleod, editor of *The Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland, begins his editorial in the October 1984 issue. It deals with an important point for Christians: to know and to do the will of the LORD in daily life. Believers must seek to do God's will. They are called to reckon with the LORD in all the daily decisions which they have to make. We read in Proverbs 3:5-7, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. *In all your ways* acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil."

Now the big question is, where do we find the guidance of the LORD? How does God reveal His will to us, and where? Rev. Macleod continues his article under the heading "Staggering claims":

We are now so familiar with this thought-world as to be completely unconscious of the staggering claims it involves. In effect, the people concerned are saying that they receive special revelations. God has revealed to them that they should marry or change jobs or become ministers or missionaries.

One problem with this is that it puts pressure on the rest of the Christian community. Revelation cannot bind only the

person who receives it. It binds everyone else as well. If God has revealed to someone that He is calling him to be a minister, He is also revealing that He requires the church to recognize, train, license and ordain him. It then becomes sacrilegious to ask questions implying a doubt or a desire to test the call. Who are we to question God's revelation? This probably explains why in every branch of the church people are admitted to the ministry who are totally unsuited to the work. How can a mere committee ask mundane questions about health, academic background, spiritual gifts and working experience of an applicant to whom God has spoken directly?

In fact the claims go beyond what the church enjoyed even when God was clearly giving her canonical special revelation. During that time certain men undoubtedly received direct disclosures of the Divine mind. But the privilege was not common to all believers. It was confined to prophets who received an audience with God, heard His secrets and were commissioned to act as His spokesmen. The rest of the believing community were not spoken to directly. They received their guidance from the prophets.

The writer, then, points out that the same situation existed in the early church. There were apostles and prophets who received special revelations and guidance, but this was not given to all the believers. He continues:

It is difficult to see how current ideas on guidance can be reconciled with the position laid down in the Westminster Confession (Chapter One, Section One) to the effect that "these former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people have now ceased." We have already seen that these "former ways" did not mean giving special revelation to every believer. It was confined to apostles and prophets. The point being made here is that this, too, has ceased. God no longer reveals Himself in this way even to prophets and apostles. The language of the Confession is very careful, however. It does not say that revelation has ceased, but only that the *former ways* of God's revealing Himself have ceased. We still have revelation and we still have the ministry of apostles and prophets: but we have them only in Scripture. The Bible is not the mere record of revelation. It is revelation itself, God's word for today. Furthermore, the "former ways" — the ways which lie behind Scripture — did not cease until "the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and

life" had been set down in Scripture (Westminster Confession, Chapter One, Section Six). In other words, the reason why God no longer reveals Himself as He did to the apostles and prophets is that in the Bible we have everything we need to know. Hence, says the Confession, nothing is to be added to the Scriptures, "whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men."

We completely agree with this. Of course, we do not deny at all that God leads the lives of His children. It is God's providential guidance that makes His children come to certain conclusions and decisions in their life. But, correctly, Rev. Macleod warns that we must not go the way of so many who seek the guidance of the LORD in their lives from another source besides His written Word, namely, from the Holy Spirit speaking directly in the heart of man. This danger is especially there where all the emphasis is placed on the experience of the work of the Spirit in one's heart. It is so very easy to assume the guidance of the LORD, while in fact it is one's own desire, one's own interest, that is followed.

Rev. Macleod points at *The Mind of Christ* when he tells us what, in the first place, should be our guide in all our decisions. We read:

But if we rule out guidance by special revelation, what can we turn to? For the moment, we must confine ourselves to two reference points.

The first of these is the description of the incarnation given by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11. Behind the enfleshment of Christ lay a pretemporal decision to become incarnate, and the relevance of this passage to our present enquiry is that it allows us a glimpse into what led the Lord to take that decision. One factor stands out dramatically: His altruism. He did not look to His own things (interests) but to those of others. The Lord was equal with God, possessing all the titles, attributes and prerogatives of His Father. But he did not regard this equality as something to be clung to. This was highly relevant to the Church at Phillipi, which was being torn apart by disputes relating to status. Everybody knew who and what he was, stood on his dignity and claimed the respect due to his position and years. Christ's attitude was completely different. He had the most exalted status conceivable, but He did not cling to it. He was willing to be sent out from God (Gal. 4:4) and to make Himself poor (II Cor. 8:9).

"That glorious form, that light insufferable,

And that far-beaming blaze of majesty
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house
of mortal clay."

This willingness on the Lord's part to be nothing is decisive for our own theology of guidance. As Christians, we never have the right to put our own interests first. We have to view our options from the standpoint of others, even though this may lead to serious loss for ourselves. God's will, for us as for Christ, may involve a downward rather than an upward movement, demotion rather than promotion. We have no choice. Entry to the Christian life is through the "strait gate," always too narrow to allow us to bring the baggage of our own egotism through. To be converted is to have accepted in principle the role of a servant, so that our own personal wants and desires can never again be paramount. We live to do God's will and that will often meet us as something we shrink from, as the Lord shrank from His cup and Moses, Jeremiah and Paul shrank from preaching.

We may go further. Not only will service come between us and our desires. It may also come between us and our needs, simply because our concern to meet the needs of others makes it impossible to attend to our own. God's will may, for example, cut right across our temperaments. The gregarious may be called to loneliness, the shy to intense publicity, the physically weak to great tests of endurance.

The inescapable fact is that God's guidance always leads to KENOSIS: to that self-emptiedness where one asks only, What will best meet the needs of others?

In my opinion, these are sober, Biblical, Reformed, words from which we all can learn. This looking to the interests of the other, and not to one's own, born from and borne by Christian compassion is a mark of a true Christian life. And it is often this mark of true Christian compassion for our neighbour that attracts people to the church and thus leads to the Head of the church, Christ Jesus.

For the "second reference point" for receiving the guidance of God's will in one's life, Rev. Macleod refers again to

a statement of the Westminster Confession. He worked that out in a follow-up article in the November issue of *The Monthly Record*. Since I plan to quote quite a part from this second article, I will leave this to the next issue of *Clarion*. But there is some space left that I will use for a next point, TV.

TV influences all our our lives. Or does it not?

A reader of *Clarion* in Southwestern Ontario, between London and Windsor — an area that is still close to my heart — sent me a little article that appeared in the local paper, the *Chatham Daily News* of November 15, 1984. In his accompanying letter he wrote that he "thought it would be upbuilding if we could read it also in *Clarion*, since a lot of our Reformed people also have a TV set. The people of the world are realizing the damage it *does* and *can do*, to children and adults alike. Do we also see it?" He pointed out that about a generation ago, warning articles were written against it, and wrote that the time which the LORD still grants us could and should be used for reading good Reformed, spiritual magazines and books, in order that we might be good stewards of our time and not perish through lack of knowledge.

Can we say that it is forbidden to have a TV? Can there be a use that is holy? I shall not deny it. Paul writes to Titus that for those who are holy, everything is holy, and that for those who are not holy, nothing is holy. There are some who just watch the news and some, carefully selected, other programs. But, in general, I am afraid that many of our families are watching TV, a considerable period of time, just for entertainment.

Now, there may be time for entertainment, or rather, relaxation, but I fear that also among us, there are too many who are entertained by TV rather than entertaining themselves by doing something positive. Reading a good book or a spiritually upbuilding magazine, visiting a lonely brother or sister or neighbour, learn to play a musical instrument, participating in a healthy sport, to mention only a few things. Watching TV is much easier. That is exactly the danger. It makes us lazy.

It also accustoms us to what God's Word calls sin, so that we are no longer shocked by sinful behaviour, but matter-of-factly accept things such as swearing, sex and violence as entertainment, as is pointed out in the article. And so we are slowly drawn into a worldly thinking and life-style, away from the truth and holiness of Christ with which His people should be adorned. That is the greatest danger. We must also be aware that this worldliness can enter and permeate our families just as well through other media, such as

books, magazines, and music. But here is the article.

In existence for 45 years, television may be heralded as an electronic marvel, but it should be [con]demned as a distorter of reality.

For good or bad, television has a pervasive influence in that it has become a major force in determining how people work, relax, and behave. The consequences are staggering when considering young people are growing up in front of the television set. They are a generation getting their morals, cultural standards, and sense of family relationships from television sitcoms, night-time soap operas, and docu-dramas.

Granted, television has achieved unprecedented results in making the public aware of local, national and international developments, but it is also weakening the bonds of traditional values. Television emphasizes that it's all right to take what you want, do what you want with the only problem being getting caught. Television has developed a philosophy that to be is to have.

Studies show that the average 16-year-old has spent more time in front of the television set than in school. Consider now that in 100 hours of watching television, the viewer witnesses an average of 12 murders, seven gunfights, 21 injuries from firearms, 21 other incidents involving firearms, four suicides (of which three are successful), four people falling off cliffs, two lynchings, two hold-ups, one hijacking, one execution, one air battle and one horse trampling.

Violence pervades nearly 64 percent of American prime-time television according to the US National Coalition on Television Violence. Programs monitored by the group averaged 9.4 violent acts an hour.

There are continual warnings that violence on television leads to aggressive behavior in children and teenagers. It's not difficult to believe when glancing through a newspaper. For example, there was the 19-year-old who on Monday, entered an Oregon college stadium, killed one person, injured another and then killed himself. Closer to home, there was the juvenile who was charged with the murder of two youngsters in Orangeville.

Violence breeds violence. Television can no longer be thought of as an electronic toy. If prison is considered a school for crime, television is its kindergarten.

There is little doubt that television has an influence on people, but the final decision is our own. It's all there, the good and bad shows. All it takes is a flick of a dial and sometimes that means turning the set off and looking for other means of entertainment.

Read any good books lately?

J. GEERTSEMA

OUR COVER

Cross country skiing—
Photo courtesy Nova Scotia Communication information centre

It is with much thankfulness that we may report about the purchase of 110 West 27th Street, Hamilton, Ontario which was completed on December 21, 1984 at a total sum of \$275,000.00. As well a contract was signed with M-G Construction Ltd. of Fergus, ON, for construction of an addition and for renovations and repairs at a total cost of \$169,177.00. This contracting firm, of which br. Mac Van Grootheest is the President, had submitted the lowest bid out of three tenders.

However, due to the fact that the base bid was considerably over our estimated cost and budget, the plans and specifications had to be reviewed and reconsidered. The changes, fourteen of them in total, resulted in substantial savings, enabling the Finance and Property Committee to enter into a construction contract, although it remains 10% over our budget.

In addition to the purchase of the property and the construction contract we will have approximately \$60,000.00 expenditures to cover the cost of a parking lot, landscaping, furnishings, moving, architectural and other expenses.

In August 1984 the churches were informed of the acquisition of the new college and a brochure containing detailed information was distributed in the congregations. At that time we thankfully announced that the Women's Saving's Action had pledged a contribution of \$110,000.00 and that a fund drive was planned with \$100,000.00 as a goal. To date \$56,408.28 has been paid to the College for the Fund Drive. Our sister Church at Kelmescott (Australia) sent us \$1,755.92 and the Church at Launceston (Tasmania) \$1677.50 of which we make special mention. We are very thankful for these overall results thus far.

However, it is clear that we are just over the halfway mark. We hope that the churches will be able to raise all of the funds in order to meet our obligations without having to obtain a mortgage. We like to finish the drive before the end of February and publish the total results in March 1985. Anyone who wishes to make a direct contribution may mail his/her cheque to the College at 374 Queen Street South, Hamilton, ON. We will send you an official receipt.

Some have commented that a mortgage should be obtained and that in this way the following generation(s) can pay for the College as well. If necessary, we will have to do so. However, we do not

share these comments. The more so, if we can pay for this project by contributing today only ten dollars per church member. This is better stewardship than paying substantial amounts of interest each year, of which the cost would have to be added to the yearly assessment.

Also we should consider that the next generation(s) will have their own financial responsibilities. More church buildings and elementary and high schools have to be built at much higher costs. More ministers and missionaries are needed. All by the grace of God. Let us today simply do what our hands find to do. In that way our generation may build towards the future and thereby teach the following generation(s) to work diligently in and for the kingdom of God. And let us do so in humbleness and total submission to God's Word.

If all goes according to our plans, the new facilities should be ready, D.V., May 1985. Our present building on Queen Street South was sold for \$165,000.00 with June 1, 1985 as closing date. This makes it of course the more important that the new building is ready in time in order to complete the move on May 31, 1985 and vacate our present college building for the new owners.

At a recent meeting of the Finance and Property Committee it was decided to inform the church membership of these transactions via a Press Release in our *Canadian Reformed Magazine*.

We express our thankfulness to our heavenly Father who has given us this school for the training of Ministers. Already at Synod Toronto 1974 the purchase of a new property was authorized. At Synod Coaldale 1977 this decision for future development of the College was again reported on. At Synod Smithville 1980 the Board of Governors was charged to pursue the matter of another property. Synod Cloverdale 1983 expressed disappointment that after nine years other facilities had not been acquired and directed the Board of Governors to give this matter full attention and to finish it before the next General Synod.

While Synod Cloverdale 1983 was in session we were introduced to a property on the mountain brow in Hamilton. Although it required extensive alterations and repairs it was large enough to alter it to function as a Theological College and we would have been able to accommodate the Teachers' College as well, if terms and conditions were agreeable to

both. An offer to purchase was accepted, subject to an earlier purchaser not being able to remove certain conditions. However, these conditions were removed and our deal fell through. Indeed a disappointment.

In January 1984 our attention was drawn to the property we now have bought. We considered the fact that it would not be large enough for Theological College and a Teachers' College, but realized that our mandate was to purchase suitable facilities for the training of the ministry. Because of the fact that this mandate was given 10 years earlier and we were simply running out of room in the present building and a number of other properties had been investigated or fallen through and considering that this property has sufficient space for our library, and instruction rooms for many years to come, the decision was taken to act and negotiate the purchase. Before the Queen Street property was put up for sale, the Teachers' College was given the opportunity to buy it at a very reasonable price. However, the Board decided against it as the building is not large enough.

A busy schedule now lies ahead of us to make the new college ready for occupancy on May 31, 1985. Thereafter we will hopefully be able to give the churches an opportunity to inspect the new school by way of an "open house."

As we have done when we first wrote the churches, we do so again and solicit your prayers for God's blessing on this training centre which is built "by the churches for the churches" as a bulwark and pillar of the true Gospel of our Saviour.

Soli Deo Gloria.

A.L. 'TONY' VANDERHOUT,
secretary of the Finance
and Property Committee
of the Board of Governors

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED to Fergus ON
REV. CL. STAM
of Smithville (South), ON
DECLINED to Lincoln, ON
REV. J. VISSCHER
of Cloverdale, BC

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)₁

Speech held at the League Day of the Men's Societies of Ontario, 1984.

The brother who acted as your "contact man" to persuade me to speak to you today, can confirm that I was very *hesitant* to do so, simply because I am no "expert" in the field of inter-church relations, never have been a deputy for correspondence with sister churches abroad, nor attended any international conferences, let alone the constituent assembly of the ICRC. For this kind of topic, I thought, it was better to have someone who has been on the scene. Since this was apparently not possible, I was prevailed upon to appear before you. My information is gleaned from sources also accessible to you, various publications and periodicals, also reports of deputies and Acts of synods. My presentation is essentially a "compilation" of available information, perhaps spiced here and there with personal comments.

I propose that we deal with the matter, the ICRC, as follows:

1. First the "I", for international, something about international ecclesiastical organizations in general and our reactions to these.
2. Then the "C", for conference — how the idea of a Reformed conference began to grow in our circles.
3. Then the "R", for Reformed — something about the basis and constitution of this conference, the problems encountered, and the solutions offered.
4. Finally, the second "C", for churches — particularly the reaction of our own Canadian Reformed Churches to the idea of and participation in such a conference.

When we are through with these four letters, I'm sure you will be longing for some refreshments.

International ecclesiastical organizations

As Canadian Reformed Churches we have from the beginning of our existence maintained close church relations with sister churches abroad, but we have NEVER taken part in any international ecclesiastical organization, *until now that is*. The same goes basically for our sister

churches in The Netherlands and elsewhere. An *international* ecclesiastical conference is for us, churches of the Liberation, something NEW. You will even find the position defended that we CANNOT participate in any such international assemblies, because our Church Order *only* speaks of ecclesiastical assemblies WITHIN our federation of churches. It is argued that an international ecclesiastical assembly or conference is not only ALIEN to our church polity, but also DANGEROUS, for it opens the door too much for possibly damaging foreign influences. In this respect we are warned of the development in the WCC, ICCC and the RES.

More about that later. I would say that the *reason* why "Liberated" churches have never participated in EXISTING ecumenical assemblies is NOT so much that they opposed *the whole idea* of such assemblies, but rather that they could not accept the BASIS, PURPOSE and also MEMBERS of such organizations. Rejecting the existing organizations, we simply did not come — until now — to the more positive step of setting up a truly Reformed ecumenical *alternative*. That we do so now is also, I believe, the result of certain developments, especially in our Dutch sister churches and in our own. We will touch upon these as well.

Back for a moment to the notion that an *ecumenical* (Reformed) assembly council conference is an INNOVATION. That notion is not entirely true, as the history of the early Christian Church and of the Reformation shows us. We know of the *ecumenical councils* of the first ages A.D. and although these were not always as *international* as is claimed, nevertheless, churches from various countries or regions gathered to deal with matters of common concern to adopt *credal* statements and ward off heresies. We also know that some of the *Reformers* (Luther, Bullinger and Calvin) favoured the convening of an ecumenical Reformed COUNCIL. Referring to Acts 15 (convent of Jerusalem) and the early Christian Councils, Bullinger wrote a booklet on "general councils" and their advantages. Despite the effort of many, due to the political complexity of the times and the constant wars between European nations

such a council was never held, but the idea was very much alive! (For more information on this, see the speech of Rev. G. VanRongen with which he opened the constituent assembly of the ICRC in Groningen — text *Clarion* — year-end issue 1982).

So, to partake in organized ecumenical activity is not really as innovative as some make it sound. On the other hand, the *ecumenical striving* of the TWENTIETH century comes forth out of an *un-Scriptural, un-Reformed way* of thinking; it is more a matter of *false ecumenism* than *true ecumenicity*, and if anything of that sort is behind the ICRC we should reject it instantly.

You see this *false ecumenicity* in the establishing of the *three* organizations I mentioned earlier, (1) the World Council of Churches, (2) the International Council of Christian Churches, and (3) the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The *basis* there is not unity in the truth, but unity at the *cost* of the truth. Let me briefly illustrate that.

The WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES was organized officially on August 23, 1948 in Amsterdam, with no less than 153 participating churches from countries all over the world. We are, of course, interested in the BASIS of this council, which was formulated broadly and meagerly as follows; "the WCC consists of churches which recognize *Jesus Christ as God and Saviour*." In essence this includes Churches of Romanist or Protestant, Reformed, or Arminian mold. There is NO reference at all to the WORD of GOD, neither to any *creed* or *confession*. In an official clarification this basis was weakened even more: everyone must officially agree with this basis — Jesus is Lord — but the churches are "FREE to read and interpret this statement as they wish." It is no wonder that Scripture criticism, blatant liberalism, and radical politics have become characteristic of this organization.

It is clear that many Christian churches could not find themselves in the WCC, and that same year, a counterpart, the ICCC was set up, the organization which became known by its principal spokesman, Dr. Carl McIntire. The BASIS here

is much more positive: "the complete truthfulness, infallibility and authority of the Bible." Some key doctrines were also included: e.g.

1. the holiness and love of the one Sovereign God, Father, Son, and Spirit;
2. the true divinity and true sinless humanity of Christ;
3. the depravity of man;
4. salvation of the redeemed and condemnation of the lost.

So, the Trinity, Sovereignty of God, two natures of Christ, depravity of man—all this was part of its basis! The ICCC wanting to be an alternative to the WCC, used methods of open confrontation, and refrained from political and social activities.

What was then the *objection* from our side? Again: false ecumenism, for *Baptists* and *Arminian* fundamentalists were also admitted, as if infant baptism, the covenant of grace and election are not key issues! Also, the ICCC neglected the *real* issues of true unity and did *politicize*, becoming known as an ANTI-COMMUNIST organization, while *Arminian* humanism is not less dangerous!

In 1949 the first meeting of the RES was held, convened upon the initiative of the Synodical Churches in The Netherlands (GKN). A preparatory meeting had been held in 1946 in Grand Rapids, hosted by the Christian Reformed Church. Basis of this organization is "The Scriptures" as explained in the Forms of Unity and Standards of the respective churches which participated. This also included, besides the continental Reformed creeds, the *Westminster Standards!*

If it is clear why the Liberated Churches could not join the WCC or the ICCC, why could they not participate in the RES? We should note that the Liberated Churches were invited to at-

tend, but declined — at the Synod Amersfoort, 1948 — this invitation. That Synod *objected* to the basis of the RES namely the *contradictory contents of the various confessions!* In 1948 we were apparently not prepared to put Belgic Confession and Westminster Standards on *one* line.

In a brochure published by our Dutch sister churches in 1978, titled "For the sake of true ecumenicity" (also published in *Clarion*) the following objections to the RES were listed:

1. It *started improperly* — the RES did invite the Liberated Churches, but refused to deal with our objections to the Synodical Churches and simply stated that we had declined the invitation. Until 1953 (Edinburgh) our churches complained about this to the RES, but to no avail. The RES accepted the Synodical Churches and did not wish to judge the issues of the Liberation, although these had been made quite clear to them.

2. It *continued improperly* — the RES did not admonish the Synodical Churches when in 1959 these churches reviewed their CO and removed Art. 31, thus establishing hierarchical rule.

3. The RES from the beginning *tolerated* churches that were members of the WCC (in 1948 the Christian Churches of Java and Indonesia were members of the WCC) Later even the Synodical Churches entered into dual membership of the WCC and the RES. The RES spoke out against this, but did not take action.

4. The RES failed to deal in subsequent years with the deformation in especially the Synodical Churches.

5. The RES has member-churches which in their own country cannot come to unity. This is indeed inconsequential — why be "one" ecumenically, but not nationally? Here it is evident that the

RES, too, does not deal properly with the issue of the unity of the church.

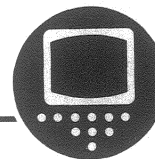
I would like you to note that in this brochure of 1978 one of the basic points of the Synod of Amersfoort 1948 is *not mentioned*, namely the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the other Reformed and Presbyterian standards mentioned in the "basis" of the RES. The report on this matter to the Synod 1948 said: because of the differences in confession, it would be an *ILLUSION* to speak of a common basis! You understand, of course, that in the meantime (Synod Amersfoort 1967) our sister churches had changed their viewpoint of 1948, stating that the Westminster Standards are a "fully Reformed" confession. It makes little sense then, in a later brochure, to include the original objection if it not longer exists, but I want you to notice this, because it is one of the developments, I referred to earlier, which sets the stage for the ICCC: a *different position* with respect to the Westminster Standards and the Presbyterian form of Church government.

All the above however, make clear, that although our churches never participated in any of these ecumenical strivings, we are not perse against ecumenical gatherings. We have stressed full unity in the truth and did not find it in the existing organizations. Since we were also relatively small in number, there seemed little opportunity to set up any usable alternatives, so we simply *refrained*, besides having sister relationships — from any international gatherings.

CL. STAM

—To be continued

PRESS RELEASE



Executive Committee Meeting CRTCA, Canadian Reformed Teachers' College Association, Hamilton, ON, December 7, 1984

The chairman, A.J. Hordijk opens the meeting in the normal Christian manner.

The treasurer, br. J. Gelderman, brings us up to date with regard to the finances. The membership fees are very slow in coming in this year. It is already causing considerable concern. However the board is confident that the membership will respond favourably in the month

of December so that our obligations can be met.

The principal makes his report. The special donations received for the equipment fund have thus far been put to use by purchasing an overhead projector and screen, a typewriter and a duplicator. The library is quickly running out of room. The Hamilton local is requested to look into this matter.

The principal further reports that he attended the annual conference of the Ontario Educational Research Council where he presented his paper on "Word

Learning" based on his research for his M.Ed.

The membership committee also presents a report.

The Annual National meeting of Governors is to be held on February 9, 1985 in the Hamilton Cornerstone Church.

After the question period and establishing the date for the next meeting (Jan. 4), the meeting is adjourned.

for the executive:
C.J. NOBELS



Annual Women's League Day — Alberta

On a beautiful sunny day, Wednesday, June 20, 1984, 69 ladies from throughout Alberta gathered in the Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton. This annual Women's rally was hosted this year by Barrhead/Neerlandia ladies. Coffee and goodies were served while registrations were taken. This day is a special day in that we may experience the oneness in faith with sisters from a great distance. Together we may grow in knowledge and also experience Christian fellowship with one another.

Shortly after 10:00 a.m. we all gathered in the sanctuary of the church and the morning session was opened by chairwoman Mrs. A. Viersen. After we sang Psalm 98:1 and 2 Mrs. Viersen read Psalm 105:1-12 and then led us in prayer. Mrs. Viersen extended a hearty welcome to all and roll call was held. Again it was evident that many had come from quite a distance. We then sang Hymn 2:1 and 5.

Our speaker for the morning Rev. A. de Jager of Neerlandia was welcomed and given a word of thanks for also being our organist. He then had the opportunity to give a speech entitled "Strangers and Sojourners according to the Scriptures."

In his introductory remarks Rev. de Jager gave an overall view of the different Biblical meanings of the above expression as it may refer to:

- a. the relationship of the church in faith to the world (Heb. 11:13);
- b. the relationship of God's people to God Himself (Psalm 39:13);
- c. the relationship of heathens to the church (Eph. 2:19).

Although the speaker would deal mainly with the first point, Rev. de Jager stressed that all the points are united in being a part of the one decisive relationship to God. How the church is in and to the world is a result of her relationship to God.

Therefore in reviewing the title, the question arose which aspects of the *covenantal life* are mentioned and meant by

the confession of church members being aliens and sojourners? Related matters i.e. the cultural mandate, Kuyper's concept of common grace, the kingdom of God and the historical implications of anabaptism and moder horizontalism, were mentioned.

Rev. de Jager went on to give a detailed explanation of Heb. 11:8-16 concluding that the riches of being a rightful claimant of the heritage (the promised land, Canaan, new heaven and earth, new Jerusalem) give God's people a specific status on this earth. Awaiting an inheritance, the heirs live on this earth temporarily and in this sense are "aliens" and "strangers" in the world. Scripture speaks of the hope in the future (Titus 3:7). Throughout Scripture the promises are given: the earth is given to God's people (Psalm 115:6); the wicked shall be removed (Psalm 104:35, Prov. 10:30); the righteous shall live there forever (Matt. 5:5); Christ is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2) and in Him we are joint heirs (Rom. 8:16).

The speaker also explained what "being an alien" meant in Israel's culture (i.e. I Chron. 29:10-16). Being aliens as it is an aspect of covenantal life, we have a task and a duty in the world and on this present earth (Gen. 1:28, Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12). He warned against the anabaptist tendencies of withdrawing and abstention on the one hand and against the cultural optimism of conquering the world for Christ on the other hand.

The speech was concluded with the following three remarks.

a. If we see our life here only as a pilgrimage to eternity we will lose the mandate of our calling. We as salt and light of this world will become tasteless and dark. Let us be aware of our important tasks and offices in the family, in the nurturing and bringing up of our children. Being sojourners does not excuse us from doing our best but stresses to us to bear

witness of the coming glory.

b. There is also a need for Scriptural Reformation in many hymns where heaven is seen as the goal strived for. Few sing about the new earth.

c. Our longing for a better country should not be a fleeing from the trials and tribulations of this life and our longing should not be weakened by our involvement in this world. Our longing should be a desire for the fulfilment of God's promises. We need to listen to God's Word and grow in faith. God's calling takes us with Him, to His rest and creational joy. Therefore we gladly confess to be strangers and sojourners here on this present earth.

A discussion followed during which the following main questions were asked and discussed:

1. Is the covenant the same in the Old and New Testament?
2. Have we not partially arrived and received an inheritance through partaking in Christ? (Eph. 2:13, 19; Gal. 3:16).
3. Can we live out of the belief that we are beginning eternal life?

Although there may be difference of opinions on certain aspects of being sojourners and strangers we could all again see the richness we daily receive as covenant heirs and the promises yet to be fulfilled. Mrs. Viersen closed the discussion and thanked our speaker after which the morning session came to an end with the singing of Hymn 27:1 and 2. Then everyone proceeded to the St. Albert Inn where we would spend the rest of our day together.

At the Inn a room had been prepared for us and a delightful, delectable smorgasbord meal was enjoyed by all, including our two male guests — Rev. A. de Jager and Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar. During our meal light entertainment was provided with the reading of some poems by several ladies from Neerlandia and Barrhead. After enjoying the meal and lingering over a cup of coffee and some chit-chat the chairwoman opened the afternoon session

and we all sang Psalm 119:34, 35 and 40. Scripture reading was Ephesians 4 after which Rev. Tiggelaar of Barrhead was introduced and gave his address "One Course — One Life-Style?" (subtitled "A Closer Look at the Cliche: 'Being Reformed'").

While establishing itself on the North American continent, the Reformed community was very tight knit, but because of our rapidly changing times and its effect on the Reformed community questions arise as to what is Reformed and what is not.

This same phenomenon has and is happening also in The Netherlands, perhaps even to a greater degree there. Of late, there has been an ongoing debate in the different church bulletins and *De Reformatie* about these changing life-styles. Rev. Tiggelaar believes that we are not too early in bringing this discussion to the fore here as well.

"it is good that we from time to time reassess our position over against each other and ask ourselves if it indeed is true that we are united and headed on the one course and direction of life . . . we should not wait too long in asking each other these and similar questions."

It is perhaps Prof. Van Bruggen of the Theologische School in Kampen who best addresses the need for the asking of the questions, when he says that the biggest problem today on matters such as dancing, drinking, observance of Sunday, etc., is that there is a certain anxiety growing to speak to others on these matters in an upbuilding, questioning and correcting manner. He says that that anxiety is fed by the vague understanding that each is after all responsible himself for his "doing" or "leaving alone" of things. He cites the answer we have taken in regard to the T.V. We have taken the stand that everyone has to control the knob himself.

Is being Reformed only a matter of personal responsibility? Or is it becoming such? Prof. Van Bruggen has entitled his topic: "Personal responsibility is no responsibility." Prof. Douma, in *Radix*, July 1983 entitled his speech: "Personal freedom inside the Communion." Rev. C. VanderLeest in a small booklet entitled *Wat is gereformmeerd?* speaks of the need on our part to identify from Scripture what is Scripturally evident and not to be challenged and what issues can be talked about in church and with other church groups even. He speaks of category A and B. VanderLeest speaks of our being called to the Biblical directive but at the same time we are warned against making bold statements as to what is Reformed.

What stands at the base of the question: One Course — One Life-Style? Is it not the directive of Phil. 4:8 & 9? Scrip-

ture extends to us the challenge to come together in many things here. It gives a directive. What we have seen we are to do. Tradition plays a large part in our lives. But there is also the *challenge* when Paul uses the word "What ever." There is a challenge to find what is pure, lovely, gracious and just. Both the communal and the personal are evident.

Rev. C. DeRuijter challenges Prof. VanBruggen in his more traditional approach of abiding by what we have learned from our elders. There is always the danger in that of following because we have to follow, because those who live out of the traditional way dictate that this is the style of life we have to live. This can stifle the need to come to personal decisions of faith. He sees the dilemma of the youth leaving the old ways being so exactly because the elders held to rules, communal rules of conduct which they held without real commitment of personal faith in them.

Rev. P. Van Gorp challenges Rev. DeRuijter on this approach as leading to antinomianism in the end. Can the personal approach with its decision of faith not lead to the point where everything we have gained as good from our forefathers is put in jeopardy? Does this not lead to having every sermon put into the decision process and judged from that point on, forget about the fact that this is the proclamation of the Word of God!

So we come to Prof. Douma again. "Personal Freedom inside the Communion." Freedom has nothing to do with thinking out of ourselves he says, for all personal must answer with Christ always in mind. Is this the solution, or does the "I" come to the centre more and more?

We may note one thing in common with all the brothers. They agree that there is one course which we must follow. Rev. W.G. de Vries addresses himself to this in *De Reformatie*. Acts 24:14 speaks of "The Way." There is one walker and then another and soon there is a way, a path. There are patterns of communion. The Bible speaks of dos and don'ts. So may we. We have patterns and not just arbitrary patterns, based on the Bible. We have to be careful with the personal approach. There is a Reformed way. But there is also a challenge to expand on the Reformed way. *Ecclesia Reformata, semper reformanda*.

There are no end to questions today. It has become the new god, de Vries says. Through the strategy of continuing to ask questions on a matter, the pretension of the absolute is destroyed. Here the caution of the more traditionalists should be heeded. We are as adults to come closer and closer to pulling one line. Christ said that "no one who has drunk old wine will want to drink young wine for

he says the old is good." Set patterns are not just to be tossed out for we need stability. We want to comprehend "with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God."

Any directive which we would like to see cannot so exist wherein the process the unity is broken, for there is but one course that we follow. There are things we hold in common and there are things we may differ on but yet seek to discuss. But let us not make those lines too distinct for they are not. We must beware of matters as not being closed because we believe them to be Scriptural in every instance. What has become of the wearing of hats, standing for prayer, separation of men and women in church, the riding of bikes on Sunday, the watching of T.V. on Sunday. They have come and gone. But let us not make the personal irresponsible either as we speak of personal freedom.

The ladies were invited to discuss the address and the following questions and comments formed the basis of the discussion.

1. Traditionalism — Someone who rocks the boat is put down, new things are put down.
2. What is "Reformed"? Is there not a norm?
3. How do we come to a unity if there are so many touchy subjects?
4. Is there a communication problem between parents and parents etc?

Although time did not allow us to go into the many aspects of being Reformed we could again see the need to go back to Scripture and have as a basis the Lord and the glorification of His Holy Name in all that we do.

The discussion was closed. Rev. Tiggelaar was thanked for his address. At this time Rev. de Jager was also called upon to come forward, and in appreciation, both speakers were presented with gifts for their libraries.

During the general question period Calgary was appointed to be the next hosting society. The societies present expressed their sincere appreciation to the ladies of Barrhead/Neerlandia for an enjoyable day. Together we sang our National Anthem and the League Song. Rev. de Jager ended with us in thanksgiving prayer.

Before going on our homeward way refreshments were served. We may thank our heavenly Father for the freedom which we may enjoy in that we have the opportunity to come together in the unity of faith to study and discuss His Word and thus be strengthened for our task here on this earth.

Secretary,
Women's League, Alberta

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

Geographically, socially, religiously, economically, Bangladesh is a world away. Yet through communication and caring, it is as close as next door. By prayerfully and financially supporting the work of Peter and Geraldine Ysselstein, we are privileged to contribute to the physical and spiritual well-being of a few of this country's needy people.

Besides overseeing ongoing projects in the Bogra area, Peter is involved in a new and exciting project in the Khanjanpur district. It is this project that we at CRWRF specifically support.

Christian development in Bangladesh

Peter tells us that: starting a Christian Community Development Program in a country like Bangladesh is a difficult job. In the first place, evangelism outreach among the Muslims is strictly curtailed. Bangladesh's older church missions historically have concentrated their evangelism efforts among the Hindu and tribal populations. As a result Christian communities are today primarily found in just a few scattered pockets of the country and in border areas with India where Tribals take up residence.

Unfortunately, the National Church of Bangladesh does not ameliorate the situation for it does not place a high priority, if any, on Muslim evangelism outreach. It tends to be suspicious of new converts (some in the past professed Christianity primarily for the relief aid the church provided) and wants to keep a low profile to avoid the punitive measures the government could inflict upon it.

Doing Christian development work is also a very real challenge because there are few models to go by. An effective word and deed ministry hardly exists in this disaster prone country. This is partly because government permission is required for any community development. An agreement with the government specifies the nature of the program to be conducted and any violation of the contract forfeits the agency's right to remain in the country. Thus caution is the rule.

Still, as Christians we are familiar with the Biblical perspective on dealing with the poor and being a brother to our



Geraldine Jr. with friends and protectors

neighbour. We are aware of the importance of giving that cup of cold water. . . . The difficulty often is to know how to do this effectively.

One promising attempt to do so is the recent establishment of a Christian Development Program. The program began in May, 1984 among the Shantal tribal people of Northwestern Bangladesh. Many of the Shantals are Christians, having been evangelized by one of the oldest missions of Bangladesh, the Churches of God. Those who do not profess the Christian faith are mainly animists.

The Shantal Christians are served by the Churches of God (COG) through a hospital, several schools, a clinic, and churches serving twenty-two communities. These communities are poor, but what is actually more distressing than their poverty is the fact that they are gradually losing control of an important resource base — their land. Some have turned to basket weaving and others have become 75 cent-a-day labourers or remain unemployed.

The reason for their land loss goes back to the partition of India in 1947. At that time, the Indian continent was divided into two predominant religious spheres: Hindu and Muslim. Bangladesh,

formerly East Pakistan, became mainly Muslim. Vacant land lots left by departing Hindus were quickly annexed by immigrating Muslims. Land was also claimed by force from Hindus and Tribals who chose to remain in Bangladesh territory. In cases where a land deed could not be provided to prove ownership, a false land deed would quickly be drawn up. Supported by a biased judicial system, the land immediately became Muslim property.

The Shantals have been victims of such unfair land grabbing practices which, unfortunately, still occur today. Consequently parcels of land are gradually reduced to uneconomic sizes and eventually must be sold to keep the family viable.

Over the past few years, the COG leadership has gradually become more concerned about the situation and has shown increasing interest in the human-resource-type of development done by CRWRF. Therefore, after much negotiation and a survey to determine need, the COG finally requested CRWRF's assistance in setting up a Community Development Program in the Khanjanpur area. The purpose of the program, entitled "Christian Extension Services," is to

build up poor nonself-sufficient families, primarily those that are Christian, but also non-Christian families who it is hoped will be drawn into Christianity by the witness given in word and deed.*

Peter is responsible for developing this new project and reports that it is well underway. He has hired a qualified project manager and field trainers to assist him. He has also managed to rent an office within arm's length of all the communities to be served.

The program is people-orientated, seeking to provide Shantals with knowledge and skills in the areas of:

a) *Literacy — Functional Education* — to increase the number of individuals who can read/write their name, numbers and the alphabet. These skills will enable them to function more effectively in society.

b) *Cooperative Development* — to train people to make and implement plans, control resources, budget, save, recognize skills needed for income-generating activities and acquire these skills, for example fish cultivation, craft development, food processing, and marketing.

c) *Health and Nutrition* — to promote homestead gardening. People need to become familiar with composting and knowledgeable about the nutritive aspects of green vegetables.

d) *Bible Knowledge* — CES staff and COG pastors and evangelists will provide Bible training to both Christians and non-Christians. The communities will also be encouraged to utilize their resources more productively and to develop their talents to the glory of God's Kingdom.

It is hoped that the church will be motivated to conduct programs similar to the ones proposed by CES as part of their diaconal ministry, allowing the present project to phase out in several years.

The CES staff recently visited the communities they are committed to working in, in order to make people aware of the program and encourage them to participate. It is hoped that ten communities and some 200 families will be served in the first year alone. So far, eight of the ten are participating and interest is strong. What is encouraging is that "relief" is not being offered, but people are learning to draw from their own resources, learning to read, to write, to save, to help each other. Participants include Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. Once the groups are really established, Bible study classes will begin.

There are many obstacles to be overcome. Illiteracy, lack of knowledge, poor self-esteem, lack of motivation, poor sanitation, and lack of income are just some of the barriers faced. However, Peter is enthused about the possibilities for Chris-

tian outreach in this program and writes that he feels blessed by this opportunity to serve.

There is certainly never a boring moment for someone with the desire and know-how to help. For instance, besides his regular work, Peter has conducted several projects (for example, fish cultivation, chicken keeping, and gardening) in his own community, from which he hopes the people will benefit. People are buying the fish as stock for their own ponds and many people are starting gar-

dens. So, although the work is still in its beginning stages, there are already encouraging results.

**The Churches of God (COG) is a small US based denomination, originally with roots in the Reformed Church of America. It is theologically conservative and Calvinistic in orientation. Since CES is a church project, it does not have to be registered separately with the government, thus avoiding the Word-Deed conflict that newer agencies may encounter.*

Projaputi crafts

Projaputi means butterfly representing new birth, new life. Projaputi Women's Skills Program is an attempt to help some village women develop skills that can be used as generating income and knowledge that will contribute to the physical well-being of their families. Perhaps these women, in their restricted society will, like the sleeping cocoon transform into a butterfly.

It's 8:00 a.m. Keys jangle in the lock of our Craft Centre. The door opens and heat rushes out. Already the sun's rays are beating down on the tin roof. Women in colourful saris come filing in. The tubewell strains under their vigorous pumping. Hands and feet washed, the floors are swept and bamboo mats are laid out. Each woman comes to collect her sewing and then sits on the mat to complete the order she has been given.

At 9:00 a.m. Nahid, our literacy and health teacher calls group one. Ten women who have never even learned to write their name now proceed to learn to count to 100, learn the Bengali script and begin to read and write. Across the courtyard where I am in another room teaching a young widow to sew on the sewing machine, I can hear their health lesson, "Vitamin A; eat spinach, pumpkins, milk and eggs to keep your eyes healthy." Most of these women have not had these foods and if you look in the whites of their eyes, there are gray blotches. Many village women and children never eat the proper foods or get treatment, and as a



Embroidering

result the cornea of their eye will bulge and burst causing blindness.

After an hour of lessons, the second group sits down. These women are fortunate to have had some education. Maybe even third grade!

When the lessons are finished, Afroza, our skills teacher, will check their handwork and help in design problems. Afroza, is a widow with two children. For years Afroza has gone out to work to provide a little income to buy rice. She is very talented in making up designs for cross-stitch and loves to learn new handwork designs.

Projaputi Crafts started in June on the veranda of my house. Spreading the word in my immediate neighbourhood, I enlisted poor women who would be able to sit a whole day and train in handwork. They would be paid for the work they completed. If their work was first-rate quality there would be a good chance to sell to foreigners in Dhaka or abroad.



Rice planting

The women came, nervous, shy, and some very unskilled. Their hand-patched sari blouses told of their lack of income. When you come to know some of the women, you also inherit all their medical problems. Scabies, boils, dysentery are the common problems. Bengalis in general feel that they haven't eaten until they've had rice. They will forfeit everything else for that bowl of rice. For pregnant or breast feeding mothers, for growing children or for working men the results can be disastrous. These problems can be avoided and overcome with proper hygiene and diet. That is why we have included a health program in this craft project. The women receive one hour of literacy and health education each day and twice a month they participate in a cooking demonstration.

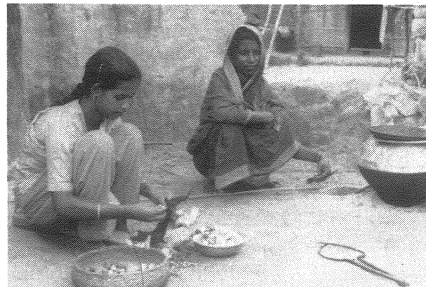
Bangladesh has a year-round growing season. If these women can overcome their inhibitions of working the soil they could supplement their families' diet and income by planting spinaches and pumpkins in kitchen gardens. Habit is a strong teacher. These women have to see that change is necessary and that they can effect it. That is not an easy matter in a fatalistic society where one tends to throw up one's hands in the face of disaster, "If Allah wills it. . . ."

Most of the seventeen women have been with us for four months now. There has been remarkable improvement and even the hopeless ones can now finish a simple cross-stitch. The projects so far are: quilted pillow covers, cross-stitch napkins, table mats, and placemats. We hope to bring about thirty items to Dhaka



Catching the fish from the pond

to market to test them. Prices range from \$1.00 for a napkin to \$5.00 for an embroidered item that takes five days to complete. The women's income is determined by piecework, earning them at present about 25-40¢ a day. They need at least



Cooking

a dollar a day and we hope this wage will improve once we sell some items.

I'm happy for the opportunity to serve in this way and find it rewarding to see

the women develop — though frustrating to see how slow the process is. Your support is very much appreciated. The number of destitute women who daily come begging for work is a constant reminder that this project is necessary. We do hope it will continue to grow so that we can keep hiring women in this area.

GERALDINE SELLES-YSSELSTEIN

* * * *

Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

CRWRF
PO Box 793
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y7

All gifts are gladly received. Donations of \$10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deduction.

PRESS RELEASE

We received the following "press release" for our magazine and place it without comment. The readers of the Press Releases of Classes of the Churches in Ontario-South are already acquainted with the Reformation Church in Blue Bell. The editor.

On October 7, 1984, the congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Blue Bell, PA, by a vote of nearly 2 to 1, withdrew from the Orthodox Presbyterian denomination. This action came after a year of debate between the congregation and the Presbytery of Philadelphia and its representatives.

The controversy began in September, 1983 when the members of the Blue Bell session resigned. Presbytery then appointed a session of three men from outside of the congregation. These men, although they rule as elders, were never approved by a vote of the congregation as required by the Orthodox Presbyterian

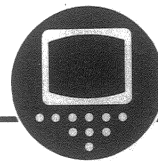
Form of Government. Further, this "interim" session sought to change the practices of the congregation with regards to the terms of membership and the restricting of the Lord's Table. Under the congregation's previous session, the terms of membership had been a knowledge of and commitment to the Reformed faith, and the Table had been restricted to members in good standing of true churches. These practices were in accord with the Church Order of Dordt, which is the source of the governments of Reformed Churches, and are within the boundaries of historic Presbyterianism.

The "interim" session found these practices narrow and sectarian, and refused to certify for election as ruling elder any man holding such views. As a result, ten men from the congregation brought four complaints against the "interim" session. Presbytery of Philadel-

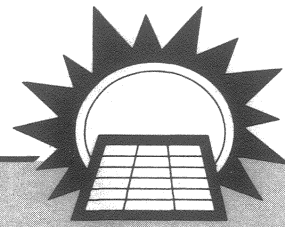
phia rejected the complaint which affirmed the right of a congregation to elect its own elders from its own members and the limited autonomy of the local church, and referred the complaints concerning the terms of membership and the Table to a committee. When the remnant of the "interim" session refused to implement steps which would have lessened tensions and the Presbytery delayed decision on the complaints, the majority of the congregation, convinced that it would receive no justice from the Presbytery and fearful for its life as a church, voted to withdraw.

On October 28, 1984, the congregation changed its name to the Reformation Church in Blue Bell. The church's mailing address is:

*The Reformation Church in Blue Bell
PO 40 Blue Bell, PA 19422*



RAY OF SUNSHINE



IS IT TRUE?

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose," Romans 8:28.

Then quit trembling and trust. Quit pouting and praise. Quit running and rest. Quit worrying and wait. Quit belittling and believe!

But! — mystery engulfs, enemies assail, friends desert, Satan buffets, demons beset, sins infest, sickness weakens, sorrows distress, death robs, and poverty threatens; air castles crumble, dreams vanish in the air, ships go on the reef, raging storms sweep down, and dark clouds of perplexity swallow you up. But why? Why? Why? Life has to many become one great question mark. The world today crawls out from under the wreckage of a tottering civilization and writes a giant question mark across the rolling black clouds of mystery and confusion. WHY? WHY? WHY? Has God deserted you? Has His promise failed you? Has Jesus forgotten you? Has the Holy Spirit deserted you? No, troubled friend. God has answered the believer. "All things work together for good" and

"God is still on the throne,
He ever cares for His own.
His promise is true;
He will not forget you,
God is still on the throne."

His promises bind Him to help you. His compassion inclines Him to hear you, and His power enables Him to deliver you. Be grateful for what He has done. Thank Him for what He is doing. Trust Him for what He will do. Quit asking "why" and praise Him that Romans 8:28 is still in "the Book."

This is one of the most blessed promises God has given us, yet one of the most doubted and misunderstood. You are not required to understand it, but to believe it, to act upon it, and to make it a working principle in your life. This is the promise of God, and the child of God can through faith turn God's promise into a prophecy. "I do not know what tomorrow holds, but I do know that it will all 'work for good.'"

Quoted with permission
from Moody Press, from
Comfort for Troubled Christians
by J.C. Brumfield

From our mailbox: Trevor Hofsink's mother wrote that Trevor, and his family, are very thankful for the many cards he received for his birthday. They wish everyone a very Happy New Year.

The following brother and sisters will celebrate their birthdays, the Lord willing, in February.

ALBERT DORGELOOS

91-199 Westwood Road
Guelph, ON N1H 7S1

Albert's 26th birthday will be on February 12. He works at a workhouse where they package items. Albert lives with two others in a townhouse now and enjoys it.

CONNIE VAN AMERONGEN

Russ Road, RR 1
Grimsby, ON

Conny hopes to celebrate her 20th birthday on February 12. She is physically handicapped and confined to a wheelchair. She loves to read.

CORA SCHOONHOVEN

700 D'Arcy Street
Cobourg, ON K6A 4I5

Cora hopes to celebrate her big day on February 18. Many people will know her from summer camp. As far as I know, Cora is in her early thirties. She loves to receive mail.

Send your requests to:

MRS. J.K. RIEMERSMA

380 St. Andrew Street E.
Fergus, ON N1M 1R1

CORINNE CROWFLAG

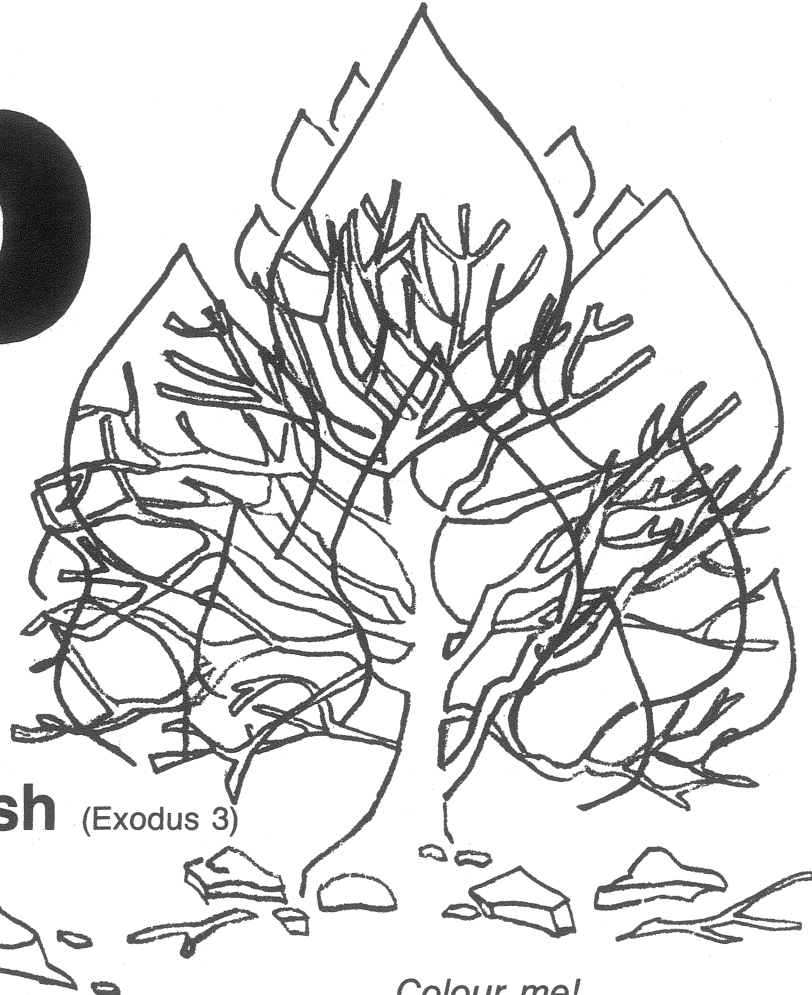
Corinne is a Native girl who has been with the Coaldale Church for 9 years. After losing both her parents, she with her sisters, were placed in our congregation. After attending catechism classes for years she expressed her desire to give her life to the Lord and His service. Last summer she helped out at Smithers Native Camp. She has made Public Profession of her faith on December 30, 1984. We are very thankful to the Lord for this.



Her temporary foster parents:
Peter and Sadie Van Spronsen
915-22 Ave.
Coaldale, AB
TOK 0L0

ABC BIBLE COLLECTION - by Mrs. John Roza

Bb



B-Burning Bush (Exodus 3)

Colour me!

Quiz Questions

1. What special book should we read every day?
2. Jesus was born in a little town called _____. (Matthew 2)
3. The Lord came down to this land to see a tower that man had made. The Lord at this time confused the languages of all man. What was the name of this tower where this event took place? (Genesis 11:1-19)
4. What did Esau sell to Jacob for a meal? (Genesis 25)
5. Moses was commanded by the Lord to make a serpent. What was this serpent made of? (Numbers 21)

Answers for the letter "A"

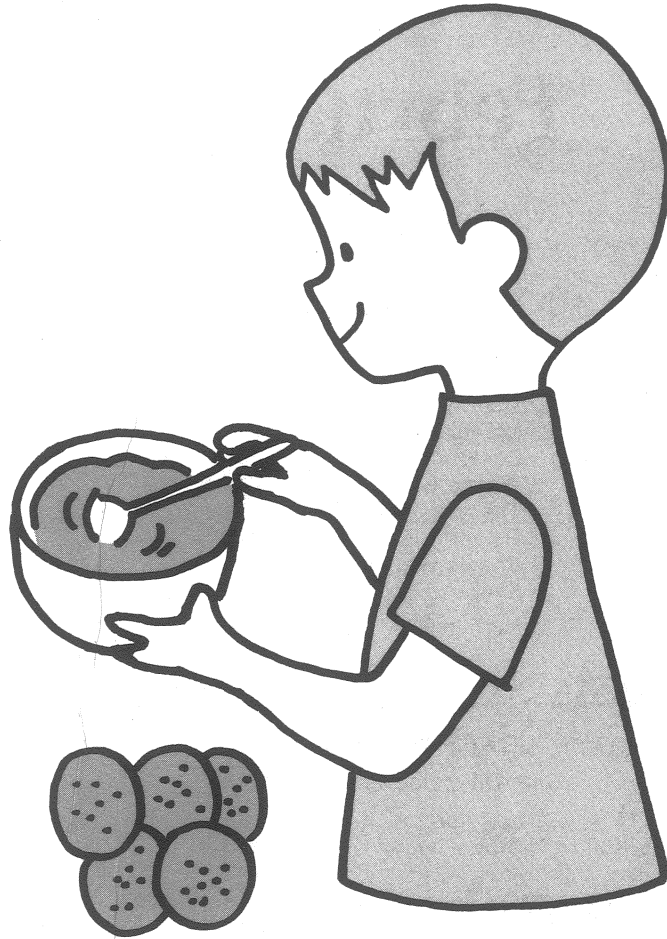
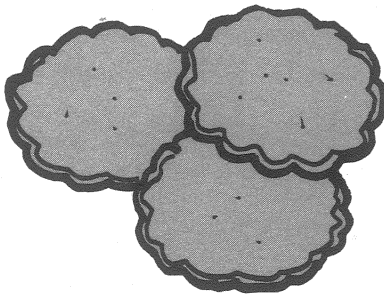
1. Animals, two of each kind
2. Adam
3. Abel
4. Ascension
5. Abraham
6. Altar





Hello Busy Beavers,

Do you like brownies?
Of course! Everybody likes brownies!
With chocolate icing and lots of nuts, yum!
Now I want to ask you something else, Busy Beavers.
Who likes to MAKE goodies to share with your family?
That's fun two times over!
First the fun of making something.
Then the fun of sharing and eating it!
Even before your cookies are ready your brothers and sisters are asking for them, right?
Busy Beavers, do you think it would be a good idea to trade favourite recipes?
That way we can all share in the fun.
Snacks, cupcakes, cookies, whatever!
Let's hear what YOU are doing!



Busy Beaver *Amy Hofsink* has a poem to share with us. It's about food, too!

The Puffin
There was a little puffin
Who was as big as a muffin,
And ate little fishes
Without any dishes!



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Loren Van Assen*. We are happy to have you join us. Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities, *Loren*! And a big welcome to you, too, *Tanya Hansma*. I see you're a real Busy Beaver already sending us puzzles. Thank you! Just keep reading *Our Little Magazine* and you'll know what the Busy Beavers are doing, *Tanya*.
Welcome to the Club, *Joyce Tenhage*. Will you write and tell me your *birthday*, *Joyce*? Then we can include you in the birthday list. And then maybe you'll tell us about your family and your hobbies, too?

Sounds to me as if you've had a very good time visiting your relatives everywhere, *Linda Van Sydenborgh*! How did you enjoy your Christmas programme?
How did your snow fort work out *Alan Van Raalte*? Will you write and tell us? Did you have a good holiday, *Alan*?

Thank you for your letter and the Christmas puzzle *Rita Wubs*. Too bad it got to me a little late. But it'll keep! How did you enjoy your holidays, *Rita*?
I'm glad to hear your sister is better, *Caroline Wubs*. Thank you for the puzzle, too! Did you have snow to play in during the holidays, *Caroline*?

Hello, *Lois Lof*. It was nice to hear from you again. Did you have a good holiday? Thanks for the puzzle, *Lois*!
Thank you very much for your good wishes and pretty cards, *Alida Krol* and *Helena Hopman*!