

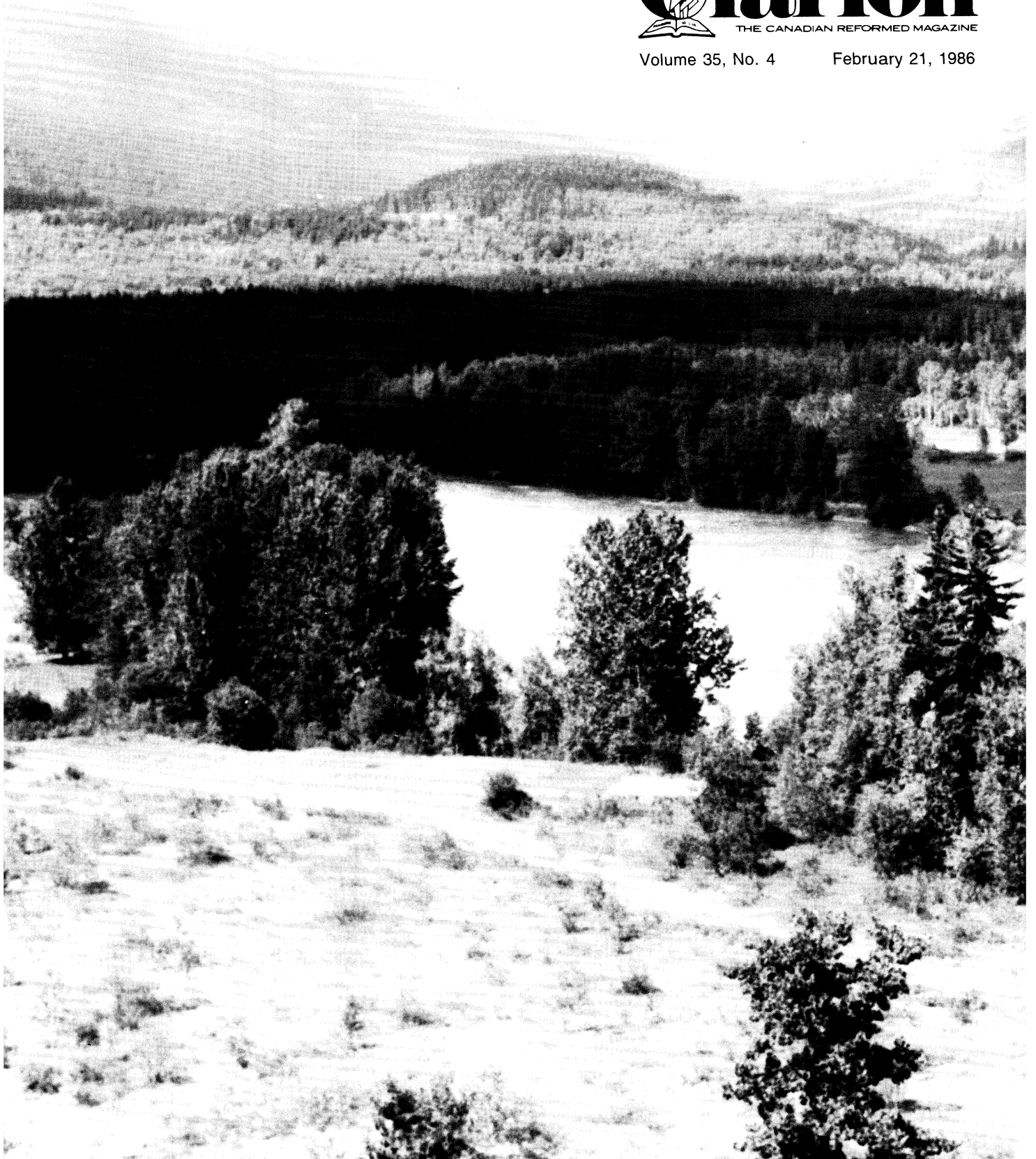


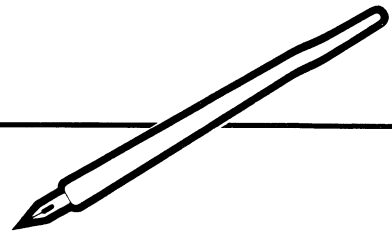
Clarion

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Appropriation of salvation

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Reflection is necessary

Recently I was asked the question: "Is it not possible that people who are wrestling with the appropriation of salvation (i.e. "Is it also for me?") could appeal to Scriptural evidence that God's promises do not always apply to everyone?" It does not happen very often among Reformed people any longer that this question of the appropriation of salvation is raised. In fact, in my first congregation I had quite a few older non-communicant members, some in their thirty's or well into their forty's; and even a brother of seventy. They were active church members, but they did not dare to appropriate salvation. They did not take their point of departure in God's covenant promise but in themselves, in their private experience of faith. The result was that they found so many shortcomings and personal failures that they could not muster the confidence to make public profession of faith and to request admission to the Lord's Supper. They doubted whether their faith was genuine and believed that they did not love the Lord enough. They had to be much more certain of themselves first. Or they felt that they were not good enough for it yet. First they had to become "better."

I told these members that they acted like the skipper who let down his anchor into the hold of his ship, to moor it. Even if he had a cargo of clay in the hold of his ship, no secure anchorage could be found there. The skipper must cast out his anchor to the solid ground outside of the ship. In the same way we must cast out our anchor to Christ if we want to find security. So, the question is not whether we are good enough for salvation but whether Christ is good enough for us. Trying to get better ourselves first is like putting the cart before the horse. It is putting justification before salvation. That is how we used to put it in those days. Later the term "justification" was quite rightly (i.e. in Dutch) substituted by "being declared righteous" or "being made righteous." These expressions stress more clearly that we are not justified before God because of anything in ourselves or because we supposedly are better than other people. No, we are justified because of the righteous judgment of God which declares us righteous for the sake of Christ. As our Catechism puts it so beautifully in question and answer 60: "Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against God's commandments, have never kept any of them, and am still inclined to all evil, yet God, without any merit of my own, out of mere grace, imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ." Here you don't find a single line about "getting better" first. That absolutely is an impossible undertaking. The only way we can "get better" is through the power of Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. That is why we always have to begin with God's love in Christ Jesus. That God comes to us in this manner has been sealed to us by Him in our baptism.

Through the church conflict which resulted in the Liberation of 1944, we have gained a clearer insight into the significance of covenant and baptism as well as a clearer view

on the appropriation of salvation. But the *need* for this appropriation in itself was never challenged. By virtue of God's covenant we have received a lawful position as God's children in the household of God. But the mere fact of having that lawful position does not guarantee the *blessing* of that position and the inheritance of eternal life. Reflecting on the appropriation of salvation remains a necessity.

For whom are God's promises intended?

Within the circle of God's covenant there is, therefore, no room for this question: "Is it also for me?" — certainly not as an open-ended question, a question without an answer. For us it should not be uncertain whether we have been adopted as children of God. Just as we are children of our own father and mother, we are children of God. But the question has a wider scope. Could there, perhaps, be other people who, reading the Bible, draw from it the conclusion that God's promises are not, or are no longer, intended for them? In general, we are not allowed to approach the problem in this way. We do read that God pronounces His curse on Cain, but this is a very specific case. Further, we often read in the Scriptures: Cursed is the man who does this or that. That curse is conditional, dependent on one's attitude. The Lord's curse also strikes people and nations who have turned away from Him in idolatry and unbelief. But there is mercy and forgiveness for them if they repent and turn back to Him. All people and all nations are commanded to repent. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:10,11). We confess, therefore, that the promise of the gospel "ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and *without discrimination* to all peoples and to all men in whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe." We further confess that "as many as are called by the gospel are earnestly called, for God earnestly and most sincerely reveals in His Word what is pleasing to Him, namely, that those who are called should come to Him. He also earnestly promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe" (Canons of Dort, II, 5 and III/IV, 8).

People who ask: "Is it also for me?" are always people to whom the gospel has been proclaimed in its full scope and riches. One cannot appeal to Scriptural evidence to make a case for the statement: "The promises of the gospel are not intended for me." Yet, the promises cannot be separated from the calling to recognize and honour the God of our life and of life as a whole. Even for the greatest sinner, including the one who up till now has squandered his life, the promise holds true: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Without personal appropriation, no possession

When we take our point of departure in God's covenant and, as a result, in our position as a child of God, the danger

may arise that we will be trapped in some sort of covenant automatism. We neither can nor may say, "All right, so I am a child of God. Now everything will work out fine for me in the long run." The Lord requires that we live sincerely as His children. In 1982/83 a survey was conducted by Reformed students in Groningen which inquired into the experience of faith among the young people of our churches. It struck me that more than 90% of those questioned said that most of the time they were certain of being a child of God. Yet 40% of them said that they never read God's Word on their own initiative. In view of this response, one cannot escape this urgent question: "How, then, is this being a child of God experienced?" Further, it could be asked whether the difference between young people and older people would really be so great. As for ourselves, the danger is certainly not imaginary that we know God's covenant only with our intellect — a knowledge which is a matter merely of the head instead of the heart. But having knowledge *about* God's covenant is not enough. We have to be party to it, to be acquainted with it. We must not just abstractly think and speak about the covenant. It may not be reduced to some "dogma" extracted from Scripture, but it has to take charge of our whole life.

In the survey mentioned above, also the following question was asked: "In your opinion, is faith within the church too theoretical?" About 50% of the young people thought that this was "often" or "most often" the case. If this is indeed the experience of the young people, it should make us think. In our tradition we are used to covenantal preaching. In catechism classes, too, God's covenant is central. The young people will be confronted there with the church conflict of the Forties. But

it was precisely during this church conflict that the *two* aspects of this child-of-God position were so sharply outlined. First, we are children of God by virtue of our lawful status in God's covenant. But secondly, we must also become children of God through a personal appropriation of everything we have in Christ. John testifies the following about the *people of the covenant*: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). A personal appropriation of salvation, therefore, is a matter of life and death for all of us. Wherever that personal appropriation, in heartfelt faith, is absent, something happens: our being a child of God (a relationship in which we were placed in His good pleasure) will then condemn us rather than benefit us. Then God's covenant brings a curse instead of a blessing. That is why this question is so compelling: What is our position and how do we live in God's covenant? We are allowed to appropriate God's promises; in fact, we have to. The Lord invites us to sit down with His family at a table generously supplied with food. But we ourselves must eat of the bread of life and drink from the cup of salvation. We must do this with the mouth of faith, a faith that acknowledges God as *our* God and testifies that the Lord Jesus Christ is "my Lord and my God." We have to apply ourselves with all our heart to know the will of our heavenly Father and to obey Him; otherwise all glory in God's covenant is only vainglory.

C.G. BOS

Adoption₃

7. The possibility of repentance

We have stated before that adoption can be necessary because of the brokenness of human life, as a consequence of sin. Some argue that adoption is too extreme a measure because it is irreversible. It does not leave enough room for repentance and the restoration of the original situation after amendment of life. That sounds reasonable and is certainly a point to be considered carefully. However, there are a few aspects we should take into consideration as well.

Before the court grants a request for legal adoption, the child has to be in the foster home for a certain period of time. The court decides whether it is in the unmistakable interest of the child to continue that situation. Before it comes to a formal adoption the child has already gone through a lot of embarrassment and suffering. After a while the child begins to feel at home and to get used to the new situation. A new relationship of love, trust, and care is growing. The child sees the foster parents or the adoptive parents as the people who care for him and love him. The child



feels safe and protected in the new environment. That is the actual situation. This situation might have been caused by the sinful attitude of the natural parents, or by their negligence or unwillingness to

take care of the child. In all these cases it is a matter of fact that the child, after much suffering, finally has found a safe place to live. The child is settled in a new environment. To remove the child from the new

home and to bring him back to the natural parents will cause, in most cases, new embarrassment and suffering.

It is quite well possible that the parents, after a number of years, recognize the mistake they have made and ask for forgiveness. We always have to be prepared to forgive. But to confess a sin does not take away the consequences of such a sin, and real repentance and remorse have to be shown also in the way someone accepts and carries the burden of lasting consequences of his wrongdoings. It is not a proof of real repentance if a person tries to put the burden of his wrongdoings on someone else. Neither is it correct to ignore, play down, or deny the consequences of ones own specific sins.

If a drunken driver kills someone in a

“The main question is whether a decision to adopt is made in prayer, expecting the help, wisdom and guidance of the Lord, and in a desire to serve Him.”

traffic accident, he may ask forgiveness, and we have to be prepared to forgive, but that does not take away the fact that he has to face justice in court, neither does it bring back the person who has been killed. When a parent has destroyed the relationship of love, respect, and trust between parent and child, and later the parent confesses his or her sin and asks forgiveness, we have to forgive, but that does not take away the fact that the parent-child relationship has been destroyed. A new relationship may grow, but it would be wrong to expect the child to act as if nothing had happened. That would put the burden of the consequences of the wrongdoing on the child instead of on the parent who was in the wrong. If a parent, for whatever reason it might be, treats a child in such a way that it has to be placed in a foster home or in an adoptive family, the relationship of love, trust, and affection between parent and child is damaged, destroyed, or prevented from developing. Real repentance in such a situation means accepting this reality as a consequence of ones own previous actions. It might be hard for the parent to accept that the child is placed in another family, but requiring the child to come back is not a proof of real remorse and willingness to make up for previous wrongdoings. It rather means that extra suffering is imposed upon the child to give the parent the feeling that the past has been undone. It is an attempt to exonerate the parent at the cost of the child. It is like cutting down a tree and after having apologized for it, demanding the fruits of the tree.

Remorseful parents should rather show how real their repentance is, by leaving the child in the new situation. They first have to consider the unmistakable interest of the child and put their own feelings and emotions in the second place. That might be the sacrifice required to make up for the past.

For all these reasons we do not believe that adoption ignores the possibility of repentance on the part of the negligent parent. It only protects the child against unreasonable demands of parents who want to let their child pay and carry the burden of their own wrongs.

8. Abuse of adoption

Objections against adoption are sometimes triggered by the cases in which the

possibility of legal adoption is abused. We have heard about tragic and heartbreaking cases. Some parents “buy” a child to fulfil their own dreams. In some countries there seems to be a “black market” in children. The poverty and misery of people is abused. In an illegal way children are sold and smuggled out of the country. With phoney papers they are given up for adoption. Unscrupulous people try to make money this way.

We mentioned already before that adoption always has to be a well considered decision, in the unmistakable interest of the child. It has to be a compassionate measure. Many cases in which a child is “bought” only to satisfy the adoptive parents, turn sour. The child becomes the victim of disappointment on the part of the adoptive parents — a disappointment which is the result of wrong expectations.

We have to emphasize, time and again, that the first responsibility for the child is with the natural parents. Adoption should only be considered if there is no prospect of a proper functioning of the relationship between parent and child. It should be an emergency measure in the unmistakable interest of the child.

However, abuse of adoption should not drive us to the other extreme, namely, to condemn every good application of this possibility. Legal adoption is rather a measure to avoid such abuse. The courts have to decide whether the interest of the child is really served by adoption. It should be a matter of mercy. We know that “the mercy of the wicked is cruel” (Proverbs 12:10), but as Christians we have to show what

compassion and mercy really mean. It has to be the mercy, taught by Holy Scripture. Jesus Christ has shown us what real mercy is. He has shown compassion for children and we have to follow His example. He has laid His hand upon them and has said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” and, “Whoever receives such a child in My name receives me.”

In order to avoid abuse of adoption we have to consider all aspects and be on the alert. Support and guidance of the office-bearers is necessary in a case of adoption. However, that requires some knowledge of the implications and the ethical aspects of adoption on the part of the office-bearers. It happens, too often, that the adoption of a child occurs without any involvement, advice, or support of the office-bearers. They get involved after the whole matter has been settled and baptism of the child is requested. Let the office-bearers stay in touch with the families, also in this respect, and let the families ask the advice and support of their office-bearers.

9. God’s sovereign good pleasure

There is still one very important point that needs attention. Some argue that a husband and wife who have no children and know that they cannot have children of their own, have to accept the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord in their life also in this respect. Isn’t adoption an attempt to go against what the Lord has brought into their life or has kept away from them? Should they not rather accept the will of the Lord in their life, than try to constitute a family through adoption? They seem to be relevant and legitimate questions and very suggestive ones at that. Still we consider these questions more suggestive than convincing. Of course, we all have to accept the Lord’s sovereign good pleasure. However, that does not mean that we have to sit idle and accept a certain situation as unavoidable if we are able to make a change for the better. We have our own responsibility and we are allowed to use the available means. When we are sick we have to accept the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord. In a case of incurable illness we have to see the hand of the Lord and we can count on His help to cope with the problems. We know and confess that He will turn everything to our benefit. Our heavenly Father takes care of us and He never makes a mistake. Still, we have to see a doctor when we are sick and we have to use the available means to cure the disease. He who refuses to see a doctor should not speak about the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord but confess his own negligence and irresponsibility. We have to accept our responsibility and we have to give account to the Lord for what

we have done with the available means.

If a young couple, after having been married for a number of years, still has no children, they might see a doctor to find out whether there is a specific reason and whether something can be done to take away the cause of the apparent infertility. In some cases a simple remedy can solve the problem. In other cases more complicated measures are required. It can be necessary to perform an operation to take away an obstacle. In all such cases people do not sit idle, speaking about the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord. No, they try to solve the problem, within the scope of their responsibilities and possibilities. That is certainly not in conflict with accepting God's sovereign good pleasure. The same counts for all medical treatment.

When a couple has come to the conclusion that they cannot have children of their own, or that it is very unlikely, are they then allowed to apply for adoption, to constitute a (larger) family in this way or do they have to accept their childless family as the will of God with respect to their life? The answer depends on the circumstances and the motives for their actions.

In previous sections we have already explained at length that adoption should never be initiated to satisfy one's own desires. But on the other hand it is also quite well possible that the Lord will use a childless couple to show mercy to a child that needs help and to provide a new home for it. That can also be seen as the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord. The main question is whether such a decision is made in prayer, expecting the help, wisdom and guidance of the Lord, and in a desire to serve Him.

Adoption is an unusual way to receive a child. It should remain an emergency measure. But adoptive parents who go this way in prayer because they feel it is their God-given task, are certainly allowed to see the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord in it. They may consider it a privilege to be allowed to show mercy through this compassionate provision in a sinful world. They can accept such a child as a gift from the hand of the Lord. If they are prepared, in self-denial and with many sacrifices, to take care of a child that needs help, they will probably enjoy the satisfaction of being allowed to bring up a child in the fear of the Lord.

We will conclude with a quote, taken from the report at General Synod Hattem 1972 (p. 532). "We certainly do not have to speak about the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord only in a case where a couple remains without children. We can be equally convinced of and confess the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord if it pleases Him to give children via this measure of child protection."

W. POUWELSE

PSALM 115:5, 6, 7

*O Israel, trust in your mighty LORD!
Praise Him, your help and shield, with one accord;
His power will protect you.
O house of Aaron, put in God your trust;
All you who fear Him, in the LORD find rest
When troubles may afflict you.*

*The LORD will not forget us but will bless
His people who their faith in Him confess
With thanks for all He gave them.
On Aaron's house and on His Israel,
On all who fear Him shall His blessings dwell;
Both small and great, He saves them.*

*May He, the LORD, give you a rich increase,
You and your children with His bounties please;
May you be blessed from heaven
By Him who heav'n's and earth's foundations laid.
His are the heavens, but the earth He made
The LORD to man has given.*



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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial — Appropriation of salvation — C.G. Bos	74
Adoption — W. Pouwelse	75
The doctrine of the church in Reformed confessions — J. Faber	78
The ICRC: reactions and reflections — J. Visscher	80
Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. J. Mulder	83
The Rev. and Mrs. G. VanDooren "In the Gold" — D. VanderBoom	84
The Fraser Valley Study Center (F.V.S.C.) — Bert Moes	85
From Manoah Manor — Bill VanderPol	87
The Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead celebrates — a church member	88
Hollandse Dag, Smithville, 31 Mei, 1986	89
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	89
ABC Bible collection — Mrs. J. Roza	91

The doctrine of the church in Reformed confessions₃

Note from the editor: Now follows the third and last part of Professor Dr. J. Faber's speech delivered at the first International Conference of Reformed Churches, held in Edinburgh, Scotland in September 1985. Having said in the first part that the struggle of our days concerns the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His work, including the doctrine of the church, he continued in the second part speaking about the characteristics of the Reformed Confessions in speaking about the church. In the concluding part he elaborates on the distinctions "visible" and "invisible" church, and "true" and "false" church with respect to the church in the Reformed Confessions.

Two distinctions

A. "Visible" and "invisible" church

We now arrive at our two last points: the distinctions "visible" and "invisible" and "true" and "false" with respect to the church in Reformed confessions. Let me first again list some expressions concerning visibility and invisibility. The Tetrapolitan Confession (1530) says, "Although that whereby it is entitled to be called the Church of Christ — namely, faith in Christ — cannot be seen, yet it can be seen and plainly known from its fruits."

The First Helvetic Confession of 1536 states, "And although this Church and congregation of Christ is open and known to God's eyes alone, yet it is not only known but also gathered and built up by visible signs, rites and ordinances." According to my opinion, it is clear that in these early Reformed confessions not two churches are taught, one visible and another one invisible, but that there is spoken of an invisible aspect or invisible aspects of the church. The emphasis is even on the visibility: the fruits of faith and the visible signs, rites and ordinances of the church.

The Geneva Catechism mentions "the visible Church of God," and "the fellowship of those whom He has elected to salvation which cannot be seen plainly by the eye." From Calvin's *Institutes* (IV.1.7) we know that he heard Holy Scripture speak of the church *in two ways*. "Sometimes by the term 'church' it means that which is actually in God's presence Then, indeed, the church includes not only the saints presently living on earth, but all the elect from the beginning of the world. Often, however, the same 'church' designates the whole multitude of men spread over the earth who profess to worship one God and Christ." Calvin makes, thus, a distinction between that which is invisible to us and visible to the eyes of God alone,

and that which is called "church" with respect to men. The Confession of the English congregation at Geneva (1556) and the Scottish Confession of 1560 speaks in a similar vein. A somewhat different approach is found in Bullinger's Second Helvetic Confession. There we find the heading, "The church is not bound to its signs." "We know — Bullinger asserts — that God has some friends in the world outside the commonwealth of Israel." Another heading reads, "The church *appears* at times to be extinct," and under this heading we find the familiar reference to first Kings 19:10, 14, the days of Elijah and the seven thousand under the reign of Ahab. "Whence the Church of God may be termed *invisible*; not because the men from whom the church is gathered are invisible, but because, being *hidden from our eyes* and known only to God, it *often* secretly escapes human judgment." Here "invisible" is used in the sense of "hidden." Although the Belgic Confession does not use the word "invisible," Article 27 declares that the holy church *sometimes* for a while *appears* very small, and *in the eyes of man* to be reduced to nothing." This confession also refers to the seven thousand men who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Here again one could speak of the hidden church. The Westminster Standards, however, formulated the distinction of the visible and invisible church in a pointed, systematical manner. (Chap-

ter 25 of the Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism, Questions and Answers 64 to 66.) Let me quote Westminster Confession, Chapter XXV:

I. The Catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all.

II. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, . . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

III. This catholic church — that must be the catholic, visible church, mentioned in section II and III [J.F.] — has been sometimes more, sometimes less visible.

What shall we say now?

First of all, from our list of quotations, it may have become clear that Reformed confessions, even when they use the terms "visible" and "invisible" in connection with the church, are not identical. There are differences and nuances in usage. Nobody will deny that the church has invisible aspects. The actions of God in calling and regeneration are imperceptible to men. And faith in Christ has an invisible aspect, although the fruit of faith can be seen. In some confessions the fact that God alone knows His elect leads to a construction of an invisible church, as far as its membership is concerned. Then there is what one could call the *hidden* church, the church in the days of persecution which appears at times to be extinct (Bullinger). Finally, as the Belgic Confession rightly states, the holy catholic church is spread and dispersed over the whole world. It means that nobody on earth can bring the entire church at a certain moment within his purview.

OUR COVER

Bulkley River
near Moricetown, BC

Photo courtesy Jack Vanderveen

But precisely these many and diversified considerations make the systematized distinction of the Westminster Standards, according to my humble opinion, open to discussion. Allow me to say to my Presbyterian Brothers, "One of yourselves, one of your own prophets, has said so." I refer to the essay of John Murray in his *Collected Writings*, Vol. I, entitled, "The Church: The Definition in Terms of 'Visible' and 'Invisible' Invalid," (pp. 231-236). His conviction was, "The distinction between the church visible and the church invisible is not well-grounded in terms of Scripture, and the abuses to which the distinction has been subjected require correction," (p. 232). The term "church" in the New Testament designates what is visible. The term "church" in the singular is also used to designate the "churches" in their collective unity. This general and embracing use of the term "church" is found particularly in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Professor Murray is of the opinion, "The 'church' in the New Testament never appears as an invisible entity and therefore may never be *defined* in terms of invisibility," (p. 234). He rightly deems this thesis to be of deep practical significance. If Professor Murray is right — and I think that he is — the questions arise: Do the Westminster Standards speak of the invisible church and the visible church as *two* definite subjects, *two* separate entities? Does this not infringe upon the truth of the Nicene Creed: "We believe in *one*, holy, catholic and apostolic church"? Is it right to divide the Scriptural epithets of the church so that the invisible church is called the *spouse* and the *body* of Christ, and the visible church His *kingdom*, the house and family of God? Therefore, is in Scripture, e.g., the metaphor of the body not applied to the *one* ekklesia with its invisible *and* visible aspects? What about the dynamic action of Christ in His ongoing church-gathering work, so Scripturally confessed in the sixteenth century confessions? Does it receive enough attention in the Westminster Standards? Professor Murray makes us alert to the danger of what I call a polarization of the so-called "invisible" and the so-called "visible" church. Some, who are disobedient to the obligation to foster unity and fellowship in the Church of God, escape to the idea of the "church invisible." Also within this International Conference, there could be the danger that we meet one another in a far-away place, yet bypass one another in our own country, and in the meantime soothe our consciences with a distinction between visible and invisible church. In the contacts between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches, the deputies of the latter have warned against a *polarization* of the visible and invisible church. It results

in a low esteem for what is called the visible church, a weakening of church-consciousness, a lack of understanding of the seriousness of the calling to separate from the false church, and the rise of the "theologoumenon" of the pluriformity of the church which is neither taught by the Scriptures nor by the Reformed Confessions. This "theologoumenon" of the pluriformity of the church proved to be an undermining factor in the fight against the sins of the church and for its reformation.

Let me immediately add, however, that the Westminster Confession does not show a low esteem for what is called the

"The mark of a true Church, also in the twentieth century, remains, 'The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. . . .'"

visible church. It is called "the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." In Section III, we read:

Unto this catholic visible church Christ has given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and protecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world; and does, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.

The following Article 26-31 all deal with the church: the communion of saints, the sacraments, church censures, synods and councils; and those articles show, in many striking respects, the Scriptural, catholic, anti-Romanist, and anti-spiritualist tendency of a typically Reformed confession.

B. True and false church

We have come to our last point: the true and false church in Reformed Confessions. The Geneva Confession of 1536 already made this distinction without using these specific terms:

In as much as all companies do not assemble in the name of our Lord, but rather to blaspheme and pollute him by their sacrilegious deeds, we believe that the proper mark by which rightly to discern the church of Jesus Christ is that his holy gospel be purely and faithfully preached, proclaimed, heard and kept, (and) that his sacraments be properly administered. . . . Hence the churches governed by the ordinances of the pope are rather synagogues of the devil than Christian churches.

The Second Helvetic Confession speaks of the notes, signs, or marks of the true Church, especially the lawful and

sincere preaching of the Word of God: *Accordingly, we condemn all such churches as strangers from the true Church of Christ, which are not such as we have heard they ought to be. . . . Moreover, we have a charge from the apostles of Christ "to shun the worship of idols," (I Corinthians 10:14; I John 5:21) and "to come out of Babylon" and to have no fellowship with her, unless we want to be partakers with her of all God's plagues (Revelation 18:4, I Corinthians 6:17).*

The 1556 Confession of the English Congregation of Geneva lists three marks of the Church of God: the pure administra-

tion of Word, sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline. It is followed by the Scottish Confession with its powerful Chapter 18 concerning the notes by which the true Kirk shall be determined from the false. We read there about the pestilent synagogue of Satan and the horrible harlot, the false Kirk. "The true Kirk . . . always hears and obeys the voice of her own Spouse and Pastor, but takes not upon her to be mistress over the same."

Let me be silent about Article 29 of the Belgic Confession and only point out that the Westminster Confession also, in its unadulterated form, knows of the dreadful possibility that churches "have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan" (Chapter 25.5). Over against those — even within the Reformed Ecumenical Synod — who reject the distinction between the true and false church as obsolete, we maintain the deep Scripturality and catholicity also of this aspect of the doctrine of the church in Reformed Confessions. These confessions basically began in 1523 with the Scriptural distinction of the Good Shepherd and the hirelings. The mark of a true Church, also in the twentieth century, remains, "The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." The gathering of *these* sheep by *this* Shepherd of John 10 is the true, catholic church of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one God to whom be glory forever.

The ICRC: reactions and reflections₂

Evaluating the reactions

When we take all of these remarks, especially the ones that tend to be of the negative sort and weight them, then we have to admit that there are definite aspects of validity to them. It is a fact that problems were encountered with the Agenda in terms of both its contents and finality. It is equally true that Edinburgh was somewhat of a public relations disaster. It is also correct to say that the matter of interdenominational relations brings to the fore various problems. We must also recognize that apartheid is not just a political issue but has ramifications for the Conference too. The creation of study committees as the result of a recommendation by speakers to the meeting highlights a procedural problem. As well the theological character of the speeches confronts us with an agenda, as well as public relations, problem.

Nevertheless, it must also be said that it does not suffice for us merely to nod our heads in agreement with all of these critical remarks. There are also other factors that should be taken into account if we are to obtain a total picture of the Conference, its value and its effectiveness.

Agenda problems?

Prof. Macleod's initial criticism, which has to do with the Agenda, is a case in point. While admitting that things did not run all that smooth at times and that procedural logjams were encountered, it must also be remarked that his own suggestions were not without their difficulties either. If he had had his way then the Agenda would have seen added to it a number of social and ecumenical issues: world hunger, apartheid and intercommunion. Now in and of themselves these topics are not outside the pale. But the manner in which Prof. Macleod wanted them added to the Agenda provoked a debate on a basic issue: Is the Conference a meeting of churches or a meeting of delegates? Who sets the Agenda: the churches or the delegates or both?

Now we do not want to be ecclesiastical hardliners and say that the Conference has to be run along the strict lines of a General Assembly or General Synod, but we do want to assert that it is the *churches* who must set the Agenda for the

meetings of the Conference. Prof. Macleod wanted to see world hunger and several other matters on the Agenda. Fine, but what is to prevent another delegate from requesting the same place for acid rain or for Soviet hegemony or for women's rights, etc., etc. The result may well be that we would end-up with an Agenda that does not so much deal with the concerns of the member churches, as it does with issues which the delegates feel are paramount.

It is our conviction that the Conference has every right to deal with social issues which have a bearing on the member churches, but then let these members exert themselves to place these matters on the Agenda. From various sides complaints have been directed at the heavy theological character of some of the speeches as if the speakers were somehow to blame. But they were not! The speakers were approached to deliver papers on assigned topics. They did their work and stuck to their parameters.

The actual problem, however, arises in that the members did not pay sufficient attention to the Agenda. Of the five topics, three came from the Canadian Reformed Churches, and in each case it was felt that the issues were relevant. If other members had certain pressing social issues that they wanted to bring into discussion, all they had to do was approach the secretary and the Interim Committee. So we are left to ask ourselves: Why did Prof. Macleod not work via the Free Church's local committee on interchurch relations and see that matters which he considered urgent be placed on the Agenda? Why did Prof. Oh not do the same on the matters of theological cooperation and Shintoism? Why did other delegations, who were of the opinion that the Conference Agenda was too one-sided, not exert their influence ahead of time, submit topics and so make things more balanced?

Now we do not want to be too critical at this point. It must be taken into account that a large part of these difficulties find their roots in a lack of experience. Hopefully, 1989 will see a marked improvement. Still, this improvement will not come by altering the Constitution to take away the rule which says that material should be received a year in advance. Some find this restrictive because it does not allow

the Conference to respond to urgent issues. Yet let us be realistic; all of the issues that some wanted added to the Agenda have been around for a much longer period of time. A submissions deadline does not stymie the dealings of the Conference, rather it enables it to deal with them in a more responsible manner.

Improvements

While insisting that it is the churches who must set the Agenda and that they should do so well in advance of the meeting of the Conference, we at the same time would be in favour of making room on the Agenda for an Evaluation and Recommendations Period. Under such a heading the delegates would have the opportunity to express their opinions about the structure, the procedures, the topics, and the direction of the Conference, as well as make suggestions for future improvements. These remarks could then be duly noted by all the delegates and be taken up in the proposals and recommendations of their churches to the next meeting.

In addition, some consideration might also be given to setting both a time and a place for some informal sessions. It is true of course that a lot of discussion occurs in the hallways, during coffee and tea breaks, as well as over meals, but usually those are of a one-on-one or two-on-two format. The majority of delegates and observers are not present. Whereas, if a few informal gatherings could be organized all who wish to partake would be able to express the kind of sentiments and frustrations that are hard to get rid of in the public, structured sessions.

On the matter of public relations, there is no doubt that news releases should go out both before, during and after the Conference. By the same token a concerted effort should be made to insure that whatever papers are presented at the evening, public sessions are of a more popular and practical nature. Perhaps the "ponderous theological stuff" can be saved for the morning sessions when all the theological minds are razor sharp.

In connection with this, it would also be of the utmost value if the topics recommended by the member churches would deal not just with theological issues, but also with ethical, missionary and historical concerns. In this way the Conference

would be more of a reflection of what lives in the churches and what concerns the churches, both as they face issues, and as they seek to fulfill their responsibilities in the society where God has placed them.

Interchurch relations

From public relations to interchurch relations is quite a step. Yet also here we must make some comments regarding Prof. Macleod's criticism. When he says that the Conference could very well hinder true ecumenism, that the access accorded to delegates to the pulpits and communion tables of the Free Church would not be reciprocated by other member churches, then he is right that this does highlight a problem. There is no doubt that our membership in the ICRC brings us into a certain undefined relationship with other members of the Conference. There is also no doubt that membership in the Conference forces us to reexamine some of our interchurch practices. Finally, there is no doubt that membership has implications for our sister church relationships.

Taken together all of these factors force us to reexamine our approach to interchurch relations. On the one hand, we can take the view that all churches who become members of the Conference are by that very fact accorded sister churches standing. This would then have as consequence that most of our relationships would be determined by the ICRC and take place within the forum of that organization. On the other hand, we can take the view that our sister church relationships take precedence over the Conference, and that the Conference is basically there to cement these relationships and to open up the possibilities of new ones.

In a sense the view espoused by Prof. Macleod runs along the first line; whereas the view we would support is in agreement with the second position. If we make the ICRC the premier forum for the exercise of interchurch relations then the danger is very great that our relations as sister churches would not amount to much anymore. As long as you see each other every four years, that should be sufficient. In the interim, you can exchange the odd letter and fraternal greeting, but not much more.

That such a scenario is not far-fetched is proven by the fact that some time ago a member of an interchurch relations committee of a church which is now a member of the ICRC but has in the past been a member of the RES said to this writer, "When we were in the RES we did not really bother establishing close ties with the individual member churches. We channeled all of our relations through the RES and its occasional meetings and did not bother to do much more. As we now reflect on that practice we see that we did things backward. We took the easy way

out and did not really live up to our ecumenical responsibilities as that pertains to the individual churches. We should have put the RES in the second rank and not in the first rank."

We can and we should learn from all this as concerns the weight and the importance we place on the Conference. It should serve to enhance our relationships,

recognition of each other as true Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also a commitment to each other to help, to assist, to support, to care for each other insofar as that may be possible.

Communion Service 1989

It is within this context too that it has to be said that Prof. Macleod's suggestion



City of Edinburgh

but not to usurp them. That this may cause inconsistencies as regards pulpit exchange and access to the communion table should be recognized. Prof. Macleod is right that the welcome the delegates received to the Free Church pulpits and at the Free Church communion table, will not be automatically reciprocated in all cases. While this gesture was appreciated by the delegates and interpreted by them as a vote of confidence in their respective churches, Prof. Macleod and others must realize that our history and practice has been different. And that has nothing to do with ecclesiastical exclusivism but everything to do with the way in which we have always exercised our interchurch relations. We are of the conviction that it is within the framework of sister church relations there should be a free exchange of pulpits and communion tables. In such a relationship there is not just a mutual

of ending the ICRC 1989 with a "Communion Service" does not meet with our approval. It is our conviction that the sacraments are given to the local Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, should be celebrated in her midst and supervised by her office-bearers. The practice which is so common, especially in North America, where almost any gathering of an ecclesiastical or quasi-ecclesiastical character, may be climaxed with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, is a rather dubious practice. It has no Scriptural warrant. It has a tendency to emphasize spiritual unity at the expense of minimizing the need for organic union.

Should a Communion Service be held at the time of the 1989 meeting it will be held in a local church. This church is then free to welcome the delegates of those churches with which we are in a correspondence relationship on the basis of

their attestations. It is also free to welcome other delegates to the table of the Lord but that only after the office-bearers have spoken with them and are certain of their commitment to the Reformed faith, (cf. Article 61 Church Order, also H. Bouwman and F.L. Rutgers). Hopefully, the day will come when such a double procedure will not be necessary and all the delegates can be admitted to the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the basis of a recognized attest. Such an attest will then not be the direct result of being a member of the Conference, but rather a result of the sister church relationship which the Conference has hopefully helped to promote and bring about.

Apartheid

Then too, there is the matter of apartheid. Here we can sympathize very much with Prof. Macleod's concern. Just imagine if we, as Canadian Reformed Churches, had a daughter church in Brazil which had come into existence largely due to the Lord's blessing on our mission work but that daughter was only accorded second class status in the land of her birth, we would be very much concerned and distressed by such a situation. We might even consider placing this matter on the Agenda of the Conference, but then it would be put there by the churches, not by individuals.

At the same time, it should also be understood that if the Free Church in Southern Africa, which is now a member of the ICRC and which is almost totally made up of coloured and black members, should approach the Conference with a request to study the matter of apartheid and, if need be speak-out on it, such a request must be considered. (Just as a request from the Presbyterian Church in Korea to speak out on Shintoism would have to be considered, if it were ever received.) Only let it then be understood that such a request, if it is to be studied, must be studied in an even-handed manner, out of a passionate concern for all involved: white, black and coloured, out of perspective which is firmly rooted in the Word of God and not in the ideologies of man. It is not the business of the Conference to meddle in politics, but it is the business of the Conference to show that the Word of God has relevance for all of life and speaks to every endeavour in life, and that includes the political, the economic and the social. We need only to turn to God's prophets of old, to a Micah or to an Amos to see that.

Favouritism?

Up until now we have dealt with the comments of Prof. Macleod, but that still leaves one of the comments of Prof.

Kamphuis unanswered. It has to do with the fact that the Conference reacted favourably to Dr. Faber's suggestion for a study committee on the Ecumenical Creeds, but ignored a plea from Dr. Oh to speak out on Shintoism. Furthermore, was it proper to appoint a committee simply because of a suggestion made by an individual in a speech and not by a member church?

In response, it should be said that the different ways in which the Conference responded to these suggestions was due to the fact that while a certain delegate took-up Dr. Faber's recommendation and turned it into a motion, which was then voted on and accepted, the same did not happen with regard to Dr. Oh's request. No one picked it up and made something concrete of it in the form of a motion. In reality, then, the success of the one and the failure of other was more a procedural matter than anything else.

But still, this does place the spotlight on a problem. Can committees be appointed by the Conference as the result of suggestions made in the papers delivered or as the result of discussions that take place, or must it be so that committees can only arise as the result of a proposal or request of one or more member churches? Against the first procedure is the fact that then delegates receive quite some power to initiate new committees. Against the second proposal is that then you give very little flexibility to the Conference and may end-up putting something on the shelf that should be dealt with until the next meeting of the Conference four years down the road.

Where does the solution lie? We are of the opinion that the Conference should have the right to appoint study committees *both* as the result of requests from the member churches and as the result of papers and discussions which arise at the meeting of the Conference. We have three reasons for this: a. the topics on which papers are delivered and discussions held come from the member churches; b. a study committee can only be created if the majority of the delegates are in favour of it; c. the results of every study committee are advisory in character and do not bind the member churches.

What this means is that a study committee (or for that matter, public declarations) cannot simply be appointed because someone proposes it while introducing his respective church or while making use of the question period. And in part the former was the case with Prof. Oh's request. He made it while introducing The Presbyterian Church of Korea. It remains unclear even today whether or not this was an official request of the church he represented or purely a personal suggestion. If he had been asked to deliver a

speech on this matter by one of the member churches and in the process had made a suggestion to appoint a committee to study the matter in more detail, it may well have seen the light of day.

Wrapping-up

In conclusion, it should be obvious that a number of difficulties remain to be resolved in the procedural area. Inexperience abounds and misunderstandings need to be corrected. All in all the start was good, but could have been better. Under the Lord's blessing that will improve. In the meantime, the Conference needs not just your critique but also your prayers.

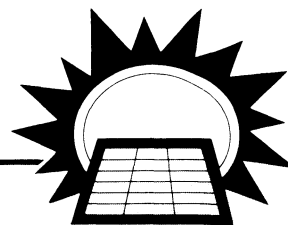
And as for those who say, "Who needs it? What do we get out of it anyway? Let's just go back to our earlier arrangement where we restricted our contacts to sister churches who share our spiritual, cultural and ethnic background," we would remind you ever so gently but seriously too that the Church of Jesus Christ is to be a *dynamic* fellowship, as well as a *servant* one.

What do we mean by that? As far as "dynamic" is concerned, do we not confess that still today Christ is gathering His Church and that He calls upon us to gather with Him, to act as His agents? Is that not what Prof. K. Schilder emphasized so often? Read his brochure *Your Ecumenical Task*. Read his "Thesis Concerning the Church" in *Clarion* (July 26, 1975). The church is not to rest on her laurels. She is not to seek her own comfort and security. She has a task to proclaim the Word far and wide, to bring the witness of the gospel to bear in all the areas of this life and in all the places of this world. She must gather with Christ and witness to Christ.

As far as "servant" is concerned, there is a sense in which the question, "What do we get out of it?" is an un-Biblical one. Turn to John 13 where you will find the incident of the Lord Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. It underlines the basic fact that the Lord Jesus Christ did not come to be served but to serve. If that is how the Head of the Church describes His task and ministry, should not His body see itself in the same light? As Canadian Reformed Churches we too are called upon to serve. If there is any way that we can serve Christ we must explore it and act on it. And that also relates to the ICRC. If through it we can serve to advance the cause of Christ, and if through it we can promote the church gathering work of our Saviour, then we must do so. Rooted in the truth of the Word and in the confessions that are subordinate to it, we must serve the King and the cause of His eternal kingdom.

J. VISSCHER

RAY OF SUNSHINE



Dear readers,

By now perhaps some of you are already enjoying the first touches of Spring. Here around Burlington a fresh layer of snow has covered the fields. And looking outside I was reminded of the fact that our heavenly Father uses the brightness and purity of fresh snow as an example to portray the forgiveness of our sins. The Psalmist David pleads with the LORD "wash me and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). And in Isaiah 1:18 the LORD promises His people "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

How great is the wonder of God's grace! That in this sinful world there are people who are "whiter than snow"! That is only through grace and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who made a complete satisfaction for all our sins. Now He does clothe us with robes of righteousness.

I think we sometimes make the wrong distinctions. Rich or poor; sick or healthy; happy or sad. And of course it is important whether you are sick or healthy, rich or poor. But it is not decisive! Near unto God or far away from Him, that determines our life now and later. Happy the man and woman whose God is the LORD. They have become whiter than snow.

Christ Jesus full atonement made,
And brought to us salvation.
Each Christian therefore may be glad,
And build on this foundation. (Hymn 24:5)

From the mailbox:

Ida Tillema, from Chatham ON, sent me some of her poems to be used if possible in this column. I will certainly keep them for that purpose and I am thankful for her contribution!

Our birthday calendar:

March 3
TREVOR HOFKINK
1426 Bulkley Drive, Box 411
Smithers, BC V0J 2M0

Trevor was born with an open spine and had to undergo another operation on his ankles and feet. He now has to learn to walk again with special braces. He is a cheerful boy and has two brothers and two sisters. He will be eight years old.

March 12
GERRY EELHART
"Rehoboth" Box 1089
Stony Plain, AB T0E 2G0

Gerry hopes to celebrate his 24th birthday. Are you still working in the greenhouse and the carpentry shop, Gerry? Have a happy birthday!

March 15
JIM VANDERHEIDEN
St Anns, ON L0R 1W0

Jim helps his father in the cleaning business. He loves reading and playing the accordion. His 27th birthday is coming up. Please, send him also a note or card.

March 18
ROSELYN KUIK
Box 11
Graysville, MB R0G 0T0



Roselyn with her teacher

Roselyn is a happy girl in spite of the fact that she can neither speak nor walk. She enjoys looking at pictures. I am sure she will appreciate it very much if you send her a colourful card for her 12th birthday.

Often we receive a "thank-you note" from parents for the many cards their children received on their birthday. They all tell us how happy their children are with these little tokens of love. So, keep it up Brothers and Sisters! And remember them and those who take care of them in your prayers!

Please notify me if there are any changes of address or circumstances.

MRS. J. MULDER
1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

The Reverend and Mrs. G. VanDooren “In the Gold”

It does not happen too often that a minister of the Word is allowed to reach the 50th Anniversary of his service in the Church of our Lord. A fact like this calls for more than the usual attention given to anniversaries. I am grateful for the opportunity to write about this anniversary as colleague, as friend, and also as someone who has close ties with the VanDoorens since their son is married to one of our daughters.

Gilbert VanDooren was born in Kampen, The Netherlands, received his elementary and secondary education in that well-known city and enrolled as a student at the Theological Seminary located at the Oudestraat. After having passed his exams and the preparatory examination by classis he received calls from several congregations.

On the 1st of March 1936 he was ordained as minister of the Word in the town of Mussel. Before the ordination took place he was married to Johanna DeJager on February 27. According to a very old saying: “You do not become a minister at seminary but in your first congregation,” the little over three years spent in Mussel were the formative years. When you reminisce with him about these first years you hear many interesting and instructive anecdotes of all the situations which have to be faced by someone who still has to “learn the ropes.”

From one of the more northern provinces the family moved to a more centrally located congregation: the beautiful town of Wezep surrounded by forest and fields.

When VanDooren begins to talk about Wezep he can hardly be stopped. In that town they went through the war years and the painful and sad liberation of the church. They were very trying months and years, still, the VanDoorens experienced the grace of the Lord in the struggle to maintain the teaching of Scripture that the LORD is faithful to His promises. The fact that the larger part of the congregation joined the “Liberated” Reformed Churches was a reason for gratitude and joy.

After the war, since many churches were without a minister, it was to be expected that other congregations would extend a call. This came in 1946 when the Church at Enschede extended a call to



him which he accepted in March, 1946. During their stay at Enschede he was invited to visit the Church at Curacao (an island in the Dutch Antilles) where he spent some time and where he got a taste of the beauty and charm of foreign countries.

A short while thereafter the post-war emigration began. Many members of the Reformed Churches attended information meetings and saw new possibilities in several parts of the world. Australia, New Zealand and, last but not least, Canada.

This country had become well-known because of the Canadian soldiers who had been greeted as the liberators of The Netherlands. It did not take long to adapt to the new situation, although many of our brothers and sisters had a hard time during the first years.

The matter of church affiliation and the subsequent institution of Canadian Reformed Churches is a story by itself. It is well-known that by the end of 1950 there were six churches: two in Eastern Canada, three in Alberta and one at the west coast. During the following years the number grew and ministers were needed to serve these congregations.

In January, 1954 the VanDooren family packed their suitcases, filled a large crate with their belongings and set out for Orangeville, ON. When the Ebenezer Church at Burlington was instituted in May, 1955, this congregation extended a call which was accepted. Up till today the VanDoorens have occupied the manse of Burlington at Emerald street and still enjoy the location and the love of the people among which they have lived for so many years.

Apart from being a faithful servant in the performance of his ministerial work and being a powerful preacher, the activities of the “jubilaris” have been impressive. He has chaired many classis and regional synods and served also as chairman of General Synod 1971. At these meetings, of which I attended many, his ability to formulate proposals and to defend an issue with sound arguments were highly appreciated. That this sometimes caused clashes with those who did not agree is something which can be expected in a fruitful discussion.

When, in 1968, General Synod decided to establish the Theological College, the Rev. VanDooren, who in the meantime

had become Master of Theology, was appointed as lecturer in the Diaconological Department. The work at the college was his "second love," being a pastor and teacher his "first." If I would mention the work done for the Synodical Committees, this article would become too lengthy. There is, however, one activity which ought to be recalled. That is his work, with other members of this committee, for our *Book of Praise*. The booklet *Op weg naar een Reformatorische Psalmbundel* is from his hand and has contributed to the decisions of synods of the following years. It was a moment of great satisfaction when the complete *Book of Praise* (in its first edition) was officially presented to synod. Having been a member of this committee myself for some years I still remember the interesting and instructive discussions which were often conducted in the Burlington parsonage.

It would be interesting to calculate how many pages have gone through his typewriter when he was editor of *Canadian*

Reformed Magazine, when he wrote the two editions of his book *Get Out* and when he prepared his lecture notes. All these activities were — to a certain extent — curtailed when in 1977, the time for retirement came. I write "curtailed," because our brother is still very active in preaching and in teaching.

The milestone of fifty years service has now been reached. And the question is, do we only look at activities and accomplishments? He himself would not have it that way. We may conclude that the LORD has granted our Brother the grace, the health and the strength to serve in the vineyard of the Great Shepherd. He would be the first to acknowledge and confess that at an occasion like this, gratitude for the sustaining and guiding power of the Lord should be the final word. Therefore, as readers of *Clarion*, we extend our congratulations to Brother VanDooren for the fact that the Head of the Church has allowed and equipped him for his task for such a long time. We

pray that the Lord may still enable him to continue to serve wherever he can.

Extending this congratulation would be incomplete if I did not mention Mrs. VanDooren.

The LORD brought them together and they may, with their children and grandchildren, celebrate this joyful occasion of a Golden Wedding Anniversary.

The work of a minister's wife is not always recognized as extensively as that of a minister. But her position is, in the widest sense, to be a help to her husband. It can be said that Mrs. VanDooren has practiced that rule extremely well. Not only in the bringing up of children with a husband who was very busy taking care of the flock, but also in a wide range of activities in congregational life.

Our best wishes are extended to the entire VanDooren family. May you have a joyful day together when you remember the blessings of the LORD which you have experienced for so many years.

D. VANDERBOOM

The Fraser Valley Study Center (F.V.S.C.)

The Fraser Valley Study Center is committed to the principle of continuing Christian education because the Bible teaches us that we are pupils of Christ who have to take every idea captive to Him. The scope of this vision implies that there is not one area of life which is not under the rule of our Lord. During the 1984-85 season we offered courses which would in some measure enrich our understanding of the Word of God and aid us in applying our knowledge to contemporary living. The topics covered such diverse areas as Biblical exposition, discipleship, economic stewardship, and current theological controversies.

In an earlier edition of *Clarion* we outlined how the 1984-85 season began with a seminar by Professor J. Faber on the doctrine of the church and a series of lectures by Professor G. Graham covering the topics of culture, divorce, and the Free Church of Scotland. This was followed by six other presentations.

The longest series was offered during the fall and winter session. Mr. D. Moes, Bible instructor of Credo Christian High School and editor of *Evangel*, offered twelve lectures on Paul's letter to the Romans. After clearly outlining the apostle's major



theme of justification by faith alone, we were shown how this message develops throughout the epistle. Paul discusses our need for justification by portraying the wrath of God; the method of justification by focussing on the righteousness of God; the life of justification by showing us our

freedom from wrath, death, sin, law and fear; the recipients of justification by expounding the electing power of God; and finally the ethics of justification by pointing us to the service of God. All in all, the series was a balanced and lucid presentation of a key Bible book.

Another series, which ran concurrently with Romans, was one on evangelism offered by Pastor J. Visscher of Cloverdale, BC. From the attendance, it was clear that this issue was close to the hearts of many. The lectures sought to give a comprehensive treatment of the subject by highlighting the Biblical basis of evangelism; the confessional emphasis on evangelism; the various approaches to evangelism throughout the history of the church; the superficial repudiation of evangelism by

Christian Concept of Property and Possessions in the Crossfire of Capitalism and Communism." This seminar was divided into three two-hour sessions.

The first session introduced us to the concept of private property central to the philosophy of capitalism. After explaining that the right to use and abuse property had been enshrined in Roman law, Professor Bockmuehl traced how this pagan idea spread throughout Europe during the Enlightenment with the help of such people



Dr. K. Bockmuehl

some church leaders; and the practical implementation of Biblical guidelines. The discussions following each of the six lectures were helpful, and one wishes that even more would have been present since the church exists to spread the Word of God.

At the beginning of the new year, Pastor J. Geertsema of the Maranatha congregation at Surrey delivered a series on Old Testament prophecy. The five lectures were timely because much confusion exists around the interpretation of various Biblical passages. After properly introducing his subject, the lecturer elaborated on John F. Walvoords view of the millenium; the christological character of Old Testament prophecy; the nation of Israel in prophetic writings; typology in Old Testament revelation; and the meaning of Daniel's "seventy weeks." From the series it became clear that we need to understand how to read prophecy before we can comprehend its overall meaning.

In February, we were able to host Dr. K. Bockmuehl, professor of theology at Regent College in Vancouver and an internationally renowned authority on Marxism. He presented a six-hour seminar entitled "The

as Rousseau, Bentham, and Blackstone.

The second session dealt with the concept of collective property central to the philosophy of communism. Our speaker proceeded by outlining the Marxist critique of capitalism and the communist vision of a new society. It was shown that this vision failed to bring anyone to the promised land, not only because it refused to see that structural change does not necessarily lead to moral change, but also because its insistence on government intervention exchanged the monopoly of private citizens for the even larger monopoly of the state.

In the third and last session, Professor Bockmuehl articulated what he believed to be the Christian concept of property. This involved a recognition that property is a divine gift to be managed by individuals in a stewardly and non-monopolistic manner. Since our possessions are transitory, dispensable, and potentially dangerous, we should aim for contentment, moderation and charitable service to our neighbour. The series ended with a plea for some form of work environment enabling both employer and employee to cooperate

in the managing of the industrial enterprise. The seminar challenged us to follow neither individualistic nor collectivistic philosophies too slavishly, but to subject all thinking to a Biblical critique. The work of the Italian Reformed Sismonde de Sismondi (1773-1842) was cited as an example of this.

At the beginning of spring, we were fortunate to have Professor Donald Macleod from the Free Church College at Edinburgh in our midst. He was lecturing at the Vancouver International Theological Academy and Regent College and spoke to us on the work of the Holy Spirit and the neo-pentecostal movement. Professor MacCleod outlined the charismatic movement's emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience distinct from conversion. The notion that speaking in tongues is the attestation of this baptism was critiqued by a lucid exegesis of the pertinent Biblical passages demonstrating that this emphasis minimizes and imperils the promise of God to Abraham, the significance of faith in Christ, and the importance of union with Christ. Our speaker did not leave us simply with a critique of Pentecostal theology, but warned the Reformed community that a spiritual vacuum created by dead orthodoxy, formalism and professionalism would be filled either by the devil, sowing seeds of dissension and discord, or by the charismatics hedonistically turning the church into a religious discotheque. In short, he underlined the need for God to fill us in such a way that we continue our role in the orthodox, catholic, and charismatic (Spirit-led and filled) church.

The last series offered in 1985 featured a six-part video presentation by Dr. R.C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries in Florida. These tapes, which have been shown all over North America, are based on Dr. Sproul's book entitled *The Holiness of God*. The major themes highlighted are the importance of holiness; the trauma of holiness, the definition of holiness; the holiness of Christ; holiness and justice; and the influence of holiness in your life. This series was generally well received, with most immensely appreciating the exposition of the sixth chapter of Isaiah.

Prospects for the new year include another diverse agenda. The Lord willing, we will tackle the subjects of technology with Pastor W. Pouwelse, counselling with Pastor J. Visscher, and hermeneutics, feminism and office with Professor J. van Bruggen. We pray that the Lord will continue to use the F.V.S.C. for the equipping of the saints for service.

Yours in Christ,
BERT MOES
secretary

From Manoah Manor

A little more than a year ago the first residents moved into the Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens Home in Langley, BC, now commonly known as Manoah Manor. When we look back over the last year we may be very thankful to our heavenly Father that He has provided the means also for this large undertaking. Now that the residents are quite well settled into their new home we would like to give you a bit of an idea of what it is like to live at Manoah Manor. We have therefore asked Sr. G.B. Wendt, one of the founders of the Senior Citizens Home Society, who continues to work hard for it and who is a resident of the home, to share her feelings about Manoah Manor with you.

She writes, "When after years of planning the building process actually started I was not too interested in moving in as I was only seventy years of age and living comfortably in a double mobile home on my son's property. I was, however, very interested in the home as it filled the needs of many of my fellow "brothers and sisters" and therefore often visited our growing building and before I was aware of it, the building grew on me. So, when in September 1984 the first seniors started to move into their new apartments I really sort of envied them. On subsequent visits I noticed that the residents were happy to live there. Oftentimes you could find them in the beautiful furnished lounge playing billiards, shuffleboard, or enjoying other activities together. Many times, even before I opened the door, I could hear them laughing and having fun. Now some experts say that laughing is a very healthy phenomenon! Therefore, in more than one way it looked good, to live there.

Thus when one of the ladies who was living in my favourite suite decided to move to the front of the building, I asked the board to reserve it for me. They did and so finally in March 1985 I moved into this home and never regretted it. In the morning I leave early as I work at the library in New Westminster so I cannot join the residents for tea often but in the afternoon I am always glad to return, not to an empty house, but to a home filled with brothers and sisters who are one in the faith. Often as I drive home I pass some of the residents who are either walking to, or coming from, the excellent shopping center about a block away.



Although I was always in favour of having our home close to the church I can now clearly see that this location is much better. Even if we can't drive anymore we can still do our own shopping.

On Sundays I usually go down to the lounge a little early to play a few Psalms on the organ and how beautiful it is, that when the others arrive one by one, we all go to the same church. How glad we are when we go to the house of the Lord one in the faith and one in the joyful expectation of a life not made with hands but eternally in the heavens.

We are the older generation who came to this great land as immigrants. Our

lives were radically changed by this move. The first years were full of struggle and strife. Looking backwards, however, we must acknowledge and see that our gracious God and Father blessed us abundantly. Church buildings arose, schools were planned and a rest home could be built. All this would have been impossible without our Father's guiding hand. To Him be the glory.

We, the older generation, cannot do very much anymore, but we can still pray:

*O Father let our children never go astray
Will't Thou take them under Thy wings
So that they remain faithful to Thy*

*Church and all things
That are done within her walls.
Help also our grandchildren, whatever
befalls*

*To be steadfast in the faith under Thy
care*

*So that they are not mislead by false
doctrines and fall in Satan's snare.*

*Yes, sometimes we are worried that the
young people think only of sports and
fun*

*But when we visit their meetings, we
notice that among them also serious
work is done*

*And we acknowledge again that Christ's
Church gathering work despite a world
full of crime*

*Goes on until the end when Christ
returns on Fathers appointed time."*

BILL VANDERPOL
President

REMINDER

**DID YOU MAIL
YOUR
SUBSCRIPTION
RENEWAL
NOTICE
ALREADY?**

The Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead celebrates

Twenty-five years ago, on January 1, 1961, the Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead was instituted. This occasion did not go unnoticed. On Saturday, January 19, 1986, one hundred and seventy members and guests gathered together to celebrate this joyous occasion.

The leading in prayer, the reading of Scripture (Hebrews 3:1-6) and the welcoming of guests and members was conducted by Br. L. Dykstra, the M.C. After this the assembly expressed its thanks to the Lord by singing Psalm 100:1-4.

Br. B. Vogelzang then gave an account of the history of the Barrhead Church. Many interesting statistics and anecdotes were told about the membership over the past twenty-five years. This account clearly reflected God's grace over the church, even in times of slow and sporadic growth.

After the singing of Hymn 40:1-3, the floor was given to the congregation's first and present pastor, Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar. Basing his speech on Hebrews 3:1-6, he reminded us all that through the many changes experienced by the church over the years, one thing remains constant — namely, that we are declared "Holy" by Christ and remain the Church of our Lord



Canadian Reformed Church building at Barrhead

Jesus Christ. Our Lord has not changed in His purpose. He died for us to bring into fullness that House of which we are members. We are called to activity and to trust in Him. Our strength is in the unchanging Christ and even though we have changed and sinned, we remain God's holy people.

The choir then sang under the capable direction of Br. P. Selles after which the Young People's Society performed a lively and amusing skit. The preschool children sang under Sr. V. Vanderdeen's direction. Some children sang more enthusiastically than others, but the performance was nevertheless, greatly appreciated by everyone.

Felicitations were received from various churches and individuals. To start with, Br. H. VanDelden took the podium to formally convey his congratulations on behalf of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church.

Rev. VanBeveren then conveyed his congratulations and best wishes on behalf of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church, as well as Classis Alberta — Manitoba. In his speech, we were told that twenty-five years is only a short period of time — but still part of that great work which the Lord is doing in gathering and defending His Church. For what the Lord has done and is still doing in keeping His children in the faith, we can be thankful. He related that classis, too, is thankful that the Sister Church at Barrhead could continue — regardless of ups and downs in membership.

Rev. DeJager then felicitated on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Church at Neerlandia. In his speech many quotes,



The preschool children sing — with Mrs. Val Vanderdeen



Br. L. Dykstra, M.C., addresses the assembly

dates, and facts were dug-up from the archives to effectively remind us all of the "controversial birth" of the Church at Barrhead from the Church at Neerlandia. In every page that records history, we are confronted with our sins. We are confronted even more with God's grace. Who deserves it?

Br. L. Dykstra then read letters from various people and congregations who could not be represented in person, namely, the Canadian Reformed Church at Coaldale, the Canadian Reformed

Church at Calgary, Prof. C. VanDam and family, and lastly from Br. and Sr. Vandenbrink.

The school-aged children provided an unauthentic but humorous version of the history of Barrhead. After singing for the congregation, the group was joined by everyone under the direction of Piet Groenwold.

This was followed by another play by the Young Peoples' Society.

"Mezereon" sang the lyrics of the Psalms to Irish tunes — providing a good example of some of the abundant talent available within the churches.

Sr. Selles presented "Tyndale Bible Commentaries" on behalf of the Ladies' Aid. This was gratefully accepted by Rev. Tiggelaar on behalf of the congregation, noting that they would be a valuable asset to the library.

After another performance by the choir, Rev. Tiggelaar formally closed the evening by thanking all those who had put the program together. He also referred to an earlier speech where it was "honestly mentioned that our lives are sinful but that God despite our sins has given the Lord Jesus Christ for us." After this thanksgiving prayer, the evening informally ended with coffee and pastries.

Though the evening was long, it was in celebration of the Lord's care and defense of His little Church at Barrhead for twenty-five years, and therefore, justified. May the Lord continue to preserve and defend His Church at Barrhead for a long time to come.

A CHURCH MEMBER



Hollandse Dag Smithville, 31 Mei, 1986

Wij willen ook dit jaar weer een Hollandse Dag organiseren om de onderlinge kontakten tussen broeders en zusters die het Hollands nog verstaan wat meer aan te halen. Er is gelegenheid voor zang en voordracht, ernst en luim. Wij zingen Vaderlandse liederen en vooral veel Psalmen. De algemene opinie vorig jaar was dat diegenen die er niet waren veel hadden gemist. Er is een misverstand in het houden van die dag als zou een Hollandse Dag alleen voor oudere mensen gelden, maar deze dag is voor alle leeftijden. Ook jongeren kunnen meehelpen zulk een dag echt gezellig te maken. Na de lunch zal Dr. K. Deddens spreken over een nog nader bekend te maken onderwerp. Laten velen meewerken om deze dag te doen slagen. Wij hebben om tien uur de koffie klaar en hopen om elf uur te beginnen met ons program. Mocht U bijdragen hebben voor deze dag of suggesties neem dan contact op met:

Mrs. S. Devries
RR 2, St. Anns, ON L0R 1Y0
Tel. (416) 386-6303

Let op de komende bekendmakingen in *Clarion*.

Het comitee Hollandse Dag
Smithville — Attercliffe



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

Hello Busy Beavers,

Do you ever wonder just how many Busy Beavers are in our Club?

Well, today I counted them!

Right now our Busy Beaver Club has 239 members!

That's counting our two new members.

And just think — those Busy Beavers live all across Canada.

An not only that.

We have some members living as far away as Brazil, Australia, and Irian Jaya!

Maybe you should get out your map to see just where we all are!

We live far away from each other, but we can share the same birthday wishes, the same fun and activities!

Today I'm going to give you two addresses of three Busy Beavers who live very far away in the mission field.

Don't you think it will make their birthday special to get cards from the other Busy Beavers?

Nora Ellen Boersema São José da Coroa Grande, PE
Ave. João F. de Melo s/n 55567, Brazil

Nora Ellen's birthday was February 14, but I think she'd still love to hear from the other Busy Beavers!

The next two Busy Beavers will be having their birthday away from home, but at the same school.

Let's surprise them (as well as Busy Beaver *Nora Ellen*) with lots of cards, Busy Beavers!

Corinne Versteeg (March 3) Emily Vegter (April 11)
The Reformed International School
Box 239
Sentani, Irian Jaya, Indonesia

PARK PLAY POEM

Every morning	I can run
I can play	And I can shout
In the park	I am glad
Across the way	When I come out.

sent in by Busy Beaver *Edie Alkema*



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Andrea Van Vliet*. We are happy to have you join us! Thank you for the puzzle. You're a real Busy Beaver already, I see. Keep up the good work! Where did you live before you moved, Andrea? You've probably made new friends here, too, right?

And a big welcome to you, too, *Edie Alkema*. Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities. Are you looking forward to summer and swimming, Edie? Thank you for sharing the poem.

Did you finish your pink scarf in time, *Karin Vanderveen*? I think your sister will love it! Were you ever lucky, Karin, your grandmother's sweater fitted you! Thanks for your letter, and the puzzles, AND the beautiful calligraphy.

It will keep you busy, *Cheryl Vandeburgt*, looking after all those rabbits! Sounds like you had a very good birthday, Cheryl. Thank you for a nice chatty letter. Bye for now.

Hello, *Geraldine Schenkel*. I'm glad you have a pen pal. You can tell her I'm looking forward to getting her letter! Thanks for the puzzle, Geraldine. Write again soon.

Thank you for the riddles, and the recipe, too, *Donna Pieffers*. It was nice to hear from you again. And your pen pal will be happy to hear from you, too, Donna!

Hello, *Carolyn Van Andel*. I was happy to hear from you! Now you'll be on the birthday list, too! Are you having lots of winter fun outside, Carolyn? Bye for now. Write again soon.

How did your skating rink turn out, *Elizabeth Barendregt*? Did you skate lots on it? And did you help get things ready for your New Year's party? Thanks for your letter and an interesting puzzle, Bethy.

RIDDLE FUN!

Try these on your family and friends.

Busy Beaver *Donna Pieffers* sent them in.

1. How do you insult a hamburger patty?
2. Why aren't burgers the least bit scared of Halloween?
3. What kind of baseball do burgers play?
4. Whom do the meat patties dislike?
5. Which baseball team do the meat patties root for?

(Answers below)

Quiz Time!

CODE QUIZ by Busy Beaver *Geraldine Schenkel*

A	— 1	F	— 6	N	— 14	U	— 21
B	— 2	H	— 8	O	— 15	W	— 23
C	— 3	I	— 9	R	— 18	Y	— 25
D	— 4	L	— 12	S	— 19		
E	— 5	M	— 13	T	— 20		

9 1 13 20 8 5 23 1 25 20 8 5

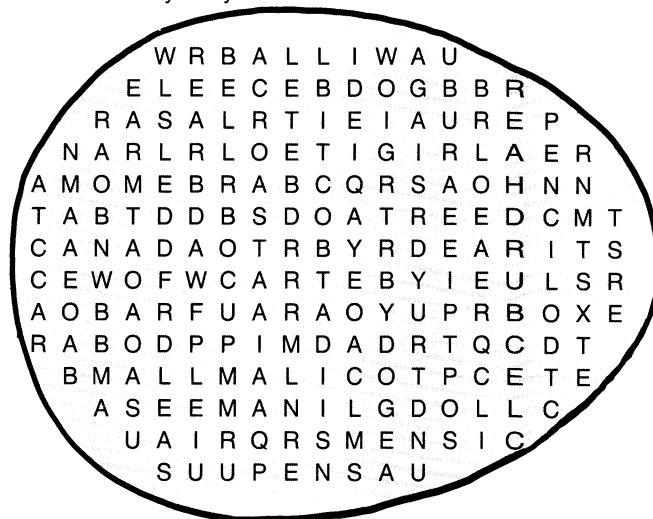
20 18 21 20 8 1 14 4 20 8 5 12 9 6 5

14 15 15 14 5 3 15 13 5 19 20 15 20 8 5

6 1 20 8 5 18 2 21 20 2 25 13 5

EGG WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Andrea Van Vliet*



- | | | | | |
|--------|------|------|--------|------|
| ball | cart | dog | mall | tie |
| bell | cob | doll | Mom | tree |
| box | cup | girl | pen | sled |
| boy | Dad | man | pencil | up |
| Canada | dear | men | see | |

FOLLOW THE LEADER!

from Busy Beaver *Elizabeth Barendregt*.

Find how many times the alphabet fits in the puzzle. The letters may go up, down, or sideways!

Start: A Z End
 B D 1 2 G H I D E F H Y
 C V E F T S J C B G I X
 B Z Y U V R K L M A J W
 C A X W 6 Q P O N Z K V
 E D W X C D E F 3 Y L U
 G F V Y B I H G 4 X M T
 H I U Z A J K L M → N S
 K J T S R Q P O N V O R
 L M N O P Q R S T U P Q

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

How many times? ANSWER: at least 4

Answers to riddles:

1. Call it a meatball. 2. They are used to people "goblin" them up. 3. Ketchup Baseball. 4. The butchers — they're always talking "chop, chop." 5. The New York Meats.

Did you enjoy the puzzles, Busy Beavers?

How did you do guessing those riddles?

Bye for now!

Keep busy everybody!

Love from your
Aunt Betty

Aunt Betty
c/o Clarion

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ABC BIBLE COLLECTION - by Mrs. John Roza

Tt

T-tables of stone

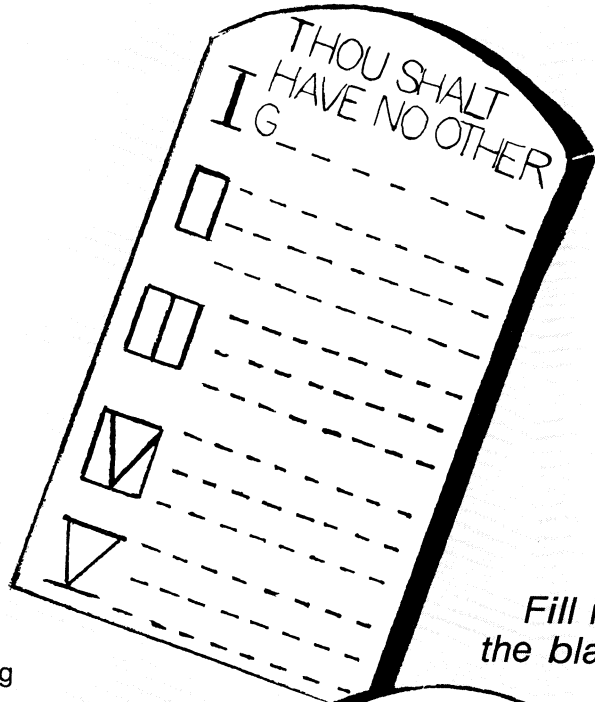
or Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:12)

Quiz Questions

1. How many women came to Solomon claiming to be the baby's mother? _____
Solomon suggested to cut the baby in half to solve this problem. (1 Kings 3:16)
2. There was a group of maidens that took oil lamps to meet a bridegroom. Half of these maidens were foolish and took their lamps, but no oil. The wise half took flasks of oil with them. How many maidens were there?
_____ (Matthew 25:1-13)
3. How many plagues did God issue on Pharaoh and his people to let Moses and his people go?
_____ (Exodus 6)
4. What is the name of this building which was a place of worship and sacrifice in Jerusalem?
Clue: Solomon had built this place along with his palace. _____ (1 Kings 5-8)
5. This man was a convert, friend and helper of Paul, he also travelled to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas. Who is he? _____ (Titus 1:4)

Answers for the letter "S"

1. Sodom 2. Sarah 3. Sapphira 4. Simeon 5. Satan



Fill in the blanks!

