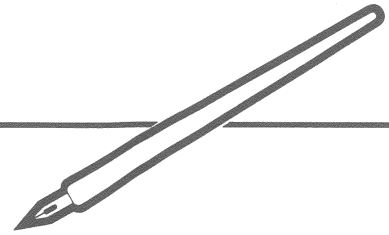




Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 35, No. 6

March 21, 1986



Are we sectarian with a closed Lord's Supper Table?

Introduction

The reader may know that there are three different ways in which the Lord's Supper is administered: at a closed Table, at a restricted Table, and at an open Table. An open Table means that every person who attends the service in which the Lord's Supper is administered and who desires to participate is invited to do so.

The restricted Table means that every one who is a professing Christian and desires to participate is, in principle, allowed to do so. There is, however, this restriction, that the consistory must give its permission. This permission can be obtained through an interview beforehand in which the consistory ascertains that the person requesting to commune with the congregation truly is a professing Christian, a church member in good standing, who is not living in sin. The restriction can be more or less strict. A consistory can decide that in principle every professing Christian is allowed, but it can also determine that the professing Christian must profess the faith as adopted by that church in its creeds and confessions, or anyway in its main doctrines.

The third manner, that of a closed Table, means that participation is only allowed to the communicant members of that local church who are not placed under discipline, or to communicant members of one of the sister churches who have an attestation with them from their home church. Also here a consistory can be more or less strict.

There is among us no difficulty with the open Table. We all agree that an open Table is in conflict with Scripture. If I am not mistaken, the practice in our churches in the past has mainly been that of the closed Table. However, there is no unanimity (anymore) with respect to the acceptance of the closed Table. Some favour very much the restricted Table, adducing even the ground that churches which have a closed Table are sectarian or lean to sectarianism.

It is good, therefore, that we pay attention to this matter and ask ourselves whether we, with our practice of a closed Table, are really sectarian. Let us, however, first listen to some voices from the past and the present.

Dr. H. Bouwman, "Reformed Church Polity"

When the late Professor H. Bouwman, in his book *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht* (Reformed Church Polity), II, pp. 386ff., writes about those who commune, he says first of all with respect to those who are members of their own congregation that "the church cannot read in the hearts and judges its members according to the outward marks, namely, of confession and walk of life. It admits to the Table adult members of the congregation who agree with the confession of the church and whose life appears to be irreproachable. And it suspends from the Holy Supper, according to the command of Christ, 'those who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly.'"

When Bouwman deals with the question "What must be

done when strangers desire to take part in the Lord's Supper?," he writes: "The rule must be that only members of the church partake in the Lord's Supper, while those who make known their desire to join the church can receive permission for it [the participation, J.G.] in special cases. It is absolutely necessary that those who come to the Lord's Supper place themselves under oversight and discipline of the consistory, because otherwise the right and calling of the consistory to keep the Holy Supper holy is taken away from it.

As I understand it, Bouwman speaks here about a person who wants to join. He means to say that, if a person is in the process of joining and of being received as a communicant member of the church, while certain matters delay a conclusion, a consistory can decide to admit such a person to the Table of the Lord before he is officially a member. Bouwman does not elaborate on the special cases. He does not give examples. That makes it difficult to follow him. We can ask, for instance, how can a person place himself under the oversight and discipline of the consistory while he is not, at the same time, ready to become a member yet? Therefore, it is better to say that one who desires to join should first join and be received as member and then can also with the congregation partake at the Supper of the Lord as member of that body.

Bouwman says the following about those who are really guests. " 'Guests' were always admitted by the church, provided they are guests in truth, that is, members of other Christian churches whose confession sufficiently agreed with their own, and provided they have a valid reason that prevents them from celebrating the Lord's Supper in their own church. In former days this happened especially with the Lutherans who stayed in places where there was not a Lutheran Church, but only a Reformed one, and vice versa. But the churches have always seen it as a necessity that in such cases the necessary oversight was fully maintained."

Bouwman adds, "In The Netherlands, where people always have the opportunity to join one of the Reformed Churches, the need for such oversight is even more urgent. . . ." He speaks about a reliable testimony, which, as far as I can see, must mean an attestation.

In the early days of the Reformation, when Reformed and Lutheran people were persecuted, they were often allowed to take part in the Lord's Supper in each others' churches, but it also happened that this admission was withdrawn. In this connection those who favour a restricted Table often point at the fact that Professor K. Schilder, when studying in Germany, partook in the celebration of the Holy Supper in a Lutheran Church. Hereby we can make the remark that something is not automatically good because K. Schilder said it or did it.

Bouwman also informs his readers about the situation in the churches of the Secession (1834) and those of the Doleantie (1886). It often happened, he writes, "That members of other churches who did attend the services in these churches, but for some reason did not dare or want to join, asked to partake in the

Lord's Supper celebration, and were allowed to do so a few times." Bouwman, then gives this comment: "It is good that the consistory does not push away such Christians, provided it always tries to convince them of the abnormality of the situation."

We finish our listening to what Bouwman says with a quotation from p. 558 in the same volume, where he deals with the necessity of a confession. Bouwman writes there: "The unity in church life requires unity in confession and church organization. Otherwise cooperation is practically impossible. There is a higher unity, namely, the unity in Christ. A church in a certain region or country may never overlook this unity because otherwise she is in danger of becoming a sectarian circle. In the deepest sense there is a unity between Christians over the whole world, however, distinct and diverse they may be in the manifestation of their faith. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. All those whose hope and faith is based in Christ are one in Him. But in the conceptions and views regarding so many things there is a profound difference. Inclination, character, upbringing, race, history and climate are part of the cause of these differences. This explains the pluriformity in the one Christian church." Bouwman also speaks of the invisible church, being all the believers wherever they are.

Coming to a provisional conclusion regarding the view of Bouwman, we can say that there is a connection between his view on the invisible, pluriform church with its higher unity in Christ and the easy acceptance of guests from other denominations at the Table of the Lord. Bouwman's concept of a higher unity that transcends church walls is the basis for his view on the admittance of members of other churches to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, even when there is no sister or other relationship with such church.

Another thing that I ask the attention for is the fact that Bouwman points out with great emphasis that "it is absolutely necessary" that strangers who are admitted as guests "place themselves under the oversight and discipline of the consistory," and further, that he calls "abnormal" the situation in which a consistory admits people of other denominations who have not joined the congregation for whatever reasons.

Dr. F.L. Rutgers, "Advice for the Churches"

It is also good to listen here to Professor F.L. Rutgers. He writes in *Kerkelijke Adviezen* (Advice for the Churches), II, p.156 about the question, "Is it allowed to admit members of other denominations in the same place as guests to the Lord's Supper? Rutgers advises, "In my opinion, a Dutch Reformed (Hervormd) person cannot and may not be admitted to the Holy Supper by a Reformed consistory, when he objects (for whatever reasons) to place himself under the oversight and discipline of that consistory, which, of course, can only happen by joining the Reformed Church [Italics added, J.G.]. If things are done differently, the admission to the Lord's Supper is given over to arbitrariness and disorder, and a policy is followed with which the consistory loses the only means to keep the Lord's Supper holy.

Rutgers continues: "I do understand that there can be various motives which urge a 'Dutch Reformed' or 'Lutheran' or 'Baptist' or 'Roman Catholic' to remain nominally and formally in the church with which he broke already spiritually, even though there is an instituted Reformed Church in the place where he lives, and even though he feels that he belongs to that (Reformed) Church. These motives can be family circumstances, fear of financial disadvantage, and so on, which are certainly 'extenuating circumstances' for his ecclesiastical unfaithfulness to the King of the Church. But they cannot make him go scotfree. A consistory, in my opinion, may not cooperate in making him think that way. This certainly would happen when a person in such a wrong position would be treated as if his situation was not abnormal."

We notice that Rutgers is stricter than Bouwman. Bouwman is of the opinion that members of other denominations who do not join the Reformed Church can be admitted under certain circumstances. Rutgers says: it cannot be done. It is wrong. It undermines the right and duty of the consistory and it allows for, and cooperates in, the continuation of a sinful, unfaithful attitude.



The Reformation Church in Blue Bell

Last year the Reformation Church in Blue Bell was admitted to the federation of our churches. The reader may remember that I quoted extensively from a report that the consistory of this church issued first of all for the churches in Ontario South. This report dealt with the controversy in this church that led to its request to be admitted to the federation of the American and Canadian Reformed Churches. This report has also a chapter on "Restricted Communion."

The Blue Bell Church was originally Orthodox Presbyterian. The question whether the OPC should have an open, a restricted or a closed Lord's Supper Table played an important role in the discussions. Before this already the Tri-County Reformed Church of Maryland separated from the OPC mainly because of the matter of "fencing" the Lord's Supper. According to the Tri-County Reformed Church, as well as the Blue Bell Church, the practice in the OPC is too free. Another Presbyterian denomination, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, as I understand, has the practice of a closed Table. It shows that not all conservative Presbyterian Churches think the same and have the same practice.

It should interest us what the brothers of the Blue Bell Church say in their report on this point. The chapter on "Restricted Communion" follows that on "Confessional Membership." The brothers write that the two matters are closely connected. Quoting James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, vol. 1., pp. 297ff., they say, "It is only by insisting upon this unity of confession that the true unity of the church is manifested." They also write, "If the Reformed faith is true, then everyone — and not just office holders — must cling to its truth." All should agree with this.

Discussing then "Restricted Communion," the brothers say, "On the basis of the preceding, it is also clear that the Lord's Table must be restricted to those who profess the true Reformed religion. *The Directory of Worship* [of the OPC, J.G.] teaches that no one may come to the Lord's Table prior to public profession of faith (v. 4) and, in the same way, access to the Table is one of the rights of membership (v. 5). Thus since it is Biblical and confessional to require that those who would be members of the church confess the true Reformed religion, it is obvious that access to the Table is also restricted to those who profess the true Reformed religion."

We read further, "One cannot say that there are those outside the visible body of Christ and yet who are entitled to the outward sign and seal of the covenant. Nor can one argue that 'teachability' qualifies one for the Table. First, teachability is not given in Scripture as a prerequisite for admission to the Table. Second, just what 'teachability' (or 'sincerity,' or 'Christian character,' for that matter) is has never been made clear, nor can it be for it is a subjective criterion. The Table ought not be used to 'win' people, nor to show the communion of the saints to those with a different confession. The Table is for those who confess the truth."

It is obvious that the Blue Bell brothers write against the views of those in the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the OPC who were their opponents and had different views.

They write also, "The term 'restricted communion' needs, however, to be more closely defined. Restricted communion is not to be confused with closed communion. The latter position would limit access to the Table to the members of one congregation; in its most virulent forms, it would restrict communion to those who 'knew' beyond doubt their election and who could demonstrate that election to the satisfaction of the elders [We recognize here the practice of, e.g., subjectivistic, Old Reformed circles, J.G.]. Restricted communion does not fence the Table in such a way as to keep out those who have a right to partake. On the contrary, restricted communion opens the Table to those to whom it belongs. But it opens the Table by following the objective command of Christ and not by setting up various man-made subjective criteria.

"Restricted communion, then, involves the elders and revolves about their proper exercise of the keys of the kingdom. The Table is not open to every individual; and it is not up to the individual to decide whether or not he ought to partake. That is the role of the elders. It is their duty to ensure that all who partake at the Table fulfill the Biblical requirements for Table fellowship. . . . The elders must see to it that they uphold the Word of God. And this they do by applying the Biblical criteria: a profession of the true religion, a godly life, and membership in a true Church.

"That is, God has entrusted this ordinance to the church (WCF [Westminster Confession of Faith, J.G.] XXV. 3; XXIX. 1). The Lord's Supper, then, is not to be administered to an individual irrespective of his relationship to the church, which is the covenant people of God, united in confession of the true Reformed religion (WCF XXIV. 3; XXV. 2). That is, the Lord's Supper is only for those who have professed this true Reformed religion, have made this profession credible in their lives, and are members in good and regular standing in the true Church (I Cor. 12:13; WCF XXIA. 1, XXX. 3)."

These words concerning the duty of the elders regarding the admittance to the Lord's Supper show good Reformed thinking and should have our full agreement. The report also says the following: "Objections [against the three above-mentioned criteria, J.G.] **which take their starting point in either an invisible church doctrine, or in a doctrine of union with Christ which is abstracted from church membership, run aground on the rocks of Deuteronomy 29:29** [bold face added, J.G.]. To argue that 'union with Christ' — that is, mystical union — is the prerequisite for Table fellowship requires the elder to be able to read the heart of the person requesting admittance."

Herewith I conclude this overview. Next time I hope to deal further with this matter and come to a conclusion. But I can say now already that I find the last paragraph which I quoted from the Blue Bell report of the greatest significance. Keep these words in mind. The Blue Bell view is not far from the closed Table view as was prevalent in our church federation.

J. GEERTSEMA

CHRIST ACCUSED

*When false accusers say, "You blasphemers and you lie,"
He gives them no reply.*

*When at their fierce demand He speaks the truth,
They smite Him on the mouth.*

*The chief of hypocrites—the High Priest Caiaphas—
Declares, "Explain to us
Your origin, and also clearly who," says he,
"You think yourself to be."*

*And when Christ says, "I am the Son of God, he knows,"
The High Priest tears his clothes
Deceitfully, as if his God he would adore,
He cries, "What need we more?"*

*"He has compared himself to God! What blasphemy!"
They strike Him brazenly;
They mock Him, taunt Him, spit Him in the eye,
And swear that He must die.*

*Horrendous blasphemers! The greatest blasphemy
That ever men could see:
Here they condemn God's Son, who never told a lie;
"He blasphemed God," they cry.*

*He finds Himself forsaken sadly in the end
By every single friend.
Yes, even Peter, who has made so strong a vow,
He, too, denies Him now.*

*Do we know Christ? Not when the worldly slough Him off
And kick Him as they scoff.
But when kings pamper Him and flatter Him, oh, then,
Of course, we know the Man.*

Special children₂



4. Using the talents

In Matthew 25 we find a sermon of our Lord Jesus Christ about the kingdom of heaven and the day of judgment. Three parables are used to show us what the most important things are. First we find the parable of the ten maidens to show us that we always have to be on the alert. The second is the parable of the talents, showing us that we will be judged according to what we have done with the talents which have been entrusted to us. The more talents given to us, the greater is our responsibility. The third parable shows us what will count in the day of judgment, namely, how our attitude has been, not in the first place with respect to great things, but first and foremost in our dealings with our brothers and sisters. "Truly, I say to you, as you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (verse 40).

With respect to the issue at stake we can learn at least two things from this chapter. In the first place that it is of ultimate importance how we deal with these seemingly unimportant members of the church, these "least of the brethren." Even a cup of water given to them, a visit, or a little proof of attention to them, can be so significant that it will be mentioned at the great day when the Son of man comes in His glory, and all His angels with Him, to sit on His glorious throne (Matthew 25:31-46). This chapter also shows us that we will be judged, not according to how many talents we have received, but according to what we have done with the talents entrusted to us.

In Matthew 21:31 Jesus warned the chief priests and the elders of the people, saying, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." That was a harsh statement to people who felt that they were the *creme de la creme* of the people. They considered themselves to be the first to go into the kingdom of God and they were very upset because of this admonition of our supreme Teacher.

Sometimes I wonder how many retarded or other handicapped children will go into the kingdom of God before highly regarded and self-confident members of the church. Handicapped children may sometimes act in an unusual way and they certainly do not understand everything, or only little about the things which we con-

sider to be very important. But they are often more honest, and more straightforward. They do not put up a front. Many intelligent people pretend to be something they are not. They talk very nice, but behind your back they may be different. Also in the church there is a lot of disappointment and frustration because of people who deceive one another.

Retarded children do not have many talents. In dealing with them we also notice that sin does not leave any life untouched. But let us not disregard these

children, who are members of the covenant, not less than the intelligent ones. They belong to the congregation and they have their place in the kingdom of God not less than others. That may be a comfort for the parents as well as for the children. In Matthew 19:13-15 we read that the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, but He laid His hand upon them and blessed them, and He said to the disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." We are ful-



Published bi-weekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, MB

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ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
1249 Plessis Road
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2C 3L9
Phone: (204) 222-5218

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1986	Regular	Air
	Mail	Mail
Canada	\$24.00	\$42.00
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$25.75	\$40.00
International	\$34.50	\$57.50

Advertisements: \$5.00 per column inch
Second class mail registration number 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

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ly aware of the fact that this text does not speak specifically about retarded or other mentally handicapped children, but it still shows us that children belong to the kingdom of heaven not less than adults, and that applies also to special children. When the disciples were arguing about the question who was to be considered the greatest among them, Jesus taught them a lesson. He put a child in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn

and very intelligent children can cause problems which sometimes seem to be more difficult to cope with than the care of a handicapped child.

One who has had the opportunity to closely watch the family situation, will admit that the life of such a special child makes sense, and serves a purpose. Many a mentally handicapped child has been of more value for his environment, a greater blessing for his family, and of more sig-

“. . . we will be judged, not according to how many talents we have received, but according to what we have done with the talents entrusted to us.”

and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Let us take to heart this warning, and let us also remember what the Apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 9. We have to use all the gifts, the talents, and the energy which the Lord has given us, in the same way as a runner who competes in a race. Only the Lord knows whether we have used all our talents in the proper way, and whether we have run and competed in an honest way. Paul himself says in I Corinthians 9:26,27, "I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

5. Bear one another's burdens

In Galatians 6:2,3 Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if one thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

As members of the church, members of the same body, the body of Christ, we have to help and support each other. That counts in a special way with respect to handicapped children and their parents. The important question is: How we can give such help and support in the most appropriate way? How can we bear another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ?

We have mentioned already that we should treat such people as normally as possible. We should not single them out. Of course, we have to acknowledge that they have special problems, and we should not avoid a conversation about it. But we have to realize also that such parents have their own pride. They don't see their child only as a poor pitiable creature. Their child gives them a lot of joy and happiness, and it makes them feel proud of what he still is able to do, in spite of the handicap. Their child is a full-fledged member of the communion of saints. It certainly causes concerns, but let us not forget that "normal"

nificance for the kingdom of heaven, than has his healthy brother or sister.

6. Public profession of faith

The last point I like to touch on is the question in how far mentally handicapped children can make public profession of faith and take part in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. A number of aspects have to be considered in this respect.

In the first place we have to realize that the Lord has given two different sacraments. In baptism the Lord gives a sign and seal of His promises to the children of believers, "without their knowledge" (see Form for Baptism of Infants). In the Lord's Supper the believers are expected to participate actively in remembering the death of the Lord. Jesus has said, (according to I Corinthians 11:24,26) "Do this in remembrance of me," and "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." Participation in the celebration of the Lord's Supper requires some knowledge and understanding, to "discern the body" (I Corinthians 11:29). Before someone can make public profession of faith and sit at the table of the Lord, there has to be evidence given that the person has at least some understanding of what it means.

In the second place we have to realize that the Lord has given us this sacrament to strengthen our faith, but He can work with His grace and Holy Spirit also without the use of this sacrament. That is a comfort for those who, by reason of persecution, cannot celebrate the Lord's Supper. It is a comfort also for those who, because of illness, cannot attend the church services. We have to use the sacraments as far as we are able to, but the Lord can work also without these means.

In the situation of the mentally handicapped it means that the Lord can work in their hearts and minds, even when they are not able to take part in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The fulfillment of the

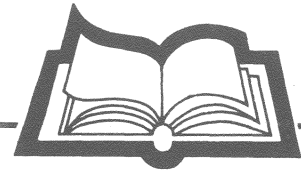
covenant promises does not depend on how smart we are, but on how faithful we use the talents He has given us, no matter how residual these talents may be.

In the Canons of Dort, chapter I, Article 17, we read: "We must judge concerning the will of God from His Word, which declares that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they are included with their parents. Therefore, God-fearing parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in their infancy." We confess that the Lord can fulfill His promises, even when a child dies before it is born, and when it never has had any opportunity to accept or reject His promises. Would the Lord not be able to save children who are so severely retarded that they can never understand what the covenant means?

At the same time we have to be aware of the fact that public profession of faith requires knowledge, according to the talents one has received. A very intelligent student, with excellent marks in High School, has to show knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the Confession of the Church, according to his capability. The armour of God in his situation has to be aimed at a profound attack of the devil during his further study and in his career. I remember cases of less educated, simple people, who at an old age joined the church. In such a situation no one expects them to learn by heart the whole Heidelberg Catechism. A very basic testimony about their trust in the Lord is sufficient. The same applies to retarded and other mentally handicapped children. No one can expect them to learn, by heart, larger sections of the Catechism. I have seen cases in which retarded children confessed their faith in a very simple way. However, a basic understanding is required. They should realize what they are doing. If children do not have the slightest notion what the Lord's Supper is all about, they should not be admitted to the table of the Lord. Jesus has said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," and the Apostle Paul says, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." Those who do not have the slightest understanding of what it means, cannot take part in it. That does not mean that they are no partakers of Christ and all His benefits. The promise, signed and sealed in baptism, stands. It is for them no less than for the children, referred to in the Canons of Dort I, 17.

Let us not disregard these members, who might seem to be the least of our brothers and sisters, but who might turn out to be the greatest in the kingdom of God.

W. POUWELSE



“Is any one among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

James 5:14, 15

Instant Healing?

We saw last time that our Lord does not offer us simple solutions to life’s complex problems, but asks of us to go the way of active, persevering prayer, a way of daily, living communion with God. In the next verses, James continues with the matter of prayer. Except now he does not speak so much of personal prayer but of the intercession made by the *elders*.

Let us look at the situation. If someone is “sick,” we read, he must call the elders, who will intercede for him and anoint him with oil. This prayer will “heal” the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. You will find that many translations (not so much the RSV) speak here in terms of “sick” and “healing.” And then it looks as if we are faced with another one of James’ simple solutions; if you are sick, call the elders, for their official prayer will lead to instant healing!

This text is used, among others, by the Roman Catholic Church to support the doctrine of “the extreme unction” (commonly known as “the last rite”), which is administered to the dying to give them the (extra) grace needed to face the ultimate trial. But we note, in passing, that this text does not at all speak of dying; instead it speaks of living! This same text is used by Pentecostal groups to prove their doctrine of spontaneous (immediate) healing, and here, it seems, they may have a point. Does this text indeed not indicate that through the official prayer of the elders, the sick will immediately be healed and raised up?

Yes, we might wonder if we find here another simple solution. Does this text support the notion that a sick person can be freed from his illness simply by calling the elders who, in fact, pray the sickness out of his system? Often we read in various publications that texts as the above should make us more sympathetic to movements which stress “faith healing” of the instant kind. I think we should be very cautious when we read of such trends which now and then also creep up in Reformed circles.

Above I have purposely put the words “sick” and “healing” between quotation marks. Because the main question is: what is meant by being *sick* and being *healed*? Is this really a matter of some physical illness or handicap which we encounter so often in life?

Then it literally says, “Is any one among you *weak*?” A word is used that means “to be weak” or “to be sickly.” But this does not mean sick exclusively in a *physical* sense, for it can mean as well: spiritual weakness! And the second

important expression, “the sick man” (verse 15) actually means: one who is weak, tired, exhausted, filled with worry and despair. And then we do not read in verse 15 that the prayer of faith will *heal* such a weak person, but will “*save*” him. This verb, to save, is mostly used when the Word of God speaks of *salvation from sin* through the Lord Jesus Christ.

This text does not speak only of those who are sick in a physical sense to give them the assurance that they will always be healed upon the prayer of the elders. The scope is much broader. James deals here especially with those who are weak in faith, who have become weakened perhaps also because of some physical handicap or spiritual burden, but who are exhausted in the struggle against sin. Using the same word, the Apostle Paul elsewhere also speaks of the weak (in faith) in the congregation (I Corinthians 8:9).

And so I come to this translation, “Is any one among you weak? Let him call the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the one who is weak, and the Lord will raise him up” “To raise up” means here indeed to enable someone to stand up again, to continue on with new courage and hope.

So there may be members in the congregation who experience great difficulties in the struggle of faith. Perhaps of a lengthy illness or a weakened spiritual disposition. Such persons are to call the elders to receive spiritual support, or, concretely, to have regular pastoral care. The elders are to pray with them and for them that they may be strengthened in their trials and encouraged in the Lord to continue their life as children of God.

“Anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord.” Oil was in those days symbolic of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. This unction was to be used together with the intercession so that the ailing member would be strengthened in the Spirit of God! This anointing, by the way, was not the most important part. It was only a sign. It says clearly in verse 15, “the prayer of faith will save the one who is weak.” The prayer of faith is decisive. Prayer alone gives the strength needed to carry on. Prayer gives certainty that the sins have been forgiven.

It is remarkable that ultimately in these verses the emphasis comes to fall on the *forgiveness of sins*, “and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” Those who in their weakness begin to struggle with the assurance of their salva-

tion, will indeed be strengthened by pastoral intercession and reassured in their difficult struggle of faith! In this way the greatest burden is lifted from their shoulders and they will be raised up to serve the Lord with new conviction and with deep joy.

I do not find in these verses any indication that “instant healing” is guaranteed upon the prayer of the elders. Also here there is no simple solution. Those who are weak must be enabled to continue the struggle, comforted and strengthened in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. I do find in these verses that it is especially the task of the elders to

support and strengthen those in the congregation who are weakened in the struggle of faith, for whatever reason, and that the weak members must actively seek this pastoral care which Christ provides in His Church.

James first spoke of personal prayer. Now he speaks about pastoral care. But the common denominator is: we must all be enabled to continue the struggle of faith. Some may need more pastoral care than others; but we must all seek our strength in the sure promises of God.

CL. STAM

Were deacons office-bearers?

No female deacons

It is clear that the office of Acts 6 was instituted as an office of *men*, so there were no *female deacons*. I agree with Dr. Van Bruggen that according to the New Testament the sisters of the congregation cannot become office-bearers. I also agree with him that there are many tasks for the sisters. We can read in the New Testament that women played an important role, and so, also today women may help in all kinds of ways.

“No one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness, and poverty.”

But the thesis of Dr. Van Bruggen is now, overagainst all kinds of emancipation theories, that the deacons have no special office in the church either. He says, “The deacon, as we know him, is a kind of colleague-office-bearer of the elder and he has his own place. But the Biblical deacon is not an office-bearer, and he is only a help for the overseers.” His conclusion is that it would be better if the deacon left his place in the pew of deacons beside the pulpit and that he went to the pew beside his wife. So he could, together with the female deacons, execute help-services in the church. He also concludes that it would be better not to install the deacons, because they have no special office. The best would be that they were appointed by the elders (Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk, pp. 117ff).

I am of the opinion that Dr. Van Bruggen is wrong here. Of course the deacon has a general title, deacon, that means, servant. But I am convinced, just as I said before, that the deacon has a permanent, special, independent and proper office in

the church. I think there are more texts in the New Testament besides Acts 6, pointing to that.

Philippians

Dr. Van Bruggen says that the deacons are not mentioned very often, because they stand beyond the elders and overseers and they do not fulfill an independent service besides them. In this respect I want to point to the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians. Paul and

Chapter 3, the verses 1-13. There we read about the requirements of overseers, deacons and women. It may not escape our attention that many conditions are required of the elders, more than of the deacons, and also more than of the women. We may also note that the female helpers are here clearly discerned from the overseers and the deacons. And the female deacons are absolutely not the same as the deacons, who apparently have their own, special, official task in the congregation.

I am of the opinion that the development is very clear. In Acts 6 we have what we called the prototype of the deacons, but in the letter to the Philippians and in the first letter to Timothy, the offices are already more established and Paul then writes down the requirements for the office-bearers.

Clemens

We also want to point to a writing that does not belong to the Bible, but that gives us insight into the situation of the church right after the time of the apostles. It is the first letter of *Clemens*, on behalf of the Church at Rome, directed to the Church at Corinth, and presumably originating in the year 96 A.D., that is only a few years after the death of the Apostle John. We read in that letter: “So preaching everywhere in country and town, they [the apostles, K.D.], appointed their first-fruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be overseers and deacons unto them that should believe. And this they did in no new fashion; for indeed it had been written concerning overseers and deacons from very ancient times; for thus said the Scripture in a certain place: ‘I will appoint their overseers in righteousness and their deacons in faith.’” Clemens quotes here the prophecies of *Isaiah*, Chapter 60:17, and he tries to prove that the Old Testa-

Timothy directed their letter to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” But Dr. S. Greijdanus argued that we have to consider the words “overseer” and “deacon” in their official, technical sense. And he adds to that, “There is nothing that points to the idea that the deacons would be helpers of the overseers in the material, financial things.”

Timothy

In the second place, I would like to point to the first letter of Paul to Timothy,

OUR COVER

Long Beach
Pacific Rim National Park

Photo courtesy:
Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère du Tourisme

ment already delivered a basis for the New Testament offices. In this respect I think Clemens was not right. Isaiah 60:17 (second part) says: "I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteous." I am of the opinion that this prophecy points to the future luxury and riches of Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, it is very clear that at the end of the first century the Church at Rome had elders and deacons, and it is also clear that one was convinced at that time that these two offices were instituted by the apostles as independent offices.

Pastor Hermae

There is a second source, originating from the early part of the second century, called *Pastor Hermae*. Hermas was not an office-bearer, but a businessman in Rome. His book is written in the form of visions. He shows in these visions how an angel lays bare the sins and deviations of the church and summons to do penance and to convert. He writes that there are, besides the former apostles, overseers, teachers and deacons as office-bearers in the church. I quote now the passage of the vision concerning deacons who did not execute their office as they ought to have: "And from the ninth mountain, which was desert, which had reptiles and wild beasts in it which destroy mankind, they that believed are such as these; they that have the spots are deacons that exercised their office ill and plundered the livelihood of widows and orphans, and made gain for themselves from the ministrations which they had received to perform. If then they abide in the same evil desire, they are dead and there is no hope of life for them; but if they turn again and fulfill their ministrations in purity, it shall be possible for them to live."

There are also faithful office-bearers. "The stones that are squared and white, and that fit together in their joints, these are the apostles and overseers and teachers and deacons, who walked after the holiness of God, and exercised their office of overseers and teacher and deacon in purity and sanctity for the elect of God, some of them already fallen in sleep, and others still living."

This book, just as *Clemens* had great authority in the church of the second century. Of course they did not have the authority of the Bible books but the church regarded them very highly. It appears from the *Pastor Hermae* that the office of the deacons was to take care of the poor. It also appears that they distributed the goods rather independently.

Didache

The third and last witness of that time (also in the first part of the second century) is the so-called *Didache*, or *Teaching of*

the Apostles to the Gentiles. It was of course not written by the apostles themselves, but it is based on the doctrine of the apostles and it also had great authority. It originated in Palestine and Syria, and it delivers clear insight into the preaching and life of the old church.

Also in this book we read about the deacons as office-bearers. We read: "Appoint for yourselves therefore overseers and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and

stance at the Lord's Supper. To Bucer the deacons have a permanent office and within the consortium of servants of the church they have their own place, characterized by the original meaning of New Testament *Diakonia*. Calvin took that over and he said in his *Institutions* that the deacon's office was not only to take care of the poor, but also to look after the sick people.

I do not want to follow the whole history. I only want to stress that the reformers went back to the early church, just as Calvin always said that he aimed to do.

PSALM 86

1543/Geneva, 1551

1. Turn Thy ear, O LORD, and heed me;
 Answer me, I'm poor and need-y.
 I, who serve Thee constant-ly,
 Trust that Thou wilt res-cue me.
 Thou, LORD, art my God and Sav-iour;
 Show to me Thy grace and fa-vour.
 Cheer Thy ser-vant, glad-den me:
 I lift up my soul to Thee.

teachers. Therefore despise them not: for they are your honourable men along with the prophets and teachers." The *didache* says: "They perform the service." The word used for service is one which always refers to an *ecclesiastical service*. So also the *Didache* recognizes the deacons as office-bearers in the church.

Reformation

It would be possible to quote more writings from this time, but I think these quotations are sufficient. They show us very clearly that in the time just after the apostles the deacons were honoured as office-bearers, just as in the time of the apostles themselves, as Paul wrote in *Philippians* and *Timothy*.

I already said that *deformation* came very soon, and it would take a long time before *Reformation* came. It was Bucer who restored the office of the deacons, and he said they had special tasks, for in-

Disappearing?

We saw that after the Reformation the elder disappeared in some regions quite quickly. What about the deacon? Time and again attempts were made to change this office or make it disappear altogether. On the one side there was the effort to separate it from the local congregation, by saying we have to look for a *world-deaconry*, thereby charging the deacons with the task of looking after the needs of the whole world rather than leaving it to the initiative of all individual believers. On the other hand there is the opinion of Dr. Van Bruggen (and he is not the first one in history) that the deacon could better leave the chair of the office-bearers and take his place in the pew.

Overagainst both efforts I want to stress the *importance* of the office of the deacon in the church, but then connected with the local church and taking care of the needy, the poor, the sick, and the old people in

that local congregation. Let the deacons keep their own office! Let the deacons keep that beautiful office! Let the deacons maintain that office in the church and persevere in it! There are many tasks for everybody in the church, for men and women, for old and young people. But let us continue to preserve the offices in the church for the ministers, the elders and the deacons.

High office

It is very good that the "Forms for the ordination of elders and deacons" (especially the new form) shows that the offices, including the office of deacons must be held in high regard. After having quoted several texts from the Old and New Testament, we read in the form: "Also today the Lord calls us to show hospitality, generosity, and mercy, so that the weak and needy may share abundantly in the joy of God's people. No one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness, and poverty. For the sake of this service of love Christ has given deacons to His Church. When the apostles realized that they would have to give up preaching the Word of God if they had to devote their full attention to the daily support of the needy, they assigned this duty to seven brothers cho-

sen by the congregation. It is therefore the responsibility of the deacons to see to the good progress of this service of charity in the church."

We may conclude that it is an office, and even a high office, that the deacons received. I want to stress that offices in the church are *Gifts* of the exalted Christ Himself, just as we for instance can read in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And we may not neglect this element! No doubt it is good to say, what for instance Dr. C. Trimp says, that the office-bearers are to be discovered and recognized by the congregation in respect of their *charismata*. So we may say indeed that the special office in the church is not to be separated from the service of the believers.

But there is more. This is only one element. The other one is that office-bearers are gifts from heaven. The "highness" of the offices in the church is that there is a divine assignment, and connected with that assignment there is also a divine qualification. Each and every office-bearer will ask time and again, "Who is *sufficient* for these things?" (cf. II Corinthians 2:16). So also the Apostle Paul himself asked that question. But he knew the answer: "He who *calls* you is *faithful*, and He will do it" (I Thessolonians 5:24). Therefore, I

emphasize that he who is an office-bearer in the church does not receive only a *calling*, but also *capability* for it. I miss that often in publications concerning the offices in the church.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I come back to the question I posed at the beginning: "Are elders and deacons really office-bearers?" My answer is: Yes, without any doubt. Their offices are different from one another, but both offices are true offices. Both of them are also "high" offices, not to be separated from the congregation by whom they are elected, neither to be separated from the exalted Lord Jesus Christ who granted them as gifts from heaven. So let us honour the office-bearers in the church. Let us pray for them, in order that they may exercise their office joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to the congregation. In this way we may be sure that God will grant the office-bearers the gifts they need: wisdom, courage, discretion and mercy, so that each of them may fulfill his office as it is pleasing to our heavenly Father.

K. DEDDENS

The Doctrine of the Covenants and the Reformed Confessions₂

At the very heart of the Covenant schema is the representative status of Adam and the consequential ruin of all mankind in his fall. Whilst it is true that the two Adam perspective on human history as expounded in Romans 5:12-21 is not exclusive to federalism — the Lutheran Creeds also assert this — yet it may be affirmed that it does not gain the prominence in any other theological construction that it does in federalism. Many see the heart of classical federalism in the mutuality that is bound up with RESTIPULATIO. This is not altogether accurate. Whilst it is no part of this paper to engage in a polemical defense of any particular species of federalism, it may be justly claimed that its genius lay in its grasp of the overarching importance of the two-Adam schema for the religious history of mankind. Here is the inspirational idea that enabled it to effect a fine balance between the theological and the historical motifs in the understanding of revelation.

We ask then do the Confessions

speak of Adam as a PERSONA PUBLICA and of the consequences of this for the human race?

The Gallican Confession states, "What God had given to Adam was not for him alone but for all his posterity."¹³

The Westminster Larger Catechism's answer to Question 22 puts it expressly in Covenant terminology, "The covenant being made with Adam as a public person not only for himself but for his posterity."¹⁴

The Formula Consensus Helvetica says, "We cannot preserve heavenly truth and straightway give assent to those who deny that Adam represented his posterity and that by God's institution."¹⁵

The corollary of this, that Adam's fall was the fall of mankind, was just as explicitly affirmed — in fact even more so. The Canons of Dort state, "As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are obnoxious to eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish."¹⁶ The Second Helvetic Confession says, "Such a one as he be-

came by his fall, such are all his offspring, even subject to sin, death and sundry calamities."¹⁷ The Thirty Nine Articles says, "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians vainly talk) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam."¹⁸ The Scotch Confession referring to Adam's sin, says "By which transgression commonly called original sin, was the image of God utterly defaced in man, and he and his posterity of nature became enemies of God, slaves to Satan and servants to sin."¹⁹

Few religious faults could be more dangerous for believers than to treat this subject as if it was a matter for speculation only. First and foremost it is a matter for the profoundest Confession of sin. And if a subjective note may be interjected at this point it is not to be doubted that a profound appreciation, "that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," always leads to a clearer recog-

nition that the believer does not possess a vestige of righteousness out of Christ. This had led to the placing of the Law and Grace in the strongest antithesis to one another soteriologically. The point that we are making is that a due appreciation of the solidarity of the race in sin, from a covenantal perspective, leads to as profound a Confession of sin and to as sharp an antithesis between law and gospel soteriologically as you find even in Luther, despite the contrary caveats of the critics of federalism, that Covenant Theology is inspired by a spirit of legalism.

Thus whilst we indeed discourage dealing with this matter as a problem merely to satisfy our speculative faculty, which would be very harmful, yet we cannot, and should not, disallow the question, regarding the universal sinfulness of mankind, how are these things so? How does it come about that the sin of one results in all becoming sinful and sinners. One secretly admires the humility of the Gallican Confession when it says, "And we confess that it is not necessary to enquire how sin was conveyed from one man to another." Nevertheless it proceeds to state a pertinent fact of revelation when it goes on to say, "For what God had given to Adam was not for him alone, but for all his posterity and thus in his person we have been deprived of all good things and have fallen with him into a state of sin and misery."²⁰ The touch of Calvin is unmistakable here and we can claim that it is in perfect accord with federalism. Although the idea of legal representation is not explicitly stated the Belgic Confession's affirmation is in complete accord with this. "We believe that through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind."²¹

We will steer completely clear of the MARE MAGNUM (great sea, J.G.) of the nature of imputation whether it is Mediate or Immediate but since the question, "In what way did the fall of Adam involve the fall of all mankind?" is so germane to Covenant Theology we must briefly consider it a little further. Every believer who has thought seriously on the Biblical teaching on the sin of Adam involving all mankind — involving each individual of mankind — must have wrestled in his soul with the PECCATUM ALIENUM (sin of someone else, J.G.) complex. We believe that only the Holy Spirit; of whom it is written "When He shall come He shall convince the world of sin"; by an effectual operation in our hearts can truly deliver us from this complex. Yet we may also expect that the theological answer to the problem should help us.

There are really only two possible replies to the question of how are we involved? How is it *my* sin? One is that the inclusion of the race in the first sin of the

protoplasts is the result of some kind of realist view of human nature. Despite the illustrious names associated with some form or other of this doctrine our judgment is that every form of realism creates more theological problems than it solves, if indeed it solves any at all. At the same time it is also difficult to see how so abstract a concept as realism can come home to the conscience of the sinner as a means

not because it unravels the mystery, but because the disturbed conscience is directed away from a questionable philosophical postulate to a divine ordination and so my Confession of original sin is an activity of faith rather than a rational conclusion. We hasten to add that the Confessions in the main content themselves with a form of words that are not a definition nor meant to be. They do not really es-

“ . . . all confess that all mankind sinned in Adam. And this doubtless is the crux of the matter.”

of conviction of and relief from the protest original sin that all of us are native to. The second possibility is that the solidarity of the race in sin, though related to the fact that God "has made of one blood all nations of men," nevertheless its true ground is the fact that God, who is without iniquity, has constituted the link between Adam and all mankind in such a way that his is our (my) sin and He had done this by way of the federal oneness that obtained between Adam and his natural posterity, over and above the genetic bond. As the protoplast he is qualified to be the first Adam, this is the ground of his federal Headship and as our federal head his sin is our sin. This is more satisfactory,

establish either of the views over against the other. The usual formula is "They being the root of all mankind." Which is but an assertion of the fact, in other terms, that Adam and Eve were the Protoplasts and as such the source of mankind's ruin. But the Westminster Standards do point to the Covenantal Oneness as the explanation. As the Shorter Catechism states it, "The Covenant being made with Adam not only for himself but for his posterity all mankind descending from him by ordinary generations sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression." But all confess that all mankind sinned in Adam. And this doubtless is the crux of the matter. We are not by any means saying that those who adopt a realist position are unfaithful to the Confessions for the Confessions do not really assert exclusively either one position or the other. They only assert the fact. However interesting it might be to pursue a bit further other affirmations of the Confessions and the way these points relate their relationships to the constituent elements of the Covenant of Works system it is unnecessary for our present purposes to add more.

A brief evaluation of what we have so far surveyed is in order by way of concluding this section. What might be called an explicit assertion of the Covenant of Works is confined to the Irish Articles, the Westminster Standards and the Formula Consensus Helvetica. The Irish Articles assert the doctrine of the Covenant of Works but do not develop it to any great extent, though the influence of the Covenant scheme is apparent in many of its articles particularly its teaching on the Law. The Westminster Standards unquestionably affirm a Covenant of Works in the Confessions and the two Catechisms. However, it has to be said that many of the refinements of federal theologians are studiously avoided. The Formula Consensus Helvetica not only asserts a Covenant of Works but engages in a polemical de-

CHURCH NEWS

ELIGIBLE FOR CALL: Owing to medical and family reasons the Consistory of the Church at Hamilton, Ontario has regretfully decided upon request to release the Rev. D.G.J. Agema from his calling as Missionary for Missionwork in Brazil.

The Consistory of the Church at Hamilton, Ontario makes it known to the churches that the Rev. D.G.J. Agema is thus now open for calls from sister churches.

* * *

CALLED to Armadale, W. Australia:

REV. W. HUIZINGA
of Hamilton, ON

* * *

NEW ADDRESS:

REV. W.W.J. VANOENE
13148 66A Ave.
Surrey, BC V3W 6S2

fence of the views of one group of federal theologians as against the views of another group. This is particularly the case in respect of the debate over the nature of imputation. The point being made is that the doctrine of the Covenant of Works is not a precisely similar formulation even in the Confessions that affirm it. The doctrine is only found in any explicit form in the Creeds of the 17th century and though the Synod of Dort is an early 17th century symbol it does not affirm the Covenant of Works. None of the sixteenth century Creeds affirm the Covenant of Works at all.

This raises very interesting questions. Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus both embraced a Covenant of Works or as Ursinus referred to call it a Covenant of Creation. Olevianus indeed is generally accorded the distinction of being the formulator of the Covenant of Works doctrine, not indeed as a wholly *de novo* (new, J.G.) theological concept. The point in referring to that here is that the question must be asked why it was not affirmed in the Heidelberg Catechism? Various answers could be proposed. One that Olevianus's fuller development of the doctrine was later by some years than the Catechism. At least the publishing of it was. It could also be that they may have taken the position that such a dogma did not belong to Catechetics. The pastoral character of the Catechism is widely recognized and acclaimed. The Gallican Confession, basically the work of Calvin, certainly predates any published formulation of the Covenant of Works as do also the Scotch Confession, the Thirty Nine Articles and the Belgic Confession. The Second Helvetic Confession, largely the work of Bullinger, also belongs to the seventh decade of 16th century — the great decade of Creed Formulation. Bullinger as is well-known developed a very full doctrine of the Covenant but it was strictly in respect of Redemptive revelation. There is no evidence that he organized pre-redemptive revelation on a Covenant basis. The absence from the Articles of Dort is easily understood because the Five Articles are the response of the Synod to the Five Armenian Articles of 1610.

What conclusions are we to draw from this survey and evaluation? The doctrine cannot claim the authority of the early Creeds of the Reformation. So far as Creedal affirmation is concerned it is very much a seventeenth century doctrine. Does this mean then that the 17th century creeds are not of the same family as the early Reformed Creeds in their basic assertions respecting the Edenic administration. I may refer here to an appraisal of the Old Scotch Confession of 1560 made by the late Professor A.F. Mitchell in his Baird Lecture of 1899 in which he also makes

a brief comparison of the Old Symbol with the Westminster Confession of Faith. He wrote, "I venture to think that no one who, with a good conscience and honest intent, could sign that Confession and answer in the affirmative the questions regarding election put to candidates for the ministry at their ordination, need hesitate to put his name to that which in 1647 was re-

tive nature of the Edenic administration; that the blessing of Secure Life and Fellowship was one to be enjoyed through obedience by Adam; that also we have in them all something of the representative status of the protoplasts stated; solidarity of the race in sin and recognition of the two Adam arrangement as overarching the religious history of mankind, affirmed



Caspar Olevianus

ceived as "in nothing contrary" to the former and held its place alongside of it even after the reign of Charles II, and under the episcopal regime."²² This judgment of a prudent and erudite historian of Church history; and of Reformed symbology; is pertinent to the question whether the difference in age and structure means that we have two disparate traditions of Reformed Symbols.

In all the constituent elements of the Covenant of Works there is no substantial difference between the Creeds of the two eras with perhaps the exception of the Formula Consensus Helvetica. Its spirit and tone is so largely polemical in the manner in which its affirmations are articulated that an observable difference has to be conceded here, but the Canons of Dort have something of that polemical nature too. But this polemical note is hardly more pronounced in any 17th century documents than the uncompromising language which we find in the earlier Creeds on the subjects of the Church and the Sacraments. Considering all these factors and bearing in remembrance that all the Creeds are agreed on the Proba-

there is complete agreement on the substance of pre-redemptive revelation. Yet the organizing of this data in accordance with Covenantal Categories by the 17th century Confessions is not unimportant, as we shall see when we consider the Covenant of Grace. Some might complain that the cutting edge of Federalism is too fine for a Creedal symbol in respect of pre-redemptive revelation and thus should be excluded from it. But then we do well to remember the OMOOUSIOS TO PATRI ([the Son is] of the same nature as the Father, J.G.) of Nicea.

— To be continued
JOHN N. MACLEOD

¹³ The Gallican Confession Article X

¹⁴ The Westminster Larger Catechism. Question 14

¹⁵ The Formula Consensus Helvetica. Chapter XII

¹⁶ The Canons of Dort Article 1

¹⁷ The Second Helvetic Confession. Chapter VIII

¹⁸ The Thirty Nine Articles

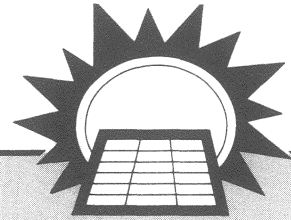
¹⁹ The Scotch Confession

²⁰ The Gallican Confession Article X

²¹ The Belgic Confession

²² A.F. Mitchell, The Scottish Reformation (The Baird Lecture 1899)

RAY OF SUNSHINE



Dear brothers and sisters,

The Lord lives and all who believe in Him, shall live with Him! Illness, disease, handicaps and death are not the ultimate realities. Christ Jesus is coming and with Him, a new world, where death will be no more!

That is the glad tidings of Easter! Christ rose from the dead and His resurrection is a guarantee of our "blessed resurrection." We may look forward to the day of His coming; that is also the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body. (Philippians 3:21)

That means first of all that we will be totally freed from the power of sin. But then also the consequences of sin, as illness, sorrow and death will be done away with for ever. At that glorious day the prophesy of Isaiah 35:5,6 will be fulfilled: "The eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart and the tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy." Sometimes we can not truly comfort each other and wipe away the tears, but the LORD can and will. He will wipe away the tears from all faces. (Isaiah 25:8).

Believing these promises of our God, we may be sometimes perplexed, but we are not driven to despair; we may be struck down, but we are not destroyed, for we know that our Redeemer lives, and we will live with Him!

That does not change the condition of our life here and now; we may have to serve the LORD being ill or handicapped till the very end of our life here on earth, but then we know that all this does prepare us for an everlasting weight of glory. We are not always that strong in faith but we are sure that the LORD who began a good work in us, will also bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. How do I know? The Bible tells me so; in Philippians 1:6! He is our Refuge and our Strength!

Our birthday calendar:

April 2

DEREK KOK

377 Dominion Street
Strathroy, ON N7G 3G9

Derek loves going to the Summer Camps organized by the Canadian Reformed Society for the Handicapped. He will be sixteen years old. Happy Birthday, Derek!

April 19

MARINUS FOEKENS

Oxford 2

South Western Regional Centre
Cedar Springs, ON

Marinus hopes to celebrate his 34th Birthday. He loves children, animals and colourful cards. I am sure he likes to receive lots of mail on his birthday.

April 23

ARLENE DEWIT

Barnston Island

Surrey, BC V3T 4W2

Arlene is nearly blind. But in spite of her handicap she is an active girl. I hope you have a happy 25th Birthday, Arlene!

According to the birthday calendar as it stands today, there is only one person to be remembered in May. I therefore include him in this list.

May 21

MR. HERMAN WEMEKAMP

131 Brenda Blvd.

Orangeville, ON L9W 3L5

Herman suffers from multiple sclerosis and has for many years already been confined to wheelchair and bed. He hopes to celebrate his 48th birthday. Please, send him a card or letter to show that you remember him.

I am waiting for the dawning
Of the bright and blessed day;
When the darksome night of sorrow
Shall have vanished far away;
When for ever with the Saviour,
Far beyond this vale of tears,
I shall sing the song of worship
Through the everlasting years.

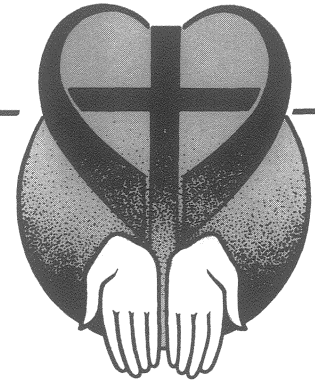
Anonymous

Greetings to you all and if you have any requests send them to:

MRS. J. MULDER

1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



For many people in the developing world, the dawning of 1986 is just another mark in the passage of time away from their homeland. These are the refugees: Ethiopians, Afghans, Cambodians. . . men, women, and children with no place to call their own. Their only crime has been a desire to protect their homelands, to live in freedom from oppression, and now they must exist in large camps, cut off from homes, livelihoods, and often, family.

We are privileged to help a few of these unfortunates by contributing financially to ZOA, an organization which seeks to serve refugees in His Name by providing a total health care program in Thailand's Ban Vinai Refugee Camp. A recent report by ZOA's Regional Director for Asia, Dr. Diny VanBruggen, reiterates some of the goals of the camp program. She writes: "The goal of Ban Vinai Health Care Program is to improve the health situation for the 45,000 hill-tribes people from Laos living in Ban Vinai camp. We try to reach this goal by implementing programs in curative and preventative health care according to both western and traditional health care systems and in medical teaching and training programs.

The general aims of the programs are:

- 1) to make the people more independent of outside help. This is done



The entrance to the ZOA office in Bangkok. From l-r Mr. Henk Huberts, President, Dr. Diny Van Bruggen, Regional Director for Asia, and Mr. Arie Locke, Board Member

by training and providing an appropriate program.

- 2) to encourage compatible forms of traditional medicine and integrate them into the program.

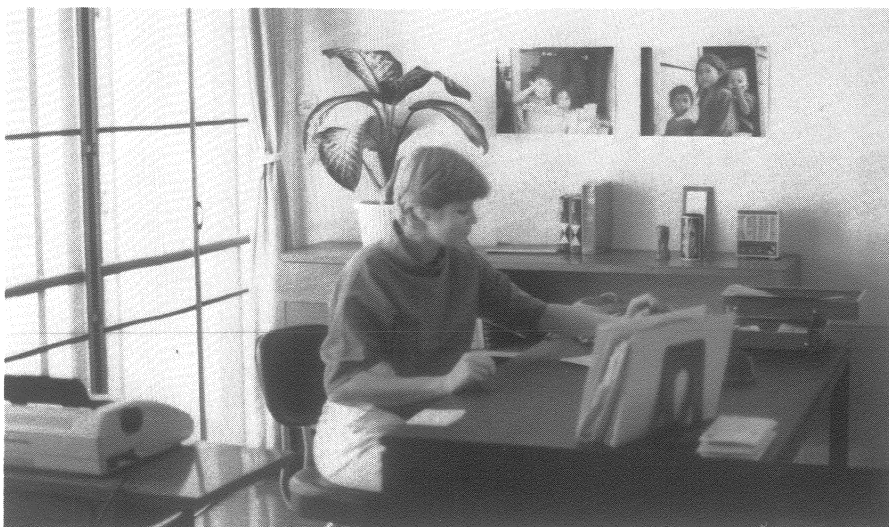
- 3) to stress preventative health care measures."

ZOA's efforts apparently do not go unrecognized. An evaluation team from UNHCR which visited the refugee camps in southeast Asia during June, remarked in their official report that "the approach of ZOA (who is linking with traditional birth attendants, decentralizing health services, and incorporating herbalists in their community centres) is a marked improvement over the past." The UNHCR team's report, very positive in most areas, was, however, somewhat critical of ZOA's avoidance of contacts with Shamans. That is indicative of the UNHCR's lack of Christian philosophy. Dr. VanBruggen clearly explains regarding this, "We do not avoid contacts with Shamans; we are very interested in what and how they are doing. In the spiritual areas, however, we cannot cooperate nor follow them. Our conviction, based on the Scriptures, the Word of God, simply is different. Regarding the results of their battles in the spiritual world, we can only be negative from a medical point of view. Too many people have lost their lives by being withheld from curative treatment in the hospital, by attending Shaman practices."

In order to give you a better picture of ZOA's ongoing work at the camp, we pass on some statistics supplied by Dr. VanBruggen. "Medics saw more than 5000 patients in the Community Health Centers this month (October). Of these, more than 4950 were diagnosed in nine categories of diseases: upper respiratory infections, otitis media, bronchitis, pneumonia, conjunctivitis, gastroenteritis, scabies, parasites, and gastritis.

This shows nicely why it is feasible to train refugees as medics. There is no need for an extensive training course which lasts for many years. If students are taught how to diagnose and treat these common illnesses and if they get to know when they are not capable of making a diagnosis or giving a treatment (in which case a doctor should see the patient), then much of the curative health care can be done by the refugees themselves.

This is how it is done at Ban Vinai at this moment. In October about 125 patients were referred by medics to the med-



Hilda Beijes working in the office

ics in the hospital where a doctor can also be consulted.

Of the 5000 patients seen by the medics, 61% were children under five years, whereas children under five count 'only' for 22% of the total Ban Vinai population. These figures explain why there is so much emphasis in our program on health care for children under five. Another 'risk group' is pregnant women. They also get much attention during the pregnancy and after delivery. This is reflected in the structure of the Community Health Centres where we have pre- and post-natal clinics."

Another recent report added that a start has been made to screen all children under five-years-old for nutritional status. By the end of November, more than 5000 had been checked. Of these, 10% were classified as malnourished and 2% as severely malnourished. All of these children were referred to the Supplementary Feeding Program.

Other activities over the past months include participation in an Opium Fair in which several Volags (volunteer agencies) and refugees participated. ZOA personnel were responsible for holding a puppet show on opium dangers as well as an exhibition re: an opium detoxification program which they are involved in.

Opium use remains a problem for many refugees who do not see a way out. The years of confinement to Ban Vinai, in spite of reasonably good conditions, are discouraging, especially when one has no immediate prospect of resettlement anywhere. The Thai government has been compassionate, but they draw the line at allowing refugees to find employment of any sort or live outside the camp. For many, opium provides a welcome temporary source of escape from the dismal prospect of being without a homeland.

We pray for continued strength and enthusiasm for all those who seek to help these people, also those who hold Bible studies and church services in the camp — which small numbers do attend, finding their hope and salvation in Christ alone. And we share with Dr. VanBruggen her sentiments as she writes, "We wish you all a happy 1986, a blessed New Year. For the Hmong refugees we hope and pray that some drastic things might happen to end their long period in limbo."

Volunteer position available

From Mr. Henk Huberts, Executive Director for ZOA, we received a letter expressing appreciation for our financial involvement in the work at Ban Vinai. He also informed us of another possibility for involvement: a volunteer position that will soon be open. We pass on the information in case anyone sees him/herself in the brief "profile" presented.



View of Ban Vinai camp showing some of the homes. Women in the doorways are doing handicrafts



A refugee boy with his chickens



Soi Procha Utit — Hilda lives on this street

As you may know, Hilda Beijes from Smithville, has been working for the past few years in the Bangkok office as Secretary/Administrator, assisting Dr. VanBruggen with correspondence, etc. and also undertaking responsibility for various projects. When she returns to Canada in June of this year, a replacement will be required.

ZOA has decided to reorganize the staff situation in Bangkok, appointing an Assistant Director to do part of the work now handled by Hilda as well as some work now done by Dr. VanBruggen. However, they will still need a *Volunteer* to take over the rest of Hilda's work, especially the Dutch/English correspondence. This person would need good English skills and also be able to understand and type in Dutch. An appreciated minimum contract period is two years. No salary as such is paid, but all personal expenses, room and board would be taken care of.

Although it seems that a recruit from Holland might best fit this job description, we decided to advertise the opening on the chance that one of our readers might be qualified and see God's leading in this direction. Anyone interested or wishing more information on this rewarding work, should write to us at CRWRF immediately.

Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

CRWRF
P.O. Box 797
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y7

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



Classis Ontario South, March 5, 1986

1. *Opening:* Elder G. Drennan, on behalf of the convening Church at Blue Bell opens classis. He requests the delegates to sing Psalm 95:1,2,3; reads Psalm 95 and leads in opening prayer. He welcomes all the delegates and visitors, in particular the two visitors from Sackville, NS.

2. *Credentials:* The credentials are examined and all the churches are found to be duly represented. The Church at Blue Bell was able to send only one delegate. Two of the churches have instructions.

3. *Constitution of classis:* Classis is constituted as follows: chairman, Rev. R. Aasman; clerk, Rev. P. Kingma; vice-chairman, Rev. C. Bosch. Rev. Aasman takes the chair and speaks an additional word of welcome. He makes mention of the visitors from Sackville. Classis has no objection to give them the opportunity to address classis. The chairman expresses sympathy to Brother Nobel whose father is gravely ill. He notes with thankfulness the recent golden jubilee of Rev. and Mrs. VanDooren and Rev. VanDooren's fifty years in the ministry of the Word. The brothers delegates are introduced.

4. *Adoption of Agenda:* After some changes and additions the agenda is adopted.

5. *Question period ad. Article 44 C.O.* The Church at Attercliffe requests and receives advice in a disciplinary matter in closed session. The Church at Blue Bell asks for advice in the calling of a minister. Classis advises Blue Bell to consult her counsellor in this matter.

6. *Instructions:* Hamilton has an instruction re. the report of the comm. concerning Tri-County Reformed Church. Classis decides to deal with this instruction under #8.c of its agenda. London asks for the reason classis was moved up from March 12 to March 5. Classis notes the change was necessitated in order to accommodate the visitors from Sackville.

7. Reports:

a. Classis adopts an additional article to the *Regulations of Classis Ontario South*. This article concerns *A Church to Administer the Fund for Needy Churches*.

b. Report; *Comm re. Guidelines for Church Visitation*. This report is referred back to the churches for further study.

c. *Report of Comm. re. Tri-County Reformed Church*. This report is presented.

In connection with it there is the instruction of the Church at Hamilton which is read. A letter of Tri-County is read as well.

Hamilton urges classis to provide Tri-County with the necessary assistance in coming to unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Tri-County informs classis of the steps she has taken in adopting the Reformed standards.

The report is extensively discussed. Classis breaks for a hearty lunch served by the sisters of London. After lunch we sing Psalm 147:1 and roll call is held. All members are present.

The discussion is continued. Classis breaks for supper which is enjoyed by all. After supper we sing Psalm 147:4 and roll call is held. All are present.

After various proposals are presented and discussed classis decides to receive the comm. report with thanks. Classis considers that at present there is no request from Tri-County for affiliation with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Classis expresses thankfulness that Tri-County continues to desire to come to affiliation.

Classis decides:

1. To file the report of the comm. so that it is available for use by a subsequent classis if and when a request for affiliation from Tri-County Reformed Church is forthcoming.

2. To provide the Tri-County Reformed Church with all necessary assistance in coming to a full understanding of the Three Forms of Unity and the Reformed Church Order.

3. To recommend to Synod 1986 to seriously take into consideration this report and its conclusions when judging the case of Tri-County Reformed Church and in synod's discussion of our relationship to the OPC. In connection with this decision a covering letter to synod is approved.

d. *Report of Visit to Covenant Orthodox Reformed Church at Sackville, NS.*

This report is tabled and read. The visitors from Sackville, Mr. H. Moes and F. Stefani are given the floor and address classis. They express appreciation for the assistance given to Covenant Orthodox Reformed Church and express the wish that we may grow closer together in the Lord Jesus Christ. The delegates take the opportunity to ask some questions.

After some discussion classis decides to ask the Church at Ottawa and Classis Ontario North to continue the contacts with the Covenant Orthodox Church.

A letter to Classis Ontario North (March 6, 1986) is approved.

Psalms 147:6 is sung and the chairman expresses a word of appreciation to the visitors from Sackville. An opportunity to extend best wishes is given. The visitors from Sackville as well as the delegates from Hamilton leave the meeting.

e. *Report Committee re. a draft to be submitted to General Synod.* Classis approves a submission to General Synod requesting it to address the General Assembly of the OPC with the concern of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the region Ontario South concerning the doctrinal and church political issues which compelled the Reformation Church at Blue Bell to withdraw from the OPC.

8. Correspondence:

Classis reads a letter from the Comm. for Contact with the OPC. The committee passes on some information received from the Philadelphia Presbytery of the OPC relating to the Blue Bell matter. The letter is received for information to classis.

9. Appointments

a. Convening church of Classis June 11, 1986 will be the Church at Chatham. The moderamen will be: chairman, Rev. G. Wieske; clerk, Rev. R. Aasman; vice-chairman, Rev. P. Kingma.

b. The Church at Ancaster is appointed as church for the administration of the Fund for Needy Churches.

c. The Church at Grand Rapids is appointed as church to help Tri-County come to a fuller understanding of the Three forms of Unity and the Church Order.

10. Personal Question period.

A number of the delegates make use of this question period.

11. Censure ad. Article 44 C.O.

It is noted with thankfulness that censure was not needed.

12. The Acts are adopted and the Press Release is approved.

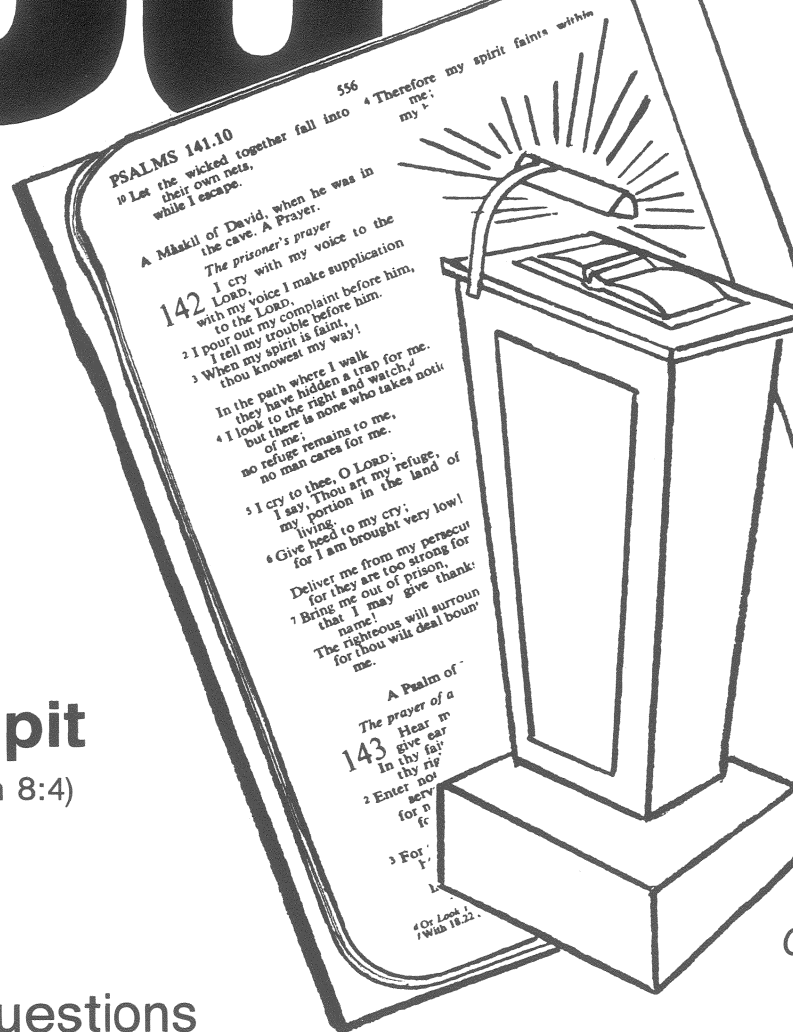
13. The chairman expresses a word of appreciation to the ladies of the London Church who have taken care of the meals and refreshments. He thanks the delegates for their cooperation during this busy and important meeting.

We sing Hymn 63 and the chairman closes the meeting with prayer and thanksgiving upon which this classis is closed.

C. BOSCH
vice-chairman

ABC BIBLE COLLECTION - by Mrs. John Roza

U



U-pulpit
(Nehemiah 8:4)

Colour me!

Quiz Questions

1. The Passover was also known as the Feast of _____ bread (Luke 22)
2. How was Mordecai related to Queen Esther? _____ (Esther 2)
3. In the Old Testament God commands the people not to eat certain kinds of animals and birds. These animals were said to be _____ (Deuteronomy 14)

Answers for the letter "T"

1. Two
2. Ten
3. Ten
4. Temple
5. Titus



Dear Busy Beavers,

It's the first Easter morning
 The disciples were scared and sad.
 The disciples had lost hope.
 They didn't know what to think!
 But the Lord Jesus is the Lord of life.
 The grave could never hold Him!
 He was very busy that first Easter gathering
 His flock — the women, Mary, Peter, the
 two travellers, and finally all the disciples together.
 The risen Lord, the Lord of life brings real joy to His
 people.
 He is not dead. He is risen!
 He has power to save from sin and death!
 No wonder the disciples could no longer be sad.
 That first Easter morning was very long ago.
 But we, too, may share the very same joy of the
 disciples.
 The Lord Jesus is our risen Lord.
 He lives and rules on high.
 Let's remember that every day!



Border by Busy Beaver, Gwenda Penninga

EASTER QUIZ WHO AM I?

Joseph's garden, the place of the Lord's grave was a very busy place that Easter morning! Can you name all the people who were there?

1. I was the first disciple to go into the Lord's empty grave. _____
2. We were planning to finish burying the Lord Jesus properly. _____
3. We fled in terror from that garden! _____
4. Right beside His grave I met the risen Lord. _____
5. I walked into that grave. The grave clothes were there neatly folded. Then I began to believe. _____
6. The great stone rolled from the grave was like a throne for me! _____
7. I came back to the grave to show one of the women that I had risen from the dead. _____



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Lisa DeHaas*. We are happy to have you join us. Thank you for your picture! And I liked your CareBear picture, too, and the psalm you printed out so neatly! You're a real Busy Beaver already, Lisa.

Sounds as if you had lots of winter fun, *Alice Van Wou-denbergh*! Has your weather warmed up now? Thanks for the riddles, Alice. Write again soon.

Hello, *Jennifer Siebenga*. Were you ever lucky you were at your friend's house on your day off school! Sounds like you had lots of fun. Thanks for the riddles, Jennifer.

How did you like skating at recess time, *Peter John Sikkema*? I think the birds were thankful for your feeder during the cold, snowy weather. No I won't ask any questions about IT, Peter John. But I'm sure curious to hear more about IT!

Did you get to go to see your cousin's farm, *Nicole De Haas*? And how did you enjoy the skating? When you get too busy to be a Busy Beaver, Nicole, just write and tell me, all right? Bye for now.

Thanks for the puzzle, *Sheila Wierenga*. I hope you had fun skiing, and didn't have any accidents. Have you heard from your pen pal again? Keep up the good work Sheila!

Hello, *Colin Van Bodegom*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thank you for the puzzle, Colin, but BR-R-R. It's a little cold for spring, isn't it? We'll put it on ice for next winter!

You've been very busy, I see, *Gwenda Penninga*! Thank you for the jokes and the puzzle. I'm sure the Busy Beavers will enjoy them. And I like your pretty border, Gwenda!

Thank you for a very neat letter, *Alex Sikkema*. I'm always glad to hear from you. Thanks for sharing, Alex. Keep up the good work!

Quiz Time!

FRUIT PICTURES

by Busy Beaver *Marjorie Barendregt*

