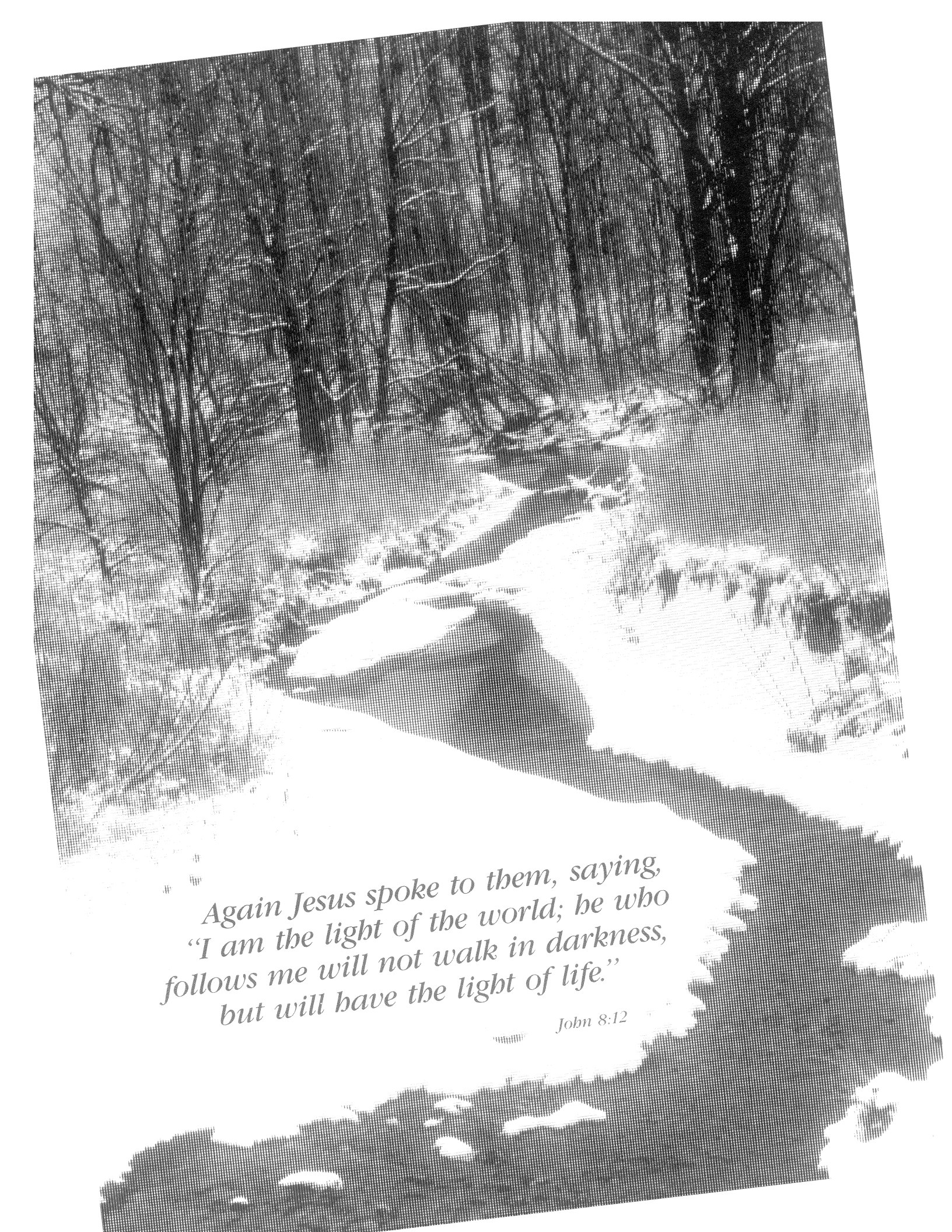


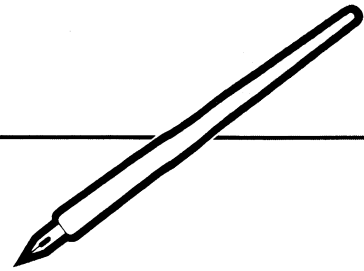
*In Him was life, and the  
life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*John 1:4,5*



*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying,  
"I am the light of the world; he who  
follows me will not walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life."*

*John 8:12*



## *Anno Domini 1986*

The reader understands that the two words in the title are Latin. They mean: in the year of our Lord. They might be more familiar as A.D. in front of a certain year, as A.D. 30. It is a good Christian way of indicating the time in which something happened. Also the time before our Lord fulfilled His calling on earth as a humble servant is indicated from the point of the birth of Christ. We speak of 30 B.C. and 586 B.C. and mean to say with these initials *Before Christ's* birth. (It is irrelevant for now that our Lord was not born exactly in the year 1, but probably around the year 6 B.C.) This manner of determining the time is Christ-centered and honours Him who first worked towards His coming into the flesh, and now, being exalted and having received all power in heaven and on earth, rules all things toward His return as Saviour and Judge.

Our modern world, also the scientific and academic world, lives and works increasingly Christ-lessly and God-lessly. In general, it not only rejects faith in Christ Jesus as the one and only Redeemer, but also refuses to reckon with the birth of Christ as the central point in the counting of the years of this world's history. It has changed the initials from B.C. to B.C.E., and from A.D. to C.E.

Now you might think that 30 B.C.E. means the year 30 Before the Christian Era, and that 354 C.E. means the year 354 of the Christian Era. However, if that is what you think, you are mistaken. C.E. stands for *Common Era*, and B.C.E., consequently, means *Before the Common Era*. These initials are another sign of the secularization of life and show a further accommodation to the unbelieving world. With *unbelieving* we mean not believing in the triune God as the only true God; not trusting in Him, not living with and for Him in humble obedience to His Word. Therefore, was 1986 really a year of our Lord, an *Annus Domini*?

We can add some more facts. Not only the academic, but also the political world does not reckon with Christ as King. We read about the man with the nice smile, but with the iron teeth: Gorbachev. Those iron teeth are felt by the dissidents in Russia, and especially by our fellow Christians who publicly confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Oppression and persecution has become much more severe since Gorbachev became leader in the Soviet Union.

The continued, increasing oppression of those who confess to believe in Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour is found all over the world. Governments in Cuba and Nicaragua, Ethiopia and Egypt, Iran and India, do not allow true freedom for the Christian faith. And these are only examples. There is much more persecution of fellow believers in this world than we are aware of. Was 1986 truly another *Annus Domini*?

Yes, it was. Although we might be inclined to say that

we do not see much of it, yet we believe it. For "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . By faith we understand that the world was created by the Word of God. . . ." (Hebrews 11:1,3). By that faith we believe that Christ is seated at the Father's right hand and has all authority in heaven and on earth. By that faith we know that He rules all things and works toward His coming as Judge to condemn all those who showed themselves to be His enemies, and to save all those who were His humble and faithful subjects in the ongoing spiritual battle.

He rules, and persecution in one place and apostasy in another have their own place and purpose in that rule. Also the year 1986 has brought us another 365 days closer to the return of the Son of God on the clouds of heaven.

Now the question that is to be asked is: Have we lived, and do we live, in that faith and hope that Christ is coming? Our Lord confronts also us, people of 1986, with the question, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find the faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

It is remarkable that the Greek text has the definite article before the word faith. Christ spoke of "the faith." It means true faith. And true faith is two things: being a hearer and a doer of the Word of the Lord, as James points out so clearly in his letter (James 1:22-2:26).

Yes, there is much that we can call negative from the point of view of this question about finding *the* faith. But there is also the positive side. There is a steadfastness in the faith under oppression and persecution. There is a holding on to the faith in a secularized and apostasizing world.

This struggle is present also in our own churches. On the one hand, the question can be asked: Are we slowly losing the battle? Are we slowly giving in to a worldly spirit? If we compare our lifestyle of today with that of some twenty years ago, quite a number of things have changed.

Twenty years ago we were quite unanimous in our negative attitude towards television, towards going to the movies in the theatre, towards drama and plays in general. Is television in itself wrong? Is a movie? Is drama? I am fully aware that the Apostle Paul writes to Titus that "To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; (because) their very minds and consciences are corrupted" (Titus 1:15). A pure use of the television is certainly possible, perhaps also of drama, although I am not ready to say that a "good" movie is a valid excuse for going to the theatre. But that is a different matter, which I cannot work out now. But is there not increasing world conformity regarding entertainment also in our circles? What is the balance of 1986 for us in this respect?

Some twenty to twenty-five years ago our whole lifestyle

was different from what it is now. We are more affluent. We can permit ourselves more today than at that time. And we do allow ourselves more. We spend much more money on ourselves and for our pleasures, in general.

But is the commitment to our Reformed principles still the same? Is our dedication to the Lord and His cause, His service, still the same? Have we grown positively in that commitment and dedication? Or is there a slackening? What came first in 1986: our own person or the spiritual well-being and faithfulness of the church, the congregation of Christ in which we each have our own responsible position?

Yes, I know, in many ways there was that struggle of commitment and dedication. There was that struggle to remain faithful, in Christian family life, in Reformed school education, in mission work abroad and at home, in the struggle to remain faithful as churches.

Also in 1987 that same struggle will continue. The struggle of faith is not an easy one. The question is and remains: Do we keep struggling as hearers and doers of the Word, as people who live in *the faith*?

The Lord said to His disciples: "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming . . . you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:42,44).

Let us wish each other the grace of our God and help each other to go on in this struggle of the faith. Understood in this light, I wish all the readers of *Clarion* a blessed new *Annu Domini*, A.D. 1987.

J. GEERTSEN



## *The King has come!*

*"We have seen His star in the East"*

The coming of the promised Messiah was a tremendous event! God had come in human form. The One who would redeem His people from all their sins and triumph over the evil one had arrived. The birth of the King of kings had been announced accordingly. The angelic hosts had been sent to the startled shepherds outside Bethlehem with the glad tidings. Israel was informed. However, also those outside the covenant nation had to know!

### **The heavens are telling . . .**

To announce Christ's arrival to the outside world, God used a star. This announcement was directed to wise men in the East who apparently were astrologers, for they kept a very close eye on the night skies. According to their astrological wisdom, the appearance of this particular star indicated to them that a great king had been born and that He was the King of the Jews, a divine King whom they should go and worship. The question arises how this King could have been included in the astrological data and thinking of these wise men. The Bible is silent on this point. However, if these wise men came from

Babylon (as is quite possible) then their knowledge of the Messianic King and their interest in Him may have stemmed from the time of Daniel, who had been influential in the circles of the Babylonian wise men and who had spoken of the Messiah (cf. Daniel 5:11ff.; 7:13ff.). They could also have been familiar with the prophecy of the Mesopotamian diviner Balaam, who had prophesied of the Messiah in terms of a star coming forth from Jacob (Num. 24:17). Precisely how they received their knowledge of the Messiah is not known. But, it is clear that in all their astrological figuring, God was at work and He called these wise men from Babylon. He called them by means of the language they could understand, the language of the stars. Also in this very special way, the heavens were telling the glory of God (Ps. 19:1) and the stars served as signs (Gen. 1:14). Those outside Israel had to know of the Messianic King and worship Him.

### **A troubled Zion**

The wise men journeyed to Jerusalem. That was the capital. Would one not

expect this to be the birthplace of the newborn Monarch? It is soon clear, however, that they would need more than God's speaking to them through the star. They would also need the revelation found in the written Word of God, for no one in the city knew of this royal birth! A Herod, worried about his throne, quickly organized a meeting of all the chief priests and scribes and asked where the Christ was to be born. The answer came promptly; one would almost say, automatically. "And thou, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel." Thus they quoted Micah 5:2. They knew the Scriptures! But did they really?

It is remarkable that they did not rejoice with the wise men. They did not even bother to go down to Bethlehem with them. Why? Why were they so troubled? Their King had come! Apart from the infamous cruelty of Herod to all would-be pretenders to his throne, why does the mention of the Christ bring trouble and fear to the covenant nation? Apparently they no longer really looked forward to His coming. They felt no real interest in His promises and no true longing for His appearing. The Word and its Messianic hope had lost their grip on them. They were more or less complacent in their self-importance as people of God and they had lost sight of the stirring agenda of God's mighty works. They had accommodated themselves to the situation as it was. But now, if the Christ had really come, everything would change. They were not ready for that. It did not fit their view of things. They therefore did not believe the glad tidings of the wise men. They did not understand the times nor the sign that God had set in the heavens.

The result was that those Eastern sages who believed the Word went to Bethlehem alone. Those who prided themselves in knowing the Word so well stayed behind.

### Guided by the Word

They found Him! They had received the clear direction of the Word. Now they could fully understand the sign of the star which they had seen in their homeland. On their way to Bethlehem, the star reappeared and actually guided them to the very house where the child was. "And going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him. Then opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. 2:11). They saw the King, their King! In faith they worshipped this infant, believing that He was the Promised One, the King of kings! What an opportunity God's people passed up. Indeed, "He came to His own and His



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own people received Him not" (John 1:11). The Word of promise had become a dead book for them.

When the wise men went back to their own country, they returned as those who had heeded God's speaking to them in the star and in the written Word. They had journeyed home as the first fruits of the innumerable multitude from the nations who would bow before the Christ and worship Him. The account found in Matthew 2 reminds one of the words of our Saviour that "many will come from east and west and sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11).

The shocking reality that God's own people knew the contents of the Word so well and yet did not recognize God's work for the redemption of His people is a sober reminder of how a people of God, wise in its own eyes, can be blind to God's continuing program of salvation. So much had the church accommodated herself to the situation in the world and so much were they in tune with the secular balances of power that not joy but being disturbed was their reaction on hearing of the Messiah's coming. After all, the coming of Christ now, when they really did not count on Him, could "rock the boat."

The church of Jesus Christ today should take note. Only when she feeds on the living Word and is daily guided by it, is she in touch with His ongoing work of redemption and restoration. Only then will she be ready for the signs of His coming. Only then will she greet Him with joy and not with a disturbed surprise. ("Hast Thou come now already?") We live in an exciting time. The King has come *and* He is coming again! God's work of salvation hastens to the climax of the renewal of all things.

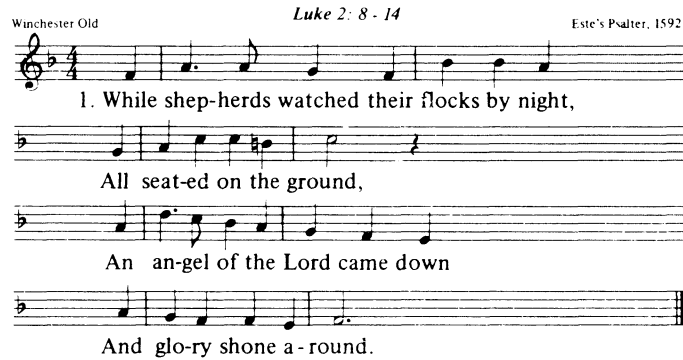
### The King is coming

As with the first coming of the Son of God, so with the second coming, signs in the heavens will accompany His appearing (Matt. 24:29-31; Rev. 6:12-14). However, only those who have a living knowledge of the Word of God and live in communion with Him by the Spirit will understand and be ready. He comes! He who triumphed over sin and Satan comes to apply His work of redemption in the renewal of this creation, which is His Father's world. He comes! And then not just certain individuals, some shepherds and wise men, will be officially informed by God of His arrival, but then all, from east and west, north and south, will see Him and all knees will bow! (Philip. 2:9-11). For He who comes is King of kings and Lord of lords. What a joyous reality in which to live and work for Him!

C. VAN DAM

## Hymn 17: 1-6

Winchester Old Luke 2: 8 - 14 Este's Psalter, 1592



1. While shep-herds watched their flocks by night,  
All seat-ed on the ground,  
An an-gel of the Lord came down  
And glo-ry shone a-round.

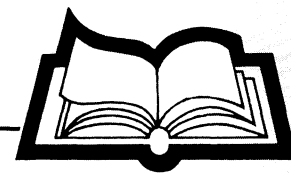
He said to them, "Be not afraid,  
For I have come to tell  
Good news of great and wondrous joy  
For all of Israel.

"To you in David's town today  
Was born of David's line  
A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;  
And this will be the sign:

"A newborn Child you there will find,  
Not as a king arrayed  
But humbly wrapped in swaddling cloths  
And in a manger laid."

Then with the angel, all at once,  
Appeared a mighty throng —  
A glorious heavenly multitude,  
All praising God in song:

"All glory to our God on high  
And on the earth His peace  
For men to whom He favour shows  
Which nevermore shall cease."



“The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” Psalm 72:20

## Final Prayer

The final words of Psalm 72 have posed a puzzle to many students of Scripture, and most commentators easily pass over the words as nothing but an editorial comment. The fact that there are other psalms of David located further on in our Psalter only leads them to conclude that there must have been different collections of songs and prayers in Old Testament times, and this editorial note only reflects the end of one such collection.

However, passing off these words as an editorial comment of little import hardly does justice to them. Particularly if we consider that in all probability David wrote this psalm late in his life, on the occasion of Solomon's coronation, we find their significance increases. In the psalm David expresses his parting wish regarding the reign of Solomon his son, and prays that as a king of peace, Solomon may bring justice to the poor, prosperity in his borders, and Israel's fame and renown over all the world. It forms a prayer which includes and incorporates David's own consciousness of his shortcomings in his office, as well as his hope of redemption in the great King who was coming, the Messiah.

So the Church has always taken this as a Messianic psalm, and rightly so, since David's prayer obviously thinks beyond the day of his immediate realm to the glorious kingdom which God had promised to His people. David's prayer for Solomon includes and incorporates his faith in the promise that deliverance and universal peace would come in a greater Son, the Messiah, whom God would send at the proper time. And while David was aware that the fulfillment of the promise had not fully come with Solomon, he also confesses that the LORD has proceeded from strength to strength, and that in Solomon a new stage in the history of redemption sets in, in which the former sins are washed away, and the punishment of a rule of perpetual bloodshed and warfare has been lifted. A reign of peace and prosperity has dawned for the people of God, and that is the end of all prayer, the fulfillment of the deepest wish.

Standing in the same faith in which David stood, we from our position can see how this psalm came to its full fulfillment in the birth and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, His coming is the fulfillment of the ancient promise! That is why with His coming one can say that the prayer of David, the son of Jesse, has come to its end. For in confessing his humble origins, David also points ahead to the glorious office of humble obedience that his great Son will fulfill. His glory will far surpass that of Solomon's, but not by a show of human strength similar to Solomon's; rather, the unsurpassable glory will be revealed in His perfect obedience as the good Shepherd who carries out the will of the Father for our redemption.

And we who confess His perfect obedience before God can only voice our “Amen” to David's closing words in the

psalm. For the Messiah has come, and is now revealed as the glorious King on high. And through His Spirit, we await the full breakthrough of His heavenly reign on earth, by which the forces of oppression and terror will be fully destroyed and the new age will blossom in fullness. So all the prayers of the church are summed up in the same cry of confident hope and expectation: “*Maranâ'thâ!*” “*Dona nobis pacem!*” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” And we also may know that this prayer will be answered with the archangel's cry: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased,” Luke 2:14.

And it remains His perfect obedience in His first coming that only fills the church with greater hope, and more certain conviction as we await His final return in glory. He has come, He has brought deliverance to the captives. He has defended the cause of the poor of the people, given deliverance to the needy, and crushed the oppressor, cf. vs. 4. For He has broken the root and cause of all sin and oppression by nailing it to the cross in His death, and triumphing over it in His resurrection.

So we can understand why the ancient church always used this Psalm in the festival of Epiphany, and why to this very day it remains the doxology of the LORD's universal triumph in Christ Jesus the Son. David sang of Solomon, and looked for the growth and expansion of his kingdom under Solomon's rule; but as a prophet he also spoke of the universal reign of God which would come into this world in the birth and completed work of Jesus Christ.

We may also understand why David could speak of this prayer as His final prayer. After you have asked for this, and the LORD hears, what else is there to ask? And after this glorious reign enters the world, what more is there left to desire and hope for? Here all prayer ends, for the reality of what is prayed for has come. All petition turns to praise and thanksgiving!

So David's note of triumph may also fill our hearts as we again may celebrate the festival of the birth of the Son of God in the flesh. And the joy of the festival may be deeper and more triumphant, all the more as we see dark and foreboding clouds of gloom come over this world. For in both national and international relations the willingness to forbear and work out differences peacefully is increasingly disappearing. Terror reigns in earth's dark places.

Yet His reign is dawning! And just as the evil one thinks he has achieved something of a victory, the Man from heaven will come, and slay him with the breath of his mouth. Then all petition will end, and we will also join in the festive song of those who sing to the one true God: “Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things! Amen and Amen!”

J. DE JONG

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# *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light<sup>2</sup>*

## *Galilee in the history of revelation*

The people who walked in darkness, the people of Galilee in the first place, will see a great light. (So certain is the fulfillment that it is described as having taken place already — “have seen a great light.”) When did this prophecy from Isaiah 9:2 find its initial fulfillment? In the days of King Hezekiah of Judah.

### **The light begins to shine**

After the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah continued. Not many years later, godly King Hezekiah reopened the temple in Jerusalem (which had been closed by his predecessor King Ahaz) and reinstated its service (II Chronicles 29). He also invited Judah and those remaining in the Northern Kingdom, including Galilee, to celebrate the Passover Feast. Through his couriers the king urged: “O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. . . . For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will find compassion with their captors, and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you, if you return to Him,” (II Chronicles 30:6, 9). Here was gospel proclamation by Hezekiah, a son of David. Here was light for those in darkness! And the believers came also from Galilee, even though they were but a few (II Chronicles 30:11). The joy in Jerusalem was great, for since the time of Solomon there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 30:26). The bond with the God of the covenant was reaffirmed!

In the days of Josiah light again shone for those in Galilee. This faithful king was able to assert political control over the former Northern Kingdom, including Galilee. This area was therefore also the object of his work of reformation. Galilee, too, was purged of idol worship and all that was connected with it (II Chronicles 34:6). Light again shone to those walking in darkness! Once again a great Passover celebration was held (II Chronicles 35:18). How the believers could rejoice in their God and His salvation!

Although these rays of light in the history of Galilee were very impressive and encouraging for the faithful remnant, it is clear that *the* fulfillment of the prophecy of Galilee’s seeing a great light could only come in Jesus Christ. Then *the* light shone through the darkness of that part of the promised land that had been despised and pushed back and that had also been disobedient and chastised by God Himself. Also as the One who fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 9:2, the Lord Jesus could say: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life,” (John 8:12).

### **Christ and Galilee**

It is touching how God involved Galilee in Christ’s coming right from the beginning. O, Galilee, along with the rest of the Northern Kingdom, had once rejected the Davidic kingship and the temple in Jerusalem. But when Jesus is presented in the temple, then Galilee is there in the person of Anna of the tribe of Asher, a prophetess, who spent all her time in the temple. “She gave thanks to God, and spoke of Him (i.e., Christ) to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem,” (Luke 2:38). Here a representative of the remnant from Galilee rejoices at the coming of the great Davidic King. The grace of God! Galilee is also included in the Messiah’s coming. He is also their Saviour.

How this fact was emphasized in Christ’s ministry! Not only did the Lord Jesus spend His childhood in Nazareth (in Galilee), but He also spent most of His time preaching, healing and gathering the lost sheep of the house of Israel in Galilee. Capernaum was His headquarters, so to speak (cf. Matthew 4:13; 9:1), and His dwelling there “in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali” is expressly called a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1, 2 in Matthew 4:14-16; “that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’ ”

The Messiah came to seek and to save the lost. He was not sent to minister in the first place to the high and mighty in Jerusalem who did not consider themselves as needing Christ’s salvation; but, He went to the most despised part of the country, Galilee (cf. John 7:52). He went to the sorely afflicted, to the masses of mixed Jewish and Gentile population in Galilee. There the proclamation was heard: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 4:17). It was in Galilee that the Lord called disciples (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 2:13ff.; John 1:43-51) and it was there that signs of the Kingdom were given. His first miracle was performed in Galilee, in Cana (John 2:1-11). Here Christ preached and healed. “And He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people. So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them,” (Matthew 4:23ff.). Here the renewal of life, the power of recreation and the dawning of the new age, was first experienced (cf. Acts 10:37). The first resurrection from the dead, that of the widow’s son at Nain, took place in



Galilee and evoked praise to God from the people (Luke 7:14ff.). Also the resurrection of Jairus' daughter occurred in Galilee, namely, in Capernaum (Luke 8:49-55). How privileged Galilee had become! It was also there that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered (Matthew 4-7; cf. 4:23; 8:5).

Zechariah had alluded to the prophesy of Isaiah 9:1-2 when he had spoken of the coming Saviour whom his son John (the Baptist) would announce. He had said; "... the Dayspring will visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace," (Luke 1:78ff.). That surely was fulfilled in Galilee. It is included in the great work of redemption. Indeed, it is on the basis of the testimony of the "men of Galilee" that the gospel went forth. (Cf. Acts 1:11 for this characterization of the apostles; cf. also Acts 2:7.) After Pentecost, the church is also found here (Acts 9:31). The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. By grace alone. So *all* God's children are included and gathered.

### Final perspective

The Son of God gathers His Church, and the end result is the full number, with no one forgotten. In Revelation 7 the Apostle John writes: "I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000 sealed out of the tribe of Judah . . . (vv. 4ff.). And so the list goes on. Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun (i.e. those who lived in Galilee) are specifically mentioned. Within the history of revelation these names say something. What man may write off as worthless and not up to par, God, who is faithful and steadfast, calls to Himself. Christ came to seek and to save the *lost*. He gathers the complete number, and no one will be missing. All will be included in the heavenly Zion with its twelve gates on which are inscribed the names of all twelve of the sons of Israel (Revelation 21:12).

C. VAN DAM



## Dear Readers

*Year-End 1986. The time of year to look back on the past year and forward to the new, unknown year. Unknown. Yes indeed, we do not know what the new year will bring us. However, one thing we know for sure; it is again a year of our Lord.*

*With the freedom we still enjoy in this country, Clarion could again be published regularly. We are pleased to be able to maintain our subscription rate for the coming year, due to the increase in subscribers and advertisement income.*

*Through the pages of Clarion, you are kept informed about events and issues in our churches. We also can share in the joy and, yes, sometimes the sadness in our families across the country.*

*We take this opportunity to say "thank you" to the members of the editorial staff and others who tirelessly work to fill the pages of our magazine.*

*A special "thank you" to Rev. Pouwelse for his contributions to Clarion. They were greatly appreciated by all. We hope that he will still enrich us, from time to time, with the fruits of his pen (computer).*

*We at Premier are committed to supporting and being instrumental in publishing good literature (see the advertisements of new booklets that are available). By purchasing booklets you not only support the publication of good literature, but you also enrich yourself spiritually. Therefore, although it is not a Premier publication, we also urge you to subscribe to and support Reformed Perspective.*

*May the Lord keep us all close to that Reformed Christian faith also in the year to come. On behalf of everyone at Premier, I wish you all a joyous Christian festive season and a blessed New Year.*

G. KUIK

# Year End Review



What would a Year End issue be without a Year Review?

Many of our families have albums full with family pictures, and they love browsing through them to see how it was in bygone years and what has become of it.

Especially when looking at the pictures of house and family of some thirty or more years ago, they discover the difference between then and now. Frequently the hearts are filled with gratitude for all the progress which has been made and for all the blessings which have been received.

It is good to reminisce on the past, and then not in the first place to look at one's achievements and the progress which one has made in the course of the years; no, then first of all to see how greatly and abundantly the Lord has blessed us and how much He has added to what we already had.

The same applies when, towards the end of the year or on New Year's Eve, we glance back and survey the year that almost came to an end.

What we are looking at as Christians first of all is not how important and extensive our achievements were, but how abundant our Lord and Saviour's blessings were and how all-encompassing His grace and mercy.

During the year 1986 these blessings were abundant and this grace and mercy did enclose us all, providing protection and safety, security and shelter.

When scanning the year that draws to a close, we are surprised at the many important events that took place, and it is good to review them within the limited space of a review.

By mentioning what we consider to be more or less "highlights," we do not wish to imply that these extra-ordinary things constitute the real life of the Churches and of the membership. Yet we do not



*Rev. W. Huizinga — left for Australia*

wish to make any false dilemmas, and bear in mind that the plain and every day events are just as important as links in the one chain as are the special occurrences.

With this in mind, we proceed to review the year of our Lord 1986 insofar as it has progressed at this moment.

## **Calls**

Since the task of the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel, it will not surprise anyone that we begin with recalling the efforts of the Churches to be provided with the continuing proclamation of the Word of grace.

Four of our ministers received a call from a Church abroad. Two of them accepted that call.

The Church at Armadale, W.A., extended a call to the Rev. J. Visscher, but he declined and decided that his place was in the midst of the Canadian Churches, at least for the time being. Then the Rev. W. Huizinga was called instead, and after deliberation he decided that he should

go and serve our sister Church under the Southern Cross. The bulletins from "down under" time and again contained the information that new obstacles appeared in the way to Rev. Huizinga's admittance into Australia. Originally it was Rev. Huizinga's intention to spend some time in the Netherlands on his way from Canada to Australia, but as time went on and the issuing of visa for the family was delayed and delayed, the stay-over in the Netherlands was cancelled. At the time of this writing rumour has it that the family finally departed for the new congregation, with the fervent hope that no new obstacles would be met.

The Rev. C. Bouwman was called to the Church at Byford, W.A., but he declined this call.

On the other hand, the Rev. W. Pouwelse accepted the call which he received from the Church at Zeist, the Netherlands, to work especially in "De Wijngaard," a rest- and nursing home in that place. The Church at Langley tried to fill the vacancy by calling the Rev. Bouwman, but he declined and thus this sister Church is still vacant.

Another vacancy occurred in the Fraser Valley when the Rev. J. Geertsema was appointed as professor of New Testament at our Theological College. This appointment was made necessary by the retirement of Prof. L. Selles who, after having taught at the College for seventeen years, retired upon having reached the age of 70.

The Church at Surrey (Maranatha) which had become vacant due to the above appointment, was blest in receiving another pastor and teacher when the Rev. G.H. Visscher of Ottawa accepted the call extended to him.

This caused a vacancy to exist in Ottawa. The Ottawa Church, however, did not wait long: they extended a call to

Cand. P. Feenstra, but were disappointed when this call was declined. They then called Cand. G. Peet. No decision is known at this moment as yet.

Before accepting the call to Surrey, the Rev. G.H. Visscher was called in Guelph, but when he declined, this Church extended a call to Cand. Feenstra, who accepted and in the meantime has been ordained and installed as Guelph's new minister of the Gospel.

When, due to health reasons, the Rev. D. Agema had to be declared eligible for call again, since going to the mission field in Brazil was practically an impossibility, he received a call from the Church at Calgary, which he declined, to accept the one that had come from Attercliffe.

Calgary, in the meantime, called the Rev. Kampen of Houston, followed by a call to the Rev. J. VanRietschoten, when the former declined. The latter also had to come to the conclusion that he could not accept the call from Alberta's second city.

When the Rev. Agema ceased being the missionary of the Church at Hamilton, this Church extended a call to the Rev. Kampen, but he declined it. The search goes on for someone to be sent to Brazil.

More calls may be expected, not only by the still vacant Churches, but also in connection with the fact that the latest Classis Pacific granted the request of the Church at Chilliwack for support in behalf of the brothers and sisters in the Okanagan Valley, so that a minister could be called for that region. And the Church at Grand Rapids is still pursuing their goal of having a "minister-at-large" for the contact with others in the United States, in order that all whose desire it is to be truly Reformed may be contacted and also guided where necessary.

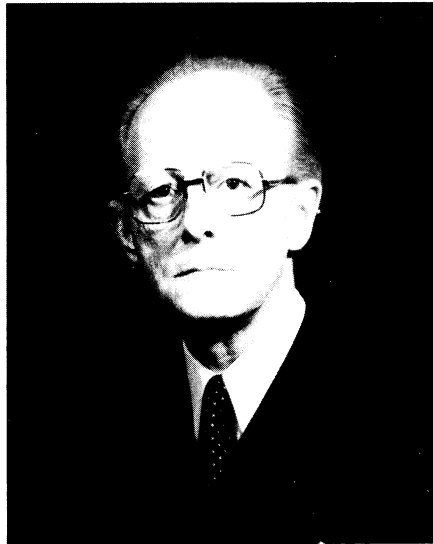
## Churches

In the above we mentioned something about various Churches. More is to be said.

The Church at Barrhead celebrated the fact that its institution took place twenty-five years ago. The Church at Abbotsford did the same.

In the Burlington area ways are being considered to have another Church instituted, since both Burlington East and Burlington West have grown to such proportions that measures must be taken to ensure proper care of the membership as well as relieving the overcrowding of the Church buildings during the services.

The same growth is reason for the Cloverdale and Langley Consistories to be on the alert and to consult together regarding possible institution of another



Rev. W. Pouwelse — gone to the Netherlands

Church somewhere halfway between these two places.

The Church at Chilliwack dedicated their pipe organ, while the Church at Smithers decided to renovate theirs. In Fergus the new organ was dedicated at a special concert which was scheduled for November 8.

As for Fergus: growth of the Congregation makes it necessary to consider what to do within the foreseeable future: already the celebration of the Lord's Supper sees the brothers and sisters divided into two sections, since there was not enough room to accommodate the whole Congregation on Sundays when the Lord's Supper is celebrated. Cloverdale found the same solution for the time being. The advantage is that now the Lord's Supper is celebrated only in the morning service without "continuation" in the afternoon.

Not everywhere growth can be re-



Prof. L. Selles — enjoying retirement

ported. The Churches at Calgary and Ottawa remain small, in spite of the fact that they are established in large cities. The Church at Grand Rapids does not see any growth either.

A sad situation prevails in the Immanuel Church in Edmonton, whose membership has diminished as well. Not much has been published about the situation there, but our special prayers are needed for the brothers and sisters there, that they may remain faithful to the true and complete doctrine of salvation and find each other in the unity of the true faith.

## Ministers

Of those who are serving in the ministry, we have to mention the Rev. G. Van Dooren in the first place. He received the privilege that he could celebrate his fifty-year ministry, as well as his and Mrs. Van Dooren's fiftieth wedding anniversary.

The promise is fulfilled that those who are planted in the house of the Lord will bear fruit even in old age. Our brother is still active and loves to proclaim the Gospel whenever an opportunity is given. He went to Sackville, NS for several weeks to guide and instruct the brotherhood there.

Prof. and Mrs. Selles celebrated their forty-fifth wedding anniversary and our brother's forty-fifth anniversary as a minister of the Gospel.

The Rev. M. VanBeveren reached the age of sixty-five, but has not given any indication of becoming "old." The Congregation of Providence Church in Edmonton celebrated it with Rev. and Mrs. VanBeveren.

The Rev. Meijer was here in Canada on furlough but has since returned to Brazil. Of the Rev. Versteeg we learned that he was seriously ill, but the Lord heard the prayers and gave recovery. Via *Mission News* we are faithfully informed about the weal and woe of our brothers and sisters who have been sent to spread God's Word and show God's mercy in obedience to their and our Master's command.

## Contact

In the above we mentioned Sackville, NS.

This brings us to contact with others.

In the first place be it mentioned that the Church at Blue Bell, PA, has been received into the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches (which federation includes the American Reformed Churches). Thus there are now three American Reformed Churches.

The Tri-County Reformed Church at Laurel, Maryland, has also taken steps which may lead to their admission into the federation as the fourth American Re-

formed Church. The Church at Grand Rapids with the Rev. P. Kingma maintain the contact and extend as much help as they are able to give.

From the Covenant Orthodox Reformed Church at Sackville, NS, delegates attended some classes in Ontario, as mentioned above, they also received help and guidance from the Rev. G. Van Dooren. Other ministers of Ontario visited that Church in the past and so the contacts are intensified. It is our sincere wish that this may lead to having a Canadian Reformed Church in Nova Scotia, something which also will give our present members a wider range of settlement and more opportunities for choosing a region where to practise their profession.

Contact with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in Ripon, CA, was continued as well as with the one in Burlington, WA. From the latter Church brothers were present at the latest Classis Pacific, while also discussions took place with the Consistory of the Lynden Church.

Alberta/Manitoba continued their contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and delegates were received mutually.

A difficult point is and remains what to do with regard to Palmetto, FLA, where brothers and sisters mainly from Ontario spend some half a year during the winter months. No satisfactory answer has as yet been given to this question.

## College

From ministers and Churches to our Theological College is but a small step, if any at all.

Above we already mentioned the retirement of Prof. Selles and the appointment and installation of the Rev. J. Geertsema as his successor.

With the retirement of Prof. Selles the only one of the original faculty left is Dr. J. Faber. Prof. Kouwenhoven passed away, Rev. Scholten was taken to the Lord, too, Rev. Van Dooren retired, as did now Prof. Selles. It is proof of the Lord's faithfulness that the work can yet go on and that "new" brothers are ready to take over.

Another proof of the Lord's blessing was the fact that our brother C. VanDam could conclude his academic studies with his promotion in Kampen, where he received the Doctor Theologiae degree upon defense of his thesis entitled *The Urim and Thummim, A Study of an Old Testament Means of Revelation*.

Three brothers received the degree of Master of Divinity at the Convocation, at which Prof. Selles delivered his farewell address and Mrs. L. Selles presented the usual greetings and financial goodies



Rev. G. Van Dooren — still active

on behalf of the Women's Savings Action.

As for this Action, besides the usual cheque presented at the Convocation, a considerable amount was received from the sisters for automatization of the library. In this age of computers such automatization is a must and the sisters provided the means to achieve this.

New students were admitted to the College so that also the freshmen courses are given again.

## Teachers' College

Another College that should be mentioned is the College where those brothers and sisters are instructed who wish to become a teacher in our schools.

This year there were seven graduates, and in total twenty-one graduates are now teaching in one of the Canadian Reformed Schools.

Imagine: what would our schools have done or what would they have been prevented from doing and achieving if these graduates had not been there? It is not only the schools where they are teaching that benefit: indirectly all our schools receive the benefits from what is done at the Teachers' College. Twenty-one fewer teachers could prove disastrous for quite a few programs and plans for expansion.

Also from this it is evident that the support of all and everyone is needed to keep this institution going.

Gradually the College finds recognition even outside our own circles. In British Columbia one of the graduates received a "System-restricted temporary teaching certificate." That it is "system-restricted," who is worried about that? Is it not the intention that our graduates should serve our own schools?

The importance is seen even in Australia, for from the Armadale Congrega-

tion promise of full support was received.

The principal visited the Alberta and British Columbia regions. He was in British Columbia's Fraser Valley when the western teachers held a conference in Langley.

Meanwhile, the College is looking for property or ready-made facilities where to conduct its activities. Thus far the Hamilton Church building is the scene of activity, but it is make-do accommodation which is far from satisfactory.

Our schools continue to grow and expand, mainly because of the blessing which the Lord gives to the families by granting them children.

New societies are formed once in a while. Calgary gave notice that a school society was established there. The brothers and sisters may still be a long way from seeing their own school in operation, the beginning is there. No one could have thought that the feeble efforts of some thirty-odd years ago would bear such rich fruits as we see today.

A new school building is nearing completion in Langley. The William of Orange School in Cloverdale became too crowded and there is hardly any room for expansion there. Besides, for many parents it might be easier to have another school building in Langley. For the time being both schools will be operated under the same board; once the initial period is over, Langley may become the ward of a school building of their own, under their own board.

In the Fergus area the Fergus/Guelph school society had to build another facility since they outgrew their present one. Many sacrifices are required for this, especially since Ontario is the only province where no support in any form is received and everything has to be financed by the parents and their supporters. It is, therefore of utmost importance that not only parents with children attending school contribute regularly and generously, but also those who are not yet married or have no children in school yet or no longer have children in school. Parents with school-age children do have many extra expenses already, expenses which other families do not have. Our young people who have benefited from this Reformed education themselves will do well when showing their thankfulness for this also in their faithful support of the younger generation.

## Further events

Although we are to take the rather limited space into account, a few more events are to be mentioned.

Both Women's Societies and Men's Societies had their League Days. In Ontario it was the twenty-fourth for the sis-

ters, in the Fraser Valley it was the twenty-third League Day.

Office-bearers' conferences were held in Ontario as well as in British Columbia, while the Fraser Valley Study Center continued its activities, with new ones planned for the current year.

The regions where the Gospel is broadcast by our people were expanded when also the brotherhood in the Bulkley Valley rented air-time for this purpose.

The Anchor Society in Ontario purchased a home in the Grimsby area where its activities in behalf of our handicapped brothers and sisters are centralized. Temporarily they found a shelter in a house on the property of the Mount Nemo Lodge, which they gratefully used.

Concerning this Mount Nemo Lodge, it was officially opened, not because it had never been opened before, but because it was purchased by the same organization which also operates the Ebenezer Home in Hamilton and thus may be considered to be "our own" nursing home. It is important that our brothers and sisters who need care in a nursing home are among those who are of the household of faith. It means such a support to them.

The Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund continued to gather in and to dispense financial contributions for relieving need and misery in other parts of the world. The brotherhood provides them

with sufficient means to achieve their immediate purpose.

Politically, in more and more Congregations a local ARPA (Association for Reformed Political Action) is established and people become more and more aware of our duty to seek the best for our country and cities and that we cannot do this while sitting with our feet on a stool before the hearth, staring at the tube while munching potato chips and have a nice drink.

More frequently the names of brothers are found on billboards urging the voters to elect them as aldermen of their municipality or city. Recently also attention was paid in *Clarion* to efforts to have a Christian party play a part in the public life of our nation.

### Conclusion

Perhaps some have been wondering why we did not mention the fact that this year a General Synod was held.

This was omitted thus far because attention should be paid first of all to those things which are going on more or less regularly and because the blessings of the Lord are to be seen as received in the not-so-spectacular things in the first place.

Yes, it was a great privilege that another General Synod could be held. It was the eleventh General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The good custom was continued that every family and every single communi-

cant member of the Churches receives a copy so that every member can take note of the things dealt with at that Synod, the conclusions drawn and the decisions arrived at.

This is not the place to comment extensively on what this Synod did. We are thankful for the fact that it could be held, that the Lord protected all the brothers who were delegated to and were members of this Synod. We are also thankful for the fact that from their decisions it is evident that their endeavour has been: to remain faithful to the King of the Church.

Now the Churches have to work with these decisions and conclusions and they have to work towards the next General Synod which, this time, will again be held in the center of the country, close to the longitudinal center of Canada.

No new things were mentioned in the above review.

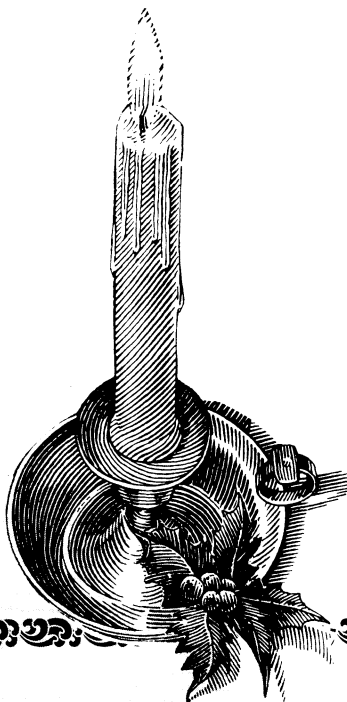
All that was mentioned was well-known to the membership.

However, do we not always run the risk of overlooking precisely the well-known things?

And must it not be our constant exhortation to ourselves and to others,

Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
Do not forget ANY of His benefits,  
For His mercy endures forever.

VO



### Revelation 21:22-26

*And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.*

# Aging and health<sub>1</sub>

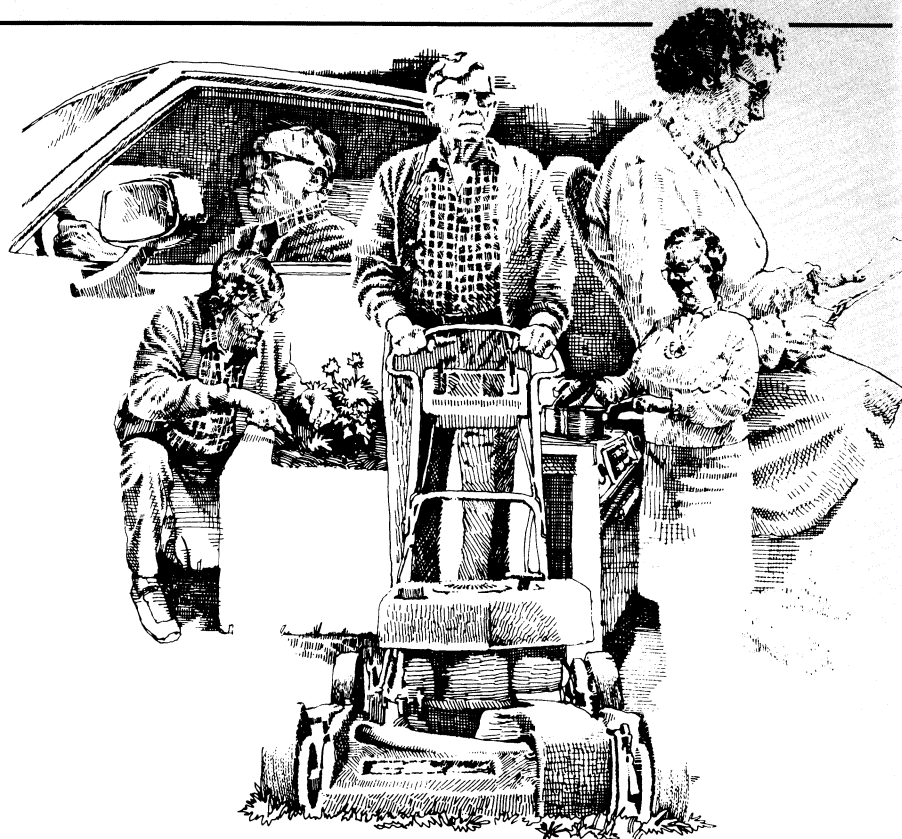
## 1. Changing patterns

Recently I published a series of articles about health and environment. In these articles I tried to explain the influence of radioactive radiation on the human body, and I tried especially to put these matters in the right perspective. There certainly are dangers involved, but they should not be exaggerated.

After I had finished these articles, I received some reactions and questions. It is striking, and an undeniable fact, that there is a sharp increase in heart diseases and cancer. When we speak in the rest of this article about heart diseases, we include all cardiovascular diseases; that is, all diseases related to the heart and the blood vessels, such as hardening of the arteries and high blood pressure.

In the past we heard about people who died because of a heart attack. They were mostly older people, who had worked hard all their life, or who had worked too hard during a certain period of their life. It was considered to be a mild death. Without suffering, people died, after they had fulfilled their task in a long and laborious life.

Nowadays the situation is different. It happens more often that people die because of a heart attack. We hear about it almost every day. The numbers are alarmingly high and still on the increase. And they are not only older people, but also middle-aged and sometimes even rather young people. There is not only an alarming number of people who die because of heart failure, but there is also a great number of people who suffer and have to be treated regularly because of cardiovascular deficiencies. We hear about open heart surgery. A double or triple by-pass operation is the order of the day. Everywhere we read about diets, about exercise, and about health food to prevent heart diseases. All this makes us



wonder what still is causing the increase of the mortality rate. All kinds of treatments which were unheard of in the past are available today, and still the number of casualties is on the increase. What is going on and what is wrong?

People tend to blame it on the more complicated lifestyle and on the tension to which we are exposed. But is there really such an enormous tension that it can be the sole reason for this medical problem? There must be more behind it. If it were only a matter of stress, something should be done to cope with the stress, and we had better smarten up. The numbers are too significant to take it hands down. In 1982 the number of people who died because of a heart disease was already more than 80,000 in all of Canada.

A similar development can be noticed with respect to cancer, although there different factors seem to be involved.

In the past we certainly heard about cases of cancer. It was an incurable disease, feared by everyone. However, there is no comparison in numbers with what we experience today. Almost every day we hear or read about new cases and in almost every family there is someone known or remembered who died of can-

cer. Large institutions have been set up, and millions of dollars are spent on cancer research. All kinds of treatments are used with varying degrees of success, but still the figures of deaths caused by cancer are rising dramatically.

In 1982 about 42,000 people died because of cancer. The numbers have never been that high. What is causing this sharp increase? Cancer seems not to be related to stress. It might have to do with heavy smoking, but many cases of cancer are not related to smoking and many forms of cancer have nothing to do with smoking.

All this makes people wonder what else may cause this alarming trend. Is it the environment? Is it the use of chemicals in industry or even in the food supply? Is it caused by air pollution, through drinking water, or possibly by an increase of radioactive radiation? There must be some reason! Quite often we hear in the discussions about these things the somewhat fatalistic sounding conclusion that it is all the result and the side effect of modern technology. No matter how understandable such remarks are, they do not really help to solve the problem. They do not cut ice, because they are too general. However, in spite of all fitness

courses, in spite of all advanced medical developments, our health is in danger, and no one seems to be able to stop the trend.

These questions keep many people busy and scare some. Instead of voicing rather general statements, we had better take a closer look at this phenomenon, and try to analyze what the real cause may be. Too often wrong conclusions are drawn, without sufficient grounds. That only makes things worse. As soon as we know what is causing this trend, we may be able to change it, or it might be less difficult to accept the reality. We can at least try to prevent certain developments from becoming more serious.

The best way to answer such questions is to have a close look at some reliable statistical information, and to try to draw meaningful conclusions from it.

## 2. Statistics

We can learn a lot from statistical information. However, we have to be careful how we use such figures. Statistics can be used and interpreted in a wrong way. Statistics do not lie, but they can be used (or should we say, abused?) to defend a lie. Some people seem to be able to use statistics to defend or prove everything they wish. It is very easy to draw wrong conclusions, and sometimes it is difficult to determine what is wrong in such a reasoning or conclusion. It needs some training, some mathematical skills, and a lot of common sense, to handle such figures in the proper way. A small oversight can cause a completely lopsided picture.

Let me use a simple example to show what I mean. Years ago I overheard someone saying: statistics prove that many more traffic accidents are caused by men than by women. His conclusion was that women are much safer drivers than men, and this conclusion seemed to be supported by statistical evidence. However, this conclusion was completely unwarranted. The investigator should first have ascertained whether the number of male and female drivers was comparable. If he had done so, his conclusion could only have been that many more cars were driven by men than by women, and that the accident rate was probably the same for both groups. This is a very straightforward example. Many cases are more subtle.

Interpretation of statistics requires careful consideration of all parameters, and it is a skill in its own right. I do not pretend to be an expert in dealing with and interpreting statistics, although I have some experience in this. Still, I will try to make a certain point and search for an answer concerning the questions raised

in the first section. I will discuss some figures, provided by Statistics Canada. These statistics are based on the situation in 1982.

## 3. Infant mortality

The first point I would like to pay attention to, in order to analyze the changing pattern of causes of death, is infant mortality.

Pre- and postnatal care have improved considerably during the last few decades and are still improving by leaps and bounds. Let me mention some figures to prove this point. In 1921 the infant death rate in Canada was 102.1 per 1000 life births. That means that about 10% of all children died before they had reached the age of one year. In 1950 this figure was down to 4%. In 1982 only 9.1 out of every 1000 babies did not survive the first year of life; this is 0.91%. In fifty years the infant mortality had decreased from 102 to 9, which is an improvement of more than ten times. This is certainly something to be thankful for. However, this phenomenon also has side effects which we are not always aware of. The high infant mortality worked as a natural selection. Only the strongest ones survived. As a result of the better medical care now, also the weaker ones can, humanly speaking, be kept alive. It means that in general the population is becoming more vulnerable and more prone to certain illnesses. Those who survive need more care and will depend more heavily on medical care than people did in the past. This phenomenon is even more evident in less developed countries. If we would have to live under the same circumstances as the Papuas in New Guinea, some of us would certainly not survive very long. Why? The native population in New Guinea has little medical care. The infant mortality is extremely high, and the average age very low. However, the effect of this bad health care is a natural selection. Only the very strong survive. Some people seem to think that such an environment has made the native population stronger and able to cope with their primitive circumstances. That is not quite correct. It is rather so that the circumstances have caused a natural selection in which the weaker ones do not survive the first year and those who survive are a relatively small group according to our standards of mortality, but they are the very strong ones. And even these strong people often do not reach advanced old age. The average life expectancy is very low. That is what we have to keep in mind when we consider the sharp decrease in infant mortality. It requires more medical care for the average population during the rest of their life. Later on we will see which consequences this phe-

nomenon has for the issue at stake. Now we will first pay attention to another point.

## 4. Average age

Another important aspect of the better medical care is the increased average age and life expectancy. Let me first explain what is meant by these two expressions and what the difference is between them. The life expectancy is the average number of years that a person, according to statistics, is expected to live. The average age of a certain group of people is the sum of their ages divided by the number of people in that group. If, during an extended period of time, the number of births equals the number of deaths, the average age tends to equal the life expectancy figure. However, if many children are born, the average age will decrease, although the life expectancy remains the same. By the same token we can say that, if few children are born, the average age of the total population will increase, although there might be no change in the life expectancy figure for an individual person. In this article we will pay special attention to the figures for life expectancy, but it is clear that these figures have a great bearing on the average age as well.

In 1931 the life expectancy at birth for male persons was 60 years. Twenty years later it was 66 years and in 1981 it had increased to 72 years. That means an increase of 12 years or 20% in half a century. Also this is a thing to be thankful for. Better health care has worked preventively and developments in the medical field have provided a cure for many diseases. More people are reaching an advanced age and they often can enjoy a much better health. In the past only the strongest survived, but now also those who are more vulnerable can be taken care of. Certain diseases which in the past caused many casualties are almost banished, and others still occur frequently but can easily be cured. This development can be accepted as a blessing out of the hand of the Lord. He uses the doctors as tools in His hand. We are allowed to use these means, and we have to give thanks to the Lord for what He has provided. However, this development is causing a significant change in the pattern of causes of death, and many people do not seem to be aware of the implications of this trend. That can cause uneasiness, concern, and even panic, while a proper analysis of these things should rather make us thankful for the blessings we receive. Let us therefore now have a closer look at the statistics about the causes of death and try to draw some meaningful conclusions from them.

— *To be continued*  
W. POWELSE

# Report — League of Women's Societies

*Burlington — October 8, 1986*

This League Day was our 25th, and therefore special. We met in the Ebenezer Church and were well looked after by the ladies of the Burlington East congregation.

The morning session began with the singing of Psalm 105:1,2,5 accompanied by Mrs. A. Spithoff. Mrs. L. van Delden, our President, read a passage from Scripture and led in prayer. In her welcome she expressed thankfulness "for the wonderful things He has done" (Psalm 105:5a) in allowing us to come together now for 25 years to study the Word of God. She also introduced and thanked the very first Board members, of whom three were present today.

Congratulations were received from Mrs. J. VanderWoude, one of the first secretaries. We also received a letter from Mrs. H. Boot who represented our League at the "Bondsdag" in Holland. Mrs. Smid, secretary of the Board in Holland, thanked us for our invitation.

Roll call showed that there were 393 ladies present and at least one gentleman. Included were some ladies from as far away as Edmonton, British Columbia, Holland, and California. To conclude the business portion of our day we sang our League song.

In preparation for the essay on "Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage" we read from Ephesians 5:21-33. Mrs. E. Oostdyk was then given an opportunity to give her introduction. This topic had been chosen because it is, today, a topic of great concern and something we read or hear of almost daily. The media would have us believe that this is normal, but we know, with the help of Scripture, that this is not so. Mrs. Oostdyk wished to show us this Biblical view.

Marriage was instituted by God in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh," and is the basis for everything in our society.



*League Day of the Women's Societies of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Ontario*

In the Old Testament marriage reflected the relationship between God and His people, and in the New Testament between God and His church. In order for a marriage to reflect this relationship both partners must be God-fearing. In Ephesians 5 we read of the correct ways which God has set out for our benefit. He knows what is best for us.

Concerning divorce the Bible is also not silent. In the Old Testament Moses allowed divorce because of "the hardness of the hearts" of the Israelites "but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8). Divorce is caused by sin and God hates it. In the next verse Christ states that divorce could only be allowed because of unchastity — "Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, permits adultery." In I Corinthians 7:15 the Apostle Paul mentions one other situation when divorce is

allowed and that is "if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound." This would only apply where a couple got married while they were unbelievers and later one of them became a Christian.

As far as remarriage is concerned, Mrs. Oostdyk found that, referring again to the above mentioned texts, wherever divorce is allowed, remarriage is also allowed.

The essay concluded with the remark that sin will remain until the Lord returns. Then there will no longer be divorce, nor even marriage — only the great marriage feast of the Lamb. In the meantime, Mrs. Oostdyk said, something can be done with Christian counselling and with the ministers and elders. We must remember that marriage is a divine ordinance and we, therefore, cannot en-



courage divorce. However, God's grace is stronger than sin. God is faithful; He will not divorce Himself from the church, of which we are members.

Before the discussion we sang Psalm 32:3,4,5. Many and varied questions were discussed. One point of emphasis was that our sons and daughters must be told before they get married that marriage is a God-given institution and divorce should not occur. Mrs. Oostdyk recommended two books for young people (even before getting serious): *Like Living Stones* by Rev. Pouwelse and *Marriage in Honour* by W.G. de Vries.

The collection for the Canadian Reformed Teachers' College Association, in which we collected \$755.40, was held. The morning was concluded with the singing of Hymn 57:2,3,4. In the rain we ran across the parking lot to John Calvin School for the lunch of soup and buns, fruit and ice cream served by the ladies of Burlington East. Thank you ladies! It was good!

In the afternoon we again gathered in the church building. After singing the National Anthem, we were treated to some talent from the hosting ladies. In honour of our 25th anniversary, they had prepared a "jubilee song" which led us down memory lane.

To take us back to business, we sang Psalm 93:1,2,3,4.

Rev. DeJong's speech, "Lessons from Early Church History" was given that title as he hoped that it would outline for us how church history must be studied in our societies and what we are to get out of it for today.

One thing that seemed to keep coming back during Rev. DeJong's readings for this speech was that many, if not all,



Rev. D. DeJong, Burlington East

the struggles in the early church centred around this one question: are we saved by God alone, or are we saved by creature either wholly or partially?

In his speech, Rev. DeJong explained the errors of Judaism, Gnosticism, Montanism, Arianism, Donatism, Pelagianism, and Roman Catholicism. He also showed how we can find these errors today. A few examples follow.

We still see Judaistic influences today when some place a wrong emphasis on certain Old Testamental situations and customs, especially in the sabbath celebration. Judaistic influences are met wherever rules become more important than faith in Jesus Christ alone.

An overreaction to the Judaizers can also be seen today in ministers who rarely

preach from the O.T. and publishers who only publish the N.T.

The Gnostics seek a "spiritual" meaning behind Scripture and overlook the literal meaning. This dualism is seen wherever a separation is made between the natural or material and what is considered to be the spiritual or religious part of life. "Sunday only" believers, those who call themselves believers but will not serve the Lord with their money, and those who do not see the dangers of a public school education where religion is considered something for private use only, are all examples of people who have fallen prey to dualism.

Montanism was condemned by the church, but a similar movement is that of the Anabaptists who do not believe that the Bible is closed and include revelations given to some "prophets."

Arianism teaches that Christ was created and therefore could not be truly divine like the Father; this heresy is found today in the Jehovah Witnesses.

Pelagius believed that man was born with an empty slate and only learned bad things by example. This error appeals very much to human pride and we must be alert for it in our personal life and in the church.

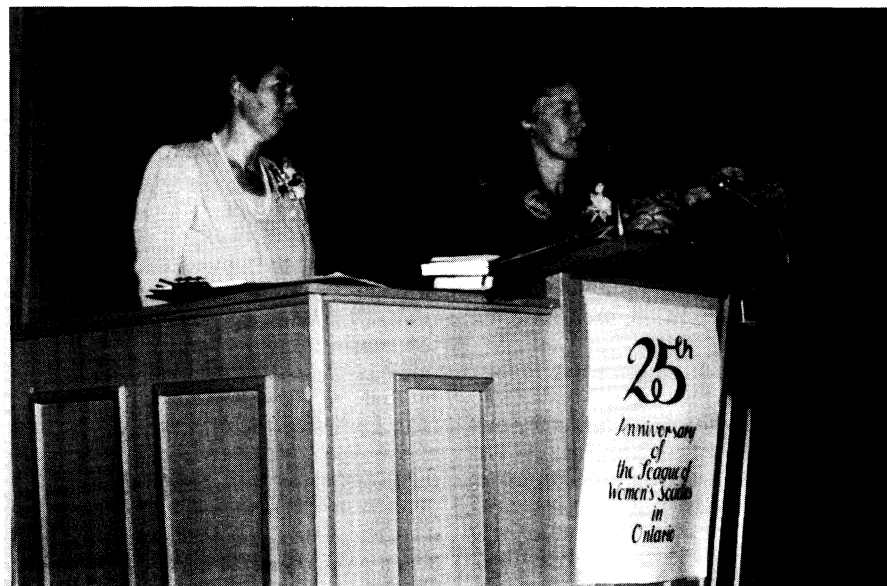
Rev. DeJong concluded that we must read the Bible as the revelation of God and let it explain itself as the good news of salvation by God in His grace, through Jesus Christ, by faith.

Before the discussion we sang Hymn 40:1,2,3, and then we again saw how easily these heresies can creep into the church today.

Before concluding the day Mrs. van Delden thanked all those involved in making this day a success: Mrs. Oostdyk, Rev. DeJong, Mrs. Spithoff, and the ladies of Burlington East. She also thanked Mrs. A. Nederveen for her work during her five years as Treasurer of the League. Mrs. Reinink, Vice-President, thanked Mrs. van Delden for her excellent and cheerful leadership today.

After singing Psalm 147:1,2,4,6, Rev. DeJong closed with us in prayer.

Before going home we went back to the school for refreshments and a little more talk. One of the best parts of these days is seeing old friends and acquaintances from other congregations. Thank you Burlington East for a wonderful day. We also give thanks to our heavenly Father who allowed us to enjoy this day together.



Mrs. L. Oostdyk (in front of the microphone), Mrs. L. van Delden

#### Note

The speech of Rev. D. DeJong will be published in the next issue.

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# *The Bible in the school*

## *Perspectives on teaching and learning*

*“Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105*

No one will want to deny that a school cannot truly call itself “Christian” unless the Bible is there. Traditionally — and correctly — the schoolday starts with devotional exercises during which God’s name is glorified, and the needs and cares of the day are put before the LORD. Bible reading and Bible storytelling form an important part of the daily activities in each classroom at a Reformed school.

The Bible, however, is not merely a sourcebook for devotional exercises. The daily prayers and Bible readings might seem routine, yet they may never take on the sense and character of pagan worship which does no more than attempt to satisfy one’s religious obligations. Routine is good, at home as well as at school. We get used to wholesome patterns in our life. Prayer and Bible reading certainly must be part of such a daily pattern, a daily routine. Don’t skip it, and don’t argue that it is merely formalistic and therefore of little importance.

Is the Bible perhaps a book which can be used at school to study the discipline of theology, of dogmatics, of ethics etc.? The answer is a resounding no! Such studies are the domain of a seminary, and children at the elementary school have no taste for such matters. A school with the Bible is certainly not a place where children find a sort of watered-down theology on the timetable.

The Bible-at-school does not mean either that we try to satisfy religious obligations, nor does it suggest a course in religious theory and dogma. The Bible speaks of our great and glorious God. Already on the first page we read of God’s great deeds as Creator of heaven and earth. Bible storytelling leads the children away from any glorification of man and sings the praises of the LORD, the Father of us all. Whoever tells of Genesis 1 and 2 is busy teaching the children that awe and humility for the great works of God is so necessary for us, human beings. It

leads them to understand that the LORD is LORD of all. The children know that He is the “boss” of all the money in the world; He owns all knowledge and science; He controls the forces of nature; He governs the people; He determines what happens — He even breathes life into our nostrils! Telling God’s story means telling the children that it is God Who gives rain, and Who causes it to snow. He, the creator of the eye certainly will see what goes on; and He who made the ear will also hear the daily news bulletins.

And the children may learn that we can count on it that tomorrow the sun shall rise, and that after the winter it will be spring. No, not because that happens to be the course of nature — God promised that to Noah when He made a new covenant with man.

In this way the children — and we ourselves — may (again) learn that the future of our world, the future of our society does not depend on the power of science and technology. They will learn that we are not dependent on forces of nature, let alone on forces of revolution. . . . Our future is sure. Why? Because the LORD promised this; the rainbow was a sign that the earth will never be destroyed by water. And that is what the children learn at school. They also learn that all people — Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, socialists, communists — depend on the LORD God. God does not exist because we believe in Him, no, we exist because in Him we have our being; He made us and He sustains us.

How terrible is therefore sin, the rejection of the God who owns it all. How shameful, if we merely try to satisfy our religious obligations, and for the rest live our lives for our own gain. . . . The world is full of such an attitude, as was the world of the Romans, of Medieval man.

Yet a Reformed parent or a Reformed teacher may tell the children of the riches of our only comfort, of our only surety. He

or she may tell them that God knows us “right well;” (their) frame was not hidden from (Him) (Psalm 139:15). He or she may tell them that all things are His, and are part of His plan of love with His creation.

It is beautiful to be able and to be allowed to tell the children of the riches of God’s covenant. First of all there is redemption: On the lid of the ark Israel found the blood of atonement. Because of that blood the LORD repeated — and it is a refrain throughout the books of Moses — I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. And there is His law with which He told them how they should live, and how they could bring forth fruits — fruits of the Spirit — so that they would not be destroyed as a nation.

And perhaps, when God shows a little of His great might in thunder and lightning, the child will become afraid — such a God, such a King! We may then tell him of Yahweh, who says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

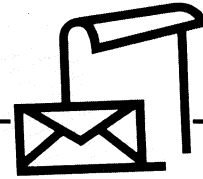
But we may also tell of Christ who paid for all our sins — and we do not have to repay any of it, no required religious exercises, no series of formula-prayers. A Reformed school which uses the Bible properly is not a school that trains its students in religious behaviour. A Reformed school and a Reformed family are Scripturally-prophetic witnesses, and a priestly praise to our God and Father in our LORD Jesus Christ.

The latter years of the 20th century are fearful times; we live in times of war; we live in constant fear for a possible nuclear holocaust. And yet the children of God may know of Christ’s promise, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:20). And then our children can also prepare themselves confidently for their life’s tasks.

T.M.P. VANDERVEN

Based on A. Janse: *Het Eigen Karakter der Christelijke School*. Hoofdstuk II: De Bijbel op School, pp.30-35. J.H. Kok, Kampen, 1935.

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Mr. Editor,

You will understand that I read your editorial in the July 11, 1986, issue with much interest. Since you have decided to publish some of the General Synod decisions with your comments prior to the publication of the Acts of Synod, I feel obliged to respond with some comments and concerns at this time. I am not suggesting hereby that you were in error in doing so. On the contrary, I consider this to be beneficial for the churches.

However, you will agree that normally there are two sides to every story. Since you have presented the one side, I now request that you permit me to present the other side so that the readers can get the full picture.

Since this is only a letter to the Editor, I will endeavour to be as brief as possible. Should you request a further elaboration on any point I bring to your attention, I would be pleased to do so. You will agree that healthy polemics can only be beneficial for the churches.

First of all, it is quite remarkable that the original theological issue in Edmonton (i.e. our rejection of the "narrow view" of Rev. Hoorn) has grown into something quite different through the involvement of the major ecclesiastical assemblies. For example, the original appellants would probably not even have dreamt of the present synodical allegations against the Immanuel Council at Edmonton. In any case, to my knowledge they do not appear anywhere in the initial correspondence.

Secondly, I can only agree wholeheartedly with the General Synod, when it states that Scripture and confessions speak about the church "in a general way and a more specific way." This also applies to the consistency maintained by Synod when it states, "The Apostles' Creed characterizes the church as the communion of saints" and that therefore also this communion has "two sides."

However, I fail to see true consistency between these and the other considerations which limit the church and communion of saints to their visible aspect. For example, Synod states that the word *ecclesia* (church) in Art. 27 B.C. "indicates a visible assembly of believers." This limitation is maintained re the communion of saints when its second "aspect" is called "a normative description of the church."

In the first place, the word *church* in Art. 27 B.C. (as in Lord's Day 21, H.C.) is to my understanding *inclusive* of every local true church, but *descriptive* of the church "in a general way." This is verified by Synod in its references to both Scripture and confessions. The same must be said of the communion of saints as confessed in Lord's Day 21, H.C. There we confess that the communion of saints is in the first place "that believers all and every as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts." This same thought is expressed in Art. 27 B.C. in the last two paragraphs, where it speaks of the communion of saints "in a general way." It may seem extinct sometimes as far as man is concerned, but it will continue to exist, and regardless how dispersed and spread over the world "it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith." Since this communion characterizes the church, this "aspect" is indeed "as broad as the holy catholic church." This first aspect indeed includes all the elect who have been regenerated, and it includes all who have been grafted into Christ by a true faith and who therefore stand in a righteous or "legal" relationship with God.

This "aspect" of the church/communion of saints is confessed as revealed in God's Word, but it is inclusive of what becomes visible of it in the world. This church/communion is in the first instance created by God apart from any activity of the believers themselves. It exists for the simple fact that God sovereignly created it in the believers without their aid.

The "more specific way" of speaking about the church relates entirely to the believers' response to God's foregoing work in submission to their only norm, God's revealed will. If you will, this aspect of the church/communion of saints becomes visible by the marks of the true church as e.g. confessed in Art. 29 B.C., wherever God has called her into being in the world. There the members can be seen as being a hand and foot to each other as members of the same body. This exercising of the communion of saints is only possible when the only norm for the gathering of the church is obeyed.

This aspect of the holy catholic church is revealed by a plurality of local true churches, whether independent or affiliated with other true churches. That

is, this plurality (meervoudigheid) of true churches has unity of faith regardless of organizational unity. For example, the purpose of the ICRC, as you pointed out, is "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ." The ideal and goal is a close corresponding relationship, not in order to establish the unity of faith, but because there *is* unity of faith as God's sovereign gift. This unity must be exercised for mutual strengthening. This is the kind of plurality taught in Edmonton. Unfortunately, this was not revealed by Synod, since it quotes only one of three footnotes to an extensive exposition on the true and the false church we confess. Throughout this exposition the only norm referred to is God's Word.

Consequently, I hereby emphatically and categorically deny any and every synodical inference and allegation that I or any office-bearer in the Immanuel Church at Edmonton has ever taken or considered God's secret decree of election to be our "starting point" and "norm" as given by Christ for the gathering of His church. In this respect I teach, as revealed in the same "handout" used by Synod, "We ought to be careful to never restrict the concept *church* to the limits of human reasoning or perceptions, but with a childlike faith confess what the Lord has revealed in His Word even though we may not understand it all. 'For we now see in a mirror (obscure glass) dimly, but then . . .' (cf. I Corinthians 13:12); 'And as to what He does surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into farther than our capacity will admit of' (Art. 13 B.C., Deuteronomy 29:29)." The very thought to consider something not revealed as the norm for the church/communion of saints is senseless and absurd.

To my knowledge this impossibility has never been promoted by anyone in Edmonton.

Since this allegation or synodical conclusion has not been substantiated in any way with factual references from the existing document at Synod (except for an out of context quotation as preface to observation E 1.), it hangs entirely in the air and can only come crashing down by virtue of its own dead weight. It seems as if a presupposition was adopted and that through the glasses of this presupposition a case was gradually built into a judgment.

The facts are, brother Editor, that in Edmonton the force of Art. 28-29 has been, and is being, maintained, with the consequences that in the recent past by the grace of God no fewer than six families and three single members from other denominations have joined the Immanuel congregation. These members have been convinced, through our outreach, by the only norm, God's Word, to join the true church in response to the foregoing work

of God in them. They joined at the local address of the true church, having recognized her by her marks, not to become but *because* they were members of Christ's Body by faith.

In conclusion, I am somewhat fearful of some of the reasoning found in Synod's considerations which seem to equate God's work with the believers' response to His revealed norm. His work seems to be brought down to the same

level as our work. You will agree, should such a fear have real cause, that such synergistic reasoning would dishonour God, and that it would do serious damage to a truly Reformed church consciousness.

Thank you for your time and effort for printing, and perhaps commenting, on this letter.

With brotherly greetings,  
Yours in Jesus Christ,  
SIMON DEBRUIN, pastor

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## A response

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The above letter was written quite some time ago, but my moving from British Columbia and some other circumstances delayed the publication. It is not my intention to reply to all the details of this letter to the editor. I see more profit in a general response, in which, at the same time, details will receive attention.

### The Synods of Cloverdale and Burlington-West

Let me begin with what I see as the message of the two synods of Cloverdale and Burlington-West. The Synod of Cloverdale 1983 basically said two things. In the first place, it said (cf. the Acts of the Synod of Burlington-West, Art. 184, pp.93ff.) that "to state that all true believers are already members of Christ's Church would nullify the above confession" which says in Art. 28 B.C. "that no person ought to withdraw from the church; that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; that all believers are to join themselves to this congregation; that all who separate themselves from it or do not join themselves to it act contrary to the ordinance of God."

The thinking here is: How can someone who is a member of the holy catholic church be called to join that church? How can one join a body to which he is joined already? As I understand Rev. DeBruin (from now on, for convenience's sake: DB), his answer is: all the elect are gathered by Christ; they have been, are, or will be regenerated, and by a true faith they have been, are, or will be ingrafted into the body of Christ; one who is ingrafted by a true faith into Christ is therewith ingrafted into His body, that is, the holy catholic church; and he now also has the calling to join the local manifestation or revelation of that holy catholic church, if he is not a member of that local manifestation yet. The question remains: If we speak in this way — that one who believes is therewith a member of the church

— do we then not undermine the calling to join the church?

I leave that question alone for the moment and go to the other point in Cloverdale's decision. This Synod also stated that, even though there is undermining of what Art. 28 B.C. says, the Rev. DB does not attack the confession. This means that the Synod of Cloverdale did not want to conclude that the statement as such — that all the believers belong to the church — makes one worthy of suspension.

These two conclusions were considered contradictory. How can undermining a part of the confession be considered not to be an attack on the confession? Why did the Synod of Cloverdale not come to the verdict: worthy of suspension? The answer is: in the statement that "all the believers are members of the holy catholic church by virtue of their faith through which they are ingrafted into Christ and have become members of His body, that is, the church" we are dealing with a certain interpretation of the confession. The point, however, is (and I will come to that later): How does Rev. DB work with this interpretation?

The interpretation that all the elect, all the regenerated true believers as members of the Body of Christ, are the holy catholic church has been held by many in the past and it is the view of not a few today. In the days of the Reformation Luther, following John Huss and others, said that the Church of Christ is all the elect. Calvin speaks about the church as God sees it, although what he means exactly has been a point of debate. Art. 16 of the Scottish Confession of 1560 says, "... this Church is catholic, that is, universal, because it contains the Elect of all ages, of all realms, nations, and tongues. . . ."

I can also quote what Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus said at the Conference at Amersfoort in 1948. On page 38ff. of the booklet that contains his speech (along with those of others) we read the state-

ment, "Every true believer belongs to the church. But we do not speak of the individual believer as church. Church makes us think of more than one, of joining together, of gathering, of putting in order. A house is not just one stone, but an orderly connection of stones. A body is not just one member, but a whole set of members. Every believer has his place in the church, as well as his task and his gifts with regard to the church and in the kingdom of God. But first several believers united with each other according to the demand of the Lord in faith and cooperation, form church (*Maar eerst verschillende gelovigen met elkander verenigd naar eisch des Heeren in geloof en samenwerking, vormen kerk*); and all believers together (spread) over the whole earth, from all ages, the present and the future, on earth and in heaven, together form the church, with Christ as her Head, Ephesians 1:22-23."

One could ask the question: What does Greijdanus mean when he says: "But first several believers united with each other according to the command of the Lord in faith and cooperation, form church." If we can, indeed, first speak of church when believers gather together according to the norms of God's Word, what does Prof. Greijdanus mean, when he says: "Every true believer *belongs to* the church?" Besides, what does Greijdanus mean by *faith*? Does he mean the faith *with which* or the faith *that* we believe? Or is it both?

I can add yet that in 1985 a discussion dealing with the same question took place between Dr. M.J. Arntzen and Dr. W.G. de Vries (both ministers in our sister churches in Holland) in *De Reformatie*. Dr. Arntzen, too, is of the opinion that Scripture and confession say that all the believers are members of the catholic church of Christ. Dr. de Vries does not agree with this view, but he did not say that this view made Dr. Arntzen worthy of suspension. On the contrary, he acknowledged that

## *I sing the birth was born to-night!*

*I sing the birth was born to-night,  
The author both of life and light;  
The angels so did sound it,  
And, like the ravished shepherds said,  
Who saw the light, and were afraid,  
Yet searched, and true they found it.*

*The Son of God, the eternal King,  
That did us all salvation bring,  
And freed our soul from danger,  
He whom the whole world could not take,  
The Word, which heaven and earth did make  
Was now laid in a manger.*

*The Father's wisdom willed it so,  
The Son's obedience knew no No;  
Both wills were in one stature,  
And, as that wisdom had decreed,  
The Word was now made flesh indeed,  
And took on him our nature.*

*What comfort by him we do win,  
Who made himself the price of sin,  
To make us heirs of glory!  
To see this babe, all innocence,  
A martyr born in our defense,  
Can man forget the story?*

BEN JONSON (1573?-1637)

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his colleague with his view did not go against the Reformed Confession. Dr. de Vries writes (Vol. 61, No. 1, p. 12): "I have not said or suggested that my colleague does not love the Reformed confession and has not remained within the frame of it. On the contrary, we just speak as Reformed confessors about the question what is the correct explanation of Articles 27-29 B.C." Sure, then Dr. de Vries adds that he finds it regrettable that Dr. Arntzen advances an explanation that was refuted more than half a century ago, but that does not take away the factuality of his preceding words.

It is in line with this that our Synod of Cloverdale did not want to say that the teaching that all believers belong to the catholic church by virtue of their faith is a false doctrine or heresy that gives ground for suspension. The conclusion is that we are dealing here with an interpretation of the confession which many have held and which should not be declared an intolerable doctrine. Declaring persons who hold this doctrine as such suspensible would mean that we declare Dr. S. Greijdanus, Dr. M.J. Arntzen, and many others who have had an honourable place in the midst of the churches teachers of a false doctrine. That certainly would not be right.

It is in this light that I also see the doctrinal consideration of the Synod of Burlington-West, in which the statement is made that it is within the bonds of the confession to say that "Scripture and the confessions speak about the church in a general way and a more specific way." It is not against the confession to say: "On the one hand, there is the general aspect of Christ's work of gathering all those whom the Father has given Him and whom He regenerates" (Acts, p. 102). The Synod at Cloverdale did not deny the truth either that Christ gathers all those whom the Father has given Him, stating that it is correct to say that all the true believers are included in the Church-gathering work of Christ (*congregatio*) (Acts, p. 129).

From the above it should be evident that we must not conclude that the view in itself — that all the believers, all the elect, are members of the church as God sees her — makes an office-bearer in our churches worthy of suspension. In my opinion, both Cloverdale and Burlington-West tried to make that clear.

In this connection I would like to remark that the word *ekklesia* or *church* occurs more than a hundred times in the New Testament; and that a concordance will immediately make clear that, with only a few possible exceptions, this word *ekklesia* always indicates the visible local churches. The possible exceptions (depending on how we explain them) are

in the letters of Paul to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Paul there speaks about Christ as the Head of the body, the church. It is not possible here and now to provide a more in-depth study of this work *ekklesia* and its use in Scripture, although such a study is necessary. Does the word in a general sense mean all the individual believers together, or does it mean all the true local churches together? Do those places in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians necessitate us to conclude that, in some instances, the word *ekklesia* used in a general sense means all the true believers?

But even if we had to come to that conclusion, the question still remains in what context Paul uses the word and what the consequences then are. But once again, we cannot deal with these exegetical questions here and now. I only mention this to make us careful, so that we do not draw all kinds of conclusions and consequences that are not warranted. And this is now exactly the point: What are the consequences that one draws. The Synod of Burlington-West has spoken about explanations and applications that have to be in line with Scripture and confession. When a person says: all the believers are members of the holy catholic church, because they are ingrafted into Christ's Body, and that is the catholic church, does he then add a "BUT," or does he add a "THEREFORE"?

### **BUT, not THEREFORE**

What is then the difficulty? Rev. DeBruin writes that he, in his explanation of the doctrine of the church to the congregation of Edmonton, fights "the 'narrow' view of Rev. Hoorn," or the view that there is only one true church in Canada, namely, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and that only these churches are the catholic church of Christ in this land; and further that only members of these churches are true believers. I am not sure that this is a correct picture of Rev. DeBruin's opponents. Let me say that I do not know of anybody in our churches who has stated or states that there are no true believers outside the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Let me also repeat that our synods have clearly stated as Scriptural and confessional that Christ, in His church-gathering work, gathers all the believers, all those whom the Father has given Him. And no synod or other ecclesiastical major assembly has stated that there is not, or cannot be, a true church outside our federation. But let it also be clear, colleague DB, that it is just as much the

manner in which, and the arguments with which, you thought you had to fight this "narrow" view that has now for a number of years caused lots of troubles, long meetings, and so on. And you must also not forget that your own views and the manner in which you propagated them were the cause of a reaction from the side of these people with what is called the narrow view.

But again, what is the difficulty? The Synod of Burlington-West spoke of Rev. DeBruin's explanations and applications. It referred to the so-called "Handout" in which Rev. DB gave his teachings on the church, and which the consistory of the Immanuel Church sent along as a supportive document for its objections against the Cloverdale decision and its defence of the views of its minister. Let me mention a number of statements in this "Handout."

On p. 4 Rev. DB takes his starting point in God's eternal plan or the decree of election. The elect receive a true faith through the proclamation of the gospel. "By a true faith the elect are in due time 'ingrafted' into Jesus Christ." And "All who have received a true faith become by virtue of that fact 'a member of Jesus Christ and of His Church' (third question in Form for Adult Baptism . . .) 'and as mutual members of the same Body' (Art. 28 B.C.) they are therefore duty-bound to join themselves to Christ's Church (when possible) wherever she has become visible." And further, "Everyone who has been ingrafted into Jesus Christ by a true faith, has true unity of faith with *all* other members who have similarly been ingrafted, wherever these members may be in the world. cf. Art. 27 B.C., L.D. 21 Q.&A. 54, Ephesians 4, I John 4:2. Since God establishes this unity by His Word and Spirit, these members must strive to exercise this unity with fellow members within a communion of saints."

On p. 5 we read, "All the church gathering and defending work of our Lord Jesus Christ, His one holy congregation, is being done in the unity of 'the true faith' L.D. 21, Q.&A. 54. The essence of this true faith is summarized in L.D. 7, Q.&A. 21, and its content is summarized in the twelve articles of faith (Apostles' Creed) L.D. 7, Q.&A. 22-23."

Now, in the first place, no Reformed confessor will deny that it is through regeneration and faith, fruits of election, that a person is ingrafted into Christ and becomes a member of His Body. But is now the consequence that only true believers, only those regenerated, are members of the catholic church? What is, then, the position of infants in the church? Q.&A. 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism, where we confess that the children of believers ought to be baptized because

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TRAVEL MANITOBA

they belong to the covenant *and the congregation* of God? Can one belong to the catholic church, that is, to the Body of Christ, without faith? And without regeneration? Or must we distinguish here between the congregation of God of which one can be a member, while not a member of the catholic church (yet), because there is no faith (yet). I am not speaking here about hypocrites, but about infants. My Baptist neighbour will respond and say: I told you! Only believers, only those who are regenerated, should be baptized and considered members of the church.

I bring the point of infants into the picture here because I see a connection here with the struggle in the days of the Liberation. The general synods of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, in 1948 and following, made binding statements with respect to covenant and baptism. They said that God's covenant exists only with those who are regenerated, and that baptism is administered on the basis of presupposed regeneration, because it seals that regeneration. From our side this view was called subjectivistic and it was rejected. It is not the fact of regeneration, but forgiveness and regeneration, the effects of the blood and Spirit of Christ, as covenant promises that is sealed. The synodical Synod's speaking about the covenant took its starting point in, and was determined by, God's regenerating work in a person's heart. Our objection was that herewith they departed from the Scriptural and confessional basis and norm, namely, the trustworthy and norm-setting covenant words of the LORD with their promise and obligation for the believers and all their children. Subjectivism builds on God's work in the heart. The Liberation was a struggle against this subjectivism, building on God's covenant word.

When colleague DB says that all believers are by faith (and regeneration) ingrafted into the Body of Christ, I agree with him. But when he adds that thus by faith they become members of the holy catholic church at the same time, because the two are the same, then my next question is: What do you now do with that conviction? How do you work with it? What are the consequences for you? How do you apply this view?

There are people who say with colleague DB that they also believe that all believers belong to the catholic church as God sees it. However, after they have said this, they come with a big "BUT." They mean to say that this can be so, BUT God has given us His norms for the gathering of the church, and to those norms we are bound in our coming together, in our gathering in obedience with Christ, and in our exercising the communion of saints. With Rev. DB, on the

other hand, the belief that all true believers belong to the church is followed by an emphatic "THEREFORE."

Sure, colleague DB, you point to Art. 29 B.C. and say that we must maintain as norm for the true church the marks as confessed there. But that strong emphasis on the catholicity as you see it makes you assume very easily the existence of true churches all over the place. Taking your starting point in what God does in the heart, you write: "Wherever the gospel is proclaimed we may expect to find true believers, and we may also expect that these true believers will endeavour (when possible) to gather and be gathered together as members of one body. This gathering together is God's work. . . . Whenever such a gathering together occurs on the basis of the one foundation, this is 'God at work.'"

So, on the basis of the catholicity of the church, being the gathering of those regenerated (work of God in the heart), we must *assume* that all over the place there are true churches. And on the *basis*

of that *assumption* the commanding application follows: "Therefore I must maintain that when away from home on extended holidays or business trips one is DUTY BOUND (emphasis added) to look for God's people on the day of the Lord in order to worship with them, and that any preconceived contention that one may not go elsewhere because there is no Canadian Reformed Church there, or a church with which we have a corresponding relationship, is haughty, judgmental, and insulting to the Lord of the Church."

In this (quite haughty, judgmental and insulting) argumentation I can only see the following reasoning: there is God's work of regeneration; thus I assume there are true believers who are members of the holy catholic church, and therefore I must also *expect* and *assume* that there probably is a true visible manifestation of this catholic church, and THEREFORE I have to join them when on a trip. Is this not building on the basis of assumed regeneration? Are the norms for the gathering of the church not receiving a second place here?

### The plurality of the church in the view of DeBruin

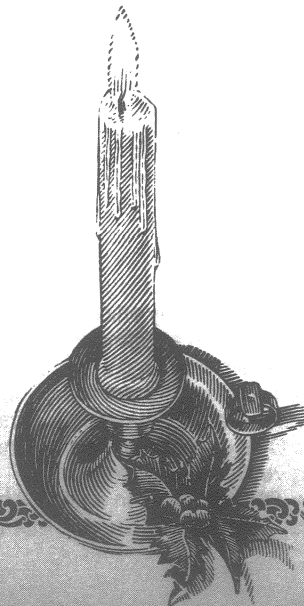
Now colleague DB will say that he very clearly referred to the norms as stated in Arts. 28 and 29 B.C. This is also pointed out in the letter to the editor. However, I am of the opinion that this maintaining of the norms just mentioned is drastically undermined with the manner in which you speak about the plurality of the church. I see the broadness of your speaking about the plurality of local true churches also in the first place as based by you on God's work of regeneration in the heart of people.

In your letter to the editor you mention the pronouncement of the Synod of Burlington-West regarding the ICRC that closer contact should be sought since there *is* unity in the true faith. It has been said: this unity is a unity that has found expression in the unity of good Reformed confessions. But, colleague DB, the unity of faith and the plurality of the church of which you speak in your "Handout" is not exactly the same. Let me give a few quotations.

Br. DB writes: "All the church gathering and defending work of our Lord Jesus Christ, His one holy congregation, is being done in the unity of 'the true faith' L.D. 21, Q.&A. 54. The essence of this true faith is summarized in L.D. 7, Q.&A. 21, and its content is summarized in the twelve articles of faith (Apostles' Creed) L.D. 7, Q.&A. 22-23. No one can be saved outside this one holy catholic church which Christ is gathering from all over the world. . . ."

### James 1:17,18

*Every good endowment  
and every perfect gift is  
from above, coming  
down from the Father of  
lights with whom there  
is no variation or  
shadow due to change.  
Of His own will He  
brought us forth by the  
word of truth that we  
should be a kind of first  
fruits of His creatures.*



I like to say here: agreed. Here we already have more than election, regeneration, and faith as an act of knowing and trusting. Here you speak also about faith *which we believe: faith in its contents, that binds together.* Here comes the work of Christ which is also norm for us: *in the unity of the true faith.* I still have a question, though, but that will come later.

First I give another quotation: "The word 'true' used in relation to church (in Art. 29 B.C.) embraces *all* local congregations in which there is **the desire and intent** [emphasis added] to continue building on the only foundation, Jesus Christ, as revealed in God's Word."

In line with this we also read: "In the past as well as in the present, I teach our young people that when they are away from home on the Lord's Day they should first of all seek a Canadian Reformed Church (when possible) and after that look for a church close to one's own, e.g. Christian Reformed or Free Reformed, then various Presbyterian Churches which still maintain the Westminster Standards, Evangelical or Confessional Lutheran Churches, Missionary Alliance, and any church where God's Word still receives a place of honour."

Colleague DB, your speaking is vague. You speak about true churches as those in which we find "the *desire and intent*" to continue building on the only foundation of the church, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures. In that respect you mention *the Twelve Articles*; you speak of all *kinds of denominations* and "any church where God's Word receives a place of honour."

I will also mention the following words in your "Handout," namely, that we are today confronted "with the reality that what must be considered a sect in one country or city may very well be the only true church elsewhere." Even though you describe sect as a group that has illegally separated from the true church, such speaking remains misleading. A sect is a group of people that illegally has separated from the true church, yes, but sects are also characterized by deviating doctrines.

Speaking of "desire and intent," about a sect that can somewhere else be the true church, mentioning first a defined, and then undefined, number of different denominations within which a local congregation can give a place of honour to God's Word, and then, in our modern time, that is dominated by Arminianism and experientialism and subjectivism; speaking about the Twelve Articles only as contents of the unity of faith, while not mentioning what we acknowledge as the standards of the unity of the true faith, (the contents of) our Three Forms of Unity, with their refutation of Arminianism, sub-

jectivism, and so on, is at least confusing. That is at least giving the impression of a broad plurality doctrine which promotes an attitude that says: I can go here and I can go there when away — it does not really matter — for I can find a true church everywhere.

No, I do not say that, per confessional definition, the Canadian Reformed Churches are the only true churches in Canada. I do not say that the possibility of finding a true congregation of Christ outside the Canadian Reformed Churches must be excluded on the basis of our confession. Our contact with the covenant Orthodox Reformed Church of Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, shows that there are. It is also true that our confession does not point at one specific denomination, but that it states the norms. That is right.

However, you also write in your letter about the irrelevance of church affiliation with respect to the trueness of a local church. This is quite a strong point in the "Handout" as well. You write: "This plurality . . . of true churches has unity of faith regardless of organizational unity." Here again I find a not-careful, confusing, overstatement of an argument to make a point. It gives the impression that affiliation is insignificant in connection with the question of true or false, faithful or unfaithful. And this is not true. When a local congregation, "where God's Word still receives a place of honour," remains in a federation of unfaithful, rebelling, liberal, or even false churches, is it then, nevertheless, my duty to worship there with them on the day of the Lord, if there is no Canadian Reformed Church, while I happen to be at that place? Is that acting in ecclesiastical faithfulness? My answer is: no.

Here again I see the same basis for the argumentation: God regenerates and works faith; together these believers have a place in the holy catholic church; therefore there is the communion of saints; church affiliation cannot change anything here; therefore there is that plurality of true local churches. The easiness with which the importance of church affiliation is reasoned away is based, ultimately, on regeneration in the heart, with a neglect of the norms of obedience.

### Conclusion

Br. DB states with great emphasis that neither he nor any office-bearer in the Immanuel Church at Edmonton has ever taken or considered God's secret decree of election as starting point and norm. I assume that Rev. DB has not understood what the Synod of Burlington-West meant. I shall give one more example.

Rev. DB has stated in another "handout" that "the Lord's Supper has been

given to, and therefore belongs to the household of faith. . . . Consequently, since the household of faith *includes every true believer, none* of such faithful believers may be denied access to the Lord's Table."

We fill in: the household of faith is the catholic church, all the believers; that means, all those who are regenerated as fruit of election.

It is clear that the right to take part at the Lord's Table is derived from membership in the catholic church, belonging to the household of faith, being a believer, being regenerated as fruit of election, while not living in sin. And those who maintain a closed table are called sectarian. They do not reckon with the catholic church. They reckon with sectarian church membership, we are told. To me this is founding one's reasoning on what God has done in the heart as fruit of election. To me this is, although I believe not intended, nevertheless in fact taking one's starting point in election and regeneration, and making that the norm. By the way, doesn't Art. 28 B.C. say that those who separate from and do not join the true church are acting against God's will?

I will say it again: We do not deny God's work in man's heart as fundamental for salvation and for the church gathering work of Christ. How can we, as Reformed confessors. But the point is that we must not use that subjective work of God in the individual believer as foundation and norm for ecclesiastical dealings and actions.

At the end of your letter you suggest that the synod's reasoning could be "synergistic." The reader may know that this means: Arminian. Saying that one can be a true believer without being a member of the catholic church, and that one becomes a member of the catholic church by joining a local true church, is suggested here to be synergistic or Arminian. You know, br. DB, that in the days of the Liberation Schilder and others were accused of Arminianism when they, stressing the obligation of obedience of faith, rejected subjectivism, which said: God makes His covenant with the regenerated only. Schilder's speaking about the condition of faith in the covenant that exists with all the children of the believers, was said to be Arminianistic. Let me tell you: what all along has caused the opposition to your thinking and speaking and writing has that same root: that speaking in line with the Liberation, rejecting subjectivism, and maintaining the covenantal manner of thinking in terms of promise and the obligation of obedience of faith to the norms of God's Word.

If the household of faith, seen as all the believers, all those who are regenerated, becomes the norm and basis for



our thinking and actions, then I see coming a situation in which cooperation in all kinds of broad, interdenominational organizations will be promoted and become a must. Then, on the basis of a broad communion of saints to which all the believers belong and with whom I am said to be placed in the unity of faith, I have to work together, e.g., in school education, in political actions, and so on. And when I then say that I see myself bound to the Three Forms of Unity in my actions and decisions, also in my joining or not joining organizations, instead of to a broad evangelical ecumenism, I am told

that I am a sectarian. Yes, br. DB, that I also see as the consequences of your writing and acting. And many times now, although in somewhat different ways, the churches have said to you in their synods and minor assemblies that they do not want to go with you in your direction.

Br. DB, subjectivism that builds on the fact of personal faith, regeneration, a wide catholic church, and interdenominational organizational cooperation will in the end undermine faithfulness to the confessional normativity. Look at the Synodical churches in the Netherlands. Look at the CRC in North America. Two

synods and many minor assemblies have struggled with you and tried to convince you.

Again: no, I do not want to say that the view that all the believers belong to the catholic church is a heresy, making one worthy of suspension. Yes, you can make your position strong with many quotations from many good Reformed men from the past. But the point is: How do you work with it? How do you apply it? With a pushing "therefore"? Or with a careful "but"? With regeneration and faith in the heart? Or with obedience to the norms?

J. GEERTSEMA

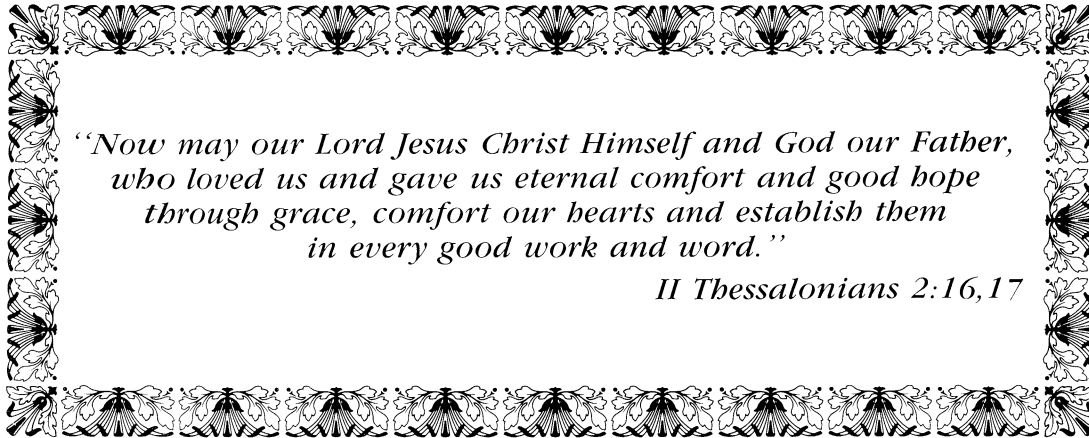
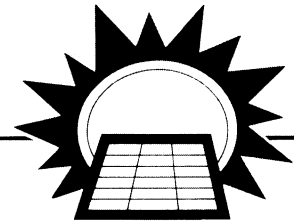
## *Ambassador Christian School Graduation Watford — June, 1986*



*The three graduates and Mr. Nap, the principal, posing with the logo of the Ambassador Christian School. From left to right: Wilbert Wubs, Caroline Wubs, Lucy Tamminga, Mr. S. Nap*



*Children singing at the graduation*



*“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort our hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”*

*II Thessalonians 2:16,17*

## Dear brothers and sisters,

At Christmas we may remember how our Lord Jesus Christ left His heavenly glory and took upon Himself our flesh and blood. The only Son of God came into this world to do for us and instead of us that which we could not do. He bore the eternal wrath of God against our sin. He humbles Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Thus He fulfilled for us all righteousness.

The forgiveness of our sins, our salvation and the eternal life we enjoy, is not the result of our human efforts or our own achievements. It all rests on God's gracious good pleasure and His divine election. That makes it so steadfast and secure, so reliable and lasting! He gives us eternal comfort!

Those who through the Gospel have learned to put their trust in God, will once also share in the glory which Christ has obtained for them by His death and resurrection. But we have not yet reached that goal of perfection! Paul warns us that hard and difficult times are in store for God's children. Times in which many will be led astray. He finds it necessary to warn not to let ourselves be deceived in any way by a spirit of lawlessness or by the activity of Satan, who shows up with pretended signs and wonders.

If there were no God, who is a refuge for His people no one would be able to stand firm. But the LORD in His grace has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sin. His kingdom is

an everlasting Kingdom! And so we are comforted and we keep up our hope and expectation. For we know that God our Father loved us and gave us this eternal comfort. What more do we need! If God is for us, who can be against us? Also as to the future, yes there is much we do not know, but we do know that God's promises are true and reliable. In spite of all kind of temptations, He will establish us. That's what Paul prays for. That's what we may pray for! That's what God will give, that we in word and deed serve Him, whether we are healthy or ill. Jesus lives and we live with Him. Therefore we know that our labour will not be in vain, but will bear fruit to the glory of God.

## From the mailbox:

There seem to be no "Sunshine-friends" having a birthday in December. If any of our readers would like to be included in our Birthday Calendar, or if you know of someone who is lonely, old or sick and who would benefit from our attention, please, let me know so that we can encourage and comfort one another as members of one body.

Fenny Kuik writes from Winnipeg:

"Thank you very much for putting my name in Clarion! I also like to thank everyone who sent me a card for my birthday. It is very exciting to look in the mailbox and find so many cards. It made me very happy!"

Doesn't that make you feel good, card-senders? Fenny, thanks also for your letter!

**Our birthday calendar:**

*In January the following brothers and sisters hope to celebrate their birthday.*

**LIZ KONING**

*Michener Centre, Box 50002  
Nightingale, N.B. Deerhome  
Red Deer, AB*

*Liz hopes to celebrate her 26th birthday on January 2. She is mentally and physically handicapped. She is originally from Edmonton where most of her relatives live.*

**CHRISTINE BREUKELMAN**

*Box 666  
Coaldale, AB TOK 0L0*

*Christine will be 25 years old on January 17th and attends a school for the handicapped. She likes happy music!*

**HENRY DRIEGEN**

*72 Ross Road, RR 3  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1M3*

*Henry will be 31 years old on January 17th.*

**GRACE HOMAN**

*RR 2  
St. Ann's, ON L0R 1Y0*

*Grace would be delighted to receive some mail on January 17th when she hopes to celebrate her 31st birthday.*

**JANINE SMID**

*RR 1  
Arkona, ON NOM 1B0*

*Janine loves cards and pictures. She hopes to celebrate her 17th birthday on January 19th.*

**HANK ORSEL**

*705 Surrey Lane  
Apartment 1201  
Burlington, ON L7T 3Z4*

*Hank has been on our birthday calendar for several years already. He will be 56 years old on January 27th.*

*A happy and joyful birthday to all of you!  
Wishing you all the LORD's guidance and blessing for the year 1987.*

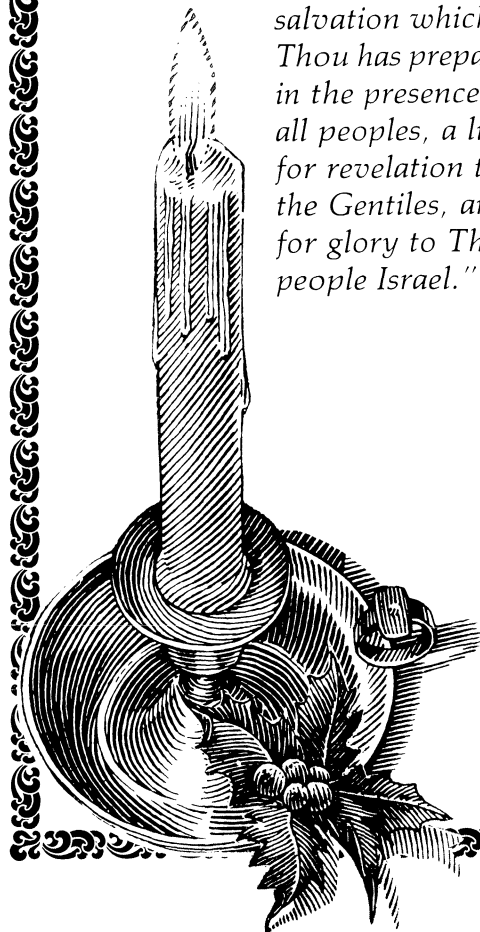
*Yours,*

**MRS. J. MULDER**

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

*Luke 2:25,26*

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel."*





## About retirement of ministers

The *Acts of Synod 1986* have reached the membership.

Here and there Consistories are already busy "ratifying" the synodical decisions.

This is a good thing and a laudable endeavour as long as it is kept in mind that this action does not entail that these decisions become binding only when a Consistory or the Consistories have approved of them. It "only" means that our Consistories investigate whether the decisions were made in accordance with the mandate given and whether there are any elements in them which conflict with the Word of God or which are against the adopted order.

There is no doubt about it that this scrutinizing and judging is important and even necessary. We wish our Consistories much wisdom and great faithfulness with this labour.

Sometimes we discover a misunderstanding as if a Consistory were allowed to try to have a decision changed only when they are convinced that a decision conflicts with God's Word or with our Church Order. This is what we called it: a misunderstanding.

If a Consistory is convinced that a decision should be changed, it has the perfect right to do its best to achieve such a change, even when it neither can nor does say that God's Word has been transgressed or the Church Order violated by the relevant decision.

From one of my colleagues I heard that "his" Consistory is considering proposing to the next General Synod to re-

store Article 13 of our Church Order to the form in which it was adopted at the Synod Cloverdale 1983. You can find it in our *Book of Praise*, page 658.

I, for one, would be most happy if this were done and achieved.

It is about the decision of Synod 1986 regarding this Art. 13 C.O. that I wish to write a few lines, or perhaps not just "a few."

### What happened?

In the year 1985 yours truly reached the age of 65.

Article 13 of our Church Order as adopted by the Synod of Cloverdale 1983 gave him the right to retire at that time, for it says, "If a minister of the Word, upon reaching retirement age, does retire. . . ."

Yours truly did not retire right away when his 65th birthday was there, for he did not wish the work of the winter season broken off. He did not wish to bring the Consistory into difficulties either.

Thus, in consultation with the Consistory, it was decided that the retirement was to begin after the last Sunday in April.

And so yours truly retired officially on May 1, 1985.

But then it was discovered that — O disaster! — no classis had had a finger in this pie. Horrible! Neither had regional-synodical deputies been involved. Terrible!

And thus the thought was born to have this evil corrected. It should not happen again that a minister could just retire without the high approval of the church federation, not even when the Church Order gave him the express right to do so. Then the Church Order should be changed!

### A sad thing

Do you know what was the saddest aspect of this effort to change Art. 13 C.O.?

That for many years our Consistories had the opportunity to bring in their objections to the provision "If a minister of the Word, upon reaching retirement age, does retire. . . ." but that, to the best of my recollection, not one Church did so. If I am mistaken in this, I shall publicly correct my statement.

Although I could go back even further in history, let it suffice to begin with what was written in January 1979, more than seven years before Synod 1986, convened April 15, 1986, and more than six years before yours truly retired.

The Committee for the Revision of the Church Order wrote to all Consistories — and this document was sent in as many copies as there were office-bearers in a Church, plus a few for the archives — among other things, the following:

Herewith you receive a "complete draft" of our revised Church Order, in accordance with the decision of the General Synod of Coaldale 1977, Acts Art. 71, which Synod instructed our Committee

"To forward a complete draft along with brief explanations to the Churches within one year and to invite comments on it."

With this complete draft we also add "brief explanations" wherever required. We understand that it was not Synod's intention that we are to write a commentary, however concise, on our Church Order, but that we are to explain the changes which we propose as well as deletions and/or additions. Complying with Synod's mandate, we

hereby request the Churches to send their comments and/or criticisms before August 1, 1979. . . .

In this very same submission to the Churches reasons were given for the provision that ministers have the right to retire upon reaching retirement age. The Committee wrote the following.

2. As for "retirement age," we fail to see why this needs further explanation. Until now no provision was inserted which even gave ministers the express right to retire at a certain age; we deemed it advisable simply to express in this article what has been a fact in the Churches for many decades. For that reason the old redaction cannot be used.

Further specification of "retirement age" would seem undesirable, since the legal retirement age might change in the course of time. The proposed wording does not require ministers to retire upon reaching the legal age.

Now, the saddest aspect is not that efforts are made to improve on what was decided before. We should always try to improve on things. The saddest aspect is that it has become clear that not sufficient attention was paid to the reports on the revision of the Church Order in the course of several years.

After I had retired and when a brother sort of tried to rap me over the knuckles because this was done without classical involvement, and when I pointed out to him that what had happened was wholly in accordance with our Church Order, he looked incredulously at me as if I tried to pull a fast one or had pulled a rabbit out of a hat. He never knew that this was in the Church Order, although he had, at one time or another, seen all the reports on the revision. I almost got the impression that he thought that I had managed to get it in surreptitiously.

It is also for this reason that I stressed in the beginning that scrutinizing of the Acts of Synod is necessary. The more closely our Consistories examine them, the better it is for the Churches of Christ.

### Why "retirement age?"

The question may come up why the provision was inserted that a minister is allowed to retire upon reaching retirement age.

The answer to this question is simple: because it renders possible to do legitimately what had been done contrary to our Church Order until then.

Every one who reads the text as adopted by Synod 1986 will come to the conclusion that the *only* reason why a minister is allowed to retire is when he "is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office because of age, illness, physical or mental disability."

No minister will be permitted to retire at age 65 or 70 or even 100 unless he has been rendered "incapable" of performing the duties of his office.

Ministers who are healthy and strong even though they are eighty years of age, *have* to continue. Don't ask what "their" congregation will say.

I wonder how many of my colleagues who voted in favour of this change at Synod 1986 will actually comply with the new Article 13!

Perhaps someone remarks nonchalantly, "Aw, you should not take that literally; don't be so formalistic."

Do you know who is the one who will tell you not to be "formalistic," i.e. insisting on loyal observance of the provisions of our Church Order?

The person who wants to defend a deviation from the agreement made and wants to circumvent its provisions.

And attitude such as, "Yes, but you should not take that literally, that is not the meaning of it," undermines the faithfulness within the confederation of Churches and is *disastrous* in the long run.

Churches beware!!

The practice was — also in the Netherlands — that a minister could retire without being incapable of performing the duties of the office.

I don't like giving many quotations because one can almost always find something to suit one's purpose. Just for illustration the following from Joh. Jansen's *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkenordening*.

"The reason for this being incapable can be age, for which the churches have now indicated the age of 70, or a number of at least forty years in the ministry."

Sort of strange, isn't it, when it can be determined by official decision that having reached the age of 70 or having served in the ministry for at least forty years

renders one incapable of continuing!

It is illegitimate as well. A Synod is allowed to *change* the Church Order when there are proposals to that effect on its table; a Synod is definitely not allowed to make decisions which *conflict* with the Church Order or which *override* the Church Order in a particular point.

### Professors

There are more strange things in ecclesiastical life.

I just took out of my bookcase a year-book of our Dutch sister-churches. It is the one of 1983.

Turning to page 53, I found there mentioned under "Dokkum": "Drs. H.M. Ohmann . . . Emeritus July 19, 1981. Professor at the Theological College in Kampen."

I'm sure that my brother won't take it ill of me that I mention his name. The issue is that he is listed here as minister-emeritus, whereas he is strong and healthy and full of vigour. Isn't this a silly thing, when you come to think of it?

In our Dutch sister-churches a minister who becomes a professor of theology is declared "minister-emeritus" according to Art. 13 C.O.

Are they really incapable of performing the duties of the office of a minister because of "age, illness, . . . etc.?"

As far as I know quite a few of them grasp every opportunity to go out preaching — and who that loves preaching would *not* do that? — and thus they prove almost every week that they are not incapable at all.

Besides, would the Churches be served if someone who is incapable of performing the duties of the ministry for the above reasons, were "retired" to the position of professor of theology?

When, in 1968, we were faced with the question, "What will the position be

## Psalm 118:7

*Blest he who in the LORD's Name enters!  
We bless you from the house of God.  
He is our strength and our salvation;  
The LORD has shed His light abroad.  
Bind festal offerings to the altar;  
With sacrifices bring Him laud.  
Shout forth your joy within His temple.  
O praise the LORD, for He is God.*

of the professors at our to-be-opened Theological College?" we refused to go this way.

Our readers can look it up in the *Acts 1968*, page 56, Art. 163.

What did Synod 1968 decide?

That a Church whose minister was appointed as professor at our College would be asked to release this minister from the *work* in the congregation in order to permit him fully to give himself to the task at the College. No "retirement," but simply released for that special task. He remains a minister — not minister-emeritus — of that Church.

Synod 1968 also decided — in case a brother from a sister federation is appointed — that the Church in the territory where the College was to be established would be asked to call that brother, install him as minister of the Church and then release him from active work for the task at the College. That's what was done, too.

Thus our professors Deddens and Faber are ministers of the Church at Hamilton. And if it ever should happen in the future that a brother from abroad is appointed, the Church at Ancaster will receive the request.

### Allowed to retire?

Another question may pop up as well.

It is the question whether a minister is allowed to retire while he is still able to perform the duties of his office.

Has he not been called and is he not bound to the service of the Church for life, as Art. 12 C.O. has it? Should he then not serve for as long as he is able to, to "die in full suit or armour," as a Dutch expression has it, i.e. while still fulfilling the obligations as an active minister?

It was in 1958 when we discussed the question.

During the second General Synod, Synod 1958 in Carman, we as ministers had the free run of the house of John and Ardis Kuik on Sunday evenings and were "among ourselves," as the owners of the house fled to safer regions for the time being.

Once, when they came home, they faced the unpleasant task of removing a dead skunk which had been deposited right in front of the door by some pranksters who undoubtedly wanted to test these ministers' courage and agility.

But this has nothing to do with Art. 13 C.O. Or does it?

During one of these evening gatherings the question came up whether as ministers of the Gospel we would have the right to retire even if we were still capable of performing the duties of the office. Some were in doubt. One of us exclaimed, "But I am going to retire at sixty! If you still wish to enjoy it, you should not wait till you need a walker to get

around!" I have to chuckle when I consider this brother's course of life and activities since that day.

The Rev. J. Van Popta was always very down to earth. He stated, "The general situation is such that people may retire at age 65. This applies to the population as a whole and there is no reason why ministers should be an exception."

Is this not a simple truth?

Would the Lord disapprove of it if a minister, after having been on call practically twenty-four hours a day for many years, retires at age 65, or later if he wishes to, in accordance with the generally accepted standards?

Don't think now that I try to win an argument by prying into hidden things or by asking questions which are impossible to answer.

There are many provisions in our Church Order for which we cannot quote any places in Holy Scripture to prove that they are based on the express Word of God.

I do think, however, that some support from Scripture can be gathered for retirement at a certain age. Although it is certainly not so that I wish to put today's ministers of the Gospel on a level with the priests or the Levites of the Old Testament Church, we may get some guidance from the following.

In the first part of Numbers the Lord speaks about the Levites, members of the tribe of Levi which, in its totality, had been set apart and consecrated for the service "in the tent of meeting."

Numbers 8:24 ff. reads:

This is what pertains to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall go in to perform the work in the service of the tent of meeting, and from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the work of the service and serve no more, but minister to their brethren in the tent of meeting, to keep the charge, and they shall do no service.

Dr. A. Noordtjij translated the last part as follows (vs. 26):

Even if they help their brothers with their ministry in the tent of meeting, yet they may not do any service.

The Levites were compelled to retire at age 50. They were allowed to help their brothers with their service if they wished to, but should abstain from doing the work itself.

Compulsory retirement at age 50!

Did this "retirement age" tend "to undermine the character of the ministry as a life-long office and calling" as Synod 1986 has it?

Synod made a good-sounding, but incorrect and not-well-considered statement.

We should totally abandon the idea

as if being a minister of the Gospel brings with it a *character indelibilis*, i.e. something which cleaves to the person for as long as he lives. That is the Romish contention. According to the Romish concept, one can take away the right to *function* as a priest but never the priesthood itself once the man has been ordained.

This is not what we believe.

All emphasis is to be placed on the *calling*.

### Calling

The calling of the one can be different from the calling of the other.

Elders and deacons are called for a specific period of time. Every three or four years they retire from office, when their call "runs out," so to speak.

Ministers are called for life, with the promise that the Church that calls will take care of their needs for as long as they live. And as long as a minister is bound to that particular Church, he is also bound to do the work of a minister to the best of his ability.

However, is it now really wrong when the Churches agree: "The work of a minister will not have to be done by him after a certain age or if he becomes disabled?"

Does this not mean that the calling to *work* covers one's life only till he reaches retirement age?

And does this speaking of "retirement age" now really tend "to undermine the character of the ministry as a life-long office and calling" as Synod 1986 has it?

In this statement the nature of the office and the character of the calling have not sufficiently been taken into account. This statement, therefore, leads to a false conclusion.

### Federation involvement

With what is said about the "dictates" of Reformed Church Polity with respect to the involvement of the Church federation in Considerations 2 of the synodical decision no one will have any quarrel, except perhaps for the formulation.

However, what was to be proved is that the federation must be involved when Art. 13 contains the provision that a minister is allowed to retire "upon reaching retirement age."

Every one knows that this day comes, if the Lord spares His servant that long.

Who needs classical or regional-synodical approval when he simply follows the road upon which the Churches have agreed in their Church Order?

What would give a classis or regional-synodical deputies the right to say "No," and thus to overrule the Church Order, or from what would they derive the right to claim that only when they say "Yes," one may do what has been provided in our Church Order?

And what "irregularities" — Consideration 3 — could occur when the Church Order is kept?

Of course there will be consultation with the Consistory as to the precise date of retirement from active service, but both Consistory and minister know that the time is coming and when.

If the relation between Congregation and minister is good, there will be consultation. If this relation is not good, the sooner he disappears after reaching retirement age, the better for the Church.

### Return necessary

It will be necessary to return to the formulation of Synod 1983, the formulation found in our present *Book of Praise*.

I repeat: In the present situation no minister is allowed to retire without being incapable of serving.

No classis or regional-synodical deputies have the right to approve of a minister's retirement unless they have become convinced that the man is unable to serve any longer.

Any different conclusion or advice would constitute a violation of Art. 13 C.O., a violation of the faithfulness to the adopted rules.

Formalistic?

No, simply an abiding by what we have agreed upon.

Deviation from it in this case would open the way to deviation in other respects as well.

For this reason I hope from the heart that there will be proposals to the next General Synod to return to the 1983 redaction, and that in the future not again so lightly an article is changed.

Until then we may not expect any minister to retire except for inability to perform the duties of his office.

Sorry, my dear colleagues.

### Retirement age

One of the arguments brought to the fore why the provision concerning retirement age should be deleted was: "The retirement age of a minister is not determined. It could be set arbitrarily."

From the 1979 submission I quote again.

Further specification of "retirement age" would seem undesirable, since the legal retirement age might change in the course of time.

The argument brought to the fore is pretty poor.

Would there really be anyone who could be expected to reason as follows, "Art. 13 C.O. speaks of 'retirement age.' I want to retire at 48, so I set my retirement age at 48?"

Would not everyone with normal

brains understand "retirement age" as referring to the generally accepted or even legally fixed age at which people may retire?

Right now that age is 65; voices have been heard to make it 60 or even 55, but 65 is the generally accepted age. It may become necessary to make it 70, when an ever-shrinking younger part of society will have to provide for an ever-increasing percentage of elderly citizens.

Thus it was not considered wise to fix a certain age in Art. 13 C.O.

But to state, "It could be set arbitrarily" is fighting against windmills as Don Quichote did.

### Final exhortation

Also from all the above it may become clearer that the Consistories will have to pay due attention to proposals submitted to them and have to scrutinize the Acts of Synod thoroughly in order that the Churches may remain in the old, truly Reformed way.

It also shows that Synods should deal only with proposals which have come from the Churches after thorough preparation.

About this point another time.

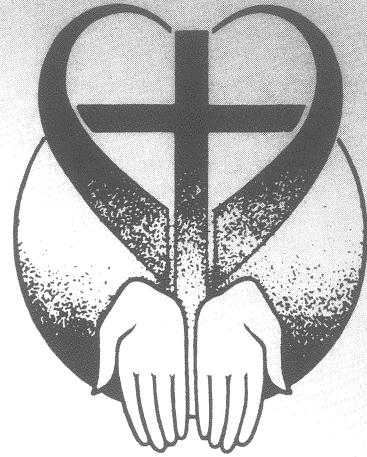
VO

On July 5 Martin Onderwater was married to Susan Huttema. This was an especially joyous occasion. The reason is that from both the bride and groom, two sets of grandparents could be present, namely: Mr. and Mrs. P. Huttema, Mr. and Mrs. C. Leyenhorst (bride), Mr. and Mrs. M. Onderwater, Mr. and Mrs. J. van Dijk (groom).



(from l-r) Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Huttema, Mr. and Mrs. P. Huttema, Mr. and Mrs. C. Leyenhorst, Bride and Groom, Mr. and Mrs. M. Onderwater Sr. Mr. and Mrs. J. van Dijk Sr., Mr. and Mrs. C. Onderwater

# CRWRF Annual Report for 1986



*“And He had compassion on them . . .”*

We, who bear the name Christian, are called to have compassion, as our Saviour did, on those in need: to feed the hungry, to lift up the fatherless, to comfort the homeless and the oppressed. The task seems to grow rather than diminish by the year, yet if each of us does his part, much *can* be accomplished. In 1986, your gifts of compassion met the following needs:

### Health Care Unit, Busan, Korea

Though Korea's economic outlook is gradually brightening, poor communities still suffer from the growing pains that country is experiencing. Many people in

### BUDGET FOR 1987

Children's Home, Achego, Kenya	\$21,000.00
Health Care Unit, Busan, Korea	13,200.00
ZOA Christian International Refugee Care	2,000.00
World Concern (for support of the Madanys)	2,000.00
Publications and Administration	850.00
Slide/Film Presentations	450.00
Miscellaneous	200.00
Relief and Long-term Development Aid	25,200.00

Total Expenses \$65,000.00



*An agricultural worker in the nursery with fast growing Leucaena seedlings. They can grow four metres in one year, providing fuelwood to the people, fodder for their livestock, and enrichment for the soil (Jilib, Somalia)*

the slums of Busan must exist on very little and thus depend on the health care our clinic offers. Our nurses cheerfully serve, attesting both in conduct and in speech to the love and truth of the Gospel. The unit is also blessed by the helpful attitude of such gospel hospital staff as Gynecologist, Dr. Eun Dong Pak. He willingly comes down to the centre when requested, to provide specialized care to women who would otherwise have to do without.

### Achego Children's Home, Kenya

Achego's faithful longtime manager Mr. Barnabas Paulo, retired early this year, and the African Inland Church which supervises our home, appointed Rev Kutte to take his place. Kees Rookmaake recently reported, after a visit to the home that the sixty children who call Achego "home," are well and they express gratitude for our support. However, some changes needed to be initiated, e.g. better bathroom facilities and other repairs are a must.





*Local people, in a food-for-work development project, plant fast-growing trees around the dams, thus helping to ensure water for their livestock during the dry season*

### **Leprosy Communities — Somalia**

Again this year, we contributed a small gift to the support of Michael and Oetje Madany, Reformed believers who work under the auspices of World Concern in Somalia, East Africa.

Agriculturalist and nursing skills enable them to contribute much to the leprosy communities of Jilib where their team works. Their recent furlough allowed for a brief visit to Ontario, and some of you, through a slide evening, gained a clearer perspective on the work the Lord has called them to. May we all, aware of what a challenge it is to be a light in a Moslem society, give their efforts our prayerful support.

### **Development Work in Bangladesh**

Our almost three-year involvement in development work in Bangladesh came to an end this year as Peter and Geraldine Ysselstein and their two daughters returned to Ontario. (They were sent out by CRWRC, but we had underwritten all of their program costs.) We are grateful for the excellent work they did among the Shantals, a very poor, land-less people

living in north-west Bangladesh. It is also encouraging to learn that the many projects they initiated in literacy and health training, cottage industries, savings skills, agriculture, etc., are still functioning well.



*This little one, along with 59 others, is now receiving shelter, food, and a Christian upbringing at Achege*

### **Ban Vinai Refugee Camp, Thailand**

This past year saw considerable progress towards ZOA's goal of having the approximately 45,000 refugees at Ban Vinai, assume more responsibility for their own health care. Improvements have been made, yet the central question of freedom remains unsolved. As time passes, Thailand is understandably becoming impatient with a refugee population it originally envisioned as temporary guests. The numbers in this host country remain large. In fact, the total number of registered refugees increased during 1986 from 128,000 to 130,000. Although some 30,000 left for resettlement, a slightly larger number was registered as new refugees. Most were infants born in the camps; about 3,300 were new boat refugees from Vietnam. (An additional 240,000 Cambodian refugees live on evacuation sites at the Cambodian border.)

The government has decided to make camp life more strict in order to more strongly encourage people to either return to Laos or strive for resettlement in a third country. This policy of "human deterrence" states, for example, that all refugee salaries must soon be discontinued. ZOA is trying to work with the government to make the required adjustments in a way that stresses the personal responsibility of the refugees, but doesn't destroy their already limited freedom.

### **Afghanistan**

The Soviet genocide of Afghanistan continues and the terrible totals of dead and wounded rise. So too do the numbers of those fleeing their beloved homeland. More than *three million* now live in makeshift communities in Pakistan, existing in miserable conditions, hoping someday to



Literacy classes in north west Bangladesh help the very poor in their struggle for self-sufficiency



A Hmong woman in typical garb — one of the approximately 45,000 housed at Ban Vinai refugee camp (Thailand)

return home. CRWRF is considering avenues for assistance here and hopes, with your help, to expand its efforts to assist these very needy people also.

### Hunger in Africa

Major relief agencies are lamenting sharp declines in contributions this year as the media no longer directs our compassion to the famine-related suffering in Africa. Why the decline? Largely it is because of a prevailing public perception that the problems in Africa are over. The crisis is past, the media have left, and people are no longer challenged via heart-stirring pictures to give.

However, though happily the situation in Africa is indeed much improved, it is still precarious. A short-term drought could return millions to the brink of starvation. Some "pockets" of extreme hunger still exist but the major crucial need now is for long-term development. Unfortunately, development attracts neither media attention nor major donor dollars. We are hopeful that *your* faithful giving will not diminish, but rather will enable us to reach our 1986 budgeted amount of \$25,000 for hunger relief. Monies sent so far this year have been largely used in food-for-work development projects in Mali, the Sudan, and Northern Kenya — under the direct supervision of local missionaries and their co-workers. We are happy to report that our contributions are indeed getting through and are making a difference. Gospel Missionary Union missionaries, for example, noted that the Canadian Foodgrains Bank project

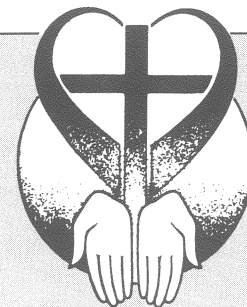
(through which we have channelled a large percentage of African relief monies) "has been a blessing to many and a way of giving witness to our Lord." Please continue to give, enabling us to address the problems and help find solutions to hunger in Africa.

### Conclusion

Our reports are usually accompanied by appeals for support. Hopefully you do not tire of this. Hunger, homelessness, disease, oppression — none of these is a short-term problem, and any solutions

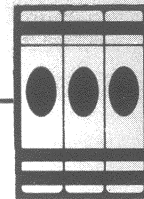
require sustained caring and giving. However, let us not grow weary of well-doing, but rather, give of our time, our prayers, and our finances with joy, knowing that "as much as you did it unto the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Gifts for the work of  
*CRWRF*  
may be directed to:



*CRWRF*  
PO Box 793  
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y7

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



## Marks of the Christians

D. Koole, *Openbare Kenmerken van de ware Christenen*, Emmeloord, 1986. Available at the Christelijke Boekencentrale 't Gulden Boek, Margrietlaan 7, Langbroek, the Netherlands. Price: Nfl.25. — (mail.excl.).

### Marks

It is well-known that Art. 29 of our Belgic Confession deals with the marks of the true and the false Church. That is even the title of this article. These marks are often discussed and it is very important to bear in mind "that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God what is the true Church, for all sects which are in the world today claim for themselves the name of Church."

But between the enumeration of the marks of the true Church and those of the false Church, there is also a passage in the same article which is very important, namely, the section concerning the marks of Christians.

First let me quote that passage: "Those who are of the Church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin and pursue righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works. Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life. They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him." That this kind of mark is not to be separated from the marks of the Church is also clear from the three parts of the book of Mr. D. Koole (I translate): "Christian Faith, Christian Attitude, and Reflection on the Ecclesiastical Situation in the Netherlands."

### The author

It is noteworthy that the author of this book is not a theologian or a teacher. He was for many years connected with the practice of a chartered accountant. It is interesting to quote some sentences from the preface of this book, written by the Rev. Joh. Francke. He tells us that the author "has been at work as a member of the Church and as a believer of Christ in the world. His book was a work of years. It has grown in his life and has matured in his mind. That does not mean that it deals with his own ideas in his heart. No, he wanted to pass to us the own Word of God. Hence the contents of God's Word is the norm for our action. Koole's book is the description of a Scriptural ethics for our life in Church and State and society. That has great value in a time in which people ask less and less for the will of God, with the consequence that life is becoming more and more coarse and godless. It must also be said that language and style will appeal to the people. The presentation is clear and invites reading. We are not to underestimate that. There is a complaint that also the people of the Church of today read little. That is a bad sign. The LORD says that God's people will perish because they have no knowledge; that is, no knowledge of faith. In order to show publicly the marks of the true Christian it is necessary to know them, to learn them from the Scriptures. The great merit of Koole's book is that it summarizes for the reader what the Scripture teaches us concerning this matter."

A significant point is also that the author became a member of a Reformed Church (liberated) at a later age with full conviction. So he time and again talks about things which he experienced himself.

### Unjust contrasts

The author stresses that we must not place doctrine and life over against each other. We ought to be hearers and doers of God's Word as well. He writes: "From one's way of life it must become evident whether the doctrine is really accepted" (p. 34).

He mentions also another wrong contrast; namely, the contrast between the law and the gospel. He says: These are often placed over against each other, but "the law is not without the gospel and the gospel is not without the law" (p.40).

Neither may a contrast be made between justification and sanctification: "The acceptance of God's promise of justification has to be connected with the acceptance of sanctification. This is a real part of Christian faith, also for this earthly life" (p. 54).

The author also emphasizes that the promise and the obligation of God's covenant may not be separated from each other (p.98).

### Passages as a whole

The author quotes many texts from the Bible, but not as mere texts, isolated from their context. He puts emphasis on the fact that we may not select texts in such a way that we separate them from the rest of the passage. In this respect he points, for instance, to Romans 7:24, where Paul writes: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" But then the author says: We may not get stuck to misery, because vs.24 is to be connected with vs.25 and from these verses together we learn that faith brings forth fruits. The marks become public! And also connected with that is the last part of vs.25, which says that faith has consequences. The result is: "I of myself serve the law of God with my mind" (p. 57 ff.).

## No ambiguous attitude!

It is important that the author writes about the fact that we may not have an ambiguous attitude, but that we must be consistent in serving God. He works that out in the attitude concerning marriage, family, education, and bringing up children. So he makes it very concrete for the people.

He also stresses that the obligation of obedience of faith in life and doctrine may never be minimized or played down. No water may be added to the wine! (p.97).

## Choice of the Church

Extensively the author writes about the necessity of the right choice with respect to the Church. "The existence of

many 'churches' and groups is predicted by the Scripture. Nobody can excuse himself with the argument: there are so many churches, I could not make my choice, etc." (p.125). There is an obligation to make the right choice with regard to the Church: "The seriousness and the contents of the Bible and the confessions of the Church force one to the right choice. They point to the norms. The Bible and the confession themselves are norm and touchstone showing whether the one only true Christian choice is made" (p.130).

## Conclusion

At the end of his book, Mr. Koole gives the complete text of the Act of Secession of 1834 and also the complete text of the Act of Liberation of 1944, after

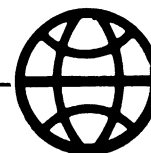
having pointed to the situation in the Roman Catholic Church, the "State" Church and the "synodical" Churches in the Netherlands. He says at the end of his book: Today we have a "Church" without communion of saints, we have "Christians" without Church, we have "Christianity" without Christ, we have "reconciliation" without satisfaction, we have "heaven" without hell.

I think sometimes it is clearly shown in this book that the author is not a theologian. But that does not matter. This book is a valuable and timely book.

The publisher presented it with a clear print and an attractive hard cover, with golden lettering on the back and the front cover.

K. DEDDENS

# INTERNATIONAL



## A SCRIBE, BUT NOT TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES

College Station, Texas (Associated Press) — A Biblical scholar said Wednesday he has identified the man who wrote or edited at least eight books of the Bible, including Deuteronomy, one of the five books attributed to Moses.

Dr. Richard Friedman, professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at the University of California at San Diego, said a 5th century B.C. scribe named Baruch ben Neriah probably wrote most of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1st and 2nd Chronicles and 1st and 2nd Kings.

The finding casts doubt on the authorship of much of the Old Testament, Friedman said . . . .

Baruch ben Neriah, which means Baruch, son of Neriah, is identified in Scripture as a secretary or special assistant to the prophet Jeremiah . . . . Friedman said Baruch wrote most of Jeremiah. (AN)

\* \* \*

Theologians attending the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission said they have agreed on a statement regarding salvation and justification.

The theologians reached the agreement after two years of discussions.

A summary statement of the recent Anglican-Catholic agreement on salvation and justification has been released. It indicates that the international commission's theologians concentrated on a "proper

understanding" of four areas:

"The faith through which we are justified"

A correct understanding of the term "justification"

The relationship between good works and salvation

The church's role in the "process of salvation."

"It is (the commission's) view that this agreed statement is coherent with the official formularies to which each communion is committed," according to the summary statement. "Moreover, the commission submits that any outstanding differences of interpretation or ecclesiological emphasis are not such as can justify continuing separation between Anglicans and Roman Catholics." (CT)

\* \* \*

Church members opposed to a 1988 merger of the American Lutheran Church (ALC) with two other Lutheran bodies are proposing the formation of an alternative association called the Association of American Lutheran Churches. Meanwhile, if two-thirds of the ALC congregations approve, it will merge with the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. (CT)

\* \* \*

## GENEVA (EPS)

Organizations which fight against

Apartheid in South Africa and Namibia receive more than half of the \$400,000 which the World Council of Churches distributes this year from the special fund for the Program to Combat Racism. (ND)

\* \* \*

## TEL AVIV (DFP)

For the first time in the history of Israel women will be allowed to co-decide about the appointment of a rabbi. The Labour Party of foreign minister Simon Peres made this decision. (ND)

\* \* \*

## BUJUMBURA/MÜNCHEN (KNA)

The government of Burundi intensified its campaign against the church. According to the West German Roman Catholic organization "Missio" at Aachen all 238 Roman Catholic schools were confiscated in the beginning of October without any prior notice. The approximately 300,000 students of these schools suddenly found the doors closed. All furniture and teaching equipment had been confiscated. (ND)

\* \* \*

## LONDON (AP)

The British House of Commons approved by a vote of 303 against 25 a measure whereby women can be ordained as deacons in the Anglican Church. (ND)

VC

## *Guido de Brès High School Commencement*

There was excitement in the air on the afternoon of October 17, 1986, at Guido de Brès High School. The halls were astir with students running here and there, the kitchen hummed with the activities of a dozen ladies as a feast was prepared and the gym echoed the commands of instructors as balloons and streamers were hung in decoration.

Why all the fuss, you may ask? Nothing less than the commencement exercises for the tenth graduating class of Guido de Brès High School were in the making. Tonight the class of '86 would re-

turn to Guido to hear their final lectures, but also to receive well-earned diplomas and awards.

And return they did. Dressed in their finest, they had never been so eager to come back to the old school. Together with board members, staff, and parents, the graduands enjoyed an excellent meal, served by the ladies auxiliary. From the buzz of conversation that came from their table, it was obvious that already the graduands had much news to exchange.

The meal was followed by commencement exercises held in Bethel Tabernacle.

The school band performed Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" as the procession of graduands entered the auditorium.

Psalms 57:1, 4, 5 were sung by the audience, followed by Scripture reading from Philippians 2 by Mr. J. Boot, chairman of the board. Mr. Boot also led in opening prayer, asking for the Lord's blessing over the evening's ceremonies. A welcome was extended to the many people in attendance.

As has become the tradition over the years, the principal, Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff then took the opportunity to wish the grad-



*Back row: Alan Datema, Gordon Vandergriendt, Henry Buist, Harry Vandekemp, Ken Wieske, Allan Schulenberg, Theo Beijes, Mike Douma, Frank Schuurman, Norm Vanderee, Rick Ludwig, Mark Komdeur, Dave Smouter, James Herringa, Dave Nienhuis  
Middle row: John Breukelman, Sharon Ludwig, Michelle Kamstra, Marian Linde, Ebelien Woudenberg, Diane Jager, Judy Groenwold, Henriette Bosscher, Carolin DeBoer, Sue DeJager, Linda Vandebos, Hetty Hofsink, Irene Hoeksema, Sonja Jans, Edith Hofsink, Teresa Bartels, Annette VanAndel, Carl Vandermaarl  
Front row: Dave Bos, Gilbert Buikema, Carrie VanSydenborgh, Francine Medemblik, Karen Buitenhuis, Ramona Bultje, Angela Hummel, Joanne Bartels, Wendy Vis, Michelle Smink, Joanne Oostdyk, Corinne Terpstra, Trudy VanDyk, Ray VanVeen (absent: Ed Vandervegte)*

uands a final farewell. Dr. Oosterhoff's word of admonition and encouragement was followed by two selections sung by a mixed chorus. The senior girls' choir was joined by a number of male graduates. This was the first time in our short history that graduands sang at their own ceremony, but we do hope to see it happen again.

The chairman of the board, then presented Secondary School Graduation Diplomas to each of forty-nine students, and a Certificate of Education to one.

After praise had been sung by the audience from Psalm 107, Mr. Garnet Peet, himself a Guido de Brès alumnus and a recent graduate of our Theological College, delivered a memorable address to the graduating students. Mr. Peet told of five students of Lyons who lived during the time of the Reformation. Of their struggles you may read elsewhere, for the address to the graduates has also been published in this issue.

A large girls' choir then sang two selections, directed by Mrs. L. Snow. There-

upon proficiency awards for the highest Grade XII averages were handed to the following graduates by Miss T. Hutten: Joanne Bartels, Michelle Kamstra, Carrie Van Sydenborgh, Edith Hofsink, David Smouter, Diane Jager, Norman Vanderee, Henriette Bosscher, Karen Buitenhuis, Carolin DeBoer.

Mr. E. Baartman then presented Guido de Brès School Awards to Carolin DeBoer, Sharon Ludwig, Dave Nienhuis, and Wendy Vis. These awards were earned for academic achievement as well as for participation in athletic and extracurricular events.

Congratulations and the prestigious Student Council Award were presented by Paul Sloots, president of the current student council, to Carolin DeBoer. In all her four years at Guido, but especially as a senior student, Carolin made great contributions to the school. By her energy and enthusiasm, she helped make Guido an enjoyable place for herself and her fellow students.

Award presentations were followed

by a second short performance of the Mixed Chorus. Ken Wieske then took the stage to deliver a thoughtful and humorous valedictory speech. He acknowledged that Guido de Brès has a special place in the hearts and memories of the graduates. Appreciation was expressed on behalf of the graduation class for the privilege of attending a school where the riches of God's promises are not forgotten. Before saying his final good-bye, Ken reminded his fellow graduates of some treasured moments during their four years together — moments that would not soon be forgotten.

And so we reached the final points of our evening program. In the singing of Psalm 56:4 and 5 and in closing prayer we gave thanks to our Covenant God for all that we have in Him — our life, our hope, and our salvation. When the band had played "O Canada" and ushered out the graduates and audience with appropriate recessional music, another memorable page of Guido de Brès High School history had been filled. J.R. RUGGI

## *The five students of Lyons*

*Here follows the speech given by Mr. Garnet Peet, B.A., M. Div., a former Guido student, at the Guido de Brès High School Commencement Exercises held on October 17, 1986.*

Having asked the question, "What do you think of when I say, 'Guido,'" and having mentioned some of the recreational experiences most Guido grads have in common, Mr. Peet continued:

But I hope you also say, "When I think of Guido, I think of a school that showed me how to think, and be Reformed." Graduates of Guido, tonight I want you to think about the past so that you can face the future. And if there's one thing that all Guido Graduates have in common, it's that we were taught the Reformed faith, not just in Reformed Religion class, but in History, Geography, Chemistry, and even P.E. — all these subjects were taught from a Reformed perspective. We learned how we should think and how we should act from a Biblical point of view.

But maybe some of you are afraid of what lies ahead. Sure, you remember the past, all that education you received at high school, but now you're on your own. In College or Grade 13 or University, you can't think fast enough to give all the answers to every question you are faced with.



*Mr. Garnet Peet addressing the graduates*

At your job you just aren't sure how to act and what to do around people who've never heard of Guido, of being Reformed, who've never believed in Jesus Christ. Maybe some of you wonder if Guido has properly prepared you in the past, prepared you for the future that lies ahead.

Well let me tell you about five students from the past, five Reformed stu-

dents, probably your age. They had learned a lot of things you've learned and they were able to face the future. These five students were from Lyons, France. They lived in the 1500s, during the Reformation, and they believed the gospel. They even went to Switzerland to study Reformed theology, since Switzerland was relatively free of persecution. And they studied a long time, too, passed a lot of tests and exams, and finally graduated. They hoped to become missionaries.

But now they wanted to head home to France, after graduation. They stopped in Geneva for a while and probably spoke to John Calvin there, but then continued on to Lyons, France. On their way, they met a traveller who asked if he could travel with them. Fine, no problem. Once they reached home, the stranger they had met invited them to visit him at his home. They had gotten to know one another a bit; the graduates had probably talked about their studies and about their ideas for the future. So the five students visited this man — and were arrested, then imprisoned.

Lyons may have had many Reformed believers in the city, but the people in power were still fiercely Roman Catholic. So the five graduates from Lyons became the five prisoners of Lyons. This happened in April, 1552. In June, Calvin already wrote them a letter, encouraging them to

keep up their faith. Calvin stressed that God would give them strength to face the future, through the Holy Spirit.

Well, these five graduates were tried in Lyons and found guilty of heresy. Then they were sent off to Paris to the French supreme court. Again they were declared guilty of heresy. Appeals were made by all kinds of Reformed people but to no avail. Eventually, the five graduates were taken from their Paris dungeon and shipped back to Lyons. That was in March, 1553. They had already suffered for a whole year. More appeals were made, but the Paris verdict was upheld and even the king agreed that they were guilty of heresy. On May 16th, the five were told to prepare for death. Guido de Brès was hanged for being Reformed. These five young men were burned alive, at the stake. Why? Because they too were Reformed. They said, "I am Reformed, I belong to Jesus Christ alone, my faithful Saviour in life and death . . . ." and they died for their confession.

But that's not the end of the story. During their imprisonment, these graduates wrote letters to John Calvin and received letters from him. I'd like to pass on to you a little of what they said. In Calvin's first letter, he had encouraged these students. So the five replied, "We want you to know that although our body is so confined here between four walls, yet our spirit has never been so free and so comforted . . . ." Their faith in God had been strengthened tremendously because of their persecution.

They went on to say, "We are so far indeed from wishing to regard our affliction as a curse of God, as the world and the flesh wish to regard it, that we regard it rather as the greatest blessing that has ever come upon us . . . ." Isn't that odd? They were happy to be in jail! Why? "For in our affliction we are made true children of God, brothers and companions of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and are conformed to His image; and by our affliction the possession of our eternal inheritance is confirmed to us."

And now comes the most striking statement of all, one that applies to us all tonight, but especially to you, graduates, who leave the school of theory so to speak, to enter the school of practice, the school of life — the world beyond Guido. These five graduates said to Calvin, "We are bold to say and affirm that we shall derive more profit in this school for our salvation than has ever been the case in any place where we have studied . . . we testify that this persecution in prison is the true school of the children of God, in which they learn more than the disciples of the philosophers ever did in their universities. Indeed, it must not be imagined that one can have a true understanding of many of the pas-

sages of Scripture without having been instructed by the Teacher of all truth in this College, prison . . . ."

That's why I called Guido the school of theory — you've learned about Math and Geography and History from a Christian perspective. You've learned what it means to be a Christian in all areas of life: in your thinking, your working, your talking. But now you're leaving Guido and go-



*Ken Wieske, this year's valedictorian*

ing into the world . . . College, University after Grade 13, or work somewhere. You're starting school over again — the school of life. You've learned what the Bible means, what it says — now you have to apply it in your daily thinking and living beyond Guido.

And now listen to these five graduates of Lyons again. "It is true that one can have some knowledge of Scripture and can talk about it and discuss it a great deal; but this is like playing at charades. We therefore praise God with all our heart and give Him undying thanks that He has been pleased to give us by His grace not only the theory of His Word, but also the practice of it, and that He has granted us this honour — which is no small thing for us who are vessels so poor and fragile and mere worms creeping on the earth . . . ." And how had God taught them the practice of His Word?

"By bringing us out to be His witnesses and giving us constancy to confess His Name and maintain the truth of

His Holy Word before those who are unwilling to hear it — indeed, who persecute it with all their force — to us, to say, who previously were afraid to confess the truth even to a poor labourer who would have heard it eagerly . . . ."

These five students faced their future by using what they had learned in the past. They had learned a lot of nice things in Switzerland, but now they put these things into practice! In prison they didn't give up, complain, question, but they said, "We trust in our Saviour, we have learned about Him, we belong to Him, we trust Him for our future." Even before the courts in Paris, these boys said, "We are Reformed, we belong to Jesus Christ alone." They used what they had learned — the theory, and put it into practice in their lives.

And was it all for nothing? They died young, a terrible death, their whole future seemed wasted — all because they wanted to confess Christ. But Calvin said, "Your chains have become renowned and the noise of your imprisonment has been spread everywhere abroad — thus it must be that despite Satan, your death will resound far more powerfully so that the name of our Lord may be magnified thereby . . . For let the enemies do their utmost, they shall never be able to bury out of sight that light which God has made to shine in you, in order that many may contemplate it from afar . . . ." In death, they spoke louder words of truth than in life.

And what does all this have to do with you, graduates? I know we don't suffer persecution in Canada today. I know none of you will be burned at the stake for being a Guido graduate. But I also know your future will not be easy. You must go out into the world to study more, to work. You must make new friends and make many important decisions. I don't expect you all to be as courageous as the five graduates of Lyons. But I do believe that the same God who strengthened those five martyrs, will strengthen you. You are graduates of Guido! Think about your past, and now use what you have learned for your future. Put the theory into practice. Be a Christian on campus, at home, on the job, and your Father in heaven, your faithful Saviour, He will care for you in the days to come. When you are faced with problems you can't solve, don't give up! Turn to Father, in prayer. When you just don't know anymore — how to act, what to say, where to go — remember what you were taught in the past and pray to your King for help.

He gave those five students in Lyons the faith and the courage to remain Reformed, even in the face of death. Well, He will fill you with His Spirit to give you wisdom, faith and courage to remain Reformed and to face your future. And the fact that you've graduated from Guido

doesn't mean you can't ask teachers for advice still — and you've got your parents and the church too!

If I still have a minute, I would like to give you some advice from a former Guido graduate. I went to University and I was very impressed with some of my professors, especially in history and philosophy courses. I worked summers in landscaping and again, I was impressed with what some of those guys could do — beautiful work. But often these people who impressed me, me, a little graduate from Guido, often these people were unbelievers.

You, too, will be impressed by people, by places and by things and ideas as you go on in life. And don't close your

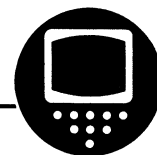
eyes! Open your eyes and ears and mind to these things. Don't go to College or University and hide in a corner — no, be humble and listen, learn, be involved. Let your light shine! But be impressed, above all, by your God. You belong to Jesus Christ. You do! You are all covenant children. Well, remember to whom you belong. Remember the faithfulness of your God who never let you down, who even sent His Son to die for you. He won't let you down in the days and years to come, for He is a faithful Saviour. He encouraged those five students I spoke about. He encouraged Guido de Brès so long ago! He will encourage you also.

As John Calvin told those five stu-

dents, so I tell you, "I shall not console nor exhort you anymore, knowing that our heavenly Father gives you to experience how precious His consolations are . . . He has already so shown you how His Spirit dwells in you, that we are well assured that He will perfect you to the end. I pray our good Lord to have you in His holy protection, to strengthen you more and more by His power, to make you feel what care He takes of your salvation, to increase you in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to make them serve His glory to the end . . . Your humble brother, John Calvin."

GARNET PEET

## PRESS RELEASES



### Classis Pacific, October 8, 1986 at Langley, BC

1. *Opening.* On behalf of the convening church, the Church of Langley, br. D. Doesburg calls the meeting to order. He requests to sing Psalm 145:1 and 5, reads from the same Psalm, and leads in prayer. He welcomes as visitors Rev. D. Van Dijken and br. Van Weerdhuizen of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church at Burlington, WA. The chairman further mentions the departure of Rev. W. Pouwelse and extends congratulations to Rev. E. Kampen, who has been called by the Church at Calgary, and Rev. C. Bouwman with the call which has been extended to him by the Church of Langley. He also mentions the fact that Rev. G.H. Visscher for the first time has been delegated by the Maranatha Church at Surrey.

2. *Credentials.* The credentials are examined by the delegates of the Church at Houston and are found to be in good order.

3. *Constitution of Classis.* Classis is constituted and the appointed officers take their seats: Rev. B. Berends as chairman, Rev. M. VanderWel as vice-chairman, and Rev. A. van Delden as clerk.

4. *Adoption of Agenda.* After a few items have been added to the provisional agenda, the agenda is adopted.

#### 5. *Correspondence.*

a. The Church of Chilliwack re-submits its request for advice in the matter of calling a minister for Vernon. After several rounds of discussion, Classis decides: a) to advice the Church of Chil-

liwack to proceed, and b) to instruct the Committee for Needy Churches to collect the needed funds from the churches as soon as a minister for Vernon is obtained, and to distribute these monies to the overseers of Vernon.

A motion, which proposes that no church shall be excluded from a Classical assessment, is carried.

b. The Church of Chilliwack, as convening church for the next Regional Synod West, asks advice in the postponing of this Synod until February 1987. Classis advises to do so.

#### 6. *Reports.*

a. The Church of Chilliwack reports on the auditing of the fund for Needy Students.

b. The Church of Smithers reports on the auditing of the fund for Needy Churches. Both funds appeared to be in good order.

c. The Committee for Needy Churches reports on its activities. The request for support by the Church of Lynden is granted.

d. The Report of the deputies for Needy Students is received and taken note of.

#### 7. *Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.*

a. The Church of Houston asks whether the churches within the Classical resort are drawing one line in their stance overagainst membership of a Union. The question is discussed and the delegates of the Church at Houston are advised to take benefit from the positive remarks which were made in the discussion.

b. The Church of Chilliwack asks and receives advice in a disciplinary matter.

This question was dealt with in closed session.

c. The Church of Chilliwack asks Classis for the continuation of the preaching assignments in Vernon.

d. The Church of Langley asks for the same preaching arrangements during its time of vacancy. Both requests are granted.

8. *Appointments.* Classis makes the following appointments:

a. Convening church for the next Classis: the Church of Lynden. Place: Langley. Date: January 7, 1987. Time: 9:00 a.m. In case there is no need for this Classis, the date for the next Classis will be: April 8, 1987.

b. Suggested moderamen: Rev. M. VanderWel, chairman; Rev. A. van Delden, vice-chairman; Rev. G.H. Visscher, clerk.

c. Deputies for examinations: Rev. C. Bouwman and Rev. J. Visscher. Examiners: Exegesis O.T. — Rev. C. Bouwman; Exegesis N.T. — Rev. G.H. Visscher; Knowledge of Holy Scripture — Rev. E. Kampen; Knowledge of Doctrine and Creeds — Rev. M. VanderWel; Church History — Rev. B.J. Berends; Church Polity — Rev. A. van Delden; Ethics — Rev. E. Kampen; Diaconiology — Rev. J. Visscher.

d. Church Visitors: Rev. B.J. Berends, Rev. C. Bouwman, Rev. M. VanderWel, Rev. G.H. Visscher, and Rev. J. Visscher. Alternates: Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. C. Van Spronsen.

e. Delegates for the next Regional Synod: Rev. B.J. Berends, Rev. C. Bouwman, Rev. M. VanderWel and Rev. J.



Visscher. Their alternates: Rev. G.H. Visscher, Rev. A. van Delden, Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. C. Van Spronsen, in that order. Elders: br. J. Hendriks, br. A.H. Lubbers, br. H. Moes and br. P. Van-Woudenberg. Alternates: br. H.A. Berends, br. L. Stam, br. G. Vane and br. H. Bosscher, in that order.

9. *Question Period.* None of the delegates makes use of it.

10. *Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.* This censure does not need to be exercised.

11. *Acts and Press Release.* The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

12. *Closing.* At the close of this Classis Rev. D. Van Dijken receives the opportunity to address Classis in a few words. After the singing of Hymn 40:1 and 2, Rev. M. VanderWel leads in prayer of thanksgiving. Classis is closed by the chairman.

For the Classis,  
M. VANDERWEL, vice-chairman e.t.

### **Regional Synod (East) of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Fergus, ON, October 15, 1986, 10:00 a.m.**

1. *Opening.* Rev. Cl. Stam on behalf of the convening Church of Fergus calls the meeting to order; he requests the singing of Psalm 118:1,6 and reads Psalm 118:1-20. He welcomes the delegates and expresses the wish that this Synod may serve the upbuilding of the churches.

2. *Credentials.* The credentials are examined and found in good order.

3. *Officers.* Officers elected are: Rev. Cl. Stam — chairman; Rev. R. Aasman — clerk; Rev. J. Mulder — vice-chairman.

4. *Agenda.* The provisional agenda is adopted after a letter of br. H. Boersma has been added.

5. *Correspondence.* Correspondence is dealt with:

a. A letter from General Synod Burlington 1986 re a decision made by Regional Synod 1985 with respect to the financial support of the Rev. C. Olij (Acts, Art. 9) is taken note of.

b. An appeal of br. H. Boersma against the decision of Classis Ontario South of Sept. 11, 12, 1985 to admit the Reformation Church of Blue Bell as American Reformed Church within the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches, is read. This letter will be photocopied for Synod and dealt with later by Synod. (Sub 7)

6. *Reports.*

a. The treasurer of Regional Synod reports re the finances of Synod and requests of the churches \$2.50 per communicant member for the year 1986 as well as for 1987.

b. The Church of Lincoln reports that the books of the treasurer have been examined and found in good order. Thankfully taken note of. Appreciation is expressed for the work done by the treasurer and he is discharged from his responsibilities for this period.

c. The Church at Brampton reports that the archives of Regional Synod, kept by the Church at Toronto, are in good order. Also thankfully taken note of.

d. Deputies re Art. 48 C.O. report that they attended Classis Ontario South of September 1985 and gave concurring advice to admit Cand. G. Wieske to the ministry in the Canadian Reformed Churches. They also advised Classis as to the request of the Reformation Church at Blue Bell to be admitted to the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Also Classis Ontario North has been attended by deputies and the report states that deputies concurred with the decision of Classis to admit Cand. P. Feenstra to the ministry in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

e. Synod gratefully takes note of these reports.

7. *Appeal Boersma.* Synod deals with the appeal mentioned sub 5, b.

Synod decides not to grant this appeal which requested Synod to condemn the decision of Classis Ontario South of September 11, 12 1985 to admit the Reformation at Blue Bell to the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

*Grounds for this decision are:*

1. The appellant overlooks in his appeal the main ground of Classis to admit the Church at Blue Bell, namely, that this Church at Blue Bell is a Reformed Church, which adheres to the "Three Forms of Unity" and the Reformed Church Order.

2. The appellant does not prove that the congregation at Blue Bell did not act in accordance with Scripture and the Form of Government and is therefore guilty of schism.

a. The congregation of Blue Bell had for years struggled within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to have justice done to preserve the unity of the church.

b. The Form of Government does allow for a congregational vote to leave the OPC. The Church at Blue Bell followed the required procedure.

c. The special presbytery meeting which the appellant mentions did deal with the complaints of the Church at Blue Bell but denied these complaints on August 10th, 1984.

d. Although it might be regretted that the congregation at Blue Bell did not first address the General Assembly of the OPC there was no compelling need (according to the Form of Government) to address the General Assembly.

i. The Form of Government does not require this.

ii. The basic issues had been dealt with in 1966, 1967 and 1983.

3. The fact that General Synod Burlington 1986 did not terminate or suspend the relationship with the OPC does not at all mean that this Synod accepted the practice of the OPC with respect to the Lord's Supper. On the contrary, General Synod charged the Committee for Contact with the OPC diligently to discuss this serious matter with the OPC and to report on this to the next General Synod.

(Art. 132, recommendations 3, 4, 5 of the Acts of Synod)

8. *Appointments.* The following appointments are made:

a. Br. P.L. Schuller, Philp Rd., R.R. 2, Beamsville, ON., LOR 1B0, is reappointed as treasurer of Regional Synod.

b. The Church at Lincoln is reappointed to audit the books of the treasurer.

c. The Church at Toronto is reappointed as church to keep the archives of Regional Synod.

d. The Church at Brampton is reappointed as church to check the archives.

e. Deputies Article 48 Church Order are appointed as follows:

i. for Classis Ontario South: the Revs. J. Mulder and Cl. Stam. (Alternate: the Rev. M. Werkman)

ii. for Classis Ontario North: the Revs. R. Aasman and J. VanRietschoten (Alternate: the Rev. C. Bosch)

f. Convening church for the next Regional Synod to be held in the fall of 1987, the Church at Lincoln.

9. *Personal Question Period.*

a. The question is raised whether the churches in Ontario should not work towards establishing three classical areas instead of two, since the number of churches has considerably increased.

It is decided to declare this a matter of the local churches concerned to start action in this respect.

b. Another question asked is whether Regional Synod should not have regulations re submitting appeals and conducting its meetings. Also this is left to the local churches in the classical districts to come with proposals.

10. *Censure.* Censure ad Art. 44 of the Church Order is not necessary.

11. *Acts, Press Release.* The Acts of Synod are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

12. *Closing.* The vice-chairman leads in prayer and thanksgiving and the chairman closes Synod.

For Regional Synod,  
J. Mulder, vice-chairman, e.t.



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Long ago a little Baby was born.  
No cozy crib and quilt for Him, though.  
No, His mother laid Him in a manger filled with straw.  
No soft, comfy sleeper for Him, only simple "swaddling cloths."

No riches and glory, and yet, He was to be . . . King!  
But listen! Listen very closely and you will hear who is this King "in hiding." And just look who come to herald His birth! First one angel, but then! A whole crowd, a multitude of the heavenly host.

And did you hear?

"To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

Then the sky is filled with the praising host from heaven.

"Glory to God" they sing.

Such a special Baby! Such a special birth announcement!

And who is listening?

The shepherds, yes, "only" the shepherds.

But they know their job.

They leave their sheep and run to worship their Saviour and King.

He is "only" a Baby. But, He is God's Son, their Saviour and King. That they know.

And from the Bible we know, too, that the Baby of Bethlehem did not stay a baby.

He became the man of suffering who died on the cross for all our sins.

But He is King!

He rose again and went to His glorious heavenly home!

You will see lots of pictures of the *First* Christmas and the Baby Jesus.

The shepherds waited anxiously for that first Christmas.

But we are waiting for the *Second* coming of the Lord when He will come again in *Glory*.

And then everyone will see that He is King of all!

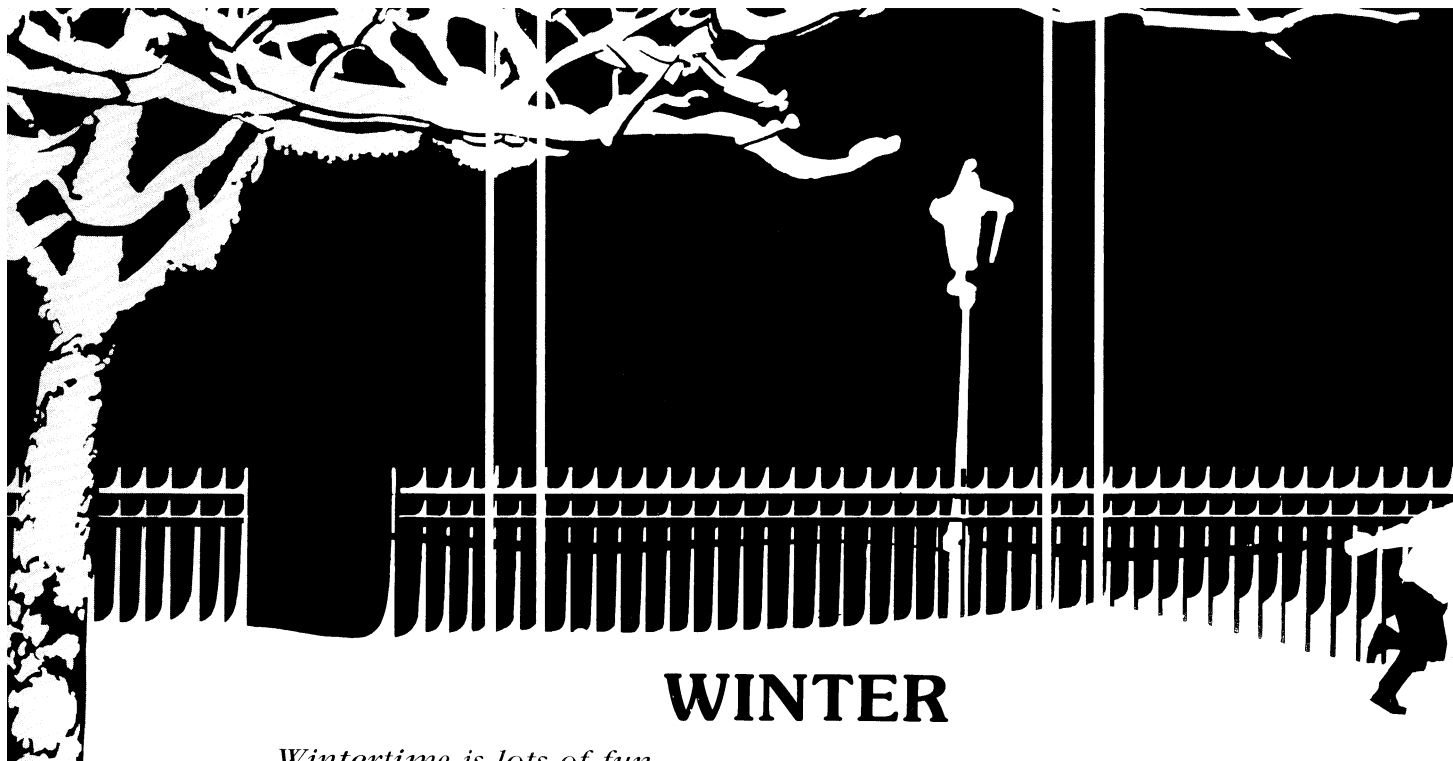
## The Promised Saviour

1. I will put \_\_\_\_\_ between you and the woman . . . (Genesis 3:15).
2. In you (Abraham) all the families of the earth shall be \_\_\_\_\_ . . . (Genesis 12:3).
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ shall not depart from Judah . . . (Genesis 49:10).
4. I have sworn to David my servant: I will . . . build your \_\_\_\_\_ for all generations (Psalm 89:3,4).
5. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name \_\_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 7:14).
6. For to us a child is born . . . and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, \_\_\_\_\_, Everlasting Father, \_\_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 9:6).
7. He will feed his flock like a \_\_\_\_\_, he will gather the \_\_\_\_\_ in his arms . . . (Isaiah 40:11).
8. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . But he was wounded for our \_\_\_\_\_ . . . (Isaiah 53:4,5).
9. "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as \_\_\_\_\_ (Jeremiah 23:5).
10. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be \_\_\_\_\_ in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from \_\_\_\_\_ days (Micah 5:2).

## Christmas Joy

1. I bring you good news of a great \_\_\_\_\_ which will come to all the \_\_\_\_\_; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 2:10,11).
2. I will be \_\_\_\_\_ and exult in \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 9:2).
3. . . . the joy of the Lord is your \_\_\_\_\_ (Nehemiah 8:10b).
4. But the fruit of the \_\_\_\_\_ is love, joy, peace . . . (Galatians 5:22).
5. Rejoice in the Lord \_\_\_\_\_; again I will say, \_\_\_\_\_ (Philemon 4:4).
6. But rejoice that your \_\_\_\_\_ are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).
7. . . . looking to Jesus the \_\_\_\_\_ and perfecter of our faith, who for the \_\_\_\_\_ that was set before him endured the cross . . . (Hebrews 12:2).
8. Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the \_\_\_\_\_ of your \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 25:21).
9. Though the fig tree do not blossom . . . and the fields yield no food . . . and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ (Habakkuk 3:17,18).
10. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ has come, and his \_\_\_\_\_ has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7).





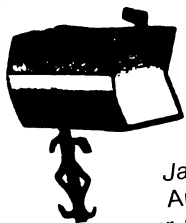
## WINTER

*Wintertime is lots of fun,  
The snow is glittering in the sun,  
All the trees are white with snow,  
They are holding winter's glow.*

*In the snow we build a fort,  
With our shovels we do the work.  
Piling all the bricks so high,  
Then we sit down, with a sigh.*

*Also tobogganing is fun,  
We go down the snowdrifts with a run,  
Slipping, sliding, going around,  
Until we reach the level ground.*

by Busy Beaver Betty Bergsma



### From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club Wendy Jansen. You are a real Busy Beaver already, I see. And I'm glad to hear you're having lots of winter fun with your new friends. Write again soon, Wendy. And a big welcome to you, too, Beth Kingma. We are happy to have you join us. Thank you for a pretty letter, Beth. Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities!

Welcome to the Club, Joni Buikema. And thank you for the poem. You are a real Busy Beaver I see. I'm glad you are having a good time. And I hope you will write again very soon. And a big welcome to you, too, Michelle Meyer. Thank you for a very interesting letter. I hope you'll really enjoy joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Bye for now.

Welcome to the Club, Annette Bax. I can see cooking is one of your hobbies. Will you write and tell us about your family and your other interests, Annette?

Hello, Christina Vandervelde. It was nice to hear from you. That was very thoughtful of you to send me that pretty picture! Thank you.

It was interesting to hear how you spent your summer, Sheila Wierenga. I think you'll be doing things now that are quite different! Thanks for the quiz, Sheila. Keep up the good work!

Hello, Tonya Beintema. I was happy to see such a nicely written story. The same goes for you. Keep up the good work and let's hear from you again soon!

Have you had snow to play in already, Judy Bysterveld? How is your hamster doing. Will you write us about how you care for him and the tricks he does? Thanks for the puzzle Judy!

You've been keeping very busy, I see, Billy Dekker. sounds as if you had an interesting summer. Thank you for sending in an interesting word puzzle. Bye for now. Write again soon.

Hello, Brenda Oosterveld. Thank you for your interesting letter! I see you've been keeping very busy! Bye for now.

How did you like your cousin's wedding, Melanie Pete. Did you get to sing or do a skit? I'm glad you're enjoying school and it's great you like books. Then you'll always have a friend nearby! Bye for now. Write again soon, Melanie. Thank you for the quizzes and puzzles!

I was happy to see you did something fitting to remember Remembrance Day, Jeannette Jansen. I'm happy, too, you so well on your crocheting! Thanks for the puzzle, Jeanne.

Is your snowfort still standing, Betty Bergsma? Or do you have to rebuild. I think you must have had lots of fun making those tunnels. Thanks for the poem, Betty. Write again soon.

# Quiz Time!

## CHRISTMAS

### WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver Judy Bysterveld

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

Christmas	star	birth	peace
snow	born	Herod	donkey
manger	Mary	sheep	Christ
angel	city	joy	glory
shepherds	David	Lord	stable
baby	Nazareth	God	night
Bethlehem	Joseph	Saviour	king

### CODE QUIZ

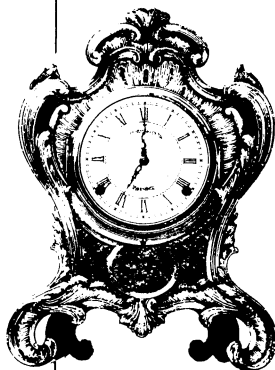
by Busy Beaver Brenda Oosterveld

1 - H	9 - L
2 - E	10 - O
3 - D	11 - A
4 - R	12 - N
5 - T	13 - P
6 - G	14 - W
7 - I	15 - F
8 - S	16 - U

— — — — —      — — — — —  
 5 1 2      9 10 4 3

— — — — —      — — — — —  
 7 8      6 4 2 11 5

— — — — —      — — — — —      — — — — —  
 11 12 3      13 10 14 2 4 15 16 9



### QUIZ OF CLOCKS

by Busy Beaver Sheila Wierenga

- How many numbers on a clock's face? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many minutes in a quarter of an hour? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many minutes in one and a half hour? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many seconds in one minute? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many hours between noon and midnight? \_\_\_\_\_

(Answers next page)

## WORD PUZZLES

sent in by Busy Beaver *Billy Dekker*



- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1. <u>Mind</u><br/>Matter</p> <p>2. T<br/>O<br/>W<br/>N</p> <p>3. <u>iiii</u><br/>oooo</p> <p>4. <u>Stand</u><br/>I</p> <p>5. CHAIR</p> <p>6. <u>Wear</u><br/>Long</p> | <p>7. ECNALG</p> <p>8. <u>Ground</u><br/>feet feet<br/>feet feet<br/>feet feet</p> <p>9. <u>Knee</u><br/>lights</p> <p>10. He's/Himself</p> <p>11. O<br/>B.A.<br/>B.Sc.<br/>Ph.D.</p> <p>12. j<br/>youme<br/>s<br/>t</p> | <p>13. R<br/>ROAD<br/>A<br/>D</p> <p>14. _____ program</p> <p>15. T<br/>O<br/>U<br/>C<br/>H</p> <p>16. <u>G.I.</u><br/>ccccc</p> <p>17. /R/E/A/D//I/N/G/</p> <p>18. <u>man</u><br/>board</p> <p>19. cycle<br/>cycle<br/>cycle</p> |
|---|--|---|

(Answers below)

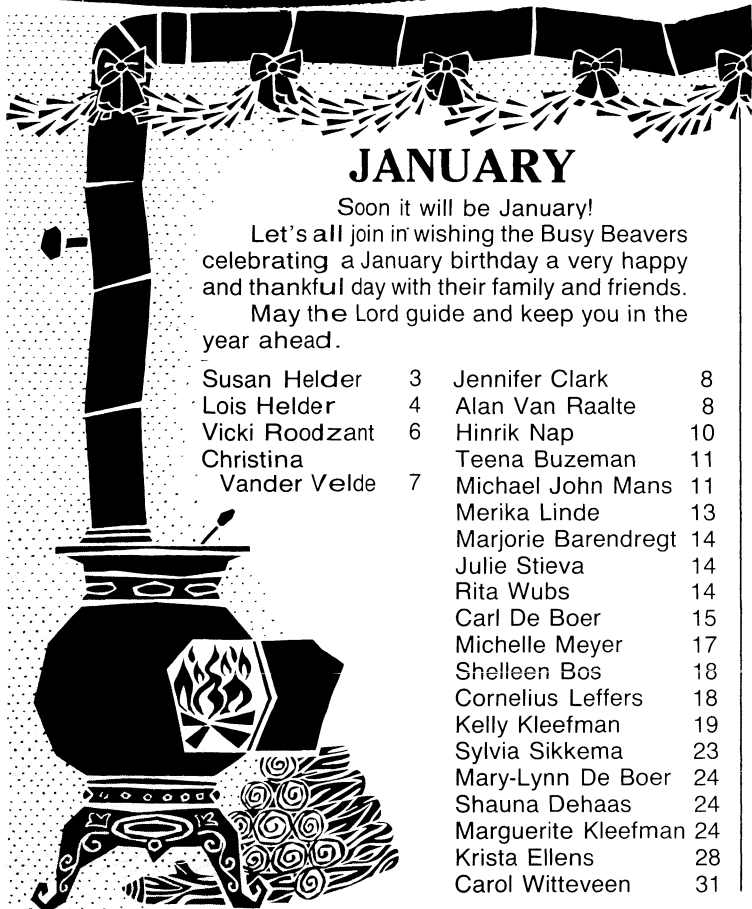
### Answer Box

#### Clock Quiz:

1. 12    2. 15    3. 90    4. 60    5. 12

#### Word Puzzles:

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 11. Three degrees below Zero | 1. He's beside himself       |
| 12. Just between you and me  | 2. Neon lights               |
| 13. Crossroads               | 3. 6 feet underground        |
| 14. Space program            | 4. Backward Glance           |
| 15. Touchdown                | 5. Long Underwear            |
| 16. G.I. overseas            | 6. Reading between the lines |
| 17. Man overboard            | 7. He's beside himself       |
| 18. Tricycle                 | 8. Mind over Matter          |



## JANUARY

Soon it will be January!  
Let's all join in wishing the Busy Beavers celebrating a January birthday a very happy and thankful day with their family and friends.  
May the Lord guide and keep you in the year ahead.

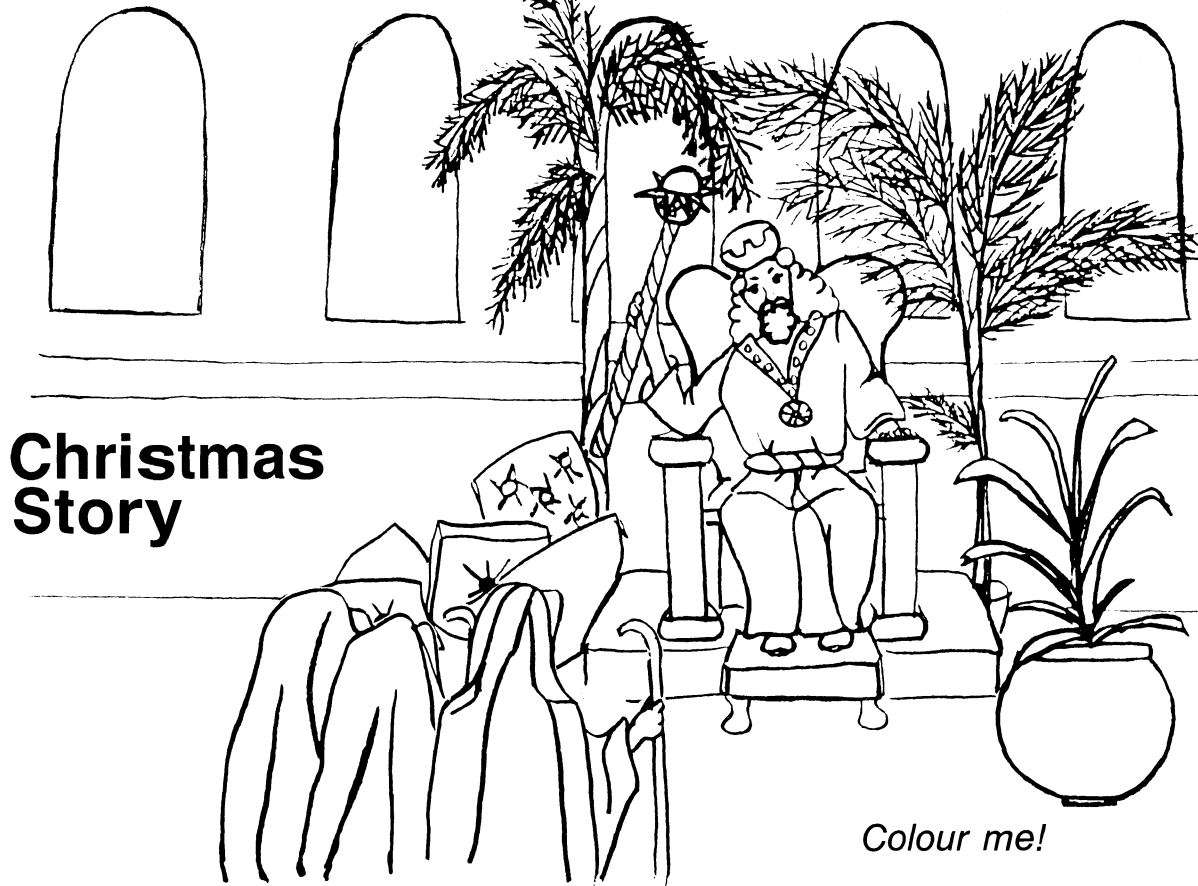
- |                        |                     |    |
|------------------------|---------------------|----|
| Susan Helder           | 3 Jennifer Clark    | 8  |
| Lois Helder            | 4 Alan Van Raalte   | 8  |
| Vicki Roodzant         | 6 Hinrik Nap        | 10 |
| Christina Vander Velde | 7 Teena Buzeman     | 11 |
|                        | Michael John Mans   | 11 |
|                        | Merika Linde        | 13 |
|                        | Marjorie Barendregt | 14 |
|                        | Julie Stieva        | 14 |
|                        | Rita Wubs           | 14 |
|                        | Carl De Boer        | 15 |
|                        | Michelle Meyer      | 17 |
|                        | Shelleen Bos        | 18 |
|                        | Cornelius Leffers   | 18 |
|                        | Kelly Kleefman      | 19 |
|                        | Sylvia Sikkema      | 23 |
|                        | Mary-Lynn De Boer   | 24 |
|                        | Shauna Dehaas       | 24 |
|                        | Marguerite Kleefman | 24 |
|                        | Krista Ellens       | 28 |
|                        | Carol Witteveen     | 31 |

Now, Busy Beavers, I want to wish each one of you, across Canada, and even those farther away yet, a very joy Christmas and also a very good school holiday!

Send me your Christmas quiz for a reward, and I hope to "see" you all again next year!

With much love from you  
Aunt Be

# ABC BIBLE COLLECTION - by Mrs. John Roza



## Christmas Story

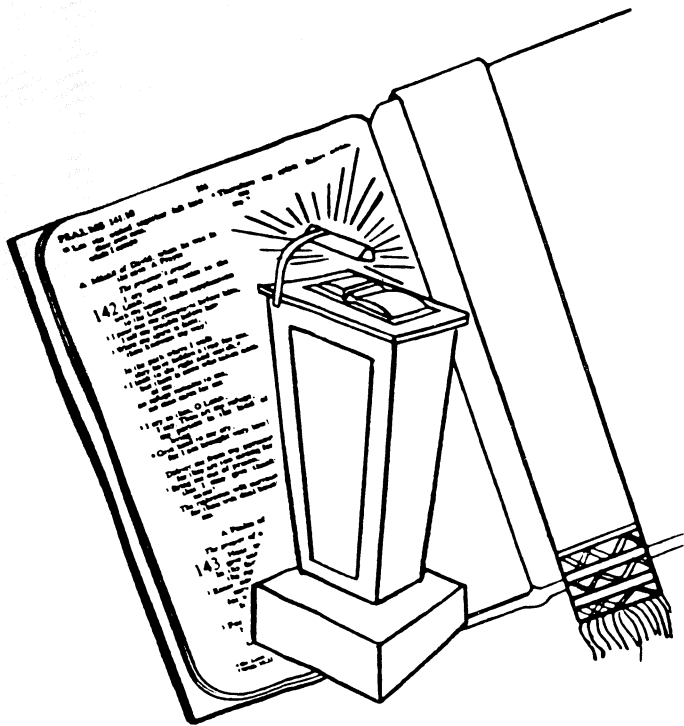
Colour me!

## Quiz Questions

Now when \_\_\_\_\_ was born in Bethlehem in the days of King \_\_\_\_\_, the King summoned the \_\_\_\_\_ men secretly and asked them what time the star appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem to search for the child, so that he too may worship Him. So they went on their way: and lo a star which they had seen in the \_\_\_\_\_ went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. And going into the house they saw the child with \_\_\_\_\_, His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him. They offered Him gifts of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The wise men were warned in a dream not to return to wicked King Herod who wanted to destroy Jesus. Then they departed to their own country by another way.

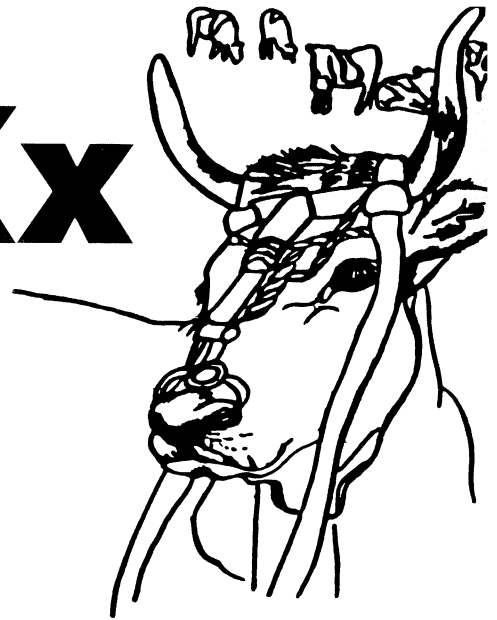
## Answers

Jesus Herod wise East Mary gold frankincense myrrh



**Uu**

**Xx**



*It's  
Where in the*

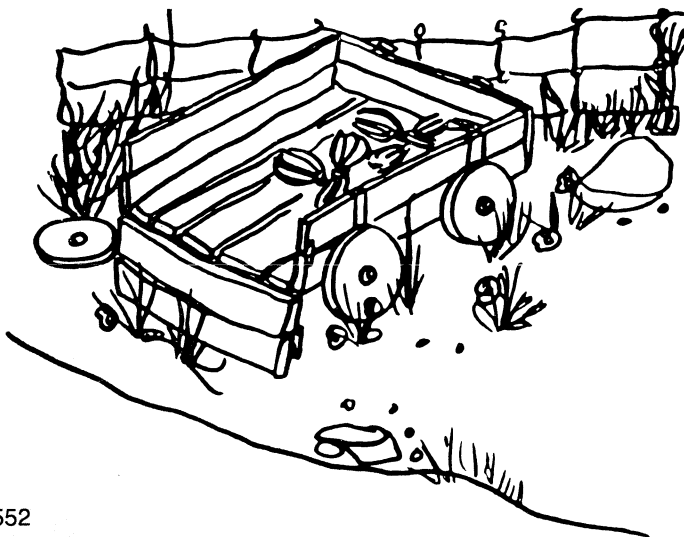
**Uu** \_\_\_\_\_

**Xx** \_\_\_\_\_

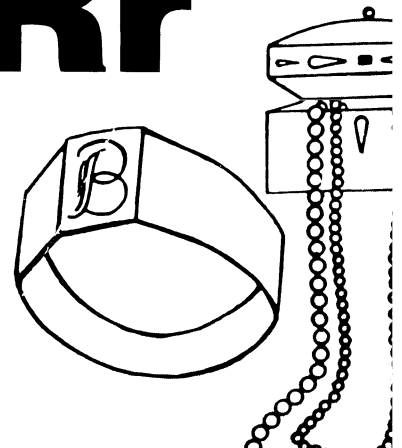
**Qq** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tt** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ww**

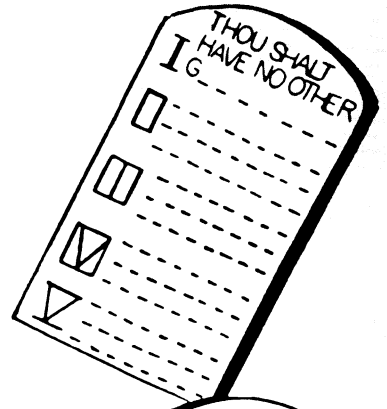


**Rr**





# Qq



*ime*  
*l these letters?*

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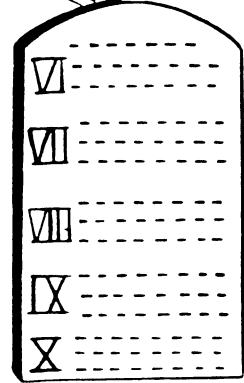


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# Tt



# Vv



# Yy

