



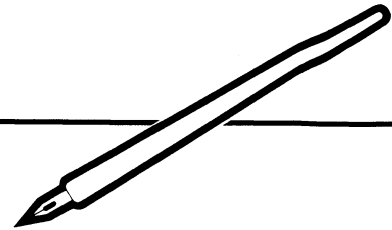
Clarion

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The synagogue and education of covenant youth

The synagogue school

It is a well-known fact that there were many synagogues in the time when the New Testament church began. Every place in the Roman empire where more than ten Jews lived was allowed to have a synagogue. We are told that Jerusalem counted four hundred and eighty (480) synagogues before its destruction in the year 70 A.D. That is quite a number. It shows that the Jews did not like large congregations.

It is not so widely known that each synagogue had one or more schools connected with it. For this fact I should like to ask the attention of the reader. A little more than a century before the birth of Christ, a Scribe, teacher of the Law, who had a very high position in the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council, issued an order that all the children should go to school. In those days that in practice meant all the boys — a short-sighted approach, but we will not go into this matter.

Around the year 60 A.D. another leader gave the order that “teachers of young children should be appointed in each district and each town and that children should enter school at the age of six or seven.” (I have taken these and other data from *Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, by S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., Volume II, pp. 948ff.) The consequence of these rabbinic orders was that almost every synagogue had a school for the youth of about six to thirteen.

A remark should be added here. The fact that rabbis stressed the need for school education and, therefore, for teachers did not mean at all that they wanted to diminish the responsibility of the fathers (parents) on the point of the education of their children. It is stressed in rabbinic literature, time and again, that it is the calling and duty of the father to see to it that his children receive a proper religious education. The children are his. He received them from the God of the covenant. He is therefore responsible for their covenantal instruction, so that they, when adults, can receive and hold a responsible position in the community of God’s people.

In fact, there were two schools. Even though the difference between their situation and ours is quite great, we could say that the synagogue school was divided into an elementary and a high school. The elementary school was for the ages six to nine and the high school was for the children of ten to twelve or thirteen. When a boy was about thirteen, he had to learn a trade. That instruction he received from his father or from a man who had a different trade.

The elementary school was called “the house of reading.” Here the children learned, in the first place, the Hebrew alphabet. Learning the letters was considered religious education, because it taught the students to read, and this reading was

focussed on the Word of God, the Old Testament. The reading exercises, you can guess, were taken from the same Scriptures. In the three years at the “house of reading” the students read the whole Hebrew Old Testament at least once. What they read was also translated into the Aramaic language and explained to them. After the Babylonian captivity, Aramaic had more and more become the native language of the Jewish people.

Certain sections of the Scriptures were read only in Hebrew. The teacher did not translate or explain them. They were considered not fit for such young ears. These were sections like those about Lot and his daughters, about Judah and Tamar, David and Bathsheba, and so on. I think there was a lot of wisdom in this educational practice.

In general, the children did not learn to write at the synagogue school. Writing was seen as a trade or profession. Nevertheless, many in those days were able to write. But it is clear that the emphasis of school education was on reading in order to enable the children to read the Tora, the Law of the LORD. Included in the curriculum was instruction in Israelite history. Not included was the teaching of arithmetic and mathematics as such.

The high school for the ages ten to twelve was called “the house of learning.” Here the youth was instructed in the so-called Mishnah. The Mishnah was the oral tradition of the “man of old” (Matthew 5). It was the Jewish traditional law, their explanations of, and additions to, the written Law of Moses. In this “house of learning” the Jewish boys were taught everything that was typically Jewish; the Jewish customs and ideas and practices; in short, the Jewish religion. Having gone through these two synagogue schools, the children were considered to have received a solid education. And at age thirteen, they became “bar mitzvah.” These Aramaic words mean “son of the commandment.” Further education was available for those who wanted to continue their studies to become, e.g., a rabbi or a scribe, but not all followed it.

Our schools: difference and similarity

It is evident that there is a difference between the synagogue schools and our Reformed elementary and high schools. Our schools are all-round schools, where the students receive a general education. They are not only taught reading, history and contents of the Scriptures, history of redemption, the doctrine of the church and church history, but also writing, general history, mathematics, language, geometry, and so on. In the synagogue the teaching was only reading and learning the Jewish manner of reading the Old Testament and the Jewish tradi-

tion. This means that, in a certain way, we can see a strong parallel between the synagogue school and catechetical instruction in the church.

Nevertheless, we certainly can connect the synagogue schools and our day schools. There are strong similarities. Certainly, the synagogue school was totally religious, giving instruction in the Jewish teachings regarding the will of God for daily life. Teaching a trade was outside its aims and goals. However, do we, with our Reformed view, not claim that all education is in principle, and has to be, religious?

Let me, although it may seem like bringing water to the sea, once again underline this Biblical and Reformed principle. God is the Creator of all of life. Therefore, all of life is to be placed in His service, and we are not to withdraw any part of our life from God and from serving Him. Sin is rebellion against God, whereby we withdraw all of our life or parts of it from God. Christ Jesus came to redeem us from that sin of rebellion. He does not just redeem our soul for eternity, but His salvation is that He so reconciles us with God that on the basis of His blood for the forgiveness of sin, we may again serve God with our whole life in all its aspects.

It cannot be stressed enough that redemption is restoration of wayward creatures back into the position of children, which is back into their original position in the house and kingdom of their Father. Redemption is not just receiving the forgiveness of sins, and that is it. Redemption is that our whole life in all its aspects is rooted in, built upon, Christ, and placed under His kingship.

This truth is the foundation for all Reformed organization, also for our Reformed schools. This truth also permeates all Reformed school education. Because God is the Creator of life in all its aspects, and because Christ is the Redeemer of that very same life in its totality, all the subjects in school have their roots in, and are taught in the light of, this same truth. Physics in the public school deals with nature and the laws of nature. Physics in the Christian school deals with the universe as God's creation and with the laws by which the Creator still upholds and governs this universe. This Biblical principle we can work out for every subject; and this matter will receive more attention again in our magazine. There remains a need for it. All of life is from the triune God and through Him and unto Him.

The basis for covenantal school education

What was the basis for the Jewish people in emphasizing the need for those synagogue schools? It was the same basis as we have. Every day the Jew was, and still is, called to recite the *Shema*'. This is their confession which they also recite in the worship services in the synagogue. This *Shema*' consists of three portions that are taken from the Tora: Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41. In the first two passages the Israelites are charged to live by and to teach their children the covenant instructions, the commandments of the LORD. The aim of the LORD is that the children grow up in the knowledge and fear of His Name, so that they love and serve Him according to His wise instructions, since He made them His own people in His grace.

That still is the aim of the LORD. The Apostle Paul says that the children are called in Christ to obey their parents. It is obvious that the apostle addresses here children whose parents are members of the church and covenant of God. They are parents who teach and instruct their children that and how their whole life in all its aspects must be lived in a Christian manner, as flowing out of a living relation of faith with Christ and aiming at the service of God, renewed by the Holy Spirit; a life in which they are again image of God.

Our conclusion is that the Jews saw as basis for their synagogue schools God's will and command as revealed in the

Tora, the Law. Thus, for the Jews it was a matter of obedience and faithfulness to the God of the covenant and a means to build and preserve their God-given heritage. They saw it as a means to preserve faithfulness to the LORD throughout their generations. Here is the formal agreement with our view on Christian education. We have the same basis for the education of our children.

How do we fare today?

Do we still live by these principles? And when we do, is that out of custom, and as far as we see possibilities? Or is



it truly a principle for us? I hear that there is here and there the reasoning: the public school is not too bad. When we were young, we went there. And we are still church members.

There are quite a few things to say on this point. In the first place there is a practical point. When this argument is used, it is an argument of parents who went to the public school some fifteen or more years ago, when the secularization and godlessness was not as far advanced as today.

In a book review in *Christianity Today*, Dec. 12, 1986, p. 56 the present situation in the public schools in the United States is discussed. The situation in Canada looks to me the same. The book is *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks*. It is written by Paul C. Vitz. An excerpt shows the following facts:

[In social studies texts for grades 1 to 4] twenty-five of the forty books have no reference in either word or image to American religious activity in any form: of the fifteen books that have a primary religious reference, seven refer only to

religious activity in the historical past, either Puritan or Spanish mission life. . . . There is not one text reference to characteristic American Protestant religious life in these books. . . . [In twenty-two basal readers for grades 3 and 6] there is not one story or article . . . in which the central motivation or major content derives from Christianity or Judaism. . . . There are scores of articles about animals, archeology, fossils, or about magic — but none on religion, much less any about Christianity. . . .

[In ten high school U.S. history texts the] “Chronology of Events in American History” . . . contains over 450 events considered important. . . . The only three referring to religion are (1) the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620; (2) the adoption of the Toleration Act in Maryland in 1649; and (3) the settling of the Mormons at Salt Lake in 1847. [In another text] of 642 listed events, only six refer to religion

This censure shows the fact of God-lessness. For God, for the gospel and for God’s commandments, even for the Christian religion as such, the public school has no place anymore. Thus, those who have eyes that see, notice that the public school and its educational system is in the hands of the adversary. Ignoring Christ and His redemption work that places life under His kingship and in His service is the modern way of life.

Now I am aware of the fact that in certain cases our youth has no choice. There is no truly Christian or Reformed education available in certain situations (yet), e.g., in university education. I am not talking about that. However, it is frightening that many of our students do not see the need to join or form fellowships in which they study to make one another aware of both the dangers of secular education and of what is truly the Christian and Scriptural view in the different disciplines. Does this mean that our students separate their studies from their Christian faith and that they see no connection between their field of study on the one hand, and the teaching of the Scriptures and the service of the Lord on the other hand? Are for them their studies one thing, and their religion another? Is here a separation of two different aspects of life?

However, if this is so, what is the cause of such a phenom-

enon? Is that cause with us, parents? Do we not see our calling sharply anymore? Do we not pay sufficient attention to these things anymore? Do we separate our daily, busy, life too much from our faith, from serving our Lord? Is for us the Sunday one thing and the Monday and the Tuesday another?

The possible consequence

What can be the consequence when we give up maintaining our principles and do not live by them anymore? When our attitude is that the public school is good enough, the children are not only placed in the public school with its sphere and climate, but they also meet at home the attitude that the public school education is acceptable. This easily brings along a diminishing critical attitude and an increasing openness for ideas and views, and, even more, a lifestyle, propagated in the public school.

What often happens then? The children not only grow up in, but also learn to accept, the god-less world around them for what it is. A radical “no” concerning what is god-less and ungodly is weakened. Per consequence, getting acquainted with, and accustomed to, and slowly accepting, worldly ways and views is what enters the mind and life of the youngsters, and thus is given an opening in our families, and in the churches. In many families the television and worldly music add their impact. Increasing worldliness is the result. And it is worldliness in a small part of our life, to begin with, that breaks the power of the church.

Taking care of the church is taking care of its youth. It is maintaining the need for solid, Scriptural, Reformed-confessional education in which Christ is taught as Saviour and Lord over all of life. That’s what He is, Saviour and Lord over all of life. That’s how we are called to confess Him.

For the Jews, synagogue and school belonged together as means to preserve the people. Luther, Calvin, Secession, Doleantie, Liberation, stressed it: church and school belong together. They are still means to preserve God’s people, when used in humble submission and faithfulness to the Word of the Lord.

J. GEERTSEMA

The New Testament Sabbath₂

In the first article we saw that God gave the Mosaic Sabbath as a shadow of things to come. This did not, however, exhaust its significance. To conclude from Paul’s references that the Old Testament Sabbath has no counterpart in New Testament times fails to take account of three arguments.

A creation ordinance

It must first of all be emphasized that the Sabbath had existed before there were the ritual enactments connected with the Mosaic law, and so the fulfilling of the typical elements does not lead to the total lapsing of the Sabbath institution,

but rather a renewed emphasis on its other elements. Even from Sinai God had enjoined His people to “remember the Sabbath day” — to remember what already existed. It will not do to date its origin a week or so earlier in the incident connected with the giving of the manna in Exodus 16. The references to the Sabbath there are most probably to be understood in terms of the reintroduction of the Sabbath into the life of God’s people after it had lapsed in the persecution and prevalent paganism of Egypt. The Sabbath had been known before. Indeed Exodus 20:11 shows that it must be understood in terms of creation.

The origin of the Sabbath dates back

to God’s original creation mandate that patterned the time-cycle of mankind, the apex of God’s creation. Man as the image of God was to live after the time sequence of God’s creative activity, observing the day in seven that was set apart. This is the basis of the recurring weekly day that is set apart. “The Sabbath was made for man” so that he could fulfill the total potential he had been endowed with. It is only in harmony with God’s creative prescription that mankind can fulfill their true destiny. Without it the wholeness and soundness of the life of the individual, the family and the society are flawed and undermined.

It is because the Sabbath principle is

a creation ordinance that we may properly urge its observance on all. This is the way that we should live because it reflects our Creator's prescriptive pattern for the bodily and spiritual integrity of humanity. Those who advocate a dominical understanding of the Lord's Day, particularly those who argue that it is an institution of the church, whether apostolic or sub-apostolic, are unable to adopt such an argument, for they have severed the vital connection between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. It is not sufficient to urge the cause of Lord's Day observance simply on the grounds of respect for the substantial body of Christian opinion in our country whose custom it is to keep this day special. It must also be stated that the source of authority for requiring such a pattern of observance in our national life is the fact that this is how God has determined it should be from creation.

It is also to be noticed that the Sabbath as a creation ordinance permits us to endorse some of the "secular" arguments of those who urge the value of Sunday as a family day, and of its usefulness as a social institution. Such arguments can never constitute more than a part of the Christian position on the Lord's Day, but they are not to be totally dismissed. Insofar as they reflect the divine shaping of human activity inaugurated at creation they can be adopted and endorsed.

The moral law

Closely linked to the Sabbath as a creation ordinance is the matter of the observance of the Sabbath as part of the moral law. This relates to the fact that because man was created by God as a responsible moral being, there is a certain pattern of behaviour required by God of all mankind. This standard of duty is commonly called the moral law, and does not change because it is a reflection of the unchanging character of God himself.

Now we do not have a detailed account of how Adam in his innocence was informed by God of the requirements of the moral law, nor indeed is there any direct account given in the period before Sinai, though the elements of it were undoubtedly known and formed the basis of many of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. Moses, however, presents the moral law at the time of the inauguration of the Sinaitic covenant by means of the Ten Commandments or the Decalogue of Exodus 20:1-17. It would confuse our thinking, however, simply to equate the decalogue with the moral law. The decalogue is an edition of the moral law, and as such may reflect the particular conditions prevailing at the time of its publication. This may for instance be seen in the reference in the fifth commandment "so

that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

From the structure of the Sinaitic covenant, however, it is clear that the decalogue contains the fundamental requirements of the sovereign ruler of Israel. These are the basic stipulations of the God who has redeemed His people and now shows them the essential principles of behaviour that pleases Him. There are other more detailed stipulations

It is in this light that the significance of the Fourth Commandment has to be appreciated. One of the basic aspects of moral behaviour focuses on the time sequence of human activity. The fact that the Sabbath commandment is in the decalogue forbids us from treating the Sabbath principle as something merely ceremonial. It does not allow us to take it as outmoded and obsolete with the passing of the Sinaitic covenant. Although

"It is because the Sabbath principle is a creation ordinance that we may properly urge its observance on all."

that were also given, but these were not placed in the special category of being delivered by the voice of God upon Mount Sinai, and written by Him in two tables of stone. The decalogue is different. From the basic principles incorporated in it, we may come to a clear understanding of what God requires of mankind, since the moral behaviour He approves of does not essentially vary, reflecting as it does His own nature, and the nature of mankind He has created.

the form of expression of the decalogue arises out of the specific cultural environment of those originally addressed, the ten basic principles incorporated in the decalogue arise out of the moral perception of God himself and thus constitute an accurate and binding expression of the moral law.

It is thus the case that moral behaviour requires the consecration of one day to God as part of our continuing expression of worship and indebtedness to our



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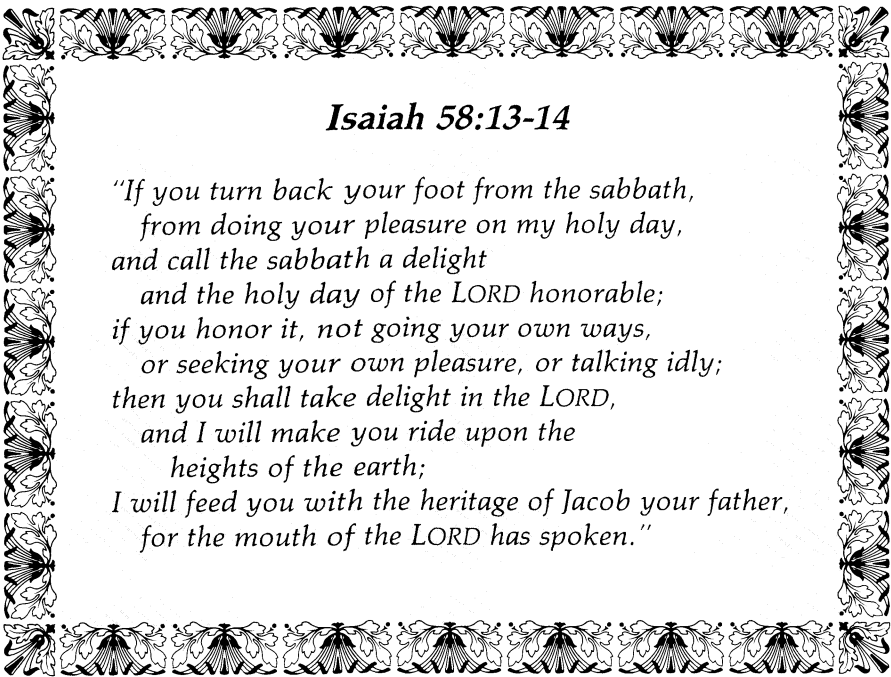
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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial — The synagogue and education of covenant youth — J. Geertsema	26
The New Testament Sabbath — John L. Mackay	28
From the Scriptures — Cutting the Lifeline — J. De Jong	31
Lessons from early church history: — D. DeJong	32
News Medley — W.W.J. VanOene	33
School Crossing — Reformed schools — can we compete? — F.C. Ludwig	36
Press Releases	38
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	41



Isaiah 58:13-14

*"If you turn back your foot from the sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon the
heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

Creator, and that this is the behaviour He requires from all.

Covenant sign

So far we have considered the Sabbath institution in terms of its being obligatory for all. But we must also notice that the Sabbath had a particular relationship with the people of God. It was not just one of the many shadows that were given to the Old Testament church as types of the reality to come in Christ. It was specifically called "a covenant sign."

Exodus 31:13

"Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for generations to come, so that you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'"

Exodus 31:16, 17a

"The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites for ever. . . ."

What does it mean when we find the Sabbath talked of as a sign of the covenant?

As we examine Scripture, we find that when God graciously entered into a covenant, a treaty, with His people, He often associated particular signs with His covenants. This is an aspect of divine condescension to make things easy for us to understand, to remember, and to go on trusting in His covenant commitment.

In making the covenant with Noah after the flood, He said, "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. . . . Whenever the rainbow appears

in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth" (Genesis 9:13, 16). When the storm clouds loomed, and Noah and his descendants became afraid that another deluge would engulf the world, they would see the rainbow, and they would know that God's awareness of it guaranteed His covenant promise: "Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth" (Genesis 9:11).

Again, with the Abrahamic covenant, we find the covenant sign of circumcision, "You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant (Authorized Version: 'a token of the covenant') between me and you" (Genesis 17:11). It would be something that would act as a perpetual reminder of God's gracious covenant dealings with Abraham and his seed.

Later, at the Sinaitic covenant, we find two signs — the Passover (Exodus 13:9) and the Sabbath.

These are the only four institutions that are called covenant signs in the Old Testament. The significance of this is that because the Sabbath is called a covenant sign, we are led to expect a New Testament parallel. God's history of salvation is not like a modern detective story, with misleading clues, red herrings, false trails, dead ends. God has not revealed Himself deceptively in His covenant dealings with His people. All that He has ordained leads on to its consummation. This continuity runs throughout God's way of working in successive covenants. There is continuity even through the radical change of the

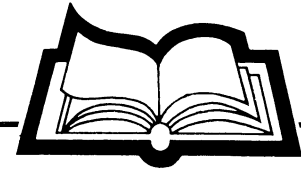
coming of the new era with Christ. Ultimately that continuity is based on the fact that the successive historical covenants serve to further the one eternal purpose which God has in salvation.

Covenant continuity is seen particularly in covenant signs. The covenant with Noah still applies, and so the rainbow is still a covenant sign. But as we find the covenant sign of circumcision continued and yet changed into baptism (and you can be antipaedobaptist and still accept that), and as we find the Passover continued and yet changed into the Lord's Supper, so too we find the Sabbath continued and yet changed into the Lord's Day. There are institutions of the older covenants that find no parallel in the church now — sacrifices, a sacrificing priesthood, monarchy. This is not because God has dropped them as being in some way unsatisfactory, but rather because they have been consummated, being brought to perfection in Christ, and finding their ultimate reference in Him. However, the covenant signs remain. They are the same and yet different; they are different and yet the same. God in His condescension still speaks to our need through them.

The Sabbath has in part gone the way of the sacrifices of bulls and of goats. The details of the covenant sign in its old form, the typical aspects of the Mosaic legislation, have passed away. But the original creation ordinance remains, as does the moral principle embodied in the Fourth Commandment, and they have been taken up in a new form appropriate to the new age, the new creation, and the new covenant.

As a covenant sign, the Lord's Day provides the children of the new creation with an ever-recurring reminder that though the new age has been inaugurated, perfection has not yet been arrived at. The new age in its fullness has not yet come to the church on earth, for it is not yet with its Lord, nor has He yet come the second time. In the time of waiting, the Lord's Day has been given as the opportunity to remember and acknowledge our Creator and our Re-Creator, and by that to strengthen faith as we eagerly await the time when our Lord comes again, and we shall no longer have to deal with the symbol, the covenant sign, but with the reality of the Sabbath rest that awaits the people of God. This is the core of the Christian's hope, and so the separation of the Lord's Day is an integral part of true Christianity and a divinely appointed means of strengthening and blessing Christian profession. The Lord of the Sabbath blesses richly with a foretaste of His eternal blessing those who observe His day.

JOHN L. MACKAY



“What! Did the Word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?”

I Corinthians 14:36

Cutting the Lifeline

Paul's strong words of rebuke against the Corinthians is normally regarded as a rebuke against the arrogance of the whole congregation apparent in their toleration of customs and practices which clashed with what was ordained and preached in the other young Gentile churches. While we certainly can endorse such a view, the context suggests that Paul has more in mind here. Not only does he rebuke the church as a whole for supposing that they were the first to hear the gospel; his words also constitute an implicit warning against a self-destructive course in the congregation. In the actions of the Corinthians, he sees the future existence of the congregation threatened.

This view of the rebuke suggests itself to the reader since it occurs in the context of prescriptions given concerning the position and office of the sisters in the church. Under the cultural influences of the day, Corinth had opened various teaching and ruling offices to women in the congregation. Paul is particularly incensed at the practice of women speaking officially in the church, calling it a shameful practice. The usurping of the preaching office by women introduces a disrespectful and unpleasant order in the life of the church, an order which defies the divine ordinances of creation.

Paul's choice of words in this rebuke can perhaps best be understood if we also consider the honoured position which these women presumably gave up in the course of their journey to the teaching office. Their movement to the position of authority not only implied a revolt against the authority of their husbands; it also implied a sacrifice of their special position as those charged with the task of the *nurture* of the children, and the *transmission* of the gospel to coming generations. For while both husband and wife figure in these tasks, the role of the mother, as bearer of children, singles her out as having a special role here. Basic nurture and the transmission of the central gospel message — particularly in the early years of childhood — lies primarily with her. In the task of passing on the good news, nothing can replace the instruction and example given in the home.

And it is this basic transmission of the gospel to future generations that Paul sees endangered in Corinth. The extent of the disorder in the church threatened the transmission of the gospel to successive generations, and also created the mentality of disrespect for the past. The Corinthians had little regard for their own spiritual fathers and for the ones who nurtured them in the gospel. They acted as if the gospel had first arisen among them, and as if there was little need or concern about the future. The arrogance evident in the self-styled female preachers and their followers was one of

pure self-isolation. The Corinthians had broken links with the past, and were also in the process of breaking their links with the future. What appeared as a harmless reversal of roles was in fact a rapid decline to self-destruction, a decline which then necessarily evokes this sharp rebuke.

So we find the Lord giving a stern warning to us all through His servant Paul. The reversal of roles in the church leads to the death of the church. Where roles are reversed with regard to the ecclesiastical tasks, and women abandon the simple and unassuming office of teaching and instruction in the home in favour of public and authoritative offices in the church — offices which Scripture entrusts to men — the future of the gospel is at stake. The line to the past is broken, and the line to the future also begins to loosen.

Seen in this light Paul's word of admonition certainly speaks to our own age, a time in which many women find themselves in the position of having to choose between a family and a career, and end up finding themselves torn between the two. Of course, exceptions always exist, but in general women cannot devote full attention to their family and develop a career at the same time. While no one can deny that women can perform tasks with greater or equal proficiency as men, we cannot overlook Paul's clear inference in this passage that the women of the church have a special task in the home. Wilfully sacrificing the maternal task in the home can only lead to the decline and death of the church.

But all this is especially true with regard to the ecclesiastical offices. Today the female celebrant has become one of the most dominant trademarks of the empty religiosity and sham churchiness of our age. Yet this ungodly and unholy movement to self-emancipation represents at the same time the movement to self-destruction. A Christianity which cuts itself off from the past also cuts its own lifeline to the future. The church that has gained its female celebrants soon loses all its children.

And the future lies with the children. Those having the youth, have the future. Therefore a church, and especially, a bond of sisters who pay attention to the children and the youth may be confident of having a good future in the Lord. And when that comes first, there is always time for other prophetic tasks in the church as well. Women who in humble submission take the exalted positions which Christ gives to them and enjoins upon them will reap a rich reward. For where there are children, there is a future! “But where there is no vision, the people perish,” Proverbs 29:18.

J DE JONG

Lessons from early church history₁

(salvation by God or by creature)

From the five topics suggested by various women's societies and put before me I chose the first one: "Early church history (from Christ to the Middle Ages)." This topic contains so much material that I only can touch certain things, I guess that this is also your intention. It does not serve any good purpose to give a run-down of all events in the period of time mentioned. You can find that yourselves in church history books, just as well as I can.

I suppose that the idea of me speaking on this topic is: how must we study church history at our societies; how do you discuss church history, and what do you get out of it for today. It is with this in mind that I call my speech, "Lessons from early church history." We want to learn from history for today, we want to learn from what God did for His church in the early days, how to recognize Him at work in gathering His church today; and we want to learn from the church's responses and reactions to God's dealings with her how we ought to respond.

While reading about the history of the early Christian church it struck me that many, if not all, of the struggles through which the early church went were about this issue: are we saved by God, by God alone, or, are we saved by creature, either wholly or partly?

This is indeed a central issue, an issue which also distinguishes the Christian faith from all other religions, which could be called "do-it-yourself" religions, while the Bible teaches that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, except the name of Jesus Christ, and that there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12).

Judaism

It was Peter who declared this before the Jewish council in Jerusalem, and it was indeed in the first place over against the Jews and Jewish influenced Christians, the so-called Judaizers or Judaists, that the early church had to maintain her confession that there is no salvation to be had except through Jesus Christ.

About Judaism we read in particular

in Paul's epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. The church was tempted to accept, besides Christ, other means in order to be saved from sin and death, namely, the observance of laws and customs, of holy rites and holy days. These were taken from the Old Testament, but because their fulfilment in and through Jesus Christ was not seen or was denied even, they were basically applied in the same way as the heathen had their rules and taboos.

Especially as a result of Paul's preaching and teaching the early church first overcame the temptation of this Judaism. Instead there came quite a reaction against it, which also was fostered by anti-Jewish feelings when the greater part of the early church was formed by people who, heathens, had become Christians.

Yet, in course of the time there came a return to all kinds of customs and ceremonies of the church of the Old Testament, with the accompanying danger of using these customs and ceremonies as means for salvation. There came again altars in the churches; the elders or presbyters began acting as priests who bring sacrifices on the altar; and the idea grew slowly that the people for their salvation depended on the work of the priests at the altar.

In the early church the believers met together whenever they could, and especially on the Lord's Day, for listening to the preaching, and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42,46; 20:7). These meetings were, as a rule, held early in the morning or late in the evening because many were slaves and had to work during the day.

Although the Judaists besides circum-

cision also demanded the observance of the sabbath and other holy days (something which Paul rejected in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16,17), the early church did not counter this by observing the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as if this day were a replacement of the Jewish sabbath and thus was the same except now on the first day of the week. But in the course of time this, in essence still Judaistic idea, did get hold in the church.

Of course the Christians tried to make time free for coming together in worship services, and, whenever it would be possible to keep the Sunday free from work for that purpose, they did. Then came, in 323, the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, and he and his successors issued Sunday laws or Lord's Day acts, so that in public life the Sunday became a day of rest.

This was a gift of God to thank the Lord for, and it is something to work and pray for that it remain or be restored also in our days of a return to unlimited Sunday shopping and Sunday work like it was in the heathen society of the early centuries of church history. At the same time, however, this free Sunday was used as an occasion for return to Jewish and pagan religious ideas of certain days being more holy than other days.

In the early Middle Ages e.g. a British scholar, Alcuin, laid for the first time a connection between the Sunday and the 4th commandment, and said that the Old Testamental celebration of the Sabbath day now rightly had been transferred to the Sunday. Thus the physical observance of a created day became the object of the 4th commandment, instead of the worship of God in spirit and truth by seeking the preaching of salvation; and the more the preaching deteriorated, the more holy days were added to the calendar, and salvation was sought in physical rest from daily work, instead of in the faith that in all (days) of life we may share in God's sabbath rest through the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ. Salvation was sought in created days, instead of in God, the Creator and Redeemer.

OUR COVER

Darlingford, Manitoba

Photo courtesy of
Travel Manitoba

No wonder that also other Judaist ideas were introduced in the church, like doing good works for salvation; and for that it was indeed helpful to take certain Old Testamental laws and regulations as literally applicable, instead of, what was the intention in the Old Testament, as shadows of Christ, who is the reality and meaning of the laws and ceremonies of the Old Testament.

Do we still meet Judaistic influences in our days as well? In the first place there are chiliastic groups, which look forward to a physical restoration of Israel in a 1000 year kingdom. In several respects they still observe Old Testament shadows, e.g.

the 7th Day Adventists, the sabbath, and the Radio Church of God, the Feast of Booths. We also see a wrong emphasis on certain Old Testamental situations and customs with the Puritans, especially in their sabbath celebration. Judaist influences are in particular met wherever legalism threatens a life by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and therefore we must be able to recognize it if and when it would also threaten us again.

Of course, we must be careful for a reaction which goes to opposite extremes. In the early church there were some people, originally gentiles and greatly influenced by heathen philosophies and ha-

tred of the Jews, who rejected the entire Old Testament as the book and the religion of the Jews. It was considered to be on a much lower level than the advanced Christian religion and the New Testament as they saw it. In this respect *Marcion* must be mentioned (see *Belgic Confession*, Art. 9). Some of this reaction can still be found in circles where the Old Testament is not much esteemed, and the message of the Gospel is being restricted to the message "Jesus saves" without showing the impact of it in all of life, due to the lack of Old Testamental background.

— *To be continued*
D. DEJONG

NEWS MEDLEY



Once again we have struggled through the Christmas season with all the songs and tunes which fill the air in the stores and malls one wishes to visit.

Once again we have had our choir performances, our school programs and our family celebrations.

And once again we have been able to notice how much nonsense is contained in the various songs which seem to be so loved by the people in general and by our own people as well. Some songs which we were requested to sing along simply could not come out of my mouth: the words were too silly, too remote from the real message that proceeds from the birth of the Saviour.

It is my fervent wish that all our schools, all our choirs, and all other organizations among us that organize evenings around the end of December eliminate from these programs all songs that simply do not make any sense to someone who knows "what Christmas is all about."

There was much to be very grateful for in the programs which we attended. One thing in particular sometimes brought real tears of emotion to our eyes: when we saw the children standing there, small and not-so-small, singing the praises of the Lord and glorifying Him for the immeasurable gift which He bestowed upon His people in His only begotten Son. How rich we are with so many treasures, and by these treasures I now refer to the children whom the Lord has given. The one time there were one hundred, the other time there were two hundred of them.

These programs also showed the rich blessings which we have received in our schools. The parents have sacrificed much to establish and to maintain these institutions, but the return they receive from these sacrifices cannot be measured.

It is especially with these extraordinary activities that the work done at the schools becomes visible to a much larger audience than to the parents only. Our teachers spent much extra time on these programs, but it was well worth it.

Now the new school-period is going to start and the whole community is working towards the next break. We wish both teachers and students much perseverance and wisdom.

As for the news from the Churches, we start in the Fraser Valley.

There is in the first place Lynden, where the Rev. Van Delden still does not have the status of landed immigrant. He received a temporary "port-pass" which allows him to cross the border back and forth, but his family cannot go to Canada; if they do, they are not allowed to return to south of the border. This temporary pass runs out on January 3rd, and then our colleague is "locked up" in the States as well. We express the wish that things may be arranged soon to everyone's satisfaction.

The Consistory of the Surrey Church discussed the case of members who live far away. This has always been a point of controversy: if one moves far away, can he or she effectively be a member of the Church? Surrey adopted the following rules.

"a. When members are *travelling* elsewhere on a short-term, temporary basis, travel attestations should be used .

"b. When members *take up residence* at a location which makes it no longer feasible (i) for them to participate actively in the life of the church, and (ii) for the consistory to have proper supervision over them, after the proper admonitions have taken place, they will be considered to have withdrawn themselves from the church.

"c. If persons who take up residence at such a location would like to remain members and insist that items mentioned under (i) and (ii) are feasible, the consistory can agree to allow them to remain such on a temporary basis for a period of six months. If after six months it is agreed that such membership is feasible, the consistory will review the matter every six months thereafter.

"d. Those serving on mission fields, in the armed forces, in the RCMP, etc., *may* be treated as exceptions to the above rules, although their status will also be reviewed every six months."

Perhaps there are more consistories that discuss the same matter and are more or less helped by learning what Surrey decided. It is for the possible benefit of others that we pass it on.

We are happy that exceptions are being made, especially regarding those who due to the nature of their occupation may be posted in remote regions, yet wish to keep the bond with the Church. While being aware of the difficulties and the dan-

gers with which we are faced in this connection, we should also bear in mind that we should not repel those who are desirous to maintain the bond while sending brothers to far-away regions to bring people to the community of Christ.

As for the brothers and sisters who are living in the Okanagan Valley, the Churches in British Columbia have promised support to the Church at Chilliwack so that a minister can be called.

The Consistory of the Chilliwack Church pondered the question how to arrange this calling. Apparently they did not wish to "push onto" the brothers and sisters in the Okanagan a minister whom they might not desire; on the other hand, since no institution has taken place in Vernon as yet, it is the Church at Chilliwack that is to extend a call as Vernon is under its care. How to go about it ?

Chilliwack found this solution: "When we call a minister, we ask Vernon first to vote on a given name; if Vernon answers positively, the congregation in Chilliwack will be asked if it has any objections before the call is extended."

A last item from the Fraser Valley: the Consistory of the Langley Church decided to discontinue the Dutch services which were held every first Sunday of the month in the evening.

Turning to the Bulkley Valley, we mention that the Rev. Van Spronsen was laid up with back problems for some four weeks, but seems to be back in gear.

From the Smithers Ladies' Auxiliary we pass on that at their latest bazaar they instituted something new. "We will be doing things slightly differently this year. Instead of *selling* coffee and a piece of cake, all entrants 19 years and over will be charged \$1.00 entree fee. Then when you feel like having a cup of coffee, you just go and get one, and it will *not* cost you anything."

I don't know whether it was such a smart idea, especially

since the pieces of cake were apparently included. Let us know.

Jumping to Winnipeg, we learn that it was not all that easy to have a garage built with the parsonage. The Committee of Administration "reports that a special committee of the City of Winnipeg first has to approve a rezoning before a garage can be built."

Winnipeg's bulletin once again contained the complete list of family visits for the season, with dates and initials of elders who will be coming to visit the families. It is the only Church with which I've ever seen something like that.

I do recall that in my teenage years I did see a list by the Rev. Gideon Boekenogen (if I recall the name well) who at the beginning of the year informed the congregation which text he was going to take on the first, second, third, etc. Sunday of the year. The strangest thing was that on the first Sunday of the year Psalm 1:1 was to be sung, and that he so successively worked through the whole Psalter. I wonder what he did when he came to the conclusion that he could not come to a satisfactory understanding of the text mentioned in his list. We shall refrain from guessing what the solution was. Perhaps he had no such problems.

Apparently the membership of the Winnipeg Church is growing as well, which brings with it the need to expand the seating capacity. In Winnipeg they already have a balcony. "Work on the balcony will start in the near future. The benches (I hope they are pews, VO) are going to be ordered and when ready some will be placed temporarily in the back of the auditorium until the balcony is finished. Families interested in sitting on the balcony are requested to contact the consistory."

It is a good thing that families will be assigned places there. It prevents certain age groups from crawling up there with all the temptations and problems associated with it.

I found that the choir in Winnipeg has a strange name,



Left to right: Rev. VanRongen, Rev. VanHoudt, Mrs. VanHoudt, Mrs. VanRongen, Rev. Bruning, Mrs. Bruning, Dr. Hur, Mrs. Hur, Mrs. VanOene, Rev. VanOene

something of a cross between Latin and Greek "Jubilate Deo." But perhaps the note for the bulletin was not written all that clearly.

Nearby Carman's evangelization committee reports about the possibility of airing complete worship services. "A number of months ago we reported that there was a possibility that we would be airing our complete Sunday services four times yearly in addition to our weekly fifteen minute broadcasts. All the arrangements had been made, however, since that time CISV has not yet put together a program schedule. The last time the committee spoke with them they were still planning to go ahead with the programming. According to them they had received enough interest from various churches to make the project worthwhile."

Would be beautiful if it could be done.

In the Smithville bulletin the Rev. Bosch writes about his attending the latest regional synod. "In the question period the matter of dividing the region into three classical resorts was raised and the local churches should give attention to this. There are now nineteen churches in the two classes and it might be beneficial to the churches to 'decentralize.' "

I am wondering whether it is the correct course that such a matter is raised during the question period at a *regional synod*, for it may make the impression as if a regional synod were the assembly which is to initiate such action.

Question periods are dangerous phenomena at times.

In Burlington South's bulletin we read that "the consistory is also informed that br. Boot of Toronto and Rev. Knigge will be going to the mission field with their wives to be present at the installation of br. Dambon as minister of the Word in August 1987."

I think it is a nice gesture to also ask the Rev. Knigge to go there. He is the one who started the mission work on behalf of the Churches in Irian Jaya and it is very encouraging when one is permitted to see such fruits upon one's work.

By the way, Rev. Knigge was also in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea where he sort of followed up the work which the Rev. Bruning of Armadale had been doing on behalf of the Australian Churches.

On his way to Australia, the Rev. Huizinga and family spent a few days here in Clearbrook, where we met them. He told us that the week after their arrival in Western Australia a unique event would take place: no fewer than seven ministers would be there on the occasion of the colloquium to be held with him. Rev. Knigge was to be one of them. From personal correspondence I know that the Knigge's were also in Albany on the south coast.

Perhaps this is as good an opportunity as any to ask the printer to include in this issue also a picture which was taken when we were in the southern hemisphere.

It is a picture taken in front of the Rev. VanRongen's house. The Brunings were over from Papua New Guinea for the wedding of one of the children; Rev. and Mrs. Van Houdt were holidaying at the VanRongens, and we were there. And then, of course, there were Dr. and Mrs. Hur, also of Kelmscott. Although it is just about a year ago that this photo was taken, not much will have changed.

Burlington East's Consistory received a letter from the one at Burlington West, "asking our cooperation in maintaining the present borderline between the congregations." "The consistory decides to answer this letter in the affirmative, stating that we will continue to encourage members to abide by the existing arrangement. The consistory feels this is also a matter of good order (I Cor. 14:33-40), as well as honouring an existing agreement. Although we cannot force members to ask for an attestation, we can and do ask members to abide by the rules."

Our readers know what I think about borderlines, so that is not the issue here.

It is my conviction, however, that here matters are turned upside down. Here is an agreement between two consistories (and the one of South, I presume); but then it is wrong to urge the *members* to honour an agreement between two *consistories*.

When two Churches have agreed upon a borderline and when thus they have drawn a dividing line with each one's authority restricted to their own side of the line, they have thereby given up whatever authority they might have had over members who move across the border.

When a borderline is drawn, and someone moves to the other side, he has thereby ceased being under the supervision of the consistory, and he has ceased being a member of that Church. It is then not up to the member to honour the agreement between the two consistories, but it is up to the two consistories to abide by their arrangement. This means that someone who moves to the other side of the borderline becomes a "church-less" person: he has ceased being a member of the one church and until he has joined the church in the other area, he is no member of either church, strictly speaking.

Of course, we do not wish to claim that he is outside the Church if he has requested an attestation with a view to joining the church in whose territory he is going to settle. We put it like that for clarity's sake.

If one moves to the territory of the other Church and is not planning on joining that Church, he is not a member of the Church, for by removing himself from the territory over which the one consistory has the oversight, he has removed himself from that Church. He is no longer allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper in that Church or to present his child for baptism there.

Of course, a consistory cannot compel or force someone to ask for an attestation, but a consistory must abide by the arrangement made with the neighbouring consistory and make clear to the member in question that he is no longer a member of the Church which he left. It is only by mutual consent of both consistories that exceptions can be made. If consistories feel that they cannot maintain the arrangement by pointing out to the member that he is no longer under their supervision and can be admitted to the Lord's Supper and baptism only when he joins the "new" Church, then they should ask themselves the question whether they acted correctly when making the arrangement. If the conclusion is that they acted correctly when making the arrangement, then it is up to them, and not to the members, to honour it.

A few items from Australia will conclude our medley this time.

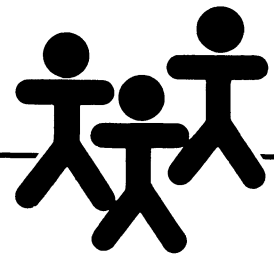
In Byford a church building and a parsonage was built with united effort. The Huizinga family will occupy the parsonage for the time being. Concerning this parsonage we read, "The finances appear encouraging at this stage. Most costs are on or below budget. The volunteer work is having a very positive effect on total costs."

And from the eastern Church, the one at Launceston on Tasmania, or "Tassie" as they say in Armadale, there is good news about their organ as follows: "For two years and three months they — i.e. some brothers who were mentioned — spent at least one evening per week together building a new organ, from the most humble activities like scraping and sanding to the most sophisticated artistic work such as voicing and tuning of the pipes."

The expectation is expressed that for many years the congregation will be able to enjoy the sound of the instrument, the oldest part of which dates back more than 120 years. Good workmanship was the rule in those days as well, for "all pipes of the original organ (1860) could be utilized."

Congratulations. Sing'em.

VO



Reformed schools — can we compete?

This is a question that nags at us all from time to time. Because of our small and isolated condition, we tend to harbour a type of xenophobia, a fear of strangers, and readily give in to a feeling of inferiority to that massive structure, the Educational Establishment, out there. While this may be understandable, it is not really very realistic. Although the wider world of education has much to teach us, it does not necessarily have all the answers to all the questions. One of the ways in which to discover that, and to gain some self-confidence, is to shed that fear of strangers and to mingle in that world a little. Those of our numbers who have studied education at the graduate level, for instance, have found themselves to be quite able to compete on an equal basis, and even to offer valuable insights and input in their classes. Isolated contacts with local education officials often result in "surprising" cooperation and respect. More such contacts are desirable in terms of public relations and to get a proper perspective on our situation.

Similar doubts assail us when we look at the burgeoning technological revolution of our times. Again the public schools far outstrip us in the acquisition of computer equipment and technology. While some of our children may already have had exposure to computers in the public school kindergarten class, when they get to our schools, generally speaking, they will be lucky to find a single unit in the school (although that is slowly changing). Do we then not worry whether our children will be properly prepared to compete with their public school counterparts when the time comes to enter the "real world" of work?

With these thoughts in mind, I'd like to share with you two small articles gleaned from the pages of the school papers of Brampton/Toronto and Orangeville respectively. I think they are complementary. The first was in turn taken from an American publication, *The Education Digest*, and is entitled:

The low-skill future of high technology

High technology has become the nation's latest white knight, and policy

makers have proposed vast changes in our education system as a result. These changes assume that future job growth in the United States will favor professional and technical jobs requiring considerable education and training in computer-related areas, and also that high technology will require upgraded skills because workers will be using computers and other technical equipment. Unfortunately, these assumptions are dead wrong.

The expansion of the lowest-skilled jobs in the American economy will vastly outstrip the growth of high-technology jobs. And the proliferation of high-technology industries and their products is far more likely to reduce the skill requirements of jobs in the U.S. economy than to upgrade them. Therefore, America's policy makers should revise their educational priorities and place greater emphasis on a strong general education rather than a narrow specialized one. Estimates suggest that most job expansion will occur in areas that require little or no training beyond high school.

Job projections aside, there is no question that high technology will have a profound effect on many American jobs. Vast segments of the labor force will find their jobs altered by sophisticated computer technologies. But will the use of these new technologies require workers with more sophisticated skills? Based on past experience, the answer seems to be no. Throughout the history of industrial production in this country, management has endeavored to divide and subdivide work into repetitive, routine tasks for which unskilled and lowpaid workers can be used. Technology has generally been used to aid and abet this division of labor.

Our recent analysis of job-skilled requirements in the United States compared Department of Labor data on job-skilled training requirements for specific occupations in 1960 with those in 1976. We found that in spite of continuing advances in technology and the widespread shift toward automation, job-skill requirements have changed very little over the last two decades. The impact of more recent technologies only reinforces this conclusion. We have every reason to

believe that future technologies will continue to simplify and routinize work tasks, making it more difficult for workers to express their individuality and judgment. Just as ominous is the possibility that high tech will eliminate more jobs than it creates.

Whereas past technical innovations primarily displaced physical labor, future technologies, rooted in the microelectronics revolution, threaten to displace mental labor. Entire classes of skilled or semi-skilled workers can be made obsolete by sophisticated software packages.

What are the implications of high tech for education? First, excessive emphasis on specialized schooling will not prepare workers for the future. Many workers will probably have to learn different, rather than more demanding, skills, but most of these can best be acquired on the job and through short training courses rather than through expanded science, math, and computer-programming studies. A recent survey of Los Angeles industrial employers showed a preference for employees with a sound education and good work habits over those with narrow vocational skills.

In the future, specialized job skills will be more rapidly rendered obsolete. The best possible preparation for adapting to a lifetime of change will be a strong general education — a knowledge of different political, economic, social, and cultural tenets as well as acquisition of strong analytical, communicative, and computational skills. These are essential to understand currents of change in society and adapt to it constructively.

This approach should also fulfill the need to provide a common educational background for all students that will best serve the democratic interests of our society. A democratic society requires that citizens be qualified to understand the major issues of the day, discuss them, and take appropriate action. Early specialization deprives students of the general knowledge and skills needed to adapt to a changing labor market and fails to provide the basis for democratic participation.

In a high-tech future, a solid basic education will become more, not less, important. The challenge of the schools

will be to upgrade the overall quality of instruction by attracting the best talent society has to offer. This will require major curriculum improvements, competitive professional salaries, and a much greater commitment to educational quality on the part of teachers, parents, policy makers, and society in general.

The second is:

"Why must I learn this?"

By Chester C. Weaver, Jr.
from *The Christian School Builder*

Sometimes upper grade students ask the teacher this question. Sometimes they ask their parents. How should we answer them?

It is very easy to say, "The school board has decided that we shall study this and so we will." But that answer does not satisfy minds that are beginning to inquire and search things out. Students who ask this question deserve a better answer — an answer that both satisfies the question and one that stimulates further growth in the mind of the inquirer.

True, a mechanic may never need to know the commutative law of addition and multiplication, who Montezuma was, where the Azores are, which president succeeded James Buchanan, what the capital of the Union of South Africa is, or why Norway has such a mild climate for its latitude. A farmer, housewife, craftsman, day labourer, or clerk could get along in life just as well without knowing these things, too. So why study history, geography, algebra, literature, or science?

If our educational philosophy is vocational oriented, we are shortsighted. Our children should be going to school with more in view than learning how to make a business succeed. They should be going to school for more reason than that, they may want to teach school or write stories when they grow up. Parents must see school as more than a place for their children to be until they can take them out to help with work at home.

We could compare school with an archer. Psalm 127:4 tells us that children are as arrows in the hand of a mighty man. School, along with the home and church, is part of that force which draws the bowstring back to its limit. Success in life and for eternity is the target. An arrow that is aimed directly at the bull's-eye of a target will fall short if the target is very far away. Far too often our arrows have fallen short. Why? We simply have not aimed high enough.

We must get our eyes above a vocation or an isolated goal. We must see life as it exists. Life is more than a vocation. Life is viewing history and benefitting from it. Life is beholding the complex order in the universe and worshiping the Creator. Life is knowing how to act and interact with all kinds of people. Life is having a general knowledge of what con-



stitutes the earth on a worldwide scale. Most of all, life is being in Christ. Life without that perspective is not life.

Why study a given area? Study it because it is part of the development of a proper concept of man and his relationship to God as the Master of the Universe.

Keeping such things in mind, we can answer the question, concerning our ability to compete, positively. As long as we remember to work hard, to use all our talents fully, and to depend prayerfully upon Him Who sets our task before us.

On that same theme, we may in fact even be able to show the way sometimes. This we may learn from an experience of the Dufferin Christian School, in Carman, Manitoba. There a program of total integration of a severely handicapped child has been undertaken in the school. The uniqueness of this program has been noted even by the local newspaper, which begins an article on the program in the following way:

"A child who can neither hold a pencil nor walk on her own is just part of everyday life at Dufferin Christian School."

The paper conducted an interview with the school principal, Mr. H.J. Ludwig, who described the philosophy and implementation of the program. He has also written an article on the same matter for the benefit of other schools and teachers in the *Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association Magazine*. Visiting officials of the Manitoba Department of Education have also commented enthusiastically about the initiative undertaken.

All that is not to pat ourselves on the back of course, but to demonstrate that innovative initiatives can be undertaken by us, and that what Carman is doing for Ruth should be seriously considered for imitation for the benefit of other such children and their families.

The other news from the schools is not that plentiful, nor are the school magazines from which to gather it lately. It can be reported that two Ontario schools are busy with expansion plans. A vigorous building program is in progress in Fergus, where they hope to complete the elemen-

tary section of their new education "complex" soon, to be ready for occupancy by January, 1987. The staff is watching the building rise out of the ground with eager anticipation! Presumably the same is true for parents and children. The Burlington society plans to refurbish an existing building and prepare it for occupancy in the fall of 1987, as a second school in that community. A big job for which they are wished much success.

It appears that the Smithville school is also approaching the "bursting at the seams" stage, which no doubt is or will present the Board there with some hard choices. Such growth is a good sign but a difficult challenge.

In my perusal of various education-related periodicals I came across the following article, which struck home. As teachers and parents who have solemnly pledged to "train up a child in the way he should go," and so very conscious of our own short-comings (I hope) we tend to get a little stuck in the "don't" or reprimand mode of discipline sometimes, at the expense of the more positive, encouraging kind. In that sense this article has something to say to us. It is taken from the Fall, 1986 *Teaching Today* magazine and is entitled:

A little reminder to all parents

There are days set aside to praise mothers and fathers. Weeks before, we are reminded — in ads, on television commercials, and by bulging greeting card racks — to Remember Mother — and, a few weeks later, to Remember Dad.

But who reminds us to tell our children we are glad we have them?

There is a day in June called Children's Day. It is noted on a few calendars. But even the greeting card manufacturers ignore it.

Once, when I was small, I saw Children's Day on a calendar and thoughtfully pointed it out to my mother. "Every day," she responded, "is children's day."

That isn't quite true. Too many children don't realize, as the years fly by, that they are enjoyed, that we are glad to have them.

A few weeks ago, a former student of mine came to visit. Mark is near completion of a Master's degree in a difficult field at a top university, on an academic scholarship. He worked every summer to help put himself through. He is an outstanding student, a hard worker, honest and efficient. His younger brother is just like him.

That afternoon he remarked, "My brother graduates next month. I graduate in June. Then my parent's troubles are over. They'll be able to enjoy life."

I was stunned.

Later I mentioned this to another teacher who had known the family for years.

She said, "Oh, they were always fine boys. I think the parents know it — but I'm not sure they're the kind to tell the boys that."

Why not?

I have a friend who learned, after his father had been dead five years, that the man had been proud of him.

His Aunt Kate, moving to smaller quarters on retirement, sent John a box of letters his father had written to her. Each letter contained glowing paragraphs about John.

John's father had written in eloquent detail to his sister 5,000 kilometers away of the pleasure he found in his son. But he never told John.

We parents, forever reminding our children to say thank you, too often forget to express our thanks, our appreciation, to the ones who matter most.

Author: Anne McCarroll

To underscore the same point, a quotation from Dr. Haim Ginott:

"If you want children to improve, let them hear the nice things you say about them to others."

Husband, father, elder, principal, teacher . . . and columnist? You will sense what is being led up to. Each, according to his abilities, can only fulfill so many functions really *well*. Although the responsibility for this column has been mine for a relatively short time, I feel I must give it up since I can't give it the time it demands in order to have it appear as regularly as it should. Since the editors have found the staff of the Canadian Reformed Teachers' College willing to take over, thus spreading the responsibility a little more widely, I readily relinquish the task and put it into their capable hands. Through their network of connections across the country they will no doubt keep you well informed. I thank the editors for the opportunity to make a contribution. Wishing you all the best for the new year, let me leave you with this thought as L. Watters expressed it:

"School is a building that has four walls — with tomorrow inside."

F.C. LUDWIG

Editorial Note

We thank br. Ludwig for his contributions for our "School Crossing" and the time spent to prepare them, and we can appreciate his decision to hand the job over to a "triumvirate." Perhaps, now that the pressure of having to have an article ready for publication every so many weeks is gone, it will be easier to have something to share once in a while with the readers of *Clarion*. We are looking forward to it.

At the same time we are grateful that the staff of our Teachers College are willing to accept the job of taking care of "School Crossing" from now on. Undoubtedly, this combined effort of the brothers W.F. Horsman, T.M.P. VanderVen, and A. Witten will be productive and keep us informed about what is going on in the schools, as well as about what it means to teach in a Reformed manner. Thank you, brothers, for your willingness to task of informing us in an instructive way about the world of school education.

J. GEERTSEMA

PRESS RELEASES



Classis Contracta at Hamilton, ON, November 27, 1986

Art. 1. *Opening*: On behalf of the convening Church of Hamilton, br. A. Witten called the meeting to order. He read Psalm 111 and leads in prayer. He welcomed Rev. W. Huizinga and the delegates of the churches present.

Art. 2. *Credentials*: The credentials of the delegates of the Churches of Ancaster, Hamilton and Smithville are examined and found in good order.

Art. 3. *Appointment of officers*: The following officers are appointed: chairman — Rev. R. Aasman; clerk — elder J.J. Kuntz; vice-chairman — Rev. C. Bosch.

Art. 4. *Adoption of agenda*: After an addition is made to the agenda the agenda is adopted.

Art. 5. The various documents relating to the release of Rev. Huizinga from the classical district Ontario South are read. These include:

a. a letter of call from the Free Reformed Church at Armadale, West Australia.

b. a letter of acceptance by the Rev. Huizinga.

c. a letter of release by the Church at Hamilton.

These documents are read and found

to be in good order. A letter of release for Rev. W. Huizinga from the classical district of Ontario South is then read and approved, signed and given to the departing minister.

Art. 6. *Appointment of a counsellor*: The Rev. D.G.J. Agema is appointed counsellor for the Church of Hamilton in accordance with Art 45, C.O.

Art. 7. *Classical representative*: A classical representative is appointed to attend the farewell service to be led by Rev. Huizinga on November 30, 1986, D.V.

Art. 8. *Acts*: The Acts and the press release are read and approved.

Art. 9. *Closing*: After addressing some words of appreciation to Rev. W. Huizinga, Rev. R. Aasman closed the meeting in prayer.

For the classis,
C. BOSCH

Classis Ontario-South, December 10, 1986

1. On behalf of the convening Church at Hamilton, brother A. Witten opens the meeting by requesting the delegates to sing Hymn 11:1, 2 and 3. He reads Isaiah 40:1-11 and leads in prayer.

He welcomes all the brothers present. In particular he extends a hearty welcome to Rev. B. Hofford and elder St.

Brown from Laurel, Maryland who are our guests.

He reminds the brothers that Hamilton is now vacant since Rev. Huizinga has left for Australia. A Classis contracta was held where the Rev. Huizinga was honourably discharged as minister of Hamilton.

2. The delegates of Hamilton report that the credentials are in good order. Only the Church of Chatham is without a credential due to the fact that its clerk forgot to give it to the delegates.

It is decided to accept the brothers on the strength of a provisional credential drawn up at the meeting and to be duly recorded in the Press Release and the Acts.

3. The meeting is constituted. Rev. C. Bosch is chairman, Rev. D.G.J. Agema is clerk and Rev. G. Wieske is vice-chairman.

4. Rev. Bosch thanks the Church at Hamilton for her preparatory work. He mentions that Hamilton was disappointed in her call for a missionary when the Rev. E. Kampen declined.

Various matters are added to the agenda.

The chairman reads a letter from two members of the Tri County Reformed Church at Laurel (Rev. Hofford) in which they ask to be allowed to attend Classis

as observers. They like to get better acquainted with our churches since they consider asking to be admitted to our federation.

The agenda is adopted.

5. The documents required for the preparatory examination of brother K.A. Kok are found to be in good order.

Brother Kok presents his sermon proposal on Revelation 11:3-6. In closed session it is decided to proceed with the examination.

Rev. Aasman then examines brother Kok on the exegesis of Zechariah 6.

After a hearty lunch break the chairman reopens the meeting. He invites us to sing Psalm 107:1 and 2. Roll call is held. The examination of brother Kok is continued.

Rev. J. Moesker examines on the exegesis of II Corinthians 3 and 4. Rev. P. Kingma examines him on the doctrine of the church and the covenant.

The outcome of the examination is discussed in closed session. The result is that Classis decides to declare brother Kok eligible for call within the American/Canadian Reformed Churches, after brother Kok has promised not to teach anything against the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.

The chairman invites us to sing Psalm 145:1 and 5 after which opportunity is given to congratulate brother Kok.

After a cup of tea the floor is given to Rev. Hofford from Laurel. He thanks Classis for allowing him and elder Brown to be present as observers. He relates that they have been studying the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordt. They hope to come with a request in March 1987 to be allowed to affiliate with the American/Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. Agema is given the opportunity to respond on behalf of Classis. He expresses our thankfulness that there is a growing recognition between our churches and the congregation at Laurel that both want to be faithful to God's Word. He wishes the brothers observers and the congregation in Laurel the blessing of the Lord upon their further plans and expresses the hope that we may soon accept each other on the basis of Holy Scripture according to the Reformed Confessions.

6. The Church at Blue Bell asks for financial support from Classis since she intends to call her own minister. The Church at Ancaster will study this request and report at the next Classis.

Two churches ask and receive advice in disciplinary matters.

7. An instruction from the Church at Smithville with regards to the brothers and sisters at Palmetto, Florida, is read. Smithville proposes to release the Church

of Grand Rapids of her original Classis mandate.

Smithville also requests Classis to deal with the proposals of the brothers and sisters at Palmetto since they are against the Arts. 40, 41 and 52 of the C.O.

A letter from the Church at Grand Rapids is read requesting that Classis release her from the mandate given by Classis December 1983 regarding Palmetto.

Classis decides to revoke her earlier given mandate to Grand Rapids on the grounds adduced by this church which are:

a. The brothers and sisters at Palmetto feel that it is not feasible, because of the distance, that the Church at Grand Rapids is their neighbouring church appointed by Classis Ontario-South to help them as they now propose.

b. The consistory cannot do any more than done thus far: Institution of a church is judged by Classis to be impossible as yet. Supervision by the Church at Grand Rapids for church services is by the brothers considered impracticable and by the Church at Grand Rapids thought impossible as well as by some of their home churches.

c. The consistory has come to the conclusion that the requests of the brothers and sisters in Palmetto for church services originate from a situation caused by themselves by staying there for a long period of time, away from their home-churches; that such a situation is a matter between each one of them and their home-church and that each home-church has the duty of pastoral care for its own members in their various needs.

This also means that the two proposals from the brothers and sisters at Palmetto will not be dealt with.

A proposal from the Church at Chatham to change a sentence in the Acts of Classis September 10, 1986. Classis agrees that Classis September erred in using the words "to be assessed for" in Art. 9(a) and decides to substitute it by the word "determine" or "raise."

A proposal from the Church at Chatham as administering church re needy students (Art. 20 C.O.) that Classis accede to a request for financial support for a student at the Theological College. This is adopted.

Classis retires for supper. After supper we sing Psalm 47:1 and 3 and the chairman reopens the meeting. Roll call is held. All brothers are present.

The Church at Chatham proposes a different way of financing any future requests of needy students. Since this has not been dealt with yet at the consistory level, it is decided to postpone this item to a future Classis.

The Church at Chatham draws the attention of Classis to an inaccuracy in

the Acts of Synod Burlington-West 1986, p. 131, regarding the sequence of events resulting in the resignation of Rev. B. Hofferford as pastor of Burtonsville Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Chatham claims that contrary to the Acts, Rev. Hofferford did not resign before the interim period came to an end but that he resigned after he was faced with the consequence of having to administer the Lords Supper against his conscience. Since the congregation at Laurel may come with a request for affiliation, Chatham deems it necessary to set this record straight.

Classis adopts Chatham's suggested correction and decides to include it in the Acts and the Press Release.

A letter from the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This letter cannot be dealt with since the consistories have not seen it yet. It will be put on the agenda of the next Classis.

A letter from two brothers of the Church at Grand Rapids regarding the ministry-at-large project is read. The matter is declared inadmissible since the brothers do not follow Art. 31 of the Church Order which states that "if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major ecclesiastical assembly;" because they do not make clear that they are appealing a decision or decisions of their consistory at Grand Rapids.

A letter from General Synod Burlington-West 1986 (cf. Art. 137) received by a previous Classis is dealt with. Classis decides that in the Acts of Classis Ontario South, June 11, 1986, the matter has been sufficiently dealt with.

8. Classis decides to charge the convening church for Classis March 11, 1987 to put the matter of the Guidelines for Church Visitation on the agenda. In the mean time the churches can familiarize themselves with the written suggestions made by the committee and by the Church at Hamilton.

Church Visit reports are read pertaining to the Churches at Smithville, Attercliffe, Blue Bell, Watford and Chatham. All reports give many reasons for thankfulness.

There is a special Church Visit report on the Church at Grand Rapids. Classis is thankful for the work that the brothers church visitors have done there.

9. Convening church for next Classis is the Church at Lincoln. The proposed moderamen: Chairman: Rev. P. Kingma; Clerk: Rev. C. Bosch; Vice-chairman: Rev. D.G.J. Agema. The date is March 11, 1987. D.V.

A proposal from the Church at Blue Bell to change the venue for future Clas-

sis from London to either Lincoln or Smithville since these places are more central to all the churches. Classis appoints the Church at Ancaster to investigate the feasibility of this request, especially regarding any financial repercussions and report at the next Classis.

10. Some brothers make use of the Personal Question Period.

11. Censure ad Art. 44 C.O. is not necessary.

12. The Acts are read and adopted. The same is done with the Press Release. The chairman thanks the sisters Wildeboer for their excellent care.

13. After singing Psalm 111:2 and 4 the chairman closes the meeting with thanksgiving and prayer.

G. WIESKE,
Vice-chairman

Classis Alberta/Manitoba of the Canadian Reformed Churches, January 13 and 14, 1987

1. On behalf of the convening Church at Carman, the Rev. P.K.A. De Boer calls the meeting to order. He requests to sing Psalm 100:1, 2 and 4, reads II Corinthians 3:12-4:12, and leads in prayer. He welcomes the delegates and the visitors and mentions that the Church at Calgary was disappointed because a call extended to Rev. E. Kampen was declined.

2. The credentials are examined. On behalf of the convening church, Rev. De Boer reads a statement to the effect that Rev. S. DeBruin c.s. cannot be accepted as delegates at Classis. The Church at Carman had received legal notice of suspension from office which includes concurring advice of the neighbouring church.

3. Classis is constituted with as chairman Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar; vice-chairman Rev. M. van Beveren; clerk Rev. W. den Hollander.

4. The chairman asks whether there are any objections to have the ministers suggested by previous Classis, as officers for this Classis. No objections are voiced.

5. With a view to the situation in the Immanuel Church at Edmonton, the chairman appeals to Classis to exercise true love and to expect the Lord's help while dealing with the matters of the agenda.

6. Upon request Rev. De Boer explains why the convening church decided to accept the credentials of the brethren H. van Delden and H. Buikema of the Immanuel Church and not of the delegation formed by Rev. S. DeBruin and Br. H. Kippers.

Classis accepts the explanation of the Church at Carman.

7. The agenda is established.

8. In closed session a report of church visitation to the Immanuel Church at Edmonton is read.

9. The Immanuel Church reports on

the inspection of the Archives.

10. An instruction of the Church at Coaldale is withdrawn by the delegates of Coaldale. They inform Classis that they will reintroduce the instruction at the next Classis in order to give the churches more time to study the contents of the instruction.

11. A request of Rev. S. DeBruin c.s. is dealt with. They request that Classis declare that "by liberating themselves from the abuse of ecclesiastical authority, the minority in the Immanuel Church obeyed God rather than men."

Classis makes the following decision:

"1. Classis, having read the request of Rev. S. DeBruin c.s. and having read the submissions and appendices of the Immanuel Consistory, judges that in view of the confusion created by the hand-outs of Rev. S. DeBruin, especially the pastoral letter of November 9, 1986 and the "Summary of the rights of the congregation" of November 29, 1986, the Immanuel Council rightly concluded that an emergency situation had developed. This conclusion warranted a provisional release of Rev. DeBruin to protect the congregation, pending a decision ad Article 11 of the Church Order to be made at Classis January 13, 1987. Church polity implies that for a release of this nature the neighbouring church should be consulted.

2. Classis judges that in accordance with Article 31 Church Order the brethren Rev. S. DeBruin c.s. had the right to appeal the decision of the Immanuel Council.

3. The Rev. S. DeBruin c.s. wrongly speak of a precedent set in the decision of General Synod Homewood-Carman 1958, since the rejection of the authority of the majority of the office bearers in that particular case took place only after two Classes had condemned the suspension and after the concurring advice of the neighbouring church.

4. Classis judges that the character of Reformed Church polity is such that liberation or withdrawal can only be considered if the appeal process has been followed to its logical end and there are no avenues of redress possible except to have one's conscience bound by un-Scriptural decisions. Considering the reference to Acts 5:29 the brethren should have obeyed God by honouring the confederation of churches within which the ministers of the Word function according to the given word and the adopted Church Order. This means that the brethren had not come to a conflict of conscience yet.

Rev. DeBruin c.s.' withdrawal short-circuits the appeal process laid out in the Church Order and as such he should request readmission to the church and follow the church-orderly way.

5. For the above stated reasons Clas-

sis decides not to accede to the request of Rev. S. DeBruin c.s."

12. In answer to questions of the Immanuel Church at Edmonton Classis declares

a. The schismatic act of rejecting the office bearers constitute withdrawal from the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church.

b. The Immanuel Church has no further financial obligations towards Rev. S. DeBruin as of January 13, 1987.

c. Further disciplinary action cannot be taken.

13. Classis grants the Immanuel Church at Edmonton pulpit supply, namely, for one Sunday per month.

14. The following appointments are made:

a. Counsellor for the Immanuel Church: Rev. M. van Beveren.

b. Deputy for Contact with the Government of Alberta: Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar.

c. Examiner for New Testament: Rev. P.K.A. De Boer.

d. To fill a vacancy in the Committee for Needy Churches: Br. John VanderDeen of the Church at Barrhead.

e. Church to convene Classis scheduled for May 5, 1987: the Church at Coaldale.

f. Suggested officers for the next Classis: chairman, Rev. A. de Jager; vice-chairman, Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar; clerk, Rev. M. van Beveren.

g. The delegation to the Regional Synod, scheduled for March 31, 1987, as appointed by the previous Classis, is confirmed.

15. An instruction of the Providence Church at Edmonton re the Articles 2, 4 and 19;5, 7 and 17 of the Acts of Classis October 7-9, 1986, is read and taken for information.

16. An invitation will be forwarded to the Presbyterian of North Dakota of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to send a representative to our next Classis.

17. Question Period and Censure ad Article 44 Church Order are held.

18. During the Personal Question Period Rev. J.D. Wielenga requests to be released of the appointment as counsellor for the Church at Calgary.

Classis grants the request and, upon Calgary's request, appoints Rev. A. de Jager.

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

20. The chairman extends Classis' congratulations to Rev. J.D. Wielenga who will remember on January 21st that he entered the ministry 25 years ago.

21. The chairman expresses Classis' appreciation for the care received from the ladies of the Immanuel Church.

2. The vice-chairman leads in prayer and supplication.

For Classis,
M. VAN BEVEREN, vice-chairman h.t.



Hello Busy Beavers!

Get out your markers and your pencils, crayons and chalks!

We want *your* picture to share with the Busy Beaver Club members.

It doesn't matter what's on your picture — winter, fun, your pet, fun with friends, or flowers' n borders.

Whatever tickles your fancy!

And I have a bookmark for every artist I hear from.

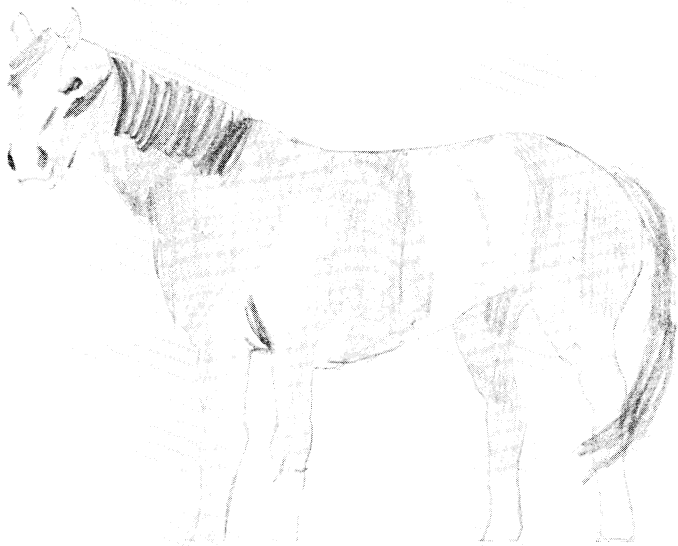
Maybe you'll make more than one and send us your best?!

* * *

Busy Beaver *Yolanda Van Spronsen* has a story for you. We could call it

Our Pets

I have a pet hamster which is a very cute animal. It is a "Teddy Bear" hamster and has long hair. I also have a rabbit. This one is an outside animal. It is part "Red Satin" and so has a kind of reddish-brown fur. It is almost 19 weeks of age, 4 months and 3 weeks. It is very soft, cute, and cuddly! I did not name my rabbit, but my hamster's name is "Happy." I named it this because when I received him on my birthday I was very, very happy! My older brother used to have a white one the same as mine (except for colour) but he gave it to me. He was named "Frisky," and came to live over 3 years, and then died. This age is very long for a hamster. Then I received Happy. I am very "happy" with him.



Picture by
Busy Beaver
Joyce Wieggers

It isn't hard to tell what animal Joyce admires, is it?



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Hannah Helder*. Thank you very much for your spring poem. Spring isn't too far away, is it Hannah. Bye for now. Be sure to write again soon.

And welcome to you, too, *Laura Aasman*. I hope you will enjoy our poems and stories and things to do. Will you write again and tell us something about what you like to do, Laura?

Welcome to the Club, *Christina Bredenhof*. Thank you very much for a very pretty letter! Be sure to write and tell us how you like your new house, Christina. Bye for now.

Are you sorry, *Elaine Bosscher* that you had to give up your dog? Do you go to see him sometimes? How do you like your new home, Elaine? Thank you for the puzzle!

How did you like your Christmas concert, *Alice Van Woudenberg*? I'll bet you had a good time with your sister and her family, right? Sounds as you had a very good time with your friend, too! Thanks for the interesting puzzle, Alice.

How is your choir doing *Yolanda Van Spronsen*? How did the performance go? Did you do lots of skiing during the holidays? Thanks for the chatty letter and the riddles and puzzle, too!

Hello, *Judy Bysterveld*. I see you mean to keep the Busy Beaver just that, *Busy*! Good for you! Thanks very much for the puzzles, and the riddles, too. Write again soon, Judy.

Hello, *Kelly Kleefman*. Thanks for your pretty card with its good wishes. It was nice to hear from you again. Did you enjoy your Christmas holidays a lot, Kelly? Bye for now.

Quiz Time!

BIBLE NAMES

by Busy Beaver *Alice Van Woudenberg*

Look up the verses that are shown below.

Then look up the Bible name in that verse.

Then find that name in the puzzle. They are all names of *people*. The words may be diagonal, up, down or backwards!

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

Nehemiah 9:2
II Samuel 1:3
Genesis 6:13
I Chronicles 22:6
Esther 5:1
Ruth 3:7
Leviticus 16:6
Zechariah 7:8
Numbers 12:15
Judges 2:6