



# Clarion

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# The Old Testament and archaeology

## A silver priestly blessing

In Numbers 6:24-26 we find the priestly blessing, well-known to us from our worship services. “The LORD bless you and keep you: the LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” It is not my intention to give an explanation of these beautiful words. Instead, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that an ancient inscription has been found outside Jerusalem which apparently contains this very blessing.

### The find

Gabriel Barkay of Tel Aviv University has directed excavations immediately west of Jerusalem above the Hinnom Valley at a site called Ketef Hinnom (Hebrew for “The Shoulder of Hinnom”) and has written a catalogue describing the artifacts that have been found and which are now on display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. From this publication (*Ketef Hinnom: A Treasure Facing Jerusalem’s Walls*, 1986) most of the information for this article has been derived.

Among the finds were looted and destroyed burial caves. However, there was one happy exception — an untouched burial site, full of objects interred with the ninety-five individuals who had been buried there. This is the first such site discovered in Jerusalem from the time of the first temple. Much pottery and beautiful silver and gold jewellery were found in this cave, but most exciting was the discovery of two small cylindrical silver objects. These were tiny scrolls with a space in the middle through which a string could be threaded enabling them to be worn. When unrolled (a delicate task!), they turned out to be two silver plaques measuring about 97 by 27 mm. and 39 by 11 mm. On these plaques, delicately incised inscriptions were found. Understandably, they could only be read with great difficulty. But two important conclusions have already been made. In the first place, the form of the script and comparison with other dated Hebrew inscriptions indicate that these plaques are from about 650 B.C., i.e. in the last years of King Manasseh’s reign and about ten years before Josiah’s. In the second place, the larger fragmentary text contains words almost completely identical (in so far as the words are legible) with the priestly blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26. The smaller inscription, which is less well preserved, is reminiscent of the Hebrew of Psalm 67:2, “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us, selah.”

### Significance

This find is of great importance if only because one of these plaques is the earliest known fragment of a Biblical text.

Previous to this, the oldest available text material was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, of which some of the Biblical texts may date as far back as the late third century B.C. What adds to the significance of this particular discovery is that Numbers 6:24-26 is usually considered by critical scholars to be of a much later date than the mid-seventh century B.C. assigned to these plaques. This find should provide another reason for re-thinking some of the critical presuppositions underlying much contemporary study of the Old Testament, by which parts of the Old Testament are rather arbitrarily assigned to late periods. Indeed, there is no reason to question the Mosaic dating of these words. The testimony of Scripture is clear enough (Numbers 6:22).

Also in another way this discovery is important in that it helps us appreciate the religious situation in Israel in the decadent days of Manasseh. Since the inscriptions are extremely small and compact, being rolled up as tiny cylinders, and could thus be worn on a string, the plausible conclusion has been drawn that they were amulets. (Amulets are mentioned in Isaiah 3:20). Amulets were common in Near Eastern antiquity as a means of warding off evil spirits and the like. That God’s people should use His Word, in this case a priestly blessing, as a type of charm, does not reflect well on the times. It testifies to an externalization of the true religion which may very well have been justified by a literalistic appeal to passages such as Deuteronomy 6:8. “And you shall bind them [God’s words] as a sign upon your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (cf. Exodus 13:9). Such amulets were probably the origin of the later phylacteries (the word means “amulet,” “means of protection”), the hollow cubes containing certain Scripture passages, which the Scribes and Pharisees wore in Christ’s time (cf. Matthew 23:5) and which are still worn by orthodox Jews today. Prior to the discovery of the silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom, it was not thought that Scripture passages were so used this early in Israel’s history. Also in this regard our understanding has thus been increased.

The place of archaeology is limited. It is not needed to establish the truth of Scripture, for God establishes the truth and Scripture as His Word is truth (cf. John 17:17; also see Art. 5 of the Belgic Confession). Yet we may gratefully take note of and use any archaeological data that have a bearing on the Bible, for it can deepen our understanding and appreciation of what we read in God’s Word. For this reason, I hope to be able to pass on to you on a more or less regular basis some results of archaeological work, both new and old, in the pages of *Clarion*.

C. VAN DAM

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# Infant baptism — divine demand or human invention?<sup>1</sup>

## A controversial issue

“We have looked well through the Bible and cannot find it, and do not believe it is there; nor do we believe that others can find infant baptism in the Scriptures, unless they themselves first put it there.” So wrote that famous 19th-century preacher, Charles Spurgeon in his official autobiography. In many respects Spurgeon was a thoroughly Reformed man, but when it came to the matter of infant baptism, a parting of the ways became painfully evident. I say, “painfully,” because it is a fact that throughout the ages the question of who are the proper recipients of baptism has been hotly debated. And it continues to be so today.

On the one side, you have those churches which have their roots in the Roman Catholic, Reformed and Presbyterian traditions insisting on the legitimacy of infant baptism, albeit for varying reasons. On the other side, you have those churches that have emerged out of the more radical wing of the Reformation which stress the validity of adult baptism alone. Both parties have their champions, their treatises, their pamphlets, their converts. Both are busy firing volley after volley at each other. And then it has to be admitted that in the process a lot of blanks are being fired as well. Not all of the arguments are sound; not all of the reasoning is rational.

Who is winning? That is hard to say at times. Although, at the moment it would appear that the advocates of infant baptism are mostly on the defensive. I say this because the number of people switching from a paedobaptist position to an adult one is larger than vice versa. Many people who were once Reformed or Presbyterian have become Pentecostal, Free Evangelical, Alliance or have gone over to some other Anabaptist grouping. Usually the reasons for the altering of their allegiances are diverse, but if you talk to them then, more often than not infant baptism and their rejection of it figures prominently in the picture.

## Why become Baptist?

What kind of justifications for becoming Anabaptist are most frequently given? The first is that there is no text anywhere in the Bible which says that infants should be baptized. In this respect these people follow in the footsteps of Spurgeon, who encountered the same difficulty. However, there is another rationale as well, and it is even more basic. It can be captured in the following syllogism: faith is a condition for baptism, infants do not possess faith, therefore infants may not be baptized. In addition, they point to the so-called abuse of baptism in established churches where many people receive the sacrament, think that it works magic, and never bother to live up to it. Infant baptizers, they allege, have added far too much water to the Biblical wine.

What has been the rejoinder to this from those who believe that baptism is also for infants? On a popular level it has often been one of consternation and weakness. The Anabaptists have always been good at spouting Bible verses at their opponents. The Reformed and others of an infant baptism affiliation have often reacted to this by citing vague and general Biblical principles. They have chimed in that, of course, faith is a necessity, but they have run stuck when it comes to relating it to baptism. Yes, and as for the matter of abuse, there the paedobaptists have to confess that there are many churches that have and still do use infant baptism in a loose and superstitious manner.

## The Reformed view: inferior?

So where does that leave us as Reformed believers, except with an overdose of inferiority? People leave our fellowships claiming that they have found a better place to worship, a place where there is more warmth, more integrity, and more Biblical faithfulness. But is that a proper reaction and is that a proper assessment of the historic Reformed position? Is tradition the only thing that Reformed confessors have going for them? Are all the

pertinent Biblical arguments on the side of the Anabaptists?

Hardly! On the matter of the baptism of our infants there is no need for Reformed believers to take even one step back. We dare to say that the teaching of the entire Scriptures is on our side, the great confessional documents of the church are on our side, the most able defenders of the faith are on our side. If we have left the field largely to the Anabaptists that is not because of defeat but due to default. We have failed to bring all of the truths of God's revelation to bear on the question in a clear, concise, and convincing manner.

What are those truths? By way of elaboration, first, a general remark, and it concerns the matter of there being no text in the Bible that commands infant baptism. Is this such a major lack? Not really! There are any number of practices current in the church which are not grounded in one or other text. Take the matter of worship on the first day of the week. Where is there a passage which says that Christians must worship on Sunday and not on Saturday? Is that not a matter of inference based on sound Biblical principle? Or take the matter of women attending the Lord's Supper. Christ instituted this sacrament in the presence of men only. There is no command which enjoins us to accede the right of participation also to women. And yet who would dare to deny them? Not even the Anabaptists! So there are more practices and procedures which we follow which cannot be hung on one or other isolated Bible verse. They are the result of working out proper Biblical principles, and that applies to the matter of infant baptism too.

To indicate that, let me proceed to develop my argument using five sets of contestants or antagonists. In each set the one position is that of the proponents of infant baptism, or better, the baptism of children of believers, and the other is that of the proponents of adult baptism.

## a) Unity versus disunity

The first set of contestants are dealt

with under the heading of "unity and disunity." What is meant by that? It has to do with the fact that many Anabaptists approach the Bible in a divisive way. They drive a wedge dividing God's people and allege that there are really two peoples of God, two different seeds of Abraham. There is the Church of Jesus Christ and there are the Jews. There is natural Israel and spiritual Israel.

This essentially dispensational scenario holds that there are the Jews who are the real and natural Israel, with special privileges, special promises, special covenants, and a special future. Included in

What the prophet Isaiah predicts about the future of God's people dovetails perfectly with what the Apostle John is led to disclose in the book of Revelation. Indeed, this unity of the Bible is everywhere. Who can read and grasp the meaning of the book of Hebrews without an Old Testament constantly at his elbow? And so the arguments for unity go on and on.

And the same applies to the *unity of God's people*. They all have one father in Abraham; as Romans 4 reminds us, "he is the father of us all," (v. 16). They have all been called to faith and holiness. They have all been ingrafted into that one olive

terms. At the same time there is little or no awareness that while the Bible speaks to persons, it also addresses itself to the generations, to one's posterity, to one's seed. God is so often described in the Bible as being the God of a people.

Any number of references can be made here. Take Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed." Or Genesis 9:9, where God establishes His covenant with Noah and says, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you." You find it again in Genesis 17:7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your descendants after you."

Why, if you look carefully in the O.T. you see that the Lord does not deal simply with individuals. No, from Adam to Seth, from Seth to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Israel, from Israel to Christ, from Christ to His people, it is abundantly evident that the Lord works through the line of the generations. And this does not stop in the N.T. either. No, on Pentecost day Peter again stresses this same truth when he says, "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him."

In light of such an emphasis, it should not surprise one at all to find that the book of Acts speaks about the baptism of "households." We will shortly touch on the matter of whether there were children in those households. For now it is sufficient to recognize that in Acts there is no tendency to separate believing adults from their children, or children from their parents. There is a stress on family solidarity, and that solidarity, it should be recognized, works both ways. In the Second Commandment mention is made of the benefits of this solidarity in terms of the future generations as well as the curses that may accrue to these generations.

The type of religious individualism which is so rampant today certainly cannot be said to take its cue from Biblical revelation. That revelation takes an organic approach. It recognizes that God works through the generations. It recognizes that believers and their seed have special standing in the eyes of the Lord, a standing for either covenant weal or woe. It recognizes that the communal aspect of Christian living does not contradict or deny the personal aspect of confession and commitment. The Christian faith is personal, but not individualistic.

— To be continued  
J. VISSCHER

## **"There is not one tree for the Jews and another tree for the Christians. There is only one building of which Christ is the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:11-20)."**

that future is an earthly land of Canaan, an earthly city of Jerusalem, an earthly temple on Mount Zion, an earthly throne of David. Here is the real and true Israel forever. As for the believers of the new dispensation, they are only the figurative seed of Israel. Two sets of people, two sets of blessings — that is the disuniting view of some Anabaptists.

Only, it does not end there, for this element of disunity crops up not only when it comes to the people of God, but also when it comes to the book of God, the Bible. There are Anabaptists who place the Old Testament against the New Testament, the law against the gospel, O.T. Israel against the N.T. church. What applies in the one dispensation is not just in certain cases fulfilled or abolished in the other. No, it can even be contradicted.

Now it is important to realize in discussions with Anabaptists that there is this disconcerting tendency among them to fracture both the people and the Word of God. It is equally important that you counteract this position. As long as it prevails there is little or no room for discussion. And then we may say that it is not too difficult to dismantle this disuniting approach either.

Take the matter of the unity of the Bible. Careful study shows that there is a *unity of purpose* stretching across both testaments. Both stress the need for God's Name to be praised in all things. Both stress the fallenness of man. Both stress the need for redemption through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In addition, there is also a *unity of ethical demand*. The moral law of the Ten Commandments retains its validity in both testaments (Exodus 20; Psalm 119; Matthew 5:17-19; I John 3:22). Also, there is a *unity of future*.

tree mentioned in Romans 11. There is not one tree for the Jews and another tree for the Christians. There is only one building of which Christ is the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:11-20).

In short, there is only one people of God, not two distinct peoples. There is only one Word of God, not two distinct books or testaments or dispensations that somehow contradict each other. There is unity that moves forward to either abolition or fulfillment, but never contradiction.

### **b) Generations versus individuals**

The second set of contestants has to do with that of "generations versus individuals." If one analyzes the Anabaptist position carefully, then one must come to the conclusion that here the emphasis is emphatically individualistic. Faith is pictured in subjective, isolated, individual

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HURCH NEWS


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ACCEPTED call to Langley, BC  
REV. J. VISSCHER  
of Cloverdale, BC

\* \* \*

CALLED by Chilliwack for Vernon, BC  
REV. C. VAN SPRONSEN  
Home missionary to the Bulkley Valley Indians, Smithers, BC

# Lessons from early church history<sub>2</sub> (salvation by God or by creature)

## Gnosticism

The main error in Judaism was and is, as we have seen, that for our salvation we depend on physical things in this created world, e.g. ceremonies like circumcision and sacrifices, the observance of holy days and feasts, and the eating or abstaining of certain foods; and this besides or instead of faith in Jesus Christ alone, through whom *God* saves us, instead of creature.

In Gnosticism we meet the opposite, that it teaches that salvation is not to be sought in physical things, but in escaping this physical and material realm to become united with the spiritual realm. The human soul or mind was considered divine, belonging to the spiritual realm, and considered as our means of salvation, salvation being the liberation of our soul and mind from what is material and physical. By declaring man's created soul or mind divine and, consequently, able to save itself, also Gnosticism ascribed our salvation to creature, instead of to God our Creator.

Of course, we should not forget that many educated heathens, who had joined the Christian Church, still were influenced by heathen religious and philosophical ideas.

The prevalent philosophy was *dualistic*, that means it divided the reality around us into two parts or realms. The higher one was the *spiritual* realm or that of the divine, the lower one the *material* or *natural* realm.

The common believers had to be satisfied with living in the natural realm, where they needed to go by the literal text of the Bible. But those who had "knowledge" (in Greek, "gnosis," therefore "gnosticism") took part of the spiritual realm and therefore could reach the deeper or spiritual meaning of the written text.

By the way, the so-called "new theology" of our days, e.g. certain ideas of Dr. Kuitert of the (Synodical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, is basically the same as "gnosticism," in that it is not interested in the actual and historical truth of the written text, but only tries to grasp the deeper meaning of it. The literal text is discarded like the wrapping paper of

a package, in order to get at the spiritual contents as the only thing which really counts.

Yes, this dualism has made deep inroads into the church. You meet it everywhere where, either theoretically or practically, a separation is made between what is natural or material on the one hand, and what is considered to be the spiritual or religious part of life on the other hand.

This pagan dualism blinds the eyes also of many Christians for the dangers of a public school education, where religion is considered something for private use only; it also makes people think that they can rightly be called believers, even if they do not serve the Lord with their money e.g.; for that is material only. On Sunday many people think to be believers, while from Monday till Saturday they are materialists.

This dualism also makes Christians to forget about their Christian calling in every sphere of life, especially in so-called

neutral territory. This dualism is one of the greatest dangers which from the beginning has threatened the Christian Church, and many Christians are more or less influenced by it.

Dualism has its roots in the old Persian idea of two gods (Ormuz and Ariman), the god of good and the god of evil. This Persian dualism was taken up again in the 3rd century by a certain *Mani*, after whom this religious philosophy was called Manicheism (see Belgic Confession, Art. 12).

This dualism is also noticeable in the belief that this world belongs to the power of evil, and that therefore we must withdraw ourselves from the world (as in Montanism, in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and in Anabaptism e.g.). This withdrawing ourselves from the world is a means of saving ourselves, just like in Gnosticism our withdrawing our soul or mind from this physical world is the means by which we save ourselves.

In the meantime the Western part



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of the early Christian Church was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Plotinus and Porphyrius, who turned to a new form of the old philosophy of *Plato*. Redemption was looked upon as a process of escaping this material world and becoming one with God (mysticism), in the way of leading a virtuous life, of thinking and theorizing, and of enthusiasm (“enthusiasm” is a Greek word which means “breathing-in-god”).

Also *Augustine* (354-430) was influenced by this Neo-Platonism, and through him Christianity up till today. This is e.g. noticeable in the fact that many Christians, when speaking about what is the purpose to which God has elected us, give the answer: that our soul may go to heaven to be with God.

### Montanism

Quite early already the Christian Church saw the necessity to refute all kinds of errors which crept into the church, by formulating creeds, summaries of what the church believed over against those errors.

Already in the Bible we find the beginning of such creeds, while our oldest Creed, the Apostles’ Creed, has its roots in a kind of Baptismal Confession, in which the Tri-une God was confessed.

In connection with this, also the organization of the church with presbyters and bishops was going to be more developed. This was a good thing, begun by the apostles already (although, alas, it all too soon went into a hierarchical direction).

In reaction to the indeed existing danger of trusting more in our own organization and ecclesiastical regulations than in the living Word of God, a spiritualistic movement arose (in about the year 160).

The initiator was a certain *Montanus* in Phrygia, who presented himself as the promised Paracletus or Comforter; with him, he claimed, the period of the Holy Spirit had started. Seeing himself as a prophet he considered himself more than a bishop, he rejected any organization with office-bearers in the church, the Bible was to be the only Creed. However, in their opinion the canon of the Bible was not yet closed; for salvation on one was also dependent on the spiritual revelations which were given through and by Montanus and other prophets in this sect. Further, the church should keep itself completely apart from the world. The church and its members did not have any calling towards the world, except to separate themselves from all worldly affairs. In short: this so-called Montanism was the way of salvation, and not God in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

Although this *Montanism* was official-

ly condemned by the Christian Church in 170, it continued to have great influence, even through the Middle Ages.

In the time of the great Reformation a similar movement can be recognized in that of the *Anabaptists*. And also in our days traces of this attitude can be found everywhere, not only in bizarre sects and fundamentalist circles, but also among Reformed people. If e.g. Christians limit their Christian calling to keeping the church as pure as possible, with perhaps as an addition to this or as part of this providing Christian school education for the children of the church; but further they fail to see their calling of bringing the Word of God to bear upon social, political, aesthetic, economic and scientific affairs, we must ask ourselves: are we still influenced by this old Montanism, and wouldn’t Reformation mean that also in these respects we return to the condemnation of this Montanism by the early Christian Church?

### Christ or Caesar

In 323 Constantine the Great became Emperor of the Roman Empire, and joined the Christian Church. This brought an end to the persecutions of the church. The heathen state religion of which the Emperor was the highpriest or *Pontifex Maximus* (today this is one of the titles of the Pope of Rome!), was replaced by Christianity as the state religion. Almost automatically the Emperor continued to act as Pontifex Maximus or highpriest of the Christian state religion.

Although there was some resistance, the church as a whole, — thankful for many good things which Constantine the Great did for the church —, accepted this situation and honoured the Emperor as the “*Defender of Faith*” (a title still given to the Queen of England, who is the Head of the Anglican Church, the (state-)Church of England).

The church received several privileges, such as freedom from military service for clergymen, Sunday laws which prohibited most work on Sundays, and that churches did not have to pay taxes. Disadvantages of all this were, that many people joined the church for wrong reasons, which caused decline in faith. The Emperors often interfered in church matters, making the church more and more dependent on the State, as if the Emperor were the Saviour (like the heathen Emperor Ceasar Augustus who, as the first one, had himself even called Saviour), instead of Christ only.

### Arius and Athanasius

It was in the time of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, that Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, taught

that Christ was not God’s eternal Son, but the first creature made by God. He said: Christ is not of the same essence of God the Father, or, He is *un-equal* to God the Father (in Greek: an-homoios).

Some of his followers softened his stand by saying that Christ “*resembles*” God the Father (in Greek: homo-i-ousios), but still is God’s first creation work. Athanasius, a deacon in Alexandria, defended that Christ is of the same essence with, or *equal* to God the Father (in Greek: homo-ousios; one letter difference!). The real difference is that either creature saves itself (Christ being a creature), or that we can be saved by God only (Christ being equal to God, being Himself God).

At the council of Nicea in 325 the doctrine of Arius was condemned. The Christian faith in this respect is confessed in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. In our days the Arian heresy is found with the Jehovah Witnesses, and in modernistic theologies.

### Augustine and the Donatists

In that time the Donatists (called after bishop Donatus in North Africa) separated from the Catholic Church, not in accordance with the Word of God, but on the basis of their own human opinions. They wanted a church as pure as possible; for that reason they were very severe in church discipline, and did not admit to the church those people who had denied the faith during the persecutions, even if they repented.

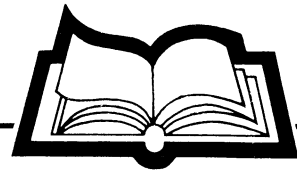
They advocated a scrupulous separation from the world, and they resembled in this respect the old sect of the Montanists. The validity of the Sacraments depended according to them on the purity of those who administer the sacraments. Therefore, while saying that they were the only true and pure church, they rejected the offices and the Sacraments of the Catholic Christian Church.

Especially Augustine preached over against this sectarianism of the Donatists that God receives sinners out of grace, and not because they are so pure. Augustine was born in 354 in Thagaste, North Africa. As a youth he was a bad sinner; he led quite an immoral life. Later he wrote a book called “*Confessions*,” in which he confessed his sins as well as his belief in God’s forgiving grace.

Basically Donatism comes down to this, that salvation is made dependent on the purity of the church, i.e. creature, instead of on God’s abundant mercy and grace in Jesus Christ. This Donatism can also be recognized in sectarian movements in our days, and must be resisted in any view concerning the church which, in theory or in practice, does not do full

— *Continued on page 56*





*“... they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying: God is with you only, and there is no other, no god besides Him.”*

*Isaiah 45:14b*

## Only You!

The remarkable feature of God’s word of promise given through His servant Isaiah to the exiles in Babylon is how much the promise contrasted with their actual situation. Lost in exile, they were the least of the peoples, of no account in the world, and servants of the servants in the land of captivity. The loss of their national identity as well as their temple and holy city made them a reproach among the other captives in the land. But Isaiah speaks of a day when all this will be reversed, and Israel will again become the wealthiest and the highest of the peoples, so that men of stature will bow down to her and confess, “God is with you only, and there is no other, no god besides Him.”

And the reversal did come, even in the lifetime of many of the exiles. The wonder of the absolute strangeness of the promise was matched only by the wonder of the speed in its coming into reality. The LORD raises a king and redeemer who does not know Him, Cyrus the Persian, who decrees liberty for Israel and a return for the Israelites to their own land. And, as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell us, the temple and holy city were able to be rebuilt again with wealth taken from the royal treasury of kings in the line of Cyrus. The wealth of the nations was placed before the feet of Israel, and even Cyrus acknowledged, “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah,” II Chronicles 36:23.

Yet Isaiah’s prophesy extends far beyond the day of Cyrus and reaches ahead even to our own day. The anointing of Cyrus models what the LORD is going to do, yet the new and coming work will be much deeper and richer. For Cyrus did not know the LORD. Having as it were exhausted His possibilities among the line of the kings of Israel and Judah, the LORD reaches outside of the borders of Israel to raise up a Redeemer-King for Israel. But this step of necessity in Cyrus’ time foreshadows a greater and more glorious new beginning further in history, in which the LORD will raise up a Redeemer-King out of Israel itself — one out of Israel, and yet not from Israel, but from beyond Israel’s spiritual borders. In Him, David’s house will be rebuilt! He will be the Messiah, the Christ who would fulfill the promises given to Israel.

In Christ Jesus, the Saviour born from above, and yet born in David’s line according to the flesh, this prophesy comes to richer and deeper fulfillment. For in Him the gospel goes out to all the world, and the rich treasures of the gospel are proclaimed to the nations. And from Ethiopia, Africa and Asia they came, bearing gifts and praising God for His work of salvation. It began with three men of the East who

brought their gifts and bowed down before the great King as He lay with His mother. But it continued in power and glory as the gospel was proclaimed in all the known world. Philip was called to baptize the Ethiopian, a high court official, Acts 8:38. Later in the church’s history kings and princes came to the gospel, and confessed to the gathering of believers: “God is with you only and there is no other, no god besides Him!”

Indeed, to this very day this confession remains the heart of the covenant, and the heart of the faith of the church. And the text does not focus on a remote and unspecified body of believers totally withdrawn from this world, or invisible to the eyes of men. The exiles were addressed in their pitiful condition! So, too, the text refers to the concrete gathering of the church today, as the Lord gathers it daily through His Word and Spirit. Still today there are those who do and will say: “God is with you only and there is no other, no god besides Him.”

One may counter that he hardly hears words like this today. Indeed, they seem as unreal to us as they did to the exiles who first heard them. Somehow the words do not accord with the situation, and seem so remote that they cannot be true. But true faith appropriates them, and acts accordingly! If we only live in humility and faith to the LORD, trusting in Him, we will see His blessings. Is the LORD’s hand shortened, that He cannot do wonders?

And true faith and humility does not begin with selfish boasting, but with the recognition of the marvellous grace of God’s ways. Real faith and humility begins with living in faithfulness to God’s covenantal commands. In Christ, and in Him alone, we may be exalted above the nations!

And if faith and humility mark our daily walk of life, then in God’s time, we may hear and will hear others saying this of the church today: “God is with you only, and there is no other, no god besides Him.” In fact, that message will be addressed to us just at the moment when we hardly believed it was possible ever to hear it. When faith grows dim, the LORD surprises His own, with a swift and sudden gift. The nations come and bow down to the Christ and to His own in fear and trembling.

And long after the cry of false ecumenicity and universal brotherhood has faded from this world, this message will reign in the heavens. Even *hell* will go on proclaiming it to all eternity. For this is a truth for the church that never comes to an end: “God is with you only, and there is no other, no god besides Him.”

J. DE JONG

## Lessons from early church history

— continued

justice to the grace of God; e.g. if being a member of God's church would be made dependent on one's act of joining it, or on the church's act of accepting as member, instead of on God's grace, by faith. For in His grace God has given us Christ as the one who gathers His church by His Word and Spirit. Not I, nor the church as part of this created world, but God alone saves His people through Jesus Christ.

### Augustine and Pelagius

Also in that time a certain Pelagius, a British monk of outstanding character and with a pious lifestyle, taught that man could train himself to be good and thus earn salvation. Man could do so, because he is not a sinner by birth, by nature, but as a result of imitation of the bad examples of others. Man is born "tabula rasa," this means "with an empty slate."

When in 411 Pelagius came to North Africa where Augustine (354-430) was bishop, Augustine (though first impressed by Pelagius' exemplary lifestyle) rejected his heresy and defended the Biblical doctrine that we are conceived and born in sin and can only be saved by the grace of God (cf. Psalm 51:5,17). Not our possibilities as creature, but only God's grace in Jesus Christ can save us.

Although the church rejected Pelagianism, it infiltrated so much and in so many forms into the church, that the Roman Church became more or less dominated by it. In the Reformed Churches some of this error was propagated again by the Arminians.

Since it appeals very much to our human pride, it is one of the most dangerous errors against which we still must be on the alert, in our personal life in the first place, but also in the church. It is e.g. Arminianism to say that we are not saved and do not become members of God's church through grace only and by faith, but by our own work.

### The Eastern part of the Roman Empire

When Constantine the Great became Emperor, he made Byzantium (in Turkey at the Bosphorus, today's Istanbul) the capital city of the Roman Empire, and renamed it CONSTANTINOPLE (or 2nd Rome). This gave the bishops of Rome in course of time the opportunity to assume the power in the Western part of the Christian church, while the Bishop or Patriarch of Constantinople remained subject to the Emperor.

At the end of the Middle Ages, in 1453, Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks; this was the end of the

Eastern part of the Roman Empire, which in fact prepared the way for the popes (who had already taken over leadership in the Western part since the fall of Rome in 410) to concentrate all power in their hands.

After the fall of Constantinople the bishop of Moscow became a Patriarch, while the king of Moscow assumed the title of Emperor by calling himself Csar or Tsar (the Russian spelling of Caesar). Since that time Moscow is considered the 3rd Rome, the legitimate successor of the 1st and the 2nd Rome as capital city of the old Roman Empire. This explains the imperialistic attitude of the Russian state as well as that of the Russian Orthodox Church. Still today this church is a will-less tool in the hands of the state, like this began in 323 already, for the proclamation of a salvation which will be brought about in this world by the state, and not by God.

### The Western part of the Roman Empire

In the year 410 the city of Rome fell into the hands of Gothic tribes, who partly confessed Arianism, for another part still were heathen. Other pagan tribes, the Vandals, conquered North Africa in 430 (the year of Augustine's death).

Western Europe fell apart into many separate states, which were only somewhat united by the same faith, first Arianism, and later under the leadership of the bishop of Rome. Only in England the church remained quite faithful to the Bible, and later several British missionaries went to the other countries of Western Europe to preach the gospel to the many heathen tribes which were living there.

In the year 590 Gregory I became bishop of Rome and proclaimed himself to be the pope or the head of the church, instead of the Emperor of the former West Roman Empire. This is the beginning of the period of the "hierarchy" in the Middle Ages, which period lasted from 590 up till the Reformation of the church in 1520.

The entire history of the church during the Middle Ages is characterized by the attempts of the church (the Roman Church under the headship of the pope) to wield both spiritual and secular power, thus making everybody and everything

for salvation dependent on the church, both for this life and for life to come.

### Priestly power over the members of the church

The church was more and more looked upon as the mediator of salvation. The church distributed the means of grace in seven sacraments. Believers depended on the church and her means of grace for salvation. The Lord's Supper table first became the altar for the gifts of love to the church and to the poor; but slowly on it became an altar where the priests repeated the one sacrifice of Christ with the magic of the Eucharist; and both the living and the dead depended for the forgiveness of their sins on the magic power of the priests (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 30, Q. + A.80).

The ministry of the Word was replaced by the ministry of priests, with the bishop of Rome or the pope as the highpriest (the "Pontifex Maximus," the original title of the Emperor in the Roman Empire), who replaced the Lord Jesus Christ as the head of the church here on earth.

### Political power of the church over the state

In the Eastern part of the original Roman Empire the state governed the church (see above). In the Western part the bishop of Rome tried to take over the original position of the Emperor. This development started in 590 with Gregory I. Gregory VII compared the relation between spiritual and secular power with that of the sun and the moon; as the light of the moon depends on that of the sun, so the secular powers depend on the spiritual power of the church. Boniface VIII said that the church received two swords from Christ (see Luke 22:38), the spiritual and the secular sword.

In the year 800 Charlemagne was crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III; and since that time there was a continuing struggle between Popes and Emperors. With the so-called "Donatio Constantini" (a forged document by which it was alleged that Constantine the Great had given land and secular power to the church) the popes attempted to put a legal basis under their claims to power over the state.

In 1077 the German Emperor Henry IV was forced by the pope to come as a penitent, barefooted in the snow, to his residence in Canossa. In 1215, at the 4th Lateran Council, Pope Innocent III declared, that the Lord gave to Peter not only the government over the church, but over the whole world. The whole world is subject to the pope, instead of to God only.

Still today the pope claims secular power, symbolized in his own state, the Vatican.

## OUR COVER

Thamesville Town hall  
Thamesville, ON

Photo courtesy: Jerry Tillema



## The power of theological reason- ing over the Scriptures

At the 4th Lateran Council the doctrine of transubstantiation (the change-over of bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ by the powerful words of the priest) was accepted. This was possible because of the "scholastic" method of theology, in which new "truths" were deduced from already accepted "truths." This "scholasticism" replaced the study of the Scriptures as the only source and norm for theology in formulating the truth.

Truths of faith could be proved by man's natural reason, some said. Others discerned between truths which could be proved by reason, and truths which could not be questioned but had to be accepted by faith. Again others, in reaction to this, went to another extreme: nothing of the faith can be proven; we believe because it is irrational, against reason.

Meanwhile the common people be-

came more and more dependent for salvation on the theologians who made the Bible understandable to them, and whose scholastic reasonings they could not follow.

Still today there is that danger, also among us, that the Bible is no longer read as the self-revelation of God, in which God by His words and recorded deeds in the history of this world and of His people shows Himself as our Creator and Redeemer, who in Christ, the Way and the Truth on whom we depend, has become our loving Father. Instead the Bible is sometimes (or often) read as a collection of loosely connected logical statements of truth, which are used to back up what our own reason or our own feelings decide to be the truth.

How do we read the Scriptures?

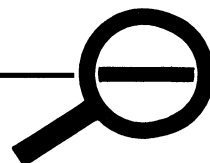
It is this question which especially today asks for a Scriptural answer again. On whatever wrong answer is given it depends which error from the past will reappear and get influence today.

Will it be Judaism, but then under a different name, with its legalistic misunderstanding of the relation between the Old and the New Testament? Or will it be Gnosticism, under different names, with its libertinistic looking down on the historical text and truth of Scripture, of the Old Testament first but of the New Testament as well? Will it be Arianism, or Pelagianism and Arminianism, Donatism or Roman Catholicism, or an Ecumenism which combines almost all errors and heresies which church history mentions?

It all depends on how we read, and understand what we read (cf. Acts 8:30); whether we resist the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures, as many of our fathers did in the course of church history (cf. Acts 7:51); or that we let Scripture explain itself as the good news of salvation by God in His grace, through Jesus Christ, by faith (cf. Acts 8:35).

D. DEJONG

## PRESS REVIEW



# Changing times and new trends?

Most of us have a very specific perception and even fixed ideas about the church (and the federation of churches) of which we are members. We are sometimes not aware of the *changes* which are occurring.

*The Banner* (weekly publication of the Christian Reformed Church) of January 5, 1987 carried an interesting article by Louis M. Tamminga titled "Observing the Trends." After a brief introduction, Tamminga presents his main thesis as follows, "The last decade has brought many profound changes — not only in society around us, but also in our church communities." And he proceeds to list "some of the changes."

To be sure, the situation in the Christian Reformed Church is different from the one in the Canadian Reformed Churches. As a much smaller federation, we are perhaps less open to change and outside influence. Also, we have no connection to the liberal churches with which the Christian Reformed Church maintains fraternal relations and through which much modernism is imported. Still, some of the elements listed by Tamminga can be applied also to our churches. Here follows his list.

### Some of the changes.

- A sophisticated communication system has revolutionized society and daily affects the lives of Christians everywhere.

- Many evangelical churches have developed flamboyant worship styles. In spite of some justified criticism, they will prove increasingly engaging to Christian Reformed people.

- Fear of being excluded from the economic cycle is very real among Christian Reformed people.

- Divorce and family problems are becoming more prevalent in Christian Reformed circles.

- A new generation is finding its own unique ownership of values and vision. Young people no longer continue in their parents' church as a matter of course. The Christian Reformed Church can no longer take loyalty for granted.

- The "baby-boomers" are taking over and taking over leadership in local CRCs. Though "institution-minded," they are not firmly committed to the old order. They expect quality ministry from their leaders.

- Increasingly, both husbands and wives are employed outside the home.

This reduces available volunteer service and leadership talent in CRC congregations. Pastors more readily seek professional assistance for their ministries.

- The CRC membership is aging. Members have fewer children, and the average life span is lengthening. Senior CRC members are becoming more assertive.

- The assumption is growing among CRC members that they should have a larger say in local church government. Yet they expect the pastor to function much as the head of a corporation so that he can be held responsible for growth.

- Local initiative in individual congregations is growing, while the need and desire to be an integral part of denominational programs is diminishing. This already affects the flow of resources toward denominational ministries.

- The CRC "calling" system for ministers is increasingly proving itself inadequate. The calling process would virtually come to a halt if we had as many pastors as congregations — not an outrageous possibility to contemplate. A synodical study committee will report on this matter to Synod 1987.

•Vacant Christian Reformed churches tend to call younger ministers rather than the older ones. Pastors under age forty receive about three times as many calls as pastors over age fifty. For a growing number of pastors, the length of their present charge is becoming problematic.

•Consistories increasingly are granting their pastors periodic study leaves. The ministry today is far more complex and demanding than a generation ago.

• Staff and team ministries are increasing. More research for their proper functioning is urgently needed. In the absence of clear understanding, such ministries invariably produce conflict.

Although I am greatly tempted to comment on various items, I will let the readers judge for themselves which changes are most apparent among us. Not all of these changes are necessarily for the worst. Some of the changes are quite understandable. I am not at all surprised that "a new generation is finding its own unique ownership of values and vision." With every generation the church must face this challenge of bringing the "old" Gospel to a "new" generation. It is a very responsible task which demands constant self-examination.

But most of the items, if not all, mentioned by Tamminga are cause for concern. It is not so much the loss of "traditional values" which we mourn, it is the breaking away from the reformed confession and the breakdown of the family which we deplore. Here we, too, must take a good look at our own churches. These points make good items for discussion at society meetings and home visits.

### Attitude towards our work?

Speaking of "changes," there are also changes with respect to how people, also Christians, view their work. From the *Covenantal Witness* (official publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America), November, 1986, we quote the following from an article titled, "Beginning to Understand Our Labor" by Randall VanOsdol.

It does not take a genius in personnel management to see that the majority of workers do not find satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness in their work. Do you remember the incredible success the then-unknown singer Johnny Paycheck experienced a few years back after the release of his song "You Can Take This Job and Shove It"? It was even made into a movie. People loved it. But why? the answer is obvious — they identified with it.

If the numerous interviews Studs Terkel made in his book, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (Pantheon, 1972), are in any way repre-

sentative of current attitudes people have concerning their jobs, we must weep. For if they are at all accurate, then when we talk about work in many people's minds we are talking about violence, ulcers, accidents, nervous breakdowns, vicious confrontations, malicious backstabbing, endless frustrations, daily humiliations, an overwhelming sense of drudgery, and a hopeless feeling of meaninglessness. Indeed, statistics show that Americans are not doing the thing we would expect from people who find their work fulfilling and satisfying.

Our country is witnessing significant increases in early retirement, absenteeism, refusal of overtime work, and refusal to do jobs considered menial. (It would be interesting research to see if the statistics among professing Christians would be at all different.) In our modern, space-age, technologically advanced, state-of-the-art, **humanistic** society, how can this be? There is one truth the humanist will never understand but we as Christians should intimately know: Though the conditions around us may improve, that will never change the motive and attitude of our hearts (Mark 7: 21-22).

Many improvements in working conditions, wages, and pension programs in the last 75 years have been necessary and beneficial. However, having worked for a very young, struggling manufacturing firm that at first did not have the cash flow to pay high wages, offer insurance benefits, or even pay for air conditioning, we found the greatest anxieties were not caused by these deficiencies but rather by people. Think about it. How many of the greatest difficulties with your work are not job or task related but people related (assuming your job is not more demanding than your abilities)?

Once our company began to deal with the people problems, our production went up. That gave us the profits to improve the conditions. The point is, improved working conditions will not change the Machiavellian, abrasive inconsiderate boss or the overly competitive, backstabbing, jealous peer or the lazy, insubordinate, untrustworthy employee. According to the Scriptures, these and other such characteristics proceed out of the heart, though the environment and the devil might fan the flames of such smoldering sin in our hearts.

What this observation and truth tells us is this: Not one of us approaches his or her work from a neutral position. We all have certain feelings and attitudes regarding labor.

VanOsdol proceeds to give an interesting Biblical exposition on the importance and purpose of our labour, beginning with the mandate given at creation and maintained after the fall into sin. He concludes with pointing to the restoration of the believer in Christ and the significance of

this restoration also for our daily work.

By our union with Christ through faith, we are renewed in the true knowledge according to the image of the One who created us (Col. 3:10). It is by our union with Christ that we are reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10), to each other (Eph. 2:12-16), and to the creation (Rom. 8:19-22).

This is how we are restored to obediently exercise our rule over the creation as God Himself would rule it and bring it all under His reign. It is only in union with Christ that we can keep livestock, plough the land, forge metals, play music, be production managers, accountants, secretaries, teachers, or do whatever our hands find to do in obedient service to God. Only by our union with Christ can we bring a measure of true and lasting peace and healing into this broken and wounded world. To attempt to do so apart from Christ, His Spirit, His wisdom and understanding, His counsel and strength, His knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:1-2) is to heal the wounds slightly and eventually end in despair (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; see Isa. 57:19-21).

So what can we do to make a difference? We can commit ourselves to earnestly carry out the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Unless people come to truly know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, the situation will only become more desperate. We must go forth with the goal, the vision, the ever-growing understanding of what God created us to do and re-created us in Christ to do for His glory. This is how we shall find fulfillment. This is how we shall discover and develop our potential. And this is how we shall achieve happiness and satisfaction. To do anything else is to go against what we were created to be. The only end of that is frustration and destruction.

In Jesus Christ, through whom and for whom all things exist (Col. 1:16), even you (I Cor. 8:6), there is the hope (Rom. 15:12-13), there is the victory (8:37-39), and there is great reward (I Cor. 3:10-15).

May you *enjoy* your daily work.

CL. STAM

### *I Corinthians 3:14*

*If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.*

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# Reflections on synodical practices<sub>1</sub>

In a previous issue the promise was made that we would write more about certain aspects of decisions made by our General Synod of 1986. This promise is now being fulfilled.

It is not our intention in these articles to discuss complete synodical decisions. If this had been our intention, we would need space in every issue of *Clarion* for the next year at least. Fairness would require us to deal with the many decisions with which we are happy as well as with those in which we find elements which are to be rejected.

Only the latter will be scrutinized in order that obvious mistakes may be pointed out and wrong trends may be nipped in the bud.

There are trends in our ecclesiastical life which cause concern and make us ask, "Where is the fruit of the lessons which we have received in the past?"

We realize that gradually a generation is taking over that knows about the Liberation of the Churches to which we trace our origin by reading about it only and by hearing their parents and others talk about it.

It is even so that the generation which is taking over for the larger part do not know from their own conscious observation how from the beginning of the organized church life in Canada we have tried to preserve the fruits of the lessons learned. There was, right from the start, a consensus among our people concerning the course to follow and we endeavoured to be very careful even in the terminology we used.

Perhaps there are a few who smile when I mention certain things time and again. Some may shrug their shoulders or smile condescendingly, thinking, "There he is again on one of his hobby-horses." Again others may turn away in disgust.

Yet I shall make my remarks and continue to do so for as long as I am able to, for the sake of the Churches.

## A Classis will be held

Let no one think that it is only a personal conviction or a petidea when I point out time and again that it is wrong to write, "Classis will meet this coming Wednesday," or "This coming Wednesday there

will be a meeting of Classis." This is not Reformed.

Although we also adorn a certain area with the title of "Classis Ontario-North," this is a wrong way of putting it if we are referring to an ecclesiastical meeting where the Churches within that area are represented.

There is no classis unless one has been constituted on a certain day and for a certain period of time, the time needed to work through and to complete the agenda. Once the agenda has been finished, classis is closed, and there is no more classis till three or four months hence.

The proper, Reformed way of putting it is: "A Classis will be held this coming Wednesday," or: "This coming Wednesday there will be a Classis."

This formulation will prevent any thought from arising which could lead to considering "Classis" to be something more or less permanent, an existing body which meets occasionally or at pre-determined times.

Especially our Rev. J.T. VanPopta was very keen on these things. He was meticulous in many things. If one inadvertently forgot to mention a date and proposed, "Classis decides . . ." he would immediately ask, "Which Classis?" and would not rest till the formulation was precise: "Classis West of November 27, 1952, decides. . . ."

Anyone who would like to know more about our late brother's convictions in this respect will do well by reading *Acts of Synod 1958, "Bijlage I, Rapport Commissie I inzake Hamilton"* (Appendix I, Report of Committee I regarding Hamilton) which extensive report is for by far the larger part his work.

What applies to a classis applies to a regional synod as well.

The congregations should not be informed in this manner: "Regional Synod will not meet till next spring," but: "No regional synod will be held this year; it will be held next spring." There is no regional synod, and it cannot meet either. It is possible to convene a regional synod on a certain day. Once the credentials have been examined and a chairman, clerk, and assessor have been elected, the regional synod is born and is in existence,

be it that it is born for a very brief life: upon completion of the agenda it is closed and is no more. An other regional synod will be held in due time. No tears are shed at its demise.

These are simple truths and basics of Reformed Church Polity.

## Not just the formulation

If it were *only* a matter of formulation, and if there needed not to be any fear for wrong conclusions and effects, we still would have to mention these things, but the danger would be minimal.

As matters stand now, the situation is different.

Classis Ontario-South of March 5, 1986 made a certain request to Synod 1986. You can read about this in Article 137 of the *Acts 1986*. What is of interest right now is not the matter concerning which the request was made but certain elements in Synod's decisions. They can be found on page 64.

1. Synod decides to inform Classis Ontario-South. . . .

2. Synod decides to ask Classis Ontario-South to cooperate fully. . . .

What to think of these decisions?

That they are completely wrong in more than one respect.

There is in the first place this, that a letter goes out from a general synod to a classis.

We shall come back to this point later on, but first wish to tell something from the past.

## Something from the past

I have not looked it up in the *Acts of all general synods*, but I would not be surprised if this is the first time that a general synod decided to send a letter to a classis. If it did happen before, this was a bad precedent.

Precedents are dangerous in ecclesiastical life. That's why wrong things have to be pointed out right away in order that they may be corrected.

During the early synods the question was asked, "Should a copy of the decisions be sent to the churches that came with proposals? And if a church tabled a matter at a classis, requesting that classis

to declare itself in favour and to pass it on to a regional synod or even the next general synod, should then a copy of the relevant decision be sent to that classis — oops!: to the next classis?"

I remember distinctly that it was decided not to do this.

In the first place: The Churches all receive the *Acts* of Synod, they learn from these *Acts* what the decisions are that were made by the broadest assembly.

In the second place: the classis or regional synod which "endorsed" a church's proposal no longer exists. The next classis or the next regional synod is a completely new and different assembly, even if it should be formed by exactly the same persons as its predecessor — something which practically never is the case.

At every classis one may find many brothers who were delegated before: think only of the ministers of the Word. Yet it would be completely wrong if someone said, "But the other time we decided. . . ." "We" did not decide anything the other time; it was the previous assembly that made a decision.

Would you wish to have a good and clear example of how we did and should look at this point?

I should like to take you along to the second general synod of the Churches, the one of 1958.

The first general synod, the one of 1954, dealt with the point of official "correspondence" with the Churches in the Netherlands, and decided not to accept the "rules for correspondence" as they had been suggested by the General Synod of Kampen 1951, but formulated these rules differently, at least partly.

Our Netherlands sister Churches then asked Synod 1958 what the reasons

had been for coming with a different formulation.

What did Synod 1958 answer to this question?

Synod, too, deplored it that Synod 1954 failed to give its reasons for this change, but, Synod said, we cannot inform you about these reasons either, since we do not know any more than you already know: all we know is what is in the *Acts*. For your information we enclose part of the 1954 decision, but that's all we can do.

Did the brothers who together formed Synod 1958 not know about the reasons which Synod 1954 had for its decision?

Several of them did most certainly. Without difficulty we can name six brothers who were members of both synods.

Synods, however, — and all broader assemblies, for that matter — are not allowed to go by what brother A remembers or what brother B can recall of arguments of a previous broader assembly of which he was a member. They are allowed to go only by the documents at their disposal.

Thus it is wrong to speak of "the classis" and to send a communication as if it were a permanent body.

In so far it is "better" (or: not as bad) what we read on page 24 of the *Acts* 1986, where it is recorded that General Synod decided to send its relevant decision to "the convening church of the next Classis Ontario-North, and the convening church of the next Regional Synod East," although our objections stand.

The third, and main objection follows in the next issue.

— To be continued  
VO

## INTERNATIONAL

### SHORTAGE OF MINISTERS

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, based in Kirkwood, has begun a campaign to offset a dwindling supply of pastors and teachers, officials said.

The Rev. Dr. Karl Barth, president of Concordia Seminary in Clayton, said that a steep decline in seminary enrollments in the past two years would create a severe shortage of pastors by 1989.

The church has 2.6 million members and 6,000 congregations. Its president, the Rev. Ralph A. Bohlmann, has issued a call for new congregations to be established.

Barth said 152 first-year students were enrolled this year at the denomination's two Concordia seminaries — 89 in Clayton and 63 in the seminary at Fort Wayne, IN.

Yet the seminaries must produce 250 graduating pastors each year just to fill vacancies from deaths and retirements, officials said. (CN)

### KANSAS CITY (RNS)

The average child sees 10,000 references to sex and no mention of birth control in a year of television viewing, a Yale pediatrics professor told a seminar on American youths.

"I abhor the idea of censorship, but violence on TV is like a massive public health problem," said Leonard Eron, a psychology professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and president of the Midwest Psychology Association. (CN)

### NEW YORK (RNS)

United Methodist pastors in Abilene, Texas — site of Dyess Air Force Base, home of the B-1 bomber program — say that out of consideration for the views of the military families in their congregations, they won't read from the pulpit a bishops' pastoral letter calling for nuclear disarmament.

The Rev. Ed Lang, pastor of Aldersgate UMC, said he will preach on the pastoral letter rather than reading it from the pulpit. "I'll probably use excerpts," he said. "We have a high concentration of Air Force people, and to be truthful, I'm a little frightened. I'm just committed to take heart in hand and deal with it." (CN)

And then still maintain that it is according to the Word of God what it pleases the bishops to proclaim??

### ERMELOO, THE NETHERLANDS

An elder in the Greek Evangelical

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BEERS, Nicolaas, geboren op 8 oktober 1921, laatstbekende adres in Canada: Rainsford Ranch, Oyama, BC.

BLITS, Saul Willem, geboren op 5 mei 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Keizer Karelweg 134, Amsterdam, naar Canada vertrokken op 25 maart 1952.

VAN BRUGGEN, Frederick Jacobus Roelof, geboren op 4 november 1921, laatst-

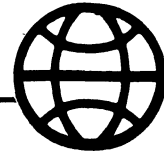
bekende adres in Nederland: Zweeloustraat 7, Den Haag, naar Canada vertrokken op 24 april 1957, waarschijnlijk richting Calgary.

FOLKERTS, Harmannus, geboren op 3 november 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Dr. Schonfeldstraat 15, Emmen, naar Canada vertrokken op 24 maart 1954.

KUIJVENHOVEN, Arend, geboren op 5 april 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: R. Feithlaan 5, Den Haag, naar Canada vertrokken op 8 april 1958.

NIELEN, Gerardus Hendricus Johannes, geboren op 23 mei 1921, laatstbekende adres in Nederland: Markt 20A, Eindhoven, naar Canada vertrokken in 1955.

De Consul-Generaal  
voor deze:  
Mevr. G. Schnitzler  
Kanselier.



Church, Mr. A. Koulouris, visited on behalf of his Church the deputies for contact with foreign Churches of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

The Greek Evangelical Church has a membership of approximately 5,000.

Mr. Koulouris has already translated books I and II of the Institutes of Calvin and is at present working on the third volume. He also visited the Theological College in Kampen and had discussions with the deputies. (ND)

### **SPAKENBURG, THE NETHERLANDS**

Due to the brokenness because of sin it should not be entirely impossible that a certain ecclesiastical relationship can be entered into with more than one Church in the same country.

This statement is contained in the report of deputies for relations with foreign Churches of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to the general synod which is to be convened next spring in Spakenburg-Noord.

"We shall not be permitted to resign ourselves to such a situation of 'double correspondence,'" they write, "because of the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to be one, but it will have to remain object of discussion." (ND)

### **CHICAGO (RNS)**

A federal judge has described the United States as a "Christian Nation" in upholding the right of municipal officials to permit the display of a Christmas creche by a private group in City Hall.

In his ruling, U.S. District Judge Frank McGarr said, "The truth is that America's origins are Christian and that our founding fathers intended and achieved full religious freedom for all within the context of a Christian nation in the First Amendment as it was adopted rather than as we have rewritten it."

He said that the display of the creche has become "a mere seasonal tradition pleasant in its associations and connotations." Although the Nativity scene "may have religious meaning to some," Judge McGarr said, "its inclusion in a larger Christmas display does not constitute advocacy of a particular religious message." (CN)

\* \* \*

The new Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which is expected to be out in the spring of 1990, will make full use

of inclusive language to reduce the number of masculine references in the Scriptures, a Vanderbilt University professor said recently.

Dr. Walter Harrelson, distinguished professor of Old Testament at Vanderbilt University, and a member of the review committee of the new Bible, said the number of masculine references will be reduced "where they ought to be reduced and where they can be reduced." (CN)

### **LIVERMORE, CA (RNS)**

It is unconstitutional for a public school to include prayers in its graduation ceremony even if a majority of the students request it, the American Jewish Congress argues in a brief presented to an appeals court here.

The brief, filed with the California Appeals Court, charges that the Livermore Valley Unified School District violated church-state separation when it allowed a prayer to be read at commencement exercises for Granada High School.

The brief also says that the use of prayer at a public high school graduation indicates that the prayer "is sanctioned by the state, conveying a clear message of state approval of religious practice." (CN)

### **AMSTERDAM (DPA)**

The Brotherhood of Remonstrants, a Dutch Protestant Denomination, plans to become the first religious group in the Netherlands to provide church weddings to homosexual couples, a newspaper reported here this week.

The newspaper, the *Telegraaf*, said the decision was approved by a large majority at a meeting of top church officials last Saturday.

The religious leaders agreed that persons should be able to participate fully in the activities of the church without regard to their lifestyles or sexual preferences, the paper said.

Officials of the large Protestant churches, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Old Reformed Church criticized the Remonstrants' decision. (TVS)

### **THE HAGUE**

An ecclesiastical ceremony in which a marriage-bond is "blessed" or "confirmed" is in conflict with the law concerning the solemnization of a marriage. This is what the MP G.J. Schutte stated in the Dutch parliament. Mr. Schutte asked the Justice Minister to say whether the Minister agrees with him that the decision by the Remonstrants mentioned above is

in conflict with the law. If not, what is then the sense of the provision that no ecclesiastical ceremony may take place unless the parties can show proof that they have been married in a civil ceremony? (ND)

### **NEW YORK (RNS)**

Most Americans are in favour of public schools offering religion studies, as well as making school facilities available for student religious groups, according to a Gallup poll.

The survey found that 75 percent of adult Americans would not object to the use of the Bible in literature, history and social studies classes; 79 percent would not object to teaching about the major religions of the world in public schools; and 75 percent would not object making facilities available after school hours for use by student religious groups or organizations.

Unlike organized school prayer, which was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, these activities are permissible under the First Amendment. (CN)

### **KAMPEN**

The Board of Governors of the Theological College of our Netherlands sister Churches decided to retain the name "Theologische Hogeschool," at least for the time being. On the basis of new legislative provisions, it could be called "University," but since the name "Hogeschool" is so well-known with the membership of the Churches the Board decided to keep that name, thereby making use of a possibility which the law provides. (ND)

### **JERUSALEM (AP)**

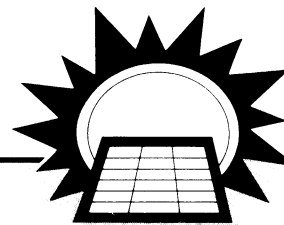
A police investigation into a case of corruption may have led to an historical find, namely of fragments of a Dead Sea Scroll.

The fragments were found under the floor of the house of an antique-dealer. A scroll of a few meters length was one of them. The dealer told police that he had bought it a few years ago from a tribe that had found it in a cave near the Dead Sea. (ND)

### **WEST BERLIN (ANP)**

Approximately 40% of the first-born children in the German Republic are born of unmarried women; in East Berlin the percentage is considerably higher, according to a gynecologist. (ND)

VO



"Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Psalm 90:14

## Dear brothers and sisters,

*Psalm 90 is a prayer of Moses, the man of God. At the end of forty years in the wilderness Moses confesses before the LORD the sins of the people of Israel, which brought upon them the wrath and judgments of the eternal God. (vs. 1) Moses pleads for God's mercy over a sinful people so that they again may experience the favour of their God.*

*Disobedience and discontentment disrupt the peace and relationship with the LORD. Also children of the LORD are time and again confronted with the futility and brokenness of life. We must acknowledge that we do not serve the LORD as we should; that often we grieve Him with our failures and sins. We do not deserve His goodness and grace.*

*Life is indeed very short and much of it is toil and trouble. "The years of our life are soon gone and fly away." (vs. 10) Looking at ourselves, our own circumstances, the moments of our joy seem few in comparison with the sadness and troubles we have to cope with in our life. If the LORD, who sets our iniquities before Him and our secret sins in the light of His countenance (vs. 8), should punish us according to our transgressions, who could escape His judgment and wrath? But God has revealed His mercy in Jesus Christ, who made a complete satisfaction for all our sins. For those who believe Him, there will be no condemnation but God's grace and loving-kindness rests upon them!*

*Trusting those promises of our LORD, we will be able to start every day again with holy amazement about the wonders of His grace. The troubles may be there every morning, but do not forget it, also His mercies are new every morning! They outweigh whatever problems we meet! When He is for us, we will be able to rejoice and be glad all the days of our life, bearing our cross with an uplifted heart, taking refuge in our heavenly Father who has been and will be our dwelling place in all generations. (vs. 1)*

## Our birthday calendar for March:

March 3

**TREVOR HOF SINK**

1426 Bulkley Drive, Box 411  
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

Trevor's birthday is on March 3rd when he will

be 9 years old. He is physically handicapped but nevertheless a happy boy.

I sure hope you enjoy your birthday, Trevor!

March 12

**GERRY EELHART**

"Rehoboth," Box 1089  
Stony Plain, AB T0E 2G0

Gerry hopes to celebrate his 25th birthday on March 12th. I don't have any other information about him, but I am sure he will be happy to receive some mail from our "Sunshine" friends.

March 15

**JIM VANDERHEIDEN**

P.O.  
St. Ann's, ON L0R 1Y0

Jim will be 28 years old on March 15th. He enjoys reading and playing the accordion. I hope I have your postal code right this time, Jim!

March 18

**ROSELYN KUIK**

Box 11  
Graysville, MB R0G 0T0

Roselyn is looking forward to her 13th birthday on March 18th. She is handicapped in more than one way but she is following a special program at the Canadian Reformed School in Carman and I heard that she is doing well! Good for you, Roselyn!

I wish you all a happy birthday and the Lord's blessing in the coming year!

Joyful, joyful we adore Thee,  
God of Glory, God of Love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,  
Praising Thee, their Sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;  
Drive the dark of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
Fill us with the light of day.

(Henry VanDyke)

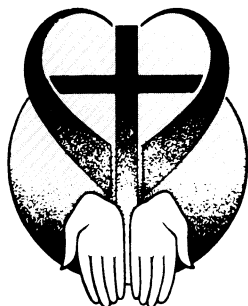
Greetings to all of you and a happy new year!

**MRS. J. MULDER**

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



# A "cup of cold water" in Somalia



Hunger and homelessness have been daily companions for many over the past decade in the East African country of Somalia. For others, fortunate enough to escape the terrible trials of famine and refugee camps, poverty and disease are still formidable opponents.

Michael and Oetje Madany, Reformed Christians with a home base in the Netherlands (Vrijgemaakte Kerk — Sauweld), have dedicated the past several years to helping needy Somalians on Labadaab Island.

Michael works as an Agriculturalist, encouraging the acceptance of new crops and improved farming methods through a demonstration garden, tree nurseries, and other projects. Oetje, a nurse, contributes to the curative and preventative health care of leprosy patients and their families (about 2,000 people altogether!) — as well as caring for their infant daughter, Alida.

The Madanys, serving through World Concern, face the tremendous challenge of living and working in a way that reflects the truth, love, and mercy of the Gospel in a largely Moslem society.

Being impressed by their labours and sincere Christian commitment, CRWRF sent a gift of \$1,000 towards their living expenses last year and the same amount again this year.

Interesting monthly reports written by the Madanys bring us closer to their work. We include a recent letter to illustrate just one aspect of the valuable work they direct in the midst of the leprosy community in southern Somalia. May we, in reading this, also be encouraged to uphold them in our prayers.

## SOMALIA



Michael and Oetje Madany  
c/o World Concern  
Box 1629  
Muqdisho, SOMALIA  
Mogadishu, SOMALIA  
AFRICA  
May, 1986

Dear family and friends,

Do you have difficulty finding fuel when you cook your meals? You probably use either gas or electricity and you likely can find cause to complain about rising costs of utility bills. But, when you go to your kitchen, you just turn on the switch and adjust the temperature on the dial and assume the rest.

The situation is a little bit different here in Labadaad Island. Like most people in this country (and this continent), the daily meals are cooked over wood fires. It has been a pretty simple operation that has been used for centuries — you just balance your pot or kettle on three stones, light the stick and begin cooking. Of course, it would take you or I a long time to get a good fire going, but folks here are well-experienced in this art. However, as elsewhere on the continent, there is a fuel shortage here. Before the huge sugar cane plantation was developed west of the leprosy village farmland, it was a short journey to the bushlands where fuelwood could be gathered.

There was plenty of acacia and other trees that were equally good fuelwood within an hour's walk of the four villages. Not so today. Villagers must trek as far as 15 km to the west in order to find fuelwood. Not everyone can make the two or three hour journey by foot to find firewood; many patients have problems with their feet and are unable to walk so far. These people must buy their fuelwood from others. For people that are quite poor (over half of the patients would fit in this category) the cost of a bundle of firewood is a major part of their limited income.

What is the solution to this? Kerosene stoves are available in the shops in Jilib (that is how we cook) but kerosene prices are high and continue to rise. One of the goals of my agroforestry work is to encourage the farmers here to plant hedges and windbreaks around their fields; after a few years, fuelwood can be harvested from these fast-growing trees.

Another way to address the problem



Michael and Oetje Madany and their daughter, Alida — having dinner at the home of a Somalian friend who worked with Oetje at the leprosy hospital



Michael shows one attempted solution to the fuel shortage problem: fast-growing (and edible) Moringa trees. This sapling was five months old at the time of the photo

is to improve the way fuelwood is used in cooking. The present way is very inefficient — a lot of heat is wasted by the “three stone fire.” Fonny Bouma, the community worker on our team, brought a consultant on mudstoves to visit us in mid-March. Five trainees were selected from the villages here and, after a month of training and practice, they were able to build mudstoves on their own. This probably doesn’t sound too impressive, and if you saw a finished product, I doubt that you would place an order to have one built in your own kitchen.

The mud that the stoves are made out of is made of a mix of local soil, sand, and cow manure. The model being produced here has two holes into which the kettle and cooking pot are placed. These fit snugly (each stove is custom-made around the kettle and pot of each household) so that the fire (burning in a compartment underneath) warms only pans without the waste of heat of the traditional method. Meals cook faster as well; it only takes five minutes to get a kettle boiling. All of this means that much less fuel is needed to cook meals.

There is another unique reason why the people in the leprosy patient villages need to be using mudstoves. The traditional method of cooking is very dangerous for those leprosy patients who have a loss of sensation in their hands. They often get burned by handling hot pans or kettles. It is injuries like this that cause the loss of fingers in those leprosy patients; with-

### What is Leprosy?

- It is an infection like tuberculosis, smallpox or measles, due to a small germ which we call “Mycobacterium leprae.” This germ spreads all over the body but prefers to attack mainly:
  1. The peripheral nerves
  2. The skin
- It has a long incubation period, three to five years on average.
- Leprosy is one of the diseases which dates right back to ancient times. It is caused by an acid-fast bacillus (or germ) which was described in 1873 by Dr. G. Armauer Hansen of Norway.
- Leprosy frequently causes disabilities, which are the origin of prejudice against the infected person, with subsequent social problems. But these are only a consequence of untreated leprosy.

- If the disease is discovered early and treatment is taken regularly, leprosy can be arrested before deformities have appeared.
- There are an estimated 15 million people in the world who suffer from leprosy. In Canada, there are about 200 cases.
- Today leprosy is found mainly in tropical areas where extreme poverty, unhealthy and crowded living accommodation, malnutrition and lack of elementary hygiene seem to be the conditions in which the disease flourishes.
- The highest concentrations of the 15 million sufferers are found in India, S.E. Asia and Central Africa. Central and Southern America, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands are also areas where leprosy is quite common.

Ref: Facts from the  
 1. The Leprosy Mission  
 2. International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Association

out the proper functioning of nerves, they have no sensation of heat. Many months ago, Fonny had commissioned the local blacksmith to attach wooden handles on the pots and kettles of those patients with sensory loss in their fingers. However, the traditional cooking methods meant that the handles would be damaged by the fire and would need frequent replacement. Now, with the mudstoves, the lids and handles stay cool and it is much safer

for the leprosy patients to do their cooking.

These days, we see the stovemakers (four women and one man) come to our compound each morning to collect their buckets of sand and the iron bars (used in the grates to keep the pot off the fire). We are paying them to install stoves in the homes of all patients who have received the special adapted cooking pots. Other villagers can hire the stovemakers to make stoves for their own compounds. So far, the stovemakers are off to a good start; as people see the benefits of the new way of cooking, they are eager to have a mudstove built in their kitchen.

This project only touches one aspect of life here and an important one at that. Thank you for your continued interest in our work. We especially appreciate prayers that we can continue to be salt and light . . . and, we rejoice in the hope that flames may someday be kindled in some other hearts.

In Christ,  
 Michael and Oetje Madany

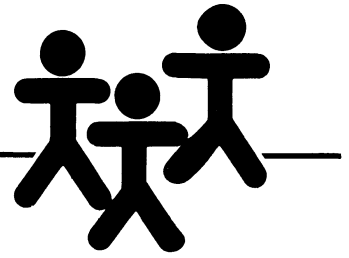


A carpenter friend, Umar Huseen, holds Alida in his riverside garden of banana and cassava

Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

CRWRF  
 PO Box 797  
 Burlington, ON L7R 3Y7

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



## Education — the concern of all

\*Maclean's (November 1986): COPING WITH THE GUILT OF DAY CARE

... The Prime Minister has repeatedly said that "substantial advances" in child care are needed. Declared Mulroney to THE TORONTO STAR. "A woman should be able to go to work and not be concerned as to whether her child is being properly cared for, either at home or in a facility . . . ."

... Although there is little evidence to support such positions, the idea that a mother's unremitting love is needed for the proper emotional development of her children remains deeply rooted in Western culture . . . .

... The overwhelming conclusion of a decade of psychological research can be summarized simply: children attending good-quality day care are no less securely attached or emotionally secure than are home-reared children . . . .

Just some quotations re child care. Is society ready to abolish the family as the first and most important place where children are to be reared? Is society ready to relinquish the parental obligation to be the first and most important educator of the children, and to hand over this right and obligation to the professional educator, certified and financed by the government?

How is it within our own, solidly Reformed families; do we also suffer from the absent-parent syndrome? Are we taking our task as educators seriously?

\*\*CHRISTIAN HOME & SCHOOL (Nov/Dec 1986): A DIFFICULT QUESTION

A reader asked whether she/he has the right to be concerned that the school might water down its traditional Reformed perspective because of the increasing numbers of students from other backgrounds. Several of the families of children who attend his/her Christian school attend churches outside the cluster of evangelical or Reformed denominations. It is noted that one family in fact attends a Mormon church. In his answer to this reader, Herman Franzen, Superintendent of Bellevue (Washington) Christian Schools, responds that "the question of who should attend our

Christian schools is a difficult one. The answer, it seems to me, is directly related to your school's philosophy. Does your school exist exclusively for children who come from Christian homes in the Reformed tradition, or does its admission policy also allow for the school to be used by the Holy Spirit in calling students and parents to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ?" Franzen suggests a careful screening process and a monitoring of the number of children from such non-Reformed family background. But we should not deny them admission if they honestly want to participate with us in the process of cultivating children and adolescents as disciples of Jesus Christ in this world. He concludes, *Those of us who are Reformed Christians have so much to give. Let's share it.*

A clear answer to a difficult question? Can Reformed Christians cooperate with Mormons in the process of cultivating children and adolescents as disciples of Jesus Christ in this world?

We are grateful that we have learned by the grace of God that the task of a Reformed school is to equip children who have already been adopted by God for their task of service, as members of Christ's Church and co-workers of Him in God's kingdom. Reformed education deals with covenant children, instructs in the covenant way of life, with the one Covenant relation. Pray to God that He enables us to remain faithful to that firm foundation, only then can we present a truly Christian, that is a prophetic, priestly, and royal witness to the world.

\*\*\*The relationship between church and school is also discussed in a recent Dutch publication *OPVOEDEN DOEN WIJ SAMEN* (Together we educate, that is: education is the concern of all of us), written by J. Veenstra, and published in the R.B. Serie by Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1985 (Take and read — this book will enrich you). Veenstra justifies the title of his book as follows, *When we speak of the function and task of the family and the school we may give the impression that the education is divided. Yet this is not at all the intention. OPVOEDEN DOEN WIJ*

*SAMEN. There must be unity between the education in the family and at school. This unity rests in the shared convictions of parents and teachers. Although the Church is not mentioned in the title (of this book), her fundamental and essential importance is implied. Education is the concern of all of us because there is unity on the basis of Word and Confession.*

Education also acknowledges the significance of our historical ties with our forebears who opposed many a heresy — also in the field of education — with the help of the confession of the Church. The school has her place within the communion of saints. The school of the parents is at the same time the school of the church.

T.M.P. VANDERVEN

\*\*\*\*INSTRUCTOR (May 1986): RESEARCH FINDINGS YOU CAN TRUST

Although we should not worship at the altar of research this article contains some interesting conclusions based on *only the most reliable, substantiated, and consistent research findings.*

It was found that the most effective schools have the following characteristics: vigorous instructional leadership; a principal who makes clear, consistent, and fair decisions; an emphasis on discipline and a safe, orderly environment; instructional practices that focus on basic skills and academic achievement; collegiality among teachers; strong expectations that all students can and will learn; and frequent review of student progress.

In effective schools, the principals, teachers, students, and parents agree on the goals, methods, and content of schooling.

When research findings are presented this way — leaving out the statistical data and descriptions of studies — the results often read as common-sense statements. But if research and common sense coincide isn't that the ideal situation?

If we use these findings to judge the effectiveness of our own Canadian Reformed Schools how do we measure up?

W.F. HORSMAN

# ABC BIBLE COLLECTION - by Mrs. John Roza



## Z-Zacchaeus

(Luke 19)

*Colour me!*

### Quiz Questions

1. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount \_\_\_\_\_, in the far north, the city of the great King. (Psalm 48)
2. This question has the letter "Z" in the word, not necessarily in the beginning of the word.  
Which Bible books contain the letter "Z"? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Who was the son of Shealtiel? \_\_\_\_\_

### Answers for the letter "Y"

1. Sycamore 2. Years