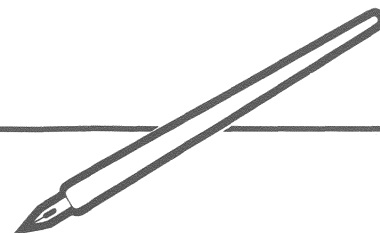




Clarion
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The Supreme Court's decision on abortion

The decision

On January 28, the Supreme Court of Canada "scrapped" the abortion law, giving women "free choice." The papers wrote that the decision to have an abortion was now up to a woman and her doctor. Abortions are no longer dependent on the judgment of a hospital abortion committee. They can now legally be performed outside hospitals, in separate, independent abortion clinics. That is exactly what a certain doctor, whose name I do not want to mention, wanted and often did already.

The law, in existence until the Supreme Court decision, was "a combination of crime and exception" (*Globe and Mail* editorial of Friday, January 29, 1988). It defined abortion as a crime, dealing with it in Section 251 of the Criminal Code. This criminal character would be taken away in cases when life or health of a woman was possibly in danger if an abortion would be denied. A decision on this point was given in the hands of therapeutic abortion committees of an "accredited or approved hospital."

The same *Globe and Mail* editorial said: "The law was an attempt to achieve the impossible — a compromise between those who believe abortion is murder and those who feel a woman has a right to exclusive control over her reproductive faculties."

What I understand from what I read is that the judges followed the reasoning of a certain man who fought many years to have the freedom to perform abortions on demand in the name of justice for women. He argued on the basis of Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that every individual has the right to "life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice."

Chief Justice Brian Dickson reasoned, according to the paper, that the law on abortion (Section 251 of the Criminal Code) pretended to offer a defence against criminal liability in case of an abortion on valid grounds, but that the regulation regarding therapeutic committees was unfair and a violation of the principles of fundamental justice.

For a woman to depend on a decision of a therapeutic committee of an accredited or approved hospital is seen as an infringement on her freedom and right and in conflict with fundamental justice. Dependence on such a decision often causes delays, we read, which, in turn, "cause serious physical and psychological trauma to women."

The Chief Justice further explained that Section 251 of the Criminal Code was "State interference with bodily integrity and serious state-imposed psychological stress, at least in the criminal law context (which) constitutes a breach of security of the person. Section 251 . . . clearly interferes with a woman's physical and bodily integrity. Forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a fetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations,

is a profound interference with a woman's body and thus an infringement of security of the person" (*Globe and Mail*).

The decision of the Supreme Court is not the end of the abortion debate. No decision has been made with regard to the rights of "the fetus." It is good to notice the wording here. Speaking about "the fetus" sounds better in the ears of those who favour the freedom of abortion than using the words "unborn child." It sounds also more neutral. However, it does not take away the awful fact that abortion means murder of an unborn child. (I am not speaking here about the rare, difficult, cases in which a maintained pregnancy, in all probability, would kill the mother.) It is probably on this point of the rights of the unborn that further debate and decisions can be expected. At this moment these rights are not determined. In the abortion decision the unborn has no rights. Only the so-called rights of women are maintained.

The implications

January 28, 1988, is a dark day in the history of Canada. It shows the Godlessness of the Canadian governing bodies. Basis for our Canadian society is human rights understood in a purely humanistic manner. We have here a talking about justice in which the justice of the Creator is not reckoned with. Those called to maintain justice speak about the rights of women to make their own private decisions regarding their body and reproductive faculties. There is no reference at all to the Creator who gives life and who created our bodies, including their reproductive faculties, to be temples of His Spirit. That man and woman were created in the image and likeness of God and were called to honour and serve Him, also with their reproductive faculties, was not considered.

Although the Canadian Constitution formally acknowledges God as the highest Sovereign, those in government practically declare this God to have no sovereign authority over the Canadian nation at all. With this decision our Supreme Court has declared by implication that Canada is a Godless nation, where those in government don't have to reckon with the laws of this highest Sovereign.

The Word of God teaches that man destroys his life on earth when he does not reckon with God. It also proclaims that God gave a Saviour in His Son, Christ Jesus, who paid for man's sin and restores life by leading man back to God. The decision of the Supreme Court, as well as the policy of the government to abide by this decision, shows once again that there is no place for the redeeming lordship of Christ Jesus in the official decision making process.

Therefore, the decision stresses once again that Canada denies its heritage of the last three centuries when leaders reckoned with the existence and commandments of the God of the Bible. It has been said and it will be said that a nation without God as Creator and without God's Son as Redeemer destroys itself. This insight reflects the wisdom of God's Word.

A certain doctor (whose name I do not want to mention) spoke about justice that finally had arrived for women in this country. Madam Justice Bertha Wilson, so we read, based her vote on her opinion that Section 251 of the Criminal Code was a violation of the liberty and rights of women. It is sad to say that we have here the destructive shortsightedness and, in fact, life-threatening narrowmindedness of modern humanism. The humanist is shortsighted because he sees only as far as his human horizon allows him, not having an eye for God. He is narrowminded because his mind is restricted to his own world, the world of man, while there is no place in his mind for a God above him.

We called the attitude behind the decision destructive and life-threatening. With the restricting Section 251 of the Criminal Code in force, through which abortions depended on a decision of a therapeutic abortion committee of an accredited hospital, still more than 60,000 recorded abortions were performed in 1985. This number does not give all the abortions of that year. Not all were recorded. A number were performed, e.g., in the United States. The decision takes the restriction away. We can expect more abortions, more murders now.

However, whatever human judges declare and what human mothers think, according to God's judgment abortion on demand because a pregnancy is unwanted remains murder of unborn life. A nation willing to murder its own unborn offspring and refusing to call this a crime is a nation which cuts away from under its society the pillars on which God established life: God's commandments, His justice. Poor criminal Canada. Will this be a step in the direction toward more legalized criminality, doing away with the mentally handicapped and the sick elderly of the nation? And is it so that those who stand up for the rights of God have to be silenced more and more?

The judges spoke of trauma caused to women being faced with a delay in receiving an abortion through Section 251 and with the fact that having an abortion was defined as a crime. Now an abortion is not a crime anymore according to Canadian law; and the restrictive law causing a delay is declared unconstitutional.

However, as man's judgment can never nullify the truth of God's judgment, so man's effort to take away traumas in an unlawful manner (we mean God's law) can never prevent worse psychological traumas. Murdering an unwanted, unborn child, remains murder, whatever euphemism is used. And the knowledge of an expecting mother that she had what was growing in her womb killed in an abortion will remain with her and often haunt her. Abortions often cause awful psychological traumas of a plagued conscience.

When, however, there is no trauma at all through a bad conscience because the "consciences are seared" (I Timothy 4:2), we can see the truth of the word of Christ in Matthew 24:12, that when "wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold." Love builds life, builds families, builds nations. The chilling coldness of a lack of love, which means hatred, breaks down life, breaks down families, breaks down nations. Let us face the situation: when human rights determine decisions apart from God there is idolatry. Man is his own idol. Selfishness is idolatry. Idolatry is serving evil spirits, being in bondage, in slavery of the devil, who is the deceiver and murderer from the beginning.

Our Christian calling

Does this decision mean that those who are "pro-life" have to struggle on? Does this decision call for a legal action and decision in which the rights of the unborn will be acknowledged and maintained? Certainly! Does this underline the need for a Christian political party? It sure does. However, I doubt whether it will stop abortions. It is not the Supreme Court only. It is not the Ministers of the Crown or Parliament. It is the

modern population of Canada in general of which quite a percentage wants the freedom to murder the unborn, the liberty to be absolute boss over one's own body.

Therefore our attention must not only focus on the judges and the government. It must focus on the nation, on the men and women in the streets, the grassroots, so to speak. Only one thing can reverse this trend. It is the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus and faith in Him. Lead the nation back to Him; call the nation to faith and repentance from sin and unbelief. That is the medication which Canada needs to be healed of her chronic and fatal illness.

Here we all as Christians have a calling. I should like to describe this calling with the words of Christ in Matthew 5:13-16. Christ calls His disciples there "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." It is the light that Christ Jesus Himself is as Saviour, who called to repentance and conversion, to faith and obedience to God. It is the light of living by God's Word, God's wisdom. It is the light of living out of Christ.

What must we do? Let us live truly Christian lives which are rooted in the love and compassion of God and His Christ for a world that is lost in sin and unbelief. Let us live in accordance with His will as expressed in His Word. Let us live together as Christian families in the surroundings where God has placed us, parents and children together. Let the world see that it is a joy to have a family; that we as mothers rejoice in seeing our task at home in taking care of our families.

Let us as fathers and mothers show that a certain high standard of living with much pleasure and fun for ourselves is not our goal in life, but that we find our joy in fulfilling our task and calling, our office, as He points it out in His Word, in His service.

Also Christian young people, Christian children, have that calling to let the light of Christ shine in today's darkening world of selfishness. That task is to live in faith and behave as Christian children who fight against an attitude of selfishness, who love and obey their parents, who show themselves willing to be helpful to parents at home and to neighbours and others they meet, showing in this way the helping compassion of Christ for those in need.

Therefore, let us maintain that abortion is sin in God's eyes, but let us not condemn, and turn away from, those who saw no other way out of their troubles than through an abortion; or those who may have come into the trouble of a pregnancy through the sin of pre-marital sex. Let us, whenever possible, point to the forgiving and healing compassion of Christ for sinners; that they may repent and confess their sin and find forgiveness and renewed life in the redeeming grace of Christ. It is easy to condemn an evil world and leave it at that. But that is acting just as badly, and just as disobediently, as a godless world does. A church which shows no compassion with those who are lost in, and suffer through their sins, is a church that does not hold up the light of Christ and becomes like tasteless salt which will be thrown away because it has become useless.

Sure, such true Christian conduct, fruit of faith in Christ and of the gospel of grace working in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit, will meet with ridicule and rejection by many. It will also find appreciation. But neither ridicule, nor appreciation should determine that conduct. The compassion of Christ for people who live in darkness, while the light of the gospel is so close by, should drive us. We should not forget our calling to let the light of Christ shine, regardless of what the reaction may be.

May that light remain visible and audible, also through our faithfulness to Christ with our whole life, personally and as families, in His fellowship and in true obedience to Him as Lord and to His commandments.

J. GEERTSEMA

Further reflections on Synodical practices

The February 20, 1987 issue of *Clarion* contained the second installment of Rev. W.W.J. VanOene's "Reflections on Synodical Practices." We found this article very instructive and to the point in several ways. In particular, we were heartened by his analysis of changes made by Synod 1983 to some of the liturgical forms. As the readers of *Clarion* will know, question one of the form for Public Profession of Faith used to read:

"First: Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament and in the articles of the Christian faith and which is taught here in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?"

The second question in the Form of Baptism had the same wording. These questions have been changed as follows:

Question one of the Form for Public Profession reads:

"First, do you wholeheartedly agree with the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here"

Question two of the Form for Baptism reads:

"Second, do you confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, summarized in the confessions and taught here"

We agree with Rev. VanOene's assertion that "historically the term 'articles of the Christian faith' refers to the Apostles' Creed," and we appreciate his warning that changes made to the confessional standards and liturgical forms should be made upon the request of the churches rather than of synodical committees or individuals. He did not "wish to go too far into history," and that is understandable given the fact that his submission to *Clarion* concerned synodical procedure and not this issue per se. We believe, however, that these changes are important and that church members ought to be aware of them. Therefore, in order to deal with them we will have to look at history.

It was at the 1923 Synod of Utrecht that these questions were originally standardized. This synod rejected the Dutch

equivalent of our present formulation. After rejecting the wording . . .

"Verklaart gij, dat gij de leer, die in het Oude en Nieuwe Testament begrepen en in de belijdenisgeschriften van de Gereformeerde Kerken uitgedrukt is . . ."

Synod 1923 decided in favour of:

"Ten eerste: Verklaart gij, dat gij de leer, die in het Oude en Nieuwe Testament en in de artikelen des Christelijken geloofs begrepen is, en in de Christelijke Kerk alhier geleerd wordt, houdt voor de waarachtige en volkomene leer der zaligheid; en belooft gij, in de belijdenis daarvan door God's genade standvastig te zullen blijven in leven en sterven?"¹

A direct translation of these words has been in use in the Canadian Reformed Churches from the beginning until Synods 1980 and 1983 brought this use to an abrupt end. (1)

The committee of 1923 which proposed this wording, questioned whether it is even realistic to expect believers to be able to give allegiance to all formulations used in the confessions and pointed out that at issue in public profession of faith is the personal faith and heart-commitment of the believer — not *how much* he knows: (2)

"2e . . . het mag, tegenover allerlei verkeerde voorstelling die soms bestaat, wel uitkomen dat de openbare belijdenis niet opgaat in eene algemeene toestemming, maar eene zeer persoonlijke zaak is van ieder individueel.

Daarbij dient echter aanstonds opgemerkt, dat juist het karakter van deze belijdenis als de aanvaarding van den doop medebrengt, dat degenen die belijdenis doen in den regel jeugdigen van jaren zullen zijn, zoodat de formulering van het persoonlijke element in geen geval zoodanig mag wezen dat daarop alleen bevestigde geloovigen zouden kunnen antwoorden; meer de behoefte dan het bezit, meer de begeerte dan de zekerheid dient daarin tot uitdrukking te worden gebracht."²

The late Dr. H. Bouwman, professor in "kerkrecht" at the Theological Seminary in Kampen, in his well-known *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* emphasized the necessity of

maintaining the words "articles of the Christian faith," (3) instead of making reference to the Three Forms of Unity:

"Met opzet is gesproken niet van het Gereformeerd geloof en van de Gereformeerde Kerk, maar van het Christelijk geloof en de Christelijke Kerk, omdat de Gereformeerde Kerk zich ook bij de sacramenten niet wil losmaken van de Christelijke Kerk, maar hare eenheid wil handhaven. De hoofdstukken der christelijke leer, waarin de jonge leden der gemeente zijn onderwezen, zijn naar de klassieke uitdrukking voor het geloof, gebod en gebed, het apostolisch geloofssymbool, de wet des HEEREN en het Onze Vader. In het catechetisch onderwijs worden deze drie stukken der leer, in de Catechismus nader uiteengezet, onderwezen. En het is de kern van de geloofsbelijdenis daarbij te zullen volharden en een christelijk leven te leiden."³

Having given some historical reasons for keeping "articles of the Christian faith" in favour of "confessions" in these two liturgical forms, we would also like to demonstrate why this change in fact conflicts with the very confession we all seek to uphold. Question and answer 22 and 23 of the Heidelberg Catechism teach us what is necessary for a *Christian* to believe, i.e. what the requirements for doing public profession of faith are:

"All that is promised in the gospel which the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith teach in a summary."

Answer 23 goes on to explain that these articles are, in fact, none other than the articles of the Apostles' Creed. No mention is made of additional confessions. Ursinus in his commentary on question and answer 23 states: (4)

"But although other confessions were formed, the Apostles' Creed greatly surpasses all others in importance and authority, and that for the following reasons:

1) Because almost the whole of it is expressed in the very language of the Scriptures.

2) Because it is of the greatest antiqui-

ty and was first delivered to the church by apostolic men, either by the apostles themselves, or by their disciples and hearers, and has been regularly transmitted down to the present time.

3) Because it is the basis and type of all other creeds which have been formed by the consent of the whole church and approved of by synods, for the purpose of preventing and refuting the perversions and corruptions of heretics, by explaining more fully the meaning of the Apostles' Creed."⁴

It is, of course, not by accident that our Dutch sister churches, when revising liturgical forms in 1981, decided on a formulation which echoes Ursinus and the decision of Synod Utrecht 1923. The first question in the Dutch Form for Public Profession of Faith now reads:

"Ten eerste: Belijdt u dat de leer van het Oude en Nieuwe Testament, die in de Apostolische Geloofsbelijdenis is samengevat en in de christelijke kerk alhier geleerd wordt, de ware en volkomen leer der zaligheid is?"⁵

This formulation refers to Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:15; Acts 2:42 and Matthew 24:13. Since attestations are issued on the basis of one's public profession of faith and walk of life, we ask whether it is still consistent to admit members of the Dutch sister churches unless they declare agreement with what the new formulation now asks of members of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Does this inconsistency not endanger the inter-church relations with our Dutch sister churches? (5)

In line with Rev. VanOene's *Clarion* article, we would also like to register our concern about the manner in which this change reached the floor of synod. It is not in line with the mandate given to the Committee for revision of the liturgical forms, which reads:

"To examine and to make use of the report of the Committee for Doctrinal and Liturgical Forms, which was submitted to General Synod Coaldale 1977.

To appoint a committee to revise the Liturgical Forms and to update the language"⁶

No mention is made of changing the *meaning* of the existing forms. In fact the reporters for the committee that revised the forms (Revs. C. Stam, G. VanDooren) proposed that Synod 1980 adopt "Apostles' Creed"⁷ instead of "articles of the Christian faith." It is impossible to glean from the Acts of Synod 1980 why the committee's proposal was rejected in favour of the ambiguous term "creeds." It is this mysterious change which allowed Synod 1983 to remove this ambiguity by incorrectly inserting "confessions." This change in meaning was never mandated or discussed by any of the churches. (6)

At this point it would be helpful to give a brief historical overview of certain objections that have been made to the confessions within our churches. The critique centers not only on terminology but extends to exegesis and doctrine as well. The following can be mentioned.⁸

In the Belgic Confession:

- The phrase "a simple spiritual being" in Article 1 is part of a scholastic dualism and is also problematic because it does not refer to God as a person.
- John 1:15 in Article 14 should not be used as a proof-text for *mankind's* total depravity. In addition, the phrase "small remains" seems to suggest that man retains some inherent goodness after the fall.
- Psalm 69:4 in Article 21 should not be applied to the *vicarious* suffering of Christ.
- Article 30 unjustly bars elders from the teaching-preaching office.
- Article 35 speculatively assumes that Judas celebrated the Last Supper with the Apostles.

In the Heidelberg Catechism:

- Answers 1 and 57 (also Article 37 B.C.) unfortunately uses terminology such as body and soul, which opens the way for a Platonic dualism and pagan thought.
- Answer 6 does not bring out the primary meaning of being created in the image of God: as vice-regency.
- Question and answer 21 creates a false dichotomy between knowledge and confidence, based on Ursinus' two-tiered view of faith.
- Answer 35 speculatively assumes that

Jesus through *Mary* is "the true seed of David."

- Question and answer 21 speculatively assumes that in Titus 3:5 "the washing of regeneration" refers to baptism.

In the Canons of Dort:

- Chapter III/IV paragraph 4 wrongly suggests that man retains some good, independent of God. The phrase "some light of nature" opens the way for a nature-grace dichotomy and undermines the radical nature of man's fall into sin.
- Chapters III/IV paragraph 11 suggests an anthropological blueprint and speculatively describes the process of conversion, something which no one understands.
- Chapters III/IV paragraph 12 uses the word "supernatural," which is reminiscent of a nature-grace dichotomy.

This list of objections is not exhaustive but should be sufficient to show not only the fallibility of the confessions, but also how they differ in style, scope and content from the Apostles' Creed, mentioned as the summary of our *undoubted catholic* faith in questions and answer 22 and 23 of the Heidelberg Catechism. (7)

In line with Rev. VanOene's sentiments expressed above, we also ask who authorized the following changes.⁹ Firstly, Article 9 of the Belgic Confession no longer retains I John 5:7 as a proof-text for the Trinity. In dropping this text from the original version, Synod 1983 chose for the text used by the Revised Standard Version and against other textual traditions. A comparison with the King James Version or the Dutch version of the Belgic Confession makes this plain. Secondly,

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Article 37 has dropped the phrase “that are the consciences” in reference to the books that will be opened at the end of time. It is curious that no explanations for these changes have been given, especially since they were *not* mandated.

This article was not written to undermine the use of the confessions within our churches. In fact it was written to preserve the function they have always had, namely a “tool” to guarantee that the preaching does not become arbitrary but remains Scriptural. The confessions are subordinate standards which should never be raised to the level of norm and used as a *prerequisite* for church membership (Article 7, B.C.).¹⁰ The late J.R. Wiskerke has aptly commented that our confessional standards do, in fact, contain “certain warped philosophical conceptions.”¹¹ To bind church members to documents that have been proven to contain faulty constructions and content is not only dangerous but demonstrates intellectual idolatry.¹² Would that we still had the approach of the professors of Leiden who wrote in 1629,

“There is no one of us who has ever believed that the words which have been once used in the confessions so *bind* those who adhere to them that no other words could ever be used or that they could never change particular manners of expression.”¹³

In summary, it appears that the changes in the current forms have gone unnoticed by most and are even denied by others. The current wording in the above mentioned forms is a departure from accepted practice, as is evident from the current Dutch version. Furthermore, we should also be careful that Guido de Brès, Olivianus, Ursinus, and the Fathers of Dordrecht do not become to us what Thomas Aquinas has been to the Roman Catholic church . . . a tradition beyond criticism. The essential doctrines of the Christian faith are *not* being questioned by us, but the raising of non-essentials to the status of essential is. We should not be driven to adopt a church polity based on fear and unwittingly undermine the *catholic* character of the faith.¹⁴ Rather, let us approach the current issue with love, remembering that “perfect love casts out fear.” (I John 4:18). This approach would allow the churches to *rescind* a decision that is not only questionable but was obtained without any church asking for it. It would also honour the Scriptural principles to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5) and to do all things “decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40).

Your brothers in Christ,
B. MOES
P. ROUKEMA
P. SCHÖN

¹Acts of Synod Utrecht — 1923, Article 136.

²Rapport inzake het concipiëren van Belijdenisvragen, de herziening van de Liturgie en het overzien en de uitbreiding van de bundel “Eenige Gezangen” door Deputaten, ad hoc, aan de Generale Synode der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, saam te komen te Utrecht in het jaar 1923.

³Bouman, Dr. H., *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, J.H. Kok, Kampen, 1921, pp. 382-383.

⁴*The Commentary of Dr. Zacharius Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, B.T. Bucher Publishing, Cincinnati 1851, p. 118.

— While Synod Burlington (1986) decided that Question/Answer 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism “does not suggest that this basic summary excludes the further confession given in the Three Forms of Unity” we ask where it suggests that it *includes* them as a requirement for being called a Christian. cf. *Acts of Synod Burlington — 1986*, Article 144.

⁵Acts of Synod Arnhem — 1981, p. 424.

⁶Acts of Synod Coaldale — 1977, Article 60, sub. 3C and 4.

⁷Committee on Translation and Revision of Confessional and Liturgical Forms.

⁸For a thorough discussion of the topic the following sources are helpful:

Ursinus, Dr. Z., *op. cit.*, pp. 108-111.

VanderLeest, C., *Wat is Gereformeerd?*

Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak b.v. Groningen, 1983, pp. 1-33.

Wiskerke, J.R., *De strijd om de sleutel der kennis* Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, b.v. Groningen, 1978, pp. 35-70.

I Timothy and Titus — for the topic of eldership.

⁹These changes have not been adopted by our Dutch sister churches, even though they had been criticized before.

¹⁰Wiskerke, J.R., *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 50, 52.

Rightfully Wiskerke comments, “Hij is een dwaas, die wanneer de belijdenis hem met uitgestoken vinger als een goede gids op de rijkdom van het Woord Gods attent will maken, op de vinger en de nagel van de gids blijft staren.”

¹¹Douma, J., *Another Look at Dooyeweerd*

Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, p. 13.

Wiskerke, J.R. *op. cit.*, pp. 60, 61.

Another Reformed scholar, outside of our circles, who discusses un-Scriptural influences in theology, is B.J. Van der Walt. See his *Horizon: Surveying a route for contemporary Christian thought* — published by Potchefstroom University, 1978, pp. 101-130. These pages contain a discussion on Biblical anthropology and the expression “image of God.” We have included his reference to the “small remains” in Article 12 B.C. in the survey of critique given by people from within our circles to enhance the flow of the article. Commenting on the phrase, he writes, “Most have not considered the fact that the confessions could have been influenced on this point by erroneous opinions. Because it is acknowledged in theory that the confessions of faith are the fallible work of man, but in practice often the same authority is given to them as the Word, Reformed theologians mostly try to defend the confessions on this point. The author has studied a number of the solutions to this problem, but finds them to be more a clever way with words than genuine solutions.” Yet Van der Walt goes on to state:

“In defence of the confessions of faith it is stated that they indeed want to give expression to the conviction that man is totally depraved, but that he cannot escape being in a relationship to God, even in his aversion, disobedience, enmity and rebellion towards God (Cf Berkhouwer, *op. cit.*, p. 133; Faber e.a. *De schat van Christus' bruid*, p. 133). If in fact this is what the confessions mean (in a deficient language which lends itself to misunderstanding) we cannot object, because it corresponds with the Scriptural idea previously expressed, that God even after the fall, remains faithful to his covenant and equips man with outstanding gifts and that man even after the fall remains a religious being — even if his religious orientation is directed wrongly, away from God” (p. 129). Whatever one decides in regard to the phrase, Van der Walt’s warning should not go unheeded namely: do not canonize human thought. Article 7, B.C. stresses this very point.

¹²Wiskerke, J.R., *op. cit.*, p. 249, footnote #66. Wiskerke cites two works by S.U. Zuidema. The first is entitled: *Van geloof tot geloof*. (1952), which states: “de kerkelijke belijdenis geen geloofsgrond voor ons belijden; overschatting van de belijdenis, wanneer men haar aanneemt, omdat twee wel meer zullen weten dan een, omdat de gemeenschap als zodanig met gezag boven de enkeling staat, dan afgoderij men de Kerk, de gemeenschap.” The second work, *Waakt!* (1950) states: “Kerkisme overall, waar de kerkleer als zodanig tot vaste grond voor het geloof wordt aanvaard en men zo in de kerk, haar leer, confessie, gezag gaat geloven; in Article 7. N.G.B. wijst de belijdenis boven zichzelf uit naar de Schrift; de vaste grond van Gods openbaring nooit vervangen door menselijke uitspraken.”

For proof that Synod Burlington — 1986 has bound members of the Canadian Reformed Churches to ALL formulations used in the confessions, see Article 144 observation 5 and considerations 2 and 5. The references to *Romans* and *Revelation* support our position rather than Synod’s. The appeal nowhere implied that “it is impossible to keep the Scriptural command” of Romans 10:9, 10 and Revelation 2:26. On the contrary, it is this command that we seek to affirm. Synod placed the Scriptures and confessions on the same level and equated the two. This seems to be a case of confessionalism, something which we should be eager to avoid. It is primary to confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9) and strive to do the will of God (Revelation 2:26). This is the Biblical prerequisite for being called a Christian and receiving admittance to the sacraments. After this confession, one spends a lifetime in the school of Christ growing in faith and knowledge. The confessions may be used to that end but may never usurp the unique place of Scripture. The Belgic Confession itself confirms this point when it says: “We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures” (Article 7).

¹³Douma, J., *op. cit.*, p. 13.

Wiskerke, J.R., *op. cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁴For a lucid account outlining the historical development of the ecumenical creeds and the need for an intellectual defense of the gospel, see Canadian-born theologian G. Bray’s *Creeds, Councils and Christ*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1984.

From “Articles” to “Confessions”: an illegal move?

The brothers object to some changes made by Synod 1983 in the Forms for Baptism and for the Public Profession of Faith. They have already appealed to Synod 1986, but their request to return to the wording before 1980 was turned down (*Acts*, Article 144, page 66 and following). It is upon their urgent request that this “article” is published in *Clarion*, and we do so with the following notations.

The brothers especially resent the change from “summarized in the *Articles* of the Christian faith” (before 1980) to “summarized in the *creeds*” (1980) and “summarized in the *confessions*” (1983).

Their objections to these changes can be summarized as follows:

1. These changes contradict the historical formulation of the churches which always spoke of *articles* of the Christian faith, meaning specifically the Apostles’ Creed;

2. these changes expand the public profession of faith to include more than is required or possible. The members of the church do accept the Apostles’ Creed, but not necessarily the “Three Forms of Unity,” or the Reformed confessions. Now these confessions are no longer “a tool” but have become a “norm” and have been placed on par with the Scriptures;

3. these changes are unauthorized and were never mandated.

It must be admitted that changes have been made. I was a member of the Committee for Revision (appointed in 1977) which originally suggested “as summarized in the Apostles’ Creed.” I do not remember exactly why Synod Smithville changed this to “creeds.” It may have been a compromise between “Apostles’ Creed” and “Reformed confessions.” I presume that behind this change was the knowledge that some tend to restrict the acceptance of the doctrine of the church only to the Apostles’ Creed. In the past such statements were made. For example, some tried to defend the teachings of Rev. B. Telder against Lord’s Day 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism by stating that he did not contradict any article of the

Apostles’ Creed, and we are, after all, bound only to that creed!

Synod 1983 understood quite well the question of br. W. vanderKamp as to whether the word “creeds” also included the “Three Forms of Unity.” “Creeds” might mean *only* the ecumenical creeds, and not include the Reformed confessions. This Synod did not want to leave any doubt regarding the question whether our profession of faith includes allegiance to “The Three Forms of Unity” and therefore changed “creeds” into “confessions.”

Did Synod 1983 require something *new* of the churches, a binding that was not there before? Although I understand the relevance of some of the objections raised, I do not share the concern (if not: consternation) expressed by the brothers in their letter. There has been a change in *formulation*, but this does not mean that the *basic matter* has been altered! A clarification is not yet an innovation. That is the gist of the answer of Synod Burlington 1986. For the question, “Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian church . . . is . . .” *always* meant the *entire* doctrine of the church, as stated in both the Ecumenical and Reformed creeds!

Certainly, this doctrine is expressed summarily in the Apostles’ Creed as the

oldest and most eminent creed of the church. But this creed is explained *further* in the Heidelberg Catechism and in the other Reformed confessions. That, too, is a historical development which must be recognized.

The “teaching of the church” is not just restricted to the Apostles’ Creed, but is also the teaching of the Scriptures as summarized as well in the Three Forms of Unity. In our public profession of faith we acknowledge this wholeheartedly.

I must seriously disagree with the brothers when they write that the confessions have only functioned as being “a tool, to guarantee that the preaching does not become arbitrary but remains Scriptural.” That is not the only function, for the confessions also express wherein the unity of faith lies for all the members! The confession is not merely a corrective “tool” but is rather a *normative standard of faith*. See, for example, the Subscription Form for office-bearers.

Indeed, all our standards are subordinated to the Word of God, but they are still, by common accord, normative standards based on the Scriptures. I wonder whether the aversion against the expression “summarized in the confessions” is not in fact a negation of the normative function of the Reformed confessions in the life of the churches and the believers.

A few more detailed comments should be made, following the numbering indicated in the published article.

Ad. 1.

The Synod of 1923 did indeed reject the wording “confessions” and adopted instead “articles.” We must be careful, however, with our conclusions based upon this fact. This decision did not deny the normative function of the Reformed confessions in the church. The report of the committee on this matter to Synod 1923 also admits that previously some churches clearly asked for stated agreement with the *confessions* of the Reformed Churches. The formulation of 1923 was not at all meant to undo that historical reality.

OUR COVER

Kananaski Country
Calgary, AB

Photo courtesy:
Isaac Smit

Ad. 2.

Synod 1923 did not, in my understanding, state that it was unrealistic to expect the believers to "be able to give allegiance to all the formulations used in the confessions." Faith is never a matter of quantity alone. Faith is always a matter of *growth*.

At one's public profession of faith, one accepts the entire Reformed confession, but this does not mean that every single expression is fully understood or appreciated! We declare that we will steadfastly continue in this doctrine in life and death, *rejecting all heresies and errors conflicting with God's Word.*" This is not just a momentary statement but a constant process of growth. We start out, however, by publicly accepting the doctrine of the Word of God, as confessed by the church, as normative.

We should not place the (simple) "heart and faith commitment" over against the (more elaborate) knowledge of the confessions, for these two matters are not mutually exclusive but belong together. It seems to me that the brothers here are creating a "false dichotomy between knowledge and confidence," something they accuse the Catechism of doing. Faith is a matter of mind and heart.

Ad. 3.

H. Bouwman did indeed point to the importance of the wording, "articles of the Christian faith." He saw this especially as an expression of unity with the (early) Christian church. But he did not thereby *exclude* the Reformed confessions. Note how in the same quote he refers to the Heidelberg Catechism in which the Apostles' Creed is further explained.

What H. Bouwman was saying is: the *Reformed faith* is ecumenical. He did not say: we do not need the Reformed confessions and are not bound to them!

Ad. 4.

The Catechism does not say in Lord's Day 7 that we need to believe only the articles of the Apostles' Creed. It says that we need to believe "all that is promised in the gospel," the fulness of God's promises in the Scriptures. A summary of this is found in the Apostles' Creed, indeed, but this summary does not preclude the further explanation in the Reformed confessions. The fact that this further explanation is *included* is self-evident in the Catechism. See Lord's Day 23, Q. 59, "What does it benefit you now that you believe *all this*?" *All this* refers not just to the bare articles of the Apostles' Creed but to the explanation thereof as well.

Ad. 5.

Our revised Forms have been properly sent to the sister churches for perusal and agreement. These churches have not

expressed any dissatisfaction with our present formulations. It appears that the Dutch sister churches understand quite well that we have not essentially changed the requirements for public profession of faith.

The concern of the brothers on this point is touching, but misplaced. The inter-church relations are still fully intact.

Ad. 6.

The objection has been raised, also earlier, that the Synods of 1980 and 1983 made changes which were not mandated. This objection is not entirely fair. The churches appointed a Committee for Revision which properly sent its reports/proposals to the churches and the Synod. The churches, in turn, extensively reacted to these reports, either to the Committee or to the Synods.

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED to the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton, AB and the Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Lower Sackville, NS:

REV. E. KAMPEN
of Houston, BC

* * *

DECLINED to the Church at Neerlandia, AB

REV. W. DEN HOLLANDER
of Winnipeg, MB

* * *

NEW ADDRESS:

REV. J. VISSCHER
5734-191A Street
Surrey, BC V3S 4N9

* * *

NEW ADDRESS:

DS. W. POUWELSE AND
MEVR. J. POUWELSE — JANSEN

from: Reymerinkstraat 6
3815 MH Amersfoort,
the Netherlands

To: Tesselschadelaan 3
3705 AK Zeist,
the Netherlands

Telephone:
03404-60877 (Residence)
03404-31744 (De Wijngaard)

The Synods had to deal with many submissions from churches and individuals. The abundance of material did not make it easy to work at Synod on these important matters. I remember that as first clerk of Synod 1983, I was sometimes quite frustrated by the speed with which certain formulations were accepted.

But to say that the churches were never involved and that no mandate was given is unfair. There was a proper process of revision going on and in that context the above, disputed, changes were made. One might disagree with some changes, but these changes came in the course of a properly requested and properly conducted revision.

Ad. 7.

The list of "objections" which the brothers raise against the Three Forms of Unity is a matter of their own responsibility. No one has said that the confessions are infallible. But we have in our churches accepted a proper way of presenting objections against the formulations of the confession, and this way should be followed at all times. In my opinion such a list does not belong in the press.

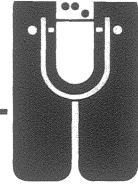
It seems to me that the brothers are here gathering blank ammunition to fire at the confessions. For example, I do not believe the old story of the so-called "dualism" which would be evident in Lord's Day 1 and 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism when it distinguishes between "body and soul." For then the Lord Jesus is also a "dualist" in Matthew 10:28.

Anyone may have questions about certain formulations, but these questions do not mean that the confessions are not properly binding upon the members of the church. There is always room for discussion to achieve a clearer understanding, but we do pledge in that discussion to uphold the validity of the confessions, without at all placing them on the same level as the Word of God.

It may be a wise move for a future Synod, when properly asked to do so on solid grounds, to return to the old expression "summarized in the *articles* of the Christian faith." We would then be more in line with history, indeed. But I would consider this a step backwards if on that basis certain members would argue that they are no longer bound to the Three Forms of Unity, but only to the Apostles' Creed. For that, too, is a breaking with history!

Then we would only destroy the unity of the faith and open the way for every wind of doctrine. In that case I would rather retain the words, "summarized in the confessions." For, in the end, this is not a matter of cosmetics, but of great principle.

CL. STAM



The month of January will remain known as a month of sadness, as the Supreme Court declared Canada's abortion law invalid.

We are not in a position to judge the correctness or incorrectness of the Court's decision. What is proved once again is that this so-called "Charter of Rights" leads to more excesses than its originators will have foreseen or intended.

What we are greatly disappointed in is the attitude of our federal Government. Apparently there is a perfectly legitimate way of re-instating the now defunct statute, but there is no indication whatever that any of those who are in authority is planning on taking measures to protect the lives of the unborn. In the meantime the murder is going on and increasing unchallenged.

Also from this place we would urge all and every one to write to their local Member of Parliament, to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health, and to whoever may appear to have any influence, urging them to fear the wrath of God more than the displeasure of some of the voters.

Let no one think that Canada is the only country where these things happen.

It is said that corruption of the best produces the worst.

I had to think of this when reading in the bulletin of the Providence Church of Edmonton what the Rev. VanBeveren quoted from *Christian Renewal*.

It appears that in the Netherlands the so-called "mercy-killing" of elderly people and of persons who suffer from an incurable disease is tolerated even by the courts. It was reported that in the year 1986 more than three thousand persons were killed by lethal injection, such upon their own request. More than five thousand others underwent the same treatment from the hand of their family doctor. It is not surprising that elderly and seriously ill persons are afraid to be hospitalized in the country which in former centuries was the protector of all whose lives were in danger.

Let prayer go up to the Lord of all, beseeching Him to change the hearts of those who are in authority and to bring to repentance all who render themselves guilty of the heinous crime of killing unborn human beings, or to destroy them if they do not repent, lest His wrath breaks forth upon our country and nation.

What was quoted was quoted from the Providence bulletin. Let us stay there a little longer.

In some Church-bulletins I read at one time or another that it was decided to start making weekly mortgage payments instead of monthly ones, as this yielded substantial savings. In Edmonton they came to a different conclusion.

"It is reported that the Committee of Administration does not consider that a saving will be realized by paying the annual budgeted amount in weekly installments rather than monthly."

Also "the previously tabled matter of installing a 'lift' for our senior members was discussed. A number of brochures was passed around."

Staying in Alberta for a while, we report that the Calgary consistory discussed "the possibility of purchasing a church building." The Committee received some more instructions "so that a more specific proposal" could be presented.

The Church at Elora, too, discussed the purchase of an existing building which could be remodelled and made into a church building. Apparently the congregation was not all that

much in favour for various reasons, for the Consistory was advised not to pursue the suggested course. If I understand the particulars in the *Church Herald* well, it is the desire of the congregation first to strive for the calling of a minister of their own; one of the other arguments was that the congregation had not grown all that much since its institution and thus the burdens would seem to be prohibitive.

Apparently there is a prospect of renting the Alma Community Hall, even though this means that most of the members have to drive out there, whereas some could even walk to Church in Salem.

In a previous medley we reported that Elora was going to have an independent Home Mission Committee. Now this stand has been reversed and it was decided to have a committee combined with Fergus.

In nearby Orangeville one does not have to be afraid anymore that the phone at the minister's manse will be ringing without one getting through. "On my birthday," Rev. Werkman reports, "I received from my children a very beautiful and practical gift: a telephone answering machine."

We pass this on in order to give the children of other — still active — ministers a hint. For retired or allegedly-retired people such is no longer necessary. Their phone does not ring all that often any more.

A few mental steps bring us to Grand Valley. When they were instituted, they numbered 19 families with a total membership of 126. By the end of the year these numbers had increased to 26 families with a total of 157 members. Especially when the number is rather small, some thirty-odd members make a lot of difference.

The Burlingtons have a new Church Directory and the particulars of all three Churches are mentioned in it. Congratulations.

As for Burlington West, Rev. Mulder mentions that from now on "the Classical meetings will be held in Burlington West's church building," if this Church is willing to act as the receiving Church. With a view to past experiences, I have no doubts in this regard.

You will forgive me that with gratitude I point to the correct formulation: not "classis will meet in Burlington West," but "Classical meetings will be held." We could also have said "Classes will be held in Burlington West." I see a glimmer of hope!

Writing about the Ministers' Workshop which was held in the beginning of January in the College building, Rev. Mulder deplored it that some of the colleagues seldom show up there. "Perhaps you must have been a minister in the West for a good number of years and have served in an isolated congregation to appreciate the opportunities we have here in Ontario."

More than once I, too, had the impression that it is not sufficiently appreciated in Ontario what the membership is allowed to enjoy there.

Time and again I read about lectures being given by the professors at our College, now here, now there, and wished we had the opportunity here in the West to enjoy the same privileges. I am thankful for the fact that, finally, the professors serve all our people by publishing articles on various topics.

I do not know whether the lectures on the covenant, given by Dr. Faber in Burlington West and apparently attended by many, have been taped and whether they could be typed from

the tapes so that we all can benefit from them, but I would certainly give this possibility into consideration.

That the privileges enjoyed in Ontario may not be sufficiently appreciated by all also becomes evident from the contributions to the Women's Savings Action.

For quite a while I have paid special attention to this when scanning the bulletins, and have come to the conclusion that, generally speaking, the congregations in Ontario make a rather poor showing when compared to those out West.

I certainly realize that this is a voluntary thing and that no one is obligated to donate even one penny to this Action. I am not interested in the amounts as such in the first place, but regard the amounts as a symptom and expression of appreciation.

There are exceptions, and we certainly should not generalize, but when I read in one bulletin that in one Ontario Church usually about one hundred dollars per year were sent for this Action, whereas a Church in the West of comparable size sent more than fourteen hundred dollars, then I question indeed whether the privileges are appreciated sufficiently.

The same seems to apply to the Teachers' College: there seems to be more active support in the West for this institution, too, than there is in general among the brotherhood in the East.

Let us show that we appreciate what we have and use it to its full potential.

We are not through yet with Burlington West.
About the Steeple Fund.



60th Wedding Anniversary



HISKE and SJOERDTJE LEFFERS (nee Bakker)

Mr. and Mrs. H. Leffers were married in Holland in 1928, where they farmed until they emigrated to Canada in 1951. There they settled in the Coaldale area where they again made their living by farming. In 1960 they retired and moved to the town of Coaldale, where they still reside. Although they are both in the mid-eighties, they still enjoy reasonably good health.



"Your generosity is much appreciated and has made it possible for our church building to finally have the finishing touch. . . . You may see the finished product early this summer."

About Rev. D. DeJong, the Rev. J. Mulder wrote: "Also our colleague from Burlington East, Rev. D. DeJong, was brought to the hospital by ambulance last Friday night. Fortunately, or better the Lord made it that way, that Mrs. DeJong just had come home from a meeting and could take action. For a while it looked very critical because of the loss of so much blood."

Apparently, the Rev. DeJong suffered a severe stomach-bleeding. However, he writes himself in the Burlington East bulletin that the Lord made it so that, as a result of transfusions and new medicine, he could go home again the Monday after, although ten to fourteen days of rest were prescribed. We wish him a complete recovery.

Burlington East sent some letters to the convening Church for the forthcoming General Synod, even though this Synod is still more than a year away. A year, however, passes by very fast, and it is good that preparations start early.

In one of these letters a proposal was made to change Art.13 of the Church Order and undo some of the damage which was caused by Synod 1986's decision regarding this article.

Let me first quote what I read in the bulletin. Burlington East proposes to read the beginning of Art.13 as follows:

"If a minister of the Word *retires because of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office due to illness or physical or mental disability*, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word."

However thankful I am for the insight that the text as adopted in 1986 forbids a minister to retire for reasons other than *illness or incapability*, yet I have grave doubts whether the redaction as proposed by Burlington East is any improvement. I am convinced that this doctoring does not help at all.

In the first place: what was wrong with the redaction as adopted in 1983? All the elements necessary were contained in it.

Secondly: in this proposal nothing is said about at which age a minister may retire. The proposed redaction leaves the possibility that a minister says at age 60: I am retiring because of age. The proposed redaction would give him the right to do so, and I would be squarely opposed to that.

In the third place: When the Church Order gives the right to retire "because of age" or — better — "upon reaching retirement age," what function would classis and regional-synodical deputies have? Their approval is not needed, their disapproval would contradict the generally accepted article.

No, considering everything, I must maintain my initial conclusion that this proposal is not a true solution to the question. It is my sincere wish and hope that the Churches will return to the 1983 redaction of Article 13 of our Church Order.

Neighbouring Hamilton received a visit from its sister congregation in Ancaster. The result was that "the consistory is unanimously in favour to support the Church at Ancaster in its endeavours."

If you should ask what these endeavours are, the answer is simple: to raise funds for the acquisition of a church building of their own. At present the Ancaster Church is having their services in the auditorium of Redeemer College.

We have spent enough time in Ontario, and so move on to Carman.

They are still busy with the preparation of their "History Book." This medley comes too late for the deadline to come up with a suggestion for a title. *Carman Capers* would be too frivolous, wouldn't it? No, that would not do for the title of a book which describes the history of the Church in that place. Forget about it, then. I have better suggestions, but it is to be prefer-

red that the title comes from Carman's own midst or, in an extreme case, from neighbouring Winnipeg. Since I come too late anyway, I dare mention the title *Carman Church Chronicle*.

When I read what this book will contain, I am certain that it will be desired by a wider circle than the immediate Carman membership. I, for one, hereby put in my subscription. And don't forget to donate a copy to the College.

Since we did visit Edmonton already, we drop in in Vernon.

"Elsewhere in this bulletin you can read about the initiative to come to the establishment of our own School Society. We heartily recommend the effort to take the first step. A school may be far down the road, but let's do what we can do at this stage, that is the groundwork: form a society in order to keep our goals in view. Besides, we never know how 'far down the road' anything is in the kingdom of God!"

Wise words, written by the Rev. Van Spronsen in Vernon's bulletin.

Before we travel all the way to Australia, we mention that in Surrey "it appears that council is in favour of promoting the calling of a third missionary, providing the cooperating Churches are willing to support this endeavour."

And now then to our southern sisters.

Alphabetically, Armadale comes first, but we go to the newly instituted Church of Bedforddale first.

They have already been discussing the possible purchase of property, and even of an existing church building which is for sale. However, the latter, although sufficient for the needs of the moment, would have to be replaced when the congregation grows, and thus it was decided not to pursue this.

The consistory of this Church also decided that "the practice of a consistory prayer prior to the church service will be discontinued." There won't be many consistories left where this custom is still in existence.

Further, "it is decided to number the consistory meetings by the year and a sequence number within that year." This is easy for filing important decisions. You can just write "1987, 7" when you wish to know what was decided about the kind of flowers that should be put into the flowerbeds at the eastside of the building.

By the way, how are those decision-books coming in those Churches where it was decided to organize one? Let me know.

The Byford consistory discussed "the use of the Athanasian Creed in the church services. Conclusion: this will be done now and then."

Although occasionally I take the Nicene Creed instead of the Apostles' Creed, I have never yet used the Athanasian Creed in the services, except when quoting from it in a sermon. However, except for its length, there is no reason why we should not use it once in a while. It is more "specific" or "limited" in its contents than the other two Creeds, but our people should be acquainted with it.

The political party which was organized by our brotherhood there now has 138 members, but they need 500 members in order to be registered. This should not be hard to achieve, already when we consider the membership of the four Churches in the Armadale area alone. And then there are Albany and the Tasmanians.

From a brief piece written by the Rev. Huizinga I get the impression that certain areas of a cemetery have been set aside specifically for members of the Free Reformed Churches. He received a letter dealing with reserving more plots. "We proposed that these areas not be set apart for local churches of the Free Reformed Churches. There are many interrelations of members within the four metro churches. People often do not choose a plot on the basis of their local church, but on the basis of relations. Therefore both areas have been designated generally for the Free Reformed Churches."

Although at His coming the Lord will find us wherever we

have been buried, there is a nice thought connected with "sleeping with one's fathers," as it is called in the Scriptures. Jacob made Joseph swear that he would bury his father in the same place where "they buried Abraham and Sara his wife, they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and where I buried Leah."

Going back to Armadale now, we learn that *Diakonia* is favourably received by the brothers in Australia as well.

The 1987 Acts of Synod are out, too. "Extra copies remain available." Please, brother Adrie!

We were wondering what a silent telephone number is when we read that "the silent telephone number of the A. fam is . . ." No use phoning them, I think.

Some friendly "barbs" are flying back and forth between Australia and Canada. We don't mind. You don't tease people with whom you cannot get along, the already tense relation cannot bear such action.

It is proof of a good relationship when such teasing is still possible.

For this reason I pass on the Rev. Huizinga's remark that "Yet we will enjoy the sunny weather, and wish all the snow-pushers up north strong backs! Be careful with that heavy, wet snow, Rev. VanOene!"

What has become of this boast when "the first Sunday of December was eventful not only because the lights went out and a tropical downpour almost deafened us and made the minister near hoarse . . ."? We never experienced something like that over here.

In light of this the remark of another former Canadian minister seems sort of out of line: "If you can't rust in the Fraser Valley's winter rain, you can surely tan in our sun." Did they get a rusty minister out there? All in all, I am happy that every one feels best in his own environment.

As long as we fulfil our task well and faithfully in whatever place and region we are working we may expect a blessing.

Such blessing be given to all and every one, world-wide.

VO

SCOTCH TE DEUM

WILLIAM KETHE, 1560

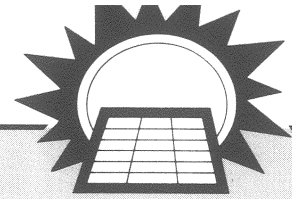
*All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come Ye before Him and rejoice.*

*The Lord ye know is God indeed,
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.*

*O enter then His gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.*

*For why? the Lord our God is good,
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood
And shall from age to age endure.*

RAY OF SUNSHINE



"The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him."

Nahum 1:7

Dear brothers and sisters,

The book of Nahum speaks about God's avenging wrath against the ungodly. When the cup of their iniquities has been filled, the LORD will act. Punishment will come! Nations may rage and kingdoms conspire against Him, but they are all under His control and subject to His authority. The LORD has shown this in the destruction of the city of Nineveh and the Assyrian Kingdom. This nation exalted itself against the LORD and oppressed God's people, Israel. It thought itself indestructable and its power unlimited.

But the LORD poured out His wrath like fire and this powerful kingdom was no more. The LORD revealed Himself as the almighty and sovereign God, for His Name's sake and for the sake of His people.

For He is not only a God of wrath, but also a God of mercy.

We believe and confess that our God is an overflowing fountain of all good, (Belgic Confession, Article 1). To those who put their trust in Him, He does show His loving-kindness. For in His infinite grace He has adopted us as His children and now we may live, sheltered under the shadows of His wings.

When troubles like a mighty river overflow us, we may take refuge in Him. He is an impregnable stronghold for all who flee to Him. He knows His children, which means that He cares for them and surrounds them with all His fatherly love and concern. Whenever we in childlike trust turn to Him for help and comfort, He will receive us with open arms. Whatever we have to go through in life, He is a mighty fortress, a bulwark. He never fails to protect those who put their trust in Him. The LORD is good! Praised be His holy Name!

From the Mailbox

A card came in from the Hofsink family in Smithers thanking all brothers and sisters for the cards Trevor received on his birthday. Trevor is able to walk with leg braces and is doing fine after his operation in August.

I also received a card from Fenny Kuik. She also was very happy to find so many cards in her mailbox.

Mrs. Foekens from Chatham sent me an address change. Marinus is now living in a group home and very happy there. While working in a workshop he is able to make (and spend!) some of his own money.

Mrs. H. Hamoen from Edmonton asked me to put the name of Robert Wierenga on our Birthday Calendar. Robert was born with a physical handicap and can only walk with the aid of crutches. Unfortunately this letter came too late for Robert's birthday on January 10th. Maybe some of our readers would as yet like to send him a card? I am sure Robert will like it! He is now seven years old and his address is:

Box 115, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

I also wish to thank all these writers for conveying to me their best wishes for the year 1988!

Our birthday calendar for March:



TREVOR HOFKINK

1426 Bulkley Dr., Box 411
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

Trevor's birthday is on March 3.
He will be ten years old.

GERRY EELHART

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

Gerry hopes to celebrate his 26th birthday on March 12.

JIM VANDERHEIDEN

PO St. Ann's, ON L0R 1Y0

Jim has his birthday on March 15, when he D.V., will turn 29 years of age.

ROSELYN KUIK

General Delivery, Carman, MB R0G 0J0

In January Roselyn underwent spinal surgery, and this has greatly improved her health. She was two weeks hospitalized. She would be very pleased to hear from you. Roselyn will be 14 years old on March 18.

I wish you all an enjoyable day and the LORD'S guidance and blessing in the year to come!

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate.
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His Name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

Hymn 41:1,2

Greetings to all of you! Send letters and requests to

MRS. J. MULDER

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

Installation and welcome of Rev. J. Moesker in Cloverdale, BC

January 17, 1988, Cloverdale, BC, 9:30 a.m., church is full to almost the last extra chair — not an unusual occurrence for a Sunday morning in this Fraser Valley town. Yet this Sunday is a special Sunday for the Canadian Reformed Church of Cloverdale. It is the day when this congregation will receive a new shepherd and herald of the Word from the hand of the Great Shepherd, the Word Incarnate.

At 9:30 a.m., Rev. J. Visscher of Langley ascends the stairs to the pulpit. As yet, also this is not an unusual occurrence in Cloverdale. Until last April, it was a most normal, weekly event, for almost a decade. So on this special Sunday, our "old" Rev. Visscher has the pleasant duty of conducting the installation service of our "new" Rev. J. Moesker.

Rev. Visscher chose as text Matthew 13:52, "And He said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is old and what is new.'" Rev. Visscher explained that a minister is given to a congregation to make it rich — affluent and prosperous in the ways of the Lord, to raise the congregation's spiritual standard of living. Today Cloverdale receives a new distributor of wealth. Just as Jesus Christ preached the comprehensive gospel of the kingdom, which was his treasure room, so also our new pastor must draw on this unlimited storehouse. There is sufficient material to draw on: the Triune God's blessing, His gifts, His truth, His judgment, His covenant. There is sufficient material and subject matter for all ages. In order to distribute this wealth, the minister must continually study and analyze, not content to coast along on the accumulated knowledge of seminary training. The preaching must be balanced, bringing forward all important aspects of God's treasure. In addition to knowledge, a heartfelt commitment to the kingdom of God is paramount. The congregation has the calling to pray constantly for their new minister, who will be in need of God's wisdom, patience and insight. The members must also implement and apply the treasures dispensed to them. These must mold and build up their life. If they would be rich in heaven,



The Moeskers at home

they must multiply the riches of the kingdom here on earth.

In the afternoon, Rev. J. Moesker preached his inaugural sermon from Hebrews 4:12, "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The Word of God is important, even central to a minister's work and to the congregation's life. It is the basis of our existence as God's people. Rev. Moesker proclaimed to us the Word of God about the Word of God, as it is delineated in the chosen text, first describing the character of the Word of God and, second, the working of the Word of God. We must never underestimate the Word of God and its power. It is not enough to accept God's Word as truth, and still live according to our own inclinations. We may not be apathetic or complacent, because God's Word is radically different from any other writings. It is living and active, and has power and energy. Remember Creation! God's Word is always effective. When it is proclaimed in truth it allows two options. It works repentance to salvation or hardening to condemnation. The Word has effect on every person who comes in contact

with it. The very effectiveness of the Word, to salvation or condemnation, demands that it be proclaimed in truth, an awesome responsibility for a minister. He needs the prayers of the congregation.

How does this Word have its effect? It is not restricted by any barriers, but pierces sharply and finely to the marrow of our existence, cutting to the core of our private being. Like an X-ray it exposes our inmost self to God. The Word forces us to choose the humble way of God's grace or the selfish way of hardening and unbelief. Our new minister must handle God's Word seriously and boldly, with wisdom and discretion. The congregation must take it seriously and apply it. For a minister, it is a comfort to know that God's Word is effective toward the working of God's kingdom. The result of faithful preaching may be left in God's hands. A congregation's greatest joy is to hear God's faithful Word, and to be assured that they are being moved into the direction of God's perfect, everlasting rest.

Monday evening it was time for the official welcome. Br. H.A. Berends, chairman of the consistory, extended a hearty welcome, in particular to our special guests. Cloverdale's ministerial history was visibly represented by the presence of Rev. and

Mrs. D. VanderBoom, Mrs. J.T. VanPopta and Rev. and Mrs. J. Visscher. The Valley, as well as Classis Pacific were well represented by several delegates. Br. Berends contemplated various aspect of the name Cloverdale: clover, a valley, these evoke a tranquil pastoral image, an appropriate setting for a shepherd and pastor.

Br. H. Leyenhorst, speaking on behalf of the Men's Society, expected that Rev. Moesker would soon know the names of all the congregation members, however, learning how everyone was related would prove more challenging. Br. Leyenhorst then proceeded to show that, via circuitous blood lines and round-about marriage ties, he is related to virtually everyone in Cloverdale, including the Moeskers.

Brothers J. Pruijm and G. Breukelman spoke welcoming words on behalf of Abbotsford and Chilliwack. Rev. J. Visscher was anxious to inform Rev. Moesker that any unruliness during consistory meetings could be blamed on the counsellor, Rev. G.H. Visscher, any rowdiness of the catechism students on Rev. A. VanDelden, any unrealistic expectations for lively exhortation on Rev. VanderBoom and any undue anticipation for deft and fluid hand movements to liven up sermons on Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. Rev. VanDelden began by mimicking Br. Berends' contemplation about tranquil, serene "Cloverdale," and then stated that catechism classes had convinced him that where there is clover, there are buzzy and sometimes stinging bees present, too.

Jason VanVliet spoke appreciative words to Rev. VanDelden, on behalf of



In the consistory room

the students, and presented him with a replica of the famous "VanDelden Stickman," a box of coloured felt markers, and a book on art. He concluded that the Rev.'s parents had appropriately named him "Art" VanDelden, and that his artistic board-work would be missed.

The Women's Society had decided to be proper and serious, offering a quite

conventional welcome to the Moeskers. Yet, just to avoid any disappointment, they also gave an imaginary rendition of what they would like to have done, if they had not decided to be proper and serious this time.

Rev. G.H. Visscher, our counsellor, enlightened the audience about the calling process. It entailed scrutinizing the church address list, evaluating, on the basis of the names, whether the congregation is agrarian, or urban, etc. Then it is simply a matter of matching up with a suitable name from the index in the *Yearbook*.

The Young Girl's Society pondered several ways of welcoming the Moeskers, especially Erica. The Young Peoples' were introduced, individually, and after a rousing rendition of some familiar tunes presented Rev. Moesker with a large picture of themselves on the church stairs.

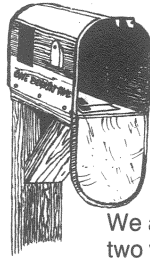
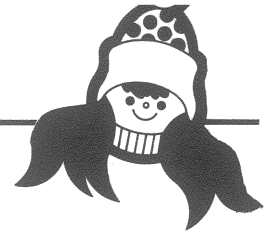
The preceding speeches and presentations were interspersed with musical selections performed by Barb and Irene Coljee, Hester Schouten, Norma Vanderpol and the choir "In Jubilant Accord," augmented by the sparkling voices of the Grade 5, 6 and 7 students, who attend William of Orange Christian School.

The last official word of the evening went to Rev. J. Moesker. He and his family indeed felt welcomed. He hoped and prayed for good cooperation between the congregation and its new shepherd. This is only possible if we are all responsible in all we do, to our Chief Shepherd.

SARAH VANDERGUGTEN



Church is over



From the Mailbox

Dear Busy Beavers,

Thank you for all your letters, poems, puzzles — all the “goodies” you sent!

Busy Beaver *Karin VanderVeen* (who lives in Smithers, BC) sent in this poem to share with you.

God is with you always.
God is always there.
God is with you always,
Just because He cares.

When you are happy, or when you are sad,
When you are good, or even when you're bad,
When you are lonely, or when you're scared,
He will be standing right there!

Busy Beaver *Anne Van Laar* has a *fun* poem called a limerick to share with you.

There was an old man called Bill
Who sat on a clean window sill.
The wind came one day
And blew him away
To the tallest of mountainous hills!

CALLIGRAPHY

By Busy Beaver *Alice Van Woudenberg*

May the
Lord bless
us



RIDDLE FUN FOR EVERYONE!



By Busy Beavers *Christina Bredenhof* and *Thelma Blom*

1. What is worse than finding a worm in your apple?
2. What's the difference between a teacher and a train?
3. When did the blind man suddenly see?
4. A riddle, a riddle — a hole in the middle.
5. Tiny as a mouse, I guard the house like a lion.
6. Why did the turkey cross the road?
7. How can you tell that the elephant is a traveler?
8. Why did the skinny man go to the beach?

(See answers)

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Anya Malda*. We are happy to have you join us. Thank you for the two very nice pictures and the big letter! Bye for now.

Welcome to the Club *Michelle Hordyk*. We hope you're really enjoying being a Busy Beaver and joining in all our activities. Write again soon!

And a big welcome to you, too, *Thelma Blom*. Did you have a good birthday, Thelma? And thank you for the riddles. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already!

Thank you very much for your Christmas poem and your pretty card *Corinne Versteeg*. You're a lucky girl to be able to do such nice computer work! Keep it up! I think your baby brother is a sweetie, right Corinne?

Sounds to me as if you had a good holiday, *Alice Van Woudenberg*. Have you and Dixie been skating yet? Do you practise your calligraphy often, Alice? They say that's what you have to do to be good. What do you think?

And you've had a good holiday, too, *Christina Bredenhof*. You saw some interesting places! Thanks for the riddles and the puzzle, Christina. I see you've been busy!

How are your recorder lessons coming, *Mary-Anne Moes*? Did you have a good time at Susan's birthday party? Please write and tell me if you got your membership card, Mary-Anne. If not I'll send you another.

I think you must really have enjoyed your trip to Holland last year, *Cheryl Vandeburgt*. Your relatives were very happy to see you, I'm sure! How are your pets doing Cheryl? And what happens to all the quail eggs?

Sounds to me as if you had lots of fun in the snow, *Alisa Schouten*! And I think you've been busy making up puzzles to share with the Busy Beavers. Thank you very much! Write again soon.

I see you have lots of exciting things to look forward to, *Mary-Lynn DeBoer*! How did you enjoy your birthday and your friend's? Congratulations on a good report, Mary-Lynn. And thank you for a chatty letter. Keep up the good work!

Thank you for one neat, bright letter, *Darlene VanderPol*! And also for the puzzles. The Busy Beavers will be happy for your sharing. Do you do a lot of work on the computer, Darlene?

March is the first month of Spring!

These Busy Beavers are looking forward to their birthday and we wish them a very, very happy day celebrating with their family and friends!

Above all, may our heavenly Father bless and keep you in the year ahead.

MARCH

Corinne Versteeg	3	Steven Leyenhorst	15
Joanne De Boer	4	Katrina De Haas	17
Yolanda Van Spronsen	4	Jodi Bouwman	22
Heather Vandenberg	6	Amanda Bartels	23
Earl Van Assen	8	Helena Beijes	24
Sheila Wierenga	9	Marjorie Helder	27
Betty Bergsma	12	Annette Jonker	31
Mirjam Bikker	15		

Quiz Time!

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

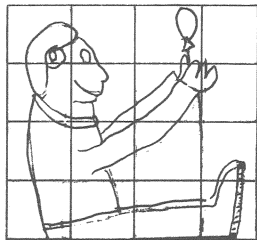
LADIES' NAMES IN THE BIBLE

By Busy Beaver Darlene VanderPol

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Abigail | 11. Marion |
| 2. Deborah | 12. Mary |
| 3. Delilah | 13. Miriam |
| 4. Dinah | 14. Rachel |
| 5. Elizabeth | 15. Rahab |
| 6. Esther | 16. Rebekah |
| 7. Eve | 17. Ruth |
| 8. Hannah | 18. Sarah |
| 9. Judith | 19. Tamar |
| 10. Leah | |

Busy Beaver Mark Timmerman wants you to practise your drawing!

REPEAT THIS
in the squares
below.



CODE QUIZ

By Busy Beaver Wendy Beijes

a - 1	e - 5	i - 9	m - 13	q - 17	u - 21	x - 24
b - 2	f - 6	j - 10	n - 14	r - 18	v - 22	y - 25
c - 3	g - 7	k - 11	o - 15	s - 19	w - 23	z - 26
d - 4	h - 8	l - 12	p - 16	t - 20		

1 19 6 15 18 13 5 1 14 4 13 25

8 15 21 19 5 23 5 23 9 12 12 19 5 18 22 5

20 8 5 12 15 18 4

Answers:

Matthew 1 (from last time): (omit last time)
 1. Isaac 2. Rehoboam 3. Asa 4. Jacob 5. Ram 6. Salmon 7. Joseph 8. Zadok

Riddle Fun for everyone: (muscles)!
 1. Finding half a worm! 2. The teacher says, "Spit out that gum!" The train, "Chew, chew, chew!" 3. When he picked up a hammer and saw. 4. ring 5. key 6. It was the chicken's day off. 7. He always carries his trunk! 8. To look for mussels (muscles)!

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty