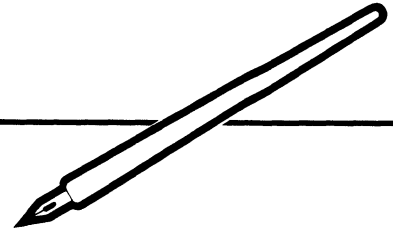




Clarion
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Is *Clarion* going to review movies?

The reader will find in this issue an article about the latest movie on the life of "Christ." *Clarion* does not have a regular column in which movies are (critically) discussed, as is done also in many a Christian paper. We do not want this in our magazine. A regular feature of Movie Reviews, however critically it may be done, means the acceptance of this secular form of entertainment and art. It suggests that we, too, are of the opinion that also for Christians, members of the Church of Christ, the modern theatre with its worldly movies is a useable or consumable element of our modern culture. We disagree with such a view and do not want to create such a suggestion.

Before and after the last World War the theatre and its movies were taboo for Reformed people. They did not allow themselves, nor their children, to see the movies in those worldly theatres, because the movies usually shown there were considered a form of worldly entertainment that would bring world conformity into the lives of holy children of God, and in that way in the church of Christ.

The purely secular (in antithesis with godly, God-fearing), worldly character of the theatre has not changed. Neither has the mostly immoral, strongly lawless, character of the movies. A simple look at the advertisements with which the movie sellers try to draw their consuming customers and the reading of reviews make this clear.

Therefore, we have no valid ground for changing our judgment and attitude. These should remain the same: a Christian must not participate in this secular, worldly, form of entertainment that thrives on what is lawless and lacks any true fear of God. A member of the church of Christ who does make use of this product of our modern secular culture brings a form of this lawless world, not only into his own life, but, being a member of the body of Christ, also into the church. Therewith he secularizes not only his own life, but also the body of Christ. It is obvious that such action is in conflict with the constant exhortation of the apostles that we are called to keep the Bride of Christ, that is, ourselves and our families, holy and pure for the heavenly Bridegroom and Lord.

Certainly, secularization can be brought into the church in many ways and forms. Besides, sin is not in the technical achievement of the film as such. The film as such belongs to the possibilities which God put in creation. In that sense it is something good and can be used in a holy manner when it can be sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer. However, this does not diminish the reality of what is stated above. The modern film industry for the consuming public in the theatres is dominated by unbelief and lawlessness. Children of God, bought by Christ, (to be) sanctified by the Holy Spirit, should, also in this respect, maintain the antithesis and keep themselves free from this contamination with the lawlessness of the world.

Are we still willing to "fast," to abstain from certain things, for the sake of the holiness and faithfulness of the church for her Lord? Proverbs teaches us (14:16, in my own translation):

"A wise man fears and turns away from evil; but a fool lets himself go and still thinks that all will be fine." Let us realize that the history of the church, also in recent times, shows that participation in the entertainment of the world is a sign of worldliness which is part of a secularization process that ruins the holiness of, and eventually destroys, the church as church of Christ.

Now one could argue that, although there is much movie junk on the market, filled with immoral garbage, nevertheless, many a movie is a piece of art, art of a high degree, in several ways, in the script, in the way it is played, in the pictures. And is not art there to be enjoyed? I shall not deny for one moment that there are films which can be marked as very artistic. But is the fact that something is art the norm for our actions? Should the norm for our actions not be the cause of the Lord?

Theatre attendance is a public act. Let me give the following reasoning: There is a (strong[?]) member of the church who goes to a theatre to see one specific movie because it is a piece of art. However, for his not so arts-minded (younger, and/or weak) brother in the church a movie is a movie and a theatre is a theatre. He argues in a simple way: that (older[?]) or stronger[?] member of the church (perhaps a friend or even someone in a leading position) goes to the movies, even talks openly about it as having seen a piece of art; therefore, there must be nothing wrong with going to the theatre to enjoy the movies shown there; so, I can go there too and enjoy myself with this form of entertainment. The earlier objections against the theatre seem to be fading away. Maybe, the opposition of previous years was just one of those old-fashioned views of an older generation that was not involved in real life.

I do not know whether movie attendance is greatly increasing among us. I fear that it is becoming an acceptable thing like so many other things. Out of concern for the church and its holiness for the Lord, I pose the question: Are we preserving and building the church of Christ with the consumption of movies from the secular movie industry? Do we keep our own life and the life of the youth of the church holy and blameless for the Lord by (regular) theatre attendance?

There is not only the matter of the preservation of the church. There is also the increase through being a light for the world. The world often realizes that the church is supposed to maintain a different, holy, lifestyle in which its (the world's) immorality is rejected and fought. The world also realizes quite well that its way of life and forms of entertainment bear the stamp of worldly liberalism and often immoral lawlessness, which are not fitting for the Christian church. If now church members reject the antithesis, the difference in outlook and behaviour between church and world and, instead, conform their lifestyle to that of the world, what message goes out from the church to the world? Why should the world repent from its sins, if Christians themselves consume and enjoy the products of sin?

Is not also here, as in many other respects, the warning

and exhortation of Christ in Matthew 10:16 in place: be innocent like doves? God's Word exhorts: Be holy, for I am holy.

Are we busy gathering the church for Christ out of the world in the proper way when our entertainment is the same as that of the world? Does not world conformity undermine and weaken the call for repentance and conversion from sin? Whom do we seek to serve, Christ in His church-preserving and gathering activity, or ourselves and our own pleasures? Do we seek to build with Christ? Or do we break the cause of Christ? It is important to keep listening to Paul in I Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23, "All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful" or building up.

Do we miss out on a significant element of our modern culture by maintaining our negative attitude regarding the movie theatre? Should we not respond to such a question with the word of Christ in Matthew 16:25, that whoever would save his life for himself and his own enjoyment will lose it, but that

whoever loses his life for Christ's (and His church's) sake will find it?

The reader now understands why we do not want a regular Film Review in our magazine. We do not deny that this form of entertainment exists. We do not deny either that some films can be of a high artistic quality. We do not say that the film as such, in itself, is evil. But we maintain that the phenomenon of the movie in our modern, secular world is dominated by lawlessness, which we do not want to become accepted in the church in the way of its becoming an accepted form of entertainment. What about T.V.? Certainly, it is my conviction (and not mine only) that the T.V. is one of the handy instruments of the devil with which he is ruining the holy character of many of our Christian families. But that is a different chapter. No film review in *Clarion*. We want to build and preserve, not to break down and ruin.

J. GEERTSEMA

A missing link in Reformed liturgy⁴

Datheen in Frankenthal and in the Netherlands

A clear link to Calvin was found in Frankenthal in the Dutch refugee congregation of the Palatinate.

In 1562 Petrus Dathenus became the minister of this congregation. He had been in London, but in 1553 he, too, had fled. In 1555 he had become a minister of the Flemish congregation at Frankfurt, where he had met Calvin.

In Frankenthal, he first made a translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, and after that a version of the rhymed Psalms of Marot and Beza. In 1566 Datheen's *Book of Praise* was published. Datheen was in his last year a minister of the refugee congregation at Frankenthal. The opening of Datheen's worship service can be reconstructed as follows: Datheen started with a prayer, and after the singing (or reading) of the law there was an exhortation to penitence and to faith in God's promises. Then followed words of admonition and comfort, retention, and declaration of grace. After the sermon followed confession of sins and intercessions. It is noteworthy that several elements of Calvin's beginning of the service are found here. But the element of Gloria (the law as a rule of thankfulness) disappeared, and there was added a confession of sins after the sermon.

The first synod in the Netherlands,

Dordrecht 1574, dropped the matter of confession of sins, words of comfort from Scripture, absolution, and retention-formula.

Gaspar van der Heyden was the chairman and he received the assignment to draft a shorter prayer for after the sermon. Van der Heyden also drafted a new liturgy in 1580, in which retention and declaration of grace were missing completely.

At the Synod of Dordrecht 1578 Peter Datheen presided, but his colleague Gaspar van der Heyden was in the chair again at the Synod of Middelburg 1581.

This synod made an important decision concerning retention and declaration of grace. The delegates from Gelderland had placed on the table the question whether or not it would be good after the sermon to proclaim to the converted forgiveness of sins and to the unbelievers the binding of sins.

But the synod was of the opinion that because the binding and loosing of sins was proclaimed sufficiently in the preaching of God's Word, it was not necessary to introduce a separate form. Indeed, the first part of the service would now be: Reading of Scripture, Singing of a Psalm, Votum and Prayer before the sermon.

Some have said that the Synod of 1574, and especially the Synod of 1581 (both of them chaired by Gaspar van der Heyden) spoiled the beautiful start of Calvin's liturgy.

Not after the sermon

Apparently some were impressed by the argument of the Synod of Middelburg 1581 that the binding and loosing of sins is done sufficiently in the preaching of God's Word. This was supported by Lord's Day 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism, which confesses that the key of preaching God's Word opens and closes God's Kingdom. A special formula after the preaching of God's Word appeared superfluous: a kind of sermonette after the sermon.

No doubt there is an element of truth in this. But one must be aware of a question placed upon the table of the Synod of 1581. The delegates of Gelderland asked about a formula *after* the sermon. That would be a kind of appendix which never had a function before in the worship service. What Calvin did in Strasbourg was different. He maintained Confiteor, Absolution, Gloria, and *Kyrie*, but in the Scriptural sense, and as a beautiful whole: that humble beginning of the service with confession of sins, comfort from Scripture, acquittal from God, His words of the covenant in promise and obligation, and the petition to live according to God's will.

Thereafter there was a prayer for the opening of God's Word and then followed reading of the Scriptures and preaching. Much later there was again an attempt to insert the "absolution" in the first part of the worship service on Sunday morning.

Deputies, appointed by the Synod of Leeuwarden 1920 to study the Order of Liturgy, placed on the table of the Synod of 1923 a report in which they pleaded for the re-introduction of the declaration of forgiveness of sins. This would then commence with the words: "The minister speaks to all who sincerely regret their sins and take refuge in the only Saviour Jesus Christ, I declare the forgiveness of sins in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." But this proposal was not adopted by the Synod of Utrecht.

Ten years later when the Synod of Middelburg (!) again dealt with the whole matter of liturgy, the status quo was maintained as it had developed over the course of time in the churches.

After the liberation in 1944 in the Netherlands, the Synod of Kampen 1975 again dealt with the order of worship.

This synod took over a large part of Calvin's order of liturgy for the Sunday morning. Unfortunately his complete Strasbourg liturgy was not taken over.

The Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Cloverdale 1983 followed the sister churches in the Netherlands by recommending to the churches this second order of liturgy. But together with A. Kuyper, G. van Dooren, G. van Rongen and others I would like to plead for the re-introduction of the beautiful beginning of Calvin's liturgy at Strasbourg, which is now a missing link in Reformed liturgy. I agree with the recent remark of C. Trimp that there is room for a third order of liturgy. It could be done in the way of the congregation at Blue Bell, where especially the confession of sins and the absolution is maintained.

Repetition?

Is it true that a word of comfort from Scripture after confession of sins, together with a word of acquittal and forgiveness would be an unnecessary repetition because it is already done in the sermon? The answer is no. In the first place there are other elements in the liturgy which take place more than once. I point to the service of praise. The singing of the congregation is not limited to one selection, but it comes back (fortunately!) several times in the liturgy.

Also praying is not limited to one prayer only.

In the second place: in the *Form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper* we have the traditional invitation and the retention. This is also true in the *Abbreviated Form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper*. There the invitation-formula is: "All who by the grace of God repent of their sins, desiring to fight against their unbelief and live according to God's commandments, will certainly be received by

God at the table of His Son Jesus Christ. They may be fully assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in them against their will shall keep God from accepting them in grace and granting them this heavenly food and drink."

Then follows the retention-formula (in the Form called "the admonition"): "But to all who do not truly grieve over their sins and do not repent from them, we declare that they have no part in the kingdom of God. We admonish them to abstain from the holy supper; otherwise their judgment will be the heavier."

Calvin esteemed this retention-formula very highly and placed it at the beginning of the service.

The argument is used that invitation and retention are sound here in the context of self-examination with a view to the celebration of or abstinence from the Lord's Supper. But I ask: is the whole matter of self-examination limited to that? Is this not something which we have to execute continually, even daily?

With respect to this I would like to point to the fact that it is not right that in some churches the Form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper is cut into two parts. One reads the first part on the so-called Sunday of preparation, namely, the part concerning self-examination, while the rest of the Form is read on the Sunday of the celebration itself. But apart from the question whether or not it is desirable to have a separate Sunday of celebration, liturgically it is not right to spread a Form over two Sundays. When the words of comfort concerning forgiveness of sins and the retention come back in the Sunday morning service, the matter of that continual obligation of self-examination will prove to be a real blessing.

Conclusions

In summary, I come to the following conclusions:

1. It was an important and laudable principle of Calvin that liturgically he sought connection with:
 - a. what he found in Holy Scripture;
 - b. the custom of the early church;
 - c. good customs which had developed in the course of history.
2. The first part of Calvin's order of liturgy (the part before the prayer for the opening of God's Word) forms an organic whole according to the triad: misery, deliverance, and thankfulness.
3. Calvin rightly emphasized very strongly the element of humility at the very beginning of the worship service.
4. This humility is expressed in the confession of sins, which is to be followed directly by a word of comfort from Scripture and the declaration of forgiveness of sins for believers.

5. The argument that absolution is given already in the preaching and that it is therefore superfluous to do it in another way is an insufficient argument:

- a. there would be an element of truth to this if absolution were placed *after* the sermon;
 - b. there are more elements in liturgy which take place more than once, e.g. singing and prayers;
 - c. similarly, aside from the preaching of God's Word, a kind of absolution (and retention) takes place in the Forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
6. When reintroducing the word of comfort from Holy Scripture and the formula of absolution, one must be on guard not to be uniform: Holy Scripture offers abundant material for this.
 7. It is seldom realized that the (singing of the) law by Calvin was designed to be an expression of thankfulness and a replacement of the "great Gloria."
 8. It is to be emphasized that the beginning of the law contains God's promise, which forms a complete unit with the Ten Words; this is to be called the Constitution of God's Covenant.
 9. Because of this unity of promise and obligation of God's covenant, a repetition of the law in the "summary" is superfluous:
 - a. actually this summary had already been given by Moses in Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18;
 - b. when Christ gives this "summary" it was done in a different context;
 - c. a repetition of the law in a summary weakens the character of the promise of God's covenant within the framework of the worship service;
 10. Calvin had a special reason for having the *Kyrie-eleison* sung by the congregation, namely, the repeated petition for help from the Lord in order that the congregation would practise the service of love in thankfulness.
 11. Calvin had a special reason for reserving the pulpit for the reading and preaching of the Word of God, while the beginning of the worship service and the administration of the sacraments took place in front of the pulpit.
 12. With a view to the special character of the second worship service, namely, the emphasis on the confession of the congregation and the instruction in that respect, Calvin's first part of the Sunday morning service was restricted to the morning service only and not interchanged with the afternoon service.

K. DEDDENS

“The Last Temptation of Christ”

Another movie on the life of a man-made Jesus

The *Globe and Mail* of Thursday, August 11, 1988, published an article on the latest film on the life of a man-made Jesus of Nazareth, as well as an interview with its director, Martin Scorsese. It was the day before this movie would be shown to the public in theatres in many North American cities.

I introduce this movie to the readers with some quotations from these articles. The film is based on a novel about the life of “Christ Jesus” (between quotation marks, because it is not the Christ of the Scriptures, but a caricature of Him) by Nikos Kazantzakis. In this book the author (all italics are added)

drew freely from all accounts of Christ to create a composite portrait of a *contradictory* man at first afraid of accepting his *intuition that he might be God*. Christ’s *evolution regarding his fate* in the novel is essentially *from unbeliever to revolutionary pacificist* to — finally, in the single stunning stroke that is a departure from any account of his life — an understanding of *the power of myth* to provide comfort to human beings. I am here using myth in the sense used by psychologists — a myth is a story that is so true to human nature that its facts are irrelevant. The novel leaves Christ’s actual divinity open to interpretation and the film follows suit.

It is evident that leaving “Christ’s actual divinity open to interpretation” means that it can be interpreted away. This, in fact, is done through the word “myth.” Besides, the human Christ Jesus is pictured as a sinful human being; he has his doubts about who he is; he “played footsie” [a U.S.A. slang expression, meaning a secret flirtation] with Mary Magdalene; as carpenter he made crosses on which the Romans killed Jews; and when “his friend Judas” asked in this connection how Jesus ever was going to pay for his sins, the reply was, “With my life, Judas,” for “I don’t have anything else.” And when, at another moment, “Judas wonders why Jesus changes his positions so often — first He’s a man of war, then a prince of peace — Jesus shrugs, ‘God

only talks to me a little bit at a time. He only tells me what I need to know.’ ”

In other words, we have here a distorted picture of Christ, in conflict with what the Gospels and the whole New Testament reveal to us about our Lord and Saviour. It is, therefore, no wonder that many Christians oppose(d) the showing of this film. This is also mentioned in the articles referred to above. These Christians, called “fundamentalists,” want to have the film banned. They picketed the entrance of a theatre where the film was shown, trying to convince people not to see the film. Their reason is that it is blasphemy to picture Christ as a sinner.

In the *Globe and Mail* of Saturday, August 13, two views are placed over against each other:

John Weusten, a Catholic and a member of the Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family and Property, drove from Hamilton [to Toron-

to, J.G.] to make known his objections. “This is an affront against the Catholic faith and an attack on my Lord Jesus,” he said.

But Helena Burnstein, a theology student at Regis College in Toronto [a Roman Catholic College, J.G.], disagreed. “The type of questioning that we’re trying to do (in school) is in line with this movie.”

This last remark is revealing. “In school” modernistic theological professors and students do the same kind of questioning: since Jesus was a human being, what did he know? When did he get the idea that he was the Saviour, the Son of Man and even the Son of God? In this liberal thinking the assumption that “Jesus” had his doubts and weaknesses and sins fits very well.

Certainly, Scripture teaches us that our Lord was a human being as we are, God the Son, who became “flesh,” but



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without sin; without doubt and uncertainty. Sure, the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us that He was "tempted as we are" (4:15, cf. 2:18), but the same letter also says that He was "holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners" (7:26).

If our Lord was a weak and sinful human being, He could not be our Saviour. In our Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 5-6, we confess that our salvation is founded in the fact that He is true God and a true and righteous man. Righteous, because a person who is a sinner himself, cannot fulfil all righteousness and pay for, and save, others.

Now this film is recommended strongly by liberal theologians, as well as in the articles referred to, because the struggle of this Jesus figure "illuminates the struggle in all souls." This was also the goal of the director. In the interview he says that he "was trying to make a film Buddhists would understand also," and "Christ's struggle is very much the way we all struggle. We all struggle to the last breath. The last breath is between God and us." This struggle of the director is explained thus: "The best I can do at this point in my life is hope. Hope that there is a God and that He cares for us." The reader understands that this hope is not the biblical hope, so full of the certainty of

faith, because it is built on the absolute truth of God's promise, God's Word. This hope of which the director speaks is the human uncertainty of a "perhaps it might be there," for the article adds: "That hope, in Scorsese's case almost a hope against hope, is in line with what he maintains is one of the messages of his movie." Thus the struggle of the "Christ" figure in this film is the struggle of intense uncertainty in the mind of Mr. Scorsese, the director. What a sinful, actually unbelieving human being is and does is projected onto his (man-made) "Christ" figure.

Now I give you a picture of the thinking of the late New Testament scholar Bultmann. According to him, we cannot accept the picture of Jesus which the four Gospels give us as historically reliable. The Gospels give us only a picture of the faith of the early church. This means: not what truly happened, is recorded, but a story, a legend, was made up by the church about "Jesus," whom it believed to have been raised. History is not important. Important is the existential message. In other words, the answer to our existential problems and struggles. When we doubt the historical reliability of the Gospels, but, nevertheless, believe in Jesus as Saviour, such faith results in righteousness.

The above shows that modernistic theology and the message of the director of this film are similar. Neither accepts the New Testament as reliable. Therefore, they do not show the Christ of the Scriptures, but a man-made Christ, a caricature. And that is blasphemy. It is sin against the second commandment: making an image of Christ according to sinful man, while He is the sinless image of God. It is also sin against the third commandment: it uses (pictures, "teaches," shows) the holy Name of Christ in vain.

Further, the message in this film is the old lie of self-redemption. A man-made Christ overcomes his own (sinful) doubts, and so is set as example for modern man, who may hope to overcome his doubts, following the example of the "Jesus" of the film. Paul calls such a gospel a different gospel which is no gospel.

The world, taught by a false prophecy of a false church, presents to itself a distorted picture of the Saviour, while liberal Christian leaders, false prophets, promote this piece of art. It is horrible. Should we not say: it is an abomination?

J. GEERTSEMA

Report on the visit to the Free Church of Scotland₂

Purity of worship

In the FCS they do not sing hymns, nor is instrumental music included in the congregational praise during the worship services.

As to the hymns they teach:

- a. There is no warrant in Scripture for the use of uninspired human compositions in the singing of God's praise in public worship.
- b. There is explicit authority for the use of inspired songs.
- c. The songs of divine worship must therefore be limited to the songs of Scripture, for they alone are inspired.
- d. The Book of Psalms has provided us with the kind of compositions for which we have the authority of Scripture.
- e. We are therefore certain of divine sanction and approval in the singing of the Psalms.

- f. We are not certain that other inspired songs were intended to be sung in the worship of God, even though the use of other inspired songs does not violate the fundamental principle in which Scripture authorization is explicit, namely, the use of inspired songs.
- g. In view of the uncertainty with respect to the use of other inspired songs we should confine ourselves to the Book of Psalms.

As to the practice of instrumental music they teach:

- a. Instrumental music considered as an element in religious worship was:
 - instituted by divine commandment;
 - practised as a branch of Levitical service in the tabernacle and temple;
 - performed by the Levitical order exclusively.
- b. But the distinctive features of the Levitical system have been abolished.
- c. Instrumental music, being strictly a

part of the selfsame system of worship, has also, therefore, now been abolished.

- d. No New Testament prescription, effectively restoring instrumental music again to church's worship, can be distinguished.
- e. The practice has no legitimate place, accordingly, in the worship of the Christian Church.

These conclusions are based on the principle that nothing is to be admitted in the worship of God, but what is prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

We have spoken with several ministers about this issue, addressing them with the redemptive-historical approach towards Scripture which makes us sing the great deeds of God from both Old and New Testament, accompanied by an organ as God loves "whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and gracious," (Philippians 4:8).

The Free Church College

In a nice prospectus about this college it reads: "The Free Church College is Reformed, Evangelical and Presbyterian. Its aim is to produce a fully equipped ministry, prepared in all the disciplines of the Reformed tradition. Doctrinally, the College is committed to an unswerving loyalty to the inspired Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and an unqualified acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Academically, it seeks to maintain a high standard, generally comparable to that of the Universities, in its teaching, curriculum and examinations."

The Free Church College is open to three categories of students.

Firstly, Free Church students who are admitted in accordance with the regulations laid down from time to time by the Free Church General Assembly.

Secondly, students studying for the ministry of other churches. Such students must be approved by their churches and recommended by them as suitable for theological training.

Thirdly, private students who wish to engage in theological study for other reasons.

All students who enter the College are understood to profess faith in Christ and obedience to Him, and the cultivation of the devotional life is a high priority.

The core curriculum is: Apologetics, Junior and Senior Hebrew and Old Testament Literature, Junior and Senior Greek and New Testament Literature, Junior and Senior Systematic Theology, Junior and Senior Church History and Principles, and Pastoral Theology.

The core curriculum also requires that candidates must demonstrate each academic session that they have an adequate working knowledge of the contents of the set portions of the Bible in English.

Prior to entering the Free Church College all students are required to pass the Entrance Examination in Scripture and at least one of the language Entrance Examinations.

As deputies we have also attended a few lectures, namely,

- a. A lecture of Prof. A.C. Boyd about the parable of the sower, as it is recorded in Mark 4.
- b. A lecture of Prof. D. Macleod about the doctrine of reprobation, as it is recorded in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter III.
- c. A lecture of Prof. J.D. MacMillan about the visible and invisible church.

As deputies we were quite impressed both by the high standard of these lectures and their Reformed sound.

One of the deputies also attended a special lecture given by Mr. Peter Morrison, Headmaster of the Woodside Sec-

ondary School in Glasgow, about "The role of the school chaplain." This headmaster took the stand that there was no reason for the FCS to have their own schools. For on the one hand this would create a hot-house situation, whilst on the other hand the FCS would deny its calling to be the salt of the earth. As church we must use the opportunities given by the government to fill the place of chaplain in non-denomination schools.

In a talk which I had with the Rev. J. Harding of Glasgow it appeared that this voice was surely not representative for the whole FCS. There are also members of the church who would love to have their own schools. Prof. MacMillan also assured me that many people in the church do regret that the education of the church's covenant children was handed over to the State by the Education Acts of the 1870s.

Discussion with representatives of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

Unfortunately we could not meet with the Committee on Ecumenical Relations in full, but only with two representatives on it, namely, Prof. D. Macleod and Prof. J.D. MacMillan. In this meeting we have explained the decision of the 1987 Synod of the FRCA to offer a temporary ecclesiastical contact to the FCS. It appeared that they had some difficulties to understand that the FRCA only go one step at the time, and therefore did not yet offer them a full sister church relation. The FCS has a different concept about sister church relation. They reason more or less as follows: "Either you are one in faith or you are not one in faith. If you are indeed one in faith, there shouldn't be any impediment to preach in each other's pulpit and to participate in the celebration of Holy Supper. Since the FRCA have acknowledged the FCS to be a faithful church of the Lord, why then is it still necessary to wait with a full sister church relation?"

In addition, the FCS doesn't see the need for fixed rules with respect to such a sister church relation.

Despite different concepts this discussion has surely clarified certain viewpoints which in future may help for a better mutual understanding. It was quite obvious that the FCS has no difficulties to establish a full sister church relation with the FRCA.

In this meeting with representatives of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations we also addressed the issue of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). The FCS has proposed to the next conference of the ICRC that its Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognize

the membership, ministry, and sacraments of the other member churches.

As deputies we have voiced our concern about this proposal, due to the fact that the FRCA have not yet full sister church relation with all the member churches of the ICRC. The problem which we face here is closely connected with what has been written under 6.1.

As to the Conference itself the FCS wholeheartedly agrees that if possible the ICRC should come with clear recommendations to the member churches, and also that more practical issues should be discussed. In this context we have referred to our suggestion to place the matter of Bible translation on the agenda of the next Conference.

Conclusions

As deputies once again we became convinced that the FCS is sound in its doctrine and in the preaching of the Word. There is indeed fundamental unity in faith between the FRCA and the FCS. We met a church which in many respects has to fight the same battle as we have to fight within Australia. This statement does not deny that there are still matters which are to be discussed. In this context I think in particular of the matter of pulpit exchange with Reformed Baptists.

As for the issue of the adherents, as deputies we have the impression that within the FCS there is a growing understanding of the commitment which these adherents should make. We are thankful that we could speak quite frankly about this issue and that we also met an open ear for our approach to this issue. This is surely one of the benefits of contact on a personal level.

At the Free Church College students are equipped very well for the ministry. They receive a real Reformed training from which the churches may harvest the fruits when these students become minister.

As to the purity of worship, this is perhaps an issue which can be addressed on ICRC level. For more member churches do hold the same viewpoint, e.g. the RPCI and PCEA.

As to the rules for correspondence, the FRCA should keep close contact about this issue with both the Dutch and the Canadian sister churches, so that hopefully we can come to a common approach with respect to rules for correspondence with churches of Presbyterian origin.

Concluding remark

When you have any queries about this report please forward them to Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, PO Box 191, Armadale, WA, Australia.

A. VELDMAN

The Arminian Controversy and the Synod of Dort¹

Why on earth should we get excited about the Synod of Dort — something which happened 370 years ago? What does the Arminian Controversy have to do with us? Do we really *have* to know anything about these theological and doctrinal contentions that disrupted the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands so long ago? My answer would be an emphatic *yes!*

We should get excited about church history because we should be vitally interested in Christ's church-gathering work throughout the ages. Understanding church history will enable us to understand the religious issues of today. In particular, understanding the Arminian Controversy of the 1600s will make clear to us that many, if not most, North American churches trace their origins to this time in history. Understanding what the Synod decided will make us realize that in these Canons we have one of the most authoritative and valuable expositions of Calvinistic theology — a confession and valuable tool to refute the errors of Arminianism also today.

In the early years of the 17th century, the Arminian Controversy shook the Reformed Churches of the United Provinces. The nature of the debate was purely theological, but, because in those days the Church and State were so intimately connected, the controversy was soon entangled in the political issues of the day. The conflict shook the whole country.

How did the state become involved in the church's theological debates? What was the controversy all about? What theological issues were at stake? What did the Synod of Dort decide about the teachings of Arminius and his followers?

To our modern minds, it seems incongruous that the state would be involved in the theological matters of the church, but in the 17th century this was commonplace. The organizational development of the Reformed Churches was such that the secular authorities maintained quite some control of church affairs.

The Calvinist Reformed Churches had formed in the United Provinces by about 1544. During these years, the Provinces were fighting to gain independence from Spain. In his writings, Calvin defend-

ed the right of people to oppose the tyranny of kings and emperors. His views were eagerly embraced by his followers in the Netherlands; the war against Roman Catholic Spain became an increasingly spiritual issue. The Calvinists were doggedly persistent in their support of William of Orange against Spain. The rapid growth of the Calvinist Church during this time, was identified with the national struggle against Spain.

During the time of Philip II, all the Dutch Protestants were severely persecuted. His aim was to reorganize the Church and exterminate heresy. It was forbidden to own a heretical book, read the Scriptures, or to attend any conventicle where points of doctrine were discussed. Failure to inform against a person suspected of heresy made one guilty of treason. Philip sent the infamous Duke of Alba and his well-trained Spanish army to carry out his wishes. Thousands were put to death, often burned alive at the stake. There is no accurate record of the number of Protestant martyrs in the Netherlands during this time. Numbers range between a documented 2,000 and an estimated 100,000.¹

William of Orange began to strike back against the Spanish Army. The Inquisition accelerated its work. War engulfed the land. At first, all were united behind William of Orange, but then the unity was broken. The Catholic South formed the League of Arras, promising loyalty to the Catholic religion and the king. The North responded with the Union of Utrecht in 1579. Two years later they declared independence from Spain.

It was during these turbulent years that the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands had their beginnings. In 1568, the Convent of Wesel, the first general assembly, met in secrecy. Ministers, elders, and other church members met in this German town to draw up some provisional regulations for ecclesiastical life and order. Three years later, at the Synod of Emden, elected representatives of the churches adopted the first official Church Order.

Almost since its inception, the churches were constituted on the basis of the Belgic Confession (1561). The church members were convinced that without



Jacobus Arminius



Franciscus Gomarus

sound preaching on the basis of a common confession, the churches would not be able to live in unity. Ministers and teachers were to subscribe to this confession and obligated not to teach anything contrary to it. In 1581, the Synod of Middelburg required its members to undersign the Heidelberg Catechism as well.

The churches regarded themselves as sovereign in the management of ecclesiastical matters. They elected their own office-bearers and exercised discipline over their members, as well as ministers, in both doctrine and conduct. However, when succeeding Synods met on Dutch soil, Dordrecht (1574), (1578), Middelburg (1581), the Hague (1586), concessions were made to the magistrates, and so the States-General were allowed quite a large measure of control over the churches.²

In 1591, a commission, including Johannes van Oldenbarnevelt and James Arminius as members, drew up a church order which was more to the liking of the States-General. According to this church order, the calling of pastors, elders, and deacons was in the hands of four secular deputies and four church deputies. The secular deputies were responsible to the city government. The church deputies were chosen with the approval of the city government. Meetings of consistories, classes and provincial synods were permitted as long as only church business was transacted. There was no mention of a national synod. No stipulation was made that ministers had to subscribe to

the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. The power of censure rested with the provincial synods, to which the States could send as many deputies as they wished. At these synods, majority ruled. According to this church order, then, the secular authorities enjoyed quite some influence in the Reformed Churches.

When the United Provinces had declared their independence from Spain, the Reformed religion was officially recognized as the state religion. There was no attempt to suppress the conscience of other Christians, but these were at a definite disadvantage. The Reformed Churches were supplied with ecclesiastical funds from the government, out of confiscated Roman Catholic holdings. Political leaders and teachers were to be members of these churches. Meanwhile, the churches had to allow civil representatives to attend their assemblies. These policies were aimed at unifying the nation against Spain. The Reformed Churches held a privileged position, but this also attracted members to it who otherwise would not have joined these churches.

In this situation, the Arminian Controversy arose. The church was concerned with two issues: one of doctrine and one of church polity. Were the teachings of Arminius and his followers in accord with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism? They, as well as all church office-bearers had pledged their agreement to these confessions. Secondly, did the Reformed Churches, as confessional churches, have the right to depose from office those whose teachings were in conflict with the creeds?

In theory, the government agreed, but in practice they nullified this right by maintaining in office men whom the churches in their classes and provincial synods had judged worthy of deposition. So between 1586 and 1618, a growing number of ministers was upheld contrary to the wishes of the congregations and decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies. The churches called for a National Synod to resolve both the doctrinal and church-government issues, but the States-General feared the growing influence of the Reformed Churches throughout the land. For years, they refused to grant the request.

It was during this time that Arminius gained influence in the Reformed Churches. James Arminius was born in South Holland in 1560. At Geneva, he studied under Beza, the successor to Calvin. In 1588, he became one of the ministers of Amsterdam. It was his preaching, not his writings, that was soon called into question. He was engaged in a systematic exposition of Romans. Some of his explanations of the earlier passages surprised his

listeners, but it was his exegesis of Romans 7:14ff. that aroused a storm of protest. Romans 7:14-15 reads: "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." He suggested that Paul was speaking about unregenerate man, not regenerate, as most Reformed exegetes understood it — unregenerate man, one who is under the law but knows its weaknesses and inability to save and therefore seeks a redeemer. In preaching on Romans 8 through 11, he stressed man's free will, and in explaining Romans 13 he ascribed to the civil government the highest authority in ecclesiastical and religious matters.

Arminius' senior colleague, Petrus Plancius, registered a protest against him which was investigated by the consistory. Rumours spread throughout the country. In subsequent discussions it became apparent that Arminius had doubts about Article 16 of the Belgic Confession, the article concerning divine election; however, Arminius pledged to adhere to what was taught in the Confession, something which he claimed to have been doing all along.

In 1602, Leiden was devastated by the plague. Franciscus Junius, the erudite professor of theology at the University there, was a victim. Johannes Uitenbogaard, court preacher, recommended Arminius to fill the vacancy. The Church Deputies were uneasy about Arminius' orthodoxy, but acquiesced to his appointment; however, this appointment was conditional upon a favourable outcome of a conference with Dr. Franciscus Gomarus, concerning the chief points of doctrine. Gomarus was also a professor at Leiden and a strict Calvinist. This conference was conducted in the presence of curators of the academy and deputies of Synod.³ Arminius expressly rejected the doctrines of the Pelagians concerning natural grace, free will, original sin, and predestination. He promised he would teach nothing in conflict with the adopted doctrine of the Churches. Consequently, he was admitted to the office of professor of Theology.

In his public lectures, he adhered to his pledge; however, in private instruction to certain select students, he voiced his doubts and dissatisfaction. His influence on these students became apparent when they appeared before classis for entrance into the ministry. When his students came home from the Academy or departed to other academies, they took positions against the Reformed Churches, disputing, contradicting, and criticizing the doctrine.

Arminius is always described, even by his critics, as a faithful pastor, a sober

and consistent Christian, a sincere man of rare scholarly abilities and a man of sensitivity and peace, who, against his will, was always at war. Yet, it is hard not to agree with the charge often leveled against him that he was not free from a certain kind of duplicity. If it is true, and it seems to have been, that Arminius pledged to adhere to the confessions of the church in his teachings while at the same time teaching otherwise, he was guilty of a serious fault.

Carl Bangs, who writes a sympathetic biography of Arminius, quotes him in a letter to a friend:

I transmit you my theses on free will, which I have composed in this (guarded) manner, because I thought that they would thus conduce to peace. I have advanced nothing which I consider at all allied to a falsity. But I have been silent upon some truths which I might have published, for I know that it is one thing to be silent respecting a truth and another to utter a falsehood, the latter of which it is never lawful to do, while the former is occasionally, nay very often, expedient (Bangs 269).

Those hostile and those sympathetic to Arminius are divided on the ethical issue. On the one hand he was not forthright about his views; on the other hand his apparent motive was peace in his university and church.

Praamsma cites Roger Nicole's verdict of Arminius:

His attitude toward confessional standards was open to question, for a theologian of his caliber must have realized that there was a substantial rift between his views and the system of teaching as well as the express utterances of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. Nevertheless, he paraded under the flag of allegiance and under the vows of conformity from the time of his ordination to his death. He repeatedly promised not to teach anything from the pulpit or the university chair which might be out of keeping with the standards. Obviously, if he had done just that, it is unlikely that he would have been the center of such storms and the rallying point of a whole group of uneasy spirits, whose heterodoxy was often more pronounced than his own. (Praamsma 28)⁴

In 1607, the Synod of South Holland dealt with complaints about Arminius' teachings. The political commissioner in attendance conveyed the grievances to Arminius, and he agreed to a "friendly conference" at a council, under the leadership of the government. Later that year, in The Hague, Gomarus and Arminius stat-

ed and compared their views. Arminius again maintained that his teachings were doctrinally sound. Gomarus pointed out some of Arminius' divergencies on how Christ's righteousness is imputed to man, but Arminius insisted on his agreement with the confessions. The council was unable to see differences of any great significance and urged mutual tolerance. In 1609, a second conference was held, with no resolution on the issues. Later that year Arminius died, presumably of tuberculosis.

— *To be continued*
SARAH VANDERGUGTEN

¹ P.Y. DeJong (Note 22, page 20) cites Hugo Grotius, who estimates that there were 100,000 Protestant martyrs. P.A. de Rover (Note 5, p. 310) asserts that the number 2,000 cannot be correct, because this number includes only those cases which were documented. ("Dat getal van 2,000 . . . kan onmogelijk juist zijn, want dat berust alleen op een lijst van bekende namen") DeJong and de Rover cite other sources whose estimate range between these two extremes.

² J. Reitsma, P. 153-160, relates the decision of the various synods about the Church Order. The secular authorities examined

the synods' decisions and judged whether these were acceptable to them.

³ Pelagius was a British monk and a contemporary of Augustine. Pelagius denied that the human race had fallen in Adam. He denied original sin, the total depravity of man and predestination. The teachings of Pelagius were condemned as heresy by the General Council of Ephesus in 431. In 529 the Synod of Orange condemned the teachings of the Semi-Pelagians — that it is up to the individual to accept or refuse God's offer of grace (B.K. Kuiper 39).

⁴ This quote is from the article "Arminianism" by Roger Nicole, *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, (1964) vol. 1, p. 411.

John Calvin: a man of compassion¹

Introduction

Many have spoken and written in disparaging tones and words of John Calvin. It was not long after his death that the vicar general of the diocese of Rouen presented Calvin as "the author of a religion of the table, the stomach, the fat, the flesh, the kitchen," in whom the whole Reformation only tended to 'establish the reign of wine, women, and song'" (Stauffer 21). Some of the charges were of a more subtle nature. Stauffer categorizes them in three groups: 1. Calvin was lifted up in pride and played on the theatre stage of Europe. 2. Calvin was an autocrat with a quick temper. 3. Calvin had a "morose and bitter spirit" and displayed a terrible sarcasm (22). These charges have coloured the understanding of John Calvin's work, for they still persist today.

Many think highly of John Calvin and yet are influenced by the false reporting concerning this great Frenchman. T.C. Hall, in an address at Union Theological Seminary in 1909 said, "We must remember that *stern old* John Calvin . . . stood at the threshold of a new world . . ." (Scotchmer 318) [italics mine]. But there seems to be little evidence that John Calvin was indeed "stern."

These perceptions are completely misguided and ill-informed. John Calvin was a man of sensitivity and compassion. This can be seen in his personal correspondence, in his scholarly, theological works, and in his ecclesiastical ordinances. It would be futile to answer to all the charges laid against the character of this great reformer. Rather, by examining

his own writings it can be illustrated that Calvin had a deep sense of commitment to those who were in need, both spiritually and physically.

His letters

In his little book, *The Humanness of John Calvin*, Richard Stauffer presents Calvin's personal correspondence. We will survey some of these letters to show that Calvin was deeply moved by human suffering.

Calvin had been appointed by the authorities in Strasbourg to attend a conference. While he was attending to his appointment, news arrived that the plague had struck Strasbourg and that some of his own household (i.e. boarders) had died. In a letter he wrote to his dear friend, Guillaume Farel, he confided ". . . These events bring me such sadness that they completely overwhelm my soul and break my spirit" (Stauffer 41). These are not the words of an "acid, negative person, withdrawn, embittered and unfeeling, coldly committed pessimist . . ." (Father Favre-Dorsaz, as cited in Stauffer 26).

There are also letters extant that Calvin wrote after the death of his wife of nine years, Idelette. To Viret, he writes,

Though the death of my wife has been a very cruel thing for me, I try as much as possible to moderate my grief . . . [Y]ou know the . . . softness of my soul . . . Of course, the reason for my sorrow is not an ordinary one. I am deprived of my excellent life companion . . . (45)

These deeply personal communications

believe the charges that Calvin was a cold, emotionless man. It may be that his expression of grief was not public, for he also writes (to Farel), ". . . I consume my grief in such a way that I have not interrupted my work" (45).

Calvin also demonstrated in his letters that he had a deep concern for the peace of mind of others. On the occasion that a son of a dear friend had run away to Geneva to study in the Academy, Calvin writes to his still Roman Catholic friend,

I beg you not to let loose the bridle of your passion in such a way that you do not judge equitably to find some good that God may have done . . . But above all I hope that you will be at peace with him. It is not as if he had left like a corrupt and dissipated young man, but since he had zeal to follow God, you would do yourselves a favor by being contented . . . (52)

Calvin clearly demonstrates his compassion and understanding for the concerns and troubles of his friends.

Calvin furthermore expressed his deep friendship with Guillaume Farel and Pierre Viret in his dedication of his commentary on Titus. In it he writes, "I think that there has never been, in ordinary life, a circle of friends so sincerely bound to each other as we have been in our ministry . . . [Y]ou and I seemed to be one" (276).

Self-denial

With this brief look into the heart of

Calvin we will examine his understanding of Christian ethics in the role of material goods. Throughout his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ICR) Calvin deals with poverty, riches, and care for the poor. When Calvin's critics accuse him of being heartless, they only show an ignorance of his work and writing.

Calvin's concern for the poor, the lonely, the sick, and the dying as evidenced in his letters is worked out in the ICR. It is in one chapter in particular that he developed "The Sum of the Christian Life: The Denial of Ourselves" (Book 3, Chapter 7, page 689).¹ Calvin shows from Scripture that self-denial is an "even more explicit plan" (3.7.1 689) than the law "even though the law of the Lord provides the finest and best-disposed method of ordering a man's life" (3.7.1 689). Since men are to be transformed by the renewal of their minds they must only act to the glory of God. To John Calvin this is the "first step, that a man depart from himself" (7.1 690) to serve the Lord. He wants to impress that in self-denial comes peace. There is no joy in pursuing the "vain-glory" of the world. If there is "[t]rust in God's blessing only" (3.7.9 699), the Christian man will not seek to promote his own benefit at the cost of others. There is no possibility of blessing when a man engages in "frauds, robberies and other wicked arts" (3.7.9 699). Self-denial will remove greed and avarice from a man and encourage him to be generous (3.7.5 695). As Calvin points out, it is impossible for a man to seek the benefit of his neighbour unless he engages in self-sacrifice.

However, Calvin does recognize the tension that develops. He admits that one of the powerful drives in a person is self-preservation and self-love, but he shows how Scripture teaches that "whatever benefits we obtain from the Lord have been entrusted to us on this condition: that they be applied to the common good of the church" (3.7.5 695).

Common good

This does not mean that Calvin espoused asceticism. In his discussion on Christian freedom he shows that we may use God's good gifts to His glory (3.19.7 838). Calvin believed that if Christians begin to doubt whether they may enjoy the blessings of God they will doubt whether any pleasure at all is possible. This, Calvin says, leads to the despising of God and therefore to destruction (3.19.7 839). The charges against Calvin that accused him of a life of pleasure may have been in reaction to passages in his writings such as this one. He here discusses the use of linen sheets, the use of napkins, the eating of dainties, and the drinking of sweet wine. Since Calvin does not believe

that these must be forbidden, he may have been misinterpreted, perhaps purposefully, as allowing licentiousness.

Calvin teaches that God has created food not only for sustenance but also for "delight and good cheer" (3.10.2 720). Clothes, besides being necessary, also may be for comeliness (3.10.2 720). In nature we find "beauty of appearance and pleasantness of odour" (3.10.2 721). Calvin finds great joy in realizing the beauty which God has made for man to enjoy as he passes as a pilgrim through this world (3.10.1 719). He qualifies the use of the good gifts of God by demanding that they be used in helping rather than hindering the course of the pilgrim (3.10.1 721).

However, Calvin believed that the blessings of God must be applied to the common good of the church. In his writings he often points to the role that the rich had in society. In his commentaries on II Corinthians he writes,

Thus the Lord recommends to us a proportion of this nature, that we may, in so far as every one's resources admit, afford help to the indigent, that there may not be some in affluence, and others in indigence. (295)

Here is one of Calvin's profound insights on the role of the Christian man. When modern critics of Calvin declare him to be the father of *laissez-faire* capitalism (Visser't Hooft 8) they fail to understand the import of (or have not read Calvin on) this issue. The Marxists may claim as their slogan, "to each according to his needs, from each according to his capacities," but Calvin understood that this was a biblical teaching. Visser't Hooft lays the charge that it is in the perversion of later Calvinism that Calvin's teachings of social reform were abandoned and that the Calvinist churches

did not for long maintain the courage and vitality necessary for the accomplishment of the prophetic mission entrusted to them — a mission which, for Calvin, had been an essential duty of the church. (8)

In his commentary on II Corinthians 8:15, Calvin writes,

... [H]e has enjoined upon us frugality and temperance, and has forbidden,

that anyone should go to excess, taking advantage of his abundance. Let those, then, that have riches, whether they have been left by inheritance, or procured by industry and efforts, consider that their abundance was not intended to be laid out in intemperance or excess, but in relieving the necessities of the brethren. (297)

Calvin also inveighed against theft (Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses 110-111). In his understanding, theft included any unjust procurement of one's neighbour's goods. Calvin also found positive messages in the negative commandments (2.6.8-9 374 ff.). When God, in His Word, forbids theft, Calvin recognizes that "this commandment obligates us to care for the others' good" (2.8.46 409). Calvin taught, "Let us share the necessity of those whom we see pressed by the difficulty of affairs, assisting them in their need with our abundance" (2.8.46 410). It is in this context that he preached on the eighth commandment. He instructed the people that the rich had to learn how to be rich [Phil 4:12] (Sermons 193).

In his sermon, Calvin portrays rich men as "insatiable" and much more difficult to satisfy than the poor. "They are almost grieved if the sun shines on the poor." Calvin stresses that it is not enough for the rich to abandon their greed but they must learn to be "poor in spirit" and gentle to those who have less than they themselves. On the other hand, the poor are not to "crave to be rich." Both of these attitudes are symptoms of dissatisfaction with the state God has put them in and therefore lead to theft (196-197).

When Calvin preached against theft, he did not stop at preaching contentment but taught what the positive response to the Law should be.

... [W]hen I see with my own eyes someone who has been oppressed and make no effort to help him, indeed, I am consenting to the thief. . . . Now isn't it the same as befriending those who steal when we do not attempt to repress them. . . . ? We are guilty of [theft] in God's sight. . . . [L]et us see that we preserve and procure our neighbour's property as much as our own. (200)

To Calvin the rich in a society had a primary responsibility to care for the poor. This admonition was not only to be applied actively by giving alms but also by ensuring that justice was done in the sight of God (200).

— To be continued
JOHN VAN POPTA

¹References to *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* will be given as follows (3.7.1 689).

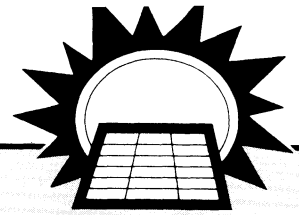
OUR COVER

"CATHARANTHUS ROSEUS"

Pure floral pleasure.

Photo courtesy of
Bram Vegter

RAY OF SUNSHINE



"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."

Proverbs 3:6

Dear brothers and sisters,

We have a Father in heaven who by His Word and Spirit rules over everything. He is the Creator and Up-holder of this world and also of the lives of each and everyone of us. He in His grace has adopted us as His children. He did not spare His own Son to make us His own. Now we should not separate any part of our life from Him and His Word.

To acknowledge the LORD in all our ways means that we, who have learned to love Him as our Father in Jesus Christ, should now also submit ourselves to His will in all the decisions we make. Those decisions we make determine the course of our life. How do we serve the LORD? How do we raise our children? How do we spend our money? In all those things we should not go by our own insight (vs. 5) but ask ourselves what He wants us to do. Our own ways will lead us away from the LORD and His Word. Then we so easily wander away from the path of life.

We can and must trust the LORD! Acknowledge His claims and submit to His authority over us. He has made us His own, with everything we have and can do. Now we should acknowledge Him "in all our ways."

You could raise the question, "Is the LORD, the mighty God, really interested in "all my ways?" The LORD is great and mighty, holy and incomprehensible! Does He have time to think of me personally, to be concerned about "my ways?" I am only a tiny creature amidst millions of other creatures. Does the LORD care for me personally and is He interested in the decisions I make?"

But don't forget that God made a covenant of grace with you. That He gave His Son also for you. Therefore He is always vitally interested in all your ways. For He wants to keep us close to Him and His grace. In Christ He has pulled us out of darkness into His light and He gave our lives a new direction.

Therefore He wants to be acknowledged when we make our plans or make decisions. And when we do that we can be sure that He will make our path straight.

That path may lead through deep valleys of sorrow or over mountains of joy, but it will keep going in the right direction. It leads to everlasting life where God will be all in all.

Acknowledging our heavenly Father in all our ways, the LORD will take care that our feet do not slip from that path of life. He has given us His Word and Spirit as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Psalm 119:105) With every step we have to take, the light is there! We better use it! For He is our Saviour and He will lead us to our eternal home without any detours. Trust that His path is straight.

From the Mailbox

Mrs. Stroop thanks all the brothers and sisters, especially the children of the Covenant Christian School, Flamborough, for the cards Daniel received on his birth-

day. Daniel had much fun looking at all the pictures! It made his day! "In the morning Daniel goes to a special class for speech and occupational therapy. In the afternoon he is integrated into kindergarten where he benefits from the contact with his peers." Our very best wishes to Daniel and his family!

Our birthday calendar for October:

ALAN BREUKELMAN

Box 666

Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

Alan was born on October 17th. He will become 22 years old on that day.

NELENA HOFKINK

"Bethesda"

6705 Satchel Road, Box 40

Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

Nelena hopes to celebrate her 28th birthday on October 22nd.

JOHN FEENSTRA

RR 1

Wainfleet, ON L0S 1V0

John's 30th birthday is coming up on October 25!

MARY-ANN DEWIT

"Bethesda"

6705 Satchel Road, Box 40

Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

Another October birthday for one of our "Sunshine-friends" who lives in Bethesda Home. Mary-Ann will be 32 on October 28.

I WISH YOU ALL A VERY ENJOYABLE DAY!

God is in every tomorrow,
Therefore I live for today,
Certain of finding at sunrise,
Guidance and strength for the way;
Power for each moment of weakness,
Hope for each moment of pain,
Comfort for every sorrow,
Sunshine and joy after rain.

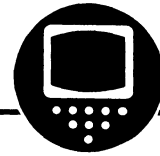
God is in every tomorrow,
Planning for you and for me,
E'en in the dark will I follow,
Trust where my eyes can not see;
Stilled by His promise of blessing,
Soothed by the touch of His hand,
Confident in His protection,
Knowing my life path is planned.

Greetings to all of you!

MRS. J. MULDER

1225 Highway 5, RR 1

Burlington, ON L7R 3X4



Classis Ontario South, June 29, 1988

1) *Opening:* On behalf of the convening church at Attercliffe, Rev. D.G.J. Agema opens the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. He welcomes the delegates and especially student J. Kroeze who is present for his preparatory examination.

The church at Attercliffe examines the credentials and finds them in order. The church at Laurel has sent only one delegate.

2. *Constitution of Classis:* The following moderamen are appointed: chairman — Rev. G. Wieske, clerk — Rev. C. Bosch, vice-chairman — Rev. M.H. VanLuik.

The chairman thanks the church at Attercliffe for the work done in preparing for this classis meeting. He also remembers that Rev. C. Bosch has accepted the call to the church at Kelmescott, Australia, and Rev. M.H. VanLuik declined the call to the church at Houston.

3. The agenda is adopted after a few additions.

4. *Preparatory Examination of br. J. Kroeze:* The necessary documents are found to be in order. Br. Kroeze presents his sermon proposal on Romans 12:11,12. After being examined in Old and New Testament exegesis and doctrine of the Church, Classis finds the exam to be satisfactory. Classis declares br. J. Kroeze eligible for call in the American/Canadian Reformed Churches. After singing Psalm 134:1,3 and thanksgiving prayer, members of Classis receive an opportunity to congratulate br. Kroeze and his family. Classis breaks for lunch.

5. *Preparatory Examination of br. W.B. Slomp:* The necessary documents are found to be in order. Br. Slomp presents his sermon proposal on Philippians 1:9-11. After being examined in Old and New Testament exegesis and doctrine of the Church, Classis finds the exam to be satisfactory. Br. W.B. Slomp is declared eligible for call in the American/Canadian Reformed Churches. After singing Hymn 48:4 and thanksgiving prayer, members of Classis receive the opportunity to congratulate br. Slomp and his wife.

6. *Question Period Ad Art. 44 C.O.:*

A. All of the churches are asked if the ministry of the office-bearers is continued and whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. All the churches answer in the affirmative.

B. The church at Ancaster asks for advice in a matter. Advice is given.

C. Attercliffe asks for advice in a matter of supervision. Advice is given.

D. Grand Rapids asks that their minister be relieved from classical pulpit supply duties because he is actively involved in the ministry at large in the U.S.A.

7. *Correspondence:*

A. Classis takes note of the letter of Chatham concerning the report about the division of classical regions into 3 districts, dated May 16, 1988.

Classis Ontario South of June 29, 1988 asks the convening church for the next classis to place this letter on the agenda when the report re: Three Classical Districts will be discussed.

B. Classis takes note of a letter from the Ecumenicity Committee of the Pres-

bytery of Ohio of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Since the churches have not been able to study this letter, Classis decides to ask the convening church of next classis to place this letter on the agenda.

Classis also decides to have this letter duplicated and sent out with the *Acts* of this classis.

8. *Reports:*

A. Report from Classical Treasurer.

B. Report on the Audit of the books of the treasurer by the church at Lincoln. The books are found to be in order.

C. Watford reports that it could not complete checking the Classical Archives.

D. Report from treasurer of the Fund for Needy Students.

9. *Appointments:*

A. Classis thanks br. P. Schuller for his work done as treasurer for Classis. Br. P. Schuller is again appointed as classical treasurer.

B. The church at Lincoln is appointed to check the books of the treasurer.

C. The church at Watford is appointed to check the Classical Archives.

D. Church Visitors are appointed.

E. Examiners are reappointed without any changes.

F. Date of next classis: September 14, 1988.

G. Convening church for next classis: Blue Bell.

H. Proposed moderamen for next classis: chairman: Rev. R. Aasman, clerk: Rev. J. VanRietschoten, vice-chairman: Rev. G. Wieske.

I. Place for next classis: Ancaster.

10. *Personal Question Period:*

A. Rev. K. Kok informs the members of Classis that his Zip Code in the year book is incorrect. The correct Zip Code is 19002.

B. The church at Laurel informs Classis that it has elected and appointed a deacon as a third office-bearer.

11. With thankfulness the chairman notes that Censure Art. 44 is not needed.

12. The *Acts* are adopted.

13. The Press Release is approved.

14. *Closing:* The chairman thanks the ladies who served the members of Classis with excellent meals and refreshments. The chairman then requested the delegates to sing Psalm 138:1,2 and Rev. M.H. VanLuik closed in prayer.

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED to the church at Fergus, ON
REV. W. DEN HOLLANDER
of Winnipeg, MB.

* * *

CALLED to the church at Houston, BC
CANDIDATE W.B. SLOMP
of Hamilton, ON.

* * *

ACCEPTED to the church at Hamilton, ON
REV. CL. STAM
of Fergus, ON.

* * *

DECLINED to the Providence Church at Edmonton, AB
REV. R. AASMAN
of Ancaster, ON.

* * *

DECLINED to the church at London, ON
REV. M.H. VAN LUIK
of Watford, ON.

For the Classis,
M.H. VANLUIK, vice-chairman

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

May I use a letter to the editor to draw attention to a concern we should have about how we delegate ministers to regional and general synods? My concern is about the fact that several ministers are being delegated to two of these assemblies in a row while others, equally experienced and capable, are not delegated. This practice does not help to promote a healthy unity in the churches, a well-rounded decision-making process and a good evaluation of appeals.

As an illustration of this problem we note that of the eight ministers delegated to the last general synod, one half also participated in the previous one. The problems this presents is best illustrated when dealing with appeals, although it also affects other areas of the work of a synod. It is already difficult to make an unbiased judgment of any appeal in our churches because it is such a small confederation, but when one quarter of the members of a synod have to judge appeals of decisions in which they themselves participated in a previous synod, this becomes all the more difficult. Not only is it virtually impossible to avoid being biased, but it is also hard to not give in to the tendency to let what is remembered

from the discussions of the previous synod influence the present discussion rather than sticking strictly to the published Acts of the previous synod. The whole purpose of an appeal, namely that a different assembly takes a second, impartial look at the matter, is undermined when the same persons consider the appeal.

It is a sound Reformed principle that all office-bearers be considered equal. This is one aspect of article 74 of the church order. Also, if a church is served by more than one minister, these ministers shall take turns in presiding over the meetings of the consistory (C.O. 38). This practice shows the good principle that we have in Reformed assemblies, namely that we like to rotate responsibilities in order to avoid hierarchy. This matter could be expounded on in much more detail, giving more justification, but this is not the place for it. Suffice it to say that it is not Reformed to always ask the same ministers to give their opinion and not to encourage the others to contribute.

I do not want to suggest that the only principle to be observed when choosing delegates to synods is that all of the ministers should have a turn, but I do wonder whether this principle has perhaps been somewhat

forgotten in the Canadian Reformed Churches. The church order specifies that church visitors shall be more experienced and able ministers. This would also be a good rule to keep in mind in choosing delegates to our regional and general synods.

What is not a good rule is to choose delegates (whether they be elders or ministers of the word) on the basis of whether or not we agree with their stand on certain issues. The biblical rule is that we consider all faithful office-bearers who subscribe to the three forms of unity as office-bearers in equally good standing.

Wise delegates to classes and regional synods will remember who were delegated to previous synods before casting their votes. It would also be wise for ministers who have been delegated to the previous assembly to ask to be excused from serving twice in a row.

We have at least 30 ministers who could be delegated to the next general synod. It is possible to delegate 8 ministers with at least 10 years experience as minister without delegating someone who participated in the last general synod.

"A word to the wise is sufficient."

Sincerely,
RALPH BOERSEMA

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE



Hello Busy Beavers,

I see you've been busy. That's great!
I was glad to hear from so many of you!
And in the meantime school has started.
How do *you* feel about that?
Happy to see your friends again? How do you like your new

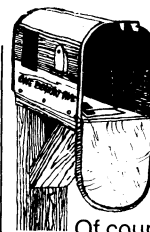
(maybe old) teacher? Are you going to a new school?
Going to school is like having a job, don't you think?
You have to be there on time. You have to do good work — just like a job.
Come to think of it — it is a job. Right?
A job the Lord gives us *and* helps us to do.
Lots of success in the new school year, Busy Beavers!

Some September birthdays have gone by already. Here's hoping all you Busy Beavers celebrating September birthdays had/have a very happy day celebrating with your family and friends! It's never too late to wish you all the Lord's blessing and guidance as you start another year of your life.

September

Jane Schulenberg	2	Teresa Oosterhoff	18
Alisa Schouten	3	Walter Bartels	19
Chris Spoelstra	3	Erica Veenendaal	19
Jason Tenhage	4	Joyce Broersma	21
Michael Hummel	6	Mary Jane Helder	24
Karrie Eelhart	8	Deanna VanderWoerd	25
Emily Barendregt	10	Jennifer Dijkstra	26
Mary Vandeburgt	11	Anthony Vis	26
Cheryl Schouten	12	Geraldine Feenstra	30

From the Mailbox



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Robbie Blanken*. So what sports do you participate in, Robbie? I hope you have a nice warm fall this year!

Of course you may join the Club, *Elizabeth Vanderpol*. We are happy to have you join us! I see you know what Busy Beavers do — make up puzzles to keep the other Busy Beavers busy!

And a big welcome to you, too, *Julie Kamphuis*. Were you happy to get back to school, Julie? Will you write and tell us about your family and what you liked doing best this summer?

Welcome to the Club, *Mary-Lynn Lof*. I think you must be a good swimmer by now, Mary-Lynn! How do you like your new teacher? And do you have chores to help out with so many animals on the farm?

A big welcome to you, too, *Helena Van Es*. I see you didn't have any trouble keeping busy this summer, Helena. Will you write and tell us all about the *very best* book you read this sum-

ner? I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Welcome back, *Margaret de Witt*. I'm happy you had such a good time in Holland. And I'm happy, too, with the poems you sent. Keep up the good work, Margaret.

Hello, *Linda Stam*. That was a pretty and neat letter you sent! Sounds to me as if you had a good time this summer. Thank you for the puzzle, too, Linda. Bye for now.

How did you enjoy your camping, *Jeanette Jansen*? I'm curious to hear! What do you do to keep the children busy when you babysit them, Jeanette?

Hello, *Janine Vanderhoeven*. It was good to hear from you again. Did you have a good summer holiday? Thanks for sharing your puzzles, Janine. Write again soon.

Thank you for your pretty letter, *Jennifer Van Pykeren*! Sounds to me as if you kept busy doing all sorts of interesting things, Jennifer! Thank you for your thoughtful sharing of the puzzle. And I'd love to hear about why you thought the lighthouse island book was such a good book!

Did you have a good holiday, too, *Kerri-Ann Spoelstra*? Thanks for your letter and picture. It was really nice to hear from you again. Bye for now.

Did you get to go peach picking, *Esther Leyenhorst*? Will you write and tell us about it, Esther? Because I wonder how many Busy Beavers know what it's like to go peach picking. And how's school, Esther?

How did you like riding the dune buggy this summer, *Laura Aasman*? Congratulations on your Canada fitness award! Thank you for the puzzles you're sharing with the Busy Beavers. And, Laura, will you write and tell us about your favourite book you read this summer?

Thank you for a very neat letter, *Nicole Aasman*! I see you were really spoiled on your birthday, Nicole. How did you enjoy going to the cottage this year? Bye for now. Write again soon.

Busy Beavers, we need some pen pals!

Who will write and exchange letters with these Busy Beavers?

Helena Van Es (age 11)
38 Elm Street
Beamsville, Ontario
L0R 1B0

Mary-Lynn Lof
RR 3
Wellandport, Ontario
L0R 2J0

Quiz Time!

What a lot of wordsearches to do this time!
Let's start with this one from
Busy Beaver *Janine Vanderhoeven*

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

Find: Abram
Ahab
Michaiah
Daniel
Solomon
Saul
Elijah
Moses
Joash
Elisha
Satan

Busy Beaver *Linda Stam*
wants you to find words about

SCHOOL

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

books
paper
pen
teacher
desk
work
study
chalk
pencil

Busy Beaver *Jennifer Van Pykeren*
made up this wordsearch for younger Busy Beavers

a	m	a	y	f	c
h	k	f	a	r	e
m	l	i	r	e	d
j	o	f	f	g	o
d	n	b	p	i	g

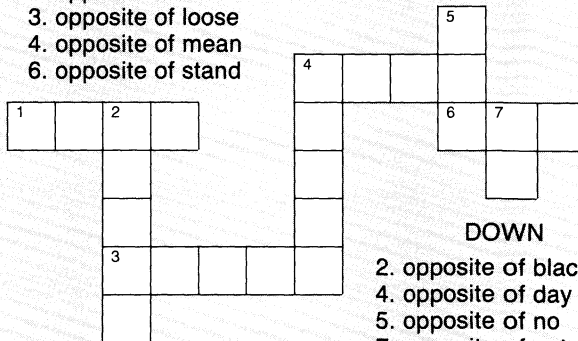
Look for: far pig
red off
dog may

OPPOSITES CROSSWORD PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Laura Aasman*

ACROSS

1. opposite of across
3. opposite of loose
4. opposite of mean
6. opposite of stand



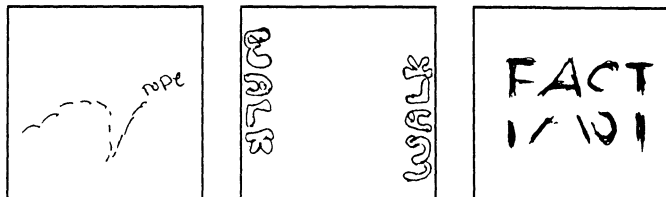
DOWN

2. opposite of black
4. opposite of day
5. opposite of no
7. opposite of out

PICTURE PUZZLES

from Busy Beaver *Jeanette Jansen*

Try and see what they mean!



1. jump rope 2. sidewalk 3. breakfast

Bye for now, Busy Beavers. Hope to "see" you all next time!

Aunt Betty