



Clarion

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Voluntary poverty at our general synods

By K. Deddens

Only delegates?

The Canadian Reformed Churches do not have the custom of making use of advisors at their general synods. These synods consist of sixteen delegates, four ministers and four elders from each regional synod area. Sometimes the minister of the convening church where the synod is held, is asked to function as an advisor, but often this minister is one of the delegates. So the delegates have to do everything on their own. The custom of the Dutch sister churches of asking the theological professors from Kampen to be advisors, was not taken over. At our first synods this could not be done because we did not yet have a Theological College and professors. But also after the Theological College was established in Hamilton, the professors (c.q. lecturers) were hardly ever asked to be advisors. The question comes up, is this wise? Is this the best, the most profitable way of coming to decisions which are so important for the churches? Or is this actually a matter of voluntary poverty?

Some negative and positive historical information

One can point to the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands during the forties, the time of the Second World War. Theological professors from Amsterdam and Kampen were invited to be advisors of the synods; they were even members of committees, and dominated the meetings with their authority. Therefore, it was understandable that after the Liberation of 1944 out of reaction some said, "Let us be careful on this point, because professors should not dominate synods." It is remarkable, though, that this reaction did not start from the beginning in 1945. At the synods of Enschede 1945, Groningen 1946, and Amersfoort 1948, the professors were present as advisors. The churches were happy that they still had professors S. Greijdanus and K. Schilder and that these were willing and able to serve the synods (and the churches) with their advice. They were also happy that the number of professors could be increased and that the new professors could add their advice.

However, this situation changed more or less at the synod of Kampen 1951. Although still invited to the synod, the professors were no longer allowed to become members of the advisory committees at the synod and they were not permitted to participate fully in the discussions. In response Prof. Dr. K. Schilder wrote a whole series of articles in *De Reformatie* entitled "Professors at Synod" ("Hoogleraren ter Synode"). It was one of his last series of articles in *De Reformatie*, for he passed away in March 1952. He was very upset about the whole development and he did not hesitate to call this a shame for the churches. Not that he considered himself so important, but he saw this as an overreaction and he was convinced that this trend in the church had to be changed.

I may insert a personal note here. Prof. Dr. K. Schilder told me that he planned to come to our wedding in Ede on his bike (a distance of about 70 km). However, contrary to his expectation, a meeting of synod was held on that day. Prof. Schilder felt that it was his responsibility to attend synod in what he called "the sad situation." This sadness was also expressed in his telegram: "Congratulations from a lonely one-man's table at the synod of Kampen. Blessings from the LORD, K. Schilder."

Prof. Schilder and also Prof. P. Deddens, my father, were strongly convinced that the churches were on the wrong track. Later on, the position of the professors at the synods was indeed reconsidered, and the latest synod of our sister churches in the Netherlands, the synod of Spakenburg-Noord 1987, appointed a committee in order to investigate how the presence of the professors at synods could be made most effective, without at the same time doing damage to the fulfillment of their first task, their teaching work in Kampen.

Misuse does not remove proper use

The reaction, or rather, the overreaction in the Netherlands is understandable. However, the question arises, "Does misuse remove the proper, beneficial use?" Here in Canada we now have our Theological College, previously with three full-time professors plus two part-time lecturers, now with four full-time professors. Is it wise that none of them is asked to be advisor at our synods? To cut off all misunderstandings, I do not say this as an *oratio pro domo*, a plea for myself. Next synod will be held in Winnipeg in April 1989, the LORD willing. I hope to be retired in 1990 and to return to the Netherlands. But what about others? The churches could use the experience, wisdom, and insight of those whose full-time occupation is to study and teach God's Word and the confession of the church. In the course of time, all kinds of decisions were made by general synods concerning many different matters, including matters concerning the confessions, the Church Order, etc. But the professors were mostly not present at the synods to give their advice. Sure, some of them were appointed as members of committees which had to prepare a report to synod. But anyway they were not asked to give advice at the synod itself and to participate in the discussions.

One can ask the question: is it not the first task of the professors to teach at the Theological College? The answer is: this is true, and I would not defend a proposal to invite all the professors to all the meetings of synod. But arrangements can be made so that very few lecture hours are lost. Besides, the first task of ministers and elders is also their daily task. A synod meets for a short time. Perhaps it could meet in the second part of May or in the March spring break and/or in the Hamilton area.

Let us use the talents we have!

I am of the opinion that especially in the situation here in Canada it would be wise to have professorial advice at the synods. About a quarter of the ministers in active service is delegated to general synods, some of them even two or three times in succession. We personally have to use all the talents which the LORD has granted to each one of us. But do we not have to use to the utmost all the talents which the LORD gave us in the midst of the churches? We need the manpower we have in the churches! It is a wrong, unnecessary voluntary poverty when we do not use the gifts which are given to us. I hear already the objection: "We would again introduce hierarchy in this way!" But I would want to say: no, when advisors know their place as servants, there is no danger of hierarchy. Let us bear in mind that in each and every heart a hierarchy is hiding. That is always

a matter of self-examination, not a matter of all kinds of measures. I would point also to another fact. Obviously churches as well as individual church members need and request advice in many ecclesiastical matters. In the three years that I have been teaching ecclesiology at the College, already about ninety times I was asked to give advice to churches and church members in ecclesiastical affairs. Why then not ask for advice in ecclesiastical assemblies, especially in synods?

Conclusion

My conclusion is: let us stop this wrong voluntary poverty and let the churches be aware and make use of the possibilities given by the LORD Himself, in order to be able to work to the utmost for the glory of God and the edification of the church!



Education in the Word in an age of the picture³

By C. Van Dam

The second commandment

So far I have said nothing about the second commandment and its relevance for our subject. We must be brief and I will try to touch on the main point.

To understand this commandment we must realize that image-making had a very specific function in the ancient Near Eastern world in which Israel lived. An image was not just considered to be a picture of the god in question. No. It was the dwelling place of the divine reality. Decisive was that the image was animated by the deity taking up his residence there.⁸ If man did his duties to that image, then man had that god in his power, so to speak. For at bottom the essence of image-making is to have the god under your control, in your power.⁹ In this way heathens thought to have some security because the god or gods were now at their beck and call.

When we keep this background in mind, we can understand Israel's decision to make a golden calf as an image of the LORD who led them out of Egypt. Israel grew restless because Moses delayed to come down from the Mount. God seemed to have left them. In such a situation there rose a demand for an image! Israel wanted, so to speak, to have God close by, under their control according to the pagan way of thinking of their day. When the calf of gold was made, then Aaron said, "Here is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt! . . . Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD!" (Exodus 32:4ff.). They had

their image. God was now with them. No more worries! The Catechism therefore rightly places the second commandment in the context of the correct worship of God, as well as stressing the point that no image of God can be made (Q.A. 96-97).

When it comes to our teaching task, the relevance of this commandment lies in my opinion first of all in the absolute necessity that we in our teaching make known to our students the true God as He has revealed Himself in His Word so that He can be rightly worshipped by them. There are many images of God today by which man tries to conceptualize God into someone that will be useful to man and serve man's purposes. In this way man seeks to control God and make Him to be what man wants Him to be. Some examples of modern images of God are: God is love. This translates "there is no hell." Or, God is a grand old man. This translates "God and His Word are out of touch with reality. He is out of date. Pay lip service to Him but we can basically ignore Him." So there are more false images of God that could be mentioned. With many misconceptions about God currently circulating, we must be careful to show only the God of Scripture; – the God who cannot be manipulated or controlled and who cannot be reduced by humans to some image; the God who is sovereign and transcendent, who cannot be grasped, be it literally or mentally. God is God! We must convey a sense of awe about Him to our students. He is Creator and we are but

creatures. As Isaiah 40 asks: "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with Him? . . . To whom then will you compare Me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One . . . Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 40:18, 25, 28a). God is more than we can ever imagine!

Therefore the revelation of God through His Word is such a miracle. There we see God as we are to perceive Him. There He has revealed Himself as He wants to be known to His people. There His glory, His love, His righteousness and His wrath are pictured for us. So we pass on the Word and God's self-revelation to our students. That is the crucial thing. But we also do more.

We do not only use verbal language. Students must also see the message. They need a visual aid and that, within this context, is the teacher himself. Also in our speaking, in our attitudes and actions, we are to show them something of the greatness of our God and His holiness and sovereignty. After all, as teachers we ourselves are children of Father above, recreated in His image (Ephesians 4:22ff.; Colossians 3:9ff.; cf. Romans 8:29). Our students must be able to see that and so see something of the greatness of Father in us. One of the vital motivations for listening can be the desire to be like the teacher. "I too want to know the Father in heaven and do my office as Christian and experience the

peace and joy and surety of the new life! I want that!" If we are a picture of the new life with all the positive features, then some of the difficulty of listening is diminished for our students. Then what we stand for and speak about becomes attractive (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). As teacher ("father") so doing our calling over against our students ("children"), we may beget children after our godly image. Or better expressed, we may be God's instruments that they too be renewed after God's image, in whose image we by grace may be.

God does not want us to make an image of Him; but, He does want to make us new after His image. Our students need to be moulded by the Word and Spirit after the image of God. We may be instruments of God in that divine moulding process. The old creation must give way to the new. Again the priority of the Word is unmistakable, although the "children," students, cannot do without seeing their "father," teacher, after God's image. But the Word is indeed first. Our students (as well as we ourselves, of course) must more and more be moulded by the Word. Their thoughts must follow the patterns set by God. Their goals and desires must be in conformity with His will. We must therefore "soak" our students with the Word so to speak.

Memorization

An important help is the memorization of Scripture. If important parts of Scripture are committed to memory, the Word of God will more effectively accomplish its purpose. Scripture says: "The Word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deuteronomy 30:14). Or think of Psalm 37:31, "The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip"; or Psalm 119:11, "I have laid up Thy Word in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." (Cf. John 15:7; Colossians 3:18a.)

In our day, memory work is generally not regarded too favourably. It should, however, be realized that this resistance to memory work is a relatively recent phenomenon. The notion that truth can exist meaningfully in a book (for reference purposes, to be consulted when needed) rather than in a person's mind is a comparatively new idea¹⁰ and certainly has no support in Scripture. Of course the material to be memorized must be meaningful and speak to the student's world. He must be able to understand and appreciate it. Then the material functions and has value in the life of faith. Then the Word of God is integrated in real life.¹¹ Here again, not only what our students hear but also what they see is very important. Are we ourselves good visual aids for showing our students how helpful memorized knowledge of Scripture is or can our students come to the

devastating conclusion that the teacher ("father") himself does not know the passage he assigned to the class? So, why should we, "the children," bother? He seems to have made out all right? Can't we do without this work?

The importance of memorizing Scripture as a tool for integrating God's Word into life cannot be overestimated. Our students are constantly bombarded by worldly language and worldly images in so much of life, including the pervasive influence of the media, especially unfortunately the almost everywhere present television. How can we expect them to stand if they have not stored in their hearts and cannot remember very concretely the demands and promises of the LORD? The world seeks our heart, our very life. But God says, "Give Me your heart!" (Proverbs 23:26). The Word is used by the Spirit to bring about the new life and to nurture it. Think again of Psalm 119, "I have laid up Thy Word in my heart that I might not sin against Thee" (verse 11).

Now often it is the worldly images that cause the greatest concern. And they should be a serious worry. However, I would like to contend that the corruption and secularization of language should alarm us at least as much. There appears to be a growing gap between the language we hear in church and on the streets. There seem to be two inter-related reasons for this. The first reason is that Christianity is waning in influence and Christians have withdrawn from certain areas so that many fields have only a secular language which stymies meaningful Christian participation in discussing issues there.¹² Coupled with that is a second reason, the degeneration of language. The present age is becoming so depraved that the words of Genesis 6:5 come to mind. "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." One could also translate: ". . . everything shaped by the thoughts of his heart was exclusively evil all the time." Whatever man contemplated it was always wicked. Today the forces of darkness have more and more claimed much language for their purposes so that much language now either carries sinful innuendo or relativizes morals.¹³ A consequence is that many in the world can truly no longer really understand what Christians are talking about when they express themselves on issues dear to them and hence have little appreciation for what Christians stand for (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:11ff.). In this sense the antithesis between light and darkness comes out more clearly now than it has in recent Western history, and our students should be aware of this.

Why mention these things? To underline the great significance of truly im-

pressing the Word on the lives and hearts of those in our care. It is a matter of life and death. Our students are not immune to the words and images of this world and for that matter neither are we as long as that struggle against the old nature is there. Hence the Word is needed to protect and nurture the life of our student and so to guard their heart, the centre of their consciousness. Proverbs 4:23 says: "Above all else guard your heart for from it flow the springs of life." Above all else! Therefore we need to continue to expose the words and pictures the world presents for what they are and we need to impress upon our "children" the great significance of the Word of God for all of life. It is of utmost importance that our students learn to distinguish and discriminate between the holy and the unholy, between good and evil. Armed with the Word of God and a correct understanding of it, this is possible. We are in the world, but not of it! Great discernment is needed. Again if we as "fathers," teaching parents in school, can illustrate, make it real and picture it, especially through our example, that is of tremendous help. We must never speak in a theoretical vacuum but speak practically (as instruction in the Old Testament was). We have the Word. It is practical and it is the Word of life! And also to our encouragement, it is an effective Word that will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it (Isaiah 55:11), also in the lives of our students.

This brings me to one final point. Since we train students for life service in God's kingdom, the exposure of darkness for what it is should at the same time serve as a challenge to advance the claims of the light of the gospel as the LORD gives opportunity and provides time before His glorious return. There is a task, both for us and our students, also in the fundamental issue of language and image, of communicating. Our students should go forth as able communicators of the Word in all of life, by speaking and applying it and reinforcing the spoken Word by themselves being pictures of Christ's redemptive work (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:3 and also Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19; 38:26).

C

⁸ J.J. Stamm and M.E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (1987), 82

⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁰ See M. Snapper, "The Dethronement of Memory in Church Education," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 13 (1978), 38-57.

¹¹ See on these criteria, M. Snapper, "Memorization in Church Education," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 16 (1981) 42-45.

¹² Cf. H. Blamires, *The Christian Mind* (1983).

¹³ See C. Van Dam, "Language and Corruption," *Clarion*, 37 (1988), 100ff.

How do we read the Church Order?

By K. Deddens

Reopening of debate

Last year there was a debate in *Clarion* about the first part of Art. 31 of the Church Order, "If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major ecclesiastical assembly . . ." To summarize the debate: the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene was of the opinion that an appeal is only to be made if one is personally wronged, while the Rev. J.D. Wielenga defended the view that the right of appeal is given with the responsibility of all the members of the churches to see to it that the churches are governed by the pure Word of God. The debate was stopped after counterplea and rejoinder in the *Clarion* issue of September 11, 1987.

However, in the *Clarion* editors' meeting of September 10, 1988, I asked for reopening of the debate. I did that for two reasons. In the first place, I noticed that several people still had questions about the matter. (One of them already wrote an article about it, but knowing that the debate was stopped, he did not ask for publication.) The second reason is that, in my opinion, this topic is so important that we have to discuss it again. It was decided at that meeting that the discussion be reopened.

No principles?

Rev. VanOene (*Clarion*, May 22, 1987 p. 221) said concerning the first part of Art. 31 C.O.: "I would certainly not say that 'a general principle was applied,' namely, 'the general principle that wrong decisions of minor assemblies can be appealed.' Our Church Order does not lay down or contain principles. Our Church Order shows how the 'principles' laid down in the Word of our God and repeated in our confessions are to be applied in the life of the churches."


Now it is so that many principles are to be applied in the life of the churches. Not all of them are written down in the Church Order. Therefore I want to underline what, already a hundred years ago, was said by the professor of Reformed church polity in the time that the churches returned to the Church Order of Dordt, Dr. F.L. Rutgers: "The church order pronounces only principles. Their

elaboration and explication are left to ecclesiastical assemblies." In the following passage Dr. F.L. Rutgers stresses this again: "The church order only gives general principles." Elsewhere he says that the Church Order has actually two pillars. The first one is the former Art. 1 (in the C.O. of the Canadian Reformed Churches now Art. 74), namely, "No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers." The second is Art. 31 in which it is guaranteed that God's Word has the final say in the church. Rutgers calls them the two pillars of the Church Order, or the two main principles (*College-dictaten* 1892/93).

Especially regarding Art. 31 C.O. Rutgers wrote: "The principle is here that God's Word has more authority than all the authority of ecclesiastical assemblies" (*Ibidem*). I expect that the Rev. VanOene will reply, "But that is only the opinion of one man, and I am not bound to human opinions." We should bear in mind that this was said precisely after the

return to the Church Order of Dordt in a time (the time of the Doleantie) that hierarchy and human wisdom had the upper-hand in the church. In that same time it was said that there are three principles of Reformed church polity: 1) absolute binding to Scriptures, and therefore also 2) absolute authority of Christ Himself in the church and 3) exclusion of every human dominion in the church. I may again refer to the church polity expert of the Doleantie time, Dr. Rutgers, who said that this former Art. 1 (now 74) is a very important principle which, at the first Dutch synod after the Reformation, even preceded the article about unity in doctrine (Art. 2 of the Synod at Emden, 1571). Then Rutgers continued, "Not that this former Art. 1 is the fundamental principle, as if in this one point everything is already said. It is certainly true that belonging to the confederation of churches also brings along certain obligations.

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By J. De Jong

"But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe!'"

Mark 5:36

Only Believe !

So simple and so brief is Jesus' command to Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, that one might question whether a statement like this is sufficient. Considering our creeds, we might be inclined to interject that there is much more to the gospel than this! Indeed, does not James say that faith without works is dead? Brevity is well and good, but is not this statement to the ruler too short?

One should not be quick to change the Saviour's words. In fact, in them we see the Reformation's central slogan: by faith alone! The gospel still has only one central demand: believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Faith, however, is often misjudged, and made easier than it really is. Jesus demands a true and living faith, a faith manifested in deeds of love, and by acknowledgment of the absolute sovereignty of Christ in our lives.

The events surrounding Jairus' daughter make this clear. If anyone had to be helped immediately, it ought to have been Jairus. His daughter was at the point of death. And he was a ruler of the synagogue, one who had the charge of the regular services of worship and all its related administrative duties. He obviously was a figure held in honour among the people, and one for whom people moved out of the way.

But Jesus deliberately appears to relegate him and his concerns to a secondary place. That Jairus' daughter was on the point of death does not make Him rush without delay to Jairus' home. For as He proceeded to go towards Jairus' home, the woman with the hemorrhage comes forward, and the Lord Jesus takes the time to heal her and speak with her. She comes before Jairus! And Jairus must wait for her, even though for him every moment is crucial. We can feel his anxiety, and yet may notice that he perseveres. And he is rewarded, for the miracle he receives far surpasses what Jesus did to the woman, and climaxes this section of the gospel.

It's precisely when the report comes through that his daughter has died, and that because of His own delays Jesus is too late to help, that Jairus' faith is tested to its limits. To believe that Jesus could *heal* – that was one thing; to believe that He could *raise the dead* was quite another. For precisely the power to raise the dead distinguishes Jesus from all prophets and teachers that appeared before Him. Now Jairus is faced with the call to believe that Jesus is more than just a special prophet. He must see Him as the Son of God!

So Jesus says, "Do not fear, only believe." Literally He says, "Hold on to your faith, keep on believing!" In Luke's account of the same event Jesus uses a word which says, "Now begin to truly believe!" And we may be sure that Jesus wants to include both aspects of the

word "believe" in His call to Jairus. Jairus must keep trusting in the one whom he believed could heal his daughter. He must also start all over and believe in Him not only as the one who can heal her, but more especially bring her back from the dead!

Here faith is tested to its limits, just as the Lord often did. In His delays and in what He temporarily withholds, the LORD tests His people. So He tested them in the wilderness, as Moses says, "that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not," Deuteronomy 8:2. The Lord Jesus also wanted to measure the strength and endurance of Jairus' faith.

And Jairus did believe! At the critical moment, he humbled himself even more, acknowledging that life and death were in Jesus' hands. He manifests a living faith. For faith tested is a working and living faith, a faith supplemented by living deeds. To be sure, he could have thrown up his hands in disgust and despair. But he trusted in Him who raises the dead! And so his daughter was saved, as Luke's account makes clear. For there Jesus says, "Only believe, and she will be well." Jairus' faith does not bring her back, but is certainly instrumental in his daughter's being brought back by Christ's power.

Therefore the church that stands in the line of the Reformation will not add anything to Christ's simple demand of faith. Still today, the Saviour's call is, "Only believe!" But the church in the line of the Reformation will also not diminish the depth of these words. For as the call is given here it clearly implies acknowledging Jesus as the only Son of God. And this confession simultaneously involves a total self-denial by which we give all glory to God for our whole salvation.

Thus the call to Jairus is still the call given to every true believer today. Jairus had to keep denying himself, and keep following a heavenly Master. It's the same for us, who have a Master who speaks from heaven. Only, we have more living proofs of His victory over the grave, and His power to raise the dead! Thus we must seek Christ where He speaks and where He seals a true and living union with His broken body and shed blood through His Spirit by faith, through the instituted means of Word and sacrament. And just as Jairus, we are to let everything go for the sake of lasting fellowship with Him!

For the call to Jairus makes one thing clear: faith does not rest in words, but includes and culminates in fellowship with the Person of the Saviour. And it tells us that by resting in the fellowship with Him, we inherit the life that never ends. So let us too – through every test of faith – only believe! Then faith will prove victorious in the power of His Spirit. ©

How do we read the Church Order?

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Nevertheless, with the acknowledgment of this principle expressed in Art. 1 of the Synod at Emden 1571 the whole Reformation is at stake." (*Collegevoordracht en van Prof. Dr. F.L. Rutgers over Gereformeerde Kerkrecht, bewerkt en uitgegeven door Dr. J. de Jong, dl. IV, p. 156.*)

No via media

We agree with the Rev. VanOene that the Church Order is not taking the "golden mean," the *via media*, in order to avoid the two cliffs of hierarchy and independentism. It indeed does not do so. But we add immediately: the Church Order goes the good Reformed way, following the Scriptures and the confession. This means that *principles* are laid down in the Church Order. One of the principles is that no church, no office-bearer, may lord it over other churches or office-bearers. This principle goes back to what our Saviour commanded His disciples, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:25, 26, cf. also Matthew 20:25-27). We may say that the Church Order has a scriptural and confessional character. This does not mean that the Church Order has a value or authority equal to that of Scripture. But it means that the Church Order is built upon the basis of Scripture and confessions.

In our book *Decently and in Good Order*, the Rev. G. Van Rongen and I came to the conclusion that the Church Order is a further exposition of what our churches confess on the ground of God's Word. I quote, "It is true, a number of clauses included in the Church Order are nothing more than agreements between the churches to handle certain matters in an identical fashion, where in fact different paths could be chosen. Also contained in our Church Order are several stipulations which cannot be traced back to any commandment of Christ or His apostles, yet they were laid down as being beneficial to the churches in showing unity and presenting a common front. We may refer here e.g. to Articles 32, 43, and 44c. Apart from that, it is not a kind of code, containing all kinds of detailed rules and regulations. However, generally speaking our Church Order is based on the 'Spiritual order' which we are taught in the Scriptures. It is therefore an important element in maintaining the unity of faith among the churches and in each local congregation. This does not mean that our Church Order is

a perfect document. It goes without saying that neither creeds, confessions, nor church orders ever attain equal level with Holy Scripture; if ever anything in them is recognized as being incorrect or wrong, it must be amended. The late Professor P. Deddens of the Kampen Theological Seminary used to say: 'To have a Church Order is a good thing, but only together with an open Bible!' " (p. 13ff.)

This means also (and my father stressed that in his inaugural speech of 1946, just after the "Liberation"), that all human decisions in the church need examination. I translate from another speech of my father the following words: "Church polity, as it is summarized and expressed in the Church Order, is a matter of confession. The contents of the Church Order is nothing else but a specified explanation of what the Belgic Confession says e.g. in the articles 7, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32. Basis and all-important factor of it is that Jesus Christ is the only King of the church. He rules the church by His Word and Spirit by means of the consistory, the *only* body which received from Him authority for leadership and rule in the local church" (*De Reformatie*, 26, October 7, 1950).

Open Bible!

I want to stress especially the matter of the "open Bible" when discussing the Church Order. This year a book was published in the Netherlands with the title "*De kerkorde, regel voor vrede in de kerk*" (The Church Order, rule for peace in the church). The author is the retired minister H. Bouma and it is published in the series *Woord en Wereld* (no. 8), Ermelo. It is remarkable that the Rev. Bouma shows from page to page that the Church Order is based on the Scriptures. Time and again he quotes texts from the Bible in order to demonstrate that not only a confederation of churches is based on the Bible, but also that all kinds of articles of the Church Order are to be considered in the framework of texts, c.q., passages from the Scriptures.

We read on page 43 of this book, "As for the matter of an appeal to broader assemblies, this matter is not something trifling or to carry one's point. Article 31 C.O. discusses a wrong due to a pronouncement ('uitspraak'), not a decision ('besluit') but a sentence, a judgment." Rev. Bouma continues, "Imagine that a consistory came to a decision on a certain point. But somebody in the congregation is of the opinion that this decision would harm the church and its Lord. Then one shall bring this before the consistory with good grounds. Then the consistory has to examine that decision and it has to come to a decision about its first decision: was it a good decision or was it not? So, an appeal about a decision is

not mentioned here, but an appeal about a pronouncement, a judgment. One must not appeal to a broader assembly too rashly, but first of all call the consistory involved to further reflection."

I agree with the Rev. Bouma in this respect. But what is now the scriptural background of the right of appeal? Of course, that no injury, no injustice, no wrong is to be tolerated in the church. Therefore there must be the possibility of an appeal.

Inadmissible?

Now the question is, is an appeal to a broader assembly inadmissible when it comes from someone who is not personally wronged? Not really! If there is injury, injustice, wrong in the church, everybody must have the right of appeal with regard to that evil. Why? Because injustice must be taken away, as soon as possible. Imagine that the person who is wronged by a minor assembly will become seriously ill after the decision. Imagine that he passes away before he can do anything. Or imagine that he was so upset that he withdrew from the church. Of course, such action would be wrong. But the question is, what about that wrong decision? Is then injustice to remain because there is no possibility of an appeal? May nobody else appeal? Is everything then blocked and will the injury be maintained? Here we have a ground which shows the need of an open Bible when we read our Church Order. The Bible says, "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless, maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute" (Psalm 83:2, 3). The late Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus quoted this text in connection with the bad decisions of the General Synod of 1944 in the Netherlands.

Now this is just one text. There are many more texts in the Bible which point to the necessity that injury and injustice must be taken out of the church, without delay. Prof. Dr. S. Greijdanus wrote a good book, titled *Schriftbeginselen van kerkrecht inzake meerdere vergaderingen* (Scriptural principles of church polity regarding broader assemblies). One of the principles is that the freedom of God's children must be honoured in the church, including the freedom that they have the right to point to injustice and injury, and to appeal unjust decisions also when injury is done to others. It could be that consistories and also other ecclesiastical assemblies are blinded, so that they do not see that there is something wrong.

On guard

Now I come back to the question asked at the beginning. How do we read

the Church Order? Do we read the Church Order in a formal, or even a formalistic way? Do we say, when something is not literally mentioned in the Church Order, that the matter is out of order, and that we have nothing to do with it? It is an easy way to say: "inadmissible!" But is this correct? My answer is: no! We have to read the Church Order with an open Bible and we have to apply the admonitions of the Bible to the concrete situation in the church. This means as far as Art. 31 C.O. is concerned – the expres-

sion is again from my father – that we have to stand on *guard*. We have to examine whether decisions in the church are in conformity with God's Word, the confessions, and the Church Order or not. It is important that we keep in mind not only the literal text of the Church Order, but also the "spirit" of the Church Order. This is not something vague, something hanging in the air, but it is a matter of what I called "principles, derived from Scripture and confessions." A Church Order should never be in conflict

with these principles, but must reflect them! I hope that the Rev. VanOene will reconsider his views in this respect. I also hope that the Canadian Reformed Churches will stand on guard concerning the scriptural principle of Art. 31 of the Church Order, so that no freedom and no right of any of God's children is contradicted or counteracted!

C

PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam

Operation Rescue: A biblical strategy?

Pro-life organizations across Canada and the United States are planning "International Days of Rescue" for January 12, 13, and 14 of this year in an attempt to save the unborn from the horror of abortion. *Vitality*, a publication of the Coalition for the Protection of Human Life, in its December 1988 issue (p. 8) devotes some space to explaining exactly what this is all about. First, what is a "Rescue"?

Rescue missions are heroic attempts by God-fearing people to save babies and mothers from abortion on a particular day, by peacefully, but physically blockading abortion mills with their bodies, to intervene between abortionists and the innocent victims. Many children across North America are alive today because of these efforts. Rescuers are usually arrested, charged with a minor infraction and released the same day. The charge is most often trespassing, or breach of the peace, although theoretically more serious charges could be laid.

But why resort to this tactic? Is this not disobeying the authorities? This question is answered as follows:

Obedience to God. God commands His people to "Rescue those unjustly sentenced to death . . ." (Proverbs 24:11) and "Rescue the weak and needy. Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked" (Psalm 82:4). Children will be saved from death; mothers from exploitation. For the babies slated to die today, tomorrow, and next week, conventional pro-life efforts hold little hope. It is for these children and others that

we must act now – those for whom there is no other hope.

Moreover, statistics issued by a well-known pro-abortion organization reveal that if women for any reason miss their first abortion appointment, 20 percent will not reschedule.

Some people question the rightness of Christians disobeying civil authority. However, the Scriptures consistently teach that when man's law and God's law conflict, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29, See also Exodus 6:5-10, Acts 4:15-20, and Proverbs 24:11).

Another important consideration given is that such a "Rescue" action will result in change and a way out of the present abortion dilemma. Victory beckons.

Even a brief examination of recent North American history shows that political change follows social activism. The civil rights movement in the U.S. underscores the basic truth that political change comes after activist citizens bring enough tension in the nation and pressure on the politicians to force change in the law . . .

Victory will come when enough people rise up with one heart and voice, compelling Canada to restore justice to children and mothers. If thousands will answer the call to battle, peacefully but physically closing down abortion mills across the country, as the upheaval increases, we could provide the necessary clout and momentum to see that Parliament passes a law to protect all unborn children.

Who cannot become upset when considering the terrible evil of abortion? Thou-

sands of unborn children are slaughtered with impunity and the aggravation of no apparent progress in our country towards protecting the unborn can be quite distressing. However, is "Operation Rescue" the way to go? Can this really be justified from the Scriptures? I am convinced that the answer is no. Let me pass on to you some material from *Chalcedon Report*, 282 (1989) [PO Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251]. It will make clear why we have to reject this strategy. R.J. Rushdoony, writing under the title "Revolution or Regeneration" notes (p. 14) that there has been a growth of revolutionary ideas in our society and also in Christian circles (e.g., tax revolt and liberation theology).

The excuse is the power of the state. But Jesus Christ and Paul lived under men like Tiberius and Nero; they lived in a time of unjust taxation, abortion, homosexuality, and more. Neither our Lord nor St. Paul counseled a tax revolt. Rather, as against the tax revolts of their day, they counseled tax-paying (Luke 20:19-26; Romans 13:7). Not revolution, but regeneration is the Christian hope for man and society.

In 1986, another revolutionary ploy became the methodology of many churchmen, the demonstrations at abortion clinics designed to violate the laws of picketing and protest and ensure arrest for impeding access. It is questionable whether or not these demonstrations saved the lives of any unborn babies; the women seeking abortions simply went elsewhere. Even more, the demonstrators set a precedent in violat-

INTERNATIONAL

By W.W.J. VanOene

OSLO

The Evangelical-Lutheran ministers in Norway want more money for working on Sundays. The National Association of ministers took this decision at their general meeting in Oslo. Only one of all the

ministers present voted against the proposal. Almost all of the 1500 ministers of the Lutheran State Church are members of this "union."

The president of the association, Rev. K. Lein, thinks that it will be difficult to defend the raise before the member-

ship. Lein is of the opinion that ministers are underpaid in relation to the income of comparable professionals. The ministers will discuss more in detail the exact size of the raise for working on Sundays.

Officially 90% of the 11,1 million

Continued on page 38



ing civil laws of various sorts. What is to prevent pro-abortion people from blocking access to churches or even entering them to disrupt services? If we allow lawless protest to one side, we justify it for all.

No Scriptural justification is offered by these demonstrators. The closest thing to a text to justify them is Acts 5:29, the answer of Peter and the other apostle, "We ought to obey God rather than men." What does this mean, however? There is no civil government anywhere which does not disobey God at some points . . . Are we then justified in obeying only when we believe God's Word is faithfully observed? Then are those around us or under us entitled to rebel against our authority whenever they feel we fall short of or neglect God's Word? Nothing in Scripture gives warrant to that. David's respect for Saul, despite Saul's sin, gives us another model.

Where freedom of God's Word in the church, its schools, its families and members is denied, then we must obey God, not the state. We do not disobey to save our money nor even our lives but where God's Word and its proclamation is at stake (p. 14).

With respect to the other passages referred to in the article arguing for Operation Rescue, it should be noted that Proverbs 24:11 ("Rescue those unjustly sentenced to death . . .") does not say what that article suggests. The context (cf. v. 12) indicates that one has an obligation to come forward with evidence he may have that can clear the accused of the wrong he is being held responsible for before the judge. Thus he will do his duty to save one from being unjustly condemned to die. The reference to Psalm 82:4 ("Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked") is God speaking to

the gods, that is, to the rulers he has set in authority over men to rule on His behalf (cf. Psalm 82:1). It is the task of rulers to uphold justice.

Rushdoony, in his article quoted above, goes on to note that the methodology of such demonstrations as they are now planned is borrowed from non-Christian and revolutionary sources. Such methodology can be effective in the short term, but, "there is no Christian calling to create mobs and to violate laws to achieve a purpose . . . The power to punish murders is a civil power, not an ecclesiastical nor a personal one" (p. 15). "The use of violence, whether by Christians or non-Christians, is a way of saying that voting, the law courts, or reason mean nothing, or, that faith and the power of God are irrelevant to the problems of our time . . . Regeneration,

not revolution is God's way" (p. 15).

In the same issue of *Chalcedon*, R.A. Hamack, a judge in the Municipal Court of Seattle, Washington, makes similar observations and in his conclusions notes:

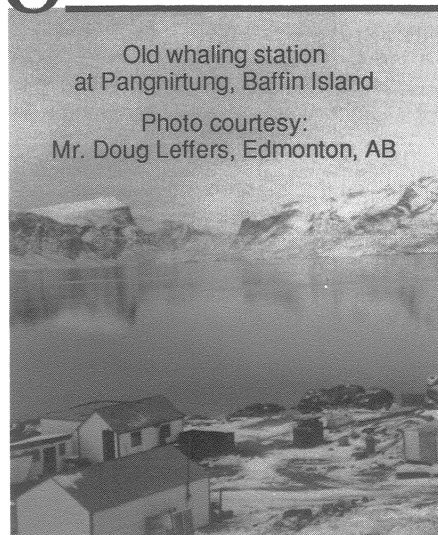
God will deal with the sin through His governments or supernaturally. Only He can give a just recompense for sin. This opinion is not given to impugn the hearts of those involved, nor to denigrate their personal courage and commitment. God knows we all have wept for this holocaust. But no emotional posture can authorize us to violate the civil law by direct rebellion against the civil government, or by the direct commission of crimes against our neighbors for their sin. Our ways are resistance, or non-compliance, prayer, work for change through any legal channel and to speak prophetically through the pulpits of the churches in this land. Anarchy, no matter how small or seemingly noble, cannot be condoned and is not authorized by Scripture. What we have before us is anarchy against our neighbor, our civil government, and against God's Law. The civil government has been given the sword of judgment and the authority by God to punish us for the first two, and has done so in the past. I leave it to God and His infinite and perfect wisdom, mercy and righteousness to deal with those who sin and violate His laws and commandments (1 Corinthians 5:12-13) . . .

Operation Rescue is not a Biblical Christian response; and cannot be analytically or scripturally upheld without doing violence to God's fully specific and established law and commandments, given for the governing of our daily lives, that we might honor and glorify His name.

Right on.



OUR COVER



Old whaling station
at Pangnirtung, Baffin Island

Photo courtesy:
Mr. Doug Leffers, Edmonton, AB

International — Continued from page 37

Norwegians belong to the Lutheran State Church. (N.D.)

EDINBURGH

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, was suspended as an elder and is not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper for half a year. The reason for this discipline is that twice he attended a Mass for the Dead after the death of a Roman Catholic acquaintance. The decision to suspend and bar from the Lord's Supper was made by the Southern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church. It is expected that next year's General Assembly will come back on the Presbytery's decision. The Free Presbyterian Church has about 7,000 members. This includes people who are not officially members but are so-called adherents. (N.D.)

CANADIAN SCENE

As of January 1988, union membership in Canada totalled 3,841,000, an increase of 1.6 per cent from 3,782,000 a year earlier, according to figures released by Labour Canada.

Union members comprised 36.6 per cent of Canada's nonagricultural workers, a decline from the level of 37.6 per cent in 1987.

The Canadian Labour Congress remains the largest central labour organization, with an affiliated membership of 2.2 million, or 58.1 percent of unionized workers.

The ten largest unions in Canada maintained their ranking from a year earlier. Those recording an increase in membership were: the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the National Union of Provincial Government Employees (NUPGE), The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and the Social Affairs Federation Inc. (SAF). Membership declined in the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) between 1987 and 1988 and was unchanged in the other five largest unions.

These and other statistics, together with information on international and national unions, independent local organizations, central labour congresses and world labour organizations are included in the *Directory of Labour Organizations* to be published later in the year.

CANADIAN SCENE

Many people are bored by the recent proliferation of public opinion polls, but a recent Gallup Poll gives us an interesting glimpse at ourselves and our neighbours. The polls compare religious belief in North America and Western Europe.

To the question: "Do you believe in God?" of those polled in the United States and in Ireland, 95 percent said "yes" and 90 percent said "yes" in Cana-

da. The "yes" vote in Italy was 84 percent, in Great Britain 76 percent, in West Germany 72 percent, in France 62 percent and in Sweden 52 percent.

To the question: "Do you attend regular religious services?" in Ireland 82 percent of the respondents said "yes". In Canada 60 percent also said "yes" but the figures dropped sharply after that. In the United States it was 43 percent, in Italy 36 percent, in West Germany 21 percent, in France 12 percent and only 5 percent in Sweden.

The appearance of these figures coincided with the publication of a book, *The Future of Christianity* by David L. Edwards, in which he states: "Secularization on the European scale is without precedent or parallel. All figures are down: ordinations, baptisms, church membership Any way you care to view it, mainstream Christianity is on the wane throughout Europe."

LEUSDEN

The Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) (synodical, VO) could not agree on details of government and church order at a combination synod at the end of October. The synod dealt with proposals from deputies for *Together on the Way* (Samen op Weg), a movement to join the two churches.

A church order draft presented by the deputies was passed by a majority of those present, but not by a majority of both churches. Since a majority of the NHK rejected the draft, it has been referred back to the Moderamina of the "Combi-Synod".

Another document known as "Sketch 1988" describing the future structure of the church was debated at length. The *Sketch* placed the emphasis of collective practice on the classical level of church government, according to G. Dingemans, the chair of the drafting committee. He noted that it was an important function of a classis that it exercises discipline over its member churches. (Sic! VO) However, delegates perceived this as a practice of the GKN more than of the NHK. (Again: Sic!!, VO). NHK delegates objected that the *Sketch* did not give enough weight to the provincial level of church government. (Don't worry, they will come around, VO)

A confessional question came up over the recommendation to accept the Remonstrant Brotherhood as an observer to the process. The Remonstrants came into being during the controversy over the proposals of Arminius, which were denounced in the Canons of Dordt. Following the Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619, the Remonstrants were sent away and their preachers banned. Since World War II, the NHK has been having talks

with the Remonstrants, who have now expressed a desire to observe the process of *Together on the Way* more closely. Prof. H.B. Weijland objected that the Remonstrants really had no interest in joining the process, and that granting them observer status would turn the process into a kind of council of churches. But the commission argued that they were only observers, not participants. The Evangelical Lutheran Church, which has been previously accepted as observers and were now accepted as full participants, was not a precedent for this case, it was argued. The combination synod approved the Remonstrants as observers. (REC NE)

NEW YORK (RNS)


As antiabortion proponents savoured their victories in three state referendums, the Reagan administration made another attempt to have the U.S. Supreme Court reconsider its 1973 ruling that legalized abortion.

Measures barring state financing for abortions were endorsed by voters in Arkansas, Colorado and Michigan in the Nov. 8 elections. In Arkansas, an "Unborn Child Amendment," which defines life as beginning at conception, was approved by 52 percent. An effort to reverse a 1984 ban on state abortion financing in Colorado failed by 60 percent. And in Michigan, a measure to ban publicly financed abortions except to save the life of the mother passed by 58 percent after 17 years of failed legislative attempts and vetoes. (CN)

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The President-elect, Mr. George Bush told what he saw at the funeral of Leonid Brezhnev. "I happened to be in just the right spot to see Mrs. Brezhnev. She walked up, took one last look at her husband and there — in the cold, grey center of that totalitarian state, she traced the sign of the cross over her husband's chest. I was stunned and I was deeply moved. Anyone who witnessed that loving gesture, could not accept any moral foundation for communism. In that simple act, Christ had broken through the core of the communist system." (CN)

ROERMOND/AMSTERDAM

According to the most recent information, the Netherlands can boast of some 27, 300 millionaires. This means that one in 531 Netherlanders was worth one million guilders or more. Limburg is the province with the largest number: 1080. The millionaires in Limburg are worth an average of 2.1 million. Even in the "lean" years 1980-1982, their number increased by 2000. (DNC) 

Dedication church and organ

Lynden, Washington

By W.D. Meesters

Our gracious God blessed the congregation of Lynden by granting them a new church building where they may congregate and worship God, and also a new organ to play and to sing to the praise of the Lord.

The dedication of this new church and organ took place on June 22, 1988, at 8:00 p.m. in the new church building on 8863 Northwood Road, Lynden, WA., U.S.A.

Br. H. Bosscher, vice-chairman of the consistory, extended a hearty welcome to everyone present. The church was filled and many brothers and sisters from the sister churches in the Fraser Valley came out to attend this memorable evening.

After the singing of Psalm 98:1 and 4, br. Bosscher read 1 Peter 1 and led in prayer. He petitioned God to "bless this House" and prayed that it might be consecrated to Him. He expressed the hope that the living preaching of the Word of God may come forth from this pulpit and that the members in the pews may be living stones in a building not made by hands. The church of Lynden has met in the gym of the Covenant Christian School for almost four years, and on behalf of the consistory br. Bosscher thanked the school board for their good cooperation.

After this br. C. Petter, chairman of the building committee, was given the floor. He thanked the consistory and congregation for their tremendous cooperation and participation in the building project of the church and gave a brief historical sketch under the theme: "Coming home." He mentioned that many of the current members of the church of Lynden, especially the old-timers, went to church in a number of meeting places, such as various halls, theater buildings, schools, chapels, and even above a hardware store. Families which lived in the United States crossed the border every Sunday to go to church in Canada, first in New Westminster (instituted in December, 1950, now Surrey), then in Cloverdale (instituted in March of 1954), and in Abbotsford (instituted in February 1961). When the church of Lynden start-



▲ The new church building of the American Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington



Dedication plaque ►

ed its own worship services on September 1, 1984, under the supervision of the consistory of the church of Abbotsford, it met in what originally had been a grange hall, converted to a school gym. After the church of Lynden was instituted on March 10, 1985, the consistory with the congregation decided first to call a minister, and then to look for property for parsonage and church. In the summer of 1985 the Rev. A. Van Delden was ordained and installed as the first minister of the church of Lynden. In November, 1985, an acre of land was purchased for the building of a parsonage, with an option on an adjacent acre of land for the

potential purpose of building a church. The parsonage, built by Faber Brothers Building Contractors, assisted by many volunteers from the church, was completed in May, 1986. In January, 1987, the option on the second acre of land was exercised and land for the construction of a church building was purchased. In the spring of 1987 the building committee presented a building plan to the consistory and the congregation. This plan was adopted, and after all the necessary permits were obtained, the same company started construction of the building in January, 1988. Again the whole congregation was involved with



The choir of the American Reformed Church of Lynden, singing on the occasion of the dedication of the new church building and organ.



Mrs. Ann Hillmer, organist, at the new organ of the American Reformed Church in Lynden, WA.

The signing of the guest book on the occasion of the dedication of the new church building of the American Reformed Church of Lynden, WA. Depicted here is Mr. H. Bronsema, charter member of the church



The handing over of the symbolic key of the new church building by br. C. Petter, chairman of the building committee (left) to br. J. Bisschop, elder

voluntary labor and/or extra financial support. Br. Petter expressed his appreciation to all those who assisted in this project, but, above all, he expressed gratitude to God, who made it possible for the congregation finally to "come home" to this beautiful new church building. He presented the consistory with a large symbolic wooden key with appropriate inscription.

On behalf of the consistory, br. J. Bisschop accepted the key. He, too, gave thanks to God and expressed the hope and sincere desire that all the activities within this building may be directed to God to the praise and the glory of

His name. Subsequently he thanked the building committee for all the time and effort given, the organ committee, srs. Ann Hillmer and Shirley Veldman, for their work in evaluating and selecting a wonderful organ, and the congregation for the harmonious way and brotherly spirit in which this project was completed. On behalf of the building contractors, br. Rick Faber thanked the church for the opportunity to construct the church building and for the many hours of voluntary work by members of the congregation. He thanked the subcontractors for their cooperation in the project. In addition he thanked Rev. and Mrs. Van

Delden for making their garage available for the workers to eat their lunch, especially during rainy days, and for their hospitality in serving soup and coffee on many occasions.

Following a performance by the choir under the direction of sr. Ann Hillmer with sr. Shirley Veldman at the organ, Rev. Van Delden presented a short meditation on 2 Peter 1:19. He pointed out the frequently recurring motif in the church building of the *Morningstar*, which decorative design is incorporated in the glass windows in the front wall of the church, and as a wood design in the pulpit and on the baptismal font. The last

star arising in the early morning hours on the eastern horizon in the Holy Land was the morningstar; it was the messenger of dawn, a symbol of hope, that soon the darkness would be dispelled. So, too, in the world we live in today, a world of sin and darkness, a great light has appeared, Jesus Christ, the Morningstar through whom children of God receive eternal light. Christ as the great Morningstar is the symbol of hope, the Light which shines in the darkness; the one who at His second coming will dispel all darkness and usher in the eternal day.

In response to Rev. Van Delden's meditation the audience sang Hymn 12:4:

*O come, Thou dayspring from on high
And comfort us by drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to Thee, O Israel.*

Rev. Donald Van Dyken, minister of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Burlington, Washington, on behalf of this church, congratulated the church of Lynden with its new sanctuary and expressed the hope that the members of the church of Lynden may be complete in Christ in accordance with Colossians 2.

A number of delegates from neighbouring sister churches offered their congratulations and presented a variety of gifts. Rev. M. VanderWel of the mother church of Abbotsford, congratulated the daughter with her own house so soon after leaving the mother's house, and promised a kneeling bench which is still in the making. Mr. Breukelman of the church of Chilliwack extended his congratulations and presented the church of Lynden with a clock. Rev. Moesker of the church of Cloverdale expressed the hope that the church of Lynden may have the solid foundation of the Word of God, which is the only solid foundation of Christ's church. He also presented a clock. Mr. Onderwater of the church of Surrey also presented a clock and suggested that we hang them up side by side and let the fastest one win, whereupon the audience burst out in laughter. Mr. H. Moes of the church of Langley commented on the twinship between the cities of Langley and Lynden. Not only do both names start with an L, the pulpits and pews in both churches are quite similar. Br. Moes presented a beautiful set of letters for the announcement boards in the front of the church. Organ recitals were performed by the sisters Mrs. Ann Hillmer and Mrs. Shirley Veldman. Brs. L. Hillmer and H. Faber on behalf of the Bible Study Society presented to Rev. Van Delden a new armchair for the pulpit. On behalf of the Lynden Young People Society, Ron Faber and

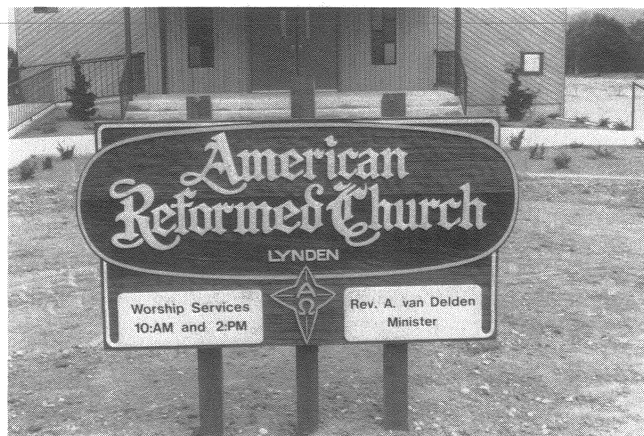


50th Wedding Anniversary



Harm Kiers and Antje Kiers-Grolleman hope to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary on February 10th, 1989, the Lord willing. They emigrated to Carman from Enschede in 1956 with their two sons Aaldert and Derk. Aaldert was taken unto the Lord in 1969 at the age of 29, after a serious illness. Derk lives with his wife and two daughters in Alberta. Harm at 80 and Antje at 79 years of age still enjoy relatively good health.

Box 813, Carman, MB R0G 0J0



Sign in front of the American Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington

Arnold Petter presented a beautiful wooden collection bag rack which matched the furnishings of the pulpit. After br. Riemer Faber thanked everyone for coming out to celebrate this evening

and invited them to stay for refreshments, he closed with a prayer of thanksgiving to our gracious God.

C

Report of the Annual Convention

of the League of the Canadian Reformed Women Societies of Ontario held in Burlington West on October 19, 1988

By Annette Nobel

Our 27th annual League Day, held in the Burlington Rehoboth (West) church, began with coffee and the exchange of greetings with acquaintances and friends from all over Ontario.

At 10:00 the morning session was opened with the singing of Psalm 87:1-5. Mrs. Van Delden, president, read from Ephesians 1:1-15 and led in prayer. She then spoke a few words remembering Mrs. Selles, who recently passed away. The League's first president, she presided over the League Day for many years. Her enthusiasm and good spirits always made League Days special. Mrs. Van Delden welcomed us and noted how the two topics for the day can be beautifully combined under one theme, "created for the praise of His glory."

We were then introduced to Mrs. Liz Dykema, the new Corresponding Secretary of the League. As a result of the vote held the evening before at the Delegates' Meeting the collection today would benefit "Beginnings." A letter from the World Home Bible League was received thanking us for the money collected at last year's League Day. Letters were received from Carman and Australia wishing us a good and fruitful day. Mrs. Meintz, of Emmen, the Netherlands, and Mrs. Jane Aikema, of Cloverdale, B.C., relayed greetings from their places of residence. It was also announced that next year the League Day will be held, D.V., in Chatham. Roll call showed that 375 ladies were present, including two from the Netherlands and two from B.C. The business part of our day was concluded with the singing of our League Song.

Our essayist, Mrs. Mulder, was introduced. She is well-known among us, being a minister's wife, and through the comforting column for the sick which appears in *Clarion*. Her topic was "Election and Reprobation."

Though this topic is a difficult one and cannot be reasoned out, we should learn about election and reprobation for it reveals God's love for us and His

majesty. Throughout the ages there has been much discussion and disagreement about this matter. The Pharisees thought they could earn salvation through strict adherence to the laws. Pelagius had the theory that everyone was born without sin and could choose for themselves. Arminius believed that man's salvation was based on his own "goodness." It is hard for man to accept that we are totally corrupt and spiritually dead but by making salvation partly dependent on our own choice the glory and majesty of the Lord is diminished. For it is He only who elects and saves, according to His good pleasure.

When Adam rejected God's love and became a sinner he did so as head of the human race. Through him we all became spiritually dead. Left to himself man wants to follow the world. But the Lord stretched out His hand to man and through His Son paved the way to life. Those who believe in Him receive eternal life, but those who reject it receive eternal death.



Dr. C. Van Dam and Mrs. L. Van Delden during the answering of the questions

Above: League Day in Burlington West Rehoboth Church

We do not choose the Lord, He chooses us. He gives faith to one and leaves the other in sin. He could have chosen all, or none. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). This is called election. He elected to Himself a people to honour and serve Him.

Many Christians today believe that God chose those whom He knew would believe. But the Scriptures teach us that God's election is unconditional (Romans 9:11-13). He chose us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). We can find rest and security in this knowledge. We do not have to worry about our state before the Lord.

What about our own responsibility? Election does not eliminate this. He bends our will so that we want to serve Him and He makes us able to do it. The Lord is always at work in us so that we can live a life of thanksgiving.

Many people nowadays only want to hear about God's love, but the Bible also

speaks about the wrath of God. God is merciful and just. This justice He shows by leaving some in their wickedness. He has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble (Proverbs 16:4).

Yet we cannot blame God for sin, though He uses it for His purposes. Man remains 100% responsible for his sins. The unbeliever goes to perdition because he delights in his sin and rejects God's love.

The doctrine of election and reprobation is a source of joy and thankfulness to us. For we can be assured that our faithful Lord who began a good work in us will also bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6). To Him be the glory!

We sang Psalm 145:1, 5 and then time was given for discussion. The collection for "Beginnings" was held (\$664 was collected). To close the morning session we sang Psalm 95:1, 2, 3.

We then went to the Legion Hall in Waterdown for a cold buffet lunch. There was plenty of good food and chatter for all.

Soon it was time to begin our afternoon session and this was done with the singing of our National Anthem. The ladies of Burlington West then entertained us with a poem about how we are the same, and questions about how we are different. This proved to be both entertaining and educational!

After singing Hymn 60:1-5, we read from Genesis 1-2:3. This was in preparation for Dr. Van Dam's speech, "In the Beginning," dealing with verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1. As this topic has been dealt with in *Clarion* by Dr. Van Dam, we will be very brief here.

Before the creation of the world, God was present. He is eternal. In fact all three Persons of the Trinity were present. God created the world and all that is in it from nothing. God is the Only one who can "create," that is, make something from nothing.

He described the "gap" theory, which says that the perfect creation of verse 1 was ruined. This ruined earth is pictured in verse 2. The restoration of the first world is recorded beginning with verse 3. Arguments supporting this theory were explained and Dr. Van Dam showed us how they are incorrect.

What is the role science should play in understanding Scripture? First of all, the Word of God is clear. Believers do not need specialists to make the Bible clear to them. God's Word is self-sufficient and self-authenticating. God's Word interprets itself; we can compare Scripture with Scripture. Finally, God's Word has the last say. Though it would be a misuse of Scripture to use it as a science textbook, biblical data are true and should be considered by scientists.

Before the discussion, we were asked

to sing Psalm 93:1-4. The discussion brought many questions, to which Dr. Van Dam ably responded.

To close the day, Mrs. Van Delden thanked God, first of all, for giving us this day. Mrs. Mulder was thanked. Her essay was so clear; we so often make it difficult. Mrs. Van Delden also thanked Dr. Van Dam for helping us discover that verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1 say so much. Mrs. Willa Dale Smid, our Corresponding Secretary for the past five years, was given warm thanks for all the work she did for the League. For the third year in a row Mrs. Van Delden could thank Mrs. Aafke Spithoff for accompanying us on the organ. The ladies of Burlington West were thanked for a well-organized day. Mrs. Reinink thanked Mrs. Van Delden for again doing an excellent job in leading this day. An opportunity was given for general questions, and then we sang from Psalm 147:1, 2, 6. Dr. Van Dam closed the day with prayer.

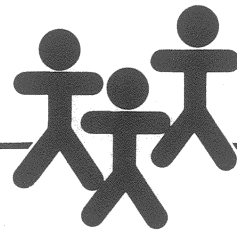
We were invited downstairs for refreshments before everyone again departed for their hometowns, once again replenished in the knowledge of Scripture, and having renewed acquaintance with old friends.

Recording Secretary
L.C.R.W.S.



SCHOOL CROSSING

By T.M.P. VanderVen



The annual headache – 1989 version

In previous years, School Crossing has paid quite some attention to what has become known as "the annual headache": the annually returning problem of finding teachers for our schools. January 1989 promises to be the beginning of another such frantic scramble for teachers. So far, a number of advertisements have already appeared, and if the gloomy predictions are correct school boards will receive hardly any response to their advertisements.

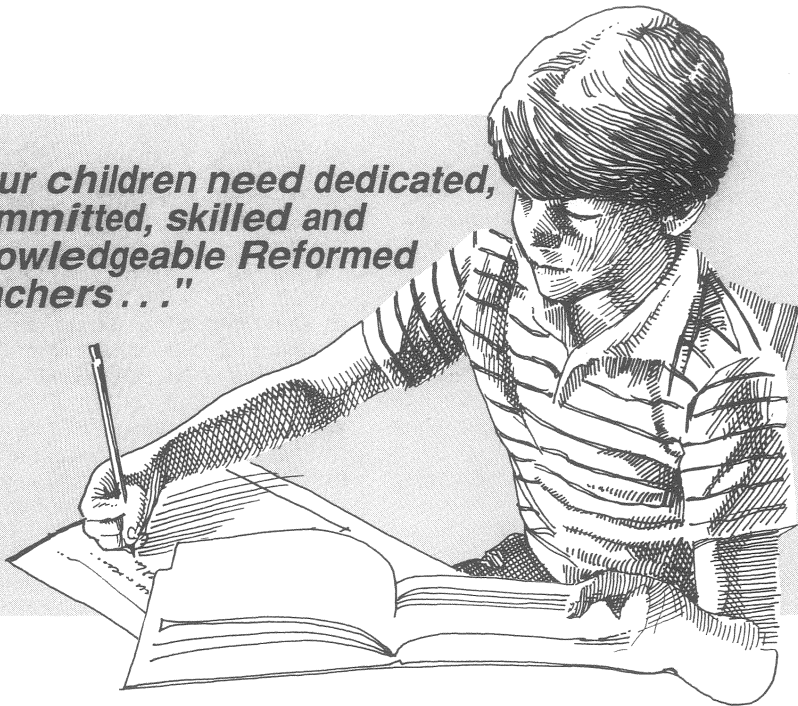
The current teacher shortage could have been predicted. The past few years have seen a steady increase in the number of teaching positions within our schools due to expansion. In addition, there is the normal staff turnover. As in

all professions, also teachers at Reformed schools come and go. If it is correct to assume that every year approximately 10% of the number of teachers needs to be replaced, and if we add to this the annually increasing number of teaching positions to be filled, then it is obvious that seven to ten new teachers entering the profession each year is not enough to fill all these vacancies. Our high schools need persons who have expertise in specific subject areas, with Mathematics and the Sciences being badly understaffed at the moment. The elementary schools lack persons able to teach elementary French, Music and Art. The number of ex-teachers able to return to the teaching profession is not

endless either, while full-time employment of such people depletes the store of capable volunteers for our schools. All of this adds up to a great need for teachers for our elementary and our high schools across the country. We do not want to push unscriptural panic buttons – the Lord reigns over all and everything – but let us not remain idle either.

Surveying the school bulletins from the past months, it is disconcerting to note that any comments about a possible staff shortage are usually made only in direct reference to the needs of the particular school for next year. I am sure that the daily operation of the schools takes up most if not all the time and energy available for schoolwork. Finances,

"Our children need dedicated, committed, skilled and knowledgeable Reformed teachers..."



transportation, and maintenance, as well as curriculum development, classroom visits, personnel concerns, parental contacts, etc., surely leave little time to think about next year, let alone the year after. Yet it remains a fact that school boards, on behalf of their school associations, are not only charged with the building and maintenance of the physical plant, but also with bringing about Reformed education by hiring teachers. After all, without teachers we cannot have schools. If then teachers are in such short supply – a problem which will not disappear overnight – school boards can no longer afford to sit back in the hope that come February and March a welcome array of applications will somehow land on the table of the secretary.

It is simply not good enough, and it certainly lacks Christian charity when we hear comments such as: "At our school we have no problem, and since we are charged with the governance of this school only, please do not bother us with the problems of other schools." It is not good enough to suggest that the responsibility lies with the Teachers' College, after all they train teachers, don't they? But I ask, who employs the teachers? Is it not right when the establishment and expansion of small schools in certain congregations is severely criticized by outsiders as irresponsible, implying that the blame for the staffing troubles should be placed on the doorstep of such uneconomic schools, while in the meantime we ourselves have the luxury of twelve years of education for our own children. The importance of Reformed education is trivialized when it is suggested, "Don't bother us with demands for quality and qualification, as long as there is somebody in front of that class, that's good enough. And we'll find somebody!"

The problem of the shortage of teachers is considerably bigger than the difficulty of finding the right number of "bodies" to teach our children in September 1989. Reformed education is per definition quality education. If that is forgotten we may discover to our chagrin and shame that we are using the adjective "Reformed" in vain. Therefore the major responsibility to ensure that there are teachers to teach our children remains with the school associations via the school boards. It is imperative that school boards generate incentives to attract capable people to the teaching profession. They must do so collectively and publicly. They should not only consider the short-range needs of the local school, but the long-range needs of the Canadian Reformed school system as a whole. I urge boards to take this task seriously. The provision of teachers for our Reformed schools is a most critical business. Our children need dedicated, committed, skilled and knowledgeable Reformed teachers, otherwise there will be no Reformed education.

Does the teaching profession have this kind of esteem within our communities, or do we generally look down upon it, making jokes about the short working hours and the long holidays, cheerfully suggesting that teachers should do some


real work for a change during those long breaks at Christmas, in March, during the summer. No, this is not the umpteenth attempt by a teacher to impress upon his constituency the weightiness of his task. With disheartening regularity school bulletins make mention of the unfortunate fact that at times students display attitudes of disrespect and disregard for their teachers, to the detriment of the learning progress and the esteem accorded to the teaching profession. From one of the more literary gifted I found a meditation on the theme of the Pied Piper of Hamelin which ended as follows:

... I would like to urge parents to match their appreciation of the reformed educators' profession to the appreciation of the importance of reformed education. I would like to urge the teachers to wake up, and to start building up their own profession. If we work together as parents and teachers in this way, I am sure the working conditions and the image of the profession will improve and with it the attractiveness to young people to enter this beautiful profession of teaching.

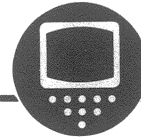
The interest of young people in teaching as a career is certainly related to the regard teachers have in our community. Notice that this respect and appreciation are two-way streets. Teachers may not simplistically point fingers at parents, nor parents at the personal oddities of teachers. Reformed education remains the concern of all of us; it takes place in the midst of the communion of saints where we are encouraged and admonished to use our gifts to the benefit of our neighbour. Being involved in education means service, both by parents and teachers, in a mutual effort to obediently respond to that command from Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78: Tell of God's great deeds, lest we forget Him.

Reformed education can be and must be a joyous enterprise: we have the greatest support in the world – God Himself. Let that joy be visible and audible in our homes and in our schools. No, not by sweeping our shortcomings and faults under the carpet. Let's do our utmost to get to know each other in order to grow in our Christian respect and appreciation for each other, in order to build each other up so that we – with and within the means given to us by the LORD – are able to provide our children with quality education. Then we – parents and teachers alike – will be able to show our young people the beauty and rewards of a career as teacher within our Reformed communities.

Our children need Reformed education, therefore our schools need to be staffed by Reformed teachers. ©

CHURCH NEWS 

Called to Neerlandia, AB
 REV. G. WIESKE
 of Lincoln, ON



Classis Ontario-South of December 14, 1988

The chairman of the convening church, Rev. J. VanRietschoten of Chatham, opens the meeting of delegates. He requests the singing of Psalm 29:1, 2, 3, the reading of John 1:1-18, and leads in prayer.

The delegates of the church at Chatham check the credentials. They report that all churches are present and duly represented.

Classis is constituted. The following officers are appointed, Chairman: Rev. D.G.J. Agema; Vice-Chairman: Rev. J. VanRietschoten; Clerk: Rev. R. Aasman.

The chairman recalls some events which have taken place in the churches of this region. The church at Hamilton is congratulated with the installation of the Rev. C. Stam as their pastor and with the ordination and installation of Rev. J. Kroeze as their second missionary. The Rev. R. Aasman, pastor of the church at Ancaster, declined calls from the churches at Chilliwack and Tasmania. The church at London is remembered because of its need as vacant church. The chairman recalls the passing away of the Rev. A. B. Roukema and his ministry to

the churches in this region. Then he welcomes all delegates and guests.

An agenda is adopted.

1. The Rev. C. Stam of Hamilton is present for the first time and signs the Form of Subscription.
2. The churches at Blue Bell and London announce that they will need advice from Classis in the Question Period ad Art. 44.
3. Rev. P. Aasman, missionary minister to the church at Hamilton is seated in an advisory capacity.
4. An appeal of a brother is dealt with in closed session.
5. At 12:30 we retire for a delicious meal prepared by the sisters of the church at Attercliffe. At 1:30 we reconvene and sing unto the Lord Psalm 65:1, 2.
6. The church at Blue Bell asks advice of Classis in a private matter. Advice is given. The church at London requests pulpit supply once every three weeks. Classis arranges for a supply once a month for one year.
7. Report Art. 20, Needy Students. The church at Chatham administers the Fund and reports that a student of the Theological College,

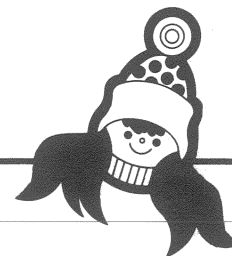
- residing in our region, has applied for financial assistance for himself and his family. Support is granted, commencing December 1, 1988. All the delegates receive a schedule of contributions to be sent to the treasurer, Mr. A.J. Ytsma, 42 Maple Street, Chatham, ON N7L 2E6. The amount of contribution per communicant member is \$7.80 per year.
8. Reports are read of classical visits to the churches at Ancaster, Attercliffe, Lincoln, London and Watford.
 9. The next classis is to be convened by the church at Grand Rapids on Wednesday, March 8, 1989 at Lincoln. Proposed officers are, Chairman, Rev. C. Bosch; Vice-Chairman, Rev. R. Aasman; Clerk, Rev. D.G.J. Agema.
 10. Personal Question Period is held.
 11. The Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.
 12. The chairman requests the singing of Psalm 121:3, 4 and leads in prayer.
 13. Classis is closed.

J. VAN RIETSCHOTEN,
Vice-chairman pro tem



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Hello Busy Beavers,

Do you have a big brother to help you finish your model car?

Or are YOU the big sister who reads to a little brother or sister?

Do you have a little brother who LOVES to watch you play with your trains (cars), and then gets into them later by himself?

What place do you have in your family?

Are you the oldest?

the youngest?

the "monkey-in-the-middle"?

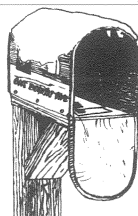
Do you LIKE being the oldest? or the youngest?

Do you think maybe it's best to be in the middle?

Please write and tell us about how you feel about YOUR place in YOUR family.

The address is:

Aunt Betty
c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3X5



FROM THE MAILBOX

I'm glad you had such a good holiday, *Jane Schulenberg*. Have you had some snow to play in now? Which was your favourite book, Jane? Will you write and tell us about it?

Hello, *Steven Vandevelde*. It was good to hear from you again. You are a good puzzler. Keep up the good work! Did you have a good holiday, Steven?

Thank you for the puzzle, *Jeannette Jansen*. You really mean to keep those Busy Beavers busy, don't you? And I see you are a good puzzler yourself, too. I hope you have a really wonderful family day when you brother gets married, Jeannette!

Do you play hockey, too, *David DeBoer*? Soccer-baseball sounds like fun. But I'll need a little practice after the winter, David. How about you? Write again soon. Bye for now.

Busy Beavers, we need another pen pal! Who will exchange letters with:

Yvonne Van Egmond (age 11)
4944-197A Street
Langley, BC V3A 6W1

Quiz Time!

SOLDIERS

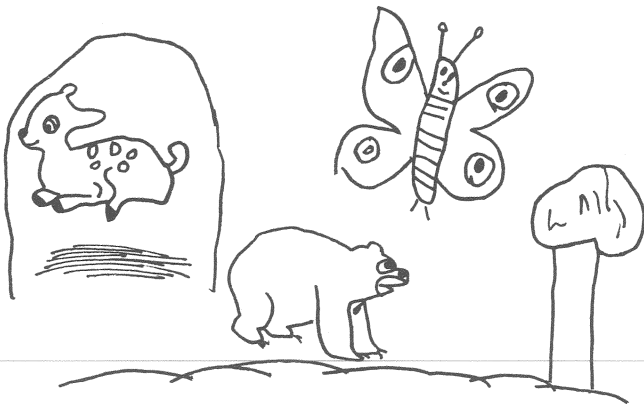
Soldiers are often mentioned in the Bible. Match the soldier with the right happening.

1. Centurion of an Italian cohort.
2. Had eyes put out by Philistines
3. Had an army of a million men
4. Had bodyguards who could throw and shoot with either hand
5. Waged war with Ahab against Syria
6. Syrians fled before him
7. Prayed and an angel destroyed the Assyrian army
8. Caught his head on a tree
9. Was defeated by the Chaldeans
10. Centurion assigned to guard Paul

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| a. Jehoshaphat | 2 Chronicles 18:1, 30 |
| b. Hezekiah | 2 Chronicles 32:20-21 |
| c. Joab | 1 Chronicles 19:14 |
| d. Absalom | 2 Samuel 18:9, 10 |
| e. Samson | Judges 16:20, 21 |
| f. Julius | Acts 27:1 |
| g. Zedekiah | Jeremiah 39:5 |
| h. Zerah | 2 Chronicles 14:9 |
| i. Cornelius | Acts 10:1 |
| j. David | 1 Chronicles 11:1, 2 |

About 4 weeks ago we got a dog. His name is Rafter. He is a Great Dane. He is only a pup but he is already big. We have also got a cat. Rafter plays very rough with pussy. He likes to play but he is a bit big for our cat!

A little story letter from Busy Beaver
Nellie Bosveld



Busy Beaver *Dennis VanOene* likes to draw animals. Maybe you can colour his pictures!

Riddles for You!

from Busy Beavers *Christina Bredenhof and Sara Plantinga*

1. What does a calf become after it is one year old?
2. Why do cows wear bells?
3. What do you get when you cross a duck and a cow?
4. What did the one candle say to the other candle?
5. What did the one firecracker say to the other firecracker?

Answers:

1. Two years old
2. Their horns don't work
3. Milk and quackers
4. Are you going out tonight?
5. My pop is bigger than your pop!

NAMES

by Busy Beaver *Rosaleen Jager*

Look for:

Bill	Amy
John	Lori-Ann
Darryl	Andrea
Fred	Tanya
Albert	Kristy

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

FAVOURITE CODE QUIZ

by Busy Beaver *Anna DeVries*

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

15	2	5	4	10	21	1	7	11	
6	14	11	2	5	8	2	5	12	1
7	11	2	9	6	4	3	10	15	
13	9	3	5						

I'm looking forward to your letters, Busy Beavers. I think it will be lots of fun sharing your ideas with the other Busy Beavers!
Bye for now.

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

