



Clarion
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“Una Sancta” *

Whoever does the will of God is My brother, and sister, and mother. Mark 3:35

The fierce battle that is waged on the frontline of church and gospel and kingdom of God is a battle that has to do with the holy war, and thus also with the holy peace.

There are some who get up and announce the holy war to one and all. They read the article of faith regarding the Church in their own fashion and with their own emphasis. They read it like this: I believe a *holy catholic* Christian church. And when the “una sancta” is mentioned, that is to say ‘the one holy church,’ they’ll emphasize beforehand that little word “sancta,” the one *holy* church. It is the *holiness* of the church they are after; so they inquire about the *norm* of the church-gathering work, and no sooner have they found that yardstick than they’ll call out the holy war for the *holy* church.

Others, however, say: that will never work. They would rather call out the holy *peace*, soft-voiced. They, too, read the article of faith about the church. They do this in their own fashion and with their own emphasis. They read it like this: I believe a *holy catholic* church. And when *these people*, in their turn, hear the “una sancta” being mentioned, *they* will put the emphasis differently again. They will put it on the word “una”; and think “one,” which little word is not even found here in the Twelve Articles of Faith. I believe the “una sancta,” the “*one only*” holy church. They have been taken in by the unification principle. They’ll do anything for that unification, and they’ll never stop looking for it either.

Before long, tragedy will strike, because from the two groups of searchers for the one holy church there will, in a little while, arise two armies that combat each other. The one army operates under the slogan: the “una sancta,” the one *holy* church; but is, meanwhile, forgetting the call for *communion*. It neglects the unification principle and runs away with . . . an abstraction. The other army organizes itself for the “una sancta,” the *one* holy church; meanwhile, it is forgetting the call for *holiness*, while it neglects the *obedience* principle. And before long it, too, will start running away with an abstraction, once again. At first both armies were marching along with one single rallying cry. But because the one emphasizes the first word and the other the second (detaching it from the other word and thus making it into an abstraction), those who started off marching together will end up fighting each other.

No longer will there be peace between these armies, unless each of them returns to *Him* who as Mediator of God and man is going to guide us and convert us continually. In doing

this He delivers us from our sin of willfulness which caused our problem to be stated incorrectly. For Christ, administering His office among the people, does *join* the part called ‘holiness and obedience’ to the other part, the ‘unity and communion principle.’ “Whoever does the *will of God*”: this is the *holiness* part; in other words: living in accordance with the *perfect norm*, this being the *law*. “[He/She] is my brother, and sister and mother.” Here you have the *unity*, the *communion*. Only the unity built by obedience will endure. And conversely: all expressions of obedience build their *own* unity and preserve it.


We do well if we are paying attention to this, also in our own age. Whether we like it or not, we, too, are caught up in the tension between putting either the holiness-principle first, or the communion-principle first. There is a kind of “brotherliness” which no longer bothers to seek obedience before anything else. This kind of “brotherliness,” however, brings together our own “dear buddies” but not the “brothers” of the Lord Jesus Christ. This activity does not edify the church; rather, it forms a club, perhaps even an “edifying club.” In the other camp you’ll find those who

Prof. Dr. K. Schilder:
“Only the unity
built by obedience
will endure.”



never let up advancing their *views* about the holiness of the church. They’ll go through fire and water to advance their own *interpretation* of the church and push their own man-made contrasts more and more into extremes. But in doing so, they are forgetting the unification-principle, for they fail to understand that this unification-principle *is part and parcel of obeying the law* and that it, therefore, also belongs to the very call for *holiness* itself. These people like to get all fired up about their own personal opinions, but their cosy little circle of like-minded persons will become a sect before long, or some little club. In the meantime they are burying the divine commandment under their own human (far too human) decrees.

A radical turnabout for the best would take place in all those relationships of family, friends, community and church, too, if people would once more submit themselves to the majesty of Christ’s words: “Whoever *does* the will of the Father is My brother.” The holiness and catholicity of the church are one; and there is no true relationship (lasting all the way into heaven) *unless this word is adhered to*.

* K. Schilder, *Schriftverdenkingen II*, Goes 1957, pp. 127-128. The italics correspond with those the author used in his article. R.K. 

The doctrine of the church – some questions

By J. Faber

Editorial note: *This is an edited transcript of some questions (with answers) raised when Dr. Faber delivered his lecture in Edmonton in 1987. The speaking style of Dr. Faber has been retained.*

Question: I know myself called to be here in the assembly, the people of God on Sundays, but there are also other gatherings in this city. Are they all disobedient?

Answer: First of all, let me say that I believe that the Canadian Reformed Churches are churches of God and I am fully convinced by faith about that. But I do not turn it around and I do not say that the church of God is the Canadian Reformed Churches. Let me say that first. If I say this ring is gold, then I do not say that this is all the gold there is in the world.

If I speak about the church of God as I wanted to show that from the Scriptures, then I must say that if I understand God's Word well about that gathering of God's people out of all tribes and tongues and nations and about the new earth and the great assembly, a multitude which no one can number, then I am amazed about what God reveals about the gathering of His church. Then I know that God is busy gathering His church all around the world. I do not and I am not even able to completely survey that ongoing work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So I would not like to think too small about that work of God in this world, for I do not want to speak in a slighting manner about that work that God does in this dispensation.

But now if you say to me, do you believe that there are in Canada children of God outside the Canadian Reformed Churches, then I say yes. I believe that. I have met people to whom I spoke and who spoke to me and they spoke about that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in such a manner that with the judgment of love I could not but say that they revealed themselves to be Christians. But, there

is sin in this world and there is sin in the life of God's people and there is sin in the life of God's children and because of that factor of sin I cannot completely systematize everything with respect to the gathering of God's people.

With respect to the assembly of the congregation of God we have confessed



“... then I am amazed about what God reveals about the gathering of His church.”

in our confession that there are Scriptural marks of the church of God. I do not have to enumerate them – the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments, the pure administration of church discipline. I must say that it is my responsibility to discern the spirits and then comes into play that I cannot but say that there are also gatherings that do not respond to that covenantal responsibility. That is the way I think in which our confession speaks about it, when the confession

says that everyone is duty-bound to join the church of God wherever it is gathered. Then precisely there is in Scripture the admonition time and again that we should flee from all iniquity. So I cannot systematize everything because of that factor of the sin in the world. But, I have to keep in mind that God continues His work and that throughout all struggle and throughout all misery from our side, the Lord Jesus Christ draws together those who form that great multitude that there will be on the last day. But I have to understand my responsibility and to act accordingly. Then I think that you are right by coming here to this place on Sunday and that you are allowed to say to others come and join us. You may say that but not in pride. We should never speak about the true church in pride and say, we, we, we, for it is all sovereign grace. But, nevertheless we may urge children of God to be obedient in every respect also with respect to church life. Then I have to speak concretely and then it depends on the person to whom I speak what I have to say. If I meet a Reformed Baptist, for instance, then I do not have to speak to a Reformed Baptist about predestination, for he also believes the grace of God in the electing love in the Lord Jesus Christ. But, I have to speak to him about the revelation about God's covenant and God's covenant children and about the responsibility that we have with respect to the sign and seal of God's covenant. I have to show him that the sacraments are not administered according to the institution of Christ in a Baptist church. I give now this example, I could elaborate on other examples, but I think that should be our approach. Not the approach that we say there are no children of God outside the assembly of the congregation of God. Augustine already said there are wolves within the sheep, the flock of sheep and there are sheep outside the flock. We know that there are hypocrites within the congregation. We also know that there are erring children of God outside the congrega-

tion. So never speak as if there are no children of God outside the congregation but always speak in a loving but nevertheless urging manner with respect to our responsibility. I think that this is, simply said, the contents of our Reformed confession.

Question: Could you explain what you mean by a Reformed Baptist?

Answer: I mean by a Reformed Baptist, a man who is a member of a Reformed Baptist church. You have them in England, for instance. There is a publication in the English language – *Reformation Today* – of Reformed Baptists. You have different groups in the Baptist world. You have Arminian Baptists who follow basically the line of Methodism and who also with respect to the five points of the Canons of Dort follow the line of Arminianism. But you also have those who call themselves Reformed Baptists. So I use that name because they call themselves in that manner, in order to indicate that they are no followers of Arminius. If you want to have an example of a Reformed Baptist then I think of Spurgeon, the well-known English preacher. Spurgeon wanted to be Reformed. He preached the doctrine of God's electing love in Jesus Christ and the sovereignty of God's grace, but he could not accept infant baptism.

Question: I am glad that you said that there are many true Christians outside the church who are still God's children. I agree with that too. But at the same time do they not miss an awful lot, – many benefits of the communion of saints which we also confess in our catechism?

Answer: In the first place you said, "Are those disobedient children of God, not depriving themselves of many benefits?" Then I say yes. And precisely that is the point that our confession says that since there is no salvation outside the church everyone is duty-bound to join the church. Now if it says there is no salvation outside the church then you should not only think of eternal life, in the sense of going to heaven to use that popular expression; but, you should think of all the gifts and benefits that God bestows upon His people. Then the confession uses that as a norm in order to say since there is no salvation outside the church you are duty-bound to join the church and it is completely clear what I said about the communion of saints that if we think about the gifts that the Holy Spirit employs within the communion that we deprive ourselves from a lot. The confession basically says you need the church and the church needs you. You need the church for you should

bow your head under the yoke of Christ. Christ has instituted officers within the church and you should not be conceited, you should not think that you do not need the church. No, you need the church. You should bow your head un-

***"I do not
and I am not
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the Son and
the Holy Spirit."***

der the yoke of Christ in acknowledging the offices that He has granted to His church. Also the church needs you, for you should use your gifts for the well-being of the other members. So indeed the first answer is they miss a lot.

Now I would like to add something to

that. We should be deeply aware of the fact that sin is still within us and if I say to another you miss a lot because you are not obedient to God, I should first of all always say that to myself in so far I may be disobedient; for instance, in listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd in the Scriptures, in reading the Scriptures regularly, in answering to the Word of God in my prayer. If I am slack in that respect, I sin and I deprive myself of a lot. That is always true – that sin distorts the life of man in relation to God. So I would apply it with respect to the church to those who are disobedient with respect to the church but I apply it first of all to myself with all other misery and sin and transgression that is found in my own life and I should pray that God opens my eyes that I may see the wonders of His law and that He will guide me by His spirit so that I may see His face in grace upon my life.

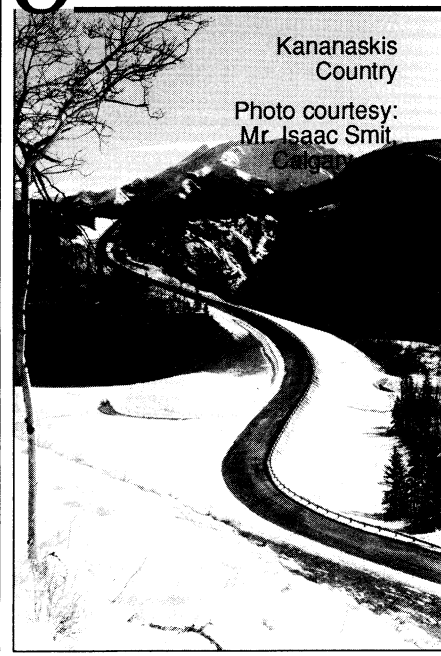
Question: I have heard it often said that because there are so many fine Christians outside the church and they live such a good holy life, therefore, wherever they are members that must also be a true church. Is that so?

Answer: No, because I stressed that the church according to the expressions that are used in Scripture is the assembly of the congregation of the people of God. Now someone can belong to the people of God and nevertheless not come to the assembly of the congregation of the people of God. I should not say because it is a child of God therefore where he is there is the true church for the church is the assembly of the congregation of God and I should not transmit qualifications about a person to an assembly.

Question: Can there be more than two true churches at the same time in the same place?

Answer: Yes, but, there should not be two true churches in one place. I indeed say again because of the working of sin in this world there can be all kinds of disruptions. For instance, think of the situation here in Canada. If I think for instance of the Free Reformed Churches then I always say you and we – we belong together and you and we – we should work that we come together. I think that in this respect we should be aware of the fact that the church-gathering is an ongoing work and that in that ongoing work there can indeed be situations because of sin that there is such a situation as I mentioned but that should not be the case and we should not let it rest. We should do to the utmost of our power what we can in order to bring together those who belong together. **C**

OUR COVER



Kananaskis
Country

Photo courtesy:
Mr. Isaac Smit,
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The report of the Committee on Bible Translations

By C. Van Dam

Among the reports that the upcoming Synod will deal with is one submitted by the Committee on Bible Translations. Their report is quite short. There was no time to submit suggestions for changes in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) since the revised edition had to be turned over to the publishers by the middle of 1988. Also, there were no new developments to report. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is scheduled to be available by 1990.

Although the NRSV is not yet available, Dr. B.M. Metzger of the RSV Bible Committee which made the revision, kindly provided the Canadian Reformed Committee with some information about the NRSV. He wrote that "the NRSV will involve the entire Bible in a fresh revision." However, "contrary to certain rumors, we are not making changes in language pertaining to the Deity; we are, however, introducing some changes with regard to eliminating masculine biased language pertaining to people, where such changes do not violate the sense of the original text."

According to the mandate that the RSV Bible Committee received from the RSV Policies Committee of the National Council of Christian Churches, the revision of the RSV was to include "necessary (1) changes in the paragraph structure and punctuation, (2) elimination of archaisms, while retaining the flavor of the Tyndale-King James tradition, (3) changes in the interest of accuracy, clarity, and/or euphony of English expression, and (4) the elimination of masculine-orientated language so far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture and of a masculine-orientated society."

According to the information received, the NRSV was done by a "Committee of men and women who, besides representing a variety of Protestant denominations, include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish scholars." The NRSV is described as having the following characteristics.

(1) The NRSV is still more accurate than the RSV (a) because the Committee has taken into account manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments that came to light since 1948-1952, and (b) because the Committee has been able to consult lexical and syntactical studies of the original languages published during the past forty years.

(2) Inasmuch as attention had been given to matters of euphony, the NRSV embodies improvements here and there that will make the version still more suitable for public reading and liturgical use than it was before.

(3) Besides greater accuracy and euphony, and partly because of them, the NRSV attains a higher degree of clarity and lucidity in presenting the Word of God to the reader.

(4) Within the constraints of the original texts and the mandate of the Policies Committee, the Committee has followed the maxim, "As literal as possible, as free as necessary." As a result the NRSV remains essentially a literal translation, so that readers who are not acquainted with the original languages of Scripture can know what the Biblical authors wrote. At the same time, however, the Committee has tried faithfully to give the sense of the original writers in terms of inclusive language when referring to people.

In time it will become clear how exactly the NRSV embodies these characteristics. The Canadian Reformed Churches would do well to charge a committee to study this new version which appears to be intended to replace the present RSV.



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IN THIS ISSUE

"Una Sancta" — K. Schilder †	170
The doctrine of the church — some questions — J. Faber	171
The report of the Committee on Bible Translations — C. Van Dam	173
Operation Rescue in the dock — Dick Moes	174
CRWRF Spotlight on Somalia	178
Women's Savings Action	179
Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. J. Mulder	180
General Synod Winnipeg 1989 — M. Werkman	181
Letters to the Editor	182
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	184

Operation Rescue in the dock

By Dick Moes

I would like to make a few remarks about Operation Rescue. I do not claim to have all the answers to this sensitive and controversial issue. I do have some answers to some of the basic questions, however. And I do know which direction we should be going, when it comes to the topic of passive resistance and civil disobedience.

Operation Rescue was founded, as you all undoubtedly know, by the Reverend Randall Terry in the United States. Rev. Terry is of the opinion that virtually no progress has been made in our fight against abortion via our traditional combat methods, such as, prayer, letters, protest marches, etc. These means have all proven to be ineffective. For the abortion holocaust is still continuing in full force.

What we need are small groups of activist Christians who are willing to go into the enemy camp and do hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Small groups of militant Christians who are willing to keep up the pressure and bring about change via passive resistance and civil disobedience.

This is the ultimate in combating abortion. And this is a method that will be effective and give results. After all, just take a little peek in recent history. Does history not prove that change is brought about when minority groups become active and pressure the government to bring about change? Is that not how the civil rights movement became successful? Is that not how the feminist movement brought about change?

Yes, history shows that when minority groups become activist and militant, they can expect some fruit on all their labours.

And what about the Bible? Does it not say that we are to "rescue those unjustly sentenced to death . . . ?" Does it not say that we are to "deliver them out of the hand of the wicked"? Then why are we not doing that? Why are we just passively allowing so many unborn babies to be unjustly sentenced to death? Why do we not deliver them out of the hand of the wicked by interlocking our arms and placing our bodies between

the body of the child and the entrance to the abortion mill, even if a court order explains that we are not allowed to do this?

Why are we not doing this? Are not God's laws higher than man's laws? Are we not allowed to follow our own *conscience* in matters of life and death?²

Sympathy

I must tell you that I understand Reverend Terry and his followers. And I understand all those people who have gone to jail.

Who would not be moved by the holocaust of millions of unborn babies? Who would not deplore all the apathy and lethargy when it comes to actively combating abortion?

Who would not want to go into the enemy camp and become an activist, militant Christian, doing hand-to-hand combat with the enemy? Who would not want to follow the example of the civil rights movement and pressure the government to bring about change by purposely disobeying unjust laws in society?

And indeed, does the Bible not say, "Rescue those unjustly sentenced to death?" Does it not say, "Deliver them

out of the hand of the wicked?" And God's laws are higher than man's laws, are they not? And am I not allowed to follow my own conscience in a matter like this?

Yes, I understand all those involved in Operation Rescue. And I sympathize with them. And yet, I cannot follow their course of action. Neither can I recommend it to you.

To make this clear, let's have a closer look at some of the arguments they use to justify their behaviour.

Proverbs 24:11

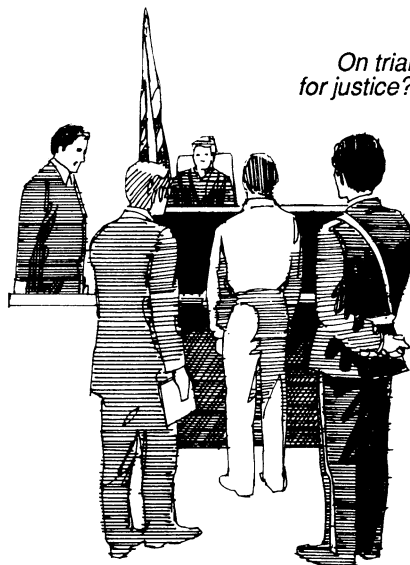
What about *Proverbs 24:11*?

Well, it's a basic principle of Biblical interpretation, that you always explain a text in its context. We all know how Jehovah's Witnesses isolate texts from their contexts to prove their heretical views. And that danger really threatens every Bible reader.

I agree with Prof. C. Van Dam, when he says that Operation Rescue has taken Proverbs 24:11 out of its context. Verse 11 and 12 clearly belong together. Verse 11 speaks about those who are being taken away to death after they have been sentenced to death. The admonition "to rescue them" would seem to indicate that this sentence is unfair, unjust. Then v. 12 goes on to say, "If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not requite man according to his work?"

The exhortation not to say "we did not know this" obviously implies that the person knows something which can vindicate the victim. Therefore, with Prof. Van Dam, I am of the opinion that 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."³ That was the way you had to rescue someone unjustly condemned to death in those days, namely, by coming up with evidence that proved the victim's innocence.

And if you neglect your responsibility in this regard, God will hold you account-



able. He perceives what is in your heart. He keeps watch over your soul. He knows whether you have neglected your responsibility or not. And He will punish you according to your works.

So yes, Proverbs 24:11 does speak about rescuing those unjustly condemned to death. But taken together with v. 12, we must conclude that *the way* in which we are to rescue these victims is by using the *legal* avenues open to us.

Psalm 82:4

What about *Psalm 82:4* – "*Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked?*" Again we have to ask ourselves, "What is the context of this verse? What is this psalm about?"

Let me quote Prof. John H. Stek, one of the associate editors of the NIV Study Bible and also the one who supplied the study notes to the Book of Psalms. He says, "As if in a vision, the psalmist sees the rulers and judges gathered before the Great King to give account of their administration of justice . . . In the language of the OT – and in accordance with the conceptual world of the ancient Near East – rulers and judges, as deputies of the heavenly King, could be given the honorific title "god" . . . or could be called "son of God."⁴

In other words, when v. 4 speaks about "deliver them out of the hand of the wicked," then obviously God is telling all *earthly rulers* to do this. It is their task to uphold justice.

Again we must conclude that also this text does not support the philosophy and activity of Operation Rescue.

God's laws are higher than man's laws

But what about, "*God's laws are higher than man's laws?*" That certainly is true, is it not?

Yes, it is. God's laws are indeed higher than man's laws!

But the question is not whether or not God's laws are higher than man's laws. The question is: What do you do about it? How do you bring about situations so that His laws are indeed obeyed?

In other words, because God's laws are higher than man's laws, does that mean that it is ethically justified to disobey a court injunction and block the entrance to an abortion mill where God's sixth commandment is being transgressed?

In order to answer that question, it may be helpful if we widen the question somewhat by applying it to each one of the Ten Commandments.

The first commandment prohibits the

worship of other gods. Does that mean that God wants us to block the entrance to Sikh temples and other places of worship where other gods are worshipped?

The second commandment forbids us to make images of our God. In other words, it forbids worshipping God in a different manner from what He has commanded in his Word. Does that mean that we should block the entrance to Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and other churches where God is, indeed, not worshipped in accordance with Scripture?

The third commandment forbids us to take the name of God in vain. Does that mean that we should block the entrance to radio stations and movie theatres where His name is, in fact, used in vain?

The fourth commandment commands us to keep the Sabbath day. Does that mean that we should block the entrance to Save-on Foods and other stores or gas stations which are doing business on Sunday?

The fifth commandment commands us to obey our fathers and mothers. In other words, all those whom God has placed in authority over us. Does that mean that we should use some form of passive resistance or civil disobedience to make sure that this commandment is indeed adhered to?

The seventh commandment forbids adultery and all other forms of fornication and impurity. Does that mean that we should block the entrance to the Langley Hotel, where strippers take off their clothes on a regular basis? Does it mean that we have to block the entrance to stores that sell pornography?

It is good that we especially ask ourselves if civil disobedience is warranted in the case of the seventh commandment and pornography. For pornography and murder are intrinsically connected.



"Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb"

That became very clear again to all those who listened to that moving interview Dr. James Dobson had with the serial killer Ted Bundy, just hours before he was executed in the electric chair in a Florida State Prison. Bundy clearly admitted – and it was the message he wanted to get out to the world before he died; that's why he asked to see Dr. Dobson, for he knew the secular press would not get it out – that it was especially pornography that incited him to sexually assault women and then kill them. Pornography was like a demon that possessed him, perverting him and pushing him onwards to a road of filth and murder.⁵

Again I ask, "Should we block the entrance to stores selling pornography, especially now that we know that there is an inherent connection between pornography and murder? Should we? Does God want us to? His laws are higher than man's laws, are they not?"

The eighth commandment forbids stealing in all its various forms. Does that mean that we should block the entrance to factories and other work places where employers are stealing from their employees by giving them an unjust wage?

The ninth commandment forbids bearing false witness to our neighbour. Again, does God require us to use passive resistance and civil disobedience to enforce this commandment?

The tenth commandment forbids coveting. Does God want us to block the entrance to, for instance, lottery booths that fuel the natural greed in a person? Does He?

Does God want us to be activist Christians, militant Christians, Christians who enter into the enemy's camp and do hand-to-hand combat with him? Does God want us to form pressure groups which try to implement His laws in society by force, albeit in a very subtle form? Does He?

I do not believe He does. I believe God has ordained a better way to implement His laws in society. God has not left that up to man himself as a citizen, but He has ordained the government for that.

He has given the government the power of the sword. That means that the government has the duty to administer justice in society. And Romans 13 clearly instructs all of us to be subject to the governing authorities, for they have been instituted by God. If we resist them, Paul tells us in this chapter, then we will incur judgment.

Yes, the government is God's means in this world to implement His laws in society. Governments are to do that, keeping in mind that we live in a

pluralistic society and that there is a distinction between church and state. They have been given a high calling by God, and they need His strength and His wisdom for the execution of that calling. That's why we should always pray for them, as the apostle Paul exhorts us to.⁶

What about Acts 5:29?

But what about *Acts 5:29*? Does it not say that "*We must obey God rather than men*"? Yes, it does. But the context clearly indicates that the apostles had been given a *direct command* not to do something Jesus had commanded them to do, namely, preach the gospel.

Applied to the abortion issue today, that would mean the following. If the government would command that, let's say, every third pregnancy had to be aborted, then, of course, we would all disobey this command. Is that not what Shiphrah and Puah, those Hebrew midwives who feared God, also did, when the Egyptian pharaoh ordered them to kill every Israelite male that was born?⁷ Is that not what Obadiah did as well, when he hid a hundred prophets in a cave, in order to keep them out of Queen Jezebel's murderous hands?⁸ Is that not what many of our relatives did during the Second World War, when they hid Jews, in order to keep them out of the murderous hands of the Nazis?

Yes, of course we would disobey a law to abort every third pregnancy. But you ask, "Then why can we not do it in the case of the government allowing women to abort their own babies?" We cannot do that, because there is a big difference between the government *directly commanding* us to do something against God's Word and the government *allowing* someone to do something against God's Word. In the former case, disobedience is warranted in the light of Acts 5:29, in the latter it is not. As a matter of fact, Acts 5:29 does not even apply in this case. Moreover, if civil disobedience was also warranted in the latter case, then it would be warranted in *all* cases when the government allows people to do something against His Word. And we have already seen what that leads to, when we looked at the question of civil disobedience in the light of each of the ten commandments.⁹

Conscience

But what about the argument of *conscience*? Does every person not have the right to follow his own conscience?

Let's for a moment say that every person does indeed have the right to follow his own conscience. What type of a situation will that lead to?

Well, you, who are pro-life, will block

“... God's great rescue operation, which He began in Paradise after man's fall into sin, will finally be completed.”

the entrance to an abortion mill, because your conscience dictates that it is wrong to murder and that you should do everything – legally or illegally – to stop this. Your conscience tells you that you should rescue the innocent unjustly condemned to death.

However, someone who is pro-choice will say, "My conscience dictates that it is not wrong to abort. What I have in my womb is only the product of conception. It is a fetus, not a person."

Who is right? The one who physically blocks the entrance to the abortion mill because he is *compelled by conscience*, or the one who aborts her own offspring because she has *no qualms of conscience*? She does not consider the fetus a human being!

Neither one is right! You see, conscience is not a norm in itself. If it were, then we would all be adrift on a sea of subjectivity and relativity. No, conscience is not a norm in itself. Conscience has to be shaped and guided by something, namely, the Word of God, before it can become a norm. And we have already seen some of the things the Word of God has to say regarding the ethics of passive resistance and civil disobedience.¹⁰

What about Paul?

I purposely said, "some of the things." For there is at least one more argument one can deduce from Scripture. Namely, the following argument: if passive resistance and civil disobedience is Biblically required when the government does not protect the lives of the unborn, then I ask you, "Why does the apostle Paul not exhort his readers to do this?"

Perhaps you say, "But there was no abortion in his days." Wrong! Abortion was rampant in his days! Let me give you some examples.¹¹

Abortion was frequently practised in Paul's days. It seems to have been more common among the rich, but it also occurred among the poor. Abortions were

performed for a variety of reasons. The most frequent reason was to conceal illicit sexual activity. Other reasons were to preserve "sex appeal" and to correct the many inefficient means of contraception. It is a known fact that at least one woman aborted her child after a divorce, because she did not want to have a child by the man she then hated. Some abortions were performed for therapeutic reasons.

The methods of abortion were no less varied than the motives for obtaining one. The most common chemical or medicinal abortifacient was a pessary, i.e., a substance introduced directly into the womb via the birth canal. Some women preferred to take oral drugs or "poisons." Mechanical abortion techniques were also available and were sometimes used to supplement the drugs. Some women bound their bodies very tightly around the womb or hit themselves so hard that an abortion occurred. Others used such abortive instruments as a copper needle or spike or more sophisticated tools such as those used in surgical operations.

Now again I ask, "With the Christian Church living in such a pagan world, where you had abortion on demand, why did the apostle Paul not exhort his readers to go into the enemy camp and do hand-to-hand combat with them? Why did he not exhort them to form small pressure groups which peacefully, but physically should put an end to these abominable practices? Why did he not do this?"

Well, he did not do this because passive resistance and civil disobedience under these circumstances are not God's way of rectifying a problem. Paul knew this! That's why instead of advocating passive resistance and civil disobedience, he urged his readers to obey the governing authorities and not to resist them.¹²

Taking the law into your own hands

Operation Rescue has decided to take the law into its own hands, now that our prayers, our letters, our peaceful protests have not brought about the desired change. Operation Rescue has decided to go beyond legal methods of combat and start to use illegal ones. This, in my opinion, is a very *dangerous* course of action to follow.

First of all, once you take the law into your own hands to rectify a situation which you feel is unjust, you have no moral defense against *someone else's* doing the same thing to rectify a situation which he thinks is unjust. When people start taking the law into their own hands, they have set their feet on a path that ultimately leads to anarchy.

Second, once you take the law into your own hands for the promotion of a just cause, you will have great difficulty in controlling the excesses of your followers. You may not want to go any further than blocking the entrance of the abortion mill, but *one of your followers* may just want to go one step further. Let me illustrate this with an example.¹³

At one of the Vancouver rescues, one of the members of the team came up to the leader and said, "I've brought my baby powder with me." "You what?" asked the leader. "I've brought my baby powder with me," he repeated. "Why did you do that?" the leader asked. "Well," he replied, "I'm going to dump it into the air-conditioning system, so that they will have to close the place down for a couple of days." "If you do that, I'll report you to the police," the leader said. "We're only here to try to counsel the woman and save her baby."

In this particular case, the leader managed to convince his team member not to use his baby powder. But who is to say that he or another leader will be successful the next time. The abortion issue is such an *emotional* issue that it can easily lead to all sorts of *fanaticism* in the name of God and the name of justice.

In the third place, once you take the law into your own hands, because you think your former combat methods have proven to be ineffective, then you are on a slippery slope. For in two or three years, peacefully blocking the entrances of abortion mills may have proven to be ineffective, too. Maybe someone will then suggest that we should bomb all the abortion mills. Maybe someone will even suggest that we should kidnap pregnant women planning to abort their babies. Let's hold them hostage, give them excellent treatment, counsel them and witness to them, and once the baby has been born, release them.¹⁴

The wrath of God

In Romans 1, Paul talks about the wrath of God. He tells us that God gave people up to the desires of their own hearts because they adamantly refused to worship Him. They want to do their own thing, so God removes the restraints on their consciences and lets them, indeed, do their own thing.

One of the things you then read in that chapter is that God gives people up to a reprobate mind. And Paul lists about twenty examples of such a mind. One of them is that people become *heartless* or *loveless*. The Greek word (astorgos) refers to the lack of the feelings of natural tenderness, as seen in a mother who exposes or kills her child, a father who abandons his family, or children who neglect their aged parents.¹⁵



Civil disobedience — not the answer

That means that just like AIDS, abortion is a sign of God's judgment on our society. God is allowing people to have their own way and to reap the destructive consequences of their own lifestyle.

And the only effective power to bring about *real* change in our permissive society is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel, that is the power of God for the *rescue* of people who have been given up by God to their own sinful and self-destructive ways.¹⁶

Activity required

Therefore our first task in our fight against abortion is to proclaim this gospel, wherever God in His grace and mercy still gives us an opportunity.

And this gospel can be proclaimed in many ways.

You can start by praying to God for all those caught in the grip of abortion and earnestly beseeching Him to illuminate their darkened minds, to open their hardened hearts and to bend their stubborn wills. Don't ever minimize the power of prayer. It is effective and it works. I am convinced that babies have also been saved simply by the prayer of a faithful Christian.

But it is always *ora et labora*, pray and work. That means that you also have to become active in society. You should write letters to your MLA's and MP's, to your minister of health and your minister of justice, to your premier and your prime minister.

You can show the video "The Silent Scream."

You can get involved in pregnancy-aid counselling work or post-abortion counselling work.

You can be part of a legal, peaceful demonstration in front of an abortion mill.

I am convinced, that all of these methods have saved babies. And who knows how many more will be saved by them.¹⁷

Therefore, do not be satisfied by simply saying No to Operation Rescue. Become active and do what you can,

while God still gives you a chance. For the day will soon arrive when our Saviour will return on the clouds of heaven — that day when He will usher in His peaceable kingdom in all its fullness; that day when *God's great rescue operation*, which He began in Paradise after man's fall into sin, will finally be completed.



¹ Speech held for the Langley Young People's Society on Feb. 19, 1989. I have revised it somewhat for publication.

² Cf. Randall Terry's training video.

³ C. Van Dam, "Operation Rescue: A biblical strategy?" in: *Clarion*, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 36ff.

⁴ Kenneth Barker (Gen. Ed.), *The NIV Study Bible*, Grand Rapids 1985, p. 873.

⁵ A video of this interview can be obtained by writing to Focus on the Family, P.O. Box 9800, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4GH.

⁶ 1 Timothy 2:1ff.

⁷ Exodus 1:15ff.

⁸ 1 Kings 18:4.

⁹ J. Douma in his *Politieke Verantwoordelijkheid* (Political Responsibility), Kampen 1984, pp. 177, 191, makes the helpful distinction between disobedience and civil disobedience. Douma would not consider the examples of Shiphra and Puah, Obadiah, and our relatives hiding the Jews to be civil disobedience, but simply *disobedience*. These people simply applied Acts 5:29 to their specific situations. For something to be *civil* disobedience, however, it has to have a *demonstrative* character. People take to the streets and consciously break the law trying to pressure the government to bring about a change in the law.

Moreover, Douma states, "When Christians protest, they must, in my opinion, abstain from every illegal activity. They have the right and duty to use every legal avenue at their disposal in order to bring about a change in a law," p. 192. In this connection, he states that, in his opinion, Francis Schaeffer goes too far in his book called *A Christian Manifesto*, when he advocates civil disobedience (by blocking the entrances to abortion clinics or so-called sit-ins in front of court houses) when the government allows abortion to take place, p. 192.

¹⁰ Cf. J. Douma, *Christian Morals and Ethics*, Winnipeg n.d., p. 68. "We remain dependent upon the guidance of God's Word, whereby His Spirit has to give us correct insight in the Scriptures. An appeal to our conscience may never provide the last word in a matter. Also our conscience is subjected to the Word of God and needs cleansing by the blood of Christ."

¹¹ The information that follows is taken from Michael J. Gorman, *Abortion and the Early Church: Christian, Jewish and Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*, Illinois, 1982, pp. 14-18.

¹² Cf. Romans 13:1-7.

¹³ This actually occurred at one of the res-

cues in front of the Vancouver abortuary. The leader of the rescue told me himself.

¹⁴ People condoning or involved in Operation Rescue will often use such suggestive arguments, as, "you see someone trying to kill someone else, wouldn't you do *everything* to save him?" The suggestion then is that *they* are doing everything to save the baby. But are they? No, they're not. They are *only* blocking the entrance to the abortion mill. The police remove them and the murdering continues. How can you call that "everything?" If they really would do everything to save

the baby, then they would probably have to kidnap the woman and keep her in hiding until she had given birth. May God forbid that Operation Rescue people ever take their own argument seriously!

¹⁵ Frederick L. Godet, *The Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by A. Cusin and Talbot W. Chambers, Grand Rapids 1977, p. 111.

¹⁶ Cf. Romans 1:16.

¹⁷ I find it somewhat difficult to understand all the excitement in the *Langley Pro Life Society Newsletter*, January 1989, p. 4, when it is stated that apparently one

woman changed her mind about having an abortion after she had been approached by some sidewalk counsellors during the Vancouver rescue on December 15, 1988. I say, "Thank God she did!" But let's keep things in proportion, shall we? How many women have not changed their minds after they visited a pregnancy aid centre? How many have not changed their minds after seeing the video, "The Silent Scream," etc.? In other words, you do not *need* civil disobedience to save babies. Other, legal methods have proven to be effective, too.

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

Spotlight on Somolia

Life in Somalia is rather different from that experienced by most of us living in modern suburbia. The following letter received from Michael and Oetje Madany illustrates that quite clearly!



30 November 1988

Dear Family/Friends,

This month, we made arrangements to buy fresh cow's milk. Since we moved to Homboy, we've continued using imported powdered milk, just as when we lived on Labadaad. Cattle are not so common there in the tsetse fly-infested Jubba valley, so we had not thought of trying to find a local source. However, there are hundreds of cattle here in Homboy and we thought it would be useful in various ways to start buying some of our milk locally. After all, a major goal of our project is increasing milk production. Most cows here produce only a liter (quart) a day on the average. Few, if any, produce any milk during the long dry season from January to April. It's no wonder, if you see what the cows have to eat. Grain and silage are out of the question. The rangelands here are green for barely half of the year. The dry season diet of corn stalks, dry grass, and twigs is usually enough for these small, brown and white, longhorned Zebus to survive on – but not enough for anything else.

Camels do produce milk year-round. One aspect of life we enjoy in Homboy is the possibility of buying *suusuc* (sour camel milk) in the market every morning. This milk comes in large wooden containers strapped to the back of camels. Every morning made from the wooded coastal sand dunes 12 km west of here arrive to sell their milk. Once sour, the *suusuc* can keep (although increasing in potency) for days without refrigeration. Much as we like this beverage, it is no substitute for normal cow's milk when it comes to adding it to coffee, tea, or porridge.

Because cow's milk production is limited and demand is high, we knew we couldn't expect to find it in the market. Oetje began asking her acquaintances (for, in Somalia, the sale of milk is strictly women's business). Most said that they didn't sell fresh milk, but preferred to churn it into butter – a very valuable commodity. Finally, one lady told Oetje that we should contact her neighbor. That afternoon we went to visit Fereji Muuse and his wife Faadumo. They were quiet, almost shy, and we soon realized we wouldn't be able to get any milk in the morning. At that time, they have more than enough customers from the neighborhood. However, the evening milk was an option. There is less demand for milk then. Since we have one of the two refrigerators in Homboy, we have a possibility of preserving the milk till the next morning. We were glad to find a place among Faadumo's customers, and we agreed on a price of 50 shillings (\$.20) for about a half liter.

Every night, after the milk is delivered, we boil it for five minutes or more. Unlike camel milk, cow's milk in these parts is liable to carry brucellosis – a sickness we certainly want to avoid. The milk has the smokey flavor that comes from being milked into a wooden container sterilized with charcoal. We don't particularly dislike the flavor, but when we asked if our milk could be directly milked into our own container, we were assured the cow herself wouldn't like it. Fereji said the noise of milk splashing into a metal pan would be too disturbing.

When the short rains began a few weeks ago, we encouraged Fereji and Faadumo to plant some *Leucaena* trees in their compound. We explained that, after the trees are a year old, they can lop off branches and feed the nutritious green leaves to their cows in the dry season. We were happy when they decided to plant five *Leucaena* in their compound. Hopefully, with some additional plantings on their farmland, they can increase the milk production from their cows. Who knows? Maybe next year we may be able to buy an entire liter every morning.

By the time you read this, it will be 1989, so we'd like to express our thanks to you for your prayers, letters, and support in the past year. May God's presence be particularly evident to all of us in these coming months.

Sincerely, Michael and Oetje Madany, c/o World Concern
Box 1629, Muqdisho, SOMALIA, AFRICA



Michael and Oetje Madany with their two daughters Johanne and Alida



An example of the fast-growing tree seedlings being planted in local farmers' fields to improve the soil and provide fodder for cattle during the dry season



A local friend enjoys visiting with Oetje and her infant daughter

The Madanys write that at present they are very busy planting fast-growing fodder trees. Michael recently also taught a forestry course in Mogudishu. After the planting season, he plans to do surveys on cattle and on wood use to assist in his agro-forestry program. Oetje, meanwhile, hopes to start training some women to make fuel-conserving stoves. As a registered nurse, she is also regularly consulted by the two healthworkers in Homboy, and assists from time to time, for example in deliveries.

The Madanys are grateful for our prayers and financial support and thankful for the opportunity to live and work in Homboy. Let us continue to uphold them and their two young daughters before our heavenly Father, praying that the opportunities they have to share, not only appropriate technology, but also and especially the news of salvation, may be blessed.

Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

CRWRF
PO Box 793
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y7

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



Women's Savings Action

Newsletter, March 1989

Dear sisters,

It is that time of the year again that many of you go (or perhaps have gone?) around in your congregation collecting nickels, dimes and sometimes even some dollar bills for the library of our Theological College in Hamilton.

For those who have never even seen the College and the Library, it is sometimes hard to understand the ongoing necessity of our work. But be assured of the continued importance of this Savings Action. Your money, for instance, buys the library commentary sets, which are not only used by our faculty and students, but also put to good use by some of the Bible study societies, teacher's college students and staff. The

monies are also used to pay subscriptions to theological Journals and Magazines which again keep our faculty and students well-informed about the trends in theology throughout the world. Besides all this, we were told that about 1000 books per year are needed to keep our library up to date. So you see, our task is not finished by far and the library remains an ongoing concern.

We are very thankful for the fine cooperation we received during the years from the many sisters in all parts of our country. Your local representatives have done a marvelous job in organizing and collecting the donations on behalf of the Women's Savings Action. As you know, this action was initiated by Mrs. L. Selles who in her own pleasant way stimulated

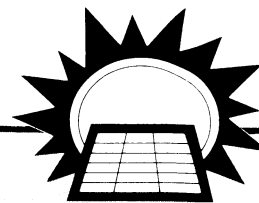
this work. It is also in remembrance of her that we like to urge you to continue this work she so lovingly started.

The executive of the Women's Savings Action has at the moment two members, namely Mrs. P. Lindhout, treasurer, and Mrs. J. Mulder, secretary. We plan to expand our committee, because of the work involved and the decisions which sometimes have to be taken.

In our next newsletter we will inform you about this and other developments. At that time we might also be able to include a financial statement so that you know how matters stand.

For the Woman's Savings Action,
(Mrs.) P. Lindhout,
(Mrs.) J. Mulder





By Mrs. J. Mulder

Shall we receive good at the hand of the LORD
and shall we not receive evil?
Job 2:10b

Dear brothers and sisters.

At the beginning of this chapter we read about a dispute between God and satan. Satan suggests that Job only serves God because of all the good things Job received from the hand of God. He implies that when God would allow him to take all those blessings away from Job, Job would give up on the LORD. The LORD takes this challenge and gives satan permission to rob Job of all his possessions and to afflict him with a terrible disease. Satan is out to bring Job down as a child of God. The LORD wants to show us how strong His work of grace is in the lives of His children. Put to the test, they will be able to stand the temptations of the evil one.

Also Job's wife is affected by all this.

Has she not also lost her own flesh and blood? Her riches and honour? Through the disasters which struck her husband, the bottom has fallen out of her life. Humanly speaking it is understandable that she rebels against the LORD and that she resents the fact that her husband continues to trust his God.

However, by urging Job to give up his trust in the LORD, she becomes another stone which may make him stumble. An instrument in the hand of satan who is out to pull Job away from God.

Job vehemently rejects the suggestions of his wife. He continues to acknowledge God's justice and sovereignty in all He does. Is it not His right to do with His own according to His will?

Job confesses God's faithfulness by calling Him LORD, that is the God who in His grace has included Job in His covenant of grace. Job is able to persevere in times of great trouble, through the power of His God who perseveres in him. Through the unfailing grace of God Job is able to resist the temptations of the devil. He trusts that all things, good as well as evil, do not come by chance but by God's Fatherly hand.

Those whose faith and trust depends on the things they receive or not receive from the LORD, are actually like Job's wife, who only loved the gifts and not the Giver. True faith does not depend on earthly possessions or the lack thereof, on the condition of our life, good or bad.

When we truly rely on the LORD, we confess that in fact we have no right to anything. And then we do not only say that when things go well with us, but then we also confess this when the road is very rough and when afflictions come our way. Trusting our LORD we will also then be steadfast and persevere in Him, because we are assured that the LORD does not forsake us. Even though He might withhold from us what we love to have or when He gives us a cross to bear.

The Lord Jesus Christ and His suffering cannot be compared with that of Job. When Christ was tempted He triumphed over satan and won the victory for Job and us.

Christ bore the eternal wrath of God. He was forsaken by God that we might never be forsaken by Him.

Decisive is not whether we are healthy or sick; rich or poor; prosperous or struggling to make ends meet.

Decisive is: near unto God or far away from Him. Near unto God, there it is good! Even in times of trouble! Far away from Him: there we will perish, although we perhaps have all the riches of the world.

Through Christ and His Spirit we learn to be content and to face prosperity and adversity; riches and poverty.

Being near unto God, we can do all things in Him who strengthens us. (Phil. 4:11-13)

From the mailbox

Mrs. A. Stad from Smithers wrote, "Mrs. Mulder, my sincere thanks to all readers of *Clarion*, who sent me a card or letter. The Lord gave us all a happy day."

Also Robert Wierenga's parents from Neerlandia were very grateful for all the cards received. "Robert was sick a lot the last few months, so it was especially nice for him to receive so much mail."

I thank both writers for their encouraging reaction. It's always good to hear from our readers and supporters.

And if you never took part in sending a card or letter to someone mentioned here, please consider starting soon. You don't realize what it means for them to receive mail. It truly is a "ray of sunshine" in an otherwise quite cloudy life.

Our birthday calendar for May:

I can only find one name on my calendar and that is

HERMAN WEMEKAMP

109 Bythia Street, Orangeville, ON L9W 3V5

Herman will be 51 years old on May 21. Congratulations and may the LORD always be your comfort and strength according to His promises.

*Quiet from fear and evil,
Dwelling with Christ my King,
Resting beneath His shadow,
Gladly my heart shall sing.
Quiet from fear and evil,
He with His peace endows;
Nothing can touch His children
But what His hand allows.
Quiet from fear and evil,
Trusting of Him I sing;
Jesus, the world's great Victor,
Jesus, our glorious King.*

Greetings to all of you,

MRS. J. MULDER
1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

General Synod Winnipeg 1989

By M. Werkman

Our eleventh synod

By the time you read this, the eleventh general synod of our churches will probably be in session. Only our first two general synods were held in the same (central) place, in Carman, MB (November 1954 and March 1958). After that a general synod was held once every three years, in accordance with art. 49 of our Church Order. Since 1958 our synods have alternately been held in the East and the West. This time the capital of sunny Manitoba is host to our broadest ecclesiastical assembly. The chairman for synod is also chosen from the East and the West alternately. If this "custom" is maintained, one of the ministers of Ontario will be the chairman of General Synod Winnipeg 1989.

What is coming up?

The convening church of Winnipeg has served the churches with at least three provisional agendas. From the last agenda we may conclude that this synod will be a very busy one indeed. Will it last three or four weeks, or even longer?

The church of Winnipeg will officially open the meeting of the sixteen delegates on Tuesday, April 18, at 9:00 a.m. Winnipeg then checks the credentials of the delegates and reports to the meeting whether the credentials are in good order, who are present, and whether they are the first or alternate delegates.

The delegates then choose the chairman, the first and the second clerk (the first clerk looks after the Acts, the second after the correspondence), and the vice-chairman (to replace the chairman when necessary and to write the press release). General Synod 1989 is now constituted and the four officers (moderamen) take their place at the head table.

Now is the time to adopt the agenda in its final form. At this stage synod is usually adjourned. Most delegates then meet socially while enjoying a cup of coffee. The moderamen gets down to work in order to come with a proposal how to divide the workload over, usually, four committees of four (and whom to put in these committees). A time schedule will

also be proposed. Synods usually meet in the mornings from 9 to 12, in the afternoons from 2 to 5, in the evenings from 7 to 9 (or 9:30), and Saturday mornings from 9 to 12:30. Certainly not a light work schedule!

Synod will probably not meet on Saturday, April 22 but will give time for the meeting of the Board for Superannuation.

No doubt the matters of our *Theological College* will be dealt with in the first week. New governors will have to be appointed, reports will be dealt with, etc. And who does not want to know who will be appointed as the two new professors to replace our professors Faber and Deddens when they retire?

There is a report of the Standing Committee for the publication of the *Book of Praise* (re the Creeds and Confessions). Synod will have to deal with at least nine letters from various churches concerning the Committee's report. Did the Committee fulfil its mandate? Did it go beyond the mandate it received from the previous synod? Will the word *Christian* remain in our present version of the Apostles Creed or will it disappear? Should Synod allow a member of this Committee to have the floor at Synod or should it judge that the report of the Committee should be clear enough and stand on its own legs?

Another five letters from churches or individuals deal with the Form for the Public Profession of Faith and the Form for Baptism (re the doctrine summarized in the *Articles of the Christian faith* or summarized in the *confessions*). Which will it be?

Did you know that Synod will have to deal with a request of the Free Reformed Churches in North America for permission to include all the Psalms of our Book of Praise in their Psalter? And that a Braille version of the Book of Praise is being planned?

If Synod will maintain the word *Christian* in the Apostles Creed, will Hymn 1A also be adjusted accordingly? Will we receive an alternate melody for Hymn 1A as requested by one church?

What about our Church Order?

Synod will find on its table letters

from at least eleven churches concerning various articles of our Church Order. Is it necessary to delete the word "institution" for the training for the ministry (Art. 19 C.O.) since there could be a time when we perhaps will not have an *institution* for this training but will nevertheless still have to train students for the ministry? Or shall we be sober and remember the last article of our Church Order? There we as churches promise that we shall *endeavour diligently* to observe the articles of this Church Order.

When may our ministers retire? Only when they are not able to perform the duties of their office anymore because of age, illness, physical or mental disability? That is the way it is at the present since Synod Burlington 1986 (*Acts*, art. 95). Many of us may not realize that Art. 13 C.O., as we have it in our Book of Praise now, is outdated since 1986. What will it be in 1989? Will our ministers be able to retire when they reach retirement age like every one else or must they continue till they are not able any longer?

Plenty of protests and appeals

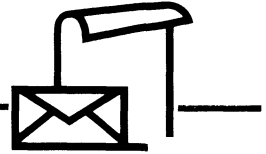
No less than eighteen protests or appeals have come in. Four of these are from churches, fourteen from individuals. Some are of people who are no longer members of our churches. For every appeal Synod will first have to decide whether or not it is admissible. If it is not admissible, Synod may not even deal with it.

Overtures

Five churches have sent an overture to Synod. Without claiming to be complete, we will mention a few topics. Should we as a rule have our theological professors as advisors at our general synods? Should church visitation be made annually or at least every second year? Can we improve on our superannuation benefits so that smaller churches are also able to call an older minister? Should quotations or references in a foreign language not be translated in the Acts of our synods?

— Continued on page 184

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Mr. Editor

I have followed with interest the series of articles written by K. Deddens, entitled "True Ecumenicity" as published in *Clarion* in three successive issues, commencing in the issue of February 3, 1989.

Although I could appreciate much of what I read in the articles, I wish to express my disappointment at the conclusion which K. Deddens reaches in the final article. K. Deddens poses the question, "But is there then no possibility for true Reformed ecumenical activity?" In answer he states, "There is!" That possibility lies, according to what follows, in a faithful participation in the I.C.R.C., an organization which was born as the result of an initiative, which I believe K. Deddens erroneously attributes to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.¹ I say erroneously because I can see a considerable difference between what the Australian churches proposed and what actually resulted from their proposal.

Mr. Editor, it disturbs me to see "true Reformed ecumenical activity" restricted to participation in an international organization of churches. I believe that it belittles and undermines a very basic reformed (and therefore Scriptural) belief that every church member has an ecumenical task and that that task is one which begins very close to home. I have always understood, that the activity of the church member in the families, in the local church and in the society and that the work of the ministers and the office-bearers in the local churches constituted, in the first place, our ecumenical task. I base this thought on what Prof. K. Schilder said in his address "Your Ecumenical Task" where he emphasizes, that our primary ecumenical task is witnessing.² He also said in this same address in relation to our ecumenical task, "never run away from the place . . . where God has placed you, . . . a wife to your husband, . . . a mother to your child and above all a member of your church."³ Rev M.J.C. Blok in a sermon on Lord's Day 29, echoed these comments when he said, "We have to know and acknowledge the Lord in His covenant, and then we start working, close to home, everybody in his/her own place. And in that way, of daily repentance and circumcision of our hearts, in that way we are working in a truly ecumenical way."⁴

Mr. Editor, K. Deddens' way of "true Reformed ecumenical activity" would be

an easy solution. It would mean that a small number of delegates to an I.C.R.C. and on top of that a few synod delegates, could comfortably fulfil our ecumenical calling for us.

Mr. Editor, a correct Scriptural view of our ecumenical calling is the lifeblood of the Reformed churches. For it activates all church members, not to pursue some fanciful goals and highfalutin aims of some distant world organization, but it puts them to work in the hard reality of their everyday life. It gives direction, also to the ministers and the office-bearers as they carry out their task in the congregations. I ask myself the question whether the time spent on participating in these glamorous meetings, not to mention the preparation and the follow up, does not in many instances go at the expense of what is really "true Reformed ecumenical activity." Mr. Editor, I would call for a review of the conclusions of K. Deddens. Restricting our ecumenical calling to participation in an international organization, may very well mean choking the life out of our Reformed existence.

With Christian greetings,

A.H. TERPSTRA
Lot 15 Queen Street
ALBANY, WA

¹ *Clarion* Vol. 38, No. 5, p.101

² Schilder, K., *Your Ecumenical Task*, p.8

³ *Ibid* p.11

⁴ Blok, M.J.C., Sermon on Lords Day 29, from *Beleden Beloften*.

Reaction

Only some remarks:

1. I wrote in my last article about true ecumenicity that the initiative of true Reformed ecumenical activity as churches came from the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. I did not erroneously attribute that initiative to the Australian deputies, because I quoted literally the letter of March 11, 1977, sent by these deputies to the Dutch deputies, in which a synod or a session was proposed of the churches of Africa, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Korea. Synod of Groningen-Zuid 1978 accepted the proposal of the Dutch deputies and the final result was the constitutional meeting of the I.C.R.C. in Groningen, 1982. But I maintain that the first idea of this form of true Reformed ecumenical activity came indeed from

Australia. In my article I wrote no more and no less than that.

2. I wrote only three articles about true ecumenicity, and I did not write at the end: here are my conclusions about all the possibilities of true Reformed activity in ecumenical respect. I discussed in my last article only (see the sub-title!) "Different ecumenical organizations. As churches we had to say "no!" to the W.C.C., the I.C.C.C. and the R.E.S., in the conviction that these organizations are not true Reformed ecumenical. So the question was: is there no possibility for us as true Reformed churches to work together in an ecumenical organization? With respect to this I pointed to the I.C.R.C., of which the Canadian Reformed Churches and also the Free Reformed Churches of Australia are a member. I emphasize: this has to do – according to the title of that article – with the activity as churches, and I wrote that article especially in connection with the upcoming Synod of Winnipeg and the upcoming conference in Langley in spring and summer of this year.

3. I did not deny at all the importance of the activity of the members of the church. I like to remind the readers of my first article in which I gave a broad quotation of K. Schilder's *Your Ecumenical Task* concerning the maintenance of the Biblical antiithesis. I agree completely that true ecumenical activity begins at home, as living members of Christ's church. But as far as the churches are concerned which are truly Reformed, they need each other, too, and are to help each other in the many problems which they as churches meet in international respect. Let us not make a false contrast between true Reformed activities as churches on the one hand and as members of the church on the other hand. Both are important.

4. When br. Terpstra uses terms as "fanciful goals," "highfalutin aims," and "glamorous meetings," he condemns and shows his disdain for activities undertaken in (what is seen as) obedience to Christ, the Head of the worldwide church, who commands us, not only locally and nationally, but also internationally, to be a hand and a foot for each other, cf. e.g. Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 16:4; Ephesians 2:19. We object to this manner of expressing oneself. Is it not impolite, unbrotherly and un-Christian to speak this way and dishonouring the author himself?

K. DEDDENS



Esteemed Editor

Thank you for the extensive coverage of the Report of the Committee for Contact with the OPC.

By mistake you published not only pages 7-10 of our Report (*Clarion*, vol. 38, No. 6, March 17, 1989, pp. 122-123) but basically duplicated these pages. What is called "Conclusion OPC report 1988" does not belong to our Report as it has been sent to the churches and will serve at General Synod 1989.

This "Conclusion" on pp. 123-125 should not have been published.

J. FABER

Response

We offer our apologies. By mistake those "Conclusions OPC report 1988" were included in what was sent to Winnipeg.

J. GEERTSEMA

To the Editor, *Clarion*

I believe that the article "Has the OPC changed" in the *Clarion* by the Rev. R.F. Boersema is in need of some correction, or rather, completion, for the sake of the honour of our brothers and sisters in Laurel and Blue Bell.

Rev. Boersema, following the advice of the OPC general assembly of 1983, quotes from a special report of the mid Atlantic Presbytery in which strong words are spoken about the need to protect the Lord's Supper table: ". . . to give serious attention to these trends in the church, and determine whether the practice being followed at present truly meets the situation in accordance with the requirement of the Lord, that all things be done decently and in good order, and not to give that which is holy to the dogs."

After this display of vigilance, one would believe things are well under control. Rev. Boersema, for one, concludes then that the comparison with the "vrij-making" is farfetched.

I believe that if quotes are to be made, we should refer to those items that are relevant, and therefore I would like to offer your readers some additional material.

In the first place there was the complaint itself which brought the matter to the general assembly. Following the official format which is prescribed for that purpose, the submission reads as follows:

And now, this fifteenth day of October, A.D., 1982, come Barry R. Hoford, et. al. and complain against the decision of the session of Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church on September 30, 1982 to cease use of an interim method of administering (in which the session exercised the final judgement as to who should be admit-

ted to the Lord's Supper) and reverted to a formerly approved (March 20, 1982) method (in which visitors are allowed to exercise final judgement as to their eligibility for admission to the Lord's supper).

The submission continues with nine reasons, reciting evidence from the scriptures and the governing documents of the OPC, why the reverting back was in error. Two of those reasons touch on the form of church government, namely 5 and 6, claiming that the decision to revert back to letting the visitor make the final judgement on admission to the Lord's table is in conflict with the OPC subordinate standards, which teach that the session must make the final judgement for admission to the Church, and thereby to the Lord's supper on the basis both of public profession and a consistent public life, (5) and that receiving and dismissing members of the church must be on letters of commendation or certificate of standing (6).

It should be noted that the session had agreed to an interim admission policy of restricting admission to visiting members of other OPC churches with an attestation. Claiming that this method was "counterproductive," the session changed back to letting visitors from other "evangelical churches" make their own judgement about their eligibility, after a verbal warning against abuse.

The complaint was dealt with at the presbytery, where it was denied without any refutation of the reasons given in the submission. But there was a very important minority report of which your readers should be aware. They presented this very interesting recommendation:

. . . that the Presbytery of mid Atlantic give its assent to the cogency of the complaint, and that we repent of the laxity regarding the celebration of the Lord's supper . . .

CHURCH NEWS



ACCEPTED to Chilliwack, BC
REV. M.H. VAN LUIK
of Watford, ON

The Canadian Reformed Church of Winnipeg, MB invites you to attend the prayer service for General Synod to be held on Monday evening, April 17, 1989 at 8:00 p.m. It will be conducted by the Rev. M. van Beveren.

The Maranatha church in Surrey, BC will hold its afternoon services at 4:00 p.m. effective March 26, 1989.

However, notwithstanding the fact that the special report from which Rev. R. Boersema gleans the reassuring state of awareness in the OPC, was in existence, this minority was overruled.

The General Assembly of 1983 denied the complaint, and justified the retention of "the present method" (e.g. admitting visitors from other churches after a general warning) in the following statement:

Permitting those who seek admission to the supper to identify themselves as meeting the qualifications established by the sessions cannot be said to be contrary to the teaching of Scripture regarding the keys of the Kingdom. Christian love "believes all things" (1 Corinthians 13), is ready to credit the word of a brother or sister, and cannot be charged with sin for failing to demand, as the condition of Table fellowship, official verification. The spiritual hospitality of welcoming love may be imposed upon or abused, and the complainants are properly sensitive to the judgement that may be incurred . . .

What it amounts to? The keys of the Kingdom are wrapped up as do-it-yourself-kits and handed to visitors for their own self application. And that is not all, the assembly continues:

There are other dangers that the complaint does not recognize: dangers of a denominational exclusivism in practice, if not in principle, an exclusivism that may compromise our witness to the table as the Lord's.

After reading this, I for one cannot quite agree with the manner in which our contact committee downplayed the pronouncement of the General Assembly in their report (*Acts Gen Syn 1986 Page 132*): "The general assembly denied a complaint that a session was not fully executing their responsibility in supervising the Lord's table." Surely, there was more at stake than that. The General Assembly gave an official adjudication, and that is more than just a "pious observation" as they themselves may want to call it.

In that light the subsequent events at Blue Bell must be seen. It is clear that the "Reformed" outlook of that congregation, including its policy of admitting visitors to the Lord's table, was not tolerated in Kenneth Kok, who was refused admission to the ministry, nor in his fellow elders, who were replaced (!) without consent of the congregation.

Therefore, whether or not the OPC has changed, is immaterial. More important is that your readers get a complete picture of the present situation.

Yours truly,
JOHN DE VOS

What about the OPC?

Synod is faced with the question whether or not to continue the temporary relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. One church proposes to terminate our present relationship and return to the form of contact as we had it before Synod Coaldale 1977.

Bible translations

There is a report from the Committee on Bible translations which Synod will have to act on.

Churches abroad

A Committee report on contact with foreign sister churches as well as a report regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches will receive due attention.

Prayer service

As we can see from the above there is a lot of hard work to be done by these sixteen brothers representing our churches. In their own strength and wisdom they will not succeed. What we need is the power and wisdom from the Lord our God who gives generously when we ask Him in humble prayer.

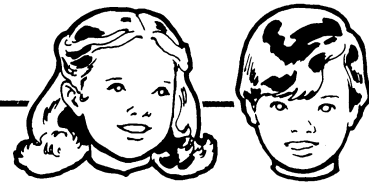
Therefore, on the evening before Synod starts, a worship service will be held in the church of Winnipeg. As is the custom, the chairman of the previous synod, Rev. M. van Beveren will preach the Word and lead in the prayers.

May our personal, family, and congregational prayers be added to these as well, that the Lord may grant all the members of Synod true Scriptural wisdom and insight and give His blessing on their work to His greater glory!

C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Thank you for your many letters, puzzles, pictures, and other "goodies" to share with the other Busy Beavers.

It was great to hear from you!

Remember I asked you how you felt about being Youngest, Oldest or Monkey-in-the-Middle!

Here is what two sisters had to say.

"Hello! I am the youngest in the family. I like being the youngest because I don't have the responsibilities that an older brother or sister has. I don't like being the youngest because I usually get in trouble. Mom says that the youngest gets in trouble just as the oldest does. I think it's best to be monkey in the middle because you don't get in trouble as often and get an equal amount of responsibilities."

Busy Beaver *Melanie Peters*

"Hello! I'm the oldest in the family. I like being the oldest because I get all the new clothes and I'm the first one to grow up to my Mom; she's really short, you know. In a way I don't like being the oldest because I'm always the one who has to do everything. And I don't know how to imagine being monkey in the middle, so I don't know what it's like."

Busy Beaver *Michelle Peters*

Sisters

by Busy Beaver *Rebecca Stel*



FROM THE MAILBOX



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Christa Jansen*. We are happy to have you join us. That's quite a few books you read, Christa! will you write and tell us about your favourite one?

Welcome to the Club *Linda Schouten*. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already, sending in a puzzle and riddles to share. Keep up the good work! How did you enjoy your spring break, Linda?

And a big welcome to you, too, *Jocelyn 't Hart*. We hope you'll really enjoy being a Busy Beaver. How did you do in your swimming lessons, Jocelyn? In the February 16, 1989 issue of *Clarion*, in the "From the Mailbox" part of Our Little Magazine you will find lots of information about pen pals. Hope to hear from you again soon, Jocelyn. And thank you for the knock-knock jokes!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Brian Degelder*. Thank you for your neat letter. Keep up the good work! Will you write and tell how you enjoyed spring break? Bye for now, Brian.

What did you do on your snow day, *Brad van Oene*? And welcome to the Club. We are happy to have you join us. Did you help your Dad during spring break? Write again soon.

Welcome to the Club, *Elisa Vandergaag*. Do you help look after your pets? And do you play your piano? Thank you for the puzzles, Elisa. I see you've been very busy! Bye for now.

Thank you for telling me about your Christmas programme, *Emily Moes*. It must have been beautiful! I'm glad you had such a good time with your cousins. Thank you too, for your story about Christmas, Emily.

Hello, *Cheryl Schouten*. It was nice to hear from you again. I see you've been very busy! Thank you for the story and puzzles, Cheryl. Write and tell how you enjoyed your holiday.

Yes, I can tell you spend time at the computer, *Steven Vandevelde*. And I see you mean to keep the Busy Beavers busy, too! Keep up the good work, Steven.

I see you enjoyed the snow, *Mary-Anne Moes*. And how did you enjoy the spring break? Thank you for the interesting puzzle, Mary-Anne. Write again soon.

What a lot of birthdays you celebrated all at once, *Wendy Jansen*! How was yours? And how did you enjoy your brother's wedding day? Thanks for the wordsearch, Wendy. Bye for now.

I see you had a very good birthday, *Laura Aasman*! Are you enjoying all those crafts? And have you read all the Laura books now? How was your holiday, Laura?

Hello, *Earl van Assen*. It was good to hear from you again. And I see you've been keeping very busy. Do you spend quite a bit of time, drawing, Earl? Keep up the good work!

I'm glad your new barn was finished in time, *Janine Vanderhoeven*. Sounds to me as if you all had a good time on your Mom's birthday. You're a good puzzler, Janine. Bye for now.

Thanks for the puzzle, *Jane Schulenberg*, and also for telling us about your favourite book. How did you enjoy the winter and your spring break, Jane?

Knock, Knock Jokes

from Busy Beaver *Jocelyn 't Hart*

Knock, knock.	Knock, knock.
Who's there?	Who's there?
Amos,	Andrew,
Amos who?	Andrew who?
Amosquito!	Ann drew all over the wall,
Knock, knock.	and she's in big trouble!
Who's there?	
Anna.	
Anna who?	
Another mosquito!	

Quiz Time!

MAKERS

Have you ever made something you were proud of? Match the following Bible people with the things they made.

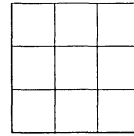
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Ark | a. Maacah |
| 2. House on a rock | b. Abraham |
| 3. Barns | c. Eliashib |
| 4. Temple | d. Solomon |
| 5. Tower | e. Wise man |
| 6. Gates (Neh. 3:1) | f. Noah |
| 7. Wells | g. a fool |
| 8. Sacrifice altar | h. People of Babel |
| 9. Gallows | i. Isaac |
| 10. Idol in a grove (1 Kings 15:13) | j. Haman |
| 11. A coat | k. Hannah |

Answers to *Makers*:

1. f; 2. e; 3. g; 4. d; 5. h; 6. c; 7. i; 8. b; 9. j; 10. a; 11. k

MAGIC SQUARES

by busy Beaver *Steven Vandevelde*

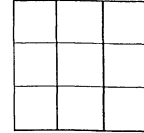


the past form for sit
the past form for eat
something to drink

an insect

to say something that isn't true

opposite of "no"



MATH CODE

by Busy Beaver *Laura Aasman*

A - 1+1 =
D - 4+4 =
E - 5+5 =
G - 2+3 =
H - 4+3 =
M - 8+8 =
N - 9+9 =
O - 6+7 =
R - 9+10 =
T - 11+11 =

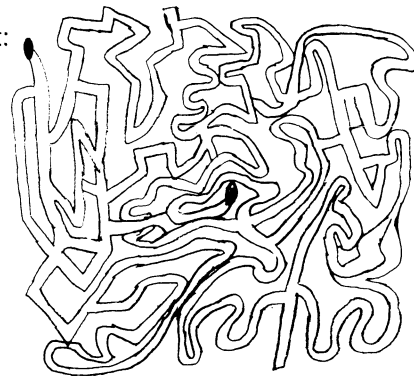
What should a man know before he teaches a dog tricks?

<u>16 13 19 10</u>	<u>22 7 10 18</u>
<u>22 7 10</u>	<u>8 13 5</u>

MAZE

by Busy Beaver *Cheryl Schouten*

Start:



Bye for now, Busy Beavers
Keep busy!

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

We thank our heavenly Father, the Creator of life, for entrusting to our care one of His covenant children. We joyfully announce the birth of our first born, a son

TRAVIS THOMAS

Born March 27, 1989

Lawrence and Marilyn Toet
(nee Buss)

68 Lynn Lake Drive
Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7

Pete and Caroline Van Grootheest thank the LORD for the beautiful gift of another daughter:

VICKI JUSTINE

Born March 5, 1989

A sister for: *Danielle*
Katie

RR 1
Belwood, ON N0B 1J0

With thankfulness to the Lord, we wish to announce the birth of our daughter:

KESHIA JAYNE

Born March 12, 1989

A sister for *Shannon*

Paul and Yolanda Veurink
(nee Koerselman)

1816 10 A Street
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0