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The Spirit of Prophecy

By R.A. Schouten

Introduction

Pentecost is known as the great feast of the Spirit. On Pentecost, the promises of the Old Testament, of John the Baptist, and of Jesus Christ were fulfilled. The Spirit was poured out on the church. The description of this event in Acts 2 is well-known to all of us. But is the meaning of Pentecost clear to all? Especially in a time when Pentecostal groups and movements raise up new ideas and stir up doubt in the minds of even Reformed people, it will be a good thing to take a closer look at the events of Pentecost.

Spirit and Word

One thing that quickly becomes clear as we read through Acts 2 is that there is a very close connection between the Spirit and the Word. Pentecost is about fiery tongues; it is about prophecy; it is about a sermon. In short, Pentecost is the feast of the Word. Driven by the Pentecostal Spirit of power, Peter begins to preach! And in the course of the sermon, he makes the startling point that from now, on, all God's people will be prophets!

So we see that the Spirit who comes to the church on Pentecost is the Spirit of the Word. And that shouldn't surprise anyone! The Spirit had always been tied up with the Word. When men of the old dispensation came under the influence of the Spirit, they invariably began to speak. As David states in 2 Samuel 23:2, The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me, His word is upon my tongue. Whenever a true prophet said, Thus says the Lord, this was a sure indication that the Spirit of God was at work. Through the prophet came the call to repentance and faith, and also the pronouncement of judgment. In this way, the mind of God was disclosed to His people.

The Man of the Spirit

The Old Testament prophets realized that their possession of the Spirit was inadequate and incomplete. They awaited something greater, namely, the Age of Messiah. Messiah would be, above all, the man of the Spirit. Isaiah speaks of the shoot from the stump of Jesse, and proclaims of Him that the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD (11:2). And in chapter 61, Isaiah prophesies that the Spirit of the LORD will be upon Messiah in order that He may preach good tidings, and proclaim liberty and the year of the Lord's favour (vs. 1,2).

Messiah comes. And in order to fulfil His Messianic task, He receives the Holy Spirit without measure. At the baptism of the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist is witness to the Spirit's descent upon Him in the form of a dove. The meaning is clear: Jesus is anointed for His task. Now His ministry must begin. And that ministry is prophetic! Jesus must declare the will of God to Israel. He must preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. He is, in fact, nothing less than the Word! In Him, the world meets the ultimate revelation of God. The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known (John 1:18). What would the world

know of God without Christ? Nothing would remain but the vanity of the human imagination.

Jesus came to preach. Everything that He heard from the Father, He made known to His disciples (John 15:15). He whom God has sent, writes John, utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that He gives the Spirit (John 3:34).

Christ was thus our Chief Prophet. Every word He uttered had the power and inevitability of the Prophet. Because they were from the Spirit, His words were for salvation and destruction. As Simeon had said in the temple: Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel (Luke 2:34). His Word would bring both blessing and curse. It would lift up the humble and destroy the proud. There was grace in the message of the Kingdom, but also judgment. The manner in which people responded to the Word of the Kingdom would have repercussions for all eternity.

As it was, the majority of the covenant people rejected the Word. And what is more, they killed the prophet. For they loved the darkness more than the light! The Word was too painful; it called them to repent, and this the masses would not do. So the Word was suppressed. Because of His Word, the Prophet was killed. The world could not bear His message.

The Church and the Spirit

But already before His exodus, the Lord had given comfort to His disciples. It was true that He would leave them. But He would not leave them as orphans in the world, without any hope or comfort. In fact, His departure would be advantageous for the disciples, because it would mean the coming of the Spirit! That was to be their comfort and hope and strength. The Spirit would come to the disciples and give to them prophetic knowledge. As Jesus said: He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. When the Spirit comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. . . . He will take what is Mine and declare it unto you (John 14:26; 16:13-15).

Jesus goes as He must — to His death, and then to the Father, but His Word will remain. It will even increase.

To the disciples will come insight into the person and work of Christ. Things which before their Master's death and resurrection they could not bear will now be revealed to them by the Spirit (cf. John 16:12). They will be able to speak authoritatively about the Christ. So they will become witnesses to Him. As apostles, their Spirit-breathed words will be the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14).

In accordance with the instruction of their Lord (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), the disciples waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit of power. They had their Great Mandate (Mt. 28:18-20), but they would not be able to fulfil that mission until clothed with the Spirit of Prophecy.

They wait for ten days. The Lord desires to teach them to depend on Him and to realize that without Him, they can do nothing.

ing. While they wait, the congregation of Christ (about 120 persons) gathers together each day to pray. She awaits the good pleasure of the Lord. One can only guess what their expectations might have been. How would the Lord return? What would be the manner of His coming in the Spirit?

The Signs of Pentecost

Finally, it happens. On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, the disciples are gathered together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:2-4).

The disciples understand what is happening. The Lord has returned in the Spirit! Heaven has come to earth. The powers of the age to come have broken into the present age (cf. Heb. 6:5). The disciples realize that this event cannot be explained in a naturalistic manner. It is from above. The Lord has broken into human history. The last days of the world have started — the age of the Spirit! God makes Himself evident in a new and remarkable fashion.

“ The signs of Acts 2 have not been repeated. We hear no sound and see no flame. But one sign of the Spirit’s presence remains forever — the prophetic confession of Christ as only Saviour and only Lord.”

There is a sound like the rush of a mighty wind. Spirit and wind are inextricably bound as metaphor and reality. Like the wind, the Spirit has compelling power. He is untameable and untraceable. No one can master Him. He comes and goes as He wills. He is sovereign. Like the wind, He can both refresh and destroy. And there are tongues of fire. Like wind, fire has a twofold association in our minds. It can warm us; it can also scorch and destroy us. So the Spirit comes into the world as fire. He is the fire of God’s love, but also brings the fire of judgment.

Christ’s Rule by the Spirit of Prophecy

The signs demonstrate that the Spirit of the glorified Christ has come into the world! The Saviour of the world, the man Jesus Christ, has been accepted into heaven. God has received Him into glory. Jesus, the Son of David sits on His holy throne. The Lamb has become the Lion of Judah. From now on the Spirit will be at the service of the man Jesus Christ, for the exercise and completion of His rule.

Christ takes up His rule. Because of this fact, the Last Days have begun. But how will Christ exercise His rule? How will He bring in His Kingdom? The answer is: through the Spirit of prophecy, through the Spirit who always binds Himself to the Word. Christ reigns through the Spirit of prophecy poured out on His church. Christ pours out His Spirit upon His church, upon His representatives, who must continue His work in the world. From now on, the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ will be full of the Holy Spirit, so that they will be able to live in communion with Christ and do His work in the world via their prophetic office.

Pentecost begins with wonderful signs. But it continues in

a starkly “normal” manner. The signs are spectacular. But they require an explanation. And that explanation comes by means of Peter’s sermon. It seems so calm and quiet. Peter’s sermon is just a patchwork of quotations from the old prophets, interspersed with some explanation. And yet, in that sermon, all the power of the Spirit is unleashed. Peter’s tongue becomes a sacred tool in the hands of the Spirit. Peter fulfills his prophetic



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office, and through that simple sermon, the world is brought a step closer to the end of history.

Yes, Peter's words are a rushing wind and a burning fire. He speaks as one baptized in the Spirit. With incredible insight, He begins to proclaim Christ to the Jewish people — gathered from all nations in Jerusalem. He shows them the meaning of the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. Before Pentecost, Peter could never have preached such a sermon. Just ten days ago, before the Lord ascended into heaven, the disciples were still hoping for the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6)! For the most part, they were still ignorant. But now Peter has been granted prophetic insight through the Spirit. The Spirit gives him knowledge and insight into the mystery of Christ and enables Him to speak with passion and conviction about Jesus as Lord.

And now, just as the Lord Himself was a power for the rising and falling of many in Israel, so the preaching of Peter and of the church will be for the rising and falling of many in all the world. The power that comes into the church is a dangerous power. The prophetic ministry of the church brings both death and life, grace and judgment. When the Spirit is loose in the world, one has to be careful. The Spirit transforms all disciples into bearers and proclaimers of the Word. And what people do with that Word has eternal consequences. For in accepting or rejecting the Word, they accept or reject the Kingship of Christ.

All are Prophets

Pentecost is the feast of the Spirit. So we are led to believe. But actually it is Jesus Christ who is in control on Pentecost day: He has poured out this which you see and hear (Acts 2:33). The Lord Jesus wants to continue His work in and through the church. Through the Spirit, the church is always pointed to Jesus Christ. The Spirit's work is like a spotlight pointing to and emphasizing Christ. He leads us to be Christ-centered. And through the Spirit, the church is enabled to speak about the Christ. When explaining the events of Pentecost day, Peter does not preach about the Spirit, but about the Christ, the Saviour of the world. The signs of Acts 2 have not been repeated. We hear no sound and see no flame. But one sign of the Spirit's presence remains forever — the prophetic confession of Christ as only Saviour and only Lord.

The New Testament church is composed of prophets and prophetesses. And we don't mean this in a "Pentecostal" sense — as if all have direct revelation from heaven, whether in tongues, dreams, or words of prophecy. Direct revelation has ceased. We have a closed canon. All we have to do is maintain the sound pattern of words once for all delivered to the saints via the New Testament prophets and apostles. The pretensions of latter-day "Pentecostals" is simply a denial of the great *Sola Scriptura* of the Church (cf. Art. 7 of the Belgic Confession).

Despite out rejecting such claims to tongues and prophecy, we also must insist on a prophetic church. For this is the message of Peter. He quotes Joel to the effect that in the last days, God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, with the result that every member of the covenant community will be prophetically endowed. "Pentecostals" cannot claim this text for their purposes, since the kind of "prophecy" they claim is not universal! Paul cleared up that possible misunderstanding a long time ago when he asked: Are all prophets? The obvious answer was "by no means" (1 Cor. 12:29).

So Peter does not mean that the Spirit will come and give direct revelations to all persons, as He did to all true prophets in the old dispensation. But Peter does mean that every person who repents and believes and is ingrafted into the New Israel — the church — will have the kind of knowledge and insight characteristic of prophecy. Such believers see and experience the things which prophets longed to see.

The prophets "searched and inquired" about the salvation that is now the possession of the church. They inquired about the person or time indicated by the Spirit. In contrast, the new covenant community has no need to search and inquire. The person is Christ, and the time is now! (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12). The mystery of God's redemption is no longer a mystery. All believers know about it. All may understand. It has been declared to them. They are witnesses to the full grace of God in Jesus. They have seen the powers of the age to come irrupt into the present. The knowledge of the folk of the Old Testament was obscure and weak in comparison to what the church may now possess. Then there was a veil; now there is the pure, burning light of Christ. For this reason, the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than the greatest of the prophets — John the Baptist (Mt. 11:11).

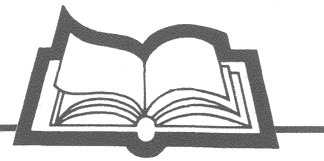
Through the Spirit of prophecy, the Lord Jesus Christ is powerfully present in the world. Peter preaches a prophetic message of grace and warning. He proclaims to the Jews that because they have rejected and crucified the Messiah, judgment is hanging over their heads. The axe is already raised. But there is one way to escape: and it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There is yet opportunity for repentance. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And again he says: Save yourselves from this crooked generation (Acts 2:21,28,40).

Peter's sermon is met with appropriate trembling: fear came upon every soul (vs. 43). The people understood from Peter's sermon that the coming of the Spirit was a terrifying reality. Through the Spirit not only grace, but also judgment would come. Through the Spirit, the world would be thrown into upheaval. The Spirit would bring crisis after crisis. When the Spirit of prophecy addresses the world, everybody and everything is taken up in a mighty rush to the end. The Word of the Spirit is a Word which will lead to bloodshed, fire, and vapour of smoke (vs. 19). Things may have seemed rather quiet on Pentecost, but through the preaching of Peter and subsequently of the whole church, the world would be driven into its mighty last phase to be concluded in the Judgment and Restoration.

We who believe have been baptized into the church. That means that as our inheritance we possess the Spirit of prophecy. We understand mysteries. We know the Christ. We can confess Him. As the New Israel, we declare the wonderful deeds of God who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (cf. 1 Peter 2:9). We live in the Spirit-baptized body of Christ. The baptism of the Spirit is not for the select ones who have demonstrated their worthiness of this higher state (as "Pentecostals" teach). It is for all the sons and daughters of the covenant.

We live in the Last Days. The only thing left in the drama of God's redemption is the drawing of the curtain. These are exciting days. These are dangerous days. We must ourselves respond to the urgent preaching of the prophetically gifted church. And then we must be faithful in our own office — as prophets and prophetesses. We must confess, declare, make manifest, bear witness, and testify. The hour is late. We can be sure that we will be mocked for this prophetic activity, reviled on account of the name of Jesus, hated because we don't have the mind of the world but of Christ. But we can be sure that through our prophetic ministry, whether in the office of all believers, or as ministers, missionaries, and evangelists, the Kingdom of God does come. As the Spirit compels us ever and again with holy love to lift up the Name which is above every Name, we are constantly the co-workers of Jesus Christ, our Chief Prophet, who comes again to judge the living and the dead. Those who receive the Gospel will be saved. Those who reject it will be condemned. That is the prophetic message of the church of Pentecost.

C



By J. De Jong

"But there are many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

John 21:25

The Word of Glory

The gospel according to John differs markedly from the other three gospels. As some put it, the approach of John's gospel is more *theological*. One might say that it is more structured and shows a definite purpose and composition. The gospel revolves around seven signs which climax in the resurrection of Christ. There is a definite order and structure to the various accounts and speeches. They are all meant to build up in concentric layers towards the revelation of Christ in His glory as He appeared on the morning of the resurrection.

This makes one wonder about the last verse of this book. After a majestic beginning and such a triumphant climax, does this not seem to be somewhat of a lame ending? He employs a figure of speech known as *hyperbole*, in which matters are exaggerated in order to make a point more effective. In the hyperbole John uses a word which recurs at other places in the gospel, a word which only adds to the exaggeration. In effect, he says that the *cosmos* itself could not contain all the books that would be written were all the deeds of Jesus enumerated one by one. This term *cosmos* includes the whole known universe, and one might counter that this is somewhat overstated, considering that Jesus lived on earth a relatively short time and that His public ministry lasted no more than three years.

However, the choice of this word is deliberate and behind it we see a deeper truth reflected. Calvin correctly notes that the evangelist meant to point out that the majesty of Christ swallows up not just our thoughts but heaven and earth itself. This majesty gave a miraculous display of its own splendor in the words of the Lord. And the brightness of this splendor overreaches the splendor and majesty of creation itself. Creation is geared to redemption, and yet it is far surpassed by redemption.

This is John's meaning in stating that the world itself could not contain the books giving an exact account of all the words and works of the Lord Jesus. The form of the words in the original indicate that all these works were still fresh in his memory. He was the disciple whom Jesus loves, and he saw all these works from close by. But they can only truly be seen in *faith*, 20:30,31. Faith stamps all these works as one united tapestry of *redemption* for the church; and this is a redemption so great and glorious it outstrips the walls of the whole universe!

Here John qualifies all the words the Spirit gives us about Jesus. We already have many words, but there could have been many more. But we do not

need to search for the historical Jesus and uncover every one of His actions. In what is written we have all we need for our salvation. For all the words are really nothing but words of the one Word — the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, 1:18. All the words find majesty and glory in the one Word, the Word that was with God and was God.

John also makes clear that the glory of the Word at the end of His work is greater than the glory at the beginning. Redemption is more than creation! As we have them, the creation accounts are tendentious, anticipating and reaching ahead to the work of redemption. But as God's counsel is realized, the willingness of the Son to offer Himself for us becomes clearer, and He is more highly exalted than ever before.

Another point stands out in this conclusion of the evangelist: the end of his gospel fits perfectly with the beginning. In fact, with this ending it becomes a perfect whole, in which the end ties up perfectly with the beginning. For the beginning of the gospel introduces the *Word*. But the end of the gospel shows that all its words testify to the *greater* glory of the Word by whom all things were made. For surpassing the glory manifested in His cooperating work in creation is the glory manifested in His work of redemption. He was willing to *redeem* the *cosmos* which was made through Him. So the greater glory of the Word is revealed!

Therefore this book can end with the resurrection of Christ, and the commissioning of the apostles at this time. The resurrection already shows enough glory to prove the victory of the Word, and His preeminence in and beyond all creation. It proves that the divine intrusion of the Son in the world surpasses the glory of the beginning. The resurrection of the Son from the dead manifests a glory greater than the divine majesty which shines forth in all creation.

We recall that these things can only be seen in *faith*. John himself says that what was written was written solely for the purpose that we might believe in the Son, and believing might have life in His name. Those who believe may be assured of the revelation of great glory at the last day. In the end we will see the Word, full of grace and truth, and we, too, will behold His glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father. Then we will also see the truth of the beginning: the Word was with God and the *Word was God*. For God is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, and all the world will show His glory.

©

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Filling the gap

There is a large gap in the material found in *Clarion*.

If one looks through several issues of this magazine, he will find "Our Little Magazine" for the Busy Beavers in the churches; "Ray of Sunshine" meant to stimulate us in our priestly care and concern for one another; "Patrimony Profile" for those interested in Church History; as well as various reports and articles, etc., for the "more mature" audience. In other words, he will find many excellent columns and articles.

And yet, there is a gap.

The gap exists about halfway between the Busy Beavers and the "more mature" audience. There is nothing which appears on a regular basis for the teenaged membership of the churches. *Clarion* describes itself as "The Canadian Reformed Magazine." Since it does so, it would be good if the magazine were also to address directly the young people of the churches.

A very brief survey has revealed to me that few young people pick up and page through *Clarion*. Some of those I polled looked at me as if I had just been beamed in from another planet. The Rev. R. Schouten of Calgary and I would like to attempt changing this.

Our unabashed goal is to get the youth of the churches accustomed to picking up *Clarion* and beginning to read the various articles which are so instructional for the faith and life of all Reformed people, and further to encourage them to read other books and magazines (e.g., *In Holy Array*) so that they might grow in faith and knowledge. And so, with the blessing of the editor, we propose to begin a new column in the pages of this magazine which we will direct specifically at the teenaged membership of the churches.

The ultimate goal is, of course, to help our young brothers and sisters remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Those words, "Remember your Creator," which also serve as the title of this column, come from Ecclesiastes 12:1. In this part of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher addresses very specifically the young people within the covenant community.

He encourages you to think about your Creator when you are young. Because if you don't think much about the Lord in the days of your youth, you are not going to think about Him at all when you are old.

If you don't begin looking to the Lord when you are young, you are not going to begin doing so when the evil days come. If you have never learned to depend upon the Lord in your adolescent and teenage years, you are not going to start leaning on Him when you start to experience the pains of old age and sickness. If you do not make the response of faith and love before the days of old age come along, you probably never will.

There are exceptions. There are cases where people who never had the time of day for God when they were young have turned to Him in the final days of their lives. Sure enough. But I think that I'm right when I say that such examples are few and that the general rule as I have described it in the previous paragraph almost always applies.

The author of Ecclesiastes portrays the symptoms of old age in very graphic language: Your arms begin to tremble. Your legs begin to shake. In the prime of life you could run a 5-minute mile. Now shuffling a few metres requires a real effort. Teeth fall out. Eyes grow dim. Cataracts make a bright day seem cloudy. Hearing fades. You're always cupping your hand behind your "good" ear and saying, "Pardon me." You feel lonely and isolated in a large group of talking and laughing people because you can no longer follow the conversation. Sleepless nights. Roaming the house at 3 a.m., warming up some milk in the microwave, hoping it will soothe you and help you sleep for a couple of hours. Your children who live in another part of the province ask you, "Why don't you ever come for a few days like you used to?" They don't realize that travelling by train has become a fearful experience.

The joy of life ends in the indignity of the nursing home listening to a roommate scream at some vague ancient memory ... or was that you? And soon the silver cord which holds all of life together snaps. The body goes into the ground and the spirit goes to God who gave it.

Perhaps you have a grandparent who is suffering from Parkinson's disease or has had a stroke or is dying of cancer. You visit them and you leave wondering how they can handle it. How can granddad smile when his arms are shaking so badly that he can't even hold his own teacup? How can grandma's eyes radiate such peace and happiness when that third stroke has robbed her of her ability to speak?

Do you know how? Because granddad and grandma have thought about their Creator since the days of their youth. And now that they are old and even forgetful, there's one thing they never forget, and that is that their Creator will never forget them. That gives them peace during their last difficult days.

You are young. You are full of optimism and exuberance. Rightfully so! But please realize that the days described above are just around the corner. Ask granddad where the past fifty years have gone! Please realize that if you wait until the days of frailty to start thinking about your Creator, it will be too late. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. And when the difficult days come then they might still be difficult, but you will have come to them out of a lifetime of knowing where to go and to whom to turn: your Creator.

P.S. Rev. Schouten and I will welcome any questions you might have on a certain topic. We do not claim any special competency; however, we will try to answer them by searching the Scriptures and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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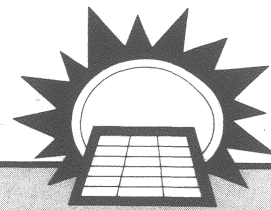
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CHURCH NEWS 

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of Attercliffe, ON



By Mrs. J. Mulder

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit."
1 Corinthians 12:12

Dear brothers and sisters,

Before His departure from this earth, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His disciples, and in them the church, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who would guide them into all the truth. (John 16:13-15) On the day of Pentecost this promise was fulfilled, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church of Christ. This outpour was accompanied by mighty signs and wonders.

As Peter explained, it was the exalted Lord and Saviour who had poured out that which the people saw and heard. (Acts 2:33) Christ Jesus baptized His church and all its members with His one and only Spirit. Through that baptism we are bound and molded together into one body.

Do we, as members of Christ's church, still see the Holy Spirit work among us? Sometimes we are accused of a lack of love and joy; a lack of dedication and enthusiasm; a lack of living faith in the powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit. What we need, some say, is a special baptism with the Holy Spirit. Christians without this special experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit are missing, as they say, a very basic link in the relationship with Christ. That's why they miss out on some of Christ's benefits!

The danger is that people who say this rely more on their personal experiences and religious feelings, than on the grace of God coming to us in the promises of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the glorious fact that the whole church has been baptized by the one Spirit into one body. The Spirit dwells in the church, the one body of Christ, a body with many members. Although those members differ in many ways; although they are from different stock, they all become one in faith of Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit. They do not become identical, no! But with their various gifts and talents, they are molded together into a living body. They all go in the same direction. They all walk on that road which Christ has paved by His blood: the way of life!

All the members of that body drink of the same spirit. Not once but always again. And that keeps them together and that strengthens them in their love and unity, in their fellowship with Christ and one another.

It is true that the Holy Spirit is a very important "link" between the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven and us here on earth. Only through the Holy Spirit, who works through God's Word, we share in Christ Jesus and all His benefits. Only through that Holy Spirit we, although so different from each other, will grow into a unity and fellowship, the one body of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we receive that new life that Christ has obtained for us.

By drinking of the Holy Spirit, that is by letting ourselves be guided and directed by the Spirit as He speaks

to us in God's Word, we will also show the fruit of the Spirit: faith, love, joy, peace and dedication to God and His service. (Galatians 5:22)

By drinking of the Spirit, we will also learn to use His gifts for the benefit and well-being of our brothers and sisters. And we will do that not because we *have* to, but because we *want* to; readily and cheerfully!

"For God has so composed the body, that is His church, . . . that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

From the Mailbox

I received a note from a friend of the Wemekamps (Orangeville) to let you know that both Mr. Herrman Wemekamp and his wife are very much encouraged by the mail they receive. Mr. Wemekamp has been bedridden due to a worsening of his condition. Although, lately he has been able to attend church again.

Is it not a pleasure and privilege that we, with actually so little effort, may bring a "Ray of Sunshine" in the lives of our sick and handicapped brothers and sisters?

Our birthday calendar for June

JOAN KOERSELMAN

Box 624, Coaldale, AB TOK OLO

Joan's 33rd birthday is on June 17th.

DANIEL STROOP

193 Diane Drive, Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

Daniel will be 9 years old on June 20th.

BEVERLY BREUKELMAN

Box 666, Coaldale, AB TOK OLO

Beverly will, the Lord willing, celebrate her 28th birthday on June 30th.

I wish all three of you an enjoyable birthday!

The Spirit, sent from heav'n above
Shows us the way of truth and love.
The promised One dwells in our hearts;
He light and life to us imparts.

He on the Church of Christ our Lord
His many varied gifts outpoured,
That, without malice, we
Might one another's members be.

Greetings from
Mrs. J. Mulder
1225 Highway 5, RR 1





By W.W.J. VanOene

Everyone will agree that it is proper to begin this column with offering our heartfelt congratulations to one of our co-editors, Dr. J. De Jong, on the occasion of his recent promotion to Theologiae Doctor. He wrote a thesis of almost three hundred pages and, although I haven't had an opportunity to read much of it, what I did read has whetted my appetite. The meditations which our co-editor wrote in our magazine were and are always surprising in that they contain thoughts and open views which are new. May it be given to our brother to serve for a long, long time in the capacity of professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology at our Theological Seminary to the benefit of the churches which he and we all love.

A more capable person than I am will pay attention to his thesis in our magazine as well, I am sure. I just want to relate a few of the little theses which, as is customary in the Netherlands, are added, sometimes with tongue-in-cheek.

To start with the last one: "The word of an ancient-Egyptian copyist 'Write nothing with your hand except that with which you will be happy in the resurrection' is to be borne in mind well especially by theologians." How about that!

I recall that Dr. De Jong was not too happy with the words in Hymn 36 "Praise the Holy Spirit." When we were busy with the composition of the Hymn section of our *Book of Praise*, he wanted us to change this. I see that he has not changed his mind about it when reading thesis No 18: "The expression 'Praise the Spirit' without a clear trinitarian context is a liturgical expression which is alien to the liturgy of the Reformation as well as to that of the ancient church."

The last one which I am going to quote here is No 19: "It is not to be recommended that the minister is the owner of the parsonage."

We could, of course, debate the question whether, when a minister owns his own home, this could be called "owning the parsonage." A house owned by the "parson" is not necessarily a "parsonage." Having his own home would make things a lot easier when he retires or is appointed as professor at our Seminary, for that matter; on the other hand, for the church it is better when the church owns the parsonage and lets the ministerial family live in it. Rise or fall of house prices would then have no effect whatsoever on the church.

However, it was not my plan to enter into a discussion of these little theses at this moment. The last-quoted one gives me a bridge to reach Chatham where, "after discussion it was decided to take off the budget for 1990 the item of \$ 5,000.00 re: relocation minister at retirement, because financially it is not possible yet. Important repairs to the church building have to be done first." It is gratifying to note that the consistories do pay attention to this matter.

Less enthusiastic I am about "a letter received from a member of the congregation objecting to recent decision by the consistory that work of Home Mission is an ecclesiastical matter. A reply will be sent."

It is possible that I misunderstand this information and that the member meant to object to a declaration that home mission is a consistory matter. As it reads here, however, it is totally incomprehensible to me how someone can state that bringing the Gospel to those in our own neighbourhood and vicinity is not an ecclesiastical matter. Who gives one the right to make the distinction that it is the task of the church to have the Gospel preached to heathen far away but that it is not the task of the church to have it done in our own country to those round about us? No such right exists.

"Tapes of sermons will be available to all members," Chatham wrote. "Brother A. will begin to set up a library and will be in charge of distribution. A special cabinet will be built by brother B. at no cost. This way members will be able to take taped sermons along on vacations or even on long distance travel." In case they want to keep a tape, the members will have to pay \$ 5.00 per cassette.

And finally: Chatham was scheduled to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the church there on May 4th.

In Fergus, too, the taping of sermons had the attention. "A request from the Home Mission Committee re: taping of sermons delivered by guest ministers, with the minister's permission. The request is granted, the consistory will decide which minister is to be selected." With reference to the above-quoted last little thesis of our brother De Jong I would advise my colleagues not to say anything from the pulpit for which they cannot be grateful in the day of the resurrection! No one should refuse to have a sermon taped. If anyone would not want to have certain words or passages recorded, he should not say them at all from the pulpit.

Coming back to what we started with, Burlington South reported: "We can also pass on to you that our minister made a most successful defense of his dissertation and was able to answer all questions confidentially and well."

There is another point for which I am very thankful. Rev. Mulder mentioned it in his remarks. According to his report, Dr. J. van Bruggen "said that the College in Hamilton, because of the language, is more suitable to receive and instruct students from other countries than Kampen." Rev. Mulder added the wish "that many of those students may find their way to Hamilton!"

I like these sounds from Kampen better than what I noticed in an article about contacts which the brothers in the Netherlands have with the Reformed Church in the U.S.A., in which "Hamilton" was not even mentioned but where apparently only one possibility was seen for students coming from these churches: have them come to "Kampen."

Burlington East passed on that "The Building Committee reports that the fire is now considered to be related to arson. Further, no news yet on the plans as it relates to obtaining permits to build." In the meantime a settlement has been reached with the insurance company. The total amount is \$ 1,015,000.00. The same consistory received a "letter from 'Rehoboth' Church proposing to set up a training for past, present, and future office-bearers. A tri-lateral committee from the Burlington churches will be formed to discuss this proposal and come with recommendations."

The plans for another institution in the Lincoln area are still very much alive. "Through means of this bulletin we wish to keep the congregation informed as well as we can with respect to the latest proceedings in connection with the possible institution of a new sister church. Presently the Committee is awaiting approval for facilities that may become available. The answer is expected some time in March. Just because nothing substantial has been published thus far, this does not imply that there is no activity. The Committee is encouraged by the response of the brothers and sisters since the beginning of their work. In the near future, the Lord willing, the Committee will call on the brothers and sisters concerned and decide on matters pertinent to institution. The preparatory work is essential since it too must serve to further the cause of becoming a new church of our Lord and thereby promote the Kingdom of our God."

In connection with this we make a big jump to the Fraser

Valley where at the Abbotsford consistory meeting "it was decided to contact the church at Langley in regards to future developments in the Clearbrook-Aldergrove area." In the meantime there was also a proposal to increase the number of elders.

Jumping back, we land in Toronto. The consistory there received "a letter regarding adding new Hymns to our *Book of Praise*. The consistory discussed the possibility of forming a committee to look into the matter. A final decision was not made yet."

It is prudent when a consistory considers the possibility of forming a committee to prepare a solid answer to a request. It is my sincere hope and expectation, however, that the answer which will be prepared is a sound, loud, and well-founded "NO." When we composed the present Hymn Section of our *Book of Praise* the fear was expressed that the present number would be just a start and that soon enough efforts would be seen to increase it. These Hymns were not added because we wanted something else beside the Psalms, but because we desired to be able to sing of the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises in New Testament language. There was not the slightest desire to have non-inspired songs which express personal feelings, are based on personal experiences and are "poems" rather than rhymings of various parts of Scripture. Care was taken that "subjective elements" such as constitute the bulk of poems found by the gross were excluded. The Apostles' Creed was taken as guide and the various songs which were deemed suitable were arranged accordingly.

There is no major event in the life of our Saviour and the course of salvation about which we cannot sing in fulfilment with the use of our Hymn Section. We can sing of His birth as an historical fact, of His completed sufferings, of His resurrection, of His ascension and sitting in glory as well as of His appearing on the clouds in majesty and splendour, expressing our hope and expectation as New Testament church.

I do not hesitate to state that any effort to add to what we have cannot bring any substantial and needed element which is supposedly still lacking in our ability to sing of the great facts of salvation in fulfilment. Thus every effort to add to what we have could mean only a weakening of our present "confessional singing" and would constitute a serious threat to the purity of contents.

In this connection we mention that in some bulletins mention is made of "a new tune for Hymn 1A," and one bulletin even referred to it as "a replacement of present 1A?" Don't try to catch up with your fantasy, brothers. As far as I know this new tune, if found acceptable, which is not certain by any means, will definitely not be a replacement of Hymn 1A, but will be known as Hymn 1C.

I have tried this "1C" several times, but find it flat, without enthusiasm such as one might expect when "singing out" one's faith. I sadly miss the triumphant ring with "Our Lord," as well as the equally triumphant ring of "and the life everlasting. Amen." which 1A displays so vividly. According to me 1C peters out. However, I am no musical expert and would love to hear a discussion by our experts, a discussion which is not influenced or dominated by emotional elements but determined by musical arguments.

There is one point that I do like to touch upon. The argument has been used that we should prefer the work of a brother over and above that of one who is not one. This argument would cut ice only if, all things being equal, we did not have a tune yet and had to choose between two. Here the situation is different: we have one and have had it for more than twenty years. If it were unsuitable and if this were demonstrated on good and solid grounds instead of on flimsy assumptions, it should be removed. But the alleged unsuitability has never been demonstrated. Then the argument of "prefer the work of a brother" is totally irrelevant. And no one should try surreptitiously to remove it by speaking

of "a replacement of 1A" or "a new tune for Hymn 1A." This is not how things are to be done in the church of Christ.

Back to Toronto.

"A request was made to our church to sponsor three Hungarian refugees from Holland. After ample discussion it was decided to pass this request on to the church in Lower Sackville, since one or more members there are of Hungarian origin." A wise decision in my opinion. Besides, it may help the brotherhood in Lower Sackville in their efforts to increase the membership.

Our trip brings us to Ottawa. The figures change every time, but the latest bulletin which I received recorded that some \$ 6,300.00 has been received from outside the congregation, while more than \$ 18,000 was brought together by Ottawa's own members. In the meantime the brothers are in the process of setting up a bank account in the Netherlands, as they have directed their appeal to the brotherhood in that country as well.

Going south again, we stop over in Orangeville. The consistory decided "that the direct involvement of the congregation with the Apostles' Creed will be intensified. From now on the Apostles' Creed will be sung every other week."

The question whether it is wise to have two brothers or a father and son or two brothers-in-law serve at the same time as office-bearers has been discussed at more than one consistory. In some instances it was almost unavoidable as there was not a sufficient number of brothers available for the various offices. Times have changed somewhat as far as this is concerned; besides, it is not by far so in each and every case that these two brothers or brothers-in-law agree in everything and form sort of a united front, so to speak. Yet it was oftentimes decided that two "blood brothers" could not serve at the same time. And if it was not an express decision, it frequently was considered to be an unwritten rule.

Rev. den Hollander paid attention to this point in *The Sheepfold*. "In the past when the congregations were still small and consisted of few families this policy was adopted in quite a few congregations. This was done not for principal reasons but for practical considerations.... However, now that councils have grown considerably and congregations too, this 'unwritten rule' is not as pressing any longer.... For indeed, the requirements for office as expressed in 1 Tim.3 and Titus 1 focus on entirely different standards than blood relationship. And a good cooperation of 'brothers among brothers' depends more on the spiritual unity of faith than on the identity of name."

Our last stop in the East is Watford. What we mention concerns the school society. Our readers know that Watford had to close its school for lack of availability of staff. New ways are being sought apparently, witness "a letter from the London School Board was received and read. They acknowledged our visit to their meeting and our concerns and request for physical movement of the school in our direction in the future to accommodate the Watford Society."

Calgary is the only church in the Alberta/Manitoba region about which we are to mention something. The news is of a pleasant nature, and we wished we could say something similar about all the churches. Calgary has seen a "favourable cash-flow." They did pay back part of the loan received from the Deaconal fund and are going to pay the rest in June. "Donations to the building Fund as of Jan. 1, 1990, will be used again to increase the fund and not any longer to bring down the loan on the parsonage." And "as a result of the decisions mentioned in the above Short Report, the Church will be debt-free by the end of the year." Congratulations!

As our readers can know, the church at Vernon rents a real church building for their services and other activities. They used the facilities of the Vernon Funeral Home for a number of years and this was a very suitable arrangement, although they are happy with what they had to exchange it for. Now "a letter was re-

ceived from the Vernon Funeral Home wishing us well in our next stage of development now that we have outgrown their facilities. A Thank You letter will be sent expressing our appreciation for their help, as well as a token of appreciation on behalf of the congregation."

Abbotsford was mentioned above in connection with a possible development in the Clearbrook/Aldergrove area. I hope that this development takes shape fast so that the following will prove to have been a waste of time. "Balcony: the Committee of Administration is instructed to acquire estimates of what is necessary to complete the balcony in conformance (conformity? VO) with the building codes."

We are more in agreement with the following: "The organists will be remunerated (compensated or reimbursed? VO) for music materials acquired."

Modern technology and its products are not always a reason for joy and satisfaction. Rev. G.H. Visscher recently was a listener instead of a preacher and wrote about some experiences.

"It struck me as I sat in the pew recently how many of these things (digital watches, VO) go off during the service. I consider this quite rude and inappropriate. If you cannot turn such mechanism off, then please leave it at home. Ministers don't need stopwatches to tell them when the hour is over, nor do we need to remind all the others around us that it is. Let us remember that we are in worship. That applies also to the second concern. It appears that many consider the time when the offerings are taken as an 'intermission' wherein we can have quite a conversation with those around us. Again, let us remember we are in a worship service, in the presence of the Lord, and let us therefore behave in a fitting manner."

Mission News will contain the information, too, we presume, but still it should be mentioned here as well, that in Smithers there was a proposal by the Home Mission Committee to "purchase or lease a piece of property in Fort Babine." This proposal is being looked into by the consistory and attests to the progress of the work which is being done among the native population of that region.

During his latest "tour of duty" at our Seminary, Rev. Berends made a video of some of the work which is being done there. He was going to show it before some who might be interested in it. And who would not be!

It seems that there was quite some stir in Smithers when someone who was not a member of the congregation and did not answer the questions at the baptism of his child, yet held the baby while the baby was receiving the sacrament. It seems that some were of the opinion that this was impermissible.

I do not know what the arguments were pro and con, but confine myself to the more "technical" question whether anything unlawful took place when the non-member held the baby during baptism. Also during my active ministry it did happen more than once, and I have never heard that anyone came with serious objections to it. There were questions alright, and some referred to the old text of the Church Order where it said that the fathers shall present their child for baptism. Some misunderstood this as meaning that holding a baby while it was receiving the sacrament is the same as presenting a child for baptism. "How can someone who is not a member present his child for baptism?" it was asked.

Let us not confuse matters. Only one who is a communicant member can present a child for baptism. Only a communicant member can enter into the stipulations, answer the questions and take the obligations upon himself or herself. But it is basically irrelevant who holds the baby. Take an extreme case: a minister who baptizes his own child while the mother cannot be present. Assume that the man has only one arm. He needs it for administering the sacrament. Then anyone, relative or nurse or whoever is present may hold the baby and it does not make one bit of difference. This example is not as strange or unrealistic as some might think.

Holding a child during baptism is not the same as "presenting

one's child for baptism." The old provision was directed against the practice that witnesses or "godparents" came instead of the father.

Whenever it happened that a parent who was not a member came and held the baby during baptism, I was always glad that he did, for he heard the Word of God and also witnessed the baptism of his child, something which can never be forgotten.

However, let's not make an article out of it.

A few particulars from Australia.

In Byford "The proposal to sing Hymn 1A at the next Lord's Supper Celebration and reevaluate it, if so required, is carried."

Bedforddale is waiting for the arrival of the van Delden family and now that the moment is coming closer, the longing increases. A few more months, the Lord willing, and they'll be there.

In the Bedforddale portion of the District Bulletin we find, among other things, the following lines. "As you will have noticed — and there have been questions about it in the past — there have been differences in the way the salutation and benediction texts are read in the church services. The Orders of Worship in the *Book of Praise* prescribe what texts are to be used."

There is a slight misunderstanding here. Things may be a little different in Australia, although we are not aware of any difference in this respect, but we do not have a prescribed Order of Worship. What we find in our *Book of Praise* is not prescriptive but descriptive: what is described there is not how it should be done but how it is usually being done. No general synod of ours has ever adopted and made compulsory any Order of Worship, nor would a general synod have the right to do so. When the text for the *Book of Praise* was prepared, care was taken to show the descriptive character. On page 581 we read: "The following are the orders of worship in common use." No consistory is bound by any of these Orders or by the text of salutation or benediction described therein.

This newsmedley has become quite lengthy, mainly because of the points on which some elaboration appeared necessary. It does not hurt if I add a few more lines.

These lines concern terms used among us. Sometimes I think, "Why do you mention it? People don't listen anyway." But then my hopes are revived and I do it again.

When we are using strange terms, we should use them correctly. I read about the heart trouble of a brother that there was "fibulation." I did not know what a bone in the lower leg has to do with heart trouble, but admittedly I don't know everything. At one time or another I did read about "fillibration," but this may have been wrong as well.

When shall we reach the stage at which everyone ceases using the wrong terminology in connection with broader assemblies? Time and again I still read that "classis meets," or hear brothers speak of a "classis meeting." Broader assemblies do not meet, for the umptieth time, but they are held, have sessions, are convened, are postponed and disappear into the hoary past. It is incorrect to write that "classis (or regional synod, for that matter) will meet June 15th." A classis will be held on that date. And if no classis is held, it is not the "meeting of classis" that is postponed, but classis itself is cancelled for that date.

May I conclude with some (correct) sentences from the Ot-tawa bulletin?

"On behalf of the church at Burlington West (the convening church for the next classis) the consistory announces that the next classis has been convened for...."

"This week Friday, brother A. and I will, the Lord willing, be attending a Classis Ontario North in Burlington."

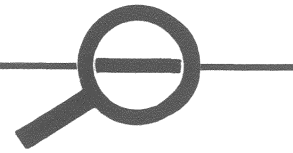
"Recently elder A. and I attended a quarterly meeting of the twelve churches in Classis Ontario North."

It is not so much the terminology in itself which is important, but the concept which is behind it.

Having occupied your attention long enough, I sign off.

Affectionately,
VO





The Christian Reformed Alliance

During a conference held 21 and 22 March 1990 in Crete, Illinois, two groups concerned with the direction of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have agreed to work together "for the ongoing work of reformation and renewal in the denomination" under the name Christian Reformed Alliance" (*Christian Renewal*, 9 April 1990).

The two original groups in question are the five-year-old Consistorial Conference based in Illinois and the fledgling Christian Reformed Alliance, formed in southern Ontario. Both the Consistorial Conference and the Christian Reformed Alliance had been council-based organizations, but up to now they had been kept apart due to a perceived difference in emphasis. The thirty church councils that were represented at the recent Illinois meeting decided that they should work as a united effort under the name Christian Reformed Alliance (CRA). An additional thirty churches have expressed an interest in the conference.

The nature and authority of the CRA

Since the CRA is not an ecclesiastical assembly and "since original authority resides in the council, just what was the place of the Alliance? Where would it fit in?" (*Christian Renewal*, 9 April 1990).

The following decision was unanimously adopted.

"The nature of the authority of the CRA is advisory, to encourage and support individual member councils." This recommendation was adopted with the following two grounds:

1. The Christian Reformed Alliance has no ecclesiastical authority.

2. The adopted Constitution of the Christian Reformed Alliance describes the limits of the Alliance's authority....

A second recommendation adopted opened and limited membership in the CRA to councils that are in complete agreement with the Constitution of the Alliance. (*Christian Renewal*, April 9, 1990)

The Constitution

The Constitution of the CRA as reported in the *Christian Renewal* of April 9, 1990 reads as follows:

Purpose of the Alliance

The Christian Reformed Alliance is an association of Christian Reformed councils who are united in an effort to give effective testimony to God's truth within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and thereby to maintain and promote the denomination's Reformed Christian heritage and its confessional nature. In doing so the alliance intends to abide by all the provisions and obligations of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church in so far as it reflects the Scriptures and our historical Reformed Confessions (1959).

Basic Confessional Statements

In light of God's infallible and inerrant Word as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity, we confess and declare as an alliance of Christian Reformed Councils:

1. That we sincerely believe that all the articles and points of doctrine set forth in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort fully agree with the Word of God.

2. That we promise to teach these doctrines diligently, to defend them faithfully, and not to contradict them, publicly or privately, directly or indirectly, in preaching, teaching, or writing.

3. That we pledge not only to reject all errors that conflict with these doctrines, but also to refute them, and to do everything we can to keep the Church free from error (cf. Form of Subscription).

4. That we believe that Christ has conferred on those who govern the churches the authority to establish appropriate means to guard against deviating from what He has ordained for us, and "so we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God" (Belgic Confession, Article 32).

5. That we believe that all ecclesiastical authority resides in Christ the Head of His Church, and that He confers His authority upon the local church, thus making the authority of

each council original among the fellowship of churches (Church Order, Article 27). Therefore the decisions of the Alliance shall not be binding on a member church until approved subsequently by its council.

Other decisions

Because of a number of overtures from church-council members, delegates voted to appoint committees in education and missions. The education committee received as mandate to work on catechetical materials. This committee was also instructed "to pursue ways to keep in print existing materials of high quality, and identify needs and commission the writing of new material where necessary."

With respect to missions, an overture was received to prepare a comprehensive study to determine whether member churches of the Conference should sponsor their own joint mission work. "The CRA adopted the recommendation of the advisory committee which suggested that the CRA should begin by formulating 'a principal statement concerning a Reformed approach to missions.' Any other action was judged to be premature at this time" (*Christian Renewal*, 9 April 1990).

Two other committees were appointed; one to provide clear Biblical grounds in support of headship in light of the weakness of the latest report on headship which the Synod of 1990 will be considering; and, another committee to prepare "a Statement of Position," as a clear, concise statement of faith, to spell out what CRA members are concerned about, what they mean to conserve, and what it means to be a Reformed Christian. (*Christian Renewal*, April 9, 1990)

The next meeting of the CRA is planned for March or April, 1991 in Pella, Iowa.

Is forming an alliance Reformed?

A concern raised at the Conference was whether the Alliance was heading in the direction of "a church within a church" similar to the Gereformeerde Bond (the Reformed Alliance) in the Hervormde Kerk. Such concerns had also been voiced in *Christian Renewal* of March 19, 1990, by Rev. D. Wynia.

At issue here is the apparent commitment to remain within the CRC. About the earlier Consistorial Committee, the Rev. D. Wynia had stated that it

stresses its commitment, which appears unconditional, to working within the CRC. I think that is a foolish commitment. Not because I do not respect a sense of loyalty. I honestly do respect and appreciate it. But from a purely tactical point of view, it is something like a business man agreeing to honor the terms of contract no matter what the other party does. From a practical point of view, I doubt that it will accomplish any real reformation. From a principal point of view, which is more significant, it is a commitment which binds the alliance to remain joined to the CRC no matter what sort of apostasy develops. (*Christian Renewal*, March 19, 1990)

It is difficult for an outsider to adequately weigh how this concern was addressed and apparently satisfied with the adoption of the constitution of the CRA (see *Chris-*

tian Renewal, 9 April 1990). The following part of this document is intriguing. "... the Alliance intends to abide by all the provisions and obligations of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church *in so far* as it reflects the Scriptures and our historical Reformed Confessions (1959)" (my emphasis). What exactly does this mean? Does this indicate that Councils associated with the CRA will simply ignore what it considers unscriptural (e.g., quotas for causes it cannot support) and for the rest remain within the CRC? Or could this stipulation indicate more drastic action? Also, does the fact that *the Alliance* intends to abide by the Church Order not in effect make the Alliance of concerned councils like a major assembly within the CRC?

Furthermore, under point 5 of the Constitution we read that "the decisions of the Alliance shall not be binding on a member church until approved subsequently by its council." Does this not suggest that a concerned church has the decisions of two major assemblies to consider, — the regular ecclesiastical ones and those of the

CRA? Does this not in effect mean a church (federation) within a church (federation)? Does this not promote divided loyalties? First loyalty to the CRA and in the second place to the CRC?

The situation that the concerned CRC members find themselves in is difficult. Rev. Wynia however did raise some points that cannot be overlooked when he asked:

What sort of unity are you working for? A purely ecclesiastical unity? Or a biblical, ecclesiastical unity in the truth, in the Spirit? Why are we so afraid to talk about leaving? If we are right in what we say, if the denomination is moving in a disobedient way, are we guilty of schism? Is the faithful partner guilty of infidelity when her spouse commits adultery, and refuses to repent? If we have no true unity with much of the denomination, while we have far greater unity with other Reformed federations of churches, why would we remain in the CRC? (*Christian Renewal*, March 19, 1990)

C

COLLEGE CORNER

By C. Van Dam

A new doctor of theology for the College

Friday, March the 23rd, was a festive day in Kampen, the Netherlands. This was the day that Rev. J. De Jong of Burlington South publicly defended his dissertation and received the degree of Doctor of Theology at the Theological University of our sister churches in the Netherlands.

As the proceedings got underway, the Lemkerzaal in Kampen was filled with guests, among whom were many Canadians. Dr. De Jong's study, entitled *Accommodatio Dei: A Theme in K. Schilder's Theology of Revelation*, provoked many questions which made for a lively defense. The topic is a difficult one. How does God put "His revelation in human words in order to make it accessible to human hearts" (p.10)? In general De Jong followed the thinking of Schilder, although not without some criticism. A future issue of *Clarion* will carry a review of this dissertation.

Among the questions raised, mention can be made of the following, by way of illustration. Dr. C. Trimp doubted whether one could make a dualism between the



Prof. J. Kamphuis presents the official degree to Dr. J. De Jong

speaking of a dogmatician and that of a preacher. De Jong agreed, but insisted that one should distinguish between the two

since their tasks differ. Dr. Veling asked how the concept of accommodation can be employed in our use of Scripture. If,

Scripture for example, speaks of God's repentance, then what exactly does this "human" way of speaking mean? De Jong replied that he wishes to avoid a dichotomy between what "actually" happened and "anthropomorphic" way of speaking. We must distinguish but not separate. Thus we deepen our insight into the history of revelation. As can already be clear from these questions, this is an intricate dogmatic area of study. This study will stimulate further reflection and debate.

As is customary with every dissertation defended in the Netherlands, certain theses (both related or unrelated to the dissertation) were appended. These can also be questioned. Drs. G. Kwakkel thus challenged the statement that B. Holwerda's translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 should be rejected. It was interesting to note that one of the theses posited the undesirability of a minister's owning the parsonage.

When the defence was over at the pre-arranged time, the Senate exited and after short deliberation returned to announce that the doctorate would be granted to Rev. De Jong. The faculty advisor ("promotor"), Prof. J. Kamphuis, who conferred the degree, noted that this joyful day of March 23, has been a day full of struggle and difficulty in the past. This was the date in 1944 that Dr. K. Schilder was suspended as Professor from this institution of higher learning. This was also the date in 1952



Dr. De Jong between his European and Korean "paranymphs"

that the Lord ended Dr. Schilder's life on this earth and so ended his task here. But now the 23rd of March is a day of joy and he congratulated Dr. De Jong and his wife, as well as the parents (in law), both those present and those unable to attend. Prof. Kamphuis also expressed the hope for a good continuation of the work of De Jong, and also of the cooperation between Hamilton and Kampen.

The rector, Dr. J. van Bruggen, also offered his congratulations and noted the international overtones of the occasion. A Korean and a European had assisted De Jong as "paranymphen" (ceremonial supporters of the one defending the dissertation who stand at the front with him). Furthermore, continuing the international theme, the dissertation would make more of Schilder's thinking accessible to the English-speaking world. Also the presence of many Canadians was noted, with special mention being made of Rev. J. Mulder of Burlington West and the representative of the Theological College.

It was good to be a witness of this joyful event which is of such great importance for our Theological College. We wish Dr. De Jong the continued blessing of the Lord, also when he starts his difficult, but beautiful work as professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology at the school of the churches for the training of ministers of the Word.

C

PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Pacific, April 3, 1990, held in Langley, BC

The chairman of the consistory of the convening church at Houston opens the meeting with the singing of Psalm 1:1,2. He reads 1 Peter 5:1-11 and leads in prayer.

The credentials are examined and are found to be in good order. Two churches submit instructions. Classis is constituted. The suggested officers are appointed: Rev. M. VanderWel (chairman), Rev. A. van Delden (vice-chairman), and Rev. W.B. Slomp (clerk). The agenda is adopted.

A letter is received from a brother of the church at Lynden regarding some statements in our confessions concerning the place of the law for the Christian. Classis decides that the consistory of the church at Lynden has in no way wronged him in their response to him.

A financial statement is given by the

classical treasurer for the Needy Church Fund and the Classis Fund. The treasurer is thanked for his work.

The church at Houston reports that their inspection of the classical archives finds them in good order.

The Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry presents its report to the Classis. Classis agrees that the churches should be assessed \$6.30 per communicant member for the period of Sept. '90-Aug. '91.

Classis goes into closed session. The chairman asks whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church. Various churches seek advice on disciplinary matters. It is noted with sorrow that the churches are given the advice to proceed with discipline.

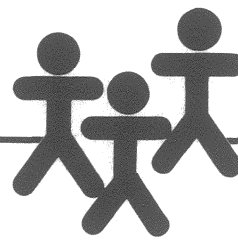
The next classis is to be convened by the church at Langley. A tentative date is set for June 5, and an alternate date is set for Oct. 2. The suggested moderators are Rev. W.B. Slomp (chairman), Rev. M.H. van Luik (vice-chairman), and Rev. G.H. Visscher (clerk).

The church at Port Kells requests Classis to grant classical preaching arrangements for one Sunday per month. Also, they request Classis to appoint Rev. J. Moesker to serve as their counsellor. Both requests are granted.

"Personal Question Period" is used. The Acts are read and adopted. Press release is approved. The chairman requests the singing of Hymn 46:1,2, and closes the meeting with prayer.

On behalf of Classis,
A. v. Delden
(vice-chairman e.t.)

C



School Activities

Volunteers

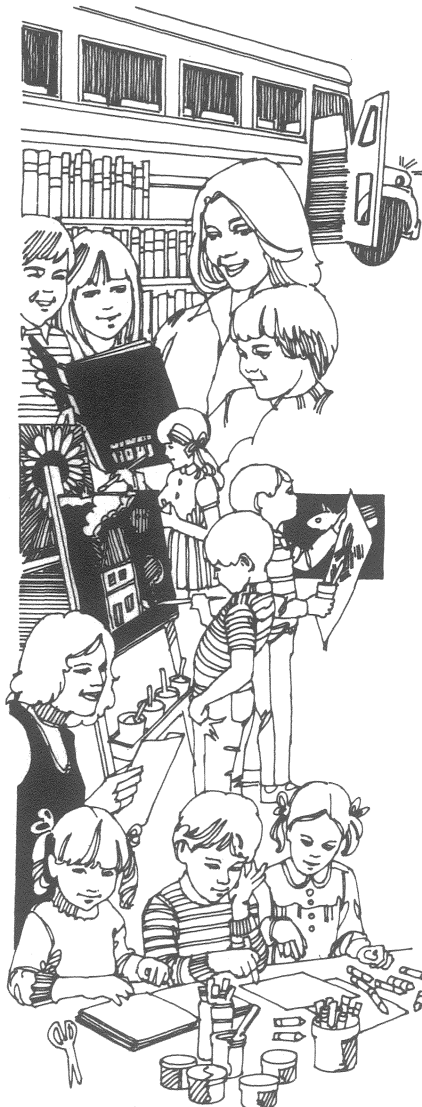
Various school magazines recognized the invaluable work of the many volunteers involved in the smooth and successful operation of our schools. Increasingly, the use of parent volunteers in our schools is understood as much more than a cheap way of getting around a perceived teacher shortage! Indeed, it is an excellent way in which parents (and for that matter also others, e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles, other adults) can become actively involved in the school education of the children. In this way the bond between home and school is strengthened. It certainly also will raise the level of appreciation for the work of the teachers in the school.

A parent-helper programme, what is it and how does it work? At Parkland Immanuel the Education Committee proposed such a programme

...in an effort to provide assistance for these teachers so that they could find more time for individual attention for the students. This "remediation" may consist of helping a student catch up if he or she has fallen behind or as is usually the case, helping those students who have more difficulty in grasping the concepts being taught. The parent helper is under direct instruction of the teacher and is to assist the teacher so that attention can be given to all students. The teacher is the trained professional. Through classroom work and evaluations the teacher tries to perceive and understand the needs of the students and to help where possible. The teacher will direct and instruct the parent helper as to their role in this educating process. Sometimes the parent helper may supervise the class while a teacher is re-teaching a lesson or concept to another group of students. Other times the parent helper may take a small group to another room and listen to them reading aloud, for example. Whatever the task, the aim of the program is to relieve the teacher somewhat so that more attention can be given to those students who need it most....

In the meantime, many a school also has

a ladies auxiliary, or a ladies aid. These ladies (although not directly involved with the instruction in the school) faithfully raise money for the many "extras" needed in the



school. Some snippets from a ladies auxiliary update...

...All mothers with children in school, have been put on their list. This will give everyone a turn to help out about once a year...

...The school Christmas musical will be held on December...

...A roller skating party has been organized for January.... This is intended to be some holiday family fun and fellowship and is *not* a fund raising event....

...Once again, we are going to ask for some unused items that you may have sitting around the house. If anyone has some large pans which they no longer use, maybe you would like to donate them to the school kitchen....

...And there are a few more garbage items of yours that we would really like to have....

...Once again our potluck dinner was a great success....

As you can see, our efforts in the past month were certainly not without reward. Now may these rewards be used to improve our school and make it a better place for learning. Our school is there to help us parents with the task of bringing up our children and prepare them for the Lord's service. May all our endeavours be crowned by the Lord's blessing!

Certainly, a thank-you to all these sisters for their efforts is not out of order. We read this in another school magazine:

Many thanks to all the volunteers who spend so much time helping out at the school. Whether it be in the library, helping out in the noon hour craft projects, typing up reports, serving on committees, classroom mothers, [and I should add here parent helpers], driving the students on field trips and last but not least, the work the XYZ Ladies do, our school benefits in so many different ways from this volunteer involvement. It is very beneficial for our children and teaches them the importance of giving of one's self.

Student behaviour: positive and negative feedback

Student behaviour remains a major concern of teachers and parents, often causing anxiety and frustration. However, appropriate behaviour does not seem to come by itself. At times measures have to be taken to improve an undesirable situ-

ation. With gratitude, a principal commented that such measures indeed had success:

The staff has noticed a general improvement in the behaviour of the "downstairs" students. Of course, these students still pull pranks and try to get away with a variety of misdemeanours, but the vocabulary and the attitude has definitely improved. We are thankful that we can mention this and want to show our appreciation to parents and students for this. I hope that this change was not just a simple result of a "cracking down", but a change which showed the students' understanding of their poor attitude and lack of good school spirit. Students as well as teachers must build one another up, strengthening one another to perform our tasks well. That is real Christian school spirit!!

At times warnings seem to have little effect. Measures had to be taken not just in an attempt to improve a bad situation, but in order to prevent a bad situation from getting worse. From one school magazine I take the following paragraph:

Some parents wondered why our traditional coffee social after the concert has apparently fallen by the wayside. Unfortunately we had to discontinue this custom because some children will not listen. They have been told on numerous occasions that they are not to run around the annex, not to fly in and out the door, etc. Sad to say, once the concert is over some children seem to think that school rules no longer apply. Because of the confusion and the mess created by these children we felt compelled to end an otherwise pleasant tradition. It simply wasn't fair to leave the mess for the Ladies Auxiliary and the janitor.

It is indeed a pity that this needs to be written; the frustration of the teachers is obvious.

However, not all is as gloomy as this. Comments about the behaviour and attitudes of our students received from "outsiders" are often quite favourable. Another principal wrote:

It is a fact that we are very much pre-occupied with comparing our school with others. More often than not it is the "negative" that draws our attention. It is then heart-warming to receive letters like the one below. From this letter it would appear that comparisons made by people who are in a position to compare and who do not have axes to grind, place us in a favourable light. Perhaps if we actively and repeatedly consider how [...] richly we have been blessed....

Just a paragraph or two from that letter,

written by a visiting consultant practical arts:

I had the pleasure of meeting with the visiting students to XYZ school's Industrial Arts on Tuesday, February 6. I was most impressed with their manner and deportment. They were truly excellent ambassadors of your school and I hope you'll pass on my admiration to them.

I watched as they came into the labs and went straight to work logging their plans in their books. They were attentive to their instructor's remarks and very respectful. I was most impressed by the way they prepared themselves to work in the lab....

There is indeed reason for concern, yet also for gratitude! Let parents and schools, yes the whole church community work together in a truly cooperative fashion to provide an education for our children which is pleasing to the LORD, bringing them up in the discipline and instruction (KJV: nurture and admonition) of the LORD (Eph.6:4).

Identity

The identity of our schools continues to receive attention — and rightly so. It is one thing to have a Reformed school, but it is quite another to ensure that the school remains Reformed. That requires the full attention of the staff, the board and the parents. It is good to notice that this work is taken seriously: several schools around the country have a study project of one sort or another to help each other in the proper understanding and application of the principles of Reformed education. The principal of Credo Chr. Elementary School,

Langley, BC, wrote a series of articles on the philosophy of education. He concluded the instalment he wrote for the February issue of Credo's *BRANCHES* as follows:

We believe that, in North America, public education rather than Jesus Christ is confessed to be man's salvation. Therefore, man does not have the key to knowledge any more and feels lost. The public school has become an instrument to satisfy everyone. Students cannot be encouraged to embrace any particular perspective which will give meaning to their lives because that goes against the grain of neutrality. This has given rise to the 'uncommitted generation'. Since this unbelief expresses a total spiritual vision, it deeply affects and distorts the direction of education. We believe that education is never 'neutral' but that it is an obedient or disobedient response to the Lord.

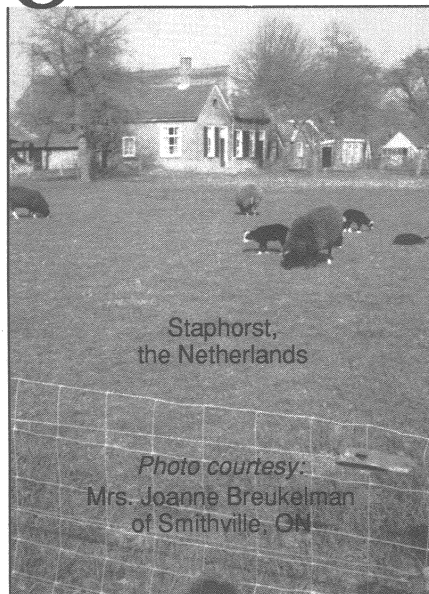
I underscore the last sentence: Reformed education is a matter of obedience to the LORD!

This work is not merely a local matter. From the magazine of the Immanuel Christian School, Winnipeg, MB, we learn about a range of activities and initiatives to further support and enrich Reformed education across the nation.

The Canadian Reformed Schools across the provinces aim at working together; however, working together can be very difficult. During the last years various efforts have been made in order to keep our schools unified. We have borrowed and shared curriculum materials. A committee of teachers in Ontario get together every summer to produce new curriculum materials and resources for the schools. The Teachers' College has a library which is becoming a resource centre for many of our schools, especially for those in Ontario. A Canadian Reformed Teachers' Magazine is published six times per year. Schools have also sought more unity in regards to readdressing more fundamental questions like: What is REFORMED education? What are our relationships with governments? What about the development of the Teachers' College? These and other questions will be addressed at a first national Principals' Conference to be held this fall. Hopefully, all the schools will be represented, and hopefully, a closer bond among schools can be developed.

A national Principals' Conference! We'll try to keep you informed. In the meantime, what about a similar conference for school board members (and others) to advance the cause of Reformed education across the nation?

OUR COVER





By Aunt Betty

Hello Busy Beavers,

Do you have a favourite baby picture of yourself?
Does your Mom say, "Oh, you were such a sweetie!" every time you look at it?

Just for fun get out your family picture album tonight or tomorrow night — sometime before Mother's Day.

Maybe your Mom will look at it with you, and tell you your baby stories — what you did, and how you laughed, and when you walked, and so on.

It's a lot of fun!

And maybe she'll show you some pictures of your Dad and Mom before they were married. And their wedding pictures.

Do you have pictures of your family on holidays?

Of you "helping" on the farm when you were three years old and sitting on the tractor?

Family picture albums are great, right?

After you and your Mom look at those pictures together it shouldn't be hard for you to think of what you can put in your Mother's Day card.

She'll love it if you write what you like best about your Mom.

She'll love it, too, if you tell her your favourite memory about you and her.

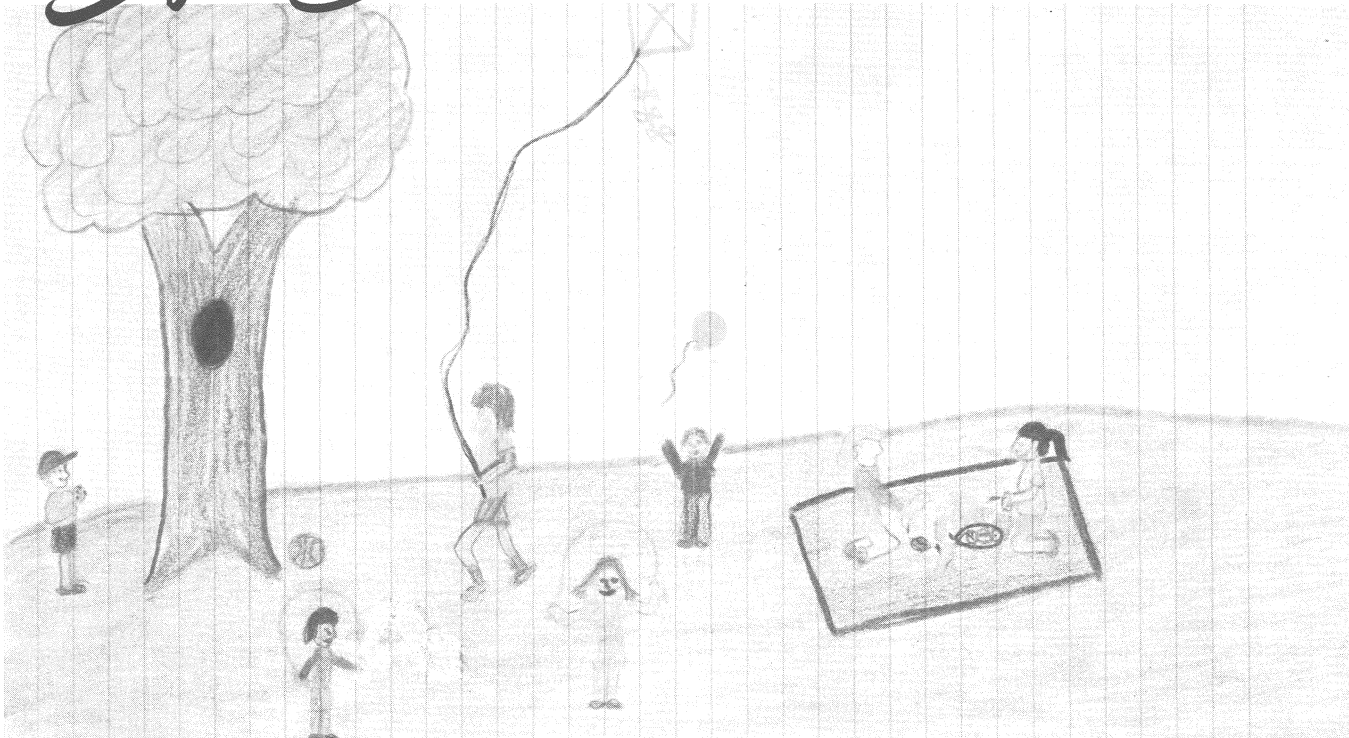
Give it a try!

I hope both you and your Mom have a very happy Mother's Day!



Spring

By Busy Beaver Jody Bouwman



Busy Beavers

Busy Beavers are often busy, as you can see.
Running up and down
Getting things ready for Aunt Betty.
Then, when the *Clarion* comes
They will have lots of fun!

Busy Beaver *Alice van Bostelen*



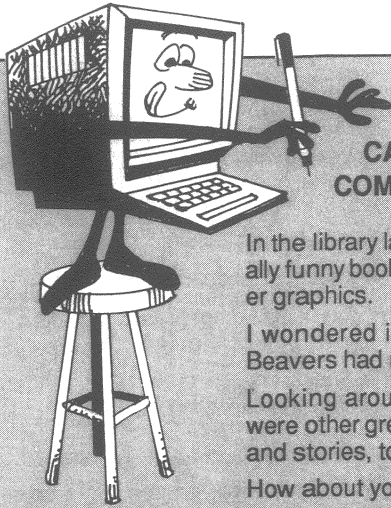
FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Aileen Feenstra*. I like your story! And I'm glad you like puzzles. I'm looking forward to hearing from you again, Aileen.

And a big welcome to you, too, *Brian Dykstra*. You didn't tell us about your family and how you spend time after school. Will you write again some time? Bye for now, Brian.

Welcome to the Club, *Robert Vandergaag*. You are a very good writer. Did you make a card for your Mom for Mother's Day, Robert? Thank you for the puzzle.

Hello, *Esther Hordyk*. It was nice to hear from you again. I see you have been very busy, and that you are good at "looking things up." Keep up the good work! Bye for now, Esther.



CALLING ALL COMPUTER FANS!

In the library last time, I saw a really funny book with great computer graphics.

I wondered if any of you Busy Beavers had read it.

Looking around I noticed there were other great computer books and stories, too!

How about you?

Have you read a good computer story lately?

Did you find a good book or magazine?

Will you share your tips with the other Busy Beavers, and let them know what you found and really liked?

Send your suggestions to:

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

P.S. Guess what?

I also noticed that you have to read carefully and critically. Did you ever hear that before, Busy Beavers? Hm . . .

Quiz Time!

MOTHERS IN THE BIBLE

Do you know these mothers and their children?

Sometimes you must give the mother's name. Sometimes the child's or children's!

The first one is done for you.

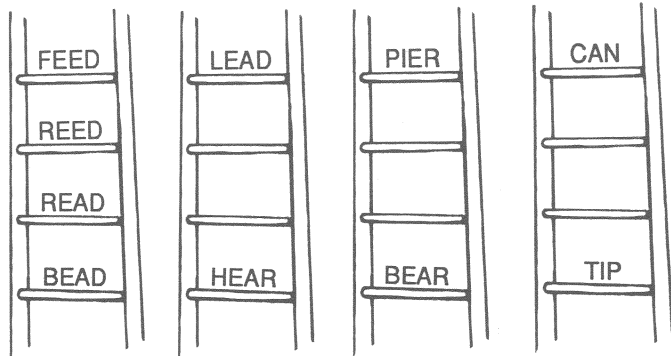
- | Mothers | Children |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. Eve | a. Seth |
| 2. Jochebed | b. _____ |
| 3. _____ | c. Joseph |
| 4. _____ | d. Isaac |
| 5. Hannah | e. _____ |
| 6. _____ | f. Athaliah |
| 7. _____ | g. Solomon |
| 8. Hagar | h. _____ |
| 9. Ruth | i. _____ |
| 10. _____ | j. Jacob |
| 11. _____ | k. John |
| 12. Salome | l. _____ and _____ |

(Answers below)

LADDERS

Busy Beaver *Anna Devries* writes:

"Fill in the ladders changing only one letter at a time. A full existing word has to be thought up to fit each space. The first one is done as an example."

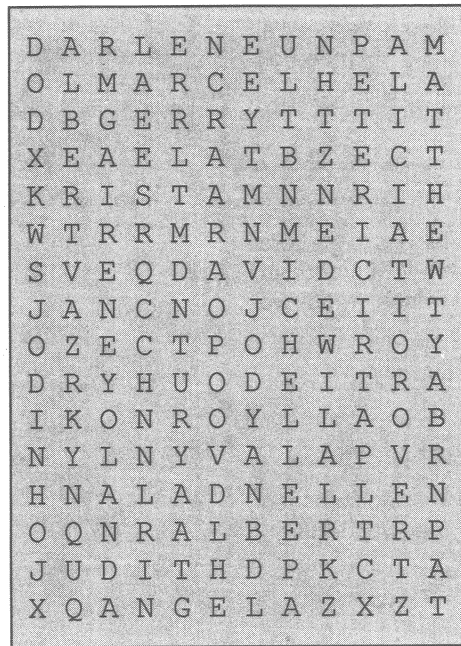


(Answers below)

"NAMES"

WORDSEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Melanie Peters*



Look for:

- Melanie
- Michelle
- Nancy
- Ellen
- Marcel
- Yolanda
- Judith
- Konroy
- David
- Ronald
- Trevor
- Angela
- Krista
- Matthew
- Albert
- Irene
- Darlene
- Jodi
- Jody
- Alicia
- Bert
- Peter
- Ken
- Pat
- John
- Gerry

Answers to

"Mothers in the Bible":

- h. Ishmael i. Obed l. James and John
7. Bathsheba 10. Rebekah 11. Elizabeth b. Aaron e. Samuel
3. Rachel 4. Sarah 6. Jezebel

Ladders:

heap, hear, pier, pier, beer, beer, can, cap tap, tip, lead, leap,

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

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty