



Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Of houses and hotels

Are you a house or a hotel? I agree that this is a rather strange question, so let me explain what I mean. The word “hotel” is associated with travelling. A hotel is a temporary lodging place. It’s a place where you can live for a day or a week or perhaps even a month, but not much longer. People who do live in hotels for longer periods of time frequently have unsettled lifestyles and are therefore looked upon with some suspicion.

On the other hand, the word “house” is closely tied up with the related term “home.” These words are associated with permanence and stability. A house is utterly familiar. You know its every nook and cranny. You feel comfortable with its sounds and smells. A home is where you belong, a place where you have made your mark. You have taken possession of it (or at least of part of it, for instance, your bedroom!).

Thus, a hotel is a temporary abode, while a house is where somebody lives on a permanent basis. The point of bringing up this contrast is that we can use it to think about our relationship to the Bible. In several places of the Bible, Christians are described as people in whom the Word of God dwells, or, at least, as people in whom the Word should dwell. For example, in his first epistle John writes: I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God *abides* in you. . . (2:14). And Paul encourages the Colossians with the following words: Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly (3:16).

John uses the word *abide* while Paul uses the term *dwell*. In both cases, the meaning is that the Word of God takes up permanent residence in the believer. It does not come for only a short stay, as in a hotel, but wants to make a home for itself in our hearts. Whether or not this happens depends, of course, on the condition of our hearts. It depends on how we receive the Word and on how we use the Word. It can be that our contact with the Word is only of a fleeting, temporary nature. We may hear a sermon on Sunday, but perhaps don’t listen with any intensity. If we don’t make a strong effort to hear and understand, the preaching will be like “water off a duck’s back.” And if people don’t listen carefully, then the word as preached can have no “spill-over” effect in the following week. And it certainly won’t drive us to faithfulness in our own Bible study.

Allow me to put the question to you again: Are you a house or a hotel for the Word of God? What kind of relationship do you have with the Bible? Do you touch base with the Word on a regular basis, or is your contact confined to the necessary — worship services and at dinner time — and then only as something you

tolerate, but in which you don’t get very involved? Is your life saturated with the Word, or is the kind of contact you have only on the surface?

These questions are terribly important, because as we’ll see, it’s only when the Word dwells in a person that he or she has any knowledge of the truth, any power for consistent Christian living. Our contact with the Word must be regular, intense, and prayerful. If we want to have Christ dwell in us, then we must be busy with the Word.

Why do we need the Word? In the first place, we need it because faith comes from the Word (read Rom. 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). The Holy Spirit uses the Bible as preached and as read to create and nourish faith. If people don’t use this means of grace, their faith life will dwindle. Faith can’t be vital and enduring without regular reading and study of the Bible. It is the reading and study of the Bible that keeps us close to Christ.

Another way to think of the Bible is as the Owner’s Manual given by Manufacturer. If you were to buy a computer, you would get nowhere without the manual. Only the company that made the machine can tell you how to use it. So it is with human life. As young people, as older people, we can’t answer the question, How shall we live? without the Word. The Word, after all, comes from the Creator of all things. He knows us. And

in the Bible, He reveals the principles that make for healthy and happy human life. He shows us how we work. He shows us how the world works. He reveals that we are truly human only when we live to His glory. We are truly happy only as we are progressively transformed into the image of Christ — through the influence of the Word dwelling in our hearts.

In a passage that is famous for its declaration about the inspiration of the Bible, the apostle Paul writes about the usefulness of Scripture. He says: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The Bible has a certain purpose. The Spirit causes the Bible to be written so that we may know the mind of God — our Creator. He shows us the way of salvation. He shows us how we must live. Through regular and intense contact with the Word, we are trained in righteousness. We are equipped for doing the will of God.

Often people talk as though the will of God is very obscure. They do this especially when they want to justify sinful behaviour. But if we are in touch with the mind of God through the Word,

***“Without the Word’s
indwelling presence,
we will be
overwhelmed by the
world.”***

then we will know His will for us. We will be increasingly sensitive to His Law as the standard for our lives. Perplexities will decrease. By nature, we live in darkness. We don't know how to think, how to act, how to talk. But the Word sheds light on our situation. As Psalms 119:130 states: The entrance of your words gives light. You can also think of verse 105 of the same Psalm: Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. We live in a dark age, a time of moral degeneration and confusion. People have lost sight of the path of life. And that is because the Bible has been closed. It may be up on the shelf, but it's not open. It's not being read and studied so that it can shed its penetrating and directing insight upon human life. Young people need to be busy with the Word. Otherwise, they too will be swept up in the great tide of evil sweeping our nation.

Yes, strength for Christian living and Christian witness comes only through the Word. There is no other way. There is no easier way, no shortcut to Christian maturity. Without the Word's indwelling presence, we will be overwhelmed by the world. In the

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passage referred to above, John speaks about young people who are strong Christians. He says: I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. You should notice the connection between victory over Satan and the presence of the Word in the heart. The people to whom John writes are able to overcome Satan only because they have the Word! The Word has a home in the hearts of these young people. Therefore, they are strong.

The Word of God, Hebrews states, is living and active (4:12). It's not a dead thing, but reveals to us the mind of the Living God. If that Word is in us, if it grips us, then we are strong. The Word is an energy, a power for renewed life. As we start to live according to its instruction and wisdom, the Word restores us to true humanity — in the image of Christ. Paul gives thanks that the Thessalonians received the Word of God in faith. He says: And we also thank God continually for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (1 Thess. 2:13). If you

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make yourself a home for the Word, then a mighty force for change and renewal is unleashed in your life.

So the question comes again: Are you a house or a hotel for the Word of God? Think about it. The answer to that question will determine your survival as a Christian in the 1990s and beyond, a time that increasingly looks like the New Dark Ages. How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to thy Word (Ps. 119:9).

C

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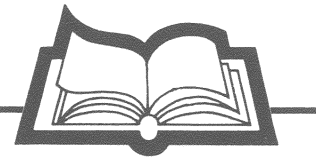
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IN THIS ISSUE

Remember your Creator	
— Of houses and hotels — R. Schouten.....	234
Church News	235
From the Scriptures — New Times!	
— J. De Jong	236
Press Review — Once again, the Christian	
Reformed Alliance — C. Van Dam	237
International — W.W.J. VanOene	238
John G. Van Huisstede, June 10, 1939—	
April 23, 1990 — A kindred spirit	238
Patrimony Profile ⁷³ — W.W.J. VanOene	239
Book Review — N.H. Gootjes	241
Letters to the editor	242
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty.....	243



By J. De Jong

“... until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.”
Isaiah 32:15

New Times!

Isaiah's reference to the Holy Spirit forms a decisive turning point in his discourse against the wayward city, Jerusalem. The first part of his prophecy announces imminent judgment and desolation because of the complacent and carnal attitude of the women of the city. But then a new time is heralded, in which destruction would give way to complete renovation and the whole land would share in the effects of renewal.

The prophecy is built around a harvest feast, most probably the feast of booths. This feast was marked by a great procession from the temple to the pool of Siloam, and this procession may be alluded to in the words “the hill and the watchtower,” vs. 14. In the days of Jotham and Ahaz, this feast had become a popular, but frivolous and self-directed event among the people. The people took time for fun, but neglected to concentrate on the meaning of the feast. So the feast began to take on a carnival-like character. Its original purpose, however, was to commemorate the Lord's care of His people, even in the dismal conditions of the desert wanderings. The focus of the feast was to be on the Giver of the harvest, the God of all good! Because this had been forgotten, God announces His imminent punishment.

Yet in His punishment the LORD does not abandon His salvation purpose. The imminent destruction of the city will serve to plant a new city — the heavenly one! The arrival of the divine Spirit brings a situation in which not only the city but all creation is renewed. Creation itself shares in the power of rebirth, and the image of the paradise comes to mind.

Now one can suggest several events which point to the fulfilment of this prophecy in Isaiah's own life time. The threat of Sennacherib brought grave poverty and distress to the city. And the great judgment of the exile brought all the feasts to an end. We can also see the first rays of fulfilment in the restoration of the temple and city after the exile. After all, Cyrus is described as one who is ‘anointed.’ He was claimed for a specific task by the Spirit of God. Yet beyond these fulfilments we can find the definitive fulfilment only in the work of the Messiah. Indeed, the whole chapter is messianic, and opens with an allusion to Christ's reign in righteousness.

Therefore we find the great fulfilment of these words in the feast of Pentecost. The cross brings

the judgment of God to a definitive climax. It is the end of judgment in the sense that all judgment henceforth only takes place in the cross. And after the work of the cross, the renewal of life begins. It begins in the church, the new Jerusalem. The text describes the Spirit as being ‘uncovered’ or poured out, much in the same way a jar is emptied of its contents so that its bottom is uncovered. Indeed, here the same word is used as found in Joel 2:28, another prophecy of the day of Pentecost.

The Lord Jesus also connects the feast of booths with the day of Pentecost. When He arrived at the feast of booths on its last day, He said: “If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water,’ Jn. 7,37,38. And John explains that He said this about the Holy Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive.

Therefore we may see the cross of Christ as the beginning of the definitive judgment in the world. And we may see Pentecost as the beginning of the definitive renewal. The Spirit on high has come down from heaven, and renewal begins in the hearts of God's children. Yet it will not stop there. Indeed, many judgments are foretold, as the book of Revelation makes clear. Paul says that the creation groans in travail, waiting for the redemption of the sons of God, Rom. 8, 22. And he ties the renewal of creation with the renewal of our bodies and the work of the Holy Spirit! The Spirit of Christ will renew not only the church, but all creation. The firstfruits of the Messianic kingdom are already present in the church. But we know: more is coming!

Christ will return to institute His kingdom of righteousness in fulness. Jerusalem is founded in right and truth — the justice of God as revealed in the cross. And the effect of this righteousness will be “peace, quietness and trust for ever.” For the wrath of God against our sin has been stilled! Now the renewal can begin — a renewal which affects the whole creation. It's God's environment first of all!

So we may keep our feasts in the age of Pentecost. The Spirit of Christ dwells in our hearts and the firstfruits of the new age may be with us. How do we then live? Let all our feasts, and our Pentecost feast as well, be directed to our God in heaven, from whom alone all rich blessings flow.

C



Once again, the Christian Reformed Alliance

In the previous Press Review, I introduced the Christian Reformed Alliance (CRA). This is an organization of about thirty church councils which have recently banded together to try to check the deterioration of Reformed values and principles in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Critical questions, especially concerning how such an alliance fits within Reformed church polity, were raised. Since more has now been written about this topic which belongs to this first discussion and since conservative developments in the CRC are always of interest to the readers of *Clarion*, I would like to take this opportunity to pass on some of the comments made by Rev. D. Wynia and Rev. J. Tuininga both in different issues of *Christian Renewal*.

“Church within a church”

Rev. D. Wynia had been quite critical of the proposed founding meeting of the CRA and warned of the danger of creating a “church within a church.” This was noted in the previous Press Review. In an article written after this meeting (which he attended as an observer), he indicates that his initial fears were alleviated, although he does not say they were taken away (*Christian Renewal*, 7 May 1990). He further writes:

From what I saw and heard, it is safe to say that the alliance (now officially called the Christian Reformed Alliance) is a relatively loose group of consistories, organized for mutual advice, encouragement, and support. It will seek to help member churches, and presumably, the other congregations of the CRC, by giving direction in educational materials, mission work, and addressing specific biblical and confessional concerns arising within the CRC situation. The constitution steers the Alliance away from the church-within-a-church idea, and far from attempting to set up an adjunct classis, one could hear in the discussion an honest effort to distinguish the nature of the Alliance from the nature of broader ecclesiastical assemblies. (They could have followed through with that more consistently in the terminology they employed: they elected

a Stated Clerk, and they received overtures; and they conducted business in a way that we normally do in classical meetings. Of course, there is only so much variety possible — many meetings of many kinds will in some ways resemble procedures followed at our ecclesiastical meetings. And of course the habits formed by regular attendance at such gatherings do not fade away easily. But it would be best for the Alliance from here on to consciously avoid the resemblance wherever possible.)

(*Christian Renewal*, 7 May 1990)

What should conservatives in the CRC do?

Rev. J. Tuininga in his article written after the founding meeting of the CRA, expressed something of the frustration felt by conservatives in the CRC, but also pointed to their responsibilities.

There is also considerable frustration among concerned members of the CRC. As someone once said, the conservatives are in the back seat of the (ecclesiastical) vehicle, and they are being taken by the more liberal drivers in directions they do not wish to go. It seems all but impossible to wrest the drivers from their position and to steer the vehicle in another direction. I have no illusions of this taking place soon, and I don’t expect the Alliance to be able to do that either. There seems to come a stage in the life of a denomination when reversal is all but impossible, barring a miracle from God.

At the same time, we must do what we can, and we must raise our voice in protest against that which we are convinced is unscriptural. God holds all of us responsible, and for office-bearers especially, this responsibility is spelled out in the Form of Subscription. Critics will say that we are going about it the wrong way, even those who privately agree with our concerns. I would like to say to them: Our way of doing something is better than your way of doing nothing. Exceptional circumstances sometimes call for exceptional actions. One can al-

ways find excuses for doing nothing. But God calls us to fight the good fight of the faith; we must do our duty, and leave the results to Him.

(*Christian Renewal*, 23 April 1990)

At the same time Rev. Tuininga went further than one is accustomed to hearing.

Meanwhile we ought to avoid making absolute statements to the effect that we will never leave the CRC. To say that is to put the CRC above the truth itself, and that borders on idolatry. We love the CRC (that’s the reason for our action), but we love the truth more, and the God of truth most of all. Wynia is correct in saying that there are Reformed communions with which the conservatives in the CRC would have a lot more in common than they now do in the CRC. And where they would feel a lot more at home as far as credal loyalty goes. And if the CRC continues to go down the road of apostasy, the time may come when we may have to leave. At the same time one does not do this easily or lightly, and local circumstances also enter into the picture. Anyone who believes there is a simple, black/white solution to this problem hasn’t really agonized about it the way he should.

(*Christian Renewal*, 23 April 1990)

As mentioned in the previous Press Review, the situation is indeed very difficult. To be sure, I still have my doubts whether some of the pitfalls raised in my questions in the previous article have really been completely removed. Rev. Tuininga, for example, mentions the Mid-America Reformed Seminary (which is not officially recognized in the CRC) is the educational component within the movement of the CRA. Does this not work hand in hand with promoting a church within a church?

However, it is clear from what is mentioned in this Press Review that those struggling for truly Biblical values in the CRC are sensitive to the dangers involved. I wanted to share that with our readers. One cannot but feel a very close kinship to the concerned in the CRC in their desire to remain Reformed. May the Lord bless their labours.

C



By *W.W.J. VanOene*

SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION.

As translation work around the world moves into the computer age, less time is required for translations to be completed. Twenty-one languages last year received at least one book of the Bible for the first time, bringing the total to 1,928. Translators with the United Bible Societies are currently working on first-time translation projects in 424 languages. (QNL)

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Elders in the Church of Scotland will continue to be elected for life. The General Assembly's Panel on Doctrine had recommended that elders be elected for a fixed term and should no longer be ordained. Reactions from presbyteries and kirk sessions were so negative that the scheme was killed. Critics saw it as a demotion of the office of elder. The Panel on Doctrine thought the changes would tap new sources of talent in the churches and narrow the gap between kirk sessions and other church members. However, the elders believed their position would be weakened. The changes were proposed by a committee that included only two elders.

The Church of Scotland reported that the number of women elders ordained in 1989 increased to 54% of the 1228 ordinations. Of all the 47,000 elders, between 20% and 25% are women now. (PR. REC NE)

GREATER ROLE FOR DEACONS

Deacons attending church gatherings should not be excluded from decisions on doctrine or discipline. This is the recommendation of the Commission for Church Order of the (synodical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Their church order now forbids deacons from participating in such decisions at the higher (! VO) levels of church meetings.

The commission noted that the rule was scarcely enforced. The opinion of deacons is in fact highly valued in doctrinal issues, the report said. Many doctrinal issues are now understood in close connection with social life. Diaconal advice was therefore important. The report noted that this was most obvious when issues of justice were discussed. (REC NE) (Influence of liberation theology, VO)

HAARLEM

In the Netherlands Reformed (Hervormd) church in Haarlem-Centrum it is possible to receive ecclesiastical confirma-

tion of other relations than that of marriage. The consistory took this decision after it had become evident that three-quarters of the membership would support it.

The matter became urgent when last year two homosexuals requested that their relation should be ecclesiastically confirmed. The consistory reacted positively to this request but postponed the actual ceremony and made it dependent on the congregation's opinion.

Homosexual and heterosexual couples can now have their relationship blessed. As with a normal marriage, so in these cases the consistory insists on it that at least one of the partners be a member of the congregation. This condition was made in order to prevent that people come from far and near to have their relation blessed in the historical and monumental St. Bavo church. (TWH)

C

JOHN G. VANHUISSTEDÉ

June 10, 1939 - April 23, 1990

A Memory for a Kindred Spirit in Four Movements

Prelude

I watch you stride, books in hand, to the front of Ebenezer church. I observe how you remove your shoes, adjust the flap of your jacket pockets and then slide behind the organ. I wait for the carefully crisp tones of your precise playing. Usually you are pretty restrained but occasionally you let some lively Bach rip. I hope I can play like that some day. SOLI DEO GLORIA.

Fantasia

The grass-cutting chores around the church are done and the kindly caretaker lets me into your private little domain. For the first time, I thrill to the organ sounding through an empty church. No critical ears hear. I ignore the sweltering heat and discover the piece you play so exuberantly — The Little Prelude and Fugue in C major by J.S. Bach. I give it a go without pedal of course and now I know what makes you tick. The caretaker lets me play for hours at a time. We chat about your playing quite often. How you found joy among the sorrow of Ps. 22. How we responded to your crescendo in verse 8 of that Ps. 22. How fitting the music to the words. How like a prophet behind the organ. SOLI DEO GLORIA.

Fugue

The years pass by and our paths cross at the organ bench many times. We combine forces to bring good music to the people. "Elijah . . . Olivet to Calvary . . . Crucifixion . . . Vivaldi's Gloria." A tradition of fine Bach Chorales. One of our favourites is "Wachet auf ! ruft uns die Stimme" — "Sleepers Awake!". We make a good team — a little stressed out but finding escape in our music. You give me a lot and never ask a great deal. SOLI DEO GLORIA.

Finale

The shocking news comes via yet another kindred spirit. We are absolutely devastated. But what a gloriously fitting funeral. What a wonderful text for you: Psalm 27:5,6. "For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble. . . . I will sing and make melody to the LORD." And Willy is doing just a beautiful job at the organ, John. He is playing one of our favourites — "Sleepers Awake!" Rich voices swell around me in response to the great organ's triumphant tune. I would like to join loudly in a fine family tradition. But today I cannot sing. I glance sideways and notice my friend the caretaker cannot sing either.

We visit the ruins of Ebenezer where it all began. Nothing but levelled ground now, John. But look! Out of the hardened muck, as if awakened out of sleep, some April tulips struggle upwards.

SOLI DEO GLORIA: TO GOD ALONE BE GLORY.

A kindred spirit.

By *W.W.J. VanOene*

"In its meeting of Thursday, April 3, the above-mentioned Consistory declared my submission unfounded. My ward elders orally informed me of this.

"I cannot acquiesce in the decision of the Consistory as I am firmly convinced that it is altogether wrong.

"Consequently I now address my objections to Your Classis in the certain and full confidence that by you as God-fearing men all that is necessary will be considered and done.

"I gave notice to the Consistory of Amsterdam South that the objections which the Consistory declared unfounded have been submitted by me to Your Classis.

"Finally I inform you as yet that it is known to me that, among others, brother J. Vree, 20 Baarsstraat, shares my objections."

One could not expect that a hasty decision would be made on this appeal. What could be expected was done: a committee was appointed to advise the next classis. A letter was sent dated June 11, 1924, to inform the appellant of this appointment of a committee.

More than two months later, on August 23, Mr. Marinus received the request to come to a meeting of the Committee, scheduled for Monday, August 25, 1924. At this meeting he maintained his objections and elaborated on them. "With understandable apprehension I bided the Classis meeting of September 11, 1924.... I did not have to prepare myself for a bitter disappointment.... Nevertheless, the disappointment befell me, one the more painful inasmuch as my trust in the Classis was greater than that in the Consistory."

What was the classical decision upon this appeal?

"It has become evident from the investigation by Classis that the declaration that the Consistory of Amsterdam South considers the objections of brother H. Marinus unfounded is subject to misunderstanding, but that it was the Consistory's intention to state thereby that brother Marinus gave an incorrect rendition of what he heard, and that therefore Classis advises this brother to take up further contact regarding this matter, in order that the question of two different versions may be solved in the way of brotherly discussion."

Almost three months later the Consistory wrote a letter to brother Marinus. It was dated December 5, 1924, and reads as follows.

"As a result of the wish of the major assembly, in this case the meeting of the Reformed Churches in the Classis Amsterdam, held on September 10 last, the Consistory confirms the decision of that meeting, which has already been passed on to you by the brothers ward elders, namely, to inform you that what was said by Dr. J.G. Geelkerken in his sermon on Lord's Day 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism was incorrectly recorded and rendered by you."

From this letter it is clear that the ward elders conveyed this message some time before the Consistory wrote it. Aware of what classis concluded and what the reaction of the consistory to this conclusion was, Mr. Marinus sent another appeal to classis, dated Nov. 15, 1924. He should have addressed his appeal to the Particular Synod of North Holland, for one cannot appeal a classical decision to the next classis. However, we shall overlook this mistake at this point.

Again his submission was given to a committee. Mr.

Marinus received word of this in a letter dated Dec. 10, 1924. Accompanied by two brothers whom he mentioned in his second "appeal" to classis, he had a discussion with the appointed committee. Finally, in a letter dated April 29, 1925, more than a year after the sermon had been delivered, he was informed that "the discussion of and dealing with Your protest have been suspended."

Discussion Suspended

Why was the discussion of the "appeal" suspended ?

The appointed committee not only had a meeting with the appellant and his witnesses, but also attended a consistory meeting in Amsterdam South, scanned the minutes of the previous meetings, and reported again that classis was still faced with the fact of two different versions. In this situation, the committee advised, the solution was to be sought by asking of Dr. Geelkerken a further declaration that what the appellant thought he heard was neither meant nor said by Dr. Geelkerken in his sermon.

Dr. Geelkerken himself described the course of events as follows.

"When the classical committee showed up in the meeting of the Consistory on February 23, 1925, the Consistory appeared to be of the same opinion as its delegates (namely, the delegates to classis, who had declared at classis that appellant should be directed to the Particular Synod and that classis should not deal with his second submission; further that the committee was wrong when stating that the first time they had dealt only formally with the complaint but now were going to deal with it materially, VO). The Consistory told the Committee that it did follow the advice of Classis, that it considered it illegal again to deal with the same matter and had nothing further to declare regarding it. The Consistory therefore refused emphatically, just like the undersigned, to do what the Committee wanted, namely, that either the Consistory or Dr. Geelkerken should declare as yet that what was alleged by brother M. was 'neither meant nor said' by me. In spite of this, the Committee proposed as one of the conclusions of its report in the meeting of the Classis on March 18 last, that Dr. Geelkerken should as yet make this declaration. Notwithstanding the protest of the delegates of Amsterdam South Classis accepted this conclusion and by the mouth of its chairman demanded of Dr. Geelkerken that at that very meeting he should make that declaration. When I was not prepared to do so, Classis decided to ask the help of deputies of Particular Synod ad Art. 49 C.O.

"On April 1 last, the Classis met again, and the above-mentioned Deputies were present. I then mentioned amply the reasons why I should not comply with the above demand of Classis. Your Synod allow me to mention them summarily.

"1. Already in general it may not be demanded of anyone after he has given his positive statement, even in writing, what he did say, to declare in addition to that that he neither meant to say nor did say other things.

"2. In particular it is improper that a minister who has already gone that far that he gave in writing what he preached, besides that still has to deny that he intended or did say what it pleases a member of the congregation over against that to put into his mouth.

"3. This was the more unacceptable in this case since the so-called 'witnesses' of brother M. all were to be challenged; in reality, this brother was standing all alone with his accusations over against the written testimony of the minister, the witness of eighteen elders, who heard the sermon in question, the pronouncement of the Consistory, and the verdict of Classis; brother M. could never be found willing to talk his objections over with me; as was known, his whole demeanour was most closely bound up with the action of a small but turbulent group of members of the congregation against me, who should not in the least receive any support in this manner, if the peace in the Church at Amsterdam South was to be preserved, and brother M. declared before his ward elders that, even in case Dr. Geelkerken was to submit to him in writing what he preached, he would not believe that to be correct.

"4. Nor was it acceptable to make use of the coincidence that I was present at the classical meeting as a delegate to demand of me — and this as a result of a conclusion of a reporting Committee and by classical decision — the separate declaration which before that I had firmly refused to give to the Committee at the Consistory meeting; and this even less so because my Consistory had raised objections to the whole point of dealing with the matter in question a second time, and had likewise been unwilling to give any further statement.

"5. Neither could it hardly be considered to be a proper ecclesiastical treatment of brother M.'s second appeal if a new negative decision of the Classis would rest solely and exclusively upon my statement that I had never intended to say or did say what he asserted.

"6. The declaration demanded by the Classis could not be made by me in good conscience since it stands to reason that in what brother M. thought he had heard something, however little, must be what indeed was said and thus also meant by me, be it with another tenor and in a different context, so that true and untrue were intertwined in what he alleged to have heard. ...

"When Deputies ad Art. 49 thereupon gave their advice, they expressed as their sentiment 1. that the Classis justly again dealt with the Marinus appeal and 2. that Dr. Geelkerken ought to give the declaration asked by Classis. As for this latter part, it was not made clear to me at all what the grounds were for this sentiment of Deputies, not did they enter into any of the objections I adduced. It was simply an apodictic pronouncement.

"When I persisted in my view and attitude, Deputies drew up a second advice, whereby they handed me the following as a statement I was to make: 'Dr. Geelkerken declares that the whole course of the record as this lies before us in Gen.3, is being accepted and proclaimed by him as history, so that what brother Marinus thought he heard of him in his sermon was never meant nor said by him.' I remarked that, even apart from my repeatedly mentioned objections to the giving of a separate statement, it was absolutely impossible for me to make this statement, which grammatically was not properly worded, already for this reason that in that case I would be lying; for on March 23 I did not proclaim the whole course of the record as it lies before us...' but preached on Lord's Day 3 and only casually made a remark about Gen.3. A proposal then made by me was declared 'insufficient' by Deputies and could not find favour in the eyes of Classis. It read: 'The Classis, having read the passage of the sermon given by Dr. Geelkerken, having heard the further information of Dr. Geelkerken that as for the rest he neither did nor

intended to say anything about Gen.3, informs brother M. that what he ascribes to Dr. Geelkerken on the basis of the sermon heard is unfounded.'

"Finally Deputies came with the advice that the same classical meeting of which the members, insofar as they took the floor, had spent themselves in the repeated declaration that no one in the meeting had even the least doubt about my orthodoxy — even though the Reporter of the Committee, the Rev.J.L.Schouten also declared that the passage from my sermon 'left room for deviating sentiments' would 'declare that, while it deplored the fact that Dr. Geelkerken refused to give the further declaration asked for by the classical meeting, it considered that there was sufficient reason in this refusal to ask of Dr. Geelkerken a further explanation of his sentiments, in order that it might become evident that this sentiment was in accordance with the confessional forms of our churches.' The Classis discussed this advice, but wanted to think the whole matter over and adjourned its meeting till April 22nd."

Review

On purpose we have quoted Dr. Geelkerken's own words extensively so as to avoid as much as possible giving a biased picture. Reviewing all we have read thus far, we see a few points emerge.

There is in the first place the point that Dr. Geelkerken wrote down what he claimed he said in his sermon after he had heard that someone was going to send his objections to that sermon to the Consistory. Apart from the difficulty of writing down correctly what one said when speaking from notes, there is the added temptation to express oneself more orderly and cautiously and to leave out what could be used against a person once one knows that objections will be lodged with the consistory.

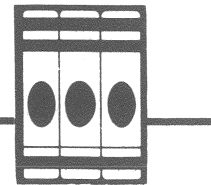
In light of this fact it is remarkable that Dr. Geelkerken obstinately refused to declare that he never intended to say nor in reality did say what Mr. Marinus reported as having been said. If Mr. Marinus had heard so incorrectly and rendered so inaccurately what Dr. Geelkerken said in reality, a clear and simple statement on Dr. Geelkerken's part could have cleared the air. Even if he had admitted that the expressions he used might have caused misunderstanding but that it was never his intention to raise any doubt regarding the historicity and factual truth of what we read in Genesis 3, things would have been different, but he refused to do so in spite of several efforts to that effect.

We read about what happened with hindsight and are aware of the further developments, but attentive and critical examination of what we have read thus far from Dr. Geelkerken himself shows that every time he stopped just short of giving a clear and unambiguous reply and statement. The whole procedure and experience of the brothers in Classis Amsterdam reminded us of the experience which the brothers in Winnipeg and Classis Alberta/Manitoba had with the Rev. C. DeHaan. One cannot conclude that the brother was lying, but to say that he was totally truthful is saying just a little too much, as evasive answers gave the impression that there was agreement with the confession of the church while the evasive character of the answers basically hid the fact that in reality there was no such agreement.

The very same point becomes obvious when we examine the questions which were posed to Dr. Geelkerken and his answer to them.

— *To be continued*

By N.H. Gootjes



A Catholic book by Dr. J. Faber

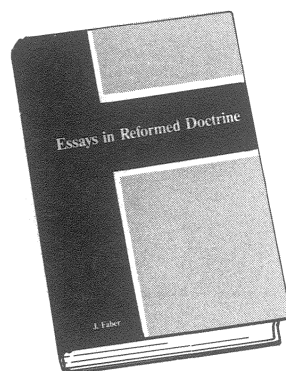
There is to my view no better word to characterize the collection of articles by Dr. Faber, published under the title *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* than the word "catholic." This word can cause misunderstanding, but Dr. Faber has always emphasized that we should not therefore abstain from using it. He distinguishes three aspects in it: there is historical, geographical and qualitative catholicity. Historical catholicity means: of all times, geographical catholicity means: throughout the world, and qualitative catholicity means: adhering to the entirety of the truth (p. 87). In all these aspects *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* is a truly catholic book.

It is catholic in the historical sense: We find in the book theologians from the second century (Irenaeus) to the twentieth century (K. Schilder). It is catholic in the geographical sense: not only theology in the Netherlands and Canada, but also in many other countries in Europe, Asia, Africa (Augustine!) and America, is presented. But the book is more than anything else catholic in the qualitative sense. For it urges us everywhere to adhere to the fullness of the biblical revelation. Therefore Roman Catholicism is rejected, and modernism as it is present in H. Berkhof. But Dr. Faber criticizes also unbiblical elements in thoughts of such Reformed theologians as Calvin and A. Kuyper. For "the truth is above all."

The book shows in its structure some of the main interests of its writer. It consists of articles grouped around three themes. The first group of articles has Jesus Christ as its center (ch. 2-7). Here the saving work of Jesus Christ is explained, especially in His coming in the flesh and in His resurrection. The second part is devoted to a development of the doctrine of the church (ch. 8-13). It is here that we repeatedly find the significance of the catholicity of the church. The third part shows Dr. Faber's interest in Calvin (ch. 14-17). Here Calvin's life, his doctrine of man and his doctrine of the Holy Spirit are discussed. In the following I would like to say something more about several of these articles. But rather than following the (correct!) logical order of the book, I would like to connect the articles with the life of Dr. Faber.

Chronologically the first article is at the same time the longest of all, the article on

"Church and Kingdom" (ch. 12). It begins with the question whether Christ is the King of the church. This may look like an academic problem, not very relevant for church life. But the underlying problem is, whether church and kingdom of God are related. Someone proposed the view that they are not related, and that therefore even someone who was excommunicated from the church, could still cooperate in the



work of the kingdom. This article is important for everyone who wants to sharpen his understanding in the relation between the church and the kingdom. But the most astonishing fact about the article is, that it was written in 1949, when Dr. Faber was still a student in theology. We can see that his interest in the doctrine of the church dates already from his student years. We can also see here the influence of his beloved professor of dogmatics, K. Schilder.

A number of articles date from his period as a minister. Dr. Faber was one of the founders of *Lucerna*, a journal for Reformed scholars in all sciences. Its goal was to promote scholarly study in the light (*lucerna* means "lamp") of God's Word. In this journal he published two studies on man as the image of God in the view of Calvin. The way he summarizes Calvin's view on man is certainly helpful. He shows that on the one hand Calvin was influenced by a neoplatonic dualism, when he spoke about an "immortal soul" and said that the soul is nobler than the body. But on the other hand Calvin always corrects this from Scripture. He therefore emphasized that

the soul does not have this immortality from itself, and he praises the body as a beautiful creation of God. Dr. Faber mentions at a certain point of the book (p. 224) that he has read through all Calvin's sermons on the book of Job. In the articles on man as the image of God this appears to be very helpful for the understanding of the complete Calvin. From the same period an article on recent ecclesiological views is added to this collection. This article is a study leading up to his dissertation on baptism as a vestige of the church. It shows how broadly Dr. Faber has acquainted himself with ecclesiological questions.

A new period in Dr. Faber's life begins with his appointment as professor of dogmatics at our Theological College in Hamilton. Several studies are the direct result of his work at the College. In the first place his inaugural address "The Catholicity of the Belgic Confession" (ch. 8). Here he answers the question whether establishing their own theological training institute was not a sectarian act of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Since the College has as its basis the three Forms of Unity, Dr. Faber answers the question by investigating whether the Belgic confession is sectarian or catholic (here again the important word "catholic!"). Dr. Faber firmly upholds the catholic character of the Belgic Confession, and therefore of the College. In maintaining this he sets the standard for the teaching at the College. It should not be sectarian, narrow-minded and self-defending. But catholic, realizing its position in the age-old and worldwide church that is founded on Scripture.

It is understandable that a professor called to teach several subjects, sets himself the task to define them and put them in order. This is what Dr. Faber did in his speech at the College evening of 1974, when he spoke about "The Significance of Dogmatology for the Training for the Ministry" (ch. 1). But the doctrine of the church kept interesting him. And so he devoted his last speech at the College evening to "The Catholic Character of the Church" (ch. 9). But Dr. Faber did more than work for the College. He also published articles for the upbuilding of the faith of the believers. That is the origin of the articles on the significance of Christ's in-

carnation (ch. 2-7). They oppose one of the evils of our time: a thoughtless, worldly celebration of Christmas. The article on "The boundaries of the Church" (ch. 11) belongs to the same category of instruction for church members.

But this period also saw the expansion of Dr. Faber's work. His article on "The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit in Calvin" (ch. 17) was originally a presentation for the Calvin Society. And the article "The Doctrine of the Church in Reformed Confessions" was a speech originally given for delegates from Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of the ICRC. While stating the basic unity of the doctrine of the church in the Presbyterian and Reformed confessions, Dr. Faber is also not afraid of tackling some differences.

Seen in this way, the book *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* shows us the interests of Dr. Faber, the basic unity of his thoughts, and his development as a theologian. This development is visible since the articles are not revised for republication, but are published in more or less the original form. (I found two exceptions, p. 190, footnote 29 and p. 196, footnote 44). Therefore the reader should be aware of the original date

of publication. To give an example of a change in Dr. Faber's thought, on p. 78 it is said that Luther changed the word "catholic" in the Apostles' Creed into "Christian". But later Dr. Faber says correctly, that this change already goes back to the Middle Ages (p. 109). We may also wonder whether Dr. Faber would still use the expression student Faber used: "Christ is organically related to the church, which is His body" (p. 143). Since that time we have begun to realize the dangers of the concept "organic." Also newer studies (e.g., that of Dr. J. J. Meuzelaar) have shown that the expression that Christ is the head of the church, is not related to the expression that the church is His body.

For whom is this book? In the first place for the ministers, for all those who study the confessions of the church and preach the catechism. Time and again they will find information about the background and the meaning of a confessional expression. Further, it is a very important book for all those who love the Theological College. They will find in this book several articles that show how our future ministers are taught at the College. Thirdly, also those who love the church of Christ will

benefit from this book. They can see that the theological struggle connected with the "Liberation" in 1944 in the Netherlands led to a development in Reformed ecclesiology. But is this book not too difficult for the general reader? I do not think so. With the possible exception of the articles especially written for scholarly publication (ch. 13, 15, 16) the articles can be understood by the attentive reader. Reading them and pondering their content will certainly benefit all readers.

I should not stop before mentioning one more feature of this book: it is a combined effort. Two students of Dr. Faber took the initiative to publish a number of his articles. They edited them, especially the footnotes, organized the translation of those articles that were originally written in Dutch, and saw the whole book through the process of publication. Professors who have such students can be congratulated.

J. Faber, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1990). The book is well published; I found hardly any misprint, and only one that affects the understanding. On p. 137 line two "Servant of David" should be "Servant of God" or "Servant David." C

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letter to the Editor of Clarion, Re: Article: Teachers Salaries by T.M.P. Vander-Ven.

You must agree with T.M.P. Vander-Ven, much indeed has been said about vacancies in our schools. There has been a lot of talk and far too little action. We refuse to venture out to where the answers lie and continue to just wish the problem would go away.

Why don't we have enough teachers today? Money! That's right, money, every one knows it, but it's never the main element in our feeble attempt at a solution. Why? The league. That's right, the league of Canadian Reformed Schools, which when it comes to salaries, acts as little more than a union of Canadian Reformed Schools, suppressing, consistently, and across the board, the wages of our teachers. What we need is a dose of good old fashioned "free enterprise capitalism," you know, the supply and demand type. The demand is high, the supply is extremely limited and the price would go up and up, to the point where young people would consider teaching at our schools as a career, right along with all the other professions.

We already know that a burning desire to make a financial sacrifice for the opportunity to serve our schools is keeping them away in droves.

But how do we pay for all this you ask? You either do or you don't. If you don't, you can't afford to run a school. It's as simple as that. But why shouldn't we be able to afford a school? Because we refuse to confront the government for relief, (or at least here in Ontario we are intimidated to do so). It's not a wonder we are finding it

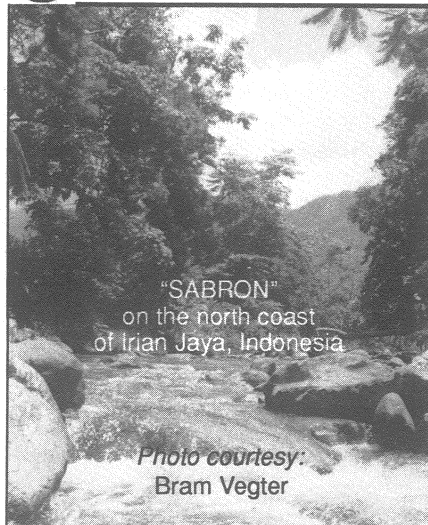
harder and harder to make ends meet. It truly is a lot more difficult than it was years ago, because our government continues to increase taxes, earmarked for public education, at twice the inflation rate annually, without even as much as a whimper of protest from our community. So what do we do? Set up a committee for contact with government so we can dance and perform for it hoping that by their good graces they will extend to us the mere right to exist. Keep that up and it's only a matter of time and you could care less about a right to exist because it's out of the question anyway because of the cost. No, we have to understand that the issue of "the right to exist" and the issue of financial relief are closely tied or as a matter of fact, are one and the same.

So the choice is ours, continue to spew out the same old rhetoric all the while hoping the problem will go away, and continue to close the schools down classroom by classroom, or decide we're going to be realistic about doing something about it and begin to alter the current trend.

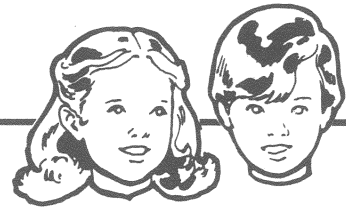
These are only a few positive suggestions. There are of course many more which need also be considered but unfortunately are seldom mentioned.

JACK SCHOLTENS
Burlington, ON

OUR COVER



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE



By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers,

Hymn 31: Ascension Day

The Lord ascended up on high,
The Lord has triumphed gloriously,
In power and might excelling;
The grave and hell are captive led.
Lo, He went up, our glorious Head,
To His eternal dwelling.

Do you think the disciples were surprised to see the Lord Jesus ascend to heaven?

Do you think they were sad?

Do you sometimes wish you lived while the Lord Jesus was on earth? Because then you could see Him?

The Lord told His disciples,

"It is good for you that I go to heaven. I will send you another Comforter to be with you always."

By faith we know that the Lord on high "is King of all creation," and that He "gives rich gifts to us His own."

I hope you all sing all of that beautiful Hymn 31 on Ascension Day!

"Happy Birthday!"



"Many Happy Returns!"



To all Busy Beavers celebrating a June birthday we send very best wishes for a happy and thankful day with your family and friends, and also for the Lord's blessing and guidance in the year ahead.

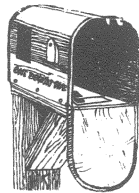
JUNE

Leona Dehaas	2	Amy Hofsink	14
Tanya Hansma	5	Jeannette Jansen	16
Lisa Dehaas	6	Hanneke Nap	16
Laura Bol	7	Ivan Sikkema	20
Esther Hordyk	7	Marnie Stam	20
Vanessa Aikema	10	Kent Van Vliet	20
Paula Grit	10	Jamie Harsevoort	21
Alice Plug	10	Esther Leyenhorst	21
Helena Van Es	10	Gwenda Penninga	21
Mark Alkema	11	Janneh Jaspers	22
Esther Bergsma	11	Garrett Penninga	25
Melanie Krabbendam	11	Billy Dekker	29
Maria Stel	11	Kristen Jagt	29
Joni Buikema	12	Marc Schouten	30

FOR YOU TO DO (for older Busy Beavers)

Hymn 31 speaks of "rich gifts . . . from His treasure taken." Use your concordance to make a list of these "rich gifts" God bestows on His people.

Hint: Look under such words as "give" and "inheritance."



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Anne-Marie Van Popta*. We are happy to have you join us. Thank you for your letter. Will you write again sometime, Anne-Marie? Bye for now.

And welcome to you, too, *Tanya Strating*. I'm glad you enjoy the quizzes and puzzles. Maybe sometime you will share one with the Busy Beavers, Tanya. Write again soon.

Congratulations on your new sister, *Esther Hordyk*. She has a very pretty name! Are you allowed to help look after her, Esther? She probably loves it! I see you are one good puzzler, too!

Have you been spending quite a bit of time "outside," *Michelle Peters*? And how did you enjoy your trip to Saskatoon? I see you did one letter on the computer, Michelle. Did you see our "computer corner" in the last issue?

I see you are a good puzzler, *Janine Vanderhoeven*. Keep up the good work. You wrote about spring fun, Janine. What did you enjoy most about spring? Will you write and tell us?

Hello, *Lydia Viersen*. It was nice to hear from you again. I see you are enjoying spring weather after the snow, too. Are you planning to spend some time outside, now that the fine weather is here, Lydia?

I see you have been keeping very busy, *Netty Sikkema*! And you want to keep the other Busy Beavers busy, too. Thank you for that personal puzzle, Netty. Did you have some guests during the Young People's Study Weekend? Bye for now.

How did your Easter Concert turn out, *Sarah Vanderzwaag*? Do you think you would like to live in the Maritimes, Sarah? Were you able to discourage that stray dog? I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Riddles

1. What is black and white and noisy?
2. Why did the bus stop?
3. What's the best way to talk to a man-eating tiger?
4. What did the spider say to the beetle?
5. What kind of snake likes pastry?
6. What did the judge say when he saw the skunk in the courtroom?
7. What do you get if you cross a parrot with a woodpecker?

(Answers below)

MORE PENITTLES

from Busy Beaver *Amanda Bartels*

(Answers below)

1. R
O
A
D
S

2. cycle
cycle
cycle

3. winter
coat

4. L
A
N
D

5. chair

6. ECNALG