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Which Church Order?

By C. Van Dam

In the growing unrest in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), questions are repeatedly being raised about the authority and responsibility of the consistories and synods. Is a consistory just to accept and adopt synodical decisions? How should one protest a decision which one is convinced is unbiblical, such as women in office? In two articles in the *Banner* (Dec. 24, 1990 and Jan. 7, 1991), Dr. H. De Moor, professor of Church Polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, tackles this problem. Although much could be said about these articles, we will have to restrict ourselves to a central key issue.

In his first article, Dr. De Moor laments the loss of denominational loyalty and argues that speaking of the original authority of the local church dates from Kuyper. When the CRC incorporated such terminology in their revised Church Order in 1965, then a concession was made to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches. The article in question (Art. 27) reads in part as follows. "Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of the consistories being original, and that of the major assemblies being delegated." The thrust of De Moor's articles is clearly sympathetic to a stress on centralized control in the CRC through their synod and a concept such as the original authority of the consistory is considered a new idea. Is the speaking of the original authority of the consistory really something new, from the time of Kuyper, and foreign to the Reformed tradition as De Moor suggests?

Rev. Jelle Tuininga of the First Christian Reformed Church in Lethbridge, Alberta has challenged Prof. De Moor's contention in *Christian Renewal*.

The legacy of the Reformed Churches from the beginning

Over against De Moor's claim that the notion of "original authority" of the consistories comes from Kuyper, Rev. Tuininga noted (*Christian Renewal*, January 28, 1991):

The genius of Reformed Church polity, with its emphasis upon the autonomy of the local church, and its warning against all hierarchial tendencies goes right back to the Synod of Dordt and has been defended by the fathers of Reformed Church polity ever since. Mention can be made of Bouwman, Jansen, Rutgers and Voetius, and, closer to home, Monsma, Schaver and Van Dellen

Our present Article 95 (CRC) (no church or office bearer shall lord it over another) was originally Article 1 in the church order of the Synod of Emden in 1571 From the very beginning the Reformed churches avoided like a plague tendencies toward Roman Catholic hierarchialism.

Rev. Tuininga continued by spelling out the following Reformed principles. The authority of major assemblies is derived, and not original; limited, and not general; smaller in

measure, and not higher in degree; ministering, and not compelling; conditional, and not unconditional.

"De Moor is forgetting a fundamental principle of biblical church policy . . . namely, that the consistory is of the *essence* of the church, while broader assemblies are only for the *welfare* of the churches Each local congregation is a complete, self-governing manifestation of the body of Christ."

The emphasis is on the local church

In his second article (*Christian Renewal*, February 11, 1991) Rev. Tuininga shows how in Scripture the emphasis falls on the local churches. "Paul's letters were written to local churches at a certain address, and Christ addressed His letters to seven local congregations in Asia Minor. The Bible does indeed, at times, speak of the church in a broader context, but the emphasis falls upon the local church with its office bearers."

Rev. Tuininga continues by quoting Dr. S. Greidanus, from his *Schriftbeginselen van Kerkrecht* (i.e., in translation, "Scriptural Principles of Church Polity").

Thus to be sure, one church over this whole earth and through all ages. And each local church only a revelation in that place of that one church of the Lord, His congregation. But that local church is surely not a branch of a larger whole — be it district, provincial or national. And those local churches . . . though called by God to enter into federation for proper cooperation, nevertheless miss every divine right to compel another to this cooperation or to domineer in such cooperation.

Although broader assemblies can be desirable and profitable, yet the autonomy of the local churches should remain untouched. Greidanus warned about the devastation hierarchy has time and again brought to the church.

For that reason too, broader assemblies have no inherent competence or right of say and might to regulate, to encroach upon, censure, suspend or depose in or over any church belonging to her, except in so far as that church has before conferred such right upon that broader assembly.

Rev. Tuininga also quoted another figure well-known in our circles, namely Rev. I. De Wolff and his *De plaats van het kerkverband in Schrift en historie* ("The place of the Church Federation in Scripture and History"). "Not a trace is to be found in the New Testament of an external organization of local congregations in synodical federation." Or as Greidanus put it: "The federation of churches rests on the side of the churches only in mutual agreement, a voluntary coming together, on mutual consensus."

Rev. Tuininga goes on to note that stressing the autonomy of the local church does not diminish or threaten the unity and catholicity of the church. Again Greidanus is quoted:

That unity does not consist in a unity of organization and doesn't have to consist in an external visible federation of

organizational cohesion The unity of the churches does not necessarily require an official (ambtelijke) union and mutual organization of local churches in smaller or larger units Otherwise the Lord would surely have pointed that out very plainly in His Word

Nevertheless, under normal circumstances a church-federation is desirable and indicated, we can even say, a matter of divine calling . . . and in so far as this is possible, it is desirable and good that this spiritual unity also comes to expression through mutual affiliation and cooperation of churches.

The place of office bearers

In opposing the hierarchial trend of De Moor's articles and seeking to equip the concerned in the CRC, Rev. Tuininga also quotes Dr. Greidanus on the offices and their place within the church federation.

An office bearer, elder, deacon, is only an office bearer, elder, deacon of the church at the place in which he was chosen and presented. A minister of the Word is only minister of the Word in the local church which called him and whose minister of the Word he is.

By mutual agreement he may preach elsewhere in the federation, but the principle holds. To continue with Greidanus:

A consistory has received directly from God the right of say (zeggenschap) over its congregation. A broader assembly

(classis, particular synod, national synod) has this right of say only in so far as the member churches or consistories have mutually agreed to give or allow this . . . but the authority of an office bearer and consistory over its congregation does not rest on such mutual agreement between congregation and consistory or office bearer, but on divine institution and thus carries a divine character.

The weight of synodical decisions

Writing about consistories that refuse to accept as binding certain synodical decisions which they deem to be against Scripture (such as women in office), De Moor suggests that all synodical decisions are to be taken as binding unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the classis or synod that they conflict with the Word of God. Rev. Tuininga correctly responded that if that was true then one would be "under the hierarchial dictatorship of the papacy: synod (the pope) has spoken!" Monsma is then quoted: "The church or the churches cannot bind the conscience If one is convinced that the churches bid him to do one thing, and the Bible another, he must follow what he believes to be Scriptural."

I have quoted quite extensively, for Rev. Tuininga correctly touches on very important truths, truths that we too had rediscovered during the Liberation of 1944. These verities bear repeating and are as relevant now as then, also for the concerned in the CRC.



What does the Bible have to say about incest?⁴

By R. Gleason

This is the fourth part in the series on sexual abuse.

In this installment we shall focus upon three more texts of Scripture which deal with the question of incest. We shall deal with 2 Samuel 13. This is a lengthy passage of Scripture, so we shall devote the entirety of this installment to these verses of Scripture.

2 Samuel 13:1-22

This portion of Scripture is lengthy which means that I will not be able to explain it verse for verse. I would suggest that you read it before you continue reading this article.

These verses of Scripture describe for us the forcible violation by Amnon, a son of David, of his step-sister, Tamar. Tamar was the daughter born to David by Maacah. By most reckonings this marriage did not take place until after David had been made king at Hebron.

This would situate the marriage somewhere around the twentieth year of David's reign. Amnon was the eldest son of David born to Ahinoam the Jezreelite.

This is a narrative of the lusts of Amnon for Tamar. Amnon was in love — or, at least in lust — with his step-sister, but her maidenly modesty evidently raised a barrier to the gratification of his lusts.

By means of the wily Jonadab, Amnon's nephew, advice is given as how Amnon may fulfill his fantasies. When King David came to visit his son who was obviously ill, the king received a strange request indeed.¹³ The king agreed to Amnon's request and the stage was set for the incestuous relationship.

What is noteworthy is the innocence of Tamar in this situation. Her father has been duped by a scheming son. But she comes in good faith to perform an act of

mercy for an allegedly sick brother. She comes to prepare the food for Amnon, the servants are sent out and the stage is further set for the gratification of lust. Notice how it is planned and thought about. Jonadab's advice is very detailed and Amnon carries out the plan.

The eleventh verse tells us that when Tamar came near with the food for her brother that his real intentions came out ("Come lie with me, my sister."). All the foregoing was just a ploy, a facade, a sham.

The verses twelve and thirteen give us Tamar's plaintiff request. She asks him not to force her. She feels helpless. She feels trapped. She has not instigated this thing and she wants out. She pleads but her cry falls on deaf ears. She tells him such a thing is not done in Israel. She does not mean that it does not

ever happen in Israel, but that it is against God's will for His people. Then she tells him that a sex act between a step-brother and step-sister would be a "wanton folly."

These words seem to recall Genesis 34:7 and the defiling of Dinah. "The sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard of it; and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had wrought folly in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done."

Both these sins were altogether out of keeping with the calling and holiness of Israel (compare Leviticus 20:8 ff.). We have already spoken about Leviticus 20 in a previous article.

Verse thirteen is very instructive as Tamar speaks about her shame and the shame that will accrue to Amnon if he proceeds with the forcible violation of her. Shame and contempt would meet her everywhere and Amnon, too, would reap nothing but shame. The latter part of verse thirteen seems to indicate a contradiction. These words should be taken as descriptive. It was against the law of God for relatives to be married. In her fear Tamar seems to be grasping for a way out.

Verse fourteen tells us that Amnon would not listen to Tamar. He was stronger than she so he forced her and lay with her. He was more concerned with his own lust than with the law of God or the shame that his step-sister would bear in this act.

Amnon had no sooner gratified his lust than his love to the humbled and shamed step-sister turned to hatred (v.15). In fact, the fifteenth verse takes things a step further and states that his hatred was greater than the love with which he had loved Tamar.

He tries to send her away. He has satisfied his lust and now he wants to send her away. He wants her out of his sight. He has used her and abused her for his purposes; to satiate his animal passions so he commands her to get up and go away. This is not only adding insult to injury, but points to a greater evil than the forcible violation (v.16).

This greater evil is that now it will be inevitably supposed that Tamar had been guilty of some shameful conduct herself, that the seduction had come from her. Truly, she was innocent and had done nothing but what affection towards a sick brother dictated. It had been impossible for her to call for help and now she must bear the shame plus Amnon's attempt to implicate her in his shameful act (Deut.22:27).

Amnon has the servants put Tamar out and bolts the door behind her giving the appearance of her having made a shameful proposal to him. It was her fault.

Absalom discovers what has happened and takes Tamar into his house. Verse 20 says that Tamar was a desolate woman. She was one laid waste by the abuse of her step-brother. Her life had been shattered. There was a road to spiritual healing available to her, but the narrative tells us of no one helping her in a Biblical manner. Absalom wanted and eventually got revenge. He hated Amnon and killed him.

Verse 21 even speaks about the manner in which King David failed to act Biblically. When he heard of all these things David was very angry. That was a small consolation to Tamar. Especially since David acted as the hiding king instead of the healing king. David let this crime of Amnon go unpunished when the law of God enjoined that incest should be punished with death. (Leviticus 20:17). He was angry, but he did not take the necessary Biblical steps to rectify the situation.

There are several vivid lessons to be learned from these verses of Scripture which are far from being exemplary. In the first place, these verses from 2 Samuel graphically teach us about the shame and desolation of the victim of sexual abuse.

Secondly, they also clearly describe the passions of the flesh which controlled the motives and actions of the abuser, the scheming required to vent those passions and the defensive blame-shifting of the abuser to the victim after the act had been accomplished.

Thirdly, this passage speaks of the unwillingness of those in authority to become involved and take the proper course of Biblical action(s).

Fourthly, this passage demonstrates how sexual abuse can cause frustration to turn into anger, anger to turn into hatred and hatred to turn into murderous thoughts and, finally, the physical act of murder. If we read further we find that Absalom eventually murdered Amnon.

Had the religious community dealt Biblically with the incestuous relationship, Amnon would have been put to death in the manner prescribed by God. By allowing the deed to go unpunished two evils prevail, namely incest and murder.

Let us take just a few moments and look into these matters in more detail.

The shame and desolation of the victim

When a child, or anyone for that matter, is sexually abused the body, mind, and spirit are violated. The victim will

never be the same again. The act of sexual abuse is a life-changing occurrence with far-reaching and life-long consequences.

Many victims carry their shame silently. They must deal with depression, enormous mood swings, a sense of worthlessness, deep guilt, helplessness and many other such attitudes. Others live with repressed anger or hatred toward the abuser and all whom the victim associates with the abuser. There can be a crass cynicism about sexuality and human love. Many victims either become frigid or sexually promiscuous. Sometimes the phenomenon of promiscuity in and during puberty is exchanged for frigidity in marriage. Often this frigidity will not occur until the marriage is well established and children are born.

Still others struggle with their faith in God. They identify what has happened with God and their spiritual life is touched deeply, quite often, in a negative manner.

Others cannot bear the memory of the abuse and, thus, to protect themselves suppress the remembrance of the act so thoroughly in their minds that they recall it only with great difficulty after other problems which surface in their lives cause them to seek help from professional counselors.

Tamar gives us a picture of the innocence of the victim. She resisted the act of sexual abuse as best she could, but her pleas were ignored. She knew that the act would be her undoing. She was right for she became a desolate woman. She lived in desolation because of that one act.

The role of the abuser

Clearly, Amnon, the abuser, was the guilty party in this narrative. He desired his sister and then, with the help and cooperation of another, planned the evil deed to satisfy his wanton lusts. This was not a case of spontaneous, unexpected passion, but one of purposeful, calculated and wilfully premeditated sexual violation. Sexual abuse was the sin that Amnon definitely chose to involve himself in.

What happened was no surprise to him. It was exactly what he wanted. When he had achieved his goal, he attempted to alleviate his true guilt by casting aspersion upon Tamar. He tried to shift the blame for his actions to someone else making it appear that it was her fault.

Often, in cases of sexual abuse, there is blame shifting on the part of the abuser. Excuses are many, varied and legion. They can range from being under the influence of alcohol to accusing

the victim of seduction. Blame shifting is a typical reaction of a human being when faced with true guilt. Adam and Eve demonstrated that tendency to shift the blame when they fell in the garden of Eden. When confronted by God with their sin, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Guilty men and women have been using this tactic ever since. Shifting the blame is no substitute for the true repentance from sin which God requires of the sinner.

The unwillingness of those in authority to become involved

When King David heard of all these things about Tamar and Amnon, he was *angry*, but, in the final analysis, did not act *Biblically* upon his knowledge. The violation was not dealt with in a Biblical fashion for David allowed it to remain hidden.

Do we, the church of Christ, sometimes fall into this pattern as well? To all who read these articles, I submit to you that it is so very true that sin in the church is always an ugly and a disheartening thing. This being true, the church should never, however, become a place where sin is excused, hidden or ignored.

Our Lord calls us to live holy, godly lives; lives set apart for God. Are we able to do that perfectly? No. The remaining sin which resides in the Christian is a reality in the life of every saint. We, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, will be fighting against this enemy for our entire life.

Yet, that truth may not discourage the church from calling her members to obedience and from dealing *Biblically* with those sins which are known to her.

The sin of sexual abuse is but *one* of the sins to which the church must address herself. There are, obviously, various ways of dealing with sin. Consistories must be *wise, informed* and *patient* in their approach to these situations.

They, and we all, must not forget that the purpose of church discipline is to bring about *spiritual* healing. We all must recognize that even when wisdom and patience are exercised, some will rebel at and reject the discipline of the church. This possibility must not, however, keep the church from attempting to use Biblical means to heal sinful situations in the lives of God's people.

The church must not become a hiding place for sin. (The examples from the Romish church in Nova Scotia should provide an ample warning next to Scripture). When we refuse to act in a Biblical fashion toward sin, we are failing the people of God and, in fact, are neglecting one of the spiritual graces God has provided to keep the church on the right path.

Indeed, all of us know that one of the marks of the true church listed in article 29 of the Belgic Confession is church discipline. This is not listed in order for us to give formal lip service to its value, but in order that, where necessary, it might be exercised for the salvation of those concerned.

One warning comes to mind here. One of the most fearful things victims must undergo is the revelation of the act(s) which has been committed in their life. Truly, we cannot comprehend how terribly painful, excruciatingly painful this is.

When consistories are dealing with such personally devastating issues, confidentiality is an absolute necessity. Consistories must be able to keep this information to themselves. They must carry the burden with the victim in the strictest of confidentiality.

As one victim told me after, revealing the sad story to me, "Pastor, you have the power to utterly destroy me now." A shiver ran down my spine as I heard those words. I felt helpless and angry all at once. I felt helpless to communicate effectively that I would never divulge the secret. I felt angry that one human being or more human beings could leave another human being with that type of hurt and pain! Any member

of any consistory who would pass on this type of information to anyone else except a professional counselor would only be adding to the devastation in the victim's life.

I say these things as a reminder of what must be the obvious truth to us all. Consistories must be trustworthy in all cases of church discipline, especially in cases of great sensitivity. Our churches must never be a place where private matters become public knowledge, unless steps toward excommunication occur.

The outworkings of hidden sin

Lastly, when sins are ignored they often lead to more difficulties and graver consequences than they do if the sins are confronted. In the case of Amnon and Tamar, the lack of action on the part of those filling the roles of the appropriate authority structure allowed Absalom's anger to grow and fester until, finally, he murdered Amnon.

Sin, unchecked, never leads to a better situation. This certainly includes sexual abuse. Sexual abuse, unconforted, leads to all types of terrible consequences and developments for the victim and it is totally dishonouring to God.



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As I mentioned earlier, the Scriptures provided the way God had prescribed to His people for dealing with this sin. So often we know these things, but like King David, fail to act upon what we know.

There is a great task which lies before us as churches in this federation to deal with the sin of sexual abuse in a Biblical manner. We must do this for the

sake of the victims who have been abused and damaged. We must do this for the sake of the abusers who are hiding their sins and need forgiveness and healing. Most importantly, we must do this for the glory of God whose ways for us are perfect and point us to the path of life (Psalm 16:11).

In our next installment we shall direct our attention to 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and the fifth commandment.

¹² Samuel 13:5, "Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand." C

Congratulations Professor Selles

By J. Geertsema



On April 20, D.V., there will be a celebration in the "Cornerstone" Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton. Professor L. Selles will have his fiftieth anniversary as Verbi Domini Minister, minister of the Word of the Lord. Prof. Selles began his work as a minister and pastor in the congregation at Waardhuizen, in Noord Brabant, the Netherlands, on April 20, 1941, when the Second World War was almost a year old, and the Netherlands was occupied by Nazi Germany. The congregation at Waardhuizen consisted of approximately three hundred members, about half of them being communicant members. It was still during the war that a call to the church at Steenwijk was received and accepted. This church had a membership of almost five times as much, about fifteen hundred, with some eight hundred communicant members. Imagine, church membership in Steenwijk was close to twenty percent of the civil population, which was eight thousand. However, the war and the occupation brought their own hardships. In spite of the situation, there were many blessings.

The work in Steenwijk began in May 1944. It was a time of great unrest in the churches because of the doctrinal and church-political decisions of the synods. On March 23 of that year Prof. Dr. K. Schilder had been suspended from his office, and on August 11, the Liberation began. Tension arose in Steenwijk, too. Rev. Selles, and many with him, rejected the synodical decisions and pronouncements. The final result of the struggle was the decision to follow many other churches and to go the way of liberation from the unscriptural synodical decisions. About a year after their arrival in Steenwijk, the Liberation took place, there, on May 18, 1945. Approximately one-third of the congregation, some five hundred members, went along with it. At first they kept the church build-

ing. On the first Sunday, early in the morning, Rev. Selles did not allow those who refused to follow the consistory to occupy the building. But those who remained under the synodical hierarchy eventually retained the church building. Those days were filled with tensions and turmoil, but, on the other hand, the bond of faith and fellowship was strong.

On April 17 Rev. Selles began his work as minister in Voorburg, in Zuid Holland. He stayed there till the summer of 1952. Although short, these three years of ministry in Voorburg were good years, both with the congregation and as a family. In August 1952 Rev. Selles and his family arrived in Canada, in Chatham, where he remained until 1969. It was quite a change from the Netherlands to Canada, and from Voorburg in Zuid Holland to Chatham in southwestern Ontario. The first years in Chatham were still very much pioneer years. So much had to be built up yet. Many came and went. Often there was need. And even though the line of thinking was not always the same, there was a strong bond. The seventeen years in Chatham have produced lasting ties. Professor Selles is still very much Chatham's minister.

In 1969 the calling to teach the New Testament disciplines at the newly established Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton was taken up, until his retirement in 1986. Often Rev. and Mrs. Selles longed for the manse, to the place in the midst of the congregation with its needs of a pastor and his wife. Teaching at the College meant much less involvement in everyday church life, but it certainly did not mean less working hours. Yet, with the same zeal and diligence as before the task was fulfilled. And when, in 1986, retirement came, this did not mean emptiness. Professor Selles continues to be busy, all the time. There was a request

to prepare a revision of the Outlines on Revelation and to write others. Besides, there was involvement in the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund and our brother is still the chairman of the Office Bearers Conference in Ontario.

During these years there were also anxieties and grief through illness and death. While the fortieth anniversary as minister was a fortieth wedding anniversary as well, Sr. Selles was taken away from his side. It means that there is an empty place at this fiftieth anniversary. However, the Christian's comfort and strength is the LORD their God in Jesus Christ. "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God."

Professor Selles is pastor. He loved and still loves the church, that is, the people of the church. And he gave and still gives himself for them. Professor Selles will say: do not glory in man; I am a sinful man with many shortcomings. Let him who boasts, boast in the LORD." We give thanks to the LORD for the good things given in Professor Selles and his work for the churches. May the Lord of the church continue to bless him and make him a blessing, as it says in Psalm 92:12-14,

The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the LORD,
they flourish in the courts of our God.
They still bring forth fruit in old age,
they are ever full of sap and green,
to show that the LORD is upright;
He is (his) my Rock (through Jesus Christ, our Lord),
and there is no unrighteousness in Him. C

Institution of Canadian Reformed Church at Taber

Submitted by Catherine Bareman

It was a joyful day when we gathered on Sunday, January 20, 1991 in the gymnasium of Taber Christian School to institute a congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ at Taber.

Many people were present to witness this occasion.

The consistory of the church of Coaldale was represented by two elders and Rev. Wielenga who conducted the church service.

Scripture reading was Matt. 16:13-28 and the text Matt. 16:17-20.

Rev. Wielenga preached the sermon with the appropriate theme for the occasion:

Jesus Christ reveals to His disciples how He will gather His church for His Kingdom.

1. He reveals the foundation on which He gathers His church.

2. He reveals the means by which He gathers His church.

3. He reveals the way along which He gathers His church.

When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" there followed the confession of Simon Peter. The Lord congratulated Peter and in him all the disciples. Peter did not owe his faith to flesh and blood, but the Father who is in heaven had revealed to him and the other disciples that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. The Lord Jesus then said to Simon, that He, too wanted to give a revelation: "And I tell you", He said, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build My church". At that time the Lord Jesus laid the foundation of apostles and prophets on which He would build His world church.

A building will derive its quality and stability from its foundation. The foundation will be decisive for the question whether the church built upon it will really be the house of God, His dwelling place in the Spirit. It is of course, also decisive for the question whether the powers of death will prevail against it. Jesus added that assurance because of the situation at that time. "Powers of death" or "gates of Hades" (in the King James Version) or gates of hell, are like gates of a fortified city, the city of him who has

the power of death, Satan. If this word is to be of any comfort to you, you will have to be a church based on that foundation of apostles and prophets, to whom that promise was given.

We live our lives between the menacing gates of hell and the promising gates of heaven, and what unlocks to us the gates of the Kingdom of God?

The Lord Jesus says to the disciples: "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus will give the keys to them in the future, after His death and resurrection, when He will open their hearts and minds to the necessity of His suffering, death and resurrection.

The gospel revealed to the disciples is the key that unlocks for sinners the Kingdom of God while those who reject the gospel in unbelief find the doors of the Kingdom closed to them.

One of the binding teachings of the disciples was that a congregation must have office bearers. The keys once given, the office bearers shall guard them against corruption. The teachings once taught shall be binding upon you, so they will keep you as church on the foundation of apostles and prophets.

It is nothing but arrogance if churches, if theologians, if synods assume to themselves the right and authority to come with teachings to the church they deem best for the well-being and salvation of the flock. They force there own keys, they modify the keys once given by the Lord. Our confession says it is a mark of the false church to ascribe more authority to themselves than to the Word of God.

The way to the Kingdom is the way of the cross. To come after Jesus Christ into the Kingdom is the way of following a crucified Jesus Christ. A way of self-denial and taking up one's cross.

This is the way of the church: readiness to suffer for the Lord's sake. And when He comes with the angels in the glory of His Father on the last day, He will repay everyone for what he has done according to his faithfulness to the crucified suffering Christ, who brought the sacrifice for sin.

Therefore, let yourself be gathered by the Lord Jesus on the foundation He

laid for you, namely that of the apostles and prophets. Submit yourself to the binding authority, the keys of the kingdom, the Scriptures at all times. And willingly accept the reproach of Christ in cross-bearing and self-denial. Then, the gates of hell will not prevail against you and the gates of the Kingdom will remain open for you, with eternal rewards, life and glory.

The form for ordination of office bearers was read and the brothers, John Bareman, Cor Hoogerdyk and John Tams were installed as elders and Wayne Veenstra as deacon, by which act the church at Taber was duly instituted.

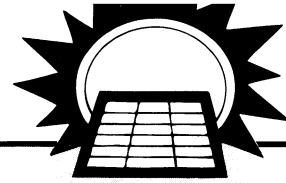
After the service, brother Bareman as elder of the new church gave opportunity to those who wished to speak.

Congratulations were brought by delegates from the churches at Coaldale, Edmonton Providence, and Neerlandia. Letters were read from the churches at Barrhead and Winnipeg and from brother and sister Devries. All churches are happy with another sister church in the classis and pray for the Lord's blessing on the newly instituted church at Taber.

Brother Bareman, on behalf of the church at Taber, expressed his thanks for all the good wishes of the sister churches. A special word of thanks was addressed to the board and staff of Taber Christian School for the use of the facilities. Everyone present was invited to have coffee and enjoy fellowship.

We experienced a day of thankfulness for God's faithfulness.

Some background information, almost for as long as the church at Coaldale has been in existence, some of its members have always lived in and around Taber. We are thankful that we now have a church in Taber. There is diversified farming and oil exploration around Taber. We have our church services in the Parkside Manor, 4830-50th Ave. at 10:00 and 3:00. We would gladly receive new members. Any minister interested in preaching for us would be most welcome. For information phone 223-2854 or 655-2405. ©



By Mrs. J. Mulder

Hold on to the Head! Colossians 2:19a

Dear brothers and sisters,

We believe and confess that the Lord Jesus Christ “ascended into heaven to manifest Himself there as Head of His Church, through whom the Father governs all things.” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 19)

That is according to the Word of God. In this letter of Paul to the Colossians we read of our Lord and Saviour that He is “the Head of the body, the Church.” (1:18) In chapter two the apostle warns the Colossians and us not to lose sight of that Head of the Church but to keep the eyes of our faith fixed on Him. For there are people, who sound very religious and strict, but in the meantime, Paul says, they are “not holding fast to the Head.”

Apparently some of the believers there in Colossae were spending much time and effort discussing questions with regard to food and drink, what to eat or not to eat; which days to celebrate or consider as a festival. As a result they disqualified each other: “You are not a good Christian for you do not keep this or that day!” (v. 18) We know about this attitude, I think.

Paul warns: it may all sound very pious and religious, but in the meantime you are in danger to lose your Head. He encourages the Colossians not to look into the wrong direction but to hold on to the Head, Jesus Christ, glorified at the right hand of His heavenly Father. In all what you do and discuss, don’t forget that Christ Jesus is in heaven!

Those so-called strict Christians talk a lot about the things of this earth: food and drink, festivals, visions, rules and regulations, precepts and doctrines. It looks and sounds quite devotional. Paul says, “These have indeed an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but *they lack any value* in restraining sensual indulgence.” (v. 23 NIV)

We lose our Head when we are very busy with all kind of issues, arguing or complaining about the congregation, but in the meantime hardly ever expressing our gratitude and joy about the glory and majesty of the Head of the Church, our Saviour Jesus Christ. You can think of a family without Christ, or a school without Christ, a society without Christ, etc., but the Church without Christ is the most ugly thing you can think of. A body without its head, is dead. A head without a body is equally ineffective.

If we lose sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, His saving work and royal claims, we can still talk religiously,

keep all kind of precepts but in the meantime we have lost our “Head.” Our salvation and well-being does not depend on ourselves and our own activities but only on Him who elects His people, saves and renews them. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, our Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together grows with a growth which is from God. (v. 19) Only when we sincerely acknowledge Him as our Head, being one with Him through faith, we may expect His blessing on all what we do or say.

We can so easily seek our security in things of this earth. Our health, intellect, money. All kinds of things can become a “power.” When we isolate them from God the Creator and Christ, the Redeemer, then they become idols. The evil one uses them to pull us away from the Lord.

But Christ our Head has disarmed those powers. They are now all subjected to Him. We have been raised with Christ to a new life. By His Spirit He, our Head, pours heavenly gifts upon us and thus He defends and preserves us against all our enemies. (Lord’s Day 19, Q. and A. 51)

That is a great comfort in times of trial and temptation. We can never please God or honour Him, when we are separated from our Head. Being one with Him, our Lord, trusting Him, we also receive many brothers and sisters, all members of Him through faith, all willing to help each other wherever they can and may, not only in words but also in deeds.

Let us therefore hold on to our Head. Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, let the Word of Christ dwell in our lives and let the Name of Christ control whatever we do, in word or deed, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col. 3:15-17)

We lift our hearts to Christ on high,
For He who laid His glory by
Is King of all creation.

Appearing as His Church’s Head,
He rules the living and the dead
And judges every nation.

From heav’n He sent His Spirit down
Who gives rich gifts to us His own,
Gifts from His treasure taken.
Protecting us from Satan’s lure,
Christ keeps us by His power secure;
We’ll never be forsaken.

Hymn 31:4, 5

Our Birthday Calendar for May

DEBBY VEENSTRA

RR 1, Sherkston, ON L0S 1R0

Debby will be 17 years old on May 4.

HERMAN WEMEKAMP

109 Bythia Street, Orangeville, ON L9W 3Y5

Herman hopes to celebrate his 53rd birthday on May 21.

Congratulations to both of you!

May I this time close off with a personal note?

After taking over from sr. Hennie Riemersma, whom many of us gratefully remember, I have now

for about six years taken care of our "Ray of Sunshine." I did it with joy, be it also with many imperfections. But I decided that the time has come that somebody else (and younger!) takes over. I am happy to tell you that the editor has found Mrs. Bep Ravensbergen (nee Hoogland) of Smithville willing to continue. We wish her God's blessing and guidance.

I wish to thank you all for your kind cooperation and know that you will also give the same to sr. Ravensbergen.

May the LORD surround all our "Ray of Sunshine" – friends, their parents, relatives and friends, with His gracious care and love. And may He bless this column, *Clarion*, and all the writers and readers!

Greetings to you all,

Mrs. J. Mulder

1225 Highway 5, RR 1,
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

A Going and Coming

By J. Geertsema


First: A Going

As you read in the last lines of "A Ray of Sunshine," Mrs. J. Mulder has decided to retire from taking care of this column. She did this for six years. We often do not realize how hard it is to fill a regular column every two weeks, and we take this hard work for granted. Now the writers do not mind the work, and they do not need open acknowledgment, because they do not do this work in order to receive public recognition and gratitude for their labours. It is for them labour of love. They do it for the Lord and for His church, without seeking their own honour and glory. They care. Therefore, they serve. This description fits also Mrs. Mulder.

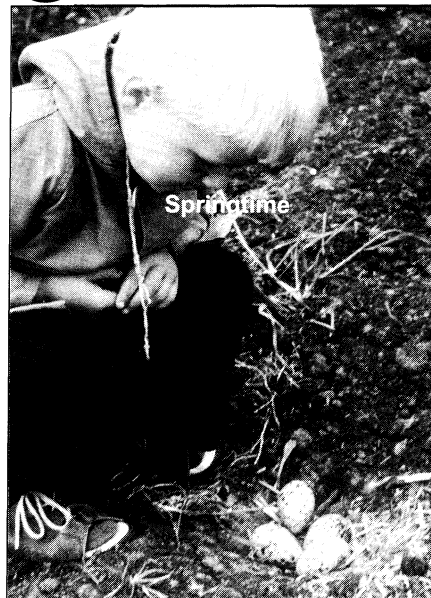
Therefore, it is a pleasure for me to express our great appreciation here for the work done for *Clarion*, or rather, in *Clarion*, for the readers, in particular for those readers who need "a ray of sunshine" more than others. Thank you very much for the many "rays" you were able to spread these six years, after you took over from Mrs. Riemersma. It was again a job well done. We shall miss you, especially those among us for whom the rays were meant in the first place. Or, let me say: we thank our God that you were

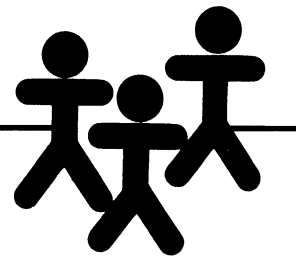
willing to fulfill this service in such a capable manner. And we wish you a quiet and peaceful retirement from this task, together with your husband, for many a year to come. May our God bless you.

Second: A Coming

It is a pleasure also to announce the coming of a successor, as Mrs. Mulder mentions. Mrs. Bep Ravensbergen, member of the Smithville congregation, is willing to give this work a try. Mrs. Ravensbergen was formerly known as Miss Bep Hoogland, teacher in Smithers, then in Chatham, after which she worked with mentally handicapped children in the Smithville area. Some years ago Miss Hoogland became Mrs. Ravensbergen, taking up the task of wife and mother in the family of br. R. Ravensbergen. At the same time sr. Ravensbergen is still involved in the work for Anchor Home and the John Calvin School in Smithville. We understand her hesitation to accept this new and additional labour, and we greatly appreciate the willingness to take this column over from Mrs. Mulder, and to bring "rays of sunshine" via our magazine in the hearts and life of some of God's people, who have a specific place in our midst. Mrs. Ravensbergen, we heartily welcome you as a new regular contributor to *Clarion*. May the Lord give you strength and wisdom for everything, also for this work. 

OUR COVER





The Biblical Image of Man

Editor's note.

The following article written by Miss. J. Kingma, principal of John Calvin School, Smithville, appeared in one of that school's recent magazines. The article is shared in this column for it clearly summarizes some of the main tenets of covenantal education.

A. Witten

The Biblical Image of Man

How we bring up and educate children is greatly influenced by our understanding of who our children are and of what their nature is. Those who believe children to be naturally good or naturally curious will go about their education in a manner that fits this perception. As parents and teachers we are the most closely and directly involved with the education of children. Who are these children for whose education we assume the responsibility? The answer to this question will also determine the way in which we must teach and instruct them. The purpose of my presentation this evening is to examine the true identity and nature of the children who attend the John Calvin School in the light of the infallible Word of God.

1. In Paradise

We start our examination of the image of man at the very beginning in Paradise. Man had a glorious beginning. Like the plants and animals, man was created and, therefore, stands under God. However, unlike the plants and the animals, man shared in the power, glory and might of the Creator. Man was the very crown of God's creation and he alone was made in the image of the Creator. To man was given kingship — the power and the might to rule creation under God. God gave man an office and mandate to fill the earth and subdue it. And in order to be capable of carrying out this command, man received the gifts of perfect knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Man was thus fully equipped to rule creation as God's image bearer. Just exactly what does this mean to be the image of God? Professor

Schilder (quoted by J. Feenstra, 1985, p. 140) explained it this way. Being God's image is to make God visible on earth through the exercise of dominion over the works of God's hands in perfect knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Man, as God's image, received power, and majesty, and dominion. He was, in the words of Psalm 8, "...a little less than God" and crowned "with glory and honour". He was fully capable of making the Name of God excellent in all the earth. Man, the creature, partook of the glory and majesty of the Creator, but, at the same time, remained under God — in His service and not to be equal with God.

2. After the fall into sin

Yes, man's beginning was glorious — so glorious that the fall into sin becomes all the more terrible when we consider it in the light of man's original position as the crown of creation equipped to make God visible on earth. In a sermon on Lord's Day 3, Professor B. Holwerda pointed out that comparing man as he *now* is to man as he was in Paradise will present a very dark picture indeed. However, in order to understand the full extent of the depth of man's fall into sin, we have to look not only at what man *lost* as God's image bearer, but also at what he *kept*. Man is no longer equipped with true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He has become totally corrupt and incapable of any good. He can no longer make God visible on earth by his deeds and, in this sense, man has *lost* the image of God he once bore. However, Holwerda continues, we must also consider that after the fall into sin, God never relieved man of his mandate to have dominion over the earth. The full horror of man's fall into sin only becomes clear when we consider what man now does with the honour and the might and the power with which he was created. Man still has the power to rule, but he no longer does so in God's service. Man is still a king, but he hates God who made him king in order to love God and live with Him in eter-

nal blessedness. This is the terrible reality, says Holwerda, of man's fall into sin that we who, by virtue of our glorious beginning, received of the glory and the power of God, now use this very same glory and power to hate Him. Our kingly ability, which is evident in man's technology, culture, and inventions, is now directed at hating God and our neighbour. Instead of laying all things at the feet of the Creator, man, the rebel king, has put all of life into a state of rebellion. Therein lies the full extent of our sin and misery. Man has become an anti-image; he bears the image of Satan who has become his father. Our Form of Baptism has it right that "we and our children are conceived and born in sin and are therefore children of wrath...." Every imagination of man's heart has become evil. Man, by nature is truly dead in sin; he is so dead he does not seek deliverance for he does not even know he needs it. This is the state of man without God. If there were nothing beyond this, then our condition would be as hopeless as it once was glorious. The purpose of education would be to equip children for the life of rebellion against God and to teach them how to show forth the image of the father of lies.

Man's corruption, total depravity, and complete deadness-in-sin make up *one* aspect of the Biblical image of man. Thanks be to God that this is not all. However, before we go on, let us pause a moment to take stock of this aspect of the true nature of man. We are becoming very quick and adept at glossing over what is man's true condition. So often we say, "Of course, we're all sinful, but...." I quote from an article by Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff:

Most of us, and that includes most of our children, seem to be Arminians-born, and therefore unduly optimistic about our moral abilities, and unduly permissive when confronted with our failures. That is, we and they tend to forget the truth about the true source of our misery, and tend to throw the blame for all that goes wrong on other factors or forces,

such as society, or heredity, or our animal nature. Furthermore, the remembrance of our deadness-in-sin should prevent us from falling into the trap of believing that we (teachers), by our own honest efforts, can change that nature of those we teach and give the required degree of goodness." We can't. No amount of saintliness, of professional or methodological efficiency, can bring about this result.

We do well to remember that we are dealing with sinful children. Inclined to evil — just as we are, Dead in sin — just as we are. Children, teachers, and parents alike corrupted by sin and by nature rebels, haters of God, and haters of our neighbour.

3. Renewed after the image of Christ

As I said earlier, if the Biblical image of our children consists only of what man has become after the fall, then the reason for having our own school is pointless. There would be nothing to distinguish our children from any other children. However, this is not all there is to it. God did not destroy man from the face of the earth although He would have been perfectly justified and righteous had He done so. Rather, God, who is ever mindful of the glory of His own great Name, sent the second Adam to open the way for man to be restored to the image of God which he corrupted through the first Adam. Christ is Himself the perfect image of God. He as the Immanuel (God with us) truly made God visible on earth. He is, at the same time, the Mediator of the covenant which God established with believers and their children. And it is the covenant which sets our children apart from all other children. It is the covenant, as we shall see later this evening, that gives purpose and direction to education. Therefore, it is the covenant which constitutes the second and all-important aspect of the Biblical image of man. The children whom we teach are fellow heirs in the covenant — heirs to all that God promises in Christ Jesus. To these children God promises forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life so that they may be able to show God's image on earth. J. Feenstra (1985) describes how God opens closed hearts, He makes what is hard soft, He circumcises what is uncircumcised (p.142). In short, those being renewed after the image of Christ are made able to serve God and to show forth His image upon the earth. And all this work of renewal takes place within the framework of the covenant and makes up the church gathering work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we teach our children we may never forget that they, and we, were conceived and born in sin. And secondly, we may never forget that they are covenant children who receive at baptism when they as yet know nothing of their sin and misery the promises of salvation in Christ Jesus. And the more that we, and someday they, understand the greatness of our sin and misery, the more we begin to realize what we have in Christ. May that joy and that comfort also be theirs.

4. In the light of Psalm 8

How do we now put all of what we have learned about the image of man into a perspective that serves as a Biblical framework for educating our children? The education implications of the Biblical image of man and the doctrine of the covenant are perhaps nowhere more beautifully stated than by Professor B. Holwerda in his well-known essay about covenantal education:

But I remember Psalm 8, the psalm which Jesus Christ had in mind whenever He thought of little children. The poet says: O LORD, our Lord, how glorious is Thy Name in all the earth! And why is that Name glorious here below? Also for this reason: Out of the mouth of babes and infants hast Thou ordained strength because of Thy enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy

and the avenger. The psalmist sees the mouth of children, including the babbling of babes, as a tremendous instrument by means of which God breaks the power of the evil one here on earth, and establishes His Kingdom, and reconquers the world for Himself.

We would say that is slightly exaggerated. The kingdom of Satan is well established, and children's mouths certainly will not be able to blow it down. Nevertheless, the poet entertains no doubt, and he knows what he is saying. He rejoices over the crowing of every baby that is born; and not because that baby's mouth will later sing psalms (that too, of course), but he does it because this child has been elected by God for royal dominion; because also this child as a son of man has been visited by God and has been crowned with glory and honour in order that later he may have dominion over the works of God's hands. He is well aware of the fact that not all children will become ministers; most of them will work on a farm and keep themselves occupied with sheep and oxen, or with hunting the beasts of the field, or with catching fish. But these sons of men will be shepherds and fishers as servants of God, and in their occupation the Name of the Lord shall become glorious in the

PSALM 90

LORD, Thou hast been since Thou didst shape creation
Our dwelling place in ev'ry generation.
Before the mountains were brought forth and grounded,
And Thou the earth and world hadst formed and founded,
From everlasting stands Thy holy throne;
To everlasting Thou art God alone.

Show forth Thy work to all who serve before Thee,
And to Thy children show Thy power and glory.
May He, the LORD, our gracious God and Saviour,
Shed on us all the riches of His favour.
Establish Thou the labours of our hand;
Establish them, that to Thy praise they stand.

earth. That is the expectation He has of His children; not that later they will have a well-paying job, but that they will keep the commandments of the LORD; that in the place and station given to them they will force God's enemy, the avenger, back, and overcome the revolt against God.

That is a very different language! For here the child is seen in his significance for the Name of the Lord; in his significance for the Kingdom of God. Here life is not cut into two; a realm of nature for man himself and a realm of grace for God. Here it is not a matter of an excellent job for the children on earth, and later a heaven for their soul. But here the children, even the babies, are important for the sake of the LORD's Name and glory on earth....

5. In recognition of the great antithesis

We have seen from the Word of God who our children are. In Christ, they are taken up in the covenant signed and sealed to them at baptism. This makes them heirs of the promise and members of Christ's Church. In our zeal to arrive at a statement of what our children *are*, we may tend to overlook what our children *are not*. The same covenant by which God claims them for His own also separates them from the seed of the serpent. Already in Genesis 3:15, God Himself drew the battlelines by establishing enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. We may tend to forget or ignore that God put that enmity there Himself and that we are not allowed to erase it or to act as if it does not exist. There are only two sides in the, great spiritual warfare — for or against God. We are fooling ourselves and deluding our children if we think we can keep a foot in both camps. Therefore, the education we give our children must recognize the great antithesis. Our children were claimed for the service of the LORD. If we educate them for anything else, we put our very own children on the side of the enemy and the avenger. Once more, Professor Holwerda:

And when you have understood that you will also see the importance of the Christian school. Of course then it remains true that also in our schools two times two equals four. But our children shall not know this in order to become shrewd businessmen in the future, but in order to sanctify the life of business to the LORD. They learn the same letters as the other children, and when they get a pen in their little hands, they also make blots. But out of the little brains, out of the mouths and clum-

sy little hands of our children has God established strength, so that His Name might be glorious in the earth. If that is not our motive, then it is better not to teach them. If your boys have to learn their arithmetic in order to get ahead in the world and so be better than their parents, then it is better not to teach them. All of life is then secularized, and this child will be an ally of the enemy and the avenger. They learn their multiplication tables, they drone off the words they have learned; their pens make blots; but only because of the enemy and the avenger. God, who established His majesty above the heavens, is busy also in those splattering pens to establish His glorious kingdom on earth....

Our children do not learn their reading and arithmetic as subjects that have value in themselves. Geography and history are not subjects that they can see as unrelated to God. They can only use their knowledge in these fields for or against God, and there is no third possibility.

For the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof. They will serve Him therein and thank Him therefore, and if they do not do that and do not learn to do that, then God gives them up to a base mind because they have not glorified and thanked Him; then they become futile in their thinking and their senseless hearts are darkened.

And this is your calling with respect to the Christian school: that you see it and confess it in this manner. That you say; my children will be educated for the service of the LORD for all of life, and not otherwise. That you persist and insist, whatever the cost: my children exist for the honour and the Name of the LORD. And not for anything else. Then you don't send them to school because they have to make a living on earth and know how to get to heaven later, but because the Name of the LORD shall be made glorious in the entire earth. If it were a matter of preparing them for a career, then the public school will also serve you. And if you find it desirable that they know something about religion, well there is always the church and the catechism classes. But if you say the earth is the LORD's, then you add: now they will never go to another school than the school with the Bible. They certainly won't become ministers, all of them, and that is fortunate. But when they occupy themselves with their sheep and cows, when they are working in the store and in the garage, they have to know how they must serve the LORD.

I wish that this theme of the great enmity would seize us again. That we would see again that in all of life here on earth, in all its relationships, the Name of God must be honoured. Then we would know again what Christian education is! Then we would be immovable again like our fathers: here we stand, we can never do otherwise. For the sake of the LORD's Name here on earth. And we will never educate our children for anything else....

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 Oosterhoff, F. G. (1985). "Biblical Image of Man." CRTA Magazine.

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED BY:

Lincoln, ON
Rev. G.A. Snip
 of Langeslag, Ov.
 the Netherlands

DECLINED TO:

Ancaster, ON
Rev. P.G. Feenstra
 of Guelph, ON

DECLINED TO:

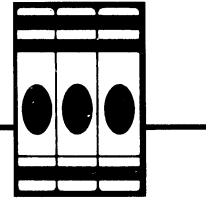
Surrey, BC
 for mission work in Brazil
Rev. R.A. Schouten
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BOOK REVIEW

By G. VanDooren



Lectures on the Church, by Dr. J. Faber
Published and distributed by Pro Ecclesia
Publishers, P.O. Box 189, Kelmscott,
Western Australia, 6111

Reviewed by G. VanDooren, Th.M.,
Burlington, ON
January 1991

Beautiful! That's the word for it, after repeated reading of this "printed voice." The "talking language" strengthens the impact of these "Australian Lectures" upon the issues and upon the readers.

The dogmatician Faber, starting from the Creeds, leads us (according to the purpose of the Creeds) straight to the green pastures of the Scriptures.

Then, at the end, he takes us back to those Creeds with an enriched understanding. This is a welcome antidote against the dangerous tendency of putting "Scripture and Confession" on the same level.

Chapter 1, "Church in Scripture" is filled with the riches of Scripture that shows us the church as the work of the Father ("assembly of the people of God"), the Son ("the body of Christ"), and of the Holy Spirit ("the temple of the Spirit"). "Faith is the response to this revelation," p. 1, Chapter 2, "Church in History," contains several eye-openers. The Reformed brotherhood, when reading it, will now and then discover their own face as in a mirror.

Both Augustine and Calvin faced and challenged the same danger, be it as *Donatism*, or as *Anabaptism*. "Donatism claimed that there (where they lived, VD) and even in the whole world, they were the (only) true church," p. 14.

Dr. Faber very clearly shows how Augustine's view of the church developed during his confrontation with and refutation of Donatism, which tried to establish a perfect church of elect only on earth. The same was the case with Calvin.

Following Luther, Calvin, in the first edition of the *Institutes*, wrote: "The church, that is the sum of God's elect," p. 17. Then, over against the Donatists of his day, the Spiritualists, he "more and more put stress upon the church as the mother of believers, with offices (preaching!) and sacraments," p. 18. You will get a good insight in the significance of baptism, also as administered

outside the true church, as a "letter of God," even if "delivered by dirty hands." And the Bible, even in the R.C. Church is still the Word of God!

The climax comes in chapter 3, "Church in Kingdom," thus giving in only 31 pages a (more or less) "complete picture" of the church of God. I read it in "one session," and then again.

This booklet is most heartily recommended for personal reading, for study and discussion, and especially for our Bible study societies.

As a proof of interested reading I offer some remarks, suggestions, and questions.

Do Roman Catholics "restrict their speaking of the church to the New Testament"? p. 2. I have always thought and taught that for their system they borrowed a lot from the Old Testament, like priesthood, robes, altars, sacrifices, incense etc.

Should not the (repeated) dogmatical expression, "the outgoing works of God" have been explained a bit, in distinction from "not out-going works"? And, speaking about *works*, are they not all "out-going"?

The Trinitarian designations of the church as the Covenant people of the Father, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, p. 3, are more than *illustrations*, are they not? Dr. Faber must have been aware of that, considering that on the same page he combines "illustrations" with "images." As in the case of "out-going" this is probably a matter of idiom, and of finding the most suitable terminology.

It goes without further proof that "ekklesia" in the New Testament is "again and again used for the assembly of God's people at a certain place," p. 6; the local church; but not always. In the next section Dr. Faber refers to Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, where "ekklesia" is a synonym for "body": "The body, that is His church". In chapter 2 we hear Calvin speak also of the church as super-local, the whole church in the world, so to speak.

Chapter 2, "Church in History," is an eye-opener. Donatists, in their exclusivist tendencies were — pp. 121 ff. — "strongly influenced by *Cyprian*. At the top of p. 14: "They appealed to Cyprian

who had strongly stated that *outside the church there is no salvation*, and who also declared that *baptism administered outside the church was not a valid baptism*." I underlined two parts of this sentence which look like Siamese twins.

One wonders, how one of the two "slipped into" the Belgic Confession via (and Dr. Faber knows his stuff — one thinks of his doctrinal dissertation) — Calvin who started in his *Institutes* to define the church as the number of the elect. These words of Cyprian ("father of the Donatists?") in Art. 28 enjoy — so I read in a Dutch church paper — four different interpretations. Why this line, while Calvin (with Augustine's help) fought against the second line all his life with all his energy? I would love to attend a further discussion among Reformed confessors about this Cyprian dictum.

The benefit of knowing the historical background becomes obvious, when Dr. Faber urges his readers, p. 20, to see and evaluate "the Presbyterian brothers" with their *Westminster Standards* against the background of Calvin, and of Augustine. Calvin, writing about the church, often spoke in the terms of "at the one hand — at the other hand." We possibly might not come much farther in this dispensation. That makes for modesty and humbleness, and — with Dr. Faber — for standing in awe of the greatness of God in gathering His church.

One could go on — Rev. S.G. de Graaf is quoted, p. 24, about man in God's kingdom. In recent Schilder celebrations ("cultural mandate!") I have missed a reference, not just to Catechism Lord's Day 12, but to Article 12 of the Confession.

Then, when talking about "the eternal kingdom," why quote only II Samuel 7, and why not also the second, updated version of that promise in I Chronicles 17?

But enough! When (soon, I hope) a reprint becomes necessary, the "taint" in the top line of page 28 should be removed in "those politically *tainted* expressions used in the New Testament" (a dutchism?).

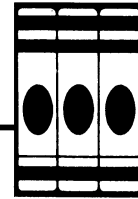
Tolle, lege!

Buy the booklet, read it, study it!

It is a ripe fruit.



BOOK REVIEW



By W. den Hollander

Behind a Frowning Providence, by John J. Murray. *Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990. pp. 30. \$1.75 (US)*

The God of all comfort ... "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (II Corinthians 1:4). These words of the apostle Paul accurately sum up the truth behind this comforting booklet. The author himself was comforted by God's Word at his daughter's death at age 13. This experience of sorrow confronted the author with what he calls the "dark providence" in his life. The affliction caused him to grapple with the questions concerning the purpose of suffering, and how to cope with it. A proper Scriptural understanding of God's designs in adversities is the only answer to arrive at the true comfort which cultivates nearness to God and assures of fruits of faith. This understanding is aided very much by the author's exposition. Especially in a time in which the hollowness of the "health, wealth, and success gospel" of a problem-free Christianity jeopardizes the believer's comfort when suffering, sorrow or disappointment comes, as the author correctly observes, it is clear that we need a faith that is grounded in God's Word. Thus, the booklet offers us the comfort of the God of all comfort! Heartily recommended for those who want to comfort others or who want to be comforted themselves.

Is There An Answer? by Roger Ellsworth. *Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990. pp. 28. \$1.75 (US)*

The O.T. book of Job is very relevant to those who ask the ultimate questions of life. As was the case with Job, adversity often forces us to think about questions such as: "What is man (Job 7:17)?" "Why evil (Job 3:20-23; 21:7; 24:1)?" "How should man be just before God (Job 9:1-2)?" "Where can wisdom be found (Job 28:12, 20, 23-28)?" "If a man die shall he live again (Job 14:14)?" "What then shall I do when God rises up (Job 31:14)?" In a series of very lucid and Scriptural expositions the author expounds the answers to these questions from the Word of God.

He presents man as "the unique, unworthy creature upon whom God has

set His heart, of which the supreme evidence is His sending of His Son to die for sinners." The author goes on to explain the origin and reality of evil, which "God didn't start," but in which He nevertheless "shared in the suffering it produces," and will remove triumphantly. In the context of the opinions of the friends of Job, the book of Job already conveys the beautiful gospel of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ, the justification of man before God (Job 9:32, 33). As the Scriptures are the only source of knowledge for the salvation of man, they also serve to teach man the new life according to the wisdom of God. This wisdom is fundamental and practical, essential to know and to do the right thing in the daily situations that present themselves. This wisdom resides with God and is revealed to those who fear Him and shun evil. In Jesus Christ the true believers learn to share in this wisdom, and so receive many answers for the complexities of life. The booklet continues this exposition by dealing with the question of life after death. While the unbelievers will experience death after death (Rev. 20:14), again, only the believers know life after death. "The crucial question, then, is not so much whether we believe in life after death, but whether we believe in life before death." In a final chapter on the Day of Judgment for all men (Job 31:14), the booklet is very helpful in opening the Scriptures, so that the reader may "Prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12).


These readers, I should say, are truly helped to come to answering the ultimate questions of life and death! The purposes for this booklet could be manifold, but especially a pre-confession class, an evangelism committee, a struggling Christian, or any sincere believer, will be much enlightened by this fine exposition.

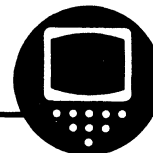
Jonah, A Study in Compassion, by O. Palmer Robertson. *Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990. pp. 64. \$3.95 (US)*

The author who calls his treatise of the book of Jonah "A Study in Compassion" has certainly captured one of the outstanding themes in this well-known O.T. prophecy. God's sovereign good pleasure stands out in its compassion

and grace for the people, the children, yes even the cattle of Nineveh. In this study Dr. Robertson has given a masterly told message in a redemptive-historical way. Although he could have given some more attention to the fact that Jonah was a prophet in Israel who wrote this account for his covenant contemporaries in the first place, the author succeeds very well in placing this prophecy in the context of the history of redemption, especially in its fulfillment in Christ. Given that approach, the book clearly proclaims its message of grace and salvation to the people of our time, calling its readers to repentance and belief. The study combines careful attention for the text with a very appealing style of presentation, so that the reader won't lay down the book until he reaches the end. At many and important moments the strong incentive for self-examination and meditation will give a very effective application to believers today (except that I would argue the point that every believer received "the great commission to preach the gospel." Only the apostles, and the succeeding ministers of the Word did!).

Although this study may be heartily recommended, a critical note should be added too. As I already indicated, the style and presentation is very appealing, yet there are limits to suggestive speech: Jonah telling the sailors that his God is "the big One" exceeds that limit, I believe. Besides, in regard to the much appreciated contemporary style in telling the story, I would like to say that the transcription of Jonah's situation into a picture of a man who needs a passport, goes through customs and who makes use of the twenty-four hour teller, is just overdoing the popular style a bit too much. Your reviewer also disagrees with the author's opinion about the sailors showing "a great deal of common grace," as well as with the theory that "every man knows the one true God of gods by the testimony of his heart."

Be that as it may, I hope that many people will seek to nurture their life of faith by the reading of these very worthwhile publications published by the Banner of Truth Trust. When you realize that not enough reading is going on, these booklets will certainly encourage you to improve on that situation. 



Press Release of Classis Pacific, March 12 - 13, 1991 at Langley, B.C.

Opening

On the morning of March 12, 1991, br. R. Faber, on behalf of the convening church at Lynden, calls the meeting to order, requests that Ps.46:2,3,5 be sung, reads from Psalm 46 and leads in prayer. He welcomes the brothers. He mentions that the churches at Lynden and Port Kells were disappointed when the Revs. R. Schouten and P. Feenstra declined respective calls extended to them, that Maranatha still awaits a decision from Rev. R. Schouten with respect to his call for the mission work, and that Rev. J. Visscher declined the call to Burlington East. He also remembers the fact that the war in which our respective nations were involved is over, speaks of gratitude in this regard, and urges the brothers to be vigilant in the continuing war against the evil one which still rages.

Constitution

After the delegates from the Church at Langley have reported that the credentials are in good order, classis is constituted and the officers take their places: Rev. M.H. VanLuik, chairman, Rev. G.H. Visscher, vice-chairman, and Rev. J. Visscher, clerk. The agenda is adopted.

Reports and Appeals

A report is taken note of from the treasurer and br. Lubbers is personally thanked for his faithful work. A report is received from the church at Houston, informing us that they have inspected the archives of classis as requested, and found them to be in good order. Reports are received re visitation to the churches at Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Cloverdale.

Several appeals are received from members of the church at Smithers, as well as a communication from the church regarding the matters raised. In closed session, and by way of three committees, classis deals with these appeals.

Reports are also heard re church visitation to the churches at Langley, Lynden, and Port Kells.

The churches at Lynden and Port Kells request pulpit supply for two services per month. Granted.

A report is received from the Committee re status of Retired Ministers at Classis. The classis decides not to agree to Cloverdale's original request that "only delegates are permitted to have the floor at classis, unless classis requests otherwise" as this is contrary to article 44 of the church order which allows for the

possibility that others can serve in an advisory capacity.

A report is received from the committee for financial aid to students for the ministry. A student continues to receive support. The churches are to be assessed \$4.90 per communicant member for the year September 1991 - August 1992.

Appointments

a. Next classis:

Convening church: Port Kells. Date: June 11, 1991 or October 8, 1991.

Suggested officers: Rev. G.H. Visscher, chairman, Rev. J. Visscher, vice-chairman, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, clerk.

b. Examinations:

Deputies for examinations: Revs. M. VanderWel, J. Visscher, O.T.: Rev. C. VanSpronsen, N.T.: Rev. G.H. Visscher, Holy Scripture: Rev. W. Slomp, Doctrine: Rev. M. VanderWel, Church History: Rev. B.J. Berends, Church Polity: Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Ethics: Rev. J. Moesker, Diaconiology: Rev. J. Visscher.

c. Church Visitors: Revs. B.J. Berends, M. VanderWel, C. VanSpronsen, G.H. Visscher, J. Visscher, (alternate: J. Moesker).

d. Church for Archives: Smithers.

e. Church for Inspection of Archives: Houston.

f. Treasurer: A.H. Lubbers.

g. Church for auditing books of the treasurer: Vernon.

h. Committee for Needy Students: K.F. Huttema, M. VanderWel, M.H. VanLuik.

i. Committee for Needy Churches: E.C. Baartman, H.A. Berends, G. Boeve.

j. Deputies for Preaching Arrangements: M. VanderWel, J. Visscher.

k. Delegates for Regional Synod: J. Moesker, M. VanderWel, C. VanSpronsen, J. Visscher (alt: B.J. Berends, M.H. VanLuik, G.H. Visscher); H.A. Berends, P. deBoer, A.H. Lubbers, L. Stam (alt: M. Vreugdenhil, T. VanLaar).

Question Period

The church at Cloverdale asks for and receives advice re the possibility of celebrating the Lord's Supper at Manoah Manor. The church at Houston asks for and receives advice re a pastoral matter.

Closing

The chairman states that there is no need for censure ad article 44 and expresses thanks for the good co-operation experienced. The acts of classis are read and adopted. The press release is read and approved. The chairman is thanked for his work by the vice-chair-

man after which he leads in prayer and classis is adjourned.

G.H. Visscher,
vice-chairman, e.t.



Maranatha Home in Burlington

It is quite possible that some of our readers are not aware of the existence of Maranatha Home in Burlington, Ont.

This is a senior citizen project, built in 1976, and contains 61 apartments. It has become the home for the senior members of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington. The project is within walking distance of the Church, but an organized pick-up is available for all tenants. Ebenezer Church conducts a Dutch evening service at 7:00 p.m. in the Common Room of the building.

The building is owned by a non-profit foundation. It is located on 3260 New Street, relatively close to shopping, and has a bus stop at the door. There are no membership requirements, and the maximum rent is about \$350 a month, including all utilities. There is a subsidy arrangement with the Ontario Government to pay rent based on income. Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church has an audio line into the building, and the Church services are available in every apartment. Discussions are on the way to supply a video signal as well. Our own ministers are conducting a Bible study program in the building, which is always well attended.

We invite your inquiries, and although we do have a waiting list, all applications will certainly be accepted. Please write to:

Arie J. Hordyk, President,
Maranatha Home, 3386 Regal Rd.,
Burlington, ON L7N 1L8.



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Busy Beaver *Trina Jelsma* wrote:

"In school we are each making an instrument. I made tin can drums. We also had to do research on our instrument. We had to write what the instrument was, how we made it, what kind of instrument it was and some special features of our instrument. My instrument is a percussion instrument."

Did you have to do a *project*, too, this year?

Was it fun?

Was it *hard*?

Will you share your ideas with the other Busy Beavers?

Please write and tell us about your favourite project: how you liked it, how you did it, what it was about, etc. etc.

As a reward I will send *you* some stickers for your collection!

BIBLE QUIZ

Who Said It?

Often we are known by something we say. Fill in the blanks with the name of the person who made the statement.

- _____ 1. I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. Matt. 3:11
- _____ 2. How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? Luke 2:49
- _____ 3. ...choose this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Josh. 24:15
- _____ 4. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth. Job 19:25
- _____ 5. Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people. 2 Chronicles 1:10
- _____ 6. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matthew 16:16
- _____ 7. And if I perish, I perish. Esther 4:16
- _____ 8. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1 Samuel 15:22
- _____ 9. Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? John 4:29
- _____ 10. Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world. John 11:27

(Answers below)

Busy Beaver *Rachel Wierenga* has this poem for you.

SPRING

Spring is here,
 Summer is near.
 Grass is growing
 The river is flowing
 Flowers are in bloom
 Time to spring-clean my room.
 Birds come back to sing
 And liven up everything.
 Spring is here!



JESSICA DEHARS

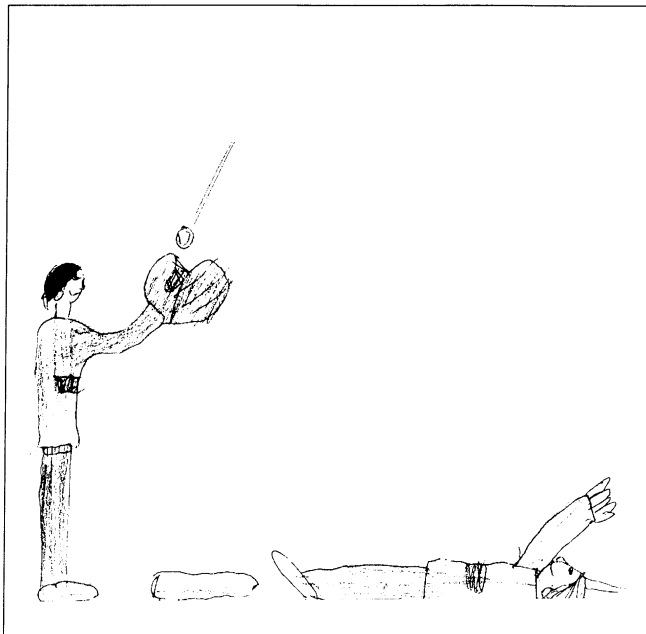
How do you like Jessica's

CARTOON SIGNATURE?

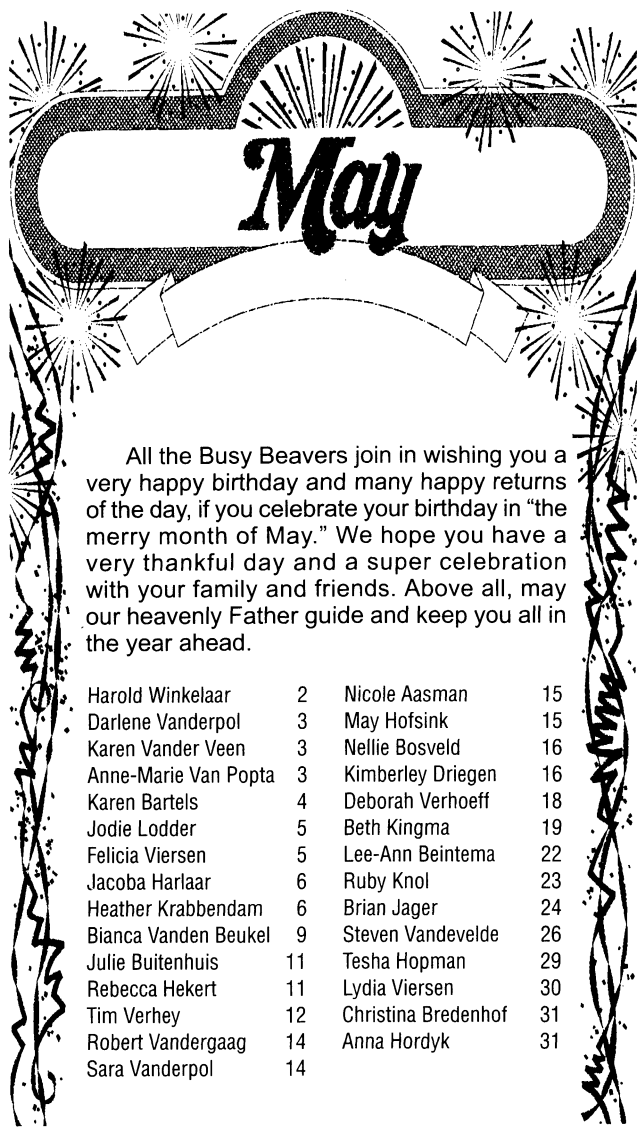
I love the eyes and the smile, don't you?
 I never thought of doing that to my name, did you?
 What could you do with

"AUNT BETTY"?

Would you like to give it a try?
 And how about your own name?
 Give it a go! Have some fun?



Busy Beaver *Brad Bergsma* has a Spring Picture for us.



All the Busy Beavers join in wishing you a very happy birthday and many happy returns of the day, if you celebrate your birthday in "the merry month of May." We hope you have a very thankful day and a super celebration with your family and friends. Above all, may our heavenly Father guide and keep you all in the year ahead.



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *David and Lisa Burger*. We are happy to have you join us. If you would like a pen pal, please look at last year's *Clarion* #24, dated Nov. 23, 1990. Lots of success!

Welcome to the Club, *James Aasman*. Will you write and tell us about yourself and your hobbies?

And a big welcome to you, too, *Sharon Heemskerck*. Thank you for the puzzle. Write again soon!

Welcome to the Club, *Tammy Heemskerck*. We hope you'll really enjoy joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Bye for now.

Hello, *Rachel Wierenga*. It was nice to hear from you again. I enjoyed your spring poem. Keep up the good work, Rachel!

Yes, I can see you enjoy gymnastics, *Marlaine Vanderhorst*! Thank you for sharing your pictures with us. And congratulations on your carrier award, Marlaine!

Thank you for a good winter picture, *Jodie Lodder*. I liked it. And I think you enjoyed making it, right? Write again soon, Jodie.

Sounds to me as if you're looking forward to camping already, *Kimberley Driegen*! It's fun, right? And I hope you'll catch lots of fish this year. In the meantime have fun at school, Kimberley. Bye for now.

Answers to Who Said It?

1. John the Baptist 2. Jesus 3. Joshua 4. Job 5. Solomon 6. Peter 7. Esther 8. Samuel 9. Samaritan woman 10. Martha

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.
I'm looking forward to your letters!

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

With joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father we announce the birth of another son

MATTHEW

Born March 6, 1991

A brother for *Clayton, Jason, Justin, Trevor, Christopher and Kevin*

Dan and Nancy Bomas
(nee Jansen)

6 Glengrove Avenue
Grimsby, ON L3M 4L7

Psalm 102:24b-28

With thankfulness to God, the Giver of all life, we announce the birth of

PAUL DANIEL

Recife, February 19, 1991

John and Alice Kroeze
Nathan, Robin, Michael

Avenida João Francisco de Melo
s/n
São José da Coroa Grande,
55567 PE Brazil

With awe, with reverent admiration,
we praise Thy wonderful creation!
Psalm 139

Our Father, the Giver of life, has entrusted another covenant child into our care

JARED LUKE

A brother for *Heidi, Lydia and Walter*

March 17, 1991

Arthur and Betsy Kingma
78 Perry Bay
Winnipeg, MB R2C 3Y6