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*...are I have with you  
...and you are with  
...world gives to I give to you*

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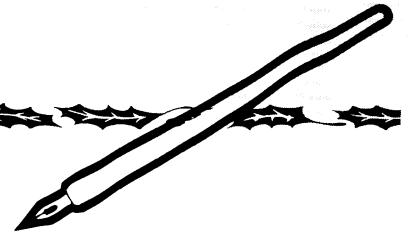






# EDITORIAL

By J. Geertsema



## *The End of the Year 1991*

Herewith you have the Year End issue of our magazine in your hands. It is about the end of another year. It is also the time that we remember the birth of Christ Jesus. The past year has again been a year of political changes of a great magnitude. The Russian empire has further crumpled down and fallen apart, partly as the result of an unsuccessful coup. Financially the country appears close to bankruptcy. Civil war still brings its devastating effect on an East-European country. Communism, and in it human pride, has been humbled.

However, we, who live under a more or less capitalistic system, have no reason to boast either. When we look at our Western economies, both of the so-called developing countries and in the so-called developed nations, the situation is not rosy either. Also here the bureaucracy often is too costly, the debt too high, and the economy in a continuing recession. And the result is that the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing, both in intensity and in number.

Many, in East and West, in developing and in developed countries, feel insecure. Their former economic, and other, securities have been slipping away. For a moment, during the war in the Middle East against Saddam Hussein, the West, in particular our southern neighbour, felt great and strong and safe and secure. But the economic woes, partly as the result of this costly war, are rapidly creating again a growing fear and anxiety. In Canada the Liberal leadership can claim that it has a better program in mind and that it will be able to bring a turn in the downward trend. However, these words are also just that, words.

In this situation we, too, as Christians, live and work, or are unemployed, or through illness or handicaps, not able to work. And in this situation we remember the birth of Christ Jesus. The Word, that is, the eternal Son of God, became flesh. The Gospel of Luke tells us that this birth took place during the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus. This emperor's real name was Octavian. When he had conquered the seat of government, and at the same time had established order and peace in the Roman empire, he received a name of great honour, "Augustus," the exalted one. It was a title which spoke of divine majesty. Especially in the east, but more and more in the west as well, the "august" emperor was acknowledged as a divine son, the great priest, the saviour of the world. In him, in his power and wisdom, people found their security. Temples were erected for him, and sacrifices and prayers were offered to him.

This honour became increasingly the demand of his less talented successors. Acknowledging the emperor as god and sacrificing to him was seen as the cement that would hold the realm of Rome together. A refusal was considered treason. We know what the consequences were. For more than

two hundred years many Christians were murdered through wild animals, through fire, through crosses, and in other cruel ways.

In the meantime, again and again, politically and economically, there was much insecurity in the Roman world. One could say that these Roman "divine sons" certainly were not almighty. Establishing a mighty power is one thing. Maintaining it for ever, as a golden age, is another.

However, in the constantly changing political and economic situations of those days, with all the accompanying insecurities, there were those Christian believers who risked their possessions and even their life. They made things even less secure for themselves by confessing this very Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem under poor circumstances, and killed as a criminal at a Roman cross, but raised from the dead and preached as the true Son of the only true God, the true Saviour of the world. In spite of this, they kept confessing. For this Christ Jesus, born in Bethlehem to die for their sins at the cross, was the greatest security they could ever receive, even though He could cost them their very life.

Christmas 1991 will find many around the tree, if they could afford one, with anxiety in the heart. Perhaps for a few hours, maybe even for a day, the anxious worries can be pushed to the background. But they will return. Will it even be with more strength because of the price of the Christmas presents that people felt compelled to buy, anyway? Santa Claus will not bring security back.

Christmas 1991 will also find people in church, for worship. In church Christ Jesus will be confessed as the Son of God who became man to pay for our sins and reconcile us to God. In church this gospel will be preached. It will be proclaimed that there is only one true and abiding security, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

In church, under the proclamation of Christ Jesus as the only security, through God's mere grace for lost sinners, the true security in life is heard and believed and received. What is your only comfort in life and death? It is this:

*That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul,  
both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour  
Jesus Christ,*

*Who has fully paid for all my sins with His precious  
blood, and has set me free from all the power of  
the devil;*

*Who also preserves me in such a way [in economic  
troubles, too] that without the will of my heavenly  
Father not a hair can fall from my head, but that,  
indeed, all things must work together for my salvation;  
Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of  
eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready,  
now and always to live [and die] for Him.*

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# Christ's Birth from the Virgin

By N.H. Gootjes

*And the angel said to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God," Luke 1:35.*

## Embarrassment

Why is it that Christians often feel embarrassed when speaking about the virgin birth of Jesus Christ? It is not that we are afraid of speaking to other people about Jesus Christ. We tell them how important Jesus Christ is as our Saviour. We will speak about His work on earth, His healings, His words, His suffering and death. Around Christmas the thoughts are concentrated on the babe in the manger. But how often do we speak about His virgin birth? Are many Christians not reluctant to speak of the way in which He came into this world?

The reason for this reluctance cannot be that the virgin birth is miraculous. One simply cannot speak about Jesus Christ without mentioning His miracles. And we do. As a matter of fact, stories about the miracles Christ performed are often used in evangelism, and rightly so. Why then is the virgin birth so often neglected?

Neither can the reason be that the church is uncertain about the virgin birth. It has been confessed in the Apostles' Creed: "He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary." An older form of this confession can be found in the Nicene Creed: "Who was incarnate by the Holy Spirit from the virgin Mary." The expression is less clear, but the virgin birth is confessed in no uncertain terms. Actually, however far we go back in history, the virgin birth is confessed.<sup>1</sup> It belongs to the core of our faith.

The reason for our embarrassment will be that we are afraid of ridicule, and we know of no good way to protect ourselves from it. We would rather speak of other things in connection with

Jesus Christ, things which are easier to explain and easier to accept. It is therefore good once more to ponder the question why the virgin birth is so central in our Christian faith that it is even one of the fundamental articles of the Apostles' Creed. We will concentrate on the words of the angel in Luke 1:35.

## Ridicule

This ridicule can come in different forms. There is bitter ridicule. An early example of this is the philosopher Celsus in the second century, who quotes what a Jew had to say about the virgin birth. Jesus' mother was turned out of

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**"Are many Christians not reluctant to speak of the way in which He came into this world?"**

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the house by her husband because of adultery. The father of her child was a soldier, by name of Panthera. So Jesus was born as an illegitimate child. He went to Egypt to work and there he acquired some miraculous powers. He then went back to his own country and proclaimed himself to be a God.<sup>2</sup>

There is also civilized ridicule. This is how a minister explained the virgin birth to his catechism students. He first asked them to mention a famous sportsman. And then he asked them: "How would you convince other people that your hero is really a great man?" One answered: "I would tell them a story in which he did something impossible."

Another said: "I would say: At his birth it was in the stars that he was to become famous." And yet another began to invent miraculous events in connection with his birth. "Exactly," said the minister, "exactly what happened with Jesus. The people were very much impressed with His teaching. And to honour Him, they invented a miraculous birth."

The two stories are different. The first one is of heathen origin (or of Jewish origin, for it is unclear whether Celsus made up the Jew or really heard this story). It is clearly hostile in tone. The second story has its origin in some church. It is not hostile to Jesus, but wants to honour Him as a great man in the church. But if someone would continue to believe in the virgin birth, he would make himself ridiculous. Who would believe a story which so clearly is the result of hero worship?

And do we know what to answer to this ridicule? Or do we feel right out of this world with a story about a miraculous birth? Who can believe such a story in a world which seems to know everything about the whole process of birth? *Why is the virgin birth important for us?* To answer this question, let us first go back to the two rejections of this doctrine. In both cases people go at great length to disprove the gospel of the virgin birth. Why?

## The reason for the rejection

In the case of Celsus it is very clear. Celsus, or the Jew he quotes, does not want to believe in Jesus Christ. The virgin birth is a lie, actually Jesus was born out of wedlock. And He also did not perform miracles; these were no more than tricks He had learned from the Egyptians. Why did Celsus reject the virgin birth? Because he felt otherwise he had to believe in Jesus.

Now the second story seems different. Here Jesus is not rejected as an illegitimate child, but honored as a hero. To honour Jesus people invented a supernatural descent. Even though we



know today that this story is not true, we still honour Jesus Christ, they say. This too, however, is a rejection. How do they honour Him? As a human, maybe a great man, on the same level as our heroes today. But He is no more than a human.

The virgin birth is not just rejected because it sounds like an improbable story. Many today acknowledge that something miraculous or out of the ordinary can happen. The rejection of the virgin birth becomes necessary because the virgin birth show that Christ is more than a great man.

### The words of the angel

Luke 1:35 says first that the Holy Spirit will cause that Maria becomes pregnant, without sexual intercourse.<sup>3</sup> And he continues: "Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." The angel reveals here that there is a direct relation between the virgin birth and the divinity of Christ. Because He was born from the virgin Mary, He can rightly be called the Son of God.

At first hearing the words of the angel sound contradictory: The Holy Spirit will come to Mary, and work so that she will conceive, therefore the child to be born will be called the Son of God. You would expect that as the result of the overshadowing of the Spirit this child would rightly be called a man. Even though no man had taken part in it, the child would be a true man. But the emphasis is not on the humanity, Jesus' divinity is emphasized. The words of the angel mean that as the result of the work of the Spirit the child that will be born will be rightly called Son of God.

This goes completely beyond the thoughts of men. The Greeks had their mythological fantasies about relations between a god and a human. The result was always a half-god, a person who had some divine characteristics, and at the same time some human characteristics. A half-god was neither fully God nor fully man. That is the best the Greek could come up with.

But God's works are radically different. God's thoughts are beyond our thoughts, and God's work is beyond our works. The Holy Spirit worked in Mary, and prepared a complete human nature for the Son of God. He is not half God, half man, but fully God and fully man. And that came about because the Holy Spirit wrought the humanity for the Son of God.

We have to connect this word of the angel with that of v. 32. The angel had already announced that the son of Mary will be called "the Son of the Most High." The "Most High" is a title for God. The words of the angel in v. 32 mean that the earthly Jesus would be the Son of God. Then in verse 35 he gives the explanation. The Son of the Most High would not be born from human parents, for then He would be a mere man. He would also not be born from the union of a god and a man (suppose that such a union is possible), for then He would only be a half-god. No, the Holy Spirit will prepare His human nature; therefore the human child can at the same time rightly be called Son of God. His divinity was not compromised in His human birth, as the result of this work of the Holy Spirit.

### The importance of this confession

Now we can understand the opposition against the virgin birth. This opposition is the old rejection of the divinity of Jesus Christ. If someone acknowledges the virgin birth, he has to acknowledge the full divinity of Jesus Christ. And as a result he has to serve Him, to obey Him, to worship Him. This rejection will never end. And we will always have to face opposition concerning the virgin birth. Gresham Machen wrote a whole book on the virgin birth, in which he showed in great detail that the virgin birth is an integral part of the gospel, and that the reasons to call it a later addition, all fail.<sup>4</sup> This is good and necessary work, but it will convince no one from the other side. For it will mean that they have to recognize that in Jesus Christ God has come to save us. If Jesus Christ is born from the virgin by the work of the Holy Spirit, then He is God and we have to obey and serve Him as God.

No "outsider" will believe us when we speak of the virgin birth. They will ridicule it, or ignore it. Unless God changes the heart, no one is ready to admit that through the virgin birth God made it possible that His Son was born as a man. But we should continue to speak of it. The Son was not embarrassed to come into our world in this way, even though derision was only to be expected. Then we should not be embarrassed in confessing the virgin birth, even though derision can be expected. Eternal life depends on recognizing Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1 John 5:5ff., 12ff.). Everyone, therefore, should believe the virgin birth. For the virgin birth was the way in which God brought His Son into this world.

<sup>1</sup>See for the old Roman Creed, the predecessor of our Apostles' Creed, J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3 ed., New York: Longman, 1983) 102. For even older forms, see 103 and 91.

<sup>2</sup>Celsus is quoted in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 28. Origen neatly turns the tables on Celsus, when he states that these stories were made up to overturn the virgin birth of Jesus. For those who made up these stories show, against their will, that they knew that Jesus was not born out of an ordinary marriage, *Contra Celsum*, I, 32.

<sup>3</sup>The RSV translates the question of Mary: "How can this be, since I have no husband?" This translation is misleading. Mary does not say: "I have no husband," but "I do not know a man." "To know" here is a euphemism for having sexual relations, a usage which also occurs in classical Greek and in the Old Testament, see W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 161.

<sup>4</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 2 ed. 1932).

# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R.A. Schouten

## Celebrating Christmas

A reader asked about our customs surrounding the celebration of Christmas. "Do Christmas trees, lights, and gifts *really* have a place in Christian homes?" asked this reader. Furthermore: "I have no problem with the tree, gifts, lights, etc., but why at Christmas and why is there an increase of this in our homes? Isn't this another way that we can show the world we are different – also in not decorating our *stores* etc.? With the lights, gifts, etc., we are by no means putting the focus on Christ."

We thank this reader for raising the point. There is no doubt that Reformed people have more and more adopted the prevailing cultural habits with respect to Christmas. There used to be a firm resistance to the opening of gifts on Christmas day. Not anymore. There used to be a lot of discussion about the propriety of trees and lights, etc. Not any more. And there was a time when Reformed people as a whole had no money for expensive gifts. Not any more.

We can weep about this, if we want to, I suppose. After all, these changes in habits can hardly be attributed to increase in faith. It is not because we Reformed folk today are more devout than a previous generation that we have these practices.

Nonetheless, can we not find a solution in a different direction than by railing against a bit of greenery in the house or by scoring a few conservative points against "lights"?

Even the previous generation was not without happy inconsistencies in this matter. One household was a "no-tree" household. But sprigs of holly or cedar hung above the mantle were acceptable, as were wreaths and other homey items. You tell me the difference.

Most Reformed households strictly separated gift-giving from Christmas (perhaps by exchanging gifts on Dec. 5 or on Christmas eve instead of on Christmas morning). But giving books

and mandarin oranges and chocolates to the children after a worship service on December 25th was acceptable to nearly all heads of these same households (and apparently also to consistories)!

Other households had trees but did not permit the accumulation of gifts under the tree (too materialistic, it was said). Instead, the gifts were hidden in

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**"Maybe we should  
make Christmas  
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various corners of the house until the appointed hour at which time they were gathered in laundry baskets or in some other receptacle and brought to the living room.

In the light of these reminiscences, I would not be too quick to allege deterioration of standards. Perhaps the Reformed community in America has always lacked a coherent approach to Christmas. And maybe there is a reason for that deficiency, too, as we'll endeavor to demonstrate in a moment.

### Giving and getting

It can be said that some of the "problems" surrounding Christmas celebrations are connected to the overall increase in wealth amongst Canadians

since, say, 1960. There is nothing wrong with wealth, as we are perhaps too quick to say. But have we demonstrated a healthy, thankful response to increase in wealth? Today, even the yuppies are discovering that "cheap is chic." Too bad they had to learn that truth from hard economic realities and not from the illuminating example of committed Christians.

We say that we celebrate Christmas because the Saviour of the world was born. We remember the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor*, so that by His poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9, 10).

Knowing the self-imposed poverty of our Lord Jesus, should we not separate ourselves from the frenzied consumerism of our day? Maybe our concern about the "secularizing" of Christmas needs a new focus – no longer on trees and lights but on blatant materialism. Christians, too, embark on wild shopping sprees. We all have our "list" of people for whom we simply have to buy a gift. Maybe we should make Christmas a time for giving to people who are truly in need, for example to our brothers and sisters who live in gross poverty in so many places of the world – like Brazil. We are anxious about whether to buy a stereo, a watch, or a record or a board game, while many fellow Christians worry about their next meal.

### An alternative

What about it? Shouldn't we develop some more restraint and modesty in our life styles? Instead of catering to greed, let's look to legitimate need. Why not give up gift-giving altogether for a year? Not because this is the rule for all pious Christians, but because it is a glorious possibility for people who know Him who "though He was rich, became poor?"



Let's imagine that the average cost per gift is \$10.00. Let's further suppose that all 13,000 of us Canadian Reformed people would direct our Christmas "gift" money to an organization that tries to help the really poor, an organization like *Mission Aid* or the *Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund*. Or else, why not hire a taxi to make an anonymous grocery delivery to a family in the church or in the broader community that is having a hard time? Did you ever consider how much relief \$130,000 would effect amongst those in need? (By the way, don't you agree that \$10 is a low figure?)

Maybe you think that I'm unfairly laying a guilt trip on you. But my only intention is to promote some thoughtful reflection about what I see as the real danger of "Christmas." Don't forget, I didn't say it was *necessary* to forego all gift giving. There's no rule I can point to! Besides, I like getting gifts, too! But the attitude I've described above would be more in keeping with the "spirit of Christmas" than our reckless and short-sighted drive for yet more luxuries and more "toys"!

Let's not forget that He who became poor often raged against materialism and consumerism. He warned His hearers that the true service of God was incompatible with a money and possession oriented lifestyle. He said that it would be hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. He praised those who would be willing to make great "sacrifices" in order to serve the cause of the Kingdom. Life, after all, does not consist in the abundance of our possessions.


If we keep these guiding thoughts in mind, I for one can't see the harm in improving the ambience of our homes with some twigs or a tree or lights or candles or a wreath.

### Christmas not a holy day

And finally, let it be said that Scripture does not command us to set aside one day or one season for the commemoration of the incarnation. The only holy day which the New Testament knows about is Sunday. It doesn't even hint at other "special days." Often people are made to feel guilty because their approach to Christmas day is not suffi-

ciently "spiritual." But why should it be such a special day? It's not a Sabbath day! Don't we remember Christ's birth every day? Isn't every day "spiritual?"

Besides, what is so unspiritual about giving and receiving gifts (as long as we remember what the Bible says about materialism)? And what is so unspiritual about a good Christmas dinner? (Here's another happy inconsistency of Reformed people: giving presents on Christmas day is no good, but gorging yourself on a fabulous dinner is fine! As if presents are less "spiritual" than a turkey!)

Let's get away from a false spiritualization of "Christmas Day." Only in this way can we have a coherent approach to the festive season. We are free to have celebrations. We are free to give gifts. We are free to decorate our homes in any way that is not indecent. We are free to hang up lights (but it is a waste of electricity). And we are gloriously free to do all these things in the light of Christ who became poor so that we might be rich - rich in the forgiveness of sins, rich in eternal life, and so rich in love toward God and man. 



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# God Shows no Partiality

## In Jesus Christ the Covenant Extends to all Peoples

By R. Faber

### Introduction

The early Christian church learned with difficulty that God extends His covenant promises and obligations to all who believe in Him. God's chosen Israel does not include the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob alone; in Jesus Christ "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise" (Ephesians 3:6). Especially the Judaizers found this doctrine hard to accept, and when they observed Peter baptizing non-Jews they were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured "even on the Gentiles" (Acts 10:45). As one commentator remarks, "the cleavage between Jew and Gentile was for Judaism the most radical within the human race."<sup>1</sup> It was no easy task therefore, for the disciples and apostles to convince the early church that Jesus Christ had broken down the "dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14) which separated Jews from Gentiles, and that He had made them one.

The Jewish members of the young church could have known that God's covenant promise is for all peoples, for it was already in the old dispensation that the Lord had promised His grace to the entire world. The prophet Joel, for example, predicts: "it shall come to pass that *all* who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered" (Joel 2:32). And Matthew reminds his readers of another Old Testament prophecy, when he quotes Isaiah, who speaks thus of the coming Messiah: "He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles...and in His name will the Gentiles hope" (Matt. 12:18, 21).

With the incarnation of Jesus Christ the gospel of salvation to all mankind becomes more pronounced. Even as infant Jesus is called by Simeon "a light

for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). When He heals the paralyzed servant of the centurion of Capernaum, Jesus Christ notes that this foreigner's faith is stronger than that of any in Is-

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**"With the incarnation of Jesus Christ the gospel of salvation to all mankind becomes more pronounced."**

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rael, and He reminds His audience that "many will come from east and west and sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11). The Lord also proclaims that He has "other sheep, that are not of this fold" (John 10:16, 19). Before His ascension Jesus charges also His disciples to bear testimony to the Gentiles (Matt. 10:18), and to "make disciples of *all* nations" (Matt. 28:19).<sup>2</sup> The proclamation of the gospel of grace to all peoples without discrimination is a command of Jesus Christ.

The disciples and apostles take the command to heart, as the New Testament shows repeatedly. One expression employed to stress that God's gift of

grace is for all who believe in Him is "God shows no partiality." Since these words convey one of the prime doctrines of christianity, it is important to understand their full significance for the church then and now. In this article I shall elucidate the meaning of this biblical expression by considering its Hebrew origin and its use in the New Testament.

### The meaning and origin of the expression

The Greek word rendered by the English "to show partiality" has a fascinating history. "Prosōpolēmpsia" (and related Greek words) does not occur in Classical Greek, and appears for the first time in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> This compound word is formed from the Greek word for "face" (prosōpon) and a noun form of the verb "to receive" (lambanō). The novel combination suggests that "prosōpolēmpsia" is not a word of Greek origin, but a probable loan-word from Hebrew.

The phrase "to receive the face" does occur in the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – and it is plausible that the N.T. word is formed from it. In Psalm 82:2, for example, the RSV reads, "How long will you judge unjustly and *show partiality* to the wicked?" The Septuagint translates the Hebrew words literally: "to receive the face of the wicked." Leviticus 19:15 is another passage in which the Septuagint uses the phrase "to receive the face": "You shall do no injustice in judgment; *you shall not be partial* to the poor (literally, 'receive the face of the poor') or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour." The literal rendering in these two texts makes as little sense in Greek as it does in English, and begs explanation.



## the meaning and use of the Hebrew "nasah panim"

In these instances the Greek translates some form of the Hebrew words "nasah panim." This phrase concerns the sphere of social behaviour, and conveys a custom of polite greeting in the ancient Near East. As E. Lohse points out, when one Hebrew greets another, he might bow low towards the ground before him.<sup>4</sup> If the person thus greeted raises or lifts the face of the one bowing before him, he shows his recognition and respect. Thus the expression "nasah panim" literally means "to receive the face," but figuratively connotes "to show respect, to esteem."

Although "nasah panim" may have originated in social custom, the expression (and its synonyms) appears repeatedly in legal contexts. Leviticus 19:15, quoted above, is an injunction to the Israelites to be unprejudiced in courts of law. Another instance is Proverbs 18:5: "It is not good to be partial to a wicked man." The people of Israel are instructed to show no undue esteem to anyone in legal trials.

God enjoins His covenant people to be impartial in courts of law, for He Himself is impartial, as numerous Old Testament texts state. Elihu reminds Job and his fellow debaters that the Lord "shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor" (Job 34:19). Similarly, in 2 Chronicles 19:7 we read, "for there is no perversion of justice with the Lord our God, or partiality, or taking bribes."<sup>5</sup> God's equity in judgment is most clearly expressed by "nasah panim" in Psalm 82, where the poet depicts God's divine tribunal, at which the gods are arraigned: "in the midst of the gods He holds judgment: 'How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?'" (1-2). The psalmist contrasts the fairness of God's justice with the prejudiced judgment of the "gods," and concludes: "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to Thee belong all the nations" (v. 8). Thus Psalm 82 praises the impartial judgment of Israel's covenant God.

From this selection of Hebrew texts we deduce that the phrase "nasah panim," from which the Greek "Prosōpolēmpsia" derives, is used figuratively in the Old Testament to mean "show undue respect," "be partial towards." It occurs especially in legal contexts, and is applied to the people of Israel and to their God. As we turn to the New Testament passages in which

"Prosōpolēmpsia" occurs, we do well to keep in mind this Semitic origin and usage.

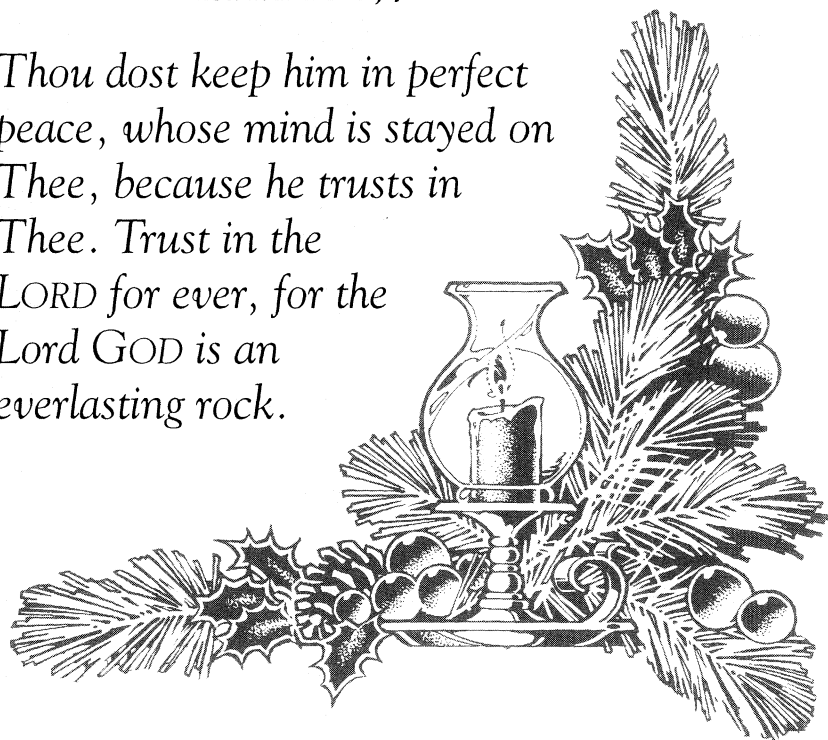
## Peter and the Roman centurion (Acts 10)

One of Luke's aims in the book of Acts is to record the manner in which the apostles fulfil the mandate of Christ to be His "witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of

"Prosōpolēmpsēs" to describe God's equal treatment of all mankind. Being an unprejudiced judge of human deeds, God does no longer prefer the Jews to the Gentiles. Accordingly, His covenant of grace now extends to all mankind.<sup>6</sup> The Roman centurion, therefore, should take heart, knowing that "every one who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His Name" (Acts 10:43). The proclamation of the gospel

## Isaiah 26:3,4

*Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee. Trust in the LORD for ever, for the Lord GOD is an everlasting rock.*



earth" (Acts 1:8). One instance of the spreading of the gospel beyond the people of Israel is recorded in Acts 10, where Peter meets the God-fearing Roman centurion in Caesarea. Having understood the implications of the vision of the sheet of clean and unclean animals (10:16), Peter says to the centurion that "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (10:28) and says further, "truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation everyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him" (10:34-35). The apostle says literally that God is "not a receiver of faces." Peter uses the word

is indiscriminate, as the vision of the sheet of clean and unclean animals had taught Peter.<sup>7</sup>

Peter's equal treatment of Jews and Gentiles causes a reaction from the Jews who think that the gospel is reserved for them. The believers from "among the circumcised," as Luke puts it, are surprised to see that the Gentiles receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues and praise God (Acts 10:45). The circumcision party criticizes Peter for preaching to, and even baptizing, the Gentiles. When Peter and Paul continue proclaiming that the gospel of salvation is irrespective of race, the Judaizers mount an organized

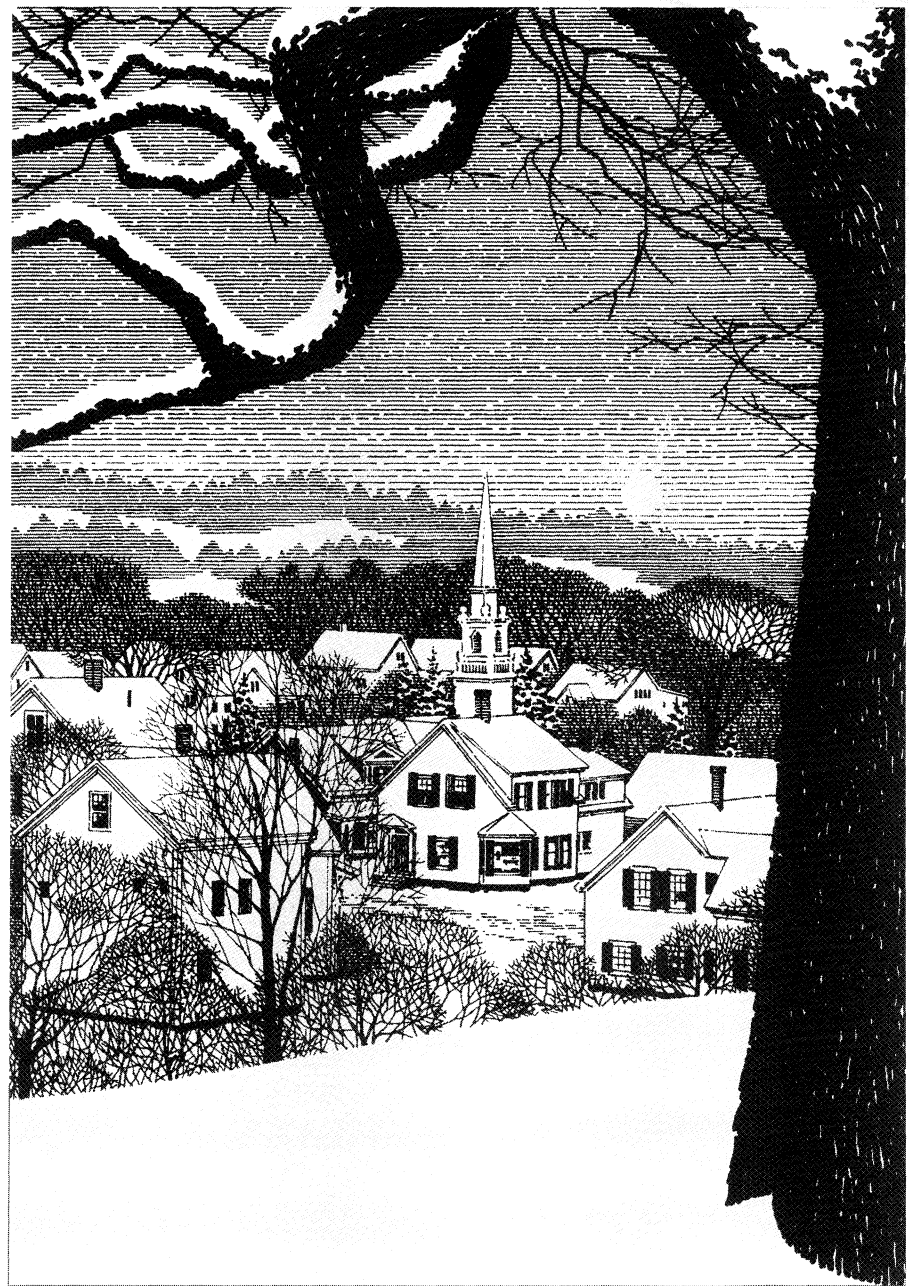
opposition, claiming that it is necessary for the Gentile believers to keep the law of Moses and be circumcised. At the “conference in Jerusalem” (Acts 15) Peter restates his conviction that God “made no distinction between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles)” (15:9). Paul and Barnabas reinforce Peter’s speech by relating what signs God did through them among the Gentiles, while James reminds especially the Jewish audience that already in the first dispensation the prophets spoke of the expansion of God’s covenant beyond Israel. James quotes Amos 9:11-12, of which these words are central: “that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name” (Acts 15:17). The conference in Jerusalem thus confirms the impartiality of God’s covenant promises to all who believe in Him.

### Jew and Greek (Romans 2:11)

In his letter to the Romans Paul expresses his “obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish...to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:14, 16). This preface broaches a recurring theme in the letter, that the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ is for all peoples. Accordingly, the apostle uses the phrase “God shows no partiality” in his argument that in the new dispensation God’s covenant people are not those who uphold the laws of Moses, but those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

In the second chapter of the letter Paul warns against hypocritical judgments of men. How can one presume, Paul asks in verse two, that the judgment of God will favour one over another? God will render everyone according to his works, and when the great day of judgment arrives, “there will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honour and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. *For God shows no partiality*” (2:9-11).

Knowing that the Hebrew phrase “nasah panim” from which the Greek “*Prosōpolēmpsia*” is formed occurs especially in juridical contexts, we are not surprised to read that Paul employs the word here in a similar legal setting. God’s judgment of the whole world will show no discrimination. Paul points out that the Jewish people will not receive special treatment when the judgment day arrives. Though the Israelites were privileged to receive the laws and ora-



cles of Moses (Romans 3:2), they will not be preferred to other peoples when the actions of all will be considered. For, argues Paul, “there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22-23). All mankind, Jews and Greeks included, are equal in the sight of God, as all are condemned because of sin. Appeals to the laws of Moses will be fruitless when God evaluates the deeds of men.

The corollary to Paul’s identification of Jews and Gentiles in the guilt which they have in common before the judgment of God is expressed in chapters 10 and 11. There the apostle shows that the  *blessings* of the covenant are for both

Jews and Greeks. Paul argues that the words of Joel 2:32 (“Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved”) apply to Jews and Greeks alike, for “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him” (10:11-13). Thus the blessings and riches of God’s covenant are extended equally to Jewish and Gentile people. In His justice and in His mercy God is no respecter of persons.

### The warnings of James and Peter

We noted above that in the Old Testament the covenant people are commanded to be impartial since their God



is impartial. In the New Testament this command remains, as James proves. He writes to the congregation: "show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1). He gives an example of a rich man who receives special attention as he enters the assembly, while a poor man is cursorily treated (2:1-7).<sup>8</sup> James asks his readers, "Have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (2:4) He implies that unfair behaviour among the members of Christ's body conflicts with their faith in Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection was for all alike. James warns his readers: "if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors" (2:9). Rather, he argues, since God's mercy triumphs over judgment (2:13), the members of the congregation ought to "so speak and act as those who are judged under the law of liberty" (2:12). The mercy of God was poured out on the whole human race in the death of Jesus Christ. The

members of the church must treat one another as equals, since they equally received the mercy of God.

Peter's advice to the exiled church is like James'. He encourages his readers to be holy in conduct, as their God is holy. And Peter reminds them, "if you invoke as Father Him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear" (1 Peter 1:17).<sup>9</sup> The context in which the adverb "aprosōpolēptos" occurs is, not unexpectedly, God's judgment of the deeds of man. Like James, Peter warns that the covenant Father does not favour one member of the congregation more than another. The divine justice which will be meted out one day is an example for the Christians. As God is unprejudiced, so too His people ought to be unprejudiced in their conduct, and to act in wisdom and fear.

### Conclusion: the Canons of Dort

It is instructive to conclude with reference to two articles in the Canons

of Dort which concern the spreading of the gospel and God's undeserved grace. In dealing with the history of revelation the Canons state that under the new dispensation, God "took the distinction away" and revealed the "mystery of His will" not to the Jews alone but to a larger number of people. "The cause of this very distribution of the gospel is not to be ascribed to the worthiness of one people above another, nor to the better use of the light of nature, but to the sovereign good pleasure and undeserved love of God" (III/IV,7). Regarding the Christian attitude to God's unmerited grace the Canons remind us that towards those who have not yet been called, "we must by no means act haughtily, as if we had distinguished ourselves from them" (III/IV,15).

<sup>1</sup>F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982), 188, on Gal. 3:28.

<sup>2</sup>Compare the command of Christ in Luke 24:47: "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in (My) name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

<sup>3</sup>Thereafter the word occurs in diverse forms in the church fathers, a.o., Origen, Polycarp, and frequently in John Chrysostom. On this see G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: University Press, 1968), 1186, where he translates prosōpolēpsia "partiality of any kind, whether favouritism, prejudice, or snobbery."


<sup>4</sup>*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament*. Vol. 6. Edd. G. Kittel, G. Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1959), 780, s.v. "prosōpolēpsia."

<sup>5</sup>So too Deuteronomy 10:17, "the Lord your God...is not partial and takes no bribe." Similarly Malachi 2:9.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Peter's explanation in Acts 11:12, 17, "The Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction....If then God gave the same gift to them (i.e. the Gentiles) as He gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

<sup>7</sup>On the day of Pentecost Peter had also preached the message of repentance to "all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him" (Acts 2:39).

<sup>8</sup>R.B. Ward, "Partiality in the Synagogue," *Harvard Theological Review*, 62, 1969, 87-97, argues that the example in 2:1-7 refers to actual judicial hearings.

<sup>9</sup>It is noteworthy that the Pharisees, when questioning Jesus Christ on the payment of the poll tax to Caesar, say, "We know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God" (Luke 20:21). Jesus Christ, like God the Father, is an impartial judge. 

## CHURCH NEWS



Called by Surrey, BC for Mission work in Brazil

**Candidate L.E. Leeftink**

of Ureterp, the Netherlands

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Called and accepted by Burlington West, ON

**Rev. G.H. Visscher**

of Surrey, BC

\*\*\*

Called to Ancaster, ON

**Rev. R.A. Schouten**

of Calgary, AB

\*\*\*

Accepted to Rockway, ON

**Rev. T. Hoogsteen**

of Brantford, ON

\*\*\*

Accepted call of Hamilton, ON for mission work in Maceió, Brazil

**Candidate R. Sietsma**

of Ysselmuiden, the Netherlands

### 40th Anniversary in the Ministry

**DR. J. FABER**

On Monday, January 20th, 1992, the Lord willing, Dr. J. Faber will celebrate his 40th Anniversary in the ministry of the Gospel.

The Board of Governors and the Senate of the Theological College, would like to invite you to meet Dr. and Mrs. Faber at an "Open House" for this occasion.

The reception is to be held **Saturday, January 18, 1992** in the hall of Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church, 353 Stone Church Road E., Hamilton, Ontario between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m.

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# An “Election Theology” of Covenant<sub>4</sub>

By D. Engelsma

Canadian Reformed (“Liberated”) theologian J. DeJong criticized the covenant doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches in his letter in the March 15, 1991 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Dr. DeJong found fault with the Protestant Reformed teaching on several counts:

1) It maintains presupposed regeneration.

2) It makes election the controlling ground of the covenant.

3) It distinguishes between membership in the covenant and a belonging only to the sphere of the covenant.

I need say little here about the “Liberated” charge that the view of the PRC constitutes presupposed regeneration. The “Liberated” choose to ignore the emphatic denial by the PRC that they hold this error. Nor do they pay any attention to the careful demonstration by PR writers that the doctrine of the PRC differs from that of presupposed regeneration. The reader is referred to chapters 3 and 4 of Herman Hoeksema’s *Believers and Their Seed* (Grand Rapids: RFP, 1971) and to my own editorial in the January 15, 1991 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

The statement in my series on the covenant that elicits from Dr. DeJong the question, “What is this but presumptive regeneration?,” does not refer to regeneration, much less to regeneration as the basis of baptism. Rather, it asserts that the approach of godly parents in the rearing of their children must be determined by election: “Election determines the approach.” If DeJong wants to analyze this teaching, he must not call it “presupposed regeneration,” but rather “believed election.”

At the crucial point in the debate, the “Liberated” always loudly shout, “presupposed regeneration.” This then is the end of the discussion. With this, the PRC are vanquished. By a loud shout, the “Liberated” covenant view

has triumphed. This may satisfy the “Liberated,” but it does not satisfy those who insist that truth be established, not by loud shouts, but by Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

The “Liberated” charge that the covenant conception of the PRC amounts to presupposed regeneration masks the fact that the “Liberated” hold all their infants and little children for unregenerated. The “Liberated” are as firmly committed to “presupposed unregeneration” as are the Netherlands Reformed and the Baptists. For the fulfillment of the covenant promise, namely, regeneration and sanctification by the Spirit, is conditioned by the child’s faith. Regeneration, according to the “Liberated,” is *mediate*, i.e., by means of the preaching of the gospel. Regeneration is the covenant child’s own activity. It is something that he must do. And, of course, the infant child cannot hear the preaching; cannot fulfill the condition; and cannot be active in giving himself the birth from above. All children of godly parents, therefore, are unregenerated, and must be viewed as unregenerated, until they prove otherwise (and become otherwise!) by fulfilling the condition of faith. (Cf. G. VanDooren, *...and we escaped*, Burlington, Ontario, 1986, pp. 130-134; also, J. Kamphuis, *An Everlasting Covenant*, Launceston, Australia, 1985, pp. 74-89.)

The entire weight of the Reformed tradition is dead against this notion of the “Liberated.” John Calvin teaches the regeneration in infancy of the elect children of believing parents in the *Institutes*, 4.16.17-32 (the quotations that follow are taken from the translation of Ford Lewis Battles). He is contending with the Anabaptists who argue against infant baptism on the ground that “regeneration...cannot take place in earliest infancy.” The Anabaptists “conclude that children are to be considered sole-

ly as children of Adam until they reach an appropriate age for the second birth.”

“But,” responds Calvin, “God’s truth everywhere opposes all these arguments.” Jesus’ command, “Suffer little children...to come unto me” (Matt. 19:14), shows that Jesus makes the little children partakers of Himself, “to quicken them.” To the objection that little children cannot be regenerated since they do not yet have any knowledge, Calvin replies:

God’s work, though beyond our understanding, is still not annulled. Now it is perfectly clear that those infants who are to be saved (as some are surely saved from that early age) are previously regenerated by the Lord. For if they bear with them an inborn corruption from their mother’s womb, they must be cleansed of it before they can be admitted to God’s Kingdom, for nothing polluted or defiled may enter there (Rev. 21:27).

In support of the regeneration of infants, Calvin appeals to the promise of the angel to Zacharias that John the Baptist “shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). “God provided a proof (of infant regeneration – DJE) in John the Baptist, whom He sanctified in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15) – something He could do in others.”

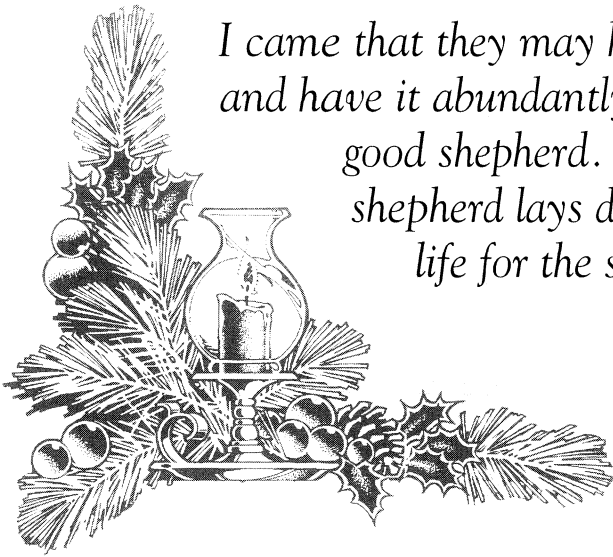
When the opponents of infant regeneration raise the argument from 1 Peter 1:23 that “Scripture recognizes no regeneration except from incorruptible seed, that is, from God’s Word,” Calvin responds:

In this they wrongly interpret Peter’s statement, which has reference only to believers who had been taught by the preaching of the gospel. We indeed admit that to such persons the Word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny the inference from this that infants



John 10:10b,11

*I came that they may have life,  
and have it abundantly. I am the  
good shepherd. The good  
shepherd lays down His  
life for the sheep.*



cannot be regenerated by God's power, which is as easy and ready to him as it is incomprehensible and wonderful to us.

Calvin suggests that infants "receive now some part of that grace which in a little while they shall enjoy to the full," apart from the medium of preaching. "Infants are baptized into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit."

"The age of infancy," says Calvin, "is not utterly averse to sanctification," as the Anabaptists (and "Liberated") suppose. For Christ "was sanctified from earliest infancy in order that he might sanctify in himself his elect from every age without distinction." He does this by "impart(ing) that holiness to us," including the elect infants. In support of his contention that God provides to infants the "immediate remedy" of the beginning of "newness of spiritual life," Calvin appeals to 1 Corinthians 7:14: "...else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." This holiness of the children of believers, for Calvin, is not a mere formal, outward setting apart of the children as members of the instituted church, but a real, living, inner, spiritual holiness, by the indwelling of the Spirit in their hearts. "As Paul testifies, although those who are

born of believers may by nature be lost, they are holy by supernatural grace."

Calvin understands the promise of the covenant to the infants of believers, and the baptism of those infants founded on this promise, to mean a work of grace in the hearts of the infants *in their infancy*. This work of grace, for Calvin, is regeneration. It is not true, therefore, that the doctrine of an immediate regeneration of infants in the covenant is the invention of later Reformed "scholastics" such as Maccovius, as is the contention of the "Liberated" theologian C. Vonk (cf. his *Is de tegenwoordige strijd over de wedergeboorte der kinderkens wel noodig?, i.e., Is the Present Struggle about the Regeneration of the Little Children indeed Necessary?*).

The doctrine was taught by Calvin.


Both the Canons of Dordt (in I/17) and the Westminster Confession (in 10.3) teach the regeneration of the elect children of believing parents who die in their infancy. Granted, the subject in both instances is the special case of children who die in infancy. But these creedal statements make plain, at the very least, that there is nothing intrinsically un-Reformed and heretical about the teaching of an immediate regeneration of elect children of the covenant in their infancy. Nor is it by any means unreasonable to appeal to these creedal declarations concerning infant regeneration in partial support of the teaching

that, as a rule, God regenerates the elect children of godly parents in the womb, in infancy, or in earliest childhood.

This is not to be taken as admission that our covenant view is, in fact, that of presupposed regeneration. But it is solid proof that the covenant theory that maintains "presupposed unregeneration" conflicts with the Reformed tradition.

If it were a choice (which is not the case!) between Abraham Kuyper's doctrine of presupposed regeneration and the covenant doctrine of the "Liberated," the doctrine of presupposed regeneration is much to be preferred. For presupposed regeneration clearly and unequivocally ascribes the regeneration of the child to the sovereign grace of God alone, the infant being as passive in his rebirth as he is in his physical birth, rather than to condition regeneration on the faith of the child and thus to make regeneration the act of the child himself. Presupposed regeneration at least makes the covenant promise and baptism refer to a saving work of God in the baptized infants, as infants, that unites them to Christ, washes away their sins, and gives them the indwelling Spirit of their covenant Head. The "Liberated" conception, in contrast, leaves all the children spiritually dead, excluded from living and saving union with Christ, and merely "legally" adopted as children of God (which adoption can be lost), until such time as they grow up and fulfill the condition of believing.

And presupposed regeneration is not at a loss to explain the experience of countless thousands of covenant children, namely, that they believe on Christ, repent of their sins, and love God in Jesus Christ from their youngest childhood. This is a reality in their lives, as soon as they hear the Word, because they were already born again. But how can a child believe on Christ as He is presented in the Word, if that child has not been born again – if, indeed, that child's regeneration depends upon the child's believing?

There is, however, an alternative. The alternative is the covenant doctrine developed by the Holy Spirit within the Reformed tradition in the PRC. This is the doctrine of the covenant maligned as an "election theology of covenant." This criticism of the covenant view of the PRC by the "Liberated" I will consider in the next, and final, instalment of the present series on the covenant of grace. 

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# The Covenant and the Children of Believers — A Reply<sup>4</sup>

By J. DeJong

*In his fourth instalment on my article of Jan. 15, Prof. Engelsma deals with my criticisms directed against his (Protestant Reformed) doctrine. Let me deal with each point he raises in turn.*

## Presupposed regeneration?

With regard to the teaching of presupposed regeneration, I am fully aware that Engelsma discounted attachment to this doctrine. I hardly believe that there is any justification for the statement he makes about the “Liberated” here. Where have we “loudly shouted” our teaching against him? My only point was: how does Engelsma’s view differ from the classical view of presupposed regeneration? He maintains there is a difference. Kuyper taught “presupposed regeneration”; the Protestant Reformed teach “believed election.”

If Engelsma insists that the PRC do not teach “presupposed regeneration,” I gladly accept this. However, one might question whether there is such a big difference here. If one insists that essentially the covenant is only made with the elect children, and that the baptism of the children rests on their election and regeneration, then there can be no certainty of God’s promises at the baptismal font. For no one knows at the baptismal font whether his child is elected or not, or whether the child is regenerated or not. All certainty here is nothing more than *assumed* certainty.

Herman Hoeksema, to whom Engelsma refers, also has a difficult time trying to dissociate himself from Kuyper on this point. With Kuyper he maintained that essentially the promise is only for the elect children. But according to Hoeksema, one must not presuppose regeneration in all the children. Rather, we baptize all the children on account of God’s way of working in

history. Hoeksema here defends what he calls “the organic idea”: God works through the families, and through the generations. This forms the ground for the baptism of *all* the children of believers. We apply to all what essentially only applies to the elect. Just as the hypocrites do not essentially belong to the church as adults, so the unregener-

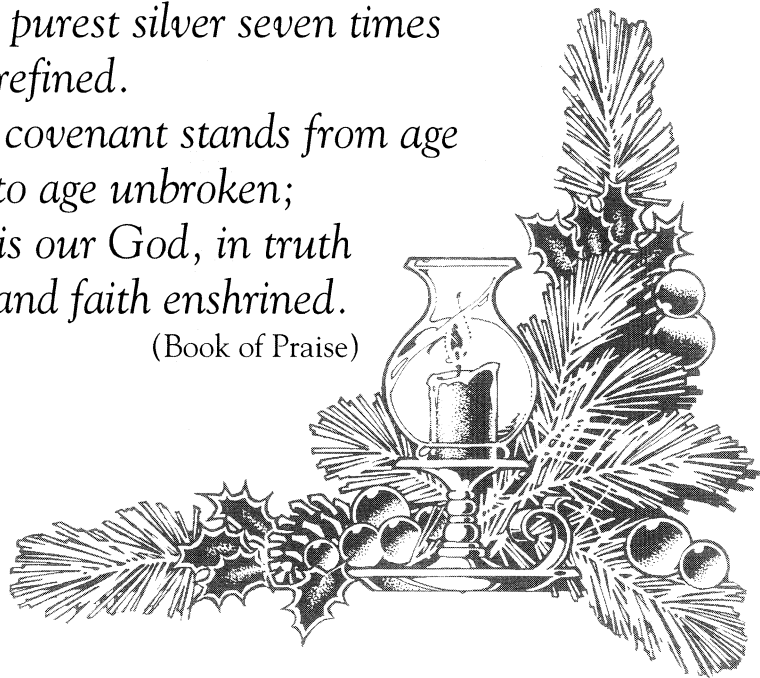
ate children do not essentially belong to the church as infants. But they are treated as members because of the “communal idea.” God elected a *people*.

However, this is barely distinguishable from Kuyper’s view. For Kuyper’s presupposition regarding *all* the children was based on the fact that externally they were in the covenant, i.e.,

## Psalm 12:4

*The words of promise which the  
LORD has spoken  
Are purest silver seven times  
refined.  
His covenant stands from age  
to age unbroken;  
He is our God, in truth  
and faith enshrined.*

(Book of Praise)



they were a part of God's covenant people. And Hoeksema is also forced to make the same presupposition if he does not want to maintain the legitimacy of God's word of promise to *all* the children. He *assumes* all are included until the future proves otherwise.

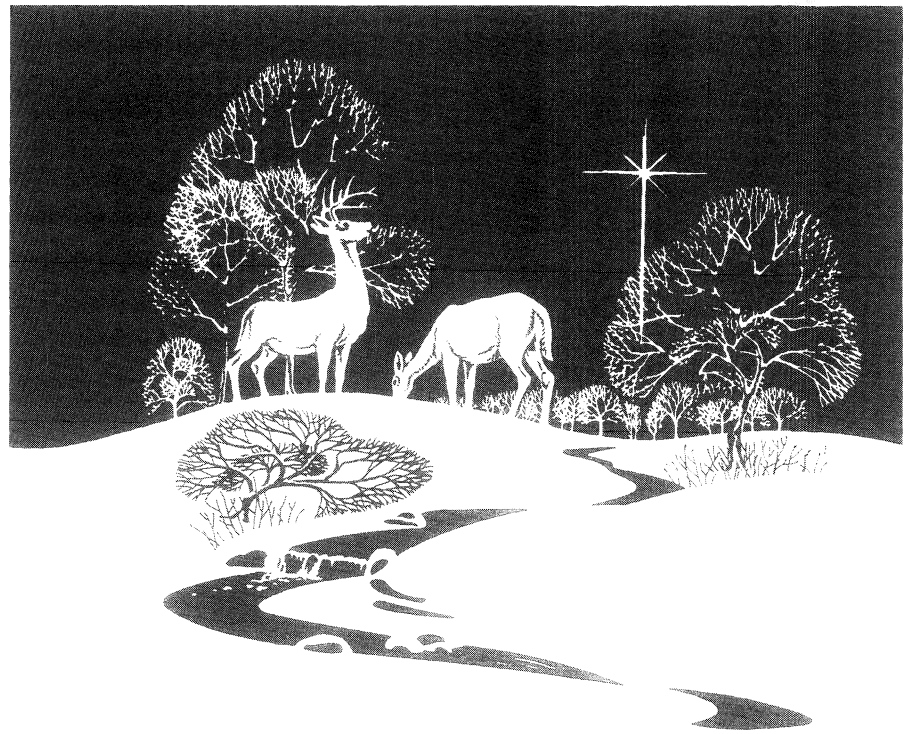
Hoeksema also says that Kuyper's approach is to be rejected because it fosters uncertainty with respect to baptism. According to him, the Reformed fathers stressed the certainty of baptism more than Kuyper did. But if those promises are not valid and reliable to *all* the children, Hoeksema has created just as much uncertainty for the parents as did Kuyper. And Engelsma's doctrine is also a living example of proclaimed *uncertainty* for parents. For who knows whether his child is elect or not? The secret things of God are not known to us. Therefore in Engelsma's view we may baptize our children but this gives no assurance with respect to the promises given to them. In fact, whether they actually receive the promises of the gospel is, for Engelsma, a matter of doubt. Again I ask, what is here the essential difference with the doctrine of presupposed regeneration? Hoeksema says very clearly in his book *Believers and their Seed*: "It is simply not true that God in holy baptism promises and seals something to all who are baptized."<sup>1</sup> Hoeksema stressed election, while Kuyper stressed regeneration; but at bottom both do the same thing: they assume God has saved all until the opposite proves true.

### Calvin's view on regeneration

Engelsma then goes on to say that we are as firmly committed to "presupposed unregeneration" as are the Netherlands Reformed and the Baptists. He is even prepared to assert that we teach that "Regeneration is the covenant child's own activity. It is something that he must do." Then he adds, "The entire weight of the Reformed tradition is dead against this notion of the 'Liberated.'"

First of all, it should be noted that all of these rather broad, unrestrained and sweeping statements are entirely wrong. Engelsma will not find one of these fanciful statements in our creedal basis, or in our publications. His references to Kamphuis and VanDooren are also wide of mark, as we will see. But first, let us look at Engelsma's use of Calvin.

Let me begin by referring to Herman Hoeksema, a mentor often quoted by Engelsma. In contrast to Engelsma, Hoeksema is more cautious with regard



to his dogmatic assertions. He says that Calvin cannot easily be pressed into one corner, as if he held only one view, *viz.* the regeneration of infants.<sup>2</sup> In *Institutes* IV.xvii.21, Calvin says that the error of the Anabaptists was that they always assumed the presence of the gift *before* the promise about it was given. In other words, the Anabaptists held that the promises of God only endorse a *realized* sanctification. Calvin says: "But they repeatedly go wrong through their deluded notion that the thing ought always to precede the sign in order of time." Quoting 1 Pet. 3:21 Calvin says that circumcision was conferred "for the time to come." Then he concludes:

"Accordingly in infant baptism nothing more of present effectiveness must be required than to confirm and ratify the covenant made with them by the Lord. The remaining significance of this sacrament will *afterward* follow at such time as God Himself foresees." (emphasis mine)

Here Calvin intimates that the normal order is: the coming of the gift *follows* the legal participation in the promise concerning the gift. This is also clear from *Institutes* IV.xvi.31, where Calvin, now combatting the view of Servetus, says that the order of participating in salvation as evidenced in Cornelius and in the book of Acts (10:44-48) is not the

usual one. For him, sanctification preceded baptism. But, says Calvin, "he (i.e. Servetus) wrongly draws a general rule from one example, as is clear from the eunuch and the Samaritans (Acts 8:27-38; 8:12), in whom the Lord followed a different order so that baptism should precede the gifts of the Spirit." These remarks show that for Calvin the normal rule is: sanctification follows baptism. This is confirmed by many other places where Calvin says that baptism points to *adoption* in Christ and a participation in the rights of the Covenant.

It is true that Calvin allowed for sanctification at an early stage. Particularly with regard to those who died in early infancy, Calvin maintained this view. Hence, in opposition to the Anabaptists, his point was that God's power may not be limited. God is sovereign and can work outside His appointed and normal channels. But to suggest as Engelsma does that for Calvin this was the *only* way God works, or even to suggest that this is the *normal* way God works is completely false. The very case Engelsma brings forward indicate that Calvin refers to an extraordinary way of working. God uses the means, but He is not bound to them. On this point Engelsma has read Calvin with Protestant Reformed glasses on. Hence it is easy for him to assert over against C. Vonk that his doctrine "was taught by

Calvin." But the examples that I have brought forward from Calvin – about which Engelsma is either unaware, or prefers to ignore – show that Engelsma cannot make Calvin a proponent of his doctrine as easily as he thinks.

To prove the point further it may be worthwhile to point out that Engelsma

where he says: "Hence it is that Paul makes honourable mention of them (the children JDJ) as holy (1 Cor. 7:14) intimating that they are separated from the common race by virtue of the Covenant."<sup>4</sup> And in the same passage which Engelsma quotes from in the *Institutes* (IV.xvi.31), Calvin explains the

ly a reference to exceptional cases in the Westminster Confession.

### "Conditional promises"

I need not repeat here that in his response Engelsma continues to operate with caricatures with respect to our teaching. His reference to Rev. G. VanDooren's *And We Escaped* is a complete misreading of VanDooren's point. For VanDooren nowhere says that the children are "unregenerated until proven otherwise." Rather he says (and even stresses!) that a baptized child is *holy by virtue of the covenant* (emphasis G. VanDooren). Again, Engelsma reads with certain preconceived notions by which he fails to grasp the substance of the simple doctrine of Scripture as defended in this book.

Here Engelsma's fright with regard to the word "condition" tends to get the better of him. But a reference to Calvin with regard to this word might help to convince him, and if not him, then others, that there is a legitimate use of the term "condition to the covenant." In his commentary on Psalm 135:12, Calvin says: "This may serve to show in what sense the covenant was not conditional; but as there were other things which were accessories to the covenant, a condition was appended, to the effect that God would bless them if they obeyed his commandments."

This and other references to Calvin should make clear to everyone that the "entire weight of Reformed tradition" is sooner "dead against" Engelsma than against the Canadian Reformed Churches. But if this is not enough, I can refer Prof. Engelsma to the dissertation of Prof. L. Doekes, which shows in great detail that among a good number of the Reformed theologians in the 17th and 18th Century, the term "sanctified" for the children simply meant "set apart" and this was also the line of Calvin.<sup>5</sup> There Engelsma will also see that the "entire weight of the Reformed tradition" is displaced somewhat differently than he suggests.

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## "...a baptized child is holy by virtue of the covenant."

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also does not quote Calvin correctly. For he makes Calvin say that Jesus makes the children partakers of himself "to quicken them" – intimating that this has already occurred. But let us listen to Calvin himself:

"On the contrary, Christ commands that they (the children, JDJ) be brought to him, (Matt. 19:14). Why is this? Because he is the life. Therefore, to quicken them he makes them partakers of himself..."<sup>3</sup>

Calvin here certainly does not teach that the children who are made partakers are all *already* quickened, but that, having been adopted they will also be quickened and renewed.

Another coloured reading of Calvin is given by Engelsma when he assumes that Calvin's reference to "supernatural grace" implies the regeneration of all elect baptized children. This is not true. With the term "supernatural grace" Calvin refers to the grace of adoption. For he refers to 1 Cor. 7:14, and on this text in his commentary Calvin says:

"As to the Apostle's assigning here a peculiar privilege to the children of believers, this flows from the blessing of the covenant, by the intervention of which the curse of nature is removed; and those who were by nature unholy are consecrated to God by grace."

Here Calvin says nothing about an inward regeneration having already taken place before the children are baptized. Calvin takes the same approach in the appendix to his tract "On the True Method of Reforming the Church,"

supernatural grace as follows: "Who will conclude from this (the words of 1 Cor. 2:13, 14, JDJ) that baptism ought to be denied to infants whom, begotten of the flesh, God consecrates to Himself by free adoption?" The grace conferred is, as one repeatedly finds in Calvin, the grace of *adoption*.

### The Creeds

Engelsma is also incorrect in his assertion that the Canons of Dort (in I/17) teach the regeneration of the elect children of believing parents who die in their infancy. This is reading one's view *into* the creed. Where do the Canons of Dort I/17 use the term "regeneration"? And where is this restricted only to the "elect children"? The article holds that the children of believers are holy!

The Westminster Confession 10/3 is also read incorrectly by Engelsma on this point. For, in Calvin's line, this article states what is the exception rather than the rule. Neither does the article specify when the children are regenerated. This article reads:

"Elect infants, dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."

Here the Westminster Confession asserts that the *normal* way of calling and regeneration is through the ministry of the Word. Engelsma is incorrect to make a general rule out of what is clear-

<sup>1</sup>see p. 140.

<sup>2</sup>*Believers and their Seed*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>*Institutes*. IV.xvi.17 (McNeil Trans). The Latin text here has "Eos ergo ut vivificet": expressing *purpose* (future).

<sup>4</sup>See Calvin's *Tracts*, III, p. 347.

<sup>5</sup>See L. Doekes, *Der Heilige: Quados und Hagios in der reformierten Theologie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wever, Franeker, 1960), pp. 171-230; on Calvin, see pp. 35-44.



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# *The Christian Reformed Alliance becomes the Alliance of Reformed Churches*

*By J. Mulder and C. Van Dam*

The Lynwood Christian Reformed Church just south of Chicago was once again the venue for another meeting of the Christian Reformed Alliance (CRA). Although the meeting had been scheduled to run from November 19-21, the large degree of unanimity that existed among delegates meant that the meeting could be closed a day early. The Canadian Reformed Churches were also invited and the undersigned were again present in an unofficial capacity. Since this meeting is of importance to the Canadian Reformed Churches, this article will pass on the highlights of the agenda and major decisions made.

## **Representatives speak**

The first part of the meetings were taken up with organizational matters and committee meetings (in which we as observers fully participated) to prepare proposals for the floor. Rev. J. Mulder served on the committee for withdrawal from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and Dr. C. Van Dam on the committee dealing with the Confessional Conference. On November 20, the public meetings commenced with the different observers being given an opportunity to address the assembly. (See elsewhere in this issue for the words spoken on behalf of the Canadian Reformed observers.)

Dr. B. Short of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario stressed that the church is the bulwark of the truth and that when a church becomes apostate, one must leave. He encouraged the delegates to withdraw from the CRC.

Rev. G.I. Williamson, member of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Inter-church Relations of the Orthodox Pres-

byterian Church (OPC), recalled how the CRC had helped the OPC in its early years and fondly recalled the names of C. Van Til, R.B. Kuiper, and N.B. Stonehouse. But, how times have now changed! The OPC is ecumenically minded and for that reason the 1991

## **Romans 14:19**

*Let us then pursue  
what makes for  
peace and for  
mutual  
upbuilding.*



General Assembly of the OPC mandated a committee to investigate the desirability and feasibility of the OPC's adopting the Three Forms of Unity and adding them to the Westminster Standards. In the present situation we ought to rise above our past traditions and

think in larger terms of a newly reformed and ecumenical church. We yearn for a realignment of truly Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

Dr. N.D. Kloosterman (who recently graduated with a doctorate from the Theological University of our sister churches in Kampen) spoke on behalf of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, a school which occupies a central place in the midst of the concerned and those who have already withdrawn. He noted that students graduating from Mid-America had to do an additional year at Calvin Seminary where they were subjected to "psychological terrorism." This situation cannot continue. He also appealed to the delegates to help with student support and suggested that the Alliance eventually assume ownership of Mid-America.

Rev. N. Riffert of the Reformed Church in the United States spoke words of encouragement. Representing the Free Reformed Churches, Rev. P. vander Meyden welcomed contacts with different Reformed churches of continental extraction and noted the common bond also felt with the Puritans. He asked his audience to realize that the unity of the church goes deeper than agreement on polity and objective standards. Crucial is the common spiritual bond that is experienced.

## **Alliance of Reformed Churches**

Key constitutional changes were quickly and unanimously made when committee proposals were adopted. Whereas previously the Alliance was made up of Christian Reformed councils fighting to preserve the Reformed heritage within the CRC, the new pur-

pose is broader and this is reflected in the new name, Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC).

The Alliance of Reformed Churches is an association of churches that are united to give testimony to the truth of the Word of God as it is set forth in the historic Reformed Creeds of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt, and to assist member churches in promoting ecclesiastical unity and biblical obedience among the people of God.

One of the grounds mentioned for this new purpose is that

this change will enable the Alliance to fulfil an ecumenical task among churches of true Reformed conviction and confession and make it possible to enlist the help of churches who are bound together by our common confession.

In light of this it is not surprising that the matter of adding the Westminster Standards to the Basic Confessional Statements will be investigated.

With these modifications the character of the Alliance has changed and it has basically become a conference of churches. For all practical purposes, it appears at the moment that the ARC will be chiefly a conference of CRC and ex-CRC churches, but there is clearly potential here for a broader coming together of churches of the Reformed and Presbyterian lines. Indeed, the Fraternal Relations Committee of the ARC was

assigned the task to serve as liaison with other Reformed or Presbyterian Churches or denominations for the purpose of joining the Alliance.

Grounds:

- a. Independent Reformed congregations should join in federation for mutual edification and fellowship;
- b. Some denominations have expressed an interest in closer fellowship with Alliance churches.

One could get the impression that the Alliance was laying the ground work for a new federation of churches or "denomination." Such was, however, clearly not the desire of the meeting. For that reason (as well as possibly others), a motion to investigate providing some house rules for the ARC was turned down. Delegates wanted the churches who have withdrawn from the CRC to be in a profitable working relationship with each other but were not prepared to set up a new church body. The present situation is seen as a temporary one.

## ARC and withdrawing from the CRC

The issue that provoked the most discussion was concerning what the official position of the ARC should be respecting withdrawal from the CRC. It appeared that some wanted to leave open the possibility of continuing to remain in the CRC while protesting liberalism (much like the Hervormde

relations and affiliations will be established for the well-being of the churches and for the furtherance of the Reformed faith.

## Confessional Convention

Readers of *Clarion* will know that a Confessional Conference is being planned for next year (see *Clarion*, 11 Oct. 1991). The organizing committee



Photo courtesy — J. van Dijk/Christian Renewal

Bond in the Netherlands). With a large majority the following statement was however adopted.

It is unbiblical to remain in a federation of churches where a synod ascribes to itself and to its declarations more power and authority than to the Word of God, (Belgic Confession 5, 7, 29, 32). So too it has now become evident that withdrawal from the CRC should occur. It appears that this withdrawal will be a prolonged process rather than an immediate and large-scale event.

The statement goes on to note that some have already withdrawn and others are only beginning to see the necessity of secession. The churches are therefore exhorted to bear with each other. "In this way the door will remain open to future development of a united Reformed witness and much hurt and harm that might otherwise be inflicted upon like-minded brethren may be prevented." Elsewhere in decisions made concerning withdrawal, the hope is expressed that

unity among like-minded brethren and churches will be maintained in the face of increasing fragmentation, and that in due course new

approached the ARC and asked it to participate. There were concerns within the ARC that this is not be a private initiative, since the purpose of such a conference would be to strengthen the unity of the faith and to consider the formulation of biblically based statements of faith. It was felt that this was an ecclesiastical matter. The ARC, therefore, decided to support the idea of a Reformed Confessional Convention, and to

work out a mutually agreeable plan of action with the present organizing committee, for the Alliance to convene such a convention.

Grounds:

This would anchor the Reformed Confessional Convention in the Alliance and its churches.

The CRA further decided that since the need for reformation and renewed unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches is desired in an age of deformation and fragmentation, faithful churches in both traditions will be invited to participate.

Such a convention will have on its agenda a Reformed view on egalitarianism, evolutionism, and ecclesiology. Whether such a convention will actually produce statements of faith remains to

be seen as division exists about this matter. Perhaps a series of affirmations will be the result as well as a renewed appreciation of what the Three Forms of Unity say about the topics in question. It would, however, be good if Canadian Reformed scholars could participate in this process. With our heritage and background, we have something to contribute to Reformed thinking on this continent and our presence and unofficial contribution at the ARC were clearly appreciated.

### Candidates for the ministry

Far reaching decisions were made concerning ministerial candidates. At the meeting of the Alliance last year, a committee had been instructed to "formulate and present to the Alliance a procedure for the supervision, examination and mutual recognition of candidates for the ministry who attend a Reformed seminary other than Calvin Seminary." This committee had done thorough work and regulations were adopted at this year's meeting governing the licensure, candidacy and ordination exams among churches of the Alliance. These regulations now enable a graduate of, for example, Mid-America, to ignore the rule of attending Calvin Seminary for one year and go directly to the churches associated in the ARC for preaching consent, being made eligible for call and ordination. Needless to say, this puts the churches associated in the ARC on a collision course with Synod 1992 of the CRC. That the ARC took such drastic action is indicative of how far the frustration has gone among the concerned. It was reported that at Calvin Seminary students were harassed and psychologically terrorized for their conservative views and even threatened with not being admitted to the ministry if they did not promise to be loyal to the CRC, implying loyalty to its present direction.

With respect to the financial needs of students, a committee was set up to "study methods of financial aid for seminary students and set up a method for distributing those funds to needy students."

### Mission and education

Churches associated with the ARC are often at loss which mission endeavours to support. A standing Committee on Missions was therefore established which was mandated (among other things) to advise congregations of mission opportunities and needs.

An Education Committee of the ARC had gathered together current orthodox titles that churches and catechism classes could use. Their recommendation that an independent publishing foundation be established in order to get needed material in print and distributed was adopted. Also accepted was their recommendation that the matter of Catechism teacher training receive the continued attention of this committee.

### Conclusion

This year's meeting of the Alliance was very well attended. The ARC has about 46 member churches and many others sent observers. The mood of the meeting was upbeat and a strong consensus was present on almost all matters of substance on the agenda. Indeed, the meeting ended on a most happy and almost euphoric note. Clearly many churches are heading out of the CRC and some of the decisions taken show that there is no longer much con-

tory was being made and that the present troubles in the CRC could serve as a catalyst to bring all truly Reformed churches together. No one would argue with the desirability of this goal! How wonderful if this would happen! On the other hand history teaches us the great difficulties to be overcome. One recalls that also during the ecclesiastical liberation of 1944 there were apparently not a few who thought that this event would be a similar catalyst and bring together the Christelijk Gereformeerde (Free Reformed), the concerned in the Synodical church and those of the Reformed Alliance in the Hervormde Kerk. This did not materialize. Humanly speaking, also today there are many obstacles to overcome before such a unity could be achieved.

These difficulties do not, however, lessen our responsibility to realize as fully as possible the true unity of the faith. Historically and theologically we are very close to these seceded church-




Photo courtesy — J. van Dijk/Christian Renewal

cern in being on a confrontation course with the CRC and Synod 1992. The withdrawal process will however take some time to be completed.

We do not know what the future will bring. There are two dynamics at work. On the one hand, there is no desire to form a new "denomination" of ex-CRC churches. There is enough fragmentation in the Reformed world. On the other hand, there was the much expressed hope of a new united Reformed church which would also include Presbyterians. Especially the OPC was mentioned. This is understandable, given the history and the numerous contacts that present exist between these churches. There was the sense that his-

es. Not surprisingly there are several Canadian Reformed Churches seeking contact with concerned CRC's who have withdrawn or are contemplating it. These local contacts are very important for we need to get to know each other. Years of living apart means that we are strangers and do not always understand each other. Besides these local initiatives, the upcoming Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches should deal with this matter and appoint deputies. Proposals from the churches will need to be prepared to that end.

It is our hope and prayer that the Lord our God may use the present developments in his own sovereign way for the gathering of His people. 

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# *Text of a short speech as observer at the meeting of the Alliance (1991)*

*(slightly abridged)*

*By C. Van Dam*

## **Esteemed Brothers,**

Thank-you for your kind invitation and for the privilege of saying a few words. Rev. J. Mulder and I are here in an unofficial capacity as observers from the Canadian Reformed Churches. Since our General Synod only meets every three years the developments within the Christian Reformed Churches have not have the official attention of the Canadian Reformed Churches in this broader assembly. Still the Canadian Reformed Churches, especially those near conservative CRC churches or those who have withdrawn, are following events in your midst with great interest. It is for this reason that the Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington West made possible our being here, and this church sends her greetings.

As mentioned last year, the Canadian Reformed Churches have had a long and deep interest in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Historically, we are brothers from one house. Before the Second World War and the events leading up to the ecclesiastical liberation of 1944 we were Dutch sister churches. It is therefore not surprising that from the very beginning of our existence as Canadian Reformed Churches we have sought to address the issues that were separating the CRC and us in order that we could experience unity with the CRC. We therefore also felt the need to address the CRC in our Appeal of 1963 and warn it about dangers which we saw in, for example, the hierarchical features of the revised Church Order. In 1977 we warned about the leaven from the CRC's sister church, the Reformed Church in the Netherlands that continued to do so

much damage in your midst. What you as the conservative element in the CRC were fighting through your associations and periodicals, (for example, of Report 44 on the nature and extent of biblical authority), we were concerned with in addressing our last appeal to the CRC. Needless to say, Canadian Re-

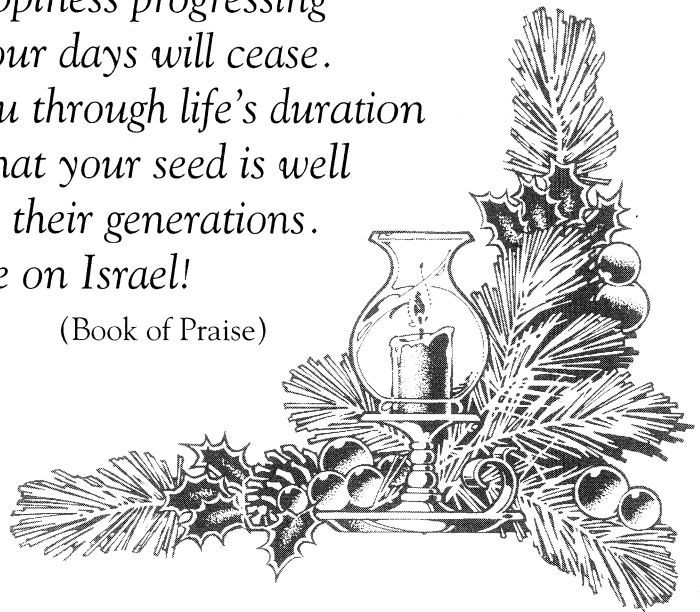
formed people have felt and continue to sense a kinship with you and not a few subscribe to conservative periodicals published in your midst.

You will also understand that as Canadian Reformed observers, our prayers and sympathies are with you. Your cause for the Reformed faith is also

## **Psalm 128:3**

*From Zion come your blessing;  
May you see Salem's peace  
And happiness progressing  
Until your days will cease.  
May you through life's duration  
Know that your seed is well  
And see their generations.  
Peace be on Israel!*

(Book of Praise)






our cause. Your desire to be truly Reformed in obedience to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions is also our desire. May the Lord guide and enable you by His Word and Spirit as you continue to wrestle with the weighty issues that are before you.

As CRA you are at a crossroads and decisions of great import need to be made. As an outsider I do not want to use this particular opportunity to discuss points on the agenda. Let me only note that separation from the CRC will be discussed and as outsiders we suspect that it will be one of the words used often in the coming days. Secession, separation. At the same time we would like to encourage you that with secession and separation comes also the possibility of new union, of biblical ecumenicity and new opportunities.

As Canadian Reformed Churches, we have yearned for the removal of bar-

riers with the CRC for many years. After all we are closely related. We are very happy that those churches that have seceded from the CRC have clearly indicated that they do not wish to form a new denomination, but want to seek unity of the true faith with others who confess the name of Christ. We pray that the same attitude may prevail here. We need each other in a world that is returning to paganism. Next year is the 100th anniversary of the great union of 1892. It will then be a hundred years ago that the church of the Secession (which seceded from the liberal Dutch Reformed Church in 1834) and the churches of the Doleantie (which left the same liberal state church in 1886) found each other in ecclesiastical unity in the Netherlands. One could argue that there is an analogy with what happened in the nineteenth century and what has happened in the ecclesiastical

liberation of 1944 and what is happening now in the doleantie type movement developing in the CRA at present. May this upcoming anniversary be a stimulus to true ecumenicity. May we also find each other under one ecclesiastical roof. Indeed, may all those who profess the Reformed faith eventually unite in obedience to the will of our Head, Jesus Christ, who prayed that they all be one.

May the Lord encourage and guide you with His Word and Spirit so that this alliance of churches may act in a manner that the head of the Church Jesus Christ is pleased with. And may in all the painful decisions made in the present darkness, shine the light and joy at the prospect of new ties and bonds in the unity of the true faith with all those who love our Lord and the Reformed faith! Our prayers go with you. 

## To Our Readers:

More and more we hear and read about the failing health of magazines. Often the blame is laid at the feet of the reading public, in particular the young people. Magazines and books do not attract their attention as much as the all-pervading media of video and television. To compete with these easy-to-digest media, many publishers have desperately tried to spruce up their publications in order to recapture the waning interest of their consumers, but often to no avail because of the lack of commitment and conviction on the part of the reader.

With gratitude to the Lord we note that *Clarion*, so far, has escaped this trend. However, we would be remiss if we did not pass on the concerns of many ministers, elders, and parents who perceive a certain automatism and passivity among church members. The desire to study the Scriptures and to read edifying articles to deepen one's knowledge as a child of the Lord, seems to be lessening among young and old. Particularly the written word which tries to discern the spirits at work, appears to be in a squeeze. In this day and age of world and ecclesiastical movements (think, for example, of the struggle in the Christian Reformed Church), it behooves us all to undergird our conviction of what we believe so that we may take a well-founded scriptural stand when we are called to do so (cf. Ephesians 6:10-20). Young people must also understand the issues of the day and appropriate them from a historical, scriptural perspective. A *personal* understanding and commitment is demanded from us as covenant children.

To this end the editors and contributors of this magazine have given their efforts to build us up in the faith. We again thank Prof. J. Geertsema, Prof. Dr. J. De Jong, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, and Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene. As publishers we appreciate your fine cooperation. It is also gratifying to see the many regular contributors continuing their work from year to year. Thank you, subscribers, advertisers, and correspondents for helping us "grow."

All who share in bringing *Clarion* to you send you greetings. In remembering the birth of Christ, may you be filled with His peace. And as you enter the new year, "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:13, 14).

W. Gortemaker

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# *A continued discussion about a confessional conference: answers to some questions*

By N.D. Kloosterman

In replying to the article by C. Van Dam, "A Confessional Conference," in the *Clarion* (11 October 1991, pp. 453-454), I wish to begin by stating my deep appreciation for my colleague's personal interest in the objectives underlying the conference.

Along with my friend, I am apprehensive about possible negative results of this effort. My colleague mentions one, that of a congregation lulled into a false security by remaining within a deformed denomination. Here is one more: the danger of theologians leading the church around by the nose. In fact, if Professor Van Dam and I spent as much time together as we'd like, we might be able to compile quite a long list!

But I would like to address his concern that such a confessional conference should be initiated within and by the church, along the "ecclesiastical way." I'll approach this concern from two angles, turning first to Reformed church history, and then to an analogy from the area of Bible translation.

## **Examples from history**

History shows that several Reformed confessions which are either adhered to or appreciated by the Canadian Reformed Churches were initiated and produced outside of the "ecclesiastical way." I am thinking of the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession, all of which were sponsored and produced by either civil governments or individuals, but not by the church.

Authored by Guido de Brès in 1561, the Belgic Confession was not formally adopted by any synod until 1566. The Synod of Dort (1618-1619), called to-

gether by the States General, included delegates representing the government and the academy. The delegates from England were appointed by King James I. Moreover, matters of procedure were often decided by the civil government. On 1 July 1643, King Charles convened the Westminster Assembly, whose membership included twenty men from the house of commons and ten from the house of lords. The rest of the participants had been chosen by the English parliament.

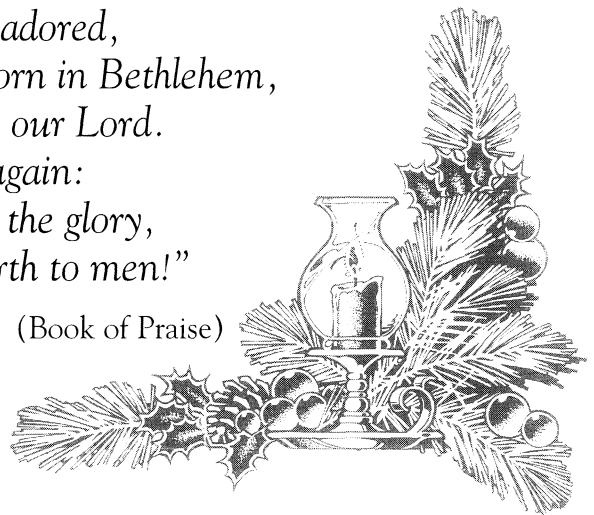
The history of the Liberation (vrijmaking) in the Netherlands is instructive at this point, I believe. Rev. G. Janssen

indicates, in his book *De feitelijke toedracht* (p. 138), that there were in fact two "Acts of Liberation" (Acte van Vrijmaking). The first was authored by Dr. K. Schilder and presented on 11 August 1944 to a gathering in the Lutheran church in The Hague. As far as I know, neither Schilder's document nor this gathering were under the auspices of any ecclesiastical assembly. It was with a view to salvaging federative relationships, threatened by synodical domination, that a second "Act of Liberation" was formulated, designed for submission by local consistories to their classes. This second "Act of Liberation" was,

## **Hymn 16:4**

*Since He came us to ransom,  
Let Him now be adored,  
The King once born in Bethlehem,  
Our Saviour and our Lord.  
Repeat the song again:  
"To God on high the glory,  
And peace on earth to men!"*

(Book of Praise)



with the exception of the addressee, precisely the same as the one Dr. Schilder penned.

Clearly, the examples I've adduced from history occurred in days when the church was under the oversight of the state, or when the churches were in a crisis situation – times that called for radical measures. But I suggest that the churches and individuals who are preparing eagerly and expectantly for this confessional conference recognize that we too are living in times that call for similar measures. My hunch is that many *Clarion* readers realize that the future of the Reformed faith in North America will be greatly affected by what *all* Reformed believers do and say – or fail to do and say – in the next ten years.

### **An example from Bible translation**

In his book *The Future of the Bible*, Dr. J. van Bruggen offers a well-crafted argument for returning the “business” of Bible translation to the church of Jesus Christ. Yet, although we may be convinced by his arguments, most of us and our churches, including the Canadian Reformed Churches, are compelled to settle for Bible versions that have been neither initiated nor produced by the church of Jesus Christ.

Let me press the analogy a bit further. If church federations like the Canadian Reformed Churches may study, dissect, publicly discuss and debate the pros and cons of a Bible translation like the Revised Standard Version, which was not originally sponsored by a church assembly, all with a view to adopting it as their own, why not a new confessional statement?

### **What about a “new” confession?**

Colleague Van Dam rightly insists that “the question whether we really need a new confession should be honestly raised.” I don't intend to answer that question fully in this brief space.

Let me say only this: in our day, it is especially the *abuse* of confessional and theological concepts and formulations that requires the church to refine her faith-statements, in order to make explicit what is only implicit. The word “new” must, therefore, be understood correctly, in the same sense that, in addition to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort were “new.” Some could argue that the earlier two confessions “covered” the heresies identified and opposed by the third. Yet, justification for

making the truth explicit in the form of new faith-statements arises when heresies become both theologically pervasive and life-threatening.

Brother Van Dam suggests that classic Reformed liturgical forms for ordaining officebearers and for solemnizing marriages provide opportunity for teaching what the Bible says concerning church office and Christian marriage. With that I heartily agree! Let our ministers and elders use these handy tools in their catechism and pre-marital classes!

But please consider these two observations: (1) liturgical forms don't – and shouldn't – have confessional status among us; and (2) the variety of liturgical forms in use among Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America needs to be addressed someday.

### **The Canadian Reformed opportunity**

Conference organizers have decided to expand the confessional field of vision, beyond the two evils of evolutionism and egalitarianism, to include the matter of ecclesiology or the Bible's teaching about the church. The project will require several phases: Phase 1, enlisting and coordinating the work of contributors; Phase 2, distributing and modifying the contributions; Phase 3, holding a plenary conference to adopt the new faith-statements; and Phase 4, submitting the adopted statements to various church federations for their endorsement and subscription.

*Clarion* readers will realize immediately that this is not a one or two-year project. The entire process could last beyond the close of the twentieth century, less than ten short years away.

Just as with organizing and producing a Bible translation, this confessional conference offers an opportunity to my colleagues in the Canadian Reformed Churches to be of service to the North American Reformed and Presbyterian church world. You need not function ecclesiastically, nor would you need to be delegated by an ecclesiastical body in order to function! Your contributions, blended with those from similarly committed believers, would later return for evaluation and possible endorsement by your own churches.

My reply, then, is a call for help. Some of the impetus for a confessional conference is coming from Christian Reformed leaders. Please understand that our Christian Reformed people who want to do the biblically right thing are



very weak and traumatized by our denominational crisis, which has been going on for decades now. They are bleeding to death, spiritually, and as we pastors and leaders go about bandaging their wounds, we're trying to *administer* first aid under enemy fire. Please come out to meet us with stretchers and bandages. Please lend your resources and insights to this *process* and its desperately needed *product*!

### Brief response

I very much appreciate my colleague's taking the trouble to respond. In discussing important issues we may get further in understanding each other and in seeking the welfare of Christ's church.

In order to enable the readers to get orientated, allow me to quote the following from what I wrote.

*Is it the responsibility of a conference or of the church to agree on confessional statements in response to new attacks on the truth? Biblically and historically the answer is the church. The church is "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) and has to guard what has been entrusted to her. The Synod of Dordt and the Westminster Assembly determined the confessional bases of respectively Reformed and Presbyterian churches. If it is the responsibility of the church, then why not leave this to churches to initiate and decide on? (p. 454)*

The issue is, therefore, not whether confessions (or for that matter Bible trans-

lations) were always initiated or produced ecclesiastically. Good arguments can be given that the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the Westminster Confession were, within their particular historical context, initiated and produced in an ecclesiastical way. But there is no space for that here. Rather the point I wanted to make is that given the place and task of the church and given our present situation, with an organization like the Christian Reformed Alliance (CRA) in place, is it not much better to follow as much as possible the ecclesiastical way? Our forefathers could not help it that they needed civil approval for major assemblies. Yet it was the churches gathered together which made the decisions. That is the point and it is underlined by what you wrote about the Liberation in 1944. Precisely because of the desire to follow the ecclesiastical way a second Act of Liberation was produced. (It, however, should be remembered in this discussion that this Act of Liberation has no confessional authority.)

At the moment, you and many others are fighting a hard battle for remaining true to the Reformed faith. It is within and around the CRC that this is happening. Is it not logical that a consistorially based organization like the CRA initiate the steps to a new confession (if such is desired) for the situation that you now find yourselves in? The CRA could in turn invite delegates from other faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches to observe and participate in

this process. But why a new para-church and inter-denominational organization now needs to be set up is something I do not understand and you have not alleviated my concern that this will cause confusion and not really serve the cause of Christ's church. Furthermore, we also have the International Conference of Reformed Churches as a possible forum for these type of discussions.

If I may, I would like to make one additional comment. Our brothers and sisters in the CRC should not forget that their difficulties are due to unbiblical decisions of synods. The troubles do not arise because they lack a confession against evolutionism, egalitarianism, etc. Scripture and the present confessions are clear enough for the present conflict. For an outsider like myself, it would seem that your greatest and most immediate need is not a new confession, but secession from the CRC.

My friend and colleague will understand that these lines are written in the spirit of trying to help each other and I am convinced that no one in our circles will withhold any assistance that he is able to give in coming "with stretchers and bandages." At the same time we would like to go beyond the bandages. Who knows what will happen? The situation is unsettled and next week the CRA will meet. May the Lord bless your struggle for the cause of reformation. May the Lord enable us in the Canadian Reformed Churches to help you in every possible way.

C. Van Dam





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# Gleanings

By J. Faber

## Dark Middle Ages illumined

After some travels abroad I promised to do some writing for *Clarion*. We chose the name "Gleanings" for a column in which from time to time I may make some observations about something I came across in my retirement reading.

Let me begin with a publication of a new professor in our sister institution at Kampen, the Theological University of The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Since 1990 this University has two professors of Church History: Dr. F. van der Pol for the period before 1650 and Dr. M. te Velde for the period thereafter. The first one gave an inaugural address the Dutch title of which the interested reader will find at the bottom of this piece. The subtitle speaks of the Church History of the Middle Ages, a recommendation to the adherents of the Reformation. The young professor wants to show the significance of his field of study for the Reformed student of theology and for his training for the ministry.

Often the Middle Ages, the period between 500 and 1500, the years between the Early Church and the Reformation, are seen as nothing but a dark period of decay and apostasy. In an introduction Dr. van der Pol rightly remarks that there is only one constant criterion for the entire history of the church, namely, the divine doctrine. We should not idolize the early church nor the Reformation, and no period of church history, e.g. the "dark Middle Ages," should be negated. Christ is an eternal King, who never was without subjects (Art. 27 B.C.). If I may paraphrase Dr. van der Pol's remark, I would say that the confession of the catholicity of the church in its continuity throughout history compels us to pay attention to the history of God's church during the Middle Ages. There is a line from Augustine to Luther and Calvin, but I can see this line only in the right perspective if I study the whole plane of the interlocking period. Convinced Protestantism does not close the horizon before 1517.

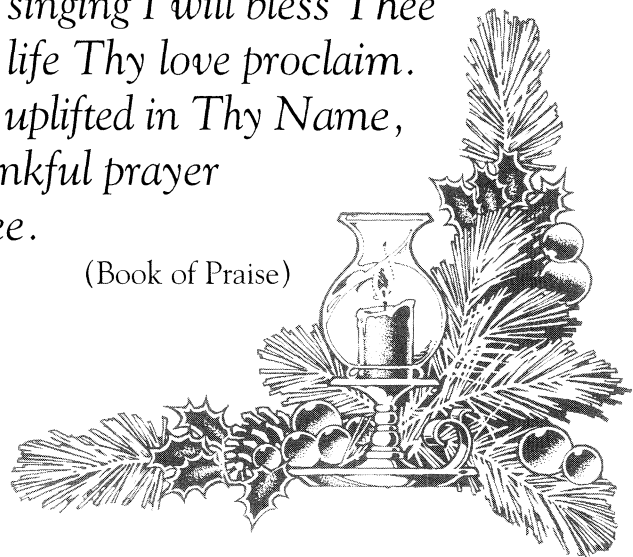
In a second section Dr. van der Pol deals with actualizing relations between the Middle Ages and the present. The period is "in." There are not only mediaevalizing novels and even detectives but especially the spirituality of the Middle Ages catches modern imagination. I would even ask the question whether the frequent use of the term "spirituality" even in contemporary Reformed circles is not a sign of nostalgia with respect to the Middle Ages: one harks back to mediaeval "modern devotion." Even the Rev. H.J. Hegger, a

well-known convert from Roman Catholicism, published last year about what he calls biblical elements in mediaeval mysticism. In uniting Europe the mystical writings of authors as Jan van Ruusbroec, Meister Eckhart, and Johann Tauler are read again. Dr. van der Pol speaks about an impulse in a secularized society to conquer the poverty of religious feeling or sentiment within an ecumenical framework (18). How important and timely it is to study the Middle Ages from a Reformed perspective!

## Psalm 63:2

*Thy steadfast love is better far  
Than life itself, O God my Saviour.  
Thy faithfulness will never waver;  
My lips Thy praises will declare.  
With joyful singing I will bless Thee  
And all my life Thy love proclaim.  
With hands uplifted in Thy Name,  
I will in thankful prayer  
address Thee.*

(Book of Praise)



The third and main part of this treatise is dedicated to the question: In which direction should research and teaching of the church history of the Middle Ages go? The author in the Low Countries begins with Willibrord. Thirteen hundred years ago he preached the gospel of Christ to my forebears in Frisia and his coming was the beginning of Anglo-Saxon influence on church life in the European continent. How did the christianization go and how was in the Middle Ages the relation to the Greek Christian church? How functioned the Latin church, how developed its hierarchical structure, its doctrine, its liturgy, and its piety? In the abundance of material that Dr. van der Pol gives in his notes (also fruits of his own archival research) I discovered a continuity between our form for the solemnization of marriage and a form of the thirteenth century. As a boy I


sometimes read in church the "Ziekentrost" in the back of my church book and I glanced through those consoling statements that one was supposed to pray in the agony of death. Even now one finds in the prayer for the sick expressions which go back to mediaeval *ars moriendi* texts. They are now removed from the Dutch church book, e.g. the expression, "Father, we commit our spirit into Thy hands." I regret that our Dutch sister churches in the latest revision of the liturgical Form for the Lord's Supper left out an expression that via the Middle Ages goes back to the early church. The attentive reader of *Clarion* knows that I refer to the analogy of the many grains and the one bread. In using this analogy for the many members and the one body our brothers in the Palatinate went with Luther, Zwingli, Oecolompadius and Calvin via Peter Lombard in the Middle Ages back

to Augustine, Cyprian and the *Didache* (see our Hymn 48). The same reader also knows that I would not have regretted it when they, illumined by a scholar as Dr. van der Pol, would have followed other Reformed federations in the Netherlands and removed the unauthorized mediaeval intrusion of the word "Christian" in the Germanic version of the Apostles' Creed. Our Canadian Reformed Churches even added the word to their modern English version of this catholic creed, under the mistaken impression that they reclaimed something valuable of the Reformation. I now gave some own examples of the importance of the study of the Middle Ages in their relation to the Reformation.

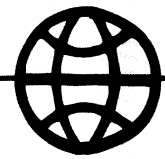
Dr. van der Pol has an interesting passage about Luther's evaluation of mediaeval mysticism (*Theologia Deutsch*). My Kampen colleague is the chairman of the Foundation for Promotion of Reformation Studies in the Netherlands and connected with a group that, in line with the work of e.g. the Dutch scholar Heiko Oberman, studies the relations between the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. There is further the relation between the "nadere reformatie" (the experimental Reformed theologians of the 17th and 18th centuries) and the "modern devotion" in the Middle Ages. Mediaeval devotion was transformed into piety! Dr. van der Pol shows an existential interest in the transition of the Middle Ages to the following periods and especially in the topics related to mysticism.

In his last section he devises a program for the enhancement of mediaeval studies within the Reformed training for the ministry of the Word. He rightly stresses the importance of reading the mediaeval authors themselves and at the same time the sympathetic-critical interpretation on the basis of Scripture and confession. Christ reigned also in a world full of chapels, cloisters and cathedrals. Therefore sympathetic, for the King cannot be without subjects. But also critical, for the church of God must always reject false doctrine. Alas, it was there also in the scholasticism and the mysticism of the Dark Middle Ages.

Re: F. van der Pol, *Duistere Middeleeuwen in het licht*.

Kerkgeschiedenis van de Middeleeuwen, aanbeveling voor wie de Reformatie zijn togedaan (Kamper Bijdrage XXXI), 60 p., Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1991. 





By W.W.J. VanOene

The Reformed Churches of Australia debated a report on women in church office, but decided to take no action now. The RCA synod in August received a report recommending that the offices continue to be restricted to men only. After a lengthy and lively debate, the report was returned to the committee for re-working. (REC NE)

The REC Interim Committee conducted an investigation of the (Syn.) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) during its meeting in October. The previous REC Synod in Harare in 1988 charged the Interim Committee to investigate the RCN to evaluate whether they continue to qualify for membership in the REC.

The conclusion of the Interim Committee came at the end of a lengthy report on the documents of the RCN and its actions since 1988. The committee recommended to the REC's Assembly next year at Athens that "REC Athens 1992 declare that there are insufficient grounds to terminate the membership of the GKN (RCN) in the REC."

The Interim Committee examined positions of the RCN in four major areas.

First it considered the status of the documents on Scripture that the RCN has published in recent years. In particular, the committee faced the question of the status of the report *God with Us*, for the REC at Harare had requested the RCN to withdraw its endorsement of that document as a "confessionally responsible" study.

Second, the Interim Committee examined the RCN's current positions with respect to its homosexual members. The REC had requested the RCN to rescind the acceptance of homosexual practice. The RCN decided not to rescind the advice it gives its churches. It encourages its churches to accept those homosexual members who are living in loving and faithful relationships. They declare that they want their church to have "room for homophilical brothers and sisters."



*The congregation of the Reformed Church of Papua New Guinea at Port Moresby (the photo was taken at The Waigani Centre, 1989)*

Third, the Interim Committee discussed and analyzed the RCN's response to the REC Hermeneutics and Ethics report.

Fourth, the Interim Committee discussed the RCN's own view of its future within the REC.

The Interim Committee said there was not "sufficient ground to charge that the [RCN] had violated" the Basis and Purpose. (REC NE)

The Church of Norway dismissed anti-abortion campaigner Ludvig Nessa from his post as assistant-pastor. Nessa has engaged in actions since 1984 protesting the country's abortion law of 1978. Norway allows free abortions up to 12 weeks after conception.

Nessa's bishop, Even Fougner, rep-

rimanded Nessa. Nessa was given a court sentence for his actions, and he lost his last appeal on August 30. Fougner then recommended his dismissal to the state ministry for church affairs. The formal charges were that Nessa has set up a separate congregation within his parish. (REC NE)

The synod of the Presbyterian Church of Korea voted not to allow women to be ordained for the ministry. The 1.4 million member church is Korea's largest denomination. A group of women gathered during the meeting for prayer and fasting in an effort to convince the male delegates to approve ordination of women. The matter will return to the agenda again in three years. (EPS) (REC NE)

# NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



This time the news medley will cover no more than a few pages. At first I considered not writing one at all because there is not all that much news to be passed on; but then the result would have been that we do not meet in this corner for a considerable time. Too much time has elapsed since the previous one appeared anyway, and so here I am again.

Various churches might be wondering what happened to the "Minister at Large" project of the Grand Rapids church. Apparently there is still some activity going on, for "Ministry at Large" issues were brought up. Expenses were reported to the Consistory and it is apparent that the MAL Committee needs to reactivate the contributions from our sister churches to further this endeavour." This is all the information I have, but our consistories undoubtedly will receive more particulars in the near future.

In a previous medley we mentioned the contact with the Reformed Church of Quebec. The Burlington West bulletin tells us that they received "A letter from the Church at Smithville concerning the upcoming Regional Synod... Proposals: L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec. Their church in Quebec had approached our church to make contact and appeal for funds. A committee at this time presents a proposal. The proposal consists of a letter to the E.R.Q. giving some information about our church and discussing some matters of doctrinal standards. The letter directs them to the nearest Canadian Reformed Church in Ottawa. A letter is also to be sent to Ottawa asking them to assist and guide the E.R.Q. and, if formal dialogue is sought in the future, to inform the Canadian Reformed Churches. This proposal is accepted."

Although not all points in the above information are clear to me, I think that the way pointed out in this proposal is the correct one.

One thing I am in the dark about is the use of the word "church." What I mean is : does it refer to the federation or to a local church, i.e. Smithville or Burlington West ? Let us take care that we are not going to use the singular "church" to denote the whole federation.

In the meantime I am wondering what happened to that "General Information Sheet" for the three Burlingtons.

I was shocked to read in the Burlington East consistory report : "A letter from the Dutch Reformed Churches (Art.31) with the request to update our statistics." One would almost surmise that this line was written by a new convert who was still caught in the slanderous misinterpretation of the events of some forty-six years ago. How did this nonsense get into a consistory report ? Besides, if this is the same request about which I read in other bulletins, it is a request from the publisher of the Yearbook for our Dutch sister churches and not a request from these churches themselves at all. Please !

A more gratifying piece of information gleaned from Burlington East's bulletin is that "We now have VIDEO CASSETTES available. To quote one of the members who viewed a service: 'It felt like I was in church.' "

In one church bulletin from another congregation we are told: "Censura Morem is held; the brothers agree unanimously that there are no objections to the celebration of the Lord's Supper." How lovely and sweet ! May I kindly suggest to the brothers (and also to those in various other congregations) to read up on the meaning of Art. 73 of our Church Or-

der, which mentions the Christian Censure (and not "Censura Morum," much less the incorrect "Censura Morem") ?

I would rather side with Armadale, from where it was reported : "Brotherly Censure according to Art. 78 C.O. takes place. A matter relating to the cooperation between the officebearers is raised and discussed. It is dealt with in a brotherly manner."

A very moving matter was reported from Elora : "This week we could see the building moved from the farm of the Feenstra family and onto the foundation." The building referred to is the church building that the Elora church purchased and had moved piecemeal from its former to its present location. Various changes were made inside and I am not ashamed to confess that I am eager to see the result. This, however, will not happen for a while.

One item that we mentioned occasionally in the past is a "Decision Book," a phenomenon to which various consistories decided and that in most cases went the way of "General Information Sheets." Now there is still hope, when we read what Abbotsford's consistory discussed. "During question period it is asked whether the idea of having a 'Book of Decisions' has ever been worked out. The answer is in the negative. The chairman suggests that this would be a nice job for a retired minister." From Abbotsford the victory starts !

Let us briefly visit the Australian continent. We did already mention something from Armadale and now turn our attention to Byford or, rather, to Rockingham.

Byford reported that regarding the "Rockingham Development: Correspondence received from the group requests consistory to initiate the goal to institute a church mid 1992. Consistory discusses the situation at length and at this point decides – because we need to call for nominations – to firstly request nominations from the Rockingham people for a possible vacancy for the position of elder and, secondly, for Rockingham and Byford to be two separate wards. Further discussion at the next meeting."

When we were in Western Australia some six years ago, we were appalled at the amount of litter by the roadsides. Bottles and soft drink cans could not be counted for their multitude, so to speak. It gladdened our hearts to read that apparently something is being done about it, and the benefits may be received by the schools, if I understand it well. Listen.

The Kelmscott John Calvin School reported under the heading "Aluminum Can Collection Competition" :

"Presently the tally stands at

1,739 K.G. of cans recycled which is equivalent to

384 cans (? VO) which is equivalent to

45 wool-bales with squashed cans, which is equivalent to

1,058.5 cans per student.

Our school target was initially 800 kg. When we reached the target in July, we re-set the target by doubling the previous one. And as you can observe from the above, also that new target has been met as we are now nearing the two tonnes."

Congratulations.

And : Goodbye for this time.

Hope to see you in the new year.

Yours truly  
VO







father and left him with a handicap. Kevin first had his left foot amputated above the ankle and a few days later also his left arm above the elbow. He celebrated his 14th birthday while in the hospital. He has had his last operation on Nov. 7th and will soon go on to be fitted with artificial limbs."

Kevin and his family have a difficult road to go. Let us all help to make them experience the communion of saints in which we share difficulties and happiness because we are one in the Lord.

**January is a busy month for birthdays:**

**Liz Koning**

Dicken's Field Extended Care Centre  
Room 210, 14225-94th Street  
Edmonton, AB T8E 6C6

On the 2nd Liz will be 31.

**Christien Breukelman**

Box 666  
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

On the 7th Christien will be 20.

**Robert Wierenga**

Box 115  
Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

On the 10th it will be Robert's 11th birthday.

**Henry Driegen**

72 Ross Road, RR 1  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1M3

On the 17th Henry is going to be 36.

**Grace Homan**

**Janine Smid**

Both ladies live at

"Anchor" Home  
361 - 30th Road, RR 2  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

On the 19th Grace will be 36, and Janine 22 years old.

**Hank Orsel**

705 Surrey Lane  
Apt. 1201

Burlington, ON L7T 3Z4

On the 27th Hank hopes to celebrate his 61st birthday.

Congratulations to all of you. I hope you will have a happy day.

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Highway 20, RR 1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

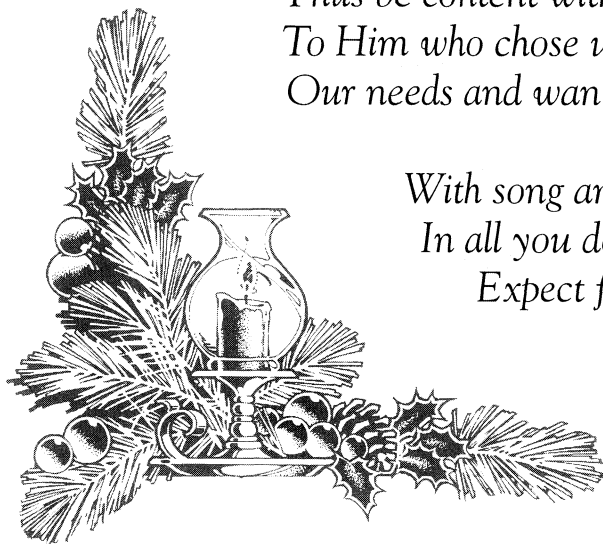


**Hymn 48:3,4**

*Be still! What God in His good pleasure  
To you in wisdom may impart  
Is given you in perfect measure;  
Thus be content within your heart.  
To Him who chose us for His own  
Our needs and wants are surely known.*

*With song and prayer, in faith progressing,  
In all you do God's will obey.  
Expect from Him alone your blessing:  
He will renew it every day,  
For God will never those disown  
Who put their trust in Him alone.*

(Book of Praise)



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# *The Eighth Conference of Mission Workers in Latin America held at Maragogi, Brazil*

*By J. DeJong*

## **Participants**

On Wednesday, October 16, 1991 the Eighth Conference of Reformed Mission Workers in Latin America opened in the Conference room of the Maragogi Praia Hotel just outside of São José. Several newcomers were present at this conference, making it one of the most international of the mission conferences held in Brazil. It was also the input of new members that contributed to the success of the Conference. The chairman, Rev. P.K. Meijer, welcomed in particular Rev. César Rodriguez, representing several churches of Venezuela that have recently chosen to follow a Reformed path; Rev. Karl A. Hubenthal of the OPC mission in Surinam (Dutch section); Rev. Leo Smelt, a missionary working for the Free Church of Scotland mission in Lima, Peru; and as a distant guest, Rev. A.J. de Visser of South Africa, a missionary working at Soshanguve, a mission post north of Pretoria. Besides these newcomers, the workers from Curaçao, Curitiba and northeast Brazil were also present. Mission workers present from Curaçao were Rev. W.J. Keesenberg, Rev. J. Klapwijk, and Miss S.S. Martina, a social worker sent out by the Dutch organization "De Verre Naasten." Attending from Curatiba was Rev. Th. Havinga, missionary of the church at Assen-Zuid. He works together with Rev. J. Janssen, who was only able to attend the mini-conference following this conference. From northeast Brazil both missionaries and mission aid workers were present: Rev. R.F. Boersema, Rev. J. Kroeze, and Rev. P.K. Meijer as missionaries, and Gerrit Glas with Jake Kuik, the mission aid workers. Also present were representatives from the churches of Surrey

(Rev. G.H. Visscher and H. Schouten) and Hamilton (Rev. Cl. Stam, H. Nienhuis and W. VanderWoude, and Drs. C. Haak) as well as myself representing the theological colleges of Holland and Canada respectively.

## **Major papers**

A number of papers were presented at the Conference which reflected the problems that arise in the missionary situation. Rev. Theo Havinga of Curitiba presented a paper on the topic "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit." Interest for this topic grew out of the strong impact that Pentecostalism has in Brazil, and it was geared towards the formulation of an effective Reformed re-

sponse against this growing religious movement. The lively discussion which followed showed that the influence of Pentecostalism is present not only in Brazil, but in most mission areas of Latin America.

Rev. Ralph Boersema of Recife presented a paper on the topic "Communication." This paper tackled the problem how one is to get the gospel across in a cultural setting entirely different from our own. The gospel must be expressed in terms which the receptor can understand. Hence it must relate to his culture in the way it is presented. The issue then becomes: how far may one go in adapting the gospel message to



*Site of the Conference – the Maragogi Praia Hotel, just outside of São José*



Participants in the conference – Standing from l to r: H. Nienhuis, P.K. Meijer, Cl. Stam, Th. Havinga, A.J. de Visser, J. Kroeze, J. Klapwijk, J. Kuik, L. Smelt, R.F. Boersema, S.S. Martina, W.J. Keesenberg, C. Rodigrez; kneeling l to r: C. Haak, G. Glas, H. Schouten, K. Hubenthal, J. De Jong, W. VanderWoude.

make it understandable for the hearers. Although all participants insisted that the content of the gospel must be left untouched, there was a good deal of discussion and debate on the matter of precisely defining what is adaptable, and what is not adaptable.

Another morning session was taken up by a presentation of Drs. C. Haak

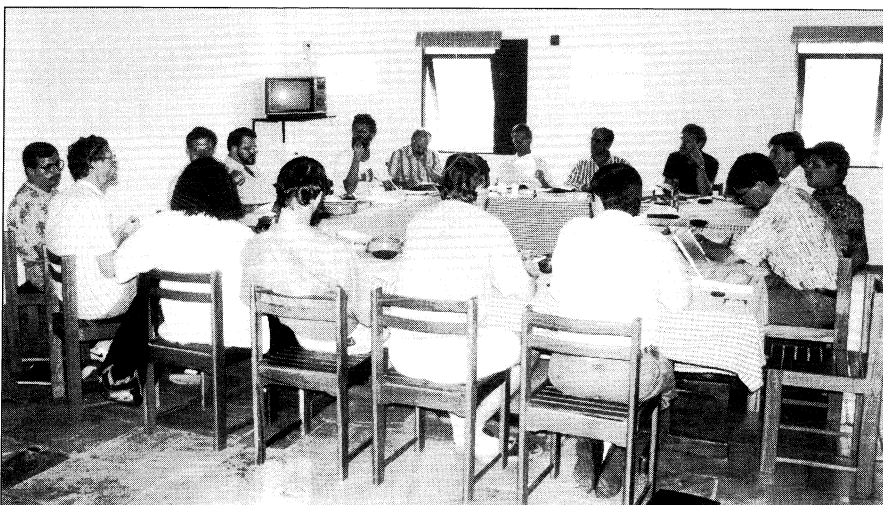
on the subject: "The Task, Training and Position of Local Evangelists and Ministers." Haak gave an extensive account of the method of training used at the Theological School in Boma, Irian Jaya, where he had taught for several years. This topic brought out many questions, since the mission fields in Brazil and Venezuela are struggling

with similar problems in the training of local evangelists.

The final major paper was presented by Rev. John Kroeze, and dealt with the topic "Rice Christians." "Rice Christians" are defined as those who attach themselves to the church or the mission work because of the material benefits that can be gained by doing this. Sometimes those who are in need attend church for a considerable period of time and appear to show a genuine interest in the gospel, only to fall away again when their needs have been provided for. Once need strikes, they return again. Since no one can look in the hearts of these people, it is not always possible to attribute their behaviour to purely material motivations. In the discussion, it was stressed that the mission must do all it can to integrate profession of faith with conduct. Yet, not all cases of need can be rejected out of hand. Therefore, this problem will always present itself to some degree on the mission field.

#### Field reports

Besides the major papers, the afternoon sessions were taken up by more

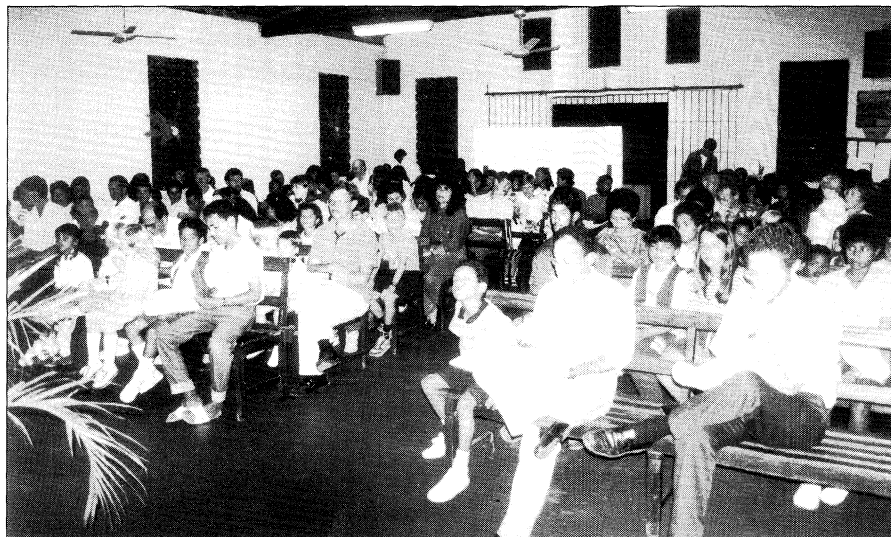


The Conference in session

informal presentations, as well as descriptions of the work on the different mission fields. This also allowed for an ample exchange of problems and experiences, which help mission workers in tackling the problems on their own fields. Some of these short topics were: how do we reach the men? How do we cultivate literacy? We were also able to hear about the Mission Aid in the field of northeast Brazil. The Mission Aid workers are Gerrit and Aafke Glas, and Jake and Darlene Kuik, both sent out by Mission Aid in Cloverdale.

### Activities

There was also opportunity for some recreation in the beautiful surroundings of the hotel in Maragogi. The sun rises early, so there is plenty of time for a walk on the beach, or a swim in the clear waters of the Atlantic Ocean. No meetings were scheduled on Saturday, and this allowed for a boat trip to the corral reef off Maragogi in the morning, and an informative tour of a sugar cane factory in the afternoon. On Saturday evening, a welcome evening was held in the church at São José for all the visitors. On Sunday, services were held in Recife, São José and Maragogi. It is very encouraging to hear many familiar psalms and hymns being sung in Por-



*The congregations of São José, Maragogi and Camaragibe welcome the visitors*

tuguese, and being sung by people of an entirely different race and background than we have.

### Mission in Recife

The second last day of the conference was devoted to a tour of Recife, and also allowed for a description of the many opportunities in this large city. We also toured a Teen Challenge rehabilitation center for drug addicts and

their children. The center also maintains a farm on the outskirts of Recife where young men are trained to assume productive and responsible roles in society. Several brothers also had the opportunity to visit the Presbyterian Seminary in Brazil.

### Evaluation

The Conference closed on Thursday, October 25 with an extensive evaluation session, which also dealt with the provisions for the next Conference. It was generally felt that this was one of the more successful conferences. All participants were very thankful for the excellent hospitality shown to them by the missionaries, mission aid workers and their families. The accommodation and food were excellent too, and also contributed to the smooth functioning of the conference.

A first-hand exposure to the mission fields does imprint on one's mind the importance of the work of preaching the gospel to all peoples. Especially when one observes the fruits of the work, one is all the more convinced of the necessity for us all to pray for and promote this work as much as we can. It is the will of our Lord that the message of His death and resurrection be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. We, too, should be found faithful and willing in this task, for His glory.

Allow me also from this place to express my thanks to the missionaries and mission aid workers for hosting this Conference, and for making our stay enjoyable! May the Lord bless all their labours!



*Mission workers of Brazil – From l to r: Rev. P.K. Meijer, G. Glas, Rev. Th. Havinga, Rev. J. Kroeze, J. Kuik, Rev. R.F. Boersema*



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# News from Support MERF Committee

## Background information

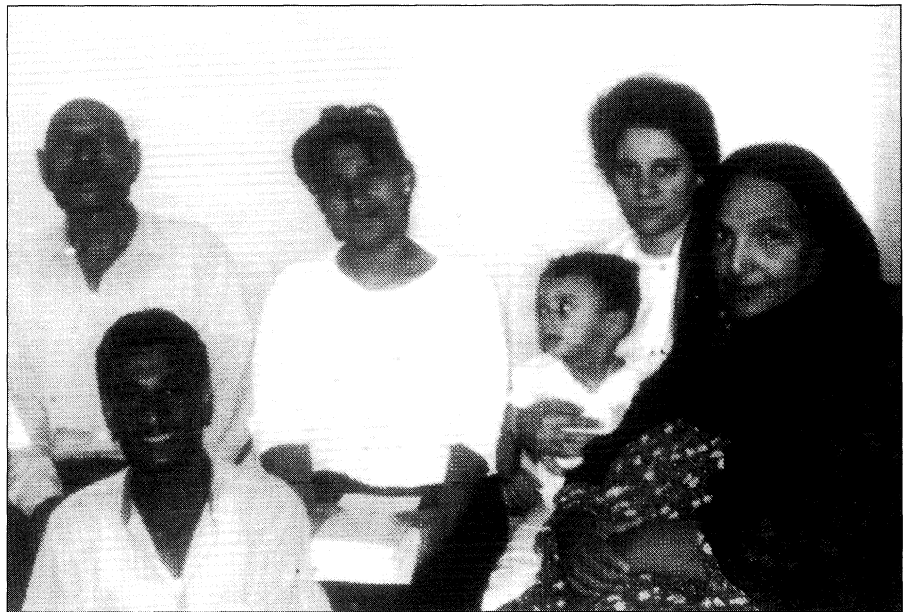
The Middle East Reformed Fellowship is a religious, non-profit and non-political charitable organization which in a hostile Muslim world is quietly and effectively working for the propagation of the Reformed faith as expressed in the early ecumenical creeds and the confessions of the Calvinistic Reformation.

Reformed literature has been translated and published in Egypt. In Lebanon MERF was organized to relieve suffering in that war-torn country. Since traditional mission work was increasingly becoming impossible in that part of the world, MERF was reorganized as a regional organization in 1983 and officially registered in Cyprus in 1984.

It is from this strategically located island that MERF now does its work of spreading the Good News and strengthening the Reformed witness in the Middle East. They have two weekly radio programs and, if more support is forthcoming, they soon hope to have a daily broadcast.

MERF is also involved in the training of evangelists at the Reformed training centre in Larnaca, Cyprus. Men who come from other countries are trained in the Reformed faith and return to their home country after a course of study which equips them to spread the Word of the Lord. Particularly in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Sudan and Jordan this approach is being blessed.

Our sister church at Groningen West in the Netherlands wrote that they decided to support this work because of its "sound and solidly Reformed perspective and aims." During the last few years a number of Dutch ministers such as Rev. L. Joose, Dr. R. Bremmer and Dr. K. Deddens have given courses at the Study Center.



*Individuals and families who respond to the Gospel broadcasts are visited by MERF-trained local workers*

In Holland support from our sister churches is growing through their "Support MERF Committee" of the church at Groningen. But they can only do so much. More could be done if the funds were available. Therefore their request that the churches on this continent also give their support. They approached the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington West who in turn sent a letter to all Canadian and American Reformed Churches asking for support for MERF.

It was decided to concentrate our support on mainly two areas: biblical and Reformed training of evangelists and the work of radio broadcasting. We are doing this in close cooperation with the church at Groningen West in the Netherlands.

## Support received

During the past year we have been gratified to see the response which has been forthcoming. In the past year just over \$19,000 has been received from churches and individuals. In the spring of 1991 we sent \$8,000 to MERF in Larnaca, Cyprus to be used specifically towards the cost of radio broadcasting.

During the past year we have received a number of newsletters from MERF in Cyprus and we would like to share some of that information with you.

## Radio broadcasts

Rev. V. Atallah continues to be very busy with the Arabic radio broadcasts. It is estimated that 600,000 people all over the Middle East are reached by

These radio broadcasts via Trans World Radio from Monte Carlo. Through the letters received from interested listeners in many different Middle Eastern countries MERF gains many new contacts with Muslims whose hearts are opened to the truth of the Gospel. Individuals and families who respond are then visited by MERF-trained local workers.

Even during the Gulf War letters continued to be received from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Abou Dhabi and even from Kuwaiti refugees in Egypt. The broadcasts were also a source of great comfort to believers in Iraq and Kuwait during this difficult time. To quote from the August/September MERF newsletter: "Believers from Iraq and Kuwait found themselves scattered and lonely in the difficult days during and after the Gulf crisis. Recent letters express great appreciation for the loving spiritual nurture of the Arabic radio broadcasts in hard times. Even in Baghdad and Kuwait City, many believers were too frightened to move out of their hiding places and seek fellowship with others until the end of the war. Instead, they sat out the days of distress and relentless bombing treasuring God's comforting Word as they listened eagerly to the broadcasts."

### Evangelical study center

During the past year many two week sessions of intensive biblical training for groups of Arab church leaders have once again been held at the Study Center in Cyprus. Arab pastors, elders, Sunday school teachers and other church leaders continue to come in groups of fourteen to receive two weeks of in depth Bible training to take back to share with their home churches. Among those teaching have been Dr. K. Deddens and Rev. L. Joose from the Netherlands. Regional training programs have also been held in various Middle Eastern countries. Biblical training is the backbone of MERF's entire work and strategy.

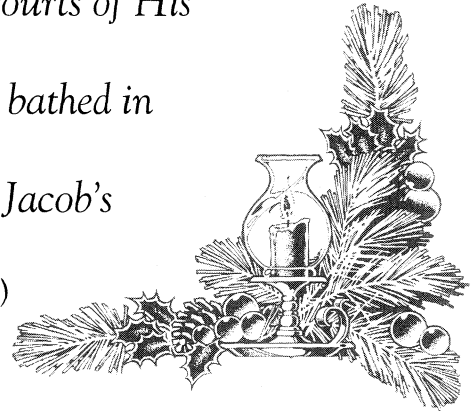
### Meeting with Dr. K. Deddens

We were very pleased to be able to meet with Dr. Deddens in June to hear a first hand account of the work being done by MERF. From December 10 to 19, 1990 Dr. Deddens gave lectures at the Study Center. He gave a total of fifteen lessons with as theme: our prophetic task towards the world. Besides telling us about his own participation in the work of biblical training, Dr. Deddens was also able to give us more detailed

## Psalm 87:1

*Our gracious God has laid His firm foundations  
On Zion's mount, the courts of His  
delight;  
Her gates of splendour, bathed in  
heavenly light,  
He loves far more than Jacob's  
habitations.*

(Book of Praise)



information about the work being done by MERF and their relationship with our Dutch sister churches.

Dr. Deddens stressed the sincere desire of Rev. Atallah to be Reformed, to bring the Gospel message in the redemptive-historical line.

### Church in Iraq

As we are all very much aware, there has been terrible suffering in Iraq during and still today after the Gulf War. The temptation has been great, also for many Christians, to escape. MERF authorized a committee of two to visit with the churches in Iraq. They were encouraged to learn that the authorities have continued to allow the church to operate freely and even have provided the churches with protection and help when needed. Rev. Barhoum, pastor of the church in Basra and member of MERF's Board of Directors, is optimistic about the future growth of the Reformed churches there. Five congregations – in Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk, Dahouk and Baghdad – continue to be active in the country.

### Persecution

We are privileged to live in a country where we may still have religious freedom. In most Muslim nations Muslims who have been converted or even are favourably inclined to the Christian faith face much physical and spiritual persecution. People are simply not allowed to make public professions of faith in Christ.

### Need for continued support and prayers

The political and military situation of the past year has caused many to be more open to consider the Christian message. Letters coming as a result of the radio broadcasts are showing a growing openness to and interest in the Gospel. Many Arabs are listening to the Gospel broadcasts and are seeking the true peace which only God can offer in Christ. We can see once again how the Lord directs and guides that which is evil towards carrying out His good purposes. We may be thankful for the opportunity to support MERF which wants to bring a truly Reformed witness to a very troubled part of the world.

### Individual donations

If you would like to make a personal donation please make out your cheque payable to "Support MERF Committee" and send it to

Support MERF Committee  
1225 Highway 5, RR 1  
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

Unfortunately, we are not able to give a tax receipt at this time because we are not a registered charity.

For the Support-MERF Committee  
of the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed  
Church at Burlington West

Rev. J. Mulder, chairman  
Mrs. J. VanDam, secretary



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# The Retirement of Rev. J. Mulder

By M. Jagt

After 36 years of active, fruitful service to our Lord and His Church, Rev. Mulder has officially retired as pastor of the Canadian Reformed Churches at the age of 62. Arriving in Canada with his wife already in 1958, after 3 years of ministry in Gees, the Netherlands, he was one of the pioneering ministers who were a blessing to the young churches. He served in the West for eighteen years: first, for close to seven and a half years in Carman, almost three years in Coaldale and finally eight years in Cloverdale. In 1977 he, his wife and their two children, Carl and Paul, came to the east where he spent a busy seven years in Toronto and finally seven more in Burlington West. Those thirty-five years included over 3500 sermons!

On August 25, 1991 Rev. Mulder delivered his farewell sermon. The text was Jude 1:20-21:

"But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

After the address "Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ," Rev. Mulder immediately mentioned that this address, although it may sound old-fashioned, is quite beautiful. We are loved by Christ, as a whole and also individually, and He constantly proclaims that love. God's faithfulness endures forever, also regardless of a minister's coming or leaving. Rev. Mulder exhorted us to keep ourselves in the love of God. Primarily, we are to do this by strengthening ourselves on our *most holy faith*. This is not a faith cluttered with heresies and with false freedom as some of



the addressees of Jude possessed, but rather based on Christ, also in His decrees and absolutes. This exhortation involves the church as a whole, working together as one body, in the strength of our Lord.

Secondly, we are kept in God's love through *prayer*. The battle of faith is not won through abstract theories, but by active voices that speak up. We must be prepared to fight believing that the almighty God also involves us in the victory! Here is the need of much prayer, too – prayers in the Holy Spirit – and the promise is that they will have great effects.

Finally, a Christian life is characterized by Christian *waiting*. Jude tells us to wait. He does not say: for the coming of the Lord, but for the *mercy* of the Lord. This waiting should by no means be scary, but rather trusting. With our focus on God's promises for the future, our present day life should be enriched



Around the table (l to r) – Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mulder, Mrs. J. Mulder, Rev. J. Mulder, Mr. Carl Mulder

with the perspective of a certain triumph over evil and death. Our life then can always be joyful.

After the service, representatives of Classis Ontario North and of our sister church of Burlington South took the opportunity to congratulate Rev. Mulder and his wife on entering this new phase in their service to the Lord.

On Friday, Sept. 27 a thank-you evening further illustrated the appreciation and gratitude of the congregations towards Rev. and Mrs. Mulder. The evening was led by the chairman of the consistory, br. L. Jagt. He addressed Rev. and Mrs. Mulder with words of appreciation and gratitude to the Lord for all what He gave in their service to the churches, in particular to the church of Burlington West, during the past thirty-six years. Various choral groups, included the choir of Covenant Christian School, the Young Peoples' choir of Burlington West, and a ladies quintet, spiced the evening with some pleasant musical selections. Carl Mulder gave us some insight as to what it means to be a minister's son. Rev. Mulder was often very busy. At one time he was the only minister in all of B.C. and taught catechism three nights of the week. The Mulder family has surprising proportions considering the amount of people who know Rev. and Mrs. Mulder as "Oom Hans and Tante Lies."



Children of the Covenant Christian School singing

Prof. J. Geertsema, br. John Van Poppe, and Prof. L. Selles, spoke as friends. Prof. Selles described his first assessment of Rev. Mulder at a synod as "a very organized young man." He emphasized

how much of a blessing Rev. Mulder has been during his 36 years of service.

The Grades 1 and 2 of Covenant Christian School prepared an extensive list of what kept Rev. and Mrs. Mulder busy. According to these young minds, Rev. Mulder no longer has to empty the collection bags after each service. Mrs. Mulder, fortunately, can rest from the time consuming job of dusting the church pews and pulpit. They also included a "things to do" list which instructed Rev. Mulder to read the Bible even more. Mrs. Mulder was advised by the young sages to, among other things, take care of Rev. Mulder, a tough job.

Rev. and Mrs. Mulder were also presented with the concrete evidence of the appreciation of the congregation.

Rev. Mulder has become the minister *emeritus* of the church at Burlington West. In his word of thanks he said, among other things, that he still hopes to be beneficial to the churches in his retirement, of course, the Lord willing. We are thankful that he and his wife have been with us so long to help in the church community and we wish them the Lord's blessing in their retirement, and that they may find the best way to serve Him and His Church. **6**



Young people of Burlington West

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# Christian Philosophy

By S. Foster

When Professor Gootjes reviewed and criticized Dr. Plantinga's book *Christian Philosophy Within Biblical Bounds*<sup>1</sup> he made the important point that although it certainly is important to use the Bible when a Christian does philosophy, the philosopher should use the Bible in the protecting context of the creeds and confessions. Professor Gootjes makes this point in light of the assertion made by Dr. Plantinga that the philosopher does not need the permission of the creeds and confessions or theology to do philosophy (p. 59). Professor Gootjes agrees that philosophy does not *need* the permission of these, but in order to ensure a more accurate use of the Bible in philosophy, the creeds and confessions should be included in setting the context. Otherwise the interpretation of the Bible can be twisted and distorted to fit any variety of philosophies. It is this point of utilizing the confessions and creeds in philosophy which I would like to address.

## Confessions and creeds

The confessions and creeds outline the doctrine which we confess to be the true teaching of the Scriptures. As such, they represent the truth and since a philosopher is attempting to discover the truth in whatever is being investigated the confessions and creeds have a place.

However, it is quite obvious that the creeds and confessions are not discovered by philosophy, they are, as all biblical doctrine, summaries of the Scriptures made by theologians. When Professor Gootjes points out that Dr. Plantinga has made an error in judgment in saying that "the most important biblical teaching for Christian philosophy is the doctrine of creation" (p. 58), he does so because one should not state that one biblical doctrine is

more important than another. All the doctrines of the Bible are important for the philosopher. The doctrine of sin and redemption as well as the doctrine of God should be considered as important as the doctrine of creation. This is true, and is a very important point. There are some important consequences of this view which need to be discussed in order to bring out their importance for Christian philosophy.

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**"...the foundation of a Christian philosophy is to be found in the true teaching of Scripture."**

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## Important distinctions

First, we must make clear *what* specifically the place in philosophy is for the confessions and creeds. Second, we must show the relationship between philosophy and theology. Third, we must indicate why the relationship is not merely an academic point of difference, but one central to the very foundation of the Reformed church.

## a. The place of the confession

When it is stated that all the doctrines of the Bible are important for philosophers and not any one being more important, and that these are to be asserted in the protecting context of the creeds and the confessions, what do we mean by this? This means that philosophical reasoning is not autonomous and independent from certain presuppositions. All philosophy, like all academic scholarship, presupposes certain things as true. To presuppose something as true in this context means to have faith and a fundamental trust in it. These presuppositions will effect the truth of the whole system of thought which follows from them. For example, for a secular philosopher to presuppose and have a fundamental trust in the autonomy of logical reasoning, means simply that logical principles are to be the foundation of one's philosophy. A Christian philosopher will obviously need to utilize logic, but the foundation of a Christian philosophy is to be found in the true teaching of Scripture. For a Christian the concept of faith and fundamental trust also carries a different origin from that of the secular philosopher. Fundamental trust in the Scriptures is based on the revelation of God in the Bible, whereas when a secular philosopher chooses to place fundamental trust or faith in logic, or mathematics, or in rationalism or empiricism, these are not revelation, but instead are personal choices based on a human bias of where to find the truth. The difference is apparent. The Christian philosopher is founding faith and trust in God's revelation, the secular philosopher on human choice and preference. This might seem obvious, but in the history of Christian



philosophy it certainly was not obvious we shall see.

### **The relationship between philosophy and theology**

This question is very important. Professor Gootjes rightly rejected as too general the definition of philosophy by Dr. Plantinga gives as a "general reflection on knowing and being in the light of God's revelation and of the insights assembled throughout the ages" (p. 60). This is more akin to meditation than philosophy. Philosophy is very difficult to define precisely, but the statement about philosophy Dr. Plantinga gives on pages 21-22 of his book is more close to what philosophy does. There he says that philosophy is not undertaken in isolation but is involved in all sectors of human culture, in sciences, literature, politics, history, the arts, medicine, technology and business. However, most philosophers specialize in one major field, the philosophy of science for example. Here the philosopher must know the science thoroughly, but also be able to step out from within that science and look critically at the methods utilized in the scientific endeavour. This description would fit all the sectors of

involvement the philosopher is in. All these sectors of involvement are worldly and one of the ways we know God is through His revelation in the world. But this is not the principle way we know God since our reason (light of nature) is obscured through the fall into sin.

Theology is the study of our knowledge of God. Our knowledge of God comes principally from the Scriptures. Within the study of theology is "dogmatics," which is "that part of the science of theology which deals with the doctrine of Holy Scripture as confessed by the church"<sup>2</sup>. One can see an obvious difference in the subject matter between philosophy and theology. One deals with a critical look at worldly investigations, primarily within the creation, the other investigates what we know of God through His Word; a summary of which is found in our confessions. One can see, however, that the subject area of theology with its inclusion of "dogmatics" is concerned with the fundamental truths of Scripture found in the context of our confessions and creeds. For the Christian philosopher this context sets the conditions for doing honest philosophy. Without this

context, Christians have good reason to mistrust and shy away from philosophy. For philosophy, approached and studied from outside of the protecting context we are referring to is rooted in pagan and secular culture. Its roots stem, not from the authority of God's revelation, but from human reason. This is not meant to make philosophy a "handmaiden" to theology, where philosophy is thought to be subservient to the science of theology. Philosophy is much too complex a discipline to adhere to such a simplistic subservience. Those who adhere to this view would find that philosophy would soon permeate and take control of their theology. It is true though that theology has greatly been influenced by philosophy. A great many theologies have been developed which find their inspiration from philosophical schools. A discipline called "philosophical theology" exists which shows the relationship of philosophy to theology. But it is precisely this danger of philosophy taking control of theology which substantiates the need to use the protecting context of the confessions and creeds. Because of the mutual interdependence of philosophy and theology one needs to be protected. To do Reformed philosophy is to do so while maintaining the purity of doctrine expressed in Reformed theology. If philosophy is not Christian, it will still enter theology, but with its pagan and secular influences.

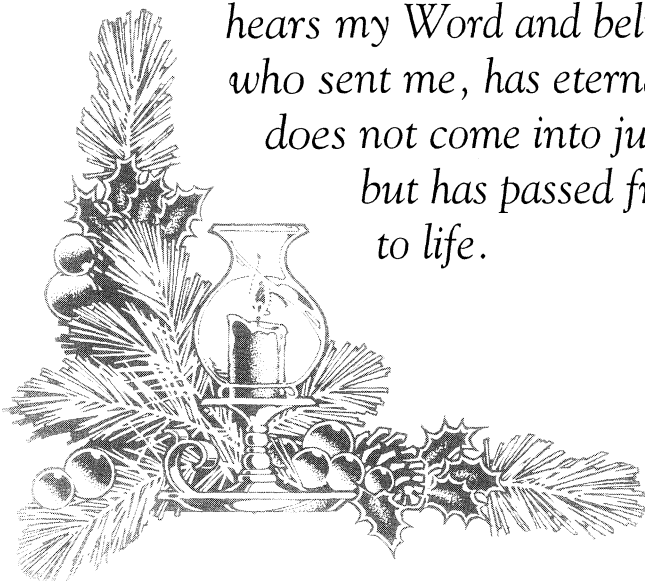
Accordingly, we must assert the dictum *Credo, ut intelligam* (I believe in order to understand) as being true. One cannot truly understand the Creation without seeing it through faith in the teaching of Scripture. The doctrines of Scripture ensure more consistent application when given in the context of the confessions of the church. However, Christian philosophers have often failed to see this. Roman Catholic philosophers do not accept this as a principle. Even Reformed philosophers, such as the philosophy of H. Dooyeweerd, mentioned by professor Gootjes, and others in the Christian Reformed tradition, want philosophy to be self-sufficient and separate from both theology and the church confessions.

### **c. A principle central to the Reformation**

Third, the point we are making about the need to do philosophy in light of our confessions of what Scripture teaches, demonstrates a principle central to the Reformation. In his book Dr.

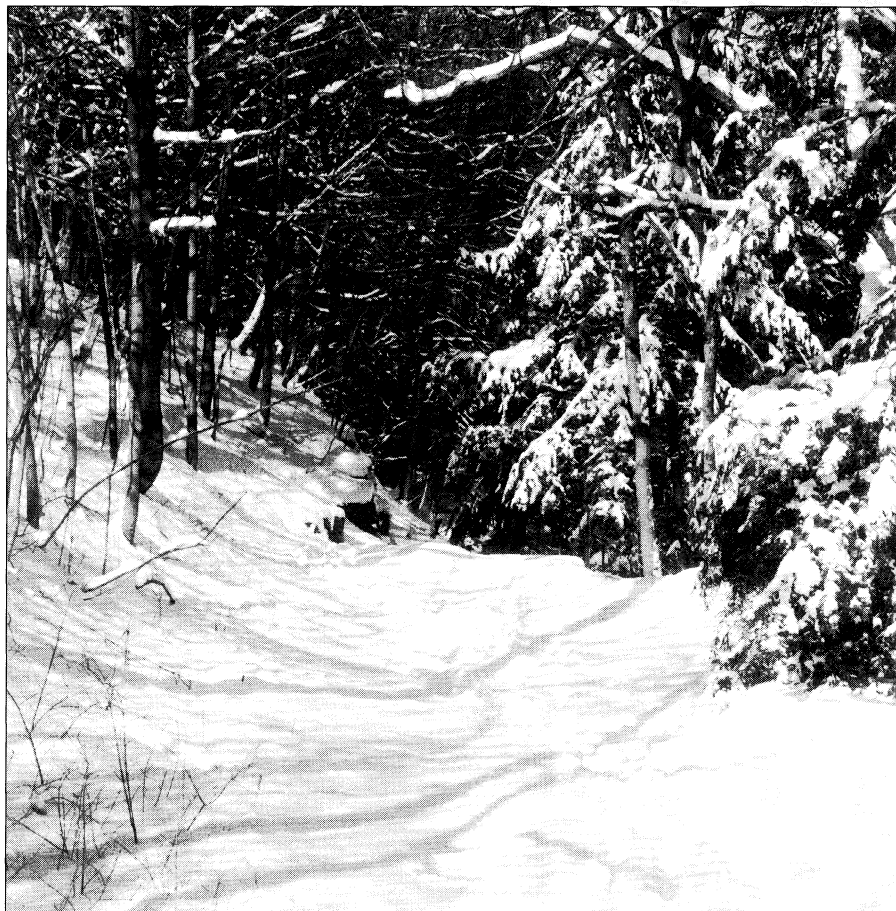
### **John 5:24**

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my Word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*



Plantinga says that the two Christian groups which have most readily gotten involved in philosophy are Roman Catholicism and Calvinism (p. 119). The Reformers have always rejected the autonomy of reason. Luther upheld faith over reason in his stand against Erasmus. Calvin was very critical of the Roman Catholic view of faith as intellectual assent. Although faith is a certain knowledge, it cannot be arrived at intellectually, as the Roman Catholics allow. Roman Catholic philosophers have always held to the autonomy of reason from revelation. The acceptance of a natural theology allowing the whole majesty of God and His creation to be fully open to investigation by reason meant that Roman Catholic philosophers could do philosophy on the same grounds as the secular philosopher; from a philosophical point of view they could be completely rational. This belief of the Roman Catholic philosophers, that people can bring themselves not only to truths found in creation, but also to knowledge of God, found its way into Arminian theology, which, as we know, is rejected in our confessions as unscriptural. It is a difference in the idea of authority which divides the Calvinist from the Roman Catholic and Arminian. The difference has been more or less exaggerated over the years, but in principle it is that for the Roman Catholic and Arminian philosopher great authority is placed in an autonomous reason, whereas the Reformed philosopher places authority in God's Word known through the gift of faith. Reason or faith? Man or God? This is the major difference. For, as we said, the fundamental trust you begin with will affect the whole system of truth.

The need to do philosophy in the context of the confessions as was pointed out by professor Gootjes, therefore, is not to be lightly taken. Secular philosophers often link "Christian" philosophers up as all the same: all using Scripture in their philosophy in some manner. However, the difference in the way a Reformed philosopher operates as compared to a Roman Catholic or Arminian is not just a denominational difference, it is a radical difference in trust, in foundations, in faith and in authority. Our knowledge of God comes from His revelation to us; we do not find Him. The authority we accept is founded upon faith in His revelation, not upon human reason. Finally, because the Roman Catholic



Church and Arminianism allow for autonomy of reason beyond the discovery of truth in Creation, but also when seeking God they have developed an elaborate metaphysics. This means that God's existence and nature can be demonstrated to be true through arguments of reason. There are many famous arguments of this kind which were used by the Roman Catholic church to justify belief in God. A "Christian metaphysics" which seeks to prove God and describe His nature from rational point of view is a replacement for a biblical "Christian faith."

### Conclusion

All faith in Scripture is antecedent to philosophical teaching. The creeds and confessions are summaries of the Scripture, so these too are antecedent to philosophy. Reformed theology should be a faithful and accurate exegesis of Scripture and the confessions and creeds. When theology moves beyond what is stated clearly in the Scriptures and summarized in the creeds and confessions, which it often does, it will merge with a philosophical school; here one must proceed with

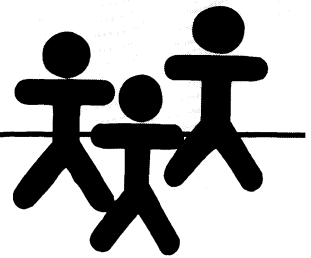
caution. It is clearly true that just because one does find philosophy on faith as a precondition, it does not mean that this philosopher will always arrive at the truth. Many philosophers who truly adhere to the biblical teachings have different philosophical opinions. Moving from the inerrant truth of Scripture to philosophical truths about the creation involves certain risks, because just as the Bible is not meant to be a science book, so too it is not meant to be a philosophical treatise. However, for both the scientist and the philosopher the Bible is essential for the conscious emplacement of true values and meaning in what is essentially the most important knowledge to have in our earthly state; the knowledge of God and redemption through Christ in our daily task.

<sup>1</sup>Th. Plantinga, *Christian Philosophy Within Biblical Bounds* (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1991). See the *Clarion*, August 30, 1991 and September 13, 1991 for Professor Gootjes' review.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. J. Faber, *Essays in Reformed Doctrine*, (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1990) p. 12.0



By A. Witten



## Parents and Teachers – Natural Allies

A recent “principal’s report” (*Link*, vol. 24, no. 2) suggested that the teacher-parent partnership is especially important in “guiding our children/students” in high school. In another school bulletin the chairman’s message (*Messenger*, Oct. 1991) noted “an increased amount of parent activity and involvement in the school.” Particularly for covenantal education all parents and teachers have a stake in the education of the children in the congregation. One commentator (*John Calvin School News*, Oct. 1991) highlighted the purpose of the home-school partnership as being an “instrument in bringing up youth for the Church.”

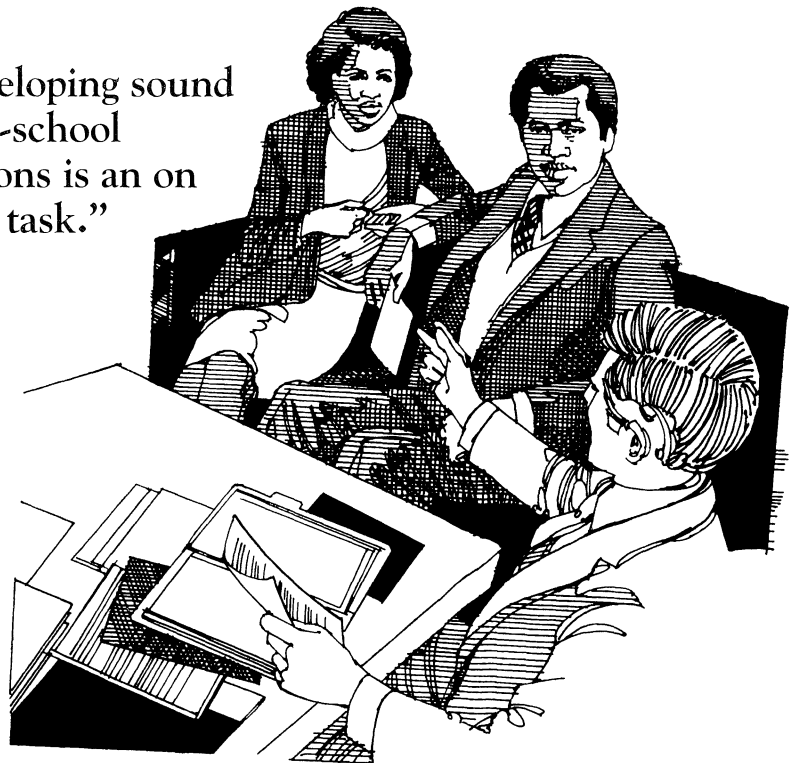
The idea of a home-school partnership is in the above example supported by parents and teachers. Parents and teachers are natural allies in the education of children. In support of the parent-teacher, home-school link, the following is submitted.

Developing sound home-school relations is an on going task. Even in public schools the Gallup polls about education, reported every September in the magazine *Phi Delta Kappa*, find that a vast majority as much as 80%, of the parents of school-age children were willing to give an evening a month to learn how to improve their children’s behaviour and interest in school work.

In many of the school bulletins referred for this column mention is made of various activities for maintaining home-school relations. The following six ideas have been reported by teachers in Reformed schools and elsewhere (McAllister-Swap, 1987, pp. 26-27) to have been effective in developing and maintaining sound home-school relations.

- **SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM NEWSLETTER.** Send home a weekly or monthly newsletter. It could include information about what the children

“Developing sound home-school relations is an on going task.”



have been doing, ideas for special projects, anecdotes, reports of joint or individual accomplishments, cartoons, and children’s art work, announcements of important expectations or upcoming meetings.

- **DIARY.** Invite each child to keep a diary throughout the year. Allot five minutes a day for each child to write in his/her diary. (Examples: “I learned to play kickball in P.E. today.”) Include photos. Ask the students to share these with their parents at regular intervals.

- **PHOTO ESSAY.** Throughout the year, keep a photo record of important or interesting events. As they are developed, post the pictures in the classroom for visitors to see. At the end of the

year, allow parents to order any pictures they would like to keep. Variation; Ask children to write or dictate stories to go with each picture. Keep stories and pictures in a scrapbook that children and parents can look at through the year and new parents can peruse to learn about the class.

- **SPECIAL DAYS (MOTHERS’ OR FATHERS’ OR GRANDPARENTS’).** Open the school up by scheduling special days. Invite the child’s parents or grandparents. The teacher (or a student) takes a few pictures during the day and writes down what is said and done and makes these into a book.

- **SHOW AND TELL.** Have a show and tell in which every child is invited

to bring in something to illustrate a theme (e.g. transportation, stuffed animals, favourite book). Create a bulletin board display. Invite each child to explain why the object is special. Combine this with a grandparents day.

- **SPECIAL ASSEMBLIES.** Have a thanksgiving day, reformation day or remembrance day assembly with participating students inviting their family.

Parent-teacher relations are generally perceived as initiated by schools. While these school initiated activities, including those listed above, are desirable more thought can be given to parent-teacher relations where parents are the initiators.

Teachers have twenty to thirty or more students to teach and guide. Try as they may, they cannot give every student all the personal attention desirable.

A word about teachers. An elementary school teacher especially has almost no free time and seldom gets the

kinds of breaks during the working day that other kinds of workers take for granted. For many elementary school teachers, there are no strolls, no coffee breaks, and except for lunch, few conversations with other adults. While a teacher has considerable freedom in running a classroom, the teacher, nonetheless, is confined to that room and must be constantly vigilant to the needs of many children. Parents by taking the initiative, can help the teacher's understanding of a student. Participating in the above mentioned suggestions or simply through direct personal contact with the teacher parents can make a difference in the schooling of their children. In the interest of the welfare of his/her child, the parent, by initiating breakthroughs, can reduce any possible "insulation" that may have developed in parent-teacher relations.

A trend in the Reformed schools (and elsewhere) that seems to positively increase school-involvement opportunities

for parents and others in the congregation is the greater use of parents as para-professionals, including teacher-aides, library aides and clerical aides. Some of the positions are part-time volunteer jobs, others are part-time or full-time paid positions. Some that start as unpaid, part-time volunteer posts (e.g. a university student tutoring a few students) soon grow into full-time or part-time paid positions. Educators realize that not all tasks carried out in a school have to be done by teachers and that some duties may in fact be more appropriately accomplished by non-professionals.

Parents and teachers can be mutual allies. Together we have a joint opportunity and responsibility to use constructive means that will be of service to our schools and the children.

McAllister-Swap, S. 1987. *Enhancing Parent Involvement in Schools*. New York: Teachers' College, Columbia University. **6**

## *Watford's Memories!*



*The new manse of Watford  
Located in Strathroy, 213 Queen Street*



*A barbecue was held during the summer, for the consistory members and their wives, behind the manse. Rev. L. Moes of the Netherlands, (on the left with white cap) was also present. On the far right, Rev. D. Moes.*

# Guido de Brès High School Commencement

By T. Hutten

October 11, 1991

After a delightful meal of roast beef, mashed potatoes, apple sauce, carrots, cauliflower, buns, cake...amongst all the helium balloons, we proceeded to Bethel Tabernacle for the commencement ceremonies.

The pianist, Mr. K. Wieske, played the Liberty Bell March by John Philip Sousa as processional and set the stage for an enjoyable evening.

Mr. W. Oostdyk, chairman of the Board, opened the assembly by read-

ing from Ephesians 6 and led in prayer. He welcomed all present on behalf of the Board. Mr. VanDooren then presented his "Principal's word of welcome." He mentioned that the students had finished the courses in the joy of Christ and that tonight was the beginning of a race they will run for the Lord.

Two present students, Teresa Oosterhoff and Rebekah Heemskerk, sang "Come Rejoicing, Praises Voicing" by J.S. Bach. Their lovely singing gives me goosebumps every time.

Next came the presentation of the Ontario Secondary School Diplomas. As the grads came to receive their diplomas, the sidelines displayed a steady stream of fireworks – Moms, Dads, Aunts, Uncles, etc., taking pictures. Next year I think we need a drum roll too. (Michelle Oostdyk got a kiss from her Dad as he handed her her diploma.) The graduating class of '91 received quite an applause from the enthusiastic audience.

The choir then filed neatly on stage



From left to right: Back row: Jack VanderVelde, Justin VanderWoude, Martin VanderWal, Eugene Ravensbergen, Doug Heikamp, Peter Schuller, Brian Vandenbos, Jason Bouwman, Christ DeJonge, Allen Komdeur, Gerard Torenvliet, Brian Jans, Marty Schulenberg, Peter Stegenga, Andrew Knegt. Second row: Ron Breukelman, Richard VanDasselaar, Ron Huinink, Scott Hutten, Richard VanEerden, Ed Mulder, Brian Tenhage, Jeff Tenhage, Francis VanDelden, Shane VanVeen, Albert Nordeman, Bernie Harsevoort, Jeremy Jagt, Steve VanderVelde, Jonathan Malda, Ian Gritter, Brad Alkema. Third row: Angela Mans, Terri-Lynn Schulenberg, Pauline Salomons, Susan Helder, Laura Verloop, Sherri DeBruin, Nancy Jelsma, Michelle Oostdyk, Lori Buikema, Sarah VanderWoude, Hildy DeJong, Tanya VanderDeen, Annetta Zeldenrust, Wynne-Ann Zandberg, Teresa Zeldenrust, Wilma Jans. Front row: Corinne Schulenberg, Joyce Tenhage, Geraldine Vis, Marjorie Stulp, Wendy VanderVeen, Nadine Woudenberg, Julie Douma, Marion Vandenbos, Lori-Anne Bartels, Tracy Bos, Hilda Buitenhuis, Monica Jager. Absent: Ann-Marie VanderHoeven, Shauna Krikke, Nick Scholtens.



to perform "Prayer" by Beethoven (Teresa Oosterhoff, solo), "Praise the Lord, O My Soul" by DeMonti, "Benedictus" by Klouse, and "The Lord is My Light" by Root (...more goosebumps!). When they were finished, Amanda VanderVen invited grads and staff to repeat with them the choir's theme song:

*The Lord is my light and my salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the strength of my life;  
Of whom shall I be afraid?  
Though a host should encamp  
against me,  
My heart shall not fear.  
Though wars should arise against me, in  
this I will be confident.  
One thing have I desired of the Lord,  
That will I seek after:  
That I may dwell in the house of the  
Lord all the days of my life.*

(Psalm 27)

Tanya DeJonge, president of the student council, called the performance "chilling and thrilling" as she got up to introduce the speaker for the evening, Dr. C. Van Dam.

Dr. Van Dam's topic was "Getting Dressed for the Job." A brief summary of his speech is as follows:

We need to decide publicly who our boss is going to be and how we are going to dress for the job. The Bible speaks of using the "shield of faith," the "armour of light," the "breastplate of faith and love," and "the helmet of salvation." We need to put on the uniform of "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

We must also *undress* the old nature, putting on a new heart and putting in a new mind. If we are to be dressed properly, we must clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. We must have such a close relationship with Jesus that we think and act like Him. The only way to achieve this is to be separate from the world, and to seek everything in Jesus Christ and to make no provision for the flesh. Christ must be everything. He demands everything and we become as nothing. Christ takes possession of us if we fulfil our responsibility and put on Christ. He uses us as instruments in His world, in His service. If we do not have the urgency to be clothed with Christ, then we have a bleak future. We must hate the sins of the world and yearn for holiness, saying, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."

There is no better way to show thankfulness to parents, teachers, and especially to God.

Directly after Dr. Van Dam's speech we sang Psalm 84:6.

The presentation of awards was next on the program. Mr. J. Wiersma and Miss R. Schoen presented the Guido de Brès High School Participation Awards to Brad Alkema, Tracy Bos, Hildy DeJong, Christ DeJonge, Mike Ludwig, and Nadine Woudenberg.

vliet, Wendy VanderVeen, Francis VanDelden, Brian Tenhage, Peter Schuller, Wynne-Ann Zandberg, Hilda Buitenhuis, and Sarah VanderWoude.

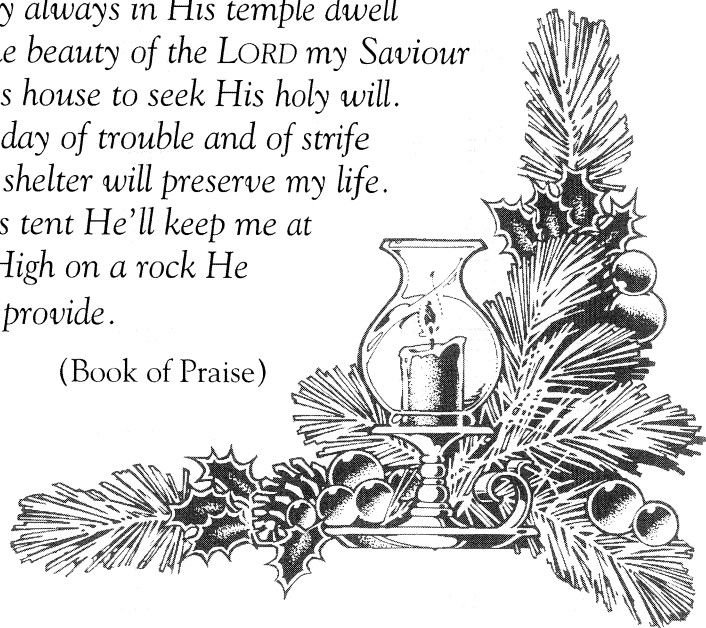
Mr. E. Baartman presented the Governor General's Bronze Medal to Susan Helder, and Mr. P. Smid presented the Student-of-the-Year Award to Gerard Torenvliet.

One of the grads, Michelle Oostdyk, then sang a solo, "In the Light of His Love" by McMillan. Some of the

## Psalm 27:2

*One thing have I desired of God as favour,  
That I may always in His temple dwell  
To view the beauty of the LORD my Saviour  
And in His house to seek His holy will.  
For in the day of trouble and of strife  
He in His shelter will preserve my life.  
Within His tent He'll keep me at  
His side; High on a rock He  
safety will provide.*

(Book of Praise)



Miss T. Hutten and Mr. P. Vander-Boom presented the Grade 12 Proficiency Awards to Susan Helder, Ann-Marie VanderHoeven\*, Ian Gritter\*, Wynne-Ann Zandberg\*, Martin VanderWal\*, Monica Jager, Hilda Buitenhuis\*, Laura Verloop, Geraldine Vis, and Gerard Torenvliet. \* (Those marked with an asterisk will also receive Ontario Scholarships.)

Mr. J. Ruggi presented the Harry Aasman Memorial Scholarship to Susan Helder, and the George DeBoer Memorial Scholarship to Martin VanderWal.

Mr. R. VanAndel and Miss Lucy De-Boer presented the Guido de Brès Alumni Scholarships to Gerard Torenvliet.

words I picked up really showed that her singing was in line with the evening's theme: "Holding Heaven in sight, I am free in the light of His love."

Albert Nordeman had been chosen by the graduating class as this year's valedictorian. His speech was very historical; he referred to many incidents which took place in the past four years, acknowledging God's work in our lives.

We sang Hymn 65:1, 3, and Mr. L. Knegt led in closing prayer. After the singing of "O Canada" it was time for congratulations. (I estimate that each graduate shook hands with over 1100 people. We should have had a collection!)

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# Fraser Valley Women's League Day

By J. Hendricks

On October 2, 1991 the 28th Annual Women's League Day of the Fraser Valley and Lynden, was held in Langley, BC. It was hosted by the Women's Society of Maranatha, "Thy Kingdom Come."

After allowing a period for socializing and coffee, the meeting was opened at 10:00 a.m., by the chairperson, Janet Hendricks. A welcome was extended to all the women, including the newly formed Aldergrove Women's Society.

With Mrs. Jansen accompanying us on the organ, we sang Psalm 67:1, 2, 3. The Scripture reading was Matthew 5:1-20. It was followed by the singing of Psalm 119:5, 13, 40, and prayer.


Our speaker for the morning, Rev. G.H. Visscher, introduced the topic "The Sermon on the Mount: a Greater Righteousness." His speech focussed on Matthew 5:17-20. Therein the Lord stresses that He, Jesus, did not come to abolish the law of Moses; rather, he was perfectly obedient to it, fulfills it and maintains that these commandments are valid till heaven and earth pass away. Our usual understanding of the position of the Pharisees is not entirely correct; the Lord was more concerned about them subtracting from the law than adding to it. In many respects the problem was not that they were too strict, but they were not strict enough, ignoring many significant aspects of the law (eg., Matt. 5:22, 28). The Lord then, with all Israel gathered before Him (4:25), tells the church that this is what He expects: unless His righteousness is in them and is worked out in their lives, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20). It must also be this way with the church today. It is not enough to point to Christ and His righteousness and meanwhile carry on; if we really belong to Christ, we will struggle to have His righteousness worked out in our lives and our families.

After the speech, we sang Hymn 49:1, 2. Discussion of the speech then

followed. Ina Bontkes, from Langley, read a fitting poem about making time for the Lord a priority, especially on our busy days. The morning session was closed by singing the League Song. Lunch and more time for socializing followed.

The afternoon session was chaired by Sarah Vandergugten of the Cloverdale Women's Society, "Sola Fide." We sang Psalm 103:1, 6 and read from Scripture, Matthew 18:1-4 and Philippians 4:4-13. An introduction titled, "Our Leisure Time," prepared by Lee Bredenhof, was read by her sister, Dorothy Bysterveld, as Lee was ill. Lee stressed the value of leisure time. As Christian women, we often feel a need to be busy all the time, both within and outside of the home. We

feel guilty when taking time to relax or for personal enjoyment. Lee discussed the benefits of a balanced lifestyle, where there is both work and play. Many helpful suggestions were given on how to find leisure time, and how to maximize its value. These suggestions covered the gamut, from a spare few minutes in our day, to the family vacation. A discussion period followed. We then sang Psalm 127:1, 2.

For entertainment, the Abbotsford ladies prepared a quiz in which we had to match names of all the different Bible study societies. A short general business period was held. After singing Hymn 48:3, 4, the League Day was closed with prayer. 



Langley church building where the Annual Women's League Day was held

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# Some Reading Some Listening

By W.W.J. VanOene

A few books have been received about which our opinion was asked. There is also a cassette tape that has been waiting for evaluation. Here it comes.

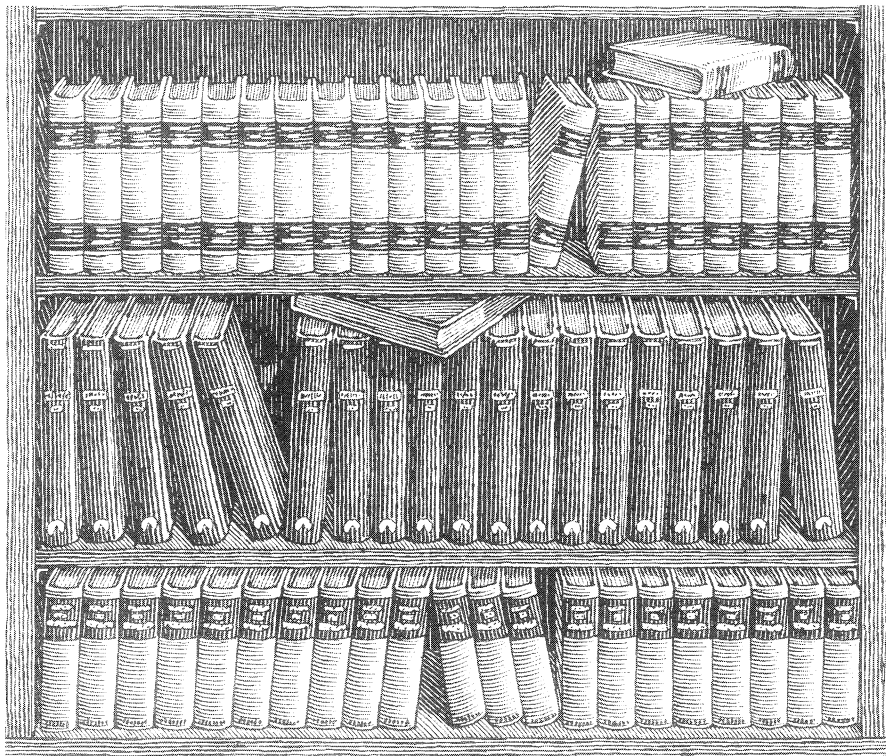
I regret that I have to state that this book gives little towards a true understanding of the coming of the Lord and the signs that are to prepare us for His coming. I even sense in the manner of

the Revelation. No, this is not the way in which our young people are to be introduced into the mysteries of God's Word. Sometimes the manner in which things are presented borders on blasphemy in my view. This applies to the title and cover already. I find it also, for example, when the writer invents a cartoon character which he calls A. Pocko Lips (a far reminder of the Greek name for the Revelation to John, the Apocalypse) that guides the students. Is that the manner to present the testimony of the Holy Spirit?

And what to think of the following: "Try out another picture. Imagine yourself sitting at a table in a great banquet hall. The table is covered with the most appealing, wholesome food you have ever seen, smelled, or tasted. The Old Testament patriarch Isaac is sitting at your table. You look around and recognize Abraham at the next table and across the room, Jacob. At each table are people from every part of the earth and every time of history. Between courses of the great feast, this huge crowd joins in singing the most exhilarating, exciting praise songs you have ever known. Jesus is going from table to table greeting each person. He comes to your table, pulls you out of your chair and give you a vigorous, laughing hug. (See Matthew 8:11 and Revelation 19:1-9 if you want to read the Bible's description of this feast.)" ?

Many passages from Scripture are quoted, but the method followed contributes very little, if any, towards understanding them.

*Women in Office, A Report to the Christian Reformed Churches*, CRC Publications 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560. \$3.95 US/ \$4.75 CDN.



*Coming Attractions. A Preview of Christ's Return* by Norman D. Stolpe. CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560. \$7.95 US/ \$9.55 CDN.

This book is intended to be a means of instructing young people about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and a guide to the understanding of the Revelation to John.

treating the subject influences of an approach to Scripture which cannot be ours.

The very title evokes aversion. The picture on the cover, showing a cinema with the lighted billboard proclaiming "Now Showing : A PREVIEW OF CHRIST'S RETURN," turns one off, at least one who approaches God's Word with reverence and stands in awe of the terrible events described for us in

This brochure is described as "an objective report of events and studies that led up to the Christian Reformed Church's decision in 1990 to open all ecclesiastical offices to women. The book does not attempt to prove the case for either "side" of the 20-year debate, but to fairly represent the study, discussion, debate, and struggle that took place."

With a view to the many discussions and articles covering the subject as such, we refrain from giving an evaluation of the topic proper in this context. Readers who wish to "trace" this sorry topic and the course followed find helpful material in the above brochure.

Typical for the prevailing line of thinking are the following expressions found in the covering letter: "the 1992 Synod (governing body of the church)" and "To help laypersons understand the debate..." Poor laypeople!

*Heidelberg/Westminster Shorter Catechisms*, CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560.  
\$4.95 US/ \$5.95 CDN.

This booklet contains the text of the Heidelberg Catechism in the left-hand columns, and the text of the Westminster Shorter Catechism in the right-hand columns, wherever parallel texts are available.

A handy reference booklet.

*A Mighty Comfort. The Christian Faith According to the Heidelberg Catechism.* by Fred H. Klooster. CRC Publications, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560.  
\$11.95 US/ \$14.35 CDN.

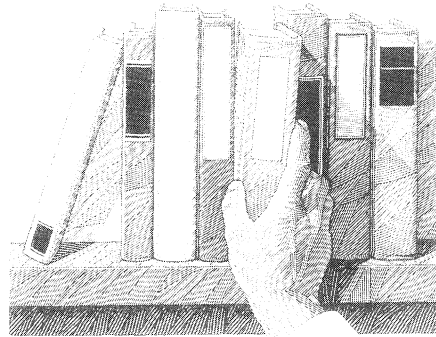
Dr. Klooster is professor-emeritus of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and "has spent decades teaching the Heidelberg Catechism to seminarians and adult study groups alike," the covering letter tells us.

Those who were taught by Dr. Klooster in the manner found in the present book have been taught well. I read a considerable part of the book, and scanned the rest. The treatment of the Heidelberg Catechism is rather summary, but what else can one expect when the 129 questions and answers of the Catechism are dealt with in 120 pages? A short history of the Heidelberg Catechism is added, as are some tables, for example, one showing the

many references to the Holy Spirit found in it.

Our ministers will find little new material in Dr. Klooster's publication, but for societies as well as for individual members of the churches it offers additional help with the study of this confessional form.

I cannot go along with his speaking of the three uses or functions of the "law" as found on page 19 and pages 99 and following, and also differ, for example in his understanding of the "law" being a "tutor" to Christ. I understand Paul's words in Galatians 3: 24,25, in this sense that the whole of God's revelation and ordinances specifically as far as the cultus was concerned were a restrictive and perhaps even pressing



bond from which the New Testament church has been freed through the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, it was with joy that I noted Dr. Klooster's rejection of the notion that in Lord's Day 21 our confession refers to an "invisible" church.

Our conclusion: heartily recommended.

*Justified by Faith. Study Outlines on Romans* by Joh. Franke. Inter-League Publication Board, Box 783 London, Ontario, N6A 4Y8

This book of 267 pages contains a translation of the Outlines on Romans which the late Rev. Joh. Franke wrote specifically for the League of Reformed Women's Societies in the Netherlands. It was translated under the auspices of the Inter-League Publication Board and has been published by it. A price of \$24.00 was mentioned, but I have not seen this in print.

Our societies will find this book to be extremely helpful with their study of the Letter to the Romans. It is unreservedly recommended. The price should not be a reason why it is not purchased.

I do not have the Dutch original, but the translation appears to be accurate and to convey the original text correctly. Here and there we discover that there is a Dutch original behind the English text. For example: when, on page 230, we read "I greet X.," this is the Dutch manner of denoting an unknown or unnamed person. In English we start with: "I greet A." But this is a minor point.

I do have a few questions, however. Why is a book like this, that is intended to be used for a length of time, not published in hard cover and then sewn? The so-called "perfect binding" proves to be far from perfect. Perhaps, as I was told, the glue used on the present volume is of a better quality and guaranteed not to permit the pages to come loose. But especially for a study book I would rather pay a dollar or a dollar-and-a-half more when it is sewn and comes with a hard cover. Think about it for next time.

The second question is: Why was not a smaller letter-type used and more text printed on the various pages? The number of pages could have been drastically reduced and thereby the cost. I find that there are too many blank areas on the pages.

The third question: We have various publishers in our midst, and they all vie for the rather limited number of dollars that is available. Here we have the Inter-League Publication Board that publishes rather regularly. We further have Premier Printing who are endeavouring to bring good books to the membership of the churches. Then there is Inheritance Publications with a new book now and then. I also mention the name of Brookside Publishing. Could there not be some consultation and cooperation? I hate centralization, but should there not be some consultative committee, formed by all in our midst who are publishing now and then, in order that the rather limited market is not "flooded" with the result that no one even breaks even?

Besides, duplication could be prevented as well. Premier Publishing published *I Belong* by Dr. J. Visscher, and Inheritance Publications came out with a book on the Heidelberg Catechism

written by the late Rev. J. Van Bruggen. Without judging the value of either of these two above-mentioned works I question whether our membership is financially strong enough to make both publications a success. Methink everyone would benefit if there were consultation and agreement on what should be published and which work should have preference. Let everyone think about it.

#### Let's listen

A few years ago the children's chorus of the Emmanuel/Maranatha Schools in Fergus/Guelph issued a cassette tape under the title "Days of Sunshine." This tape was a success and greatly enjoyed by all who purchased it and heard it.

Now they have come out with another cassette tape with the title "Christmas Joy." The very title indicates what type of songs one can expect to hear. If one, however, should think that he is in for a collection of "run-off-the-mill" songs, such as are played in shopping centres until one gets sick of them, he is mistaken.

Comparing the two above-mentioned cassette tapes, I at first had the impression that the first one was more lively than the second one, mainly due to the character of the songs. Repeated listening to the new tape convinced me, however, that it is not less lively than the first one, while it is technically definitely superior.

In practically each congregation there will be someone who has received a number of tapes and is willing to sell them. Do go and purchase one. The price is \$14 per tape and not a penny of it is wasted.

It is quite a chore to bring non-selected schoolchildren to a point where they are able to produce a tape such as the present one. Our congratulations to (Mrs.) Bonnie Bouwman who achieved this. Our compliments also to all who accompanied the chorus in whatever way. Recording by Harpert M. Vander-Wel of Audio Productions is as we are used to receive from him. The whole is a delight.

Besides providing yourself with an hour of enjoyable music, you will also lend support to the schools whose pupils are heard. Ontario schools, as we are aware, do not receive any governmental support. Thus the knife cuts both ways: you benefit and the schools do. What else do we have to add? **6**

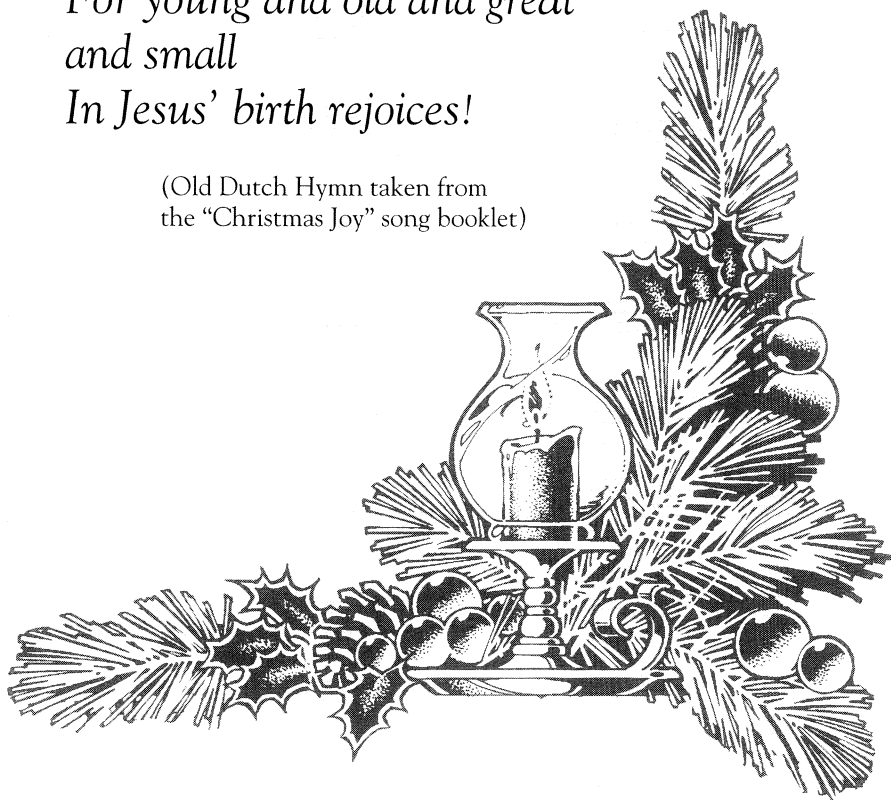
## Sound Forth

*Sound forth, sound forth a song of praise  
With organ, harp and voices;  
Sing out your song through Church and hall,  
For young and old and great and small  
In Jesus' birth rejoices!*

*We find Him in no palace proud  
In worldly pride excelling,  
No purple robe, no crown is His,  
His throne a wooden manger is,  
A stable is His dwelling.*

*Sound forth, sound forth a song of praise  
With organ, harp and voices;  
Sing out your song through Church and hall,  
For young and old and great  
and small  
In Jesus' birth rejoices!*

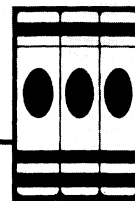
(Old Dutch Hymn taken from  
the "Christmas Joy" song booklet)





# BOOK REVIEW

By N.H. Gootjes



## G. Smeaton on atonement

The Banner of Truth Trust recently republished the two volumes G. Smeaton wrote in the 19th century on the doctrine of the atonement. Somehow this work seems to have escaped the attention of reformed theologians on the continent and in America: it is not mentioned in the dogmatics of Ch. Hodge, H. Bavinck or L. Berkhof. Yet it is an impressive work.

The author became minister in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1839. Together with many other ministers he came out of the Presbyterian Church in 1843 to form the Free Church of Scotland. He was appointed professor at the College of the Free Church in 1854. Three years later he became professor of Exegesis in the New College in Edinburgh. In the century in which the exegetical world fell victim to Scripture criticism, Smeaton uncompromisingly maintained Scripture as the infallible Word of God.

His study on the atonement was originally published in 1870/71. This was right in the middle of a great debate on this doctrine. In the first half of the 19th century F. Schleiermacher had reinterpreted it. In the middle of that century J.C.K. Von Hofmann had published his views in his famous *Der Schriftbeweis*. When Smeaton wrote his studies, A. Ritschl had just published an article about the atonement in a journal. A few years later Ritschl would write the work that made him famous, about justification and atonement. All three theologians deny that God's justice had to be satisfied by a sacrifice. In the midst of all these attempts to reinterpret the atonement Smeaton upheld the orthodox doctrine with much theological skill.

The work consists of two volumes of about 500 pages each. In the first volume *Christ's Doctrine of the Atonement* Smeaton discusses mainly texts from the Gospels. The second *The Apostles' Doctrine of the Atonement* deals with texts from the Epistles. An historical survey of this doctrine, in 60 pages of condensed print, concludes this volume.



The books, however much alike, are not similar in approach. The first one, about the Gospels, is more topical. The writer discusses many topics connected with atonement, and organizes the texts under these topics. He attempted to follow the same method in the second volume, but he found that this method did not work: he would have to discuss the same text under several topics. He therefore decided to discuss the texts in the order in which they occur in the Epistles (II, p.vii). I prefer the discussion in the second volume.

Smeaton, who was an exegete and approaches the doctrine of the atonement exegetically, discusses the texts fairly and thoroughly. If I have an objection, it is that sometimes too much is read into a text to make it fit Smeaton's emphasis on the atonement. An example is his explanation of John 2:19, Jesus' word to the Jews: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Smeaton says about the passage: "...the acceptance of all gospel worship depends simply on its relation to Him as the sole atonement for sin, and temple of God." He then goes on to show what the text means for the nature and the effects of atonement (I,

p.290). Jesus Christ, however, at this point did not speak of the atonement. He did say that He would die through the hands of the Jews, but He did not indicate here that He would be the sacrifice for the sins of the people. Smeaton has a tendency to read atonement into the texts he discusses, and even to make this doctrine the focus of the texts. In fact the reference to Christ's death are often general and not specifically concerned with the atonement.

But there are many texts which do speak about this important doctrine, and which are admirably discussed by Smeaton. The books should be read carefully, since the texts are explained in detail, but the explanation itself is not difficult to read. Someone who preaches through the catechism, and so twice in about a year and a half will speak about the atonement (Lord's Day 5 and 6), will find in this book enough material to keep his sermons fresh.

G. Smeaton, *Christ's Doctrine of the Atonement*, and *The Apostles' Doctrine of the Atonement*, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991. Price: \$23.95 per volume.



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# Inter-League Publication Board Report

## Outlines - a useful tool

What is your reaction when you read that ILPB has published another new book of outlines? Are you interested or do you give the information a cursory glance and determine that the book is not for you because that is not the topic you are currently discussing at your Bible study society? Do you know what outlines are and for which purpose they are written?

An outline is defined as a sketch of a literary composition, a systematic listing of the important points of a subject. You would not expect to find exhaustive details in an outline. But you can expect that an outline will guide you through the material you will read or study, explain the theme and highlight the important points.

It is obvious that there can be a wide variation in how extensive an outline may be, depending on the author of the outline and the material with which he/she is dealing.

The Inter-League Publication Board, sponsored by the Bible Study Society Leagues in Ontario has been publishing


outlines for almost 30 years. Our purpose is to publish guides to assist you in your study of Bible and other topics which help you live a life of service to God's glory.

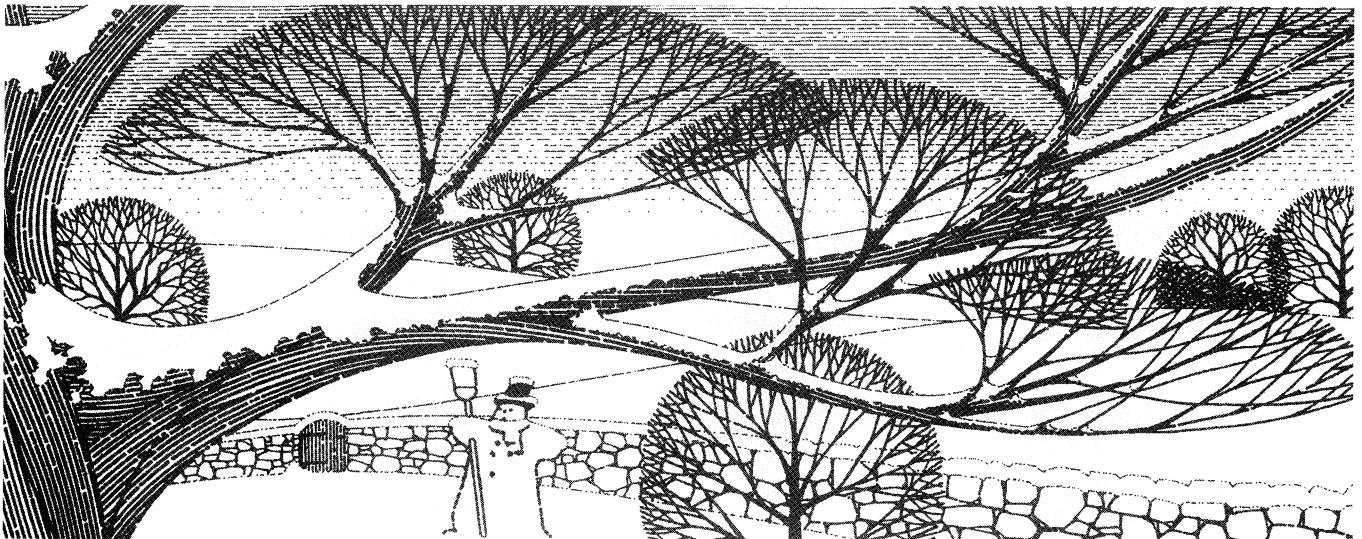
An outline will help you understand, in broad terms, what a book is all about. It helps you recognize themes, highlights different areas, explains details where necessary to help you get an idea of the riches to be found in the subject you are studying. An outline encourages you to think about the topic, helps you ask questions and often poses questions for you to ponder or study.

You probably begin to see that an outline can be a valuable tool in your efforts to know and understand your God, His works and His mandate. But does the use of an outline need to be limited to use in a study society only? Think about the other times when an outline could be helpful. In your personal study, an outline can challenge and encourage you to deeper thought and further study. In your family worship an outline can give you enough information to help you understand a Bible book better, without being too

lengthy and cumbersome. It can also assist you in encouraging discussion.

Do you purchase outlines only when you "need" them? Or do you buy each new outline as it is published because you wish to have the tools at hand when you begin to read another book of the Bible? We can assure you that having the proper study tools can enrich your life greatly and make your time spent in studying God's Word very fruitful.

Some of ILPB's outlines were published many years ago. We try our best to keep even the older titles in stock. In recent years we have published outlines on all the minor prophets, the book of Ecclesiastes and two volumes on the book of the Revelation to John. Our newest book contains outlines on the book of Romans. We know it will greatly help you in understanding the profound wisdom found in the book of Romans. Books, especially study books, have lasting value. If you have not yet discovered this, why don't you purchase one of our outlines and find out for yourself? We have included a list of all our titles. 



# LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Rev. DeJong:

We are following with interest the editorials on the covenant of grace in the *Clarion* as well as in the *Standard Bearer*. We have concern with your statement on p. 457 of the October 11, 1991, issue of the *Clarion*, "We have reason to believe that the whole matter of the covenant is a critical issue in the Protestant Reformed Churches today, and that some members of that church are open to a more scriptural view on the covenant."

The implications of this statement are, 1) that the PRC are in the midst of an internal debate regarding the covenant. It is a doctrine that is not only important to the PRC, but it is in crisis, in controversy. 2) That some members of the PRC are not happy with the historic PR view of the covenant, think some aspects of it are less than scriptural, and wished it were more scriptural. 3) That the editorials of Prof. D. Engelsma do not speak for the PRC, at least not for all the membership. We deny all three of these allegations. We know of no dissatisfaction among the officebearers or membership of these churches, after ministering the Word to them for almost twenty-five years.

You owe it to your readers in all denominations to print the "reasons" why you think the above situation in the PRC is true.

Cordially,  
(Rev.) D.H. Kuiper  
Lacombe, AB Canada

## A few points in reply:

1. I appreciate the interest Rev. Kuiper shows in the debate with Prof. Engelsma regarding the covenant of grace. I make no claim to have the final word on this, and I believe all can benefit from an exchange of views on these matters.

2. I said: "a critical issue"; Rev. Kuiper makes of this: "It is in *crisis*, in *controversy*," (my emphasis). These terms are not at all what I had in mind.

3. I did not at all mean to imply that Prof. Engelsma does not speak for "all the membership" of the PRC. However, now that Rev. Kuiper brings up the matter, I submit that it is puzzling to me how he, as the minister of the PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, can authoritatively tell us who speaks for "all the membership" of the PRC and who does not. Not that I have anything against Lacombe, Alberta; but it is, after all, a *local* congregation.

4. I do not think it is necessary to make public matters from various private conversations which led to this statement. Interpretations of this kind are invariably subjective anyway. But if Rev. Kuiper insists on reading some material contributing to my statement which as yet may not have reached the Protestant Reformed manse in Lacombe, Alberta, I may refer him to a worthwhile and informative article by Prof. J. Kamphuis entitled "Scholastiek in Singapore" in *De Reformatie*, Vol 67, no. 7 (November 16, 1991) pp. 126-127.

J. DeJong



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# Alberta Officebearers' Conference

By E. Kampen

On November 2nd, 1991, officebearers from most of the churches in Alberta gathered in the building of the Immanuel Church at Edmonton for the second annual officebearers' conference.

In the morning, Rev. R. Aasman spoke on the topic "The Care for the Aged and Dying." He started out his speech by mentioning how the older people have become labelled as a distinct group, and how this label is actually a hindrance. Older people are stereotyped as those who are sickly, deteriorating, hard of hearing, seeing, and rather incompetent. He pointed out that older people are ordinary people. It is important that we have a right attitude towards the older members of the congregation, so that they can enjoy life and still be fruitful in the church.

Extensive attention was paid to the matter of mandatory retirement, and all the consequences this has for the older members. Though some may be looking forward to retirement, for many retirement will mean that they have nothing to do, and that they suddenly will be standing outside the mainstream of life. This can bring much frustration, even depression. It was pointed out that retirement can thus set off various sicknesses and ailments.

Rev. Aasman gave some suggestions as to how officebearers can be of help to the elderly. First of all he mentioned that officebearers should have the right attitude towards the older members, and try to keep them involved as much as possible in church life. Having a brother, for example, pass the age of 65 or 70 should not mean that he no longer could be nominated for one of the offices. As a matter of fact, the ex-

perience and wisdom of older members is much needed in the churches. Along with this, officebearers should strive to instill a respect for the elderly in the congregation. He referred to the O.T. situation, where the elderly people were venerated in society, and still seen as very valuable members of the family. He also mentioned that older members themselves should realize that they are needed in the congregation, and that they should involve themselves. One can never retire from kingdom work. He also spoke about trying to get the seniors involved in all sorts of congregational activities, like visiting the sick, helping younger families (cf. 1 Tim. 5), staying active in study and school societies!

He also addressed issues like the guilt feelings the older people may struggle with, and how they need to be comforted. Attention was also paid to issues like taking an aged parent in the home, or placing them in a nursing home, and the task of the officebearers in all this. Further, he spoke about the losses older people face, especially when they lose their spouse, and how they need to be visited. Finally, he spoke about how the older members should be taught to live with the hope of the life to come, so that as the day of death comes nearer, they would look forward with joy to meeting their Lord.

After a coffee break, a general discussion was held which reinforced some of the points raised in the speech, as well as bringing up some other aspects.

An excellent lunch was served, prepared by some ladies from the Immanuel congregation. After this the conference reconvened to hear Rev.

Tiggelaar speak about the topic "Shepherding the Youth."

Rev. Tiggelaar began by pointing out the scriptural basis of the word "shepherding" when it comes to the task of the officebearers. Since the word "shepherding" applies to the task of the officebearers with respect to the whole flock, it is also suitable with respect to a segment of the flock, namely, the lambs.

He continued then by emphasizing God's covenant relationship with us. God made His covenant with the believers and their children. Thus, when we speak about shepherding the youth we must not forget the parents. The involvement of the parents is made clear already from the day of baptism, when the parents promise to bring up the children in the way of the Lord. The prayer of the church is that the lambs may come to spiritual maturity.

Rev. Tiggelaar repeatedly emphasized the task of the parents. The church may not usurp their place. Actually, the church has a big responsibility to see to it that the parents do their work diligently and faithfully. Thus, the task of shepherding the youth in a sense is an indirect one. By making sure the parents do their work faithfully, the lambs will receive the proper food.

Especially when it comes to the older youth, that is, age 12 and up, the task of the church can be more direct, although the place of the parents remains primary. Attention was drawn to the many temptations faced by the youth in terms of the media and modern music. In order to assist the youth, elders should make sure they speak to the youth at a family visit, and ask pointed questions. Officebearers should not as-

ime everything is right, just because e children are covenant children. In der to ask the right questions, and help e youth, the elders should be up to ate on what's going on in life. Some ggested questions were: "Do the children show signs having a personal relationship with the Lord, in prayer? Do ey faithfully study their catechism? Do ey pay for the church when they have ork?" By looking for the fruits of faith, e youth will be guided.

In his speech he warned against the ttitude that we see the flock as more ecre than it really is. The covenant is o reason to feel smug. Youth need to ome to rebirth. Although rebirth is the ork of the Holy Spirit, it is not outside he responsibility of parents and office-earers. They must be taught to live in he new obedience.

It was also mentioned that in dealing with the youth, that officebearers should not be self-righteous but remember their own youth, their own struggles, so that they can assist the young lambs in a sympathetic way.

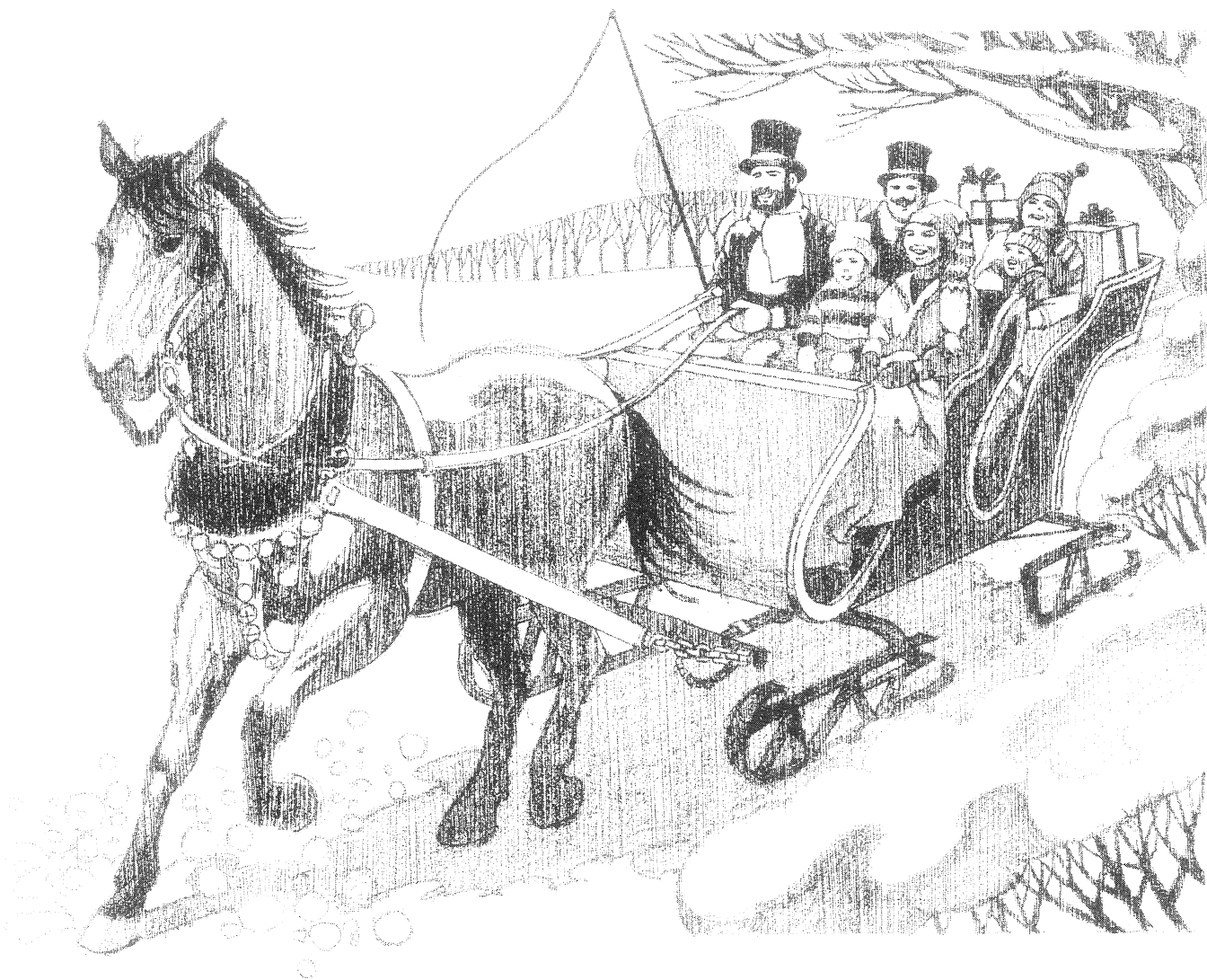
Finally, some comments were made concerning the popular "Youth Ministries" as found in many evangelical churches. Rev. Tiggelaar rejected that approach, as it did not have an eye for God's covenant, and the place of the parents and children in that covenant. Youth Ministries seem to approach children as outsiders, who have to be brought into the church, whereas as Reformed believers we know the children belong to God already! In connection with this he also warned against the idea of a Sunday school, which is making inroads in some "reformed" churches. He pointed out that the lambs

belong to the congregation, and it is wrong to think that the lambs have to be fed away from the main body of the flock.

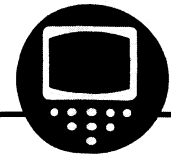
Also this speech was followed by discussion, in which various points were reinforced.

At the end of the conference it was decided to ask the church at Calgary to host the next conference, so that also the delegates of southern Alberta would have a chance to attend. Calgary's representatives willingly consented. After singing of Psalm 119:1, 4 and prayer led by Rev. Wieske, the conference was closed.

The comments that could be heard over coffee after the meeting indicated that those who made the effort to attend were well rewarded in that they received much food for thought. **6**







## **Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Hamilton, Ontario, September 5, 1991.**

### *Opening*

The Chairman, Rev. Cl. Stam, opened the meeting with the reading of 2 Corinthians 4:1-15, and led in prayer to ask for the Lord's blessing. He welcomed the brothers, also Prof. C. Van Dam who attended the meeting as Principal of the College. All members of the Board appeared to be present.

### *Agenda*

The agenda was adopted after a few points were added.

### *Appointment of Officers*

The following officers were re-appointed: Rev. Cl. Stam - Chairman; Rev. P. Kingma - Vice-Chairman; Rev. M. VanderWel - Secretary; Mr. C. Heeringa - Treasurer.

### *Minutes*

The Minutes of the annual Board meeting of September 6, 1990 were approved.

### *Executive Committee*

The Secretary, Rev. M. VanderWel, presented the report of the Executive Committee. It had the attention of the Board.

### *Academic Committee*

This committee reported regarding its activities by the reading of the minutes of its annual meeting held on Wednesday, September 4, 1991.

### *Finance and Property Committee*

This committee presented its Ninth Annual Report (for the period commencing June 1, 1990 to and including May 31, 1991). It was dealt with. The financial statements May 31, 1991 were submitted and the budget for the 1991/1992 year was adopted.

A small increase in assessment to the churches will be necessary to achieve a balanced budget. The increase is \$1.00 per communicant mem-

ber to take effect on January 1, 1992. It means that the assessment is raised from \$54.00 to \$55.00 per communicant member. The tuition fees for the academic year 1992 through 1993 were left at the same level as that for 1991-1992.

### *Appointment of auditor*

Mrs. A. Spithof was appointed as new auditor. This change is due to the retirement of the College's former auditor, Robinson, Lott & Brohman. Audit given by Mrs. A. Spithof C.A. has been acknowledged.

### *Convocation Committee*

This committee presented its report, made suggestions and gave information on various points for alterations.

### *Reports*

#### *Report of College Visitors*

Visits were made by Rev. J. VanRiet-schoten and Rev. P. Kingma on Novem-

ber 15, 1990 and on February 20, 1991. Visits were made by Rev. B.J. Berends and Rev. M. VanderWel on Thursday, April 18 and Friday, April 19, 1991. These reports were gratefully received.

### *Report of the Senate*

Each professor reported regarding the work done in his department, including the subjects taught and the assignments given. The progress of the students was noted with gratitude. The Lecture Schedule for 1991-1992 was adopted.

### *Report of the Principal*

The Principal, Professor Dr. C. Van Dam, reported on his activities. The Board took note of this report.

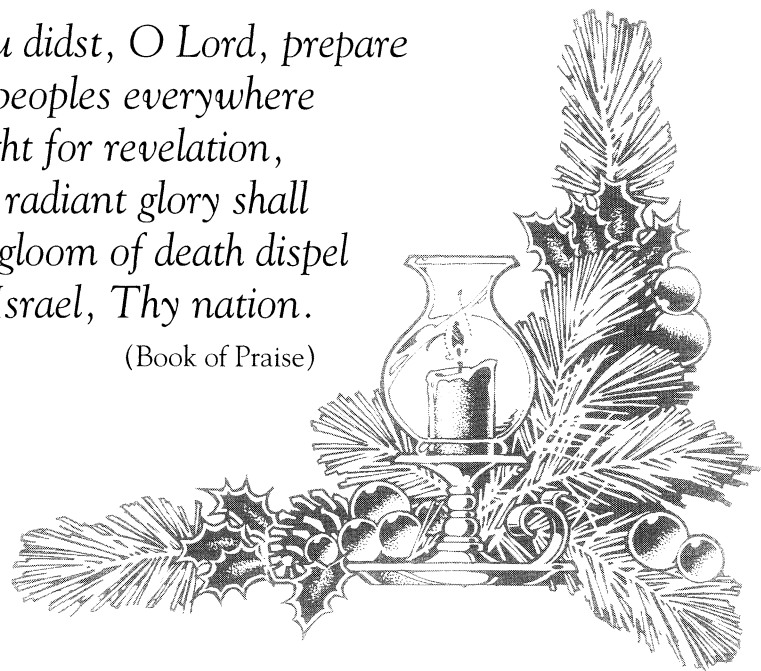
### *Report of the Librarian*

The Librarian, Professor C. Van Dam, reported on the Library. This report was gratefully received.

## Hymn 18:2

*Thou didst, O Lord, prepare  
For peoples everywhere  
A light for revelation,  
And radiant glory shall  
The gloom of death dispel  
For Israel, Thy nation.*

(Book of Praise)



## Report of the Registrar

The registrar, Professor J. Geertsema A.Th., reported that the following students had requested admittance: Mr. Johan Plug of the Free Reformed Church at Armadale, Western Australia and Mr. Joe Poppe of the Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Interviews with these students were reported. The reports were received and the recommendations to admit them to the course of study were gratefully adopted.

## Appointment of College Visitors

The following governors were appointed to visit the College: in the Fall of 1991, Rev. C. Van Spronsen and Rev. P. Kingma and in the Spring of 1992, Rev. Cl. Stam and Rev. M. VanderWel.

## New Business

Various matters had the attention of the Board.

## Press Release

The press release was read and approved.

## Closing

Br. H. Buist led in prayer of thanksgiving after which the chairman, Rev. Cl. Stam, closed the meeting.

For the Board  
P. Kingma

## Classis Ontario-South, October 22, 1991, Smithville

### Opening

On behalf of the convening church Rev. Agema opens the meeting in a Christian manner. He welcomes the delegates, the deputies ad Art. 48 C.O. and Rev. G.A. Snip. He explains that this classis is convened earlier than proposed by the previous classis due to the colloquium of Rev. G.A. Snip.

### Examination credentials

The delegates of the convening church examine the credentials. They are found to be in good order. Classis is declared constituted. Moderamen: Rev. K.A. Kok - chairman, Rev. B.R. Hofford - clerk, Rev. D.G.J. Agema - assessor.

### Agenda

After some changes the agenda is adopted.

### Retirement of Rev. J. VanRietschoten

The consistory at Chatham requests concurring advice for the early retire-



ment of Rev. J. VanRietschoten according to Art. 13 C.O. The chairman reads the pertinent documents. Classis decides, with the concurring advice of the deputies ad Art. 48 C.O., to concur with the decision of the consistory to grant Rev. J. VanRietschoten honorable early retirement. A certificate of retirement is approved and signed.

The chairman speaks some words of appreciation to Rev. VanRietschoten, followed by Rev. Nederveen, who addresses Rev. VanRietschoten on behalf of the deputies. Rev. VanRietschoten responds to these words. Classis sings Psalm 85:2, 3 and Rev. Hofford leads in prayer.

### Colloquium Rev. G.A. Snip

The church at Lincoln request approbation of the call of Rev. G.A. Snip. Because Rev. Snip comes from our sister churches in the Netherlands a colloquium is required according to Art. 5C C.O. The pertinent documents are read and found to be in good order. In the colloquium matters of doctrine and church polity are discussed. In closed session classis decides that the colloquium was sufficient and decides to approbate the call of Rev. Snip. The chairman reads the Form for Subscription, after which Rev. Snip signs this form. Classis sings Psalm 84:4, 5, 6 and Rev. Agema leads in prayer of thanksgiving. The members of classis receive opportunity to welcome Rev. Snip as minister within our confederation.

### Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.

The chairman asks the required questions. The church at Chatham asks advice. Advice is given in closed session.

## Proposals

Two proposals of the church at Watford are defeated after due consideration.

## Correspondence

The chairman reads a letter from the consistory at Grand Rapids with requests concerning the Denver American Reformed Church. Classis requests Grand Rapids to submit this letter to the convening church of the next classis.

## Acts

Due to the clerk's early departure the Acts are read and adopted.

## Appointments

1. Deputy ad examina - Rev. D. Moes. Examiner exegesis O.T. - Rev. D.G.J. Agema
2. Next classis: convening church - Blue Bell; place of venue - Lincoln; suggested date - March 11, 1991; suggested moderamen - chairman Rev. D. Moes, clerk Rev. K.A. Kok, assessor Rev. B.R. Hofford.

## Personal Question Period

The consistory at Hamilton extends an invitation to the churches to attend a meeting on Nov. 14, 1991 to meet Cand. S. Sietsma and his wife. The consistory at Lincoln informs classis that the installation of Rev. G.A. Snip will take place November 3, 1991.

Censure ad Art. 44 C.O. is not necessary.

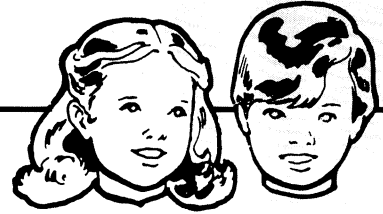
The remainder of the Acts are read and adopted. The press release is read and approved.

The chairman closes classis in a Christian manner.

For classis  
D.G.J. Agema, assessor e.t.



By Aunt Betty



## Behold! the King of Kings

### Dear Busy Beavers

"Jesus, the Saviour is born."  
What good news!  
Good news to a world lost in sin.  
Yes, we need the Saviour.  
God sent Him to save us from  
our sin.

"Jesus, the Saviour is born."  
Christmas joy!

We see the Christmas scenes and pictures everywhere  
– the shepherds, the wise men, Joseph and Mary, the Christ  
Child.

"Jesus, the Saviour is born."  
But we know that's not the *whole* story.  
The Christ Child was named *Jesus* "Saviour."  
And He did not *stay* small.

He became the Teacher, the Healer, and most of all, the  
Man of Sorrows.

He also became the *risen Lord* who rose to heaven.

He is working there, making everything ready for His  
*return in glory*.

Now we see pretty pictures of shepherds and kings  
kneeling before the Christ Child.

But when Christ returns in *glory* every knee must bow  
to *Him*, the King of kings.

He is our *Saviour King!*

### NAMES OF THE SAVIOUR

Busy Beaver *David Burger* sug-  
gested we make a list of all the names and  
titles given to the Lord Jesus.

There are some of the names David  
found.

Adam, Advocate, Amen, Ancient of  
Days, Author and Finisher of faith, Begot-  
ten, Bread of Life, Consolation, Cornerstone.

Here are some more *names* for your to *finish*

Bright morning \_\_\_\_\_

Wonderful \_\_\_\_\_

Everlasting \_\_\_\_\_

Prince of \_\_\_\_\_

the Lamb of \_\_\_\_\_

the Lion of the tribe of \_\_\_\_\_

the Alpha and the \_\_\_\_\_

the Son of \_\_\_\_\_

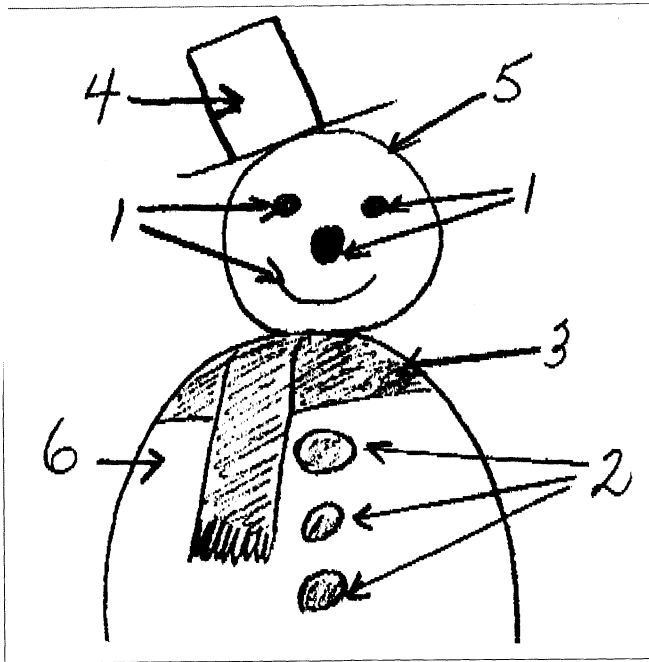
See how many more you can find!

### CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN!

- "I will come again and will take you to \_\_\_\_\_,  
that where I am you may be \_\_\_\_\_." John  
14:3
- "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into  
\_\_\_\_\_, will \_\_\_\_\_ in the same way  
as you saw Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11
- "...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with  
His \_\_\_\_\_ angels...when He comes on that  
day to be \_\_\_\_\_ in His saints.... 2 Thess. 1:7,  
10
- "...awaiting our blessed \_\_\_\_\_, the appear-  
ing of the glory of our great \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus Christ...." Titus 2:13
- "When Christ who is our \_\_\_\_\_ appears, then  
you also will appear \_\_\_\_\_  
in glory." Col. 3:4
- "We know that when He appears we shall be  
\_\_\_\_\_ Him, for we shall see Him  
\_\_\_\_\_ He is." 1 John 3:2
- "And when the chief Shepherd is \_\_\_\_\_ you  
will obtain the \_\_\_\_\_ crown of glory." 1 Pet.  
5:4
- "...keep the commandment unstained and free from  
\_\_\_\_\_ until the \_\_\_\_\_ of our Lord  
Jesus Christ." 1 Tim. 6:14
- "For as often as you eat this \_\_\_\_\_ and drink  
the cup, you proclaim the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_ until  
He \_\_\_\_\_." 1 Cor. 11:26
- "\_\_\_\_\_, I am coming \_\_\_\_\_...." Rev.  
22:12

# Christmas Holidays' Games

## BUILD A SNOWMAN



The object of this game is to be the *first* person to finish a drawing of a snowman by throwing a die.

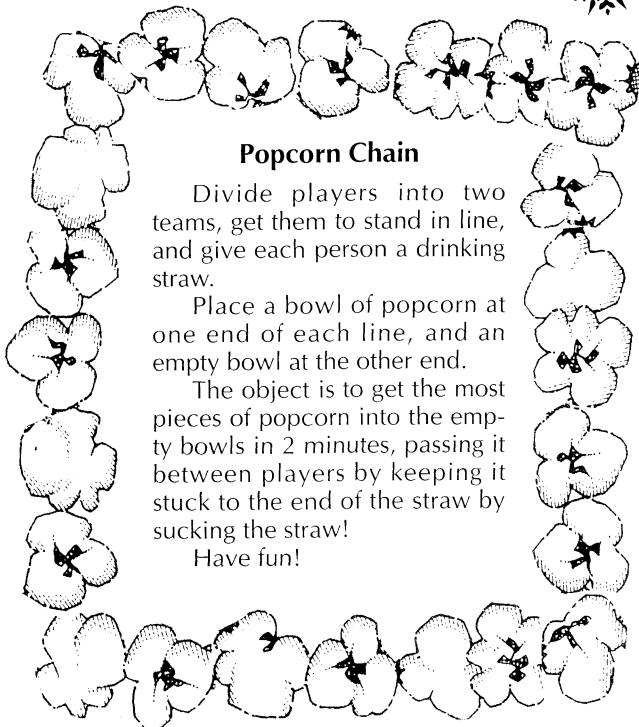
The correct number must be thrown before each part of the snowman can be drawn in this order:

body (6); head (5); hat (4); scarf (3); three buttons (2 for each); eyes, then nose, and then mouth (1 for each).



## “ME IN THE SNOW”

By Busy Beaver Jodie Lodder



### Popcorn Chain

Divide players into two teams, get them to stand in line, and give each person a drinking straw.

Place a bowl of popcorn at one end of each line, and an empty bowl at the other end.

The object is to get the most pieces of popcorn into the empty bowls in 2 minutes, passing it between players by keeping it stuck to the end of the straw by sucking the straw!

Have fun!



# Puzzle Time

## SEARCH-A-WORD

By Busy Beaver *Tesha Hopman*



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

Find the following hidden words in the puzzle:

RED	BLUE	GREEN	PURPLE
YELLOW	ORANGE	GRAY	BROWN
BLACK	INDIANRED	SILVER	GOLD
INDIGO	VIOLET	SEAGREEN	

## MAGIC SQUARES

By Busy Beaver *Alison Veenendaal*

1.	2.	3.
2.		
3.		

1. a boy or girl's name
2. a playing card
3. a number



1. I \_\_\_\_\_ in a race
2. You say it when you catch someone
3. to bother someone

1.	2.	3.
2.		
3.		



1.	2.	3.
2.		
3.		

1. The baby sat on her \_\_\_\_\_
2. short name for Alison
3. I found a \_\_\_\_\_ and a needle this morning

## WORDSEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Ivan Sikkema*

N U N H O J P H A R A O H I  
S N S A M U E L H A N N A H  
D O R E H S T S M I R I A M  
U A R M A N E B U E R D A E  
H H A C I M R S H S U R R L  
E R L E A H D S O J K I O B  
Y M N J U D A S A M S O N O  
D E B O J A N R M U N I A C  
A H V S M V D D A A L E B A  
D S T E L I J A H S L E O J  
A I E P S D S G M E D U J O  
H K P H I L I P I L A T E N

This puzzle is special since many of the letters are used more than twice. When all of the words have been found, there will (should) be ten (10) letters left over. Connect these letters horizontally to find a magical word.

Aaron	Eli	Jesus	Leah	Pharaoh
Abel	Elijah	Job	Mark	Philip
Adam	Esau	Joel	Mary	Pilate
Anna	Eve	John	Micah	Reuben
Asa	Gad	Jon	Miriam	Samson
Asher	Hadad	Joseph	Moses	Samuel
Cain	Ham	Judah	Noah	Sarah
Dan	Hannah	Judas	Nun	Saul
David	Herod	Jude	Obed	Shem
Ehud	Jacob	Kish	Peter	Simon





## From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Hannah Verhoeff*. We are happy to have you join us. Thank you for the puzzle and the picture, Hannah. I see you are a real Busy Beaver already!

Welcome to the Club, *Alisha Hummel*. And thank you for a pretty letter. How did your Indian puppets turn out, Alisha? Will you write and make a picture of them for us?

Welcome to the Club, *Marcia Rook*. Thank you for the picture! I hope you soon get a pen pal, Marcia. Please write and let me know when you do.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Lydia Penninga*. I'm sorry to hear your Opa passed away. Will you miss him a lot, Lydia? Thank you for the puzzle!

Yes, you may join the Busy Beaver Club, and welcome, *Michael Breukelman*. You are lucky to have three friends, Michael. And I hope you get a pen pal, too!


Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Karen DeBoer*. I see you have lots of hobbies and interests! You shouldn't have any trouble keeping busy. Thanks for the quiz, Karen.

Thank you very much for all the interesting puzzles, *Alison Veenendaal*. Sounds as if you have a great time with your pets, Alison. Have a good holiday!

Thank you for your letter, *Benjamin Bartels*. I'm glad you enjoyed that Chinese yo-yo, and that you like our games and puzzles. Keep up the good work!

Hello, *Bradley Bartels*. It was good to hear from you again. Yes, you're right about books telling us about our world and all the different people in it!

Thank you for the interesting puzzle, *Ivan Sikkema*. Do you have some interesting plans for your holiday, too, Ivan? Here's hoping you have a very good holiday. Write again soon!



**Two Pen Pals Needed!**

Who would like to exchange letters with these Busy Beavers?

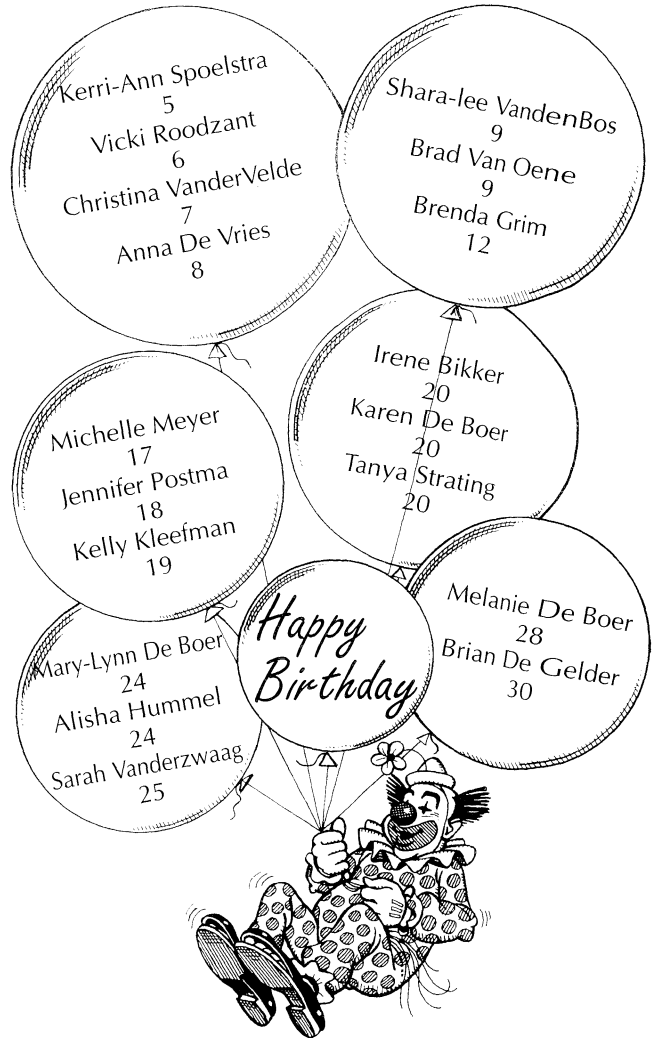
Marcia Rook (age 9)  
Box 1051  
Carman, MB R0G 0J0

Michael Breukelman  
Box 129  
Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0

# JANUARY BIRTHDAY WISHES

To all the Busy Beavers starting the New Year with a January birthday, we wish you one happy day, and many happy returns! May our heavenly Father guide and keep you in the year ahead.

Have a super day celebrating with your family and your friends!



Busy Beavers, very best wishes to you all, and to your families, for a blessed Christmas. Also best wishes for a real fun holiday!

With much love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

P.S. Yes, you get a sticker reward for your Bible quiz!  
Send your letters to: The Busy Beaver Club

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

