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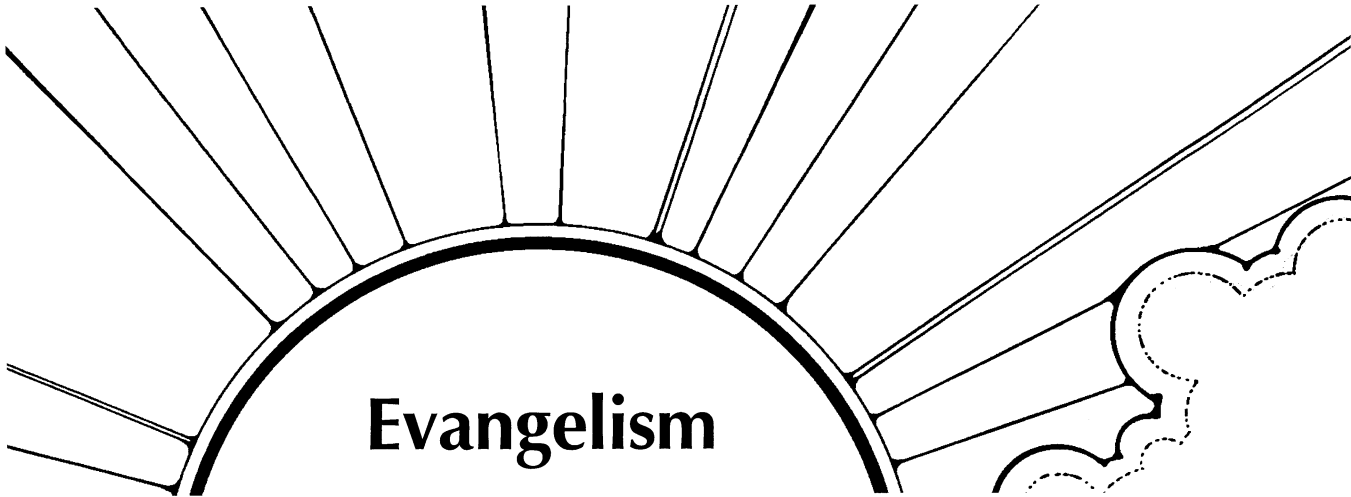
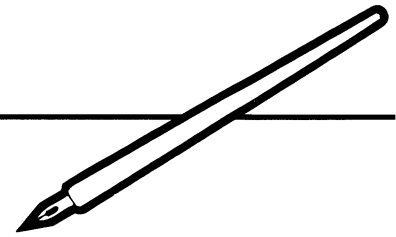
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 41, No. 6

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EDITORIAL

By J. Geertsema



The reader will find an insert from the Evangelism Task Force with this issue of our magazine. Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered at the cross in hellish agony in order to deliver those whom the Father had given Him. He gave His life in order to deliver His people for the Father out of the grip of sin and Satan. And He rose from death, the righteous One, to restore life to His people and to gather His church out of the darkness into His marvelous light. Our living Lord continues to gather His church out of all the tribes and peoples and nations.

This church has the task to be a bulwark of the truth. It is charged to preserve and to proclaim this truth. For this purpose, the church has to build itself up in the knowledge of the truth, and stand firm in it, and live it. All this is possible for sinful people, not because of their own strength, but because there is a secret power of the church, secret for the world, not for the church itself. This secret strength is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. With His death He laid the foundation for the gathering of the church. With His resurrection and ascension He began the gathering work. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:16),

*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.*

In the name of this risen Lord, all church work of preserving and increasing done by Christ Himself, is now also placed into our hands. He wants us to be His instruments in His work. In this light the Evangelism Task Force sees its task. Rev. J. Visscher correctly points out that our confession speaks about winning the neighbour for Christ. It is one of the goals of God's children with their godly walk of life in good works.

The Catechism (L.D. 32, Q.A. 86) answers here the question why we must do good works. It refers, among others, to Matt. 5:16. Christ commands us there, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." The good works are works of faith and love to God and neighbour as they are presented by Christ, for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount. Works of faith and love are the obedience to God's will as expressed in His Word. Living by God's commandments shows how we build up life.

What Christ says here is nothing new. We find it also already in Deut. 4:6. Moses speaks there to the people of Israel that he gave them God's statutes and ordinances. Then he continues, "Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?"

Let your light shine before men. Let them see your good works, your obedience to the good commandments of the law of your God, in order that they may praise, not you, but your God. This purpose must dominate our life. If it does, it will make us live the more carefully. To say it with another word of Christ (Matt. 10:16), "Be prudent as serpents and innocent as doves." The first word means sensible, discerning, acting with good sense, with insight in what is good and practically wise. The second word speaks for itself. Innocent means that people you seek to win for Christ cannot find fault with you in any thing. If our neighbour can blame us for immoral acts or greed and fraud or deceit, we have put a barrier on his way to Christ. We can in that case just as well quit with calling people to Christ, unless we have mended our ways and asked for forgiveness of God and neighbour. Proper evangelism is always and foremost life style evange-

lism of those who believe with a living faith in their Saviour Jesus Christ.

Reformed Churches, which means, Reformed people, are so enormously rich with our Reformed confessions and Church Order. We know this. And sometimes there is the danger that we forget how rich we are because we are so used to it. However, the Lord brings people from outside to the Reformed faith. It is gladdening to see the joy and the enthusiasm of such people. They have found the great treasure. They learn the Reformed faith as their treasure. They, then, know it and work with it. And they become living, strong, upholding bricks in the walls of the church. This is the purpose of evangelism: to win the neighbour for Christ in order that the church of the living, risen Lord may be strongly built with them too.

* * *

Mid-America Reformed Seminary

Mid-America Reformed Seminary has made an important decision. In a Press Release the Trustees made known that, in the Board meeting on January 22-23, they adopted a resolution "to relocate the seminary" from the vicinity of Orange City in Iowa "to the Chicagoland area." When Synod Orangeville, 1968 came to the decision to establish a Canadian Reformed Theological College, it considered that the College should be established in a place which had a university close by. This was found a necessity in connection with the need for a good academic library, including theological study material, even though it would be lacking in Reformed books. It would have resources which the College would not be able to purchase, at least not for quite a number of years. Both professors and students still make use of the McMaster library in Hamilton. Now teachers and students at Mid-America Reformed Seminary will also have easier access to more study resources. On this point I congratulate them.

However, I am not impressed by the reason presented for the relocation. The Press Release tells us that this resolution was adopted "in order better to fulfill its goal to serve a broad range of Reformed and Presbyterian churches in an increasing urban world." It continues to state that "This decision is taken in grateful acknowledgement of the support of local constituents, but with the conviction that such a move is compelled by our vision for broader service. 'It is clearly a decision taken in faith,' said one board member." And "a committee has been appointed to work out details relative to the decision, such as site, time table of the move, and financing." The board hopes and expects that those supporting the seminary will continue to do so.

The last paragraph reads, "Mid-America Reformed Seminary is a school serving existing and emerging Presbyterian and Reformed churches through the training of pastors. Its Board contains representatives of many such churches and from all across North America. The Seminary is financially supported by the free will gifts of Reformed believers in many states and nations."

What the board of Mid-America Reformed Seminary writes is understandable in the present situation. In the Christian Reformed Church, many are dissatisfied with Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids and it appears that not all who are Reformed in the Presbyterian camp are content with the direction of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. In this situation the Mid-America Reformed Seminary board has a vision of serving "a broad range of Reformed and Presbyterian churches." As far as I can see, we have here a change in vi-



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sion. Mid-America Reformed Seminary was originally set up as a seminary working within the Christian Reformed Church in order to provide it with truly Reformed ministers. Mid-America Reformed Seminary was therefore set up in opposition to the training in Calvin Seminary. It is now to be officially an inter-church theological school for training ministers. This change in direction is relatively easy since Mid-America Reformed Seminary is a private institution.

There is therefore a formal similarity between Westminster Seminary and Mid-America Reformed Seminary on the one hand and Calvin Seminary and our Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton on the other hand. The former two are private undertakings, the latter two are church institutions.

Although one can see positive results in the fact that Mid-America Reformed Seminary trains young men who become Reformed ministers, I still think that a theological college or seminary should not only be bound to Scripture and confession, but also to a church federation. The training for the ministry is not a matter of private individuals, but of the churches. This has been a Reformed principle and it was maintained after the Secession in 1834.

Biblical basis for this principle is, for instance, 2 Tim. 2:2,

where the apostle Paul writes to his fellow officebearer Timothy, "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." In this text we have the clear binding to the apostolic teaching and the binding to the confession of the church. Of course, also a private institution can bind itself to a confessional basis. But the second line, that of a binding to a church or church federation that has oversight over the institution cannot be established. In our College the teachers are bound by their ecclesiastical subscription form and are in their work accountable to the churches. With Mid-America Reformed Seminary, going the inter-church way, such an ecclesiastical accountability is not possible. I would have liked it if Mid-America Reformed Seminary would have had this vision of becoming a seminary bound to a federation of Reformed churches, rather than officially going the inter-denominational route. I hope that this development does not automatically mean the promotion of the old church plurality thinking.

I do wish Mid-America Reformed Seminary God's guidance and blessing on its way to the Chicagoland area, so that it will continue to be a blessing. C

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper₂

By N.H. Gootjes

In the previous issue we saw that the fundamental Reformed position concerning the second sacrament is that it is a meal, not a sacrifice. But two other meanings are added to this: the unity of the church and the expectation of Christ's return. The actual celebration of this sacrament reflects some of this. But the Reformed understanding and celebration of the Lord's Supper is now under attack for exegetical, dogmatic and practical reasons.

Exegetical criticism: H. Ridderbos

H. Ridderbos has discussed the Lord's Supper extensively in his book on the synoptic gospels: *The Coming of the Kingdom*.⁵ The Bible indicates that the Lord's Supper was instituted at a passover meal as prescribed in Ex. 12 and 13. This is very important for the understanding of the Lord's Supper, says Ridderbos, it leads to the question how

exactly the Lord's Supper is related to the passover. Did Jesus Christ present Himself here as the true passover lamb? This is maintained by many scholars, but Ridderbos does not agree. When Jesus Christ speaks of "his body" He does not distribute the lamb, but the bread. And concerning the wine, Jesus Christ does not say that this refers to the blood of the passover lamb, but to the blood sprinkled at the making of the covenant (425). The bread and the wine do not represent the sacrifice of Christ, says Ridderbos.

The true background for the Lord's Supper is the sacrifice meal. That means that the Lord's Supper is a meal similar to the meals the people of Israel enjoyed after having sacrificed an animal to God. The important consequence of this is, that the sacrifice itself is no longer a part of the Lord's Supper. In the sacri-



fice meal the sacrifice is not represented in the meal. The meal is the result of the sacrifice (426ff.). This means that the Lord's Supper does not set before us the death of Jesus Christ, but only the beneficial results of His death.

At first sight this does not seem to be a very important change. But this impression changes when we see how Ridderbos applies this to the elements of the Supper. The breaking of the bread does not belong to the symbolism according to him. When Jesus said: "This is my body," He did not refer to His sacrifice, but to what He is distributing.

The breaking itself does not have any particular meaning. Breaking bread was a customary action: the father of the family did this at every meal (429).

Ridderbos has even stronger objections against the pouring of the wine as a symbol of the shedding of Christ's blood. The verb "to shed" cannot be used for the action of pouring wine into a cup. Moreover, the wine was not poured out at this moment of the passover meal. The wine had been standing ready for some time, when Jesus spoke these words (429ff.).

Ridderbos concludes that not the acquisition but only the application of salvation is represented in the Lord's Supper. This means: Christ's death is not represented in (broken) bread and (poured) wine. The point of the bread and the wine is, that they are there to be eaten and drunk. The participants in their believing act of eating and drinking will receive the virtue of Christ's expiatory death (437ff.).

This is undoubtedly a reduction compared to the traditional Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper. Of the meanings we found: the meal, the communion and the eschatology, only the first is emphasized by Ridderbos.⁶ From this first meaning every reference to the sacrifice is removed. The Lord's Supper should be conducted without the breaking of bread or the pouring out of wine. No distinction is indicated between bread and wine. The meaning of the Lord's Supper can, in Ridderbos' view, be summarized under two aspects:

1. Christ gives the results of His work of satisfaction
2. We receive the results of Christ's work of satisfaction.

Dogmatical criticism:

M.J. Erickson

The evangelical scholar M.J. Erickson discusses the Lord's Supper under the title: the continuing rite of the Church.⁷ When he speaks of the meaning of this rite, he distinguishes three things that are symbolized. 1. It is in particular a reminder of the death of Christ and its sacrificial and propitiatory character as an offering to the Father on our behalf. 2. It further symbolizes our dependence upon and vital connection with the Lord, and points forward to His second coming. 3. It symbolizes the unity of believers within the church and their love and concern for each other (pp. 1123ff.).

This division concentrates on the Father, Jesus Christ and the church, re-

spectively. But in content it sounds close to the Reformed interpretation. The reference to Christ's sacrifice, unity of the participants and to eschatology are all there. The only remarkable thing is, that the meal character of the sacrament is not mentioned. Is this intentional?

Then it strikes us that Erickson characterized the Lord's Supper as a reminder. From 1 Cor. 11:26 Erickson draws the conclusion that the rite is basically commemorative (1122). The Lord's Supper is essentially a memorial (1123). We have to realize what this means: Erickson does not see the Lord's Supper as a means of grace. It is not God who shares out His grace in it, we ourselves have to make it work. "The Lord's Supper, properly administered, is a means of inspiring the faith and love of the believer as he or she reflects again upon the wonder of the Lord's death and the fact that those who believe in Him will live everlastingly" (1127). This explains the fact that the meal character is not mentioned as a meaning of the Supper. For if it is taken as a meal, then the fact that Christ shares it out becomes important. But for Erickson the important thing is that we receive it.

The fact that Erickson sees the Lord's Supper as a memorial instead of as a means of grace influences the way he speaks about the celebration. If our chief concern were, says Erickson, to duplicate the original meal, then we would have to use unleavened bread, since that was eaten at the passover meal. But if our concern

is the symbolism, we might just as well use a loaf of leavened bread. Erickson is of the opinion that we should strive, not for duplication, but for bringing out the symbolism. The Lord's Supper must be celebrated in such a way that it inspires the believer to faith and love.

This means for the bread, that leavened bread can be used. Erickson adds here that this loaf symbolizes two things. In the first place: the oneness of the loaf symbolizes the unity of the church. In the second place, breaking the loaf signifies the breaking of Christ's body (p. 1125).

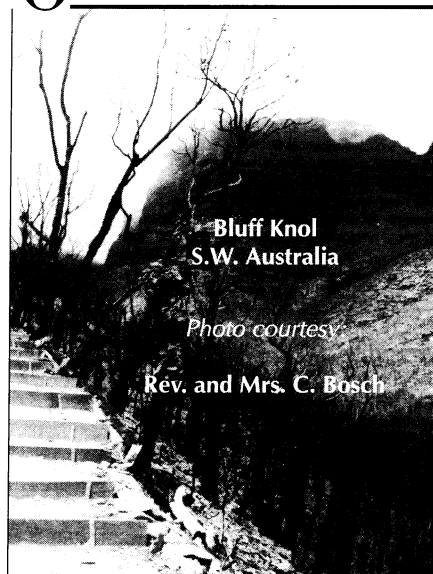
If I may interrupt Erickson here for a moment, this is somewhat confusing to me. The bread has here within the same context two distinct meanings. The bread is first (in its oneness) is a symbol of the church, next (in its brokenness) a symbol of Christ. I wonder if it is possible to see the bread within the one action of the Lord's Supper, first as representing the church, and then Christ. But I realize that if this critical remark is correct, we may have to criticize our own tradition, too. We will have to come back to this in a future article, but first we go back to Erickson.

Since the Lord's Supper must inspire us, the elements can be replaced by substitutes. But the substitutes should retain the symbolism. Fish may replace the bread. Erickson even says that fish might well be a more suitable symbol than bread. He does not give the reason for this statement. My guess is that fish is a good substitute because it is a traditional symbol for Christ. But bizarre substitutes, such as potato chips, should be avoided. The reason is, that we then would focus our attention on the mechanics instead of on Christ's atoning work (p. 1125).

Concerning the wine Erickson says: If we want to duplicate the original institution, wine has to be used, probably diluted with water. But if our concern is representation of the blood of Christ, then grape juice will do equally well. But again, bizarre substitutes such as cola, bear little resemblance to the original and should not be used (p. 1125).⁸

We have a general disagreement with Erickson concerning the Lord's Supper as a means of grace. But we are also faced with more specific questions. Do the bread and the wine itself contribute to the meaning of the sacrament? Or can they easily be replaced, as long as we maintain the symbolism in general?

OUR COVER



**Bluff Knol
S.W. Australia**

Photo courtesy

Rev. and Mrs. C. Bosch

Practical criticisms: two movements from the 19th Century

Two movements that came up in the 19th century did have an impact on the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the first place there is the movement for total abstinence, often called the Temperance Movement. This movement began within the churches. The Scriptures were often seen as the strongest bulwark to defend the doctrine of total abstinence. Then the Lord's Supper became an embarrassment: there wine was used. This led to the attempt to understand the word for "wine" in the New Testament as meaning grape juice.

In our century the discussion is no longer as fierce as it was during the last century, but churches are still faced with questions. If there are (former) alcoholics in the congregation, would it not be better to replace the wine with grape juice? Does it not set a better example if the Lord's Supper is celebrated without wine?

All this leads to questions concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Does the wine contribute to the meaning of the Lord's Supper, or does the meaning not suffer when it is replaced by grape juice?

The other movement which had an impact on the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the movement for hygiene. H. Bavinck makes a remark in his dogmatics, that recently a movement has come up in many churches to replace the one cup by individual cups.⁹ It was feared that the use of a communal cup could lead to the spreading of contagious diseases.

This movement seems now to be gaining in strength because of the fear of AIDS. This, too, leads to a question concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Is the communal cup part of the meaning, or not?

⁹H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (tr. H. de Jongste; ed. R.O. Zorn; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), ch. 9: The Coming of the Kingdom and the Lord's Supper. The numbers in the text refer

to the pages of this edition. Ridderbos also discussed the Lord's Supper in his book *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (tr. J.R. De Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) pp. 414ff.; but for the meaning Ridderbos refers back to his *The Coming of the Kingdom*.

⁶In his *The Coming of the Kingdom* Ridderbos does speak extensively about the eschatological perspective. Eschatology is very important for Ridderbos, but he does not see it as a meaning of the Supper. In his book *Paul* Ridderbos does pay attention to the unity expressed in the Lord's Supper (pp. 423 ff.). By his method Ridderbos seems to imply that the idea of unity is not present in the Synoptic Gospels, but only in the epistles of Paul.

⁷M.J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), pp. 1107ff.

⁸The examples of potato chips and cola are probably not so far out as we might suppose. In the December 6, 1991 issue of *Calvinist Contact* an article appeared about a celebration of the Lord's Supper at which Wonder bread and Koolaid were used for the elements (see p. 20). But it is possible that the opportunities were limited since this Supper was celebrated within a penitentiary.

⁹H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Vol. IV (4th ed. Kampen: Kok, 1930) p. 548.



REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R.A. Schouten

Signs and Wonders

A man stands in front of a large crowd in a Pentecostal church auditorium. He is swaying in prayer, and he is saying that he has just received "a word of knowledge" from God that somebody in the room has serious back problems. As it turns out, there are a lot of "somebodies with back problems" in the church. They come forward. With the help of some associates, the preacher lays hands on them, and in the name of Jesus, commands the pain to leave.

Some of the back pain people testify that they have received liberation from suffering. Others say that their situation has somewhat improved. Others, alas, experience no restoration of health and leave as they came – with "back problems."

Meanwhile, in the audience, you can observe a quadriplegic confined to

her wheelchair. Her face is intent on the preacher. You can imagine her thoughts. She hopes that the preacher would receive a "word of knowledge" about her tragic condition. And you think about the little boy with the horrendously invasive brain tumor. Will the preacher have a "word" for this dear little fellow, too?

A growing movement

Such are the observations and questions a person might take home from a "healing service" commonly held in certain Pentecostal circles. Typically, we identify Pentecostals and so-called "charismatics" by their emphasis on speaking in tongues and prophesying. But in recent years, there has emerged an



equal stress on the restoration of the gifts of healing and casting out of demons (I hope to write another article in the future about exorcism). The claim is that the signs and wonders performed by the Lord Jesus and the apostles can be and are being restored today!

One man who has strongly promoted these ideas in recent years is John Wimber. Formerly a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary (the largest evangelical seminary in the world) in California, Wimber left the professor's life to return to a pastor's job. But his express purpose in doing so was to see if he could achieve a restoration of "signs and wonders" in the American context.

Today, the books of Wimber are read by the thousands and he has successfully started a new church group under the name "Vineyard Christian Fellowship." We can find this group also in many Canadian cities and we have even heard that some Reformed persons have become captivated by the thrills of the Vineyard. Wimber's ideas are also promoted and practiced in other circles ranging from Roman Catholic parishes to United Church congregations.

One of the reasons for Wimber's popularity is the application of his ideas to evangelism. For example, one of his best-selling books is entitled, *Power Evangelism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986). In this book Wimber tries to develop the argument that traditional evangelistic methods (a clear, rational presentation of the content of the Gospel together with the call to repent and believe) fall short of the biblical ideal. With traditional evangelistic methods, church growth will be very slow. As far as Wimber is concerned, the only way to achieve a new explosion of growth is through the restoration of signs and wonders. Only when the church shows the power to do miracles will modern people be open to the Gospel.

Signs and wonders in the Bible

How do Wimber's claims stack up against the Bible? If we think about miracles in Scripture, we soon realize that the Lord has not been pleased to perform signs and wonders at all times. Miracles are very frequent in the Bible, but they are not performed continuously or haphazardly. The occurrence of signs and wonders fall into recognizable patterns in distinct, restricted periods of history.

First of all, we may think of the signs and wonders which the Lord did

through Moses. Moses was the Lord's prophet. The Word of God was given through Moses and with the Word came also many signs and wonders to confirm and validate the Word. So it happened that "signs and wonders" were multiplied in the land of Egypt (Ex. 7:3 – the plagues) and also during the whole period of the Exodus (think of the manna). The people of Israel had many clear indications that Moses was a true and faithful prophet, somebody who really did bring a divine Word and not his own word (compare also Deut. 4:34).

A second period of miraculous activity can be noted during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. This was a crucial period in Israel's history for it marked a turning point in the great struggle against pagan religions (Baalism etc.). In response to this life and death struggle for the heart of Israel, the Lord sent prophets like Elijah and Elisha. These men brought the Word of the Lord and again the Word was confirmed by many signs and wonders (read 1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 8).

We can also think of the powerful revelation of God's strength in Babylon. The Lord performed miracles in that pagan land, so much so that pagan Nebuchadnezzar and pagan Darius had to confess of the God of Israel, "How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders" (see, e.g., Dan. 4:3). In this way, the Lord gained a clear and decisive victory over the gods of Babylon.

But signs and wonders were not continuous in the OT period. Instead of a constant repetition of miracles, the Lord commanded His people to *remember* His previous miracles. Parents had to tell their children through the generations of the mighty deeds the Lord had once done. Just think, for example, of the repeated commemoration of the plagues upon Egypt and the other Exodus events in the Psalms and elsewhere (see, e.g., Psalm 77 and 105). Through the generations, Israel celebrated the mighty works of the Lord in history. From a biblical perspective, the *record of the miracle* is just as persuasive and just as valid as the miracle itself. And if a later generation forgets the miracle, then the Lord is not obligated to repeat the miracle (although in His grace He may do so).

In the fullness of times, the Lord sends our chief Prophet and Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came to preach and to teach the Gospel of the Kingdom. This new Prophet's ministry was also marked by an outburst of signs

and wonders. Peter says about the Lord Jesus that He was a "man attested to you by God with *mighty works and wonders and signs* which God did through Him in your midst – as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). So we see that the old Scriptural pattern is repeated, namely, that with fresh revelation come also signs and wonders.

The unique place of the apostles

After the Lord's Ascension into heaven, the apostles began to fulfill their ministry of proclaiming the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. And once again, we see that the prophetic message of God's servants is accredited by miracles. In the NT, the display of signs and wonders is always tied to the apostles or their appointed associates. In 2 Cor. 12:12, the apostle Paul says to the Corinthians that "the *signs of a true apostle* were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works." Hebrews 2:4 also teaches that God "bore witness" to the salvation proclaimed by the apostles with "signs and wonders."

That signs and wonders are restricted to the apostolic circle should surprise nobody who knows the crucial significance of these central New Testament figures. These men were not merely the first Christian preachers. Rather, the NT views them as the foundation of the church. Think only of Rev. 21:14 which



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tells us that the walls of the New Jerusalem had twelve foundations inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles (see also e.g., Eph. 2:20).

The apostles were unique. They were men through whom God revealed Himself to the world. And with that revelation came signs and wonders. Today, there are no apostles. With the end of the apostolic age, the signs and wonders also came to an end. Already in the New Testament record itself, we can see a diminishing emphasis on the miraculous. Today, we need not pray for the restoration of these kinds of miracles. Instead, just like Israel of old, we commemorate the mighty deeds which the Lord did during past times. We sing about the wonders He has already performed.

Does this mean that no miracles happen in our day? Let us never say such a thing. The Lord is free and sovereign. But we are saying that the church need not expect a restoration of the signs and wonders of the NT period. Nor ought we to take seriously people who claim the gift of healing. And we ought to be very leery of those who claim a “word of knowledge” from God, thus presenting themselves as latter-day prophets.

“Natural” versus “supernatural”

Wimber accuses those who do not practice signs and wonders of a lack of faith (*Power Evangelism*, page 50). According to him, Christians need to develop “faith for miracles.” Frankly, however, I see a real lack of faith here on the part of Wimber. He belittles those who stress what he calls “natural methods” of spreading the Gospel in contrast to the way of supernatural signs and wonders. A “natural” method of evangelism is the age-old way of proclaiming the contents of the Gospel in a clear, understandable format. The so-called “natural” way stresses the facts, the content of the Gospel (think of the Apostles’ Creed), together with a call to repent from sin and believe this Gospel.

This “natural” (we would say biblical) method is condemned by Wimber. Yet the Lord has clearly revealed that faith comes from what is heard! (compare Rom. 10:14) And the Lord reveals that the Bible is the sword of the Spirit by which He cuts into human hearts (compare Eph. 6:17). But Wimber has lost confidence in these revealed means of grace, believing that the church which relies on the merely “natural” way is doomed to irrelevance and will

eventually fade altogether. Only if the church can recreate the “power encounter” of the early church will there be a wide open window for the Gospel in modern society.

In *Power Evangelism* (p. 50), Wimber goes so far as to say that when the apostle Paul went to Athens (see Acts 17), he made the mistake of using a rational (“natural”) appeal to the *mind* of the Athenians. This misguided approach resulted in a meager harvest in Athens. But when Paul left Athens to go to Corinth, he changed his strategy. In Corinth, Paul resorted to the use of signs and wonders! He performed miracles with the result that many believed (compare 1 Cor. 2:1-5 and see Acts 18:1-11).

Here we have to say that Wimber reads a great deal of his own thinking into Acts 17 and 18. Acts 18 records not even so much as one sign and wonder during Paul’s ministry at Corinth. Instead, we read in verse 5 that Paul “was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.” And in verse 11, we hear that Paul stayed for 18 months in Corinth and that during this time he was “teaching the Word of God among them.”

Instead of disparaging the preaching of the Gospel as merely “natural,” let’s remember the better biblical way as summarized in Lord’s Day 25 where we confess that faith comes “from the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments.”

A further critique

Furthermore, I am left perplexed by the wide ecumenical base of the signs and wonders movement. According to Wimber, being able to perform signs and wonders depends on an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit. Yet Wimber freely recognizes the legitimacy of signs and wonders as done by Roman Catholic nuns and priests. It is hard to see how a person blessed with a special gift of the Spirit would continue to worship Mary, pray to the saints and adore the host on the altar. It would seem that in his excitement about signs and wonders, Wimber is quite willing to sacrifice basic Protestant distinctives. The common ability to do “signs and wonders” creates very strange bedfellows.


Finally, it has to be said that the miraculous claims of Wimber and others do not measure up to NT reality. Jesus calmed a storm on the sea. It is interesting to think that I know of no

Pentecostal preacher who claims the power to calm a storm on the Pacific.

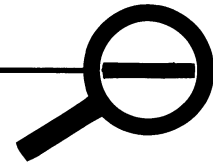
If Wimber claims a full restoration of the signs and wonders of the NT period, why are people not being raised from the dead? And why is it that all the “healings” performed by the Pentecostal preachers are so unimpressive compared to NT healings? The disorders which they claim to cure are usually on the lines of back problems or chronic headaches or partial blindness, chest pains, etc. But we don’t hear of any paraplegics selling their wheelchairs. We don’t see instantaneous healing of broken bones. And we don’t see the healers coming to hospital beds to swiftly and decisively restore the cancer victim perfect health (remember that the healings of the Lord and of the apostles were always swift and decisive).

One of the favourite passages of the “healers” is John 14:12, where the Lord says: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and *greater works* than these will he do, because I go to the Father.” If this text indeed means that believers can have the power to do greater miracles than Jesus Christ, why don’t we hear of Pentecostals routinely feeding crowds of 30,000 or more with just a few loaves?

The fact is that we don’t hear about such things. This deficiency confirms that the whole approach of Wimber is badly flawed. Wimber reads through certain parts of the NT and is so impressed that he wants to stop the clock right there. He wants to take a certain aspect of the description of the early NT church and make that our norm for today. In so doing, he ignores the whole redemptive-historical nature of Scripture. Wimber needs to realize that we can’t stop the clock anywhere in the Bible. Certain things, like signs and wonders, happen at certain times in God’s revelation to man for specific reasons.

Just as there are no longer apostles in our midst, so there are no longer “signs and wonders” in the special NT sense. To seek their restoration is futile. What remains for us today is the *official record* of the mighty works of God done in OT and NT times. Our task, therefore, is to pay full attention to that record and to proclaim it to the world. We may be sure that through the reverent memory of those signs and wonders, the power of God is as certainly unleashed in our lives as it was in the days of the early church. 

By C. Van Dam



Reformed Believers in the Ukraine

Reformed Christians in the Ukraine are beginning to receive the attention that is warranted. With the fall of communism and relaxed tensions, exploratory trips are being made from the West to see what help can be given. Herman Veenhof (*Nederlands Dagblad*, 28 Dec. 1991) and William Van Tol (*The Banner*, 3 Feb. 1992) have provided informative articles. The area visited is called Carpatho-Ukraine. In order to get a clear picture of where this is, one must remember that the Carpathian mountain range runs through southern Poland and the eastern Ukraine. The plain to the west of these mountains is part of the Hungarian plain and used to be part of Hungary, but is now in the Ukraine. This is the area where many Hungarian Reformed churches are found.

Background

What is the background of these Reformed Christians? How did they get there?

In 1944 nearly five hundred thousand Hungarians living in what is now Ukraine were suddenly cut off from their motherland. The region where they lived, Carpatho-Ukraine, had been occupied by the Soviet Union, taken away from Hungary, and assigned to the Ukrainian Republic.

The Soviet soldiers swept through the Hungarian community, sending about forty thousand men between the ages of eighteen and fifty to prison camps in Kazakh and Siberia. Most never returned; today about two hundred thousand Hungarians remain in Ukraine.

Before the Soviet occupation, Carpatho-Ukraine was home to more than one hundred Hungarian Reformed churches. They were part of what is still the largest Reformed church in the world – the Hungarian Reformed Church, which num-

bers about 2 million members. Before World War II, it had 3 million members, of which 120,000 lived in Carpatho-Ukraine. (Van Tol)

The Soviet occupation has devastated this once prosperous region.

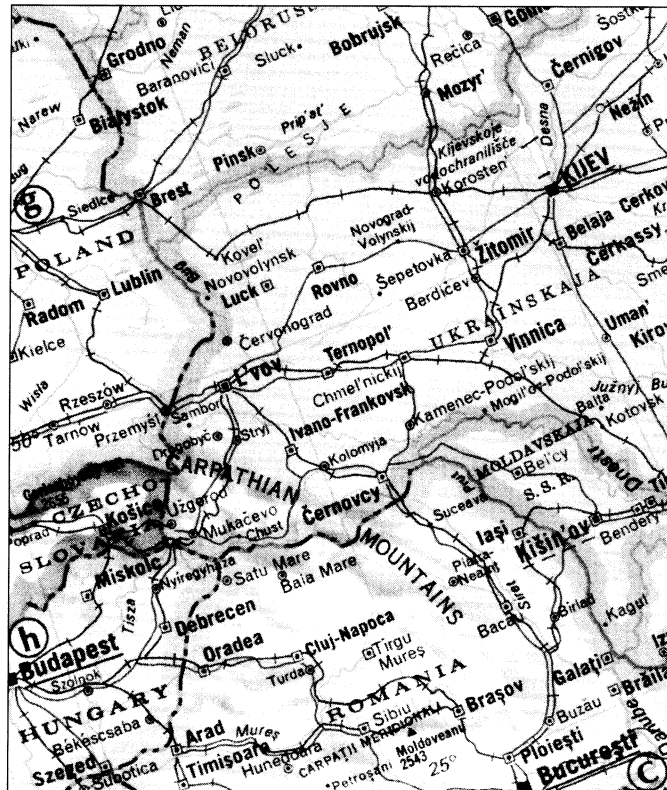
We were not prepared for what we saw. Before the Soviet occupation, the Carpathian plain...was a breadbasket of corn, wheat, sugar beets, and vegetables. It had been farmed by people who had many strong horses and wagons. Soviet soldiers shot their horses and promised tractors. Today both horses and tractors are few, and the people can hardly feed themselves.

After the Soviet government took over, it left the churches open but severely persecuted Christians.

Officials took away church bells, Bibles, songbooks, catechism books, and other literature. The government took over parsonages and Christian schools. It did not permit schoolchildren to go to church. Soviet authorities imprisoned most of the pastors, many of whom never returned. (Van Tol)

The present situation

Today the Hungarian Reformed Church in Carpatho-Ukraine has ninety churches. They are served by twenty-five pastors, who preach in up to eight congregations every Sunday. Fourteen of these pastors are older, having completed their theological education before the hard years. Most survived many



years of imprisonment and forced labour. The other eleven are young men who received informal theological training from the fourteen. (Van Tol)

The churches are quite full on Sundays (in contrast with Rumania and Hungary) and young people are in attendance, even though there is no heat in these buildings (Veenhof).

Veenhof noted that it is a miracle that the Hungarian Reformed Church in the Ukraine is blossoming under very difficult circumstances. Remarkable is how good the relationships are between the Ukrainians and the Hungarian believers. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe all kind of old grievances surface, but not here (although there are enough that could be brought up). The

atmosphere is exceptionally positive.

In the village of Bergovo a church was returned to the Reformed after 28 years. It was a mess for it had been used as a storage place for salt and coal, and as a furniture store. Everyone in the village helped to fix it up, even the Roman Catholics. Similar situations are found in Mukàcs, Bergazàcz, and Oezjgorod. Churches are returned and people help each other. A Reformed minister can even borrow gasoline from his non-Reformed neighbour in order to preach in other congregations! (Veenhof)

The future

With the end of oppression, the Reformed Church is entering a critical period. In which direction will it go? Veenhof notes that the weakness of a

national church ("volkskerk"), which is what the Hungarian Reformed Church is, shows itself in lack of discipline, in the actual functioning of church life, and the preaching which is not always optimal. These churches need much help, materially, but also where possible the confessional character needs to be strengthened.

One organization that is busy with extending appropriate aid to the needs of Eastern Europe is Fundamentum, run by members of our Dutch sister churches. Its chief goal is to strengthen the Reformed character of churches after the fall of communism. Last fall, this organization established its first contacts with Reformed churches in Carpatho-Ukraine. May their efforts for a Reformed church life and doctrine be blessed. **C**

The Reformed Evangelism Taskforce – An Update

By J. Visscher

It was some time ago that our readers last received an update on the activities of the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce. What have we been doing over the last couple of years? Perhaps the following information will give you some idea.

Personnel

The Taskforce continues to be chaired by Dr. J. Visscher, pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, B.C. The Rev. D. Moes, pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Watford, Ontario, acts as Vice-Chairman. Miss Sietta Oostenbrug, the secretary for the Langley Church, also acts as secretary/treasurer of the Taskforce. As such she replaces Miss Alice VanEerden who worked very faithfully in that dual capacity for a number of years.

In short you can see that we have a small executive and that as a result it is possible to run a tight ship. Consideration is currently being given to possibly adding some more members to the executive.

Because the executive is small it is important to have good contact with others. As such the Consistory of the church at Langley is kept informed as to our activities and asked for feedback. The local Home Mission Committee in Langley is also used in a consultative way, as are other Home Mission Committees both in the Fraser Valley as well as in Ontario. With respect to the latter it may be reported that two members of the executive were in Ontario in November of 1991 in order to update the League of Home Mission Committees there on our work and to receive input from them.

Current activities

At the moment we continue to produce the evangelistic magazine called *Evangel* which appears four times a year. It is edited by the Rev. D. Moes who manages to involve a number of the ministers in our federation by getting them to submit articles on a regular basis. He also makes use of some very capable church members who contribute articles as well as assist in

the editing. As for the printing work, that is in the capable hands of Premier.

Hopefully, your church is among the many churches in our federation that are subscribing to *Evangel* and using it to spread the Good News about our Lord. Many churches are distributing it to homes around their church building, placing it in public buildings and offices. Some churches are giving it to the members for them to read first and then to pass on to their neighbours. The possibilities for its use are many and are only limited by our imaginations.

The Taskforce originally distributed the Bible Course *A Gift from Heaven* in four parts dealing with Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, Redemptive History and the Bible. These parts have been widely distributed both at home and abroad. They are used for introducing people to the faith, as refresher courses for members, and for other educational and evangelistic work.

In Ontario, as well as BC, the Course has been advertised in local newspapers and this has produced a wide and interesting response. Feed-

back from this approach has also led the Taskforce to publish *A Gift from Heaven* in a second format, namely in 25 parts or booklets (as it was originally produced in the Netherlands). Each booklet of a dozen pages contains three different subjects. Early reactions indicate that this format should be better suited to correspondence evangelism.

New activities

A number of new projects are being worked on. The first issue of *Outreach* is evidence of that. It is slated to appear twice a year as an insert in *Clarion*. Its purpose is three fold: to supply the readers with the necessary information that will lead to the development of a biblically sound view of Reformed evangelism; to assist and stimulate members and Committees engaged in this work; to communicate new ideas and to act as a conduit that will inform people about local activities in different parts of the country.

At this time another new project is

nearing completion. It consists of a booklet called *Introducing the Canadian Reformed Churches*. This booklet was written by Dr. J. Visscher and has been revised in light of suggestions made by a number of ministers and professors. It has been professionally designed seeing that it should be a fitting reflection on our churches. At the moment it is being printed by Premier and should be available in the near future. At present the price remains unknown, although like all Taskforce material it will be sold at cost.

Another project that is in process has to do with a more basic and elementary Bible course. Our experience has taught us that the present Course is well-suited for people who have some idea of what the Christian faith is all about, but that it is not so ideal for people who have little or no biblical understanding. As a result, we are working on a course that will fill this need.

One more area that will be explored in the future has to do with the produc-

tion of pamphlets that will shed a biblical light on various contemporary topics. For this work topics will have to be selected, writers will have to be approached and layout and production will have to be determined.

Finally, the Taskforce has also stated its willingness to help and assist various committees in Ontario as they continue to develop Vacation Bible School material from a Reformed perspective. This help may take the form of monetary assistance, research, writing, page layout work and printing.

In short

We trust that this update gives you some idea as to what we are involved in. If you have any suggestions to make about projects that we should consider, please let us know. In the meantime, we continue to solicit your prayers and support. May the Lord see fit to continue to bless our humble efforts to spread far and wide the glorious Gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ. C

Farewell, Rev. and Mrs. Boessenkool

By Mrs. T. Heyink

From August 1990 to August 1991, the congregation at London was privileged to enjoy the services of a retired minister from Johannesburg, South Africa, the Rev. W. Boessenkool. Originally it was the intention that Rev. and Mrs. Boessenkool stay only for one catechism season, however their stay was soon extended to a year. Rev. Boessenkool hoped that during his stay the existing vacancy in the London congregation would be filled. Although this was not the Lord's plan, Rev. and Mrs. Boessenkool cheerfully and tirelessly laboured among the members of the congregation. We were amazed at his stamina and zest. Mrs. Boessenkool also found a special place in the hearts of young and old alike. We all helped in her struggle to conquer the English language, which she accomplished. Her

reticent but humorous nature was appreciated by all.

Therefore it was a somewhat subdued congregation which gathered together on the 25th of August to worship with Rev. and Mrs. Boessenkool for the last time. The Scripture passage for the sermon was John 10:1-18 and the text was Psalm 23. The theme of the sermon was "The Song of the Good Shepherd about the Church." The three points were:

1. Song of thanksgiving of the persecuted church
2. Song of confidence of the struggling church
3. Song of advent of the satisfied church.

It was pointed out that although the shepherd's task seems to be viewed as a pastoral, peaceful task, in reality it was



Mr. and Mrs. Lindhout Sr. saying farewell to Rev. and Mrs. Boessenkool

a very dangerous occupation. Defense against enemies was important and sometimes deadly. The author, David, laments that it is truly a time of grief and persecution for him, but in the midst of his sorrow he sings of the help and strength of the Good Shepherd. David is confident the Lord will provide comfort and mercy to the persecuted church



The congregation of London

in time of need. Even in time of abundance the Lord will strengthen and guide His people, protecting them from the attacks of the evil one. The shepherd must provide safe, still waters for his sheep. The Good Shepherd promises the living waters of the Holy Spirit to His flock. The Good Shepherd gave His life, so that His flock might have life abundantly. Through His divine sacrifice, He provides righteousness and life eternal for His sheep. The Good Shepherd is God with us, Immanuel. He uses the rod and staff of His Word to rescue, protect and guide His sheep. And finally He promises a table of plenty in the presence of enemies. He promises the

comfort of healing oil and overflowing blessings. Above all He promises the divine blessing of dwelling in His eternal house forever.

Although there is no minister as yet in the London congregation, the Good Shepherd is here. He watches over this flock and keeps all the promises to His people. The congregation is exhorted to remain in Him, love Him, keep His commandments, and follow Him as He is the Good Shepherd. Quoting Hebrews 13:20, 21, Rev. Boessenkool blessed the congregation, giving the glory forever to Christ Jesus our Lord.

After the service, the congregation stayed to formally thank Rev. and Mrs.

Boessenkool, and wish them God's blessing. The Chairman of the consistory, Mr. J. Schouten, expressed thanks to them, also for their dedication to the Lord's cause. He said, "May our heavenly Father protect you in your travels home, and grant you many years of fruitful work in His vineyard." The congregation sang Psalm 134:1, 2, 3 with and to the ministerial couple.

Several tokens of appreciation were then given and received with much pleasure. For Mrs. Boessenkool a tablecloth with the signatures of all the members of the congregation embroidered upon it, and for Rev. Boessenkool a carved loon, also as a remembrance of Canada. Then Karen Bostelaar presented, on behalf of the Young People, personalized hockey jerseys, with numbers 7 and 11, representing the apartment number of the Boessenkool's temporary Canadian residence. A social hour followed, giving everyone the opportunity to say good-bye.

The congregation at London have many fond memories of Rev. and Mrs. Boessenkool's stay. We pray the Lord will continue to grant them good health, that they may continue to be a blessing among our brothers and sisters in South Africa. C

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

The article, "Celebrating Christmas" by R.A. Schouten had some very good points to think about and to act on, but I do think that Rev. Schouten failed to see a negative aspect with regards to celebrating Christmas in similar ways as the world.

Very few people will disagree when he says that having a tree in the house is harmless. There is nothing spiritual or unspiritual about a Christmas tree, in the same sense that there is nothing spiritual or unspiritual about the meat that had been offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8.

However, Paul does say that it can lead the weaker members astray: "Therefore if food is a cause of my brother's

falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall" (1 Cor. 8:13).

In the minds of little children it is hard to understand the difference between what we mean by Christmas and what the world means by Christmas if in the children's view, we celebrate it in the same way.

Sure, they know that we remember Christ's birth and the reason for His birth, but what does this have to do with *Christmas trees*, *Christmas lights* and *Christmas presents*. Therefore, if having a Christmas tree is a cause of confusion in the minds of my young brothers and sisters in the church, I will never have a Christmas tree, lest I cause them to fall.

It is true, Christmas day is not a holy day. The world celebrates on December 25, in a totally man-centered way and adds some "spirituality" to make it seem more holy or religious.

Why don't we teach our children what Christmas is, instead of going along with the foolishness of the world.

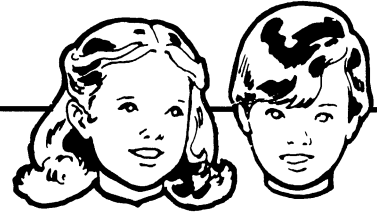
In this letter I would also like to express my appreciation for Rev. Schouten's and Rev. van Popta's articles in the column "Remember Your Creator."

The articles are easy to read, and they are a great way to get the young people interested in reading *Clarion*, and to motivate them to study the Bible.

With brotherly greetings,
Bert de Haan
Grand Valley, ON C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

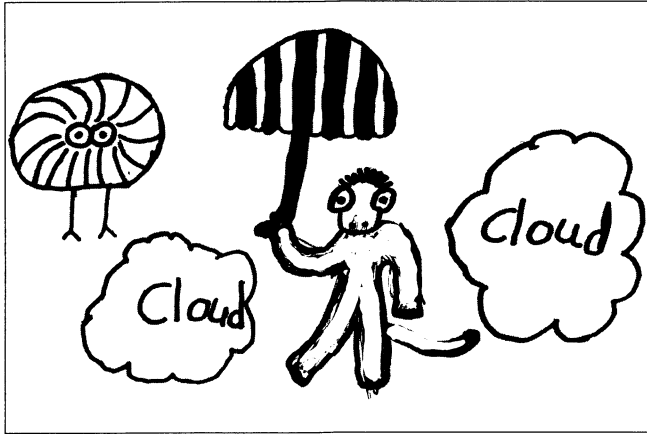


Dear Busy Beavers,

Let's start with a spring cartoon and Knock Knock Jokes.

SPRING CARTOON

by Busy Beavers Anna and Michelle Hordyk



KNOCK KNOCK JOKES

from Busy Beavers

Lee-Anne Vanderwoerd
and Lydia Penninga

Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Pasture.
Pasture who?
Pasture bedtime!



Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Catchup.
Catchup who?
Catchup with me and I'll tell you!

Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Robin.
Robin who?
Robin the cookie jar is a "no-no."

Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Oliver.
Oliver who?
Oliver the place people are
telling knock-knock jokes!

Quiz Time!

SPRING WORDSEARCH

by Busy Beaver Margaret Nyenhuis

Find:

flowers
showers
puddles
buds
leaves
green
trees
babies
animals
rain
rainbows
thunderstorms
April
May
June
cheer
pink

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

A man rode into a town on Thursday, stayed three days, and left on Thursday. How can this be?

(See answer)

BRAIN TEASERS

Strange Purchase

"How much will one cost?" asked the customer in a hardware store.

"Twenty cents," replied the clerk.

"And how much will twelve cost?"

"Forty cents"

"O.K. I'll take nine hundred and twelve."

"Fine, that will be sixty cents."

Question: What was the customer buying?

Parts

Name ten parts of the body that are spelled with only three letters.



Make One Word

Take the letters in the word "new door" and rearrange them to make one word. There is only one way.

Spelling Test

What is the next letter in the following series?

O T T F F S S

(see answers)



Birthday Wishes!

Very best wishes for a very happy day and much happiness in the year ahead! For all the Busy Beavers celebrating an April birthday we hope you have a super day with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father guide and keep you all from this birthday to the next!



APRIL

Janine Vander Hoeven	1	John Witten	16
Clifford Vandersluis	2	Jeremy Vandenbos	17
John Verhoeff	2	Jessica Beintema	19
Brad Bergsma	3	Carrie-Lynn Poort	21
Jennifer Van Pykeren	4	Diana Flokstra	22
Jessica Vandergugten	6	Tammy Heemskerck	22
Melanie Peters	10	Bonnie Van Laar	22
Alisha Stroop	10	Jim Spoelstra	23
Jolene Hulzebosch	11	Elissa Faber	27
Wendell Huttema	14	Carrie Schuurman	29
Tony Van Oene	14	Marlaine Vander Horst	29

Answer to Brain Teaser

The horse is named Thursday!

Answers:

Brain Teasers – Strange Purchase: house numbers. Parts: arm, ear, eye, gum, hip, leg, lip, rib, toe. Make One Word: The letters in "new door" can be rearranged to make ONE WORD. Spelling Test: The letters are the initials of the first seven numbers, one, two, three, four, five six, seven. The eighth letter, then, would be "E".

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

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

