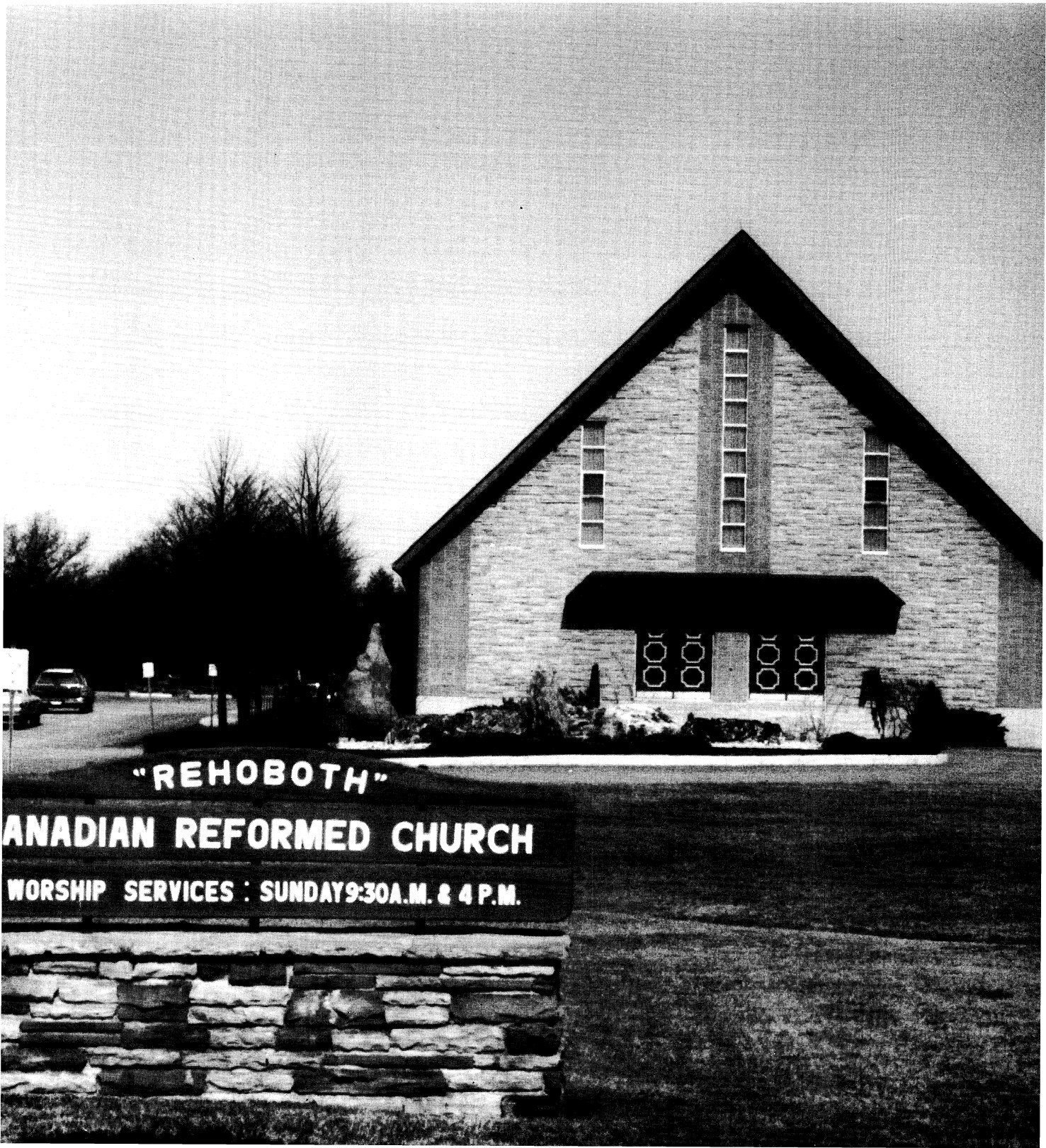


Clarion



Volume 41, No. 8

April 24, 1992



"REHOBOTH"

CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCH

WORSHIP SERVICES : SUNDAY 9:30 A.M. & 4 P.M.

How does God reveal Himself in His Works and Word?¹

(First of three parts)

By C. Van Dam

A slightly revised text of a speech given at the Men's League Day held on March 28, 1992 at the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington, Ontario. Footnotes have been kept to a minimum.

The issue

In our day and age, the controversy about Bible and science shows no signs of letting up. What is the authority of the Bible and what is the authority of science respecting inquiry and research into the created world? In an effort to break through the apparent deadlock, there are signs that a new approach is being attempted. It is suggested that the present dilemma would be solved if it be realized more fully and adequately that the created world is also God's revelation. The implication is that science properly done therefore passes on not only human insights but also God's revelation.¹ For this position, appeal is often made to Art. 2 of our Belgic Confession. After all, besides the Bible, this article also speaks of revelation with respect to creation.

Perhaps an illustration will make clear what is at stake and the dilemmas one faces. A geologist says that to the best of his knowledge, based on what is found and deduced from the world he studies, the earth must be billions of years old. The Bible reader says, I do not find this in Genesis or anywhere else in Scripture. So who is right? According to the new emphasis of equating the weight of special and general revelation, the geologist must be right for he is equipped to study the givens of creation which is also revelation. We must trust God's revelation also in the rock formations. The CRC Report on Creation and Science which was adopted in 1991, states that "the authority of general revelation, no less than that of special revelation, is a divine authority, which must be acknowledged without reservation."²

What we see happening here is that creation or general revelation in effect and in practice becomes separated from Scripture and becomes an authority of itself, even though it is denied that this is the intent. If there is a dispute between science and the Bible, science is generally given the greater weight for it virtually functions as interpreter of revelation in creation. But what about Scripture when it appears to disagree with science (e.g. on evolution, age of the earth)? God cannot contradict Himself can He? How can God say one thing in Scripture and another in His so-called general revelation? How do we get out of this dilemma? To answer this question, I propose that we investigate first of all what precisely God reveals in general revelation. We must be clear on this point. Next, in order to be specific in our discussion, we will need to look at a concrete scientific tool, like the laws of nature, which functions so prominently in

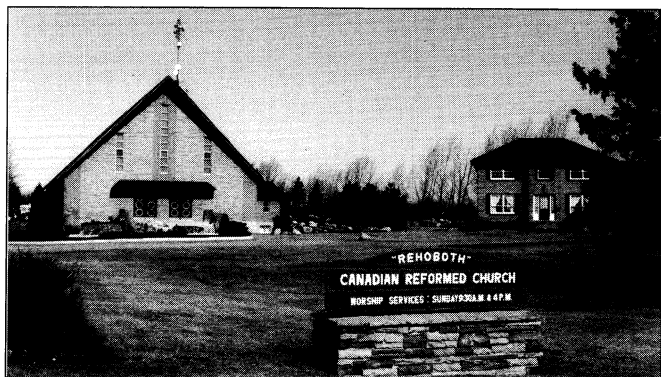
furthering scientific knowledge and postulating new theories. In the third place in the light of the above, we should consider the place of Scripture and what man's scientific enterprise should consist of.

What does general revelation reveal?

If one studies passages dealing with general revelation, one must come to the conclusion that general revelation reveals God, His glory and His handiwork. Let us look at some important examples. We read in Psalm 8: "How majestic is Thy Name in all the earth (vv. 1, 9)! Psalm 19:1 says: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork." Romans 1 speaks of the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (v. 18).

¹for what can be known about God is plain to them [the unbelievers], because God has shown it to them.

²Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse....



One can also think of Acts 14:17 which speaks of God's goodness as seen in His provision of rain and food. In all these examples, the object of the revelation is God, be it His glory, or His goodness, or His wrath.

One can therefore say that both Scripture and general revelation reveal God.³ Formally speaking, one could further conclude that science which is the study of general revelation should as a result be accorded as much respect as theology which studies God's special revelation. But here we run into a major problem with the way current science is conducted. If general revelation reveals God and if science studies general revelation, then the first conclusion science should come to is the reality and characteristics of God who reveals himself in creation! But science as conducted

today basically ignores God. Indeed, the influential and prestigious National Academy of Sciences (in the U.S.A.) defines the most basic characteristic of science as being "reliance upon naturalistic explanation."⁴ How can such a science that ignores the Creator and His attributes be considered as a valid authority by Christians to inform us concerning what God is saying in His general revelation? God's Word (Romans 1:20-21) tells us:

²⁰Ever since the creation of the world His (i.e. God's) invisible nature, namely His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; ²¹for although they knew God they did not honour Him as God....

Christian scientists will not only see God revealed in creation; but they will also take His written revelation into consideration when theorizing and trying to come to an integrated understanding of our present world. Perhaps an example which is not controversial in our circles can make this point clear. Some scientists have concluded that homosexuality is largely a genetically determined condition. From this data, it is reasoned that since nature (general revelation) shows that this is a "normal" occurrence we have no right to condemn homosexuals but must accord them full rights and privileges as any other member of society.⁵ A Christian will, however, say that if such conclusions from general revelation regarding the genetics are to be considered correct, we must also listen to God's special revelation. There God says we live in a world that is fallen from the original state of perfection and sinful (with all the consequences, also genetically) and that God condemns homosexuality (e.g., Lev. 18:22; 20:13). In other words both means of revelation are taken into consideration.

This approach will also have to be followed for the natural sciences to be able to speak with any authority about the results of their work being equated with God's revelation in creation. God does not speak with one voice via the means of general revelation and with another voice via special revelation. There is one truth. What man can see or discover in the created world must always be seen in the light of Scripture. This relationship is reinforced many times in the Bible. God's Word accompanies His work. Already in paradise, Adam not only saw God's handiwork, he also heard God's voice. God did not leave man with only natural revelation. After the fall, God's spoken Word preceded and accompanied His mighty acts whereby the LORD God explained the miracles and upheavals He worked in creation. For example, Israel would not have understood the Red Sea crossing correctly if they had simply assumed that a strong east wind came along just at the right time. God's spoken Word had preceded and accompanied this event and God's people could respond accordingly (Ex. 3:7-10; 14:16-18; 15:1-21). In the New Testament, we find the same. Christ's miracles could not be understood apart from His teaching. (See, e.g., Matt. 9:1-8, 18-38.) What is true of extraordinary events in creation and the natural world is also true of what we consider perfectly normal and routine. It cannot be correctly understood without the special revelation of the Word of God. His creation work cannot be interpreted neutrally and objectively. The more God's creation is studied, the more one must keep in mind God's special revelation. The two go together and general revelation cannot be correctly understood without the special revelation.

It may be good to consider an aspect of Psalm 19 for a moment to make that clear. Psalm 19 is divided into two



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

SUBSCRIPTION RATES	Regular	Air
	FOR 1992	Mail
Canada*	\$32.00*	\$57.25*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$35.00	\$50.00
International	\$46.25	\$78.00

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055

Advertisements: \$6.50 per column inch

Second class mail registration number 1025

ISSN 0383-0438

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basic parts. In verses 1-6 we are told of God's glory in creation. In verses 7-14 we read of the glory of the LORD revealed in His Word. In this arrangement there is a movement towards a climax. One can marvel at the night sky and see something of the greatness and glory of God. But, when one reads the Word written then God's glory and power is seen in a much richer way. It is striking that in the first half of the Psalm, God is referred to only once and the name used is Elohim, the Hebrew word for God. In the second half of the Psalm, however, God is referred to seven times and the name used is Yahweh, the covenant God. The message is clear. Nature and creation cannot reveal the God of the covenant. That is only known through the special revelation. At the same time, it is clear that one cannot understand the created world properly without knowing about this covenant God, for His salvation work not only concerns the soul, but also the creation. This is His world and He is busy with it and will renew it on that great day of Jesus Christ.

These observations bring us to the next question. How does God reveal Himself in nature, in creation and why can one not understand creation properly if one does not

know of the God of creation and recreation? In order to make the answers to these questions as concrete as possible (so that we do not get lost in theory), let us concentrate on the matter of "laws of nature" and see how Scripture deals with this. As you know, "laws of nature" are a key element in the modern quest for understanding the world in which we live and from which general revelation is received. More about that the next time, D.V.

¹See, e.g., the Christian Reformed Report of the Committee on Creation and Science appointed in 1988 and reporting to the 1991 Synod (hereafter *CRC Report*), 13, 38, 41, 44 (mimeographed copy).

²*CRC Report*, 41; also see pp. 38, 44. Also see, e.g., the response to this way of thinking by N.H. Gootjes, "Does the Belgic Confession Teach 'Not the Bible Alone?'" *Clarion* 39:22-23 (1990) 470-471, 492-493.

³See on this point and for what follows, N. Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1988), 16-17.

⁴See P.E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1991) 7-8; also see pp. 145-154.

⁵"Born or Bred," *Newsweek*, February 24, 1992, pp. 46-53, esp. pp. 48, 53. C

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper³

By N.H. Gootjes

The center of the Lord's Supper

The traditional reformed understanding of the meaning of the Lord's Supper is being questioned from several sides. This means that we have to go back to Scripture. The church did not invent this ceremony, it only followed the instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ, who made the Lord's Supper an institution in the church, 1 Cor. 11:25.

But where shall we begin, now that the meaning of the Lord's Supper is no longer obvious to many? Studying the passages in the Bible that speak about the Lord's Supper, it can easily be seen that this sacrament has its center in the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. We should therefore first investigate the meaning of eating Christ's body and of drinking Christ's blood. Later we can study how these are represented in the sacrament.

The body

The traditional Reformed position is that the word "body" refers to Christ's body, as He gave it over to be crucified on the cross for our salvation. Some

theologians today, however, are of the opinion that the word "body" refers not to the body, but to the person of Christ. This is defended in different ways.

For example, W.L. Lane in his commentary on Mark says that the Aramaic word for "my body" means no more than "I." What Jesus says here is no more than: "I am myself this bread," or: "My person is this bread."¹⁰ We have to reject this kind of exegesis. Whether the Lord Jesus said these words in Aramaic or not, is a debated question. But we do not have an Aramaic version, and we do therefore not know what word He would have used in Aramaic. We have a Greek version, and that should remain the basis for exegesis. In other words: We should not correct the Greek text from a supposed Aramaic original.

Another attempt to explain "My body" as meaning no more than "I" was given by J.P. Versteeg. The word "body" refers according to him first of all to a person as creature of God, see Rom. 12:1. It is used as equivalent for "oneself" in Eph. 5:28. "Body" is the concrete person in his actions toward God and man, see 2 Cor. 5:10. And

when Jesus Christ says: "This is My body," He means: "This am I," in the very concrete sense of "Christ as He gave Himself for His people in His death on the cross."¹¹

Even this brief summary makes clear that the meaning of the word "body" is continually shifting. Versteeg gives no reason for his translations. But the most important criticism that must be brought in against Lane as well as Versteeg is, that they do not explain the word "body" in the context.¹²

From the several meanings of "body"¹³ only the first: either living or dead body, can be considered. Within the context of the institution of the Lord's Supper the word "body" is used in combination with the word "blood." This is very unusual; the usual combination is "flesh and blood." It is not hard to determine what "flesh and blood" means. Flesh and blood denote the two main parts of our body. But blood normally belongs to a body, so that there is no need to speak of body and blood separately. Why is the blood mentioned next to the body?

The combination "body and blood" is used only once in the New Testa-

ment; Heb. 13:11 says: "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp." The word "body" in combination with "blood" here refers to a dead body. Would this meaning also fit Christ's Word at the institution of the Lord's Supper: "This is My body"? Before rejecting this interpretation as impossible let us see whether this would fit the context of the Lord's Supper.

The blood

In the words of institution the "blood" is almost always (the exception is 1 Cor. 11:25) connected with the verb: "to pour out." To quote the gospel according to Mark: "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24). What does the Greek expression "to pour out blood" mean? A survey of the New Testament shows that this expression in all instances means: "to murder." A clear example is Matt. 23:35: "Upon you may come the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar."¹⁴

We may conclude that Christ's Word: "This is My blood which is poured out" refers to the violent death which He was about to die. This supports the opinion we stated above, that the word "body" refers to Jesus' dead body.

This is confirmed by 1 Cor. 11:26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." Both the bread and the cup refer to the death of Jesus Christ; the bread by the comparison with a dead body; the cup by the comparison between the wine and the blood which was shed.

This leads to the conclusion that both the body and the blood refer to the death of Jesus Christ. We have to disagree with Ridderbos' opinion, stated in the second article, that the death of Jesus Christ is certainly in the background but it is not present in the Lord's Supper itself. Our investigation led to a different conclusion. The sayings about body and blood refer directly to Christ's death. The traditional reformed conviction that Christ's death is made visible in bread and wine is correct.

Eat...

Jesus Christ does more than indicate the meaning of bread and wine. He also

says what the disciples have to do with bread and wine.

They have to take the bread and eat it. The disciples have to accept it out of Christ's hand and use it. Bread is meant to be used as food. The expression: "This is My body...., eat," can only mean that the death of Christ should be accepted in faith as food. This food will keep them alive.

In the gospel of Luke we do not find the words "take (and eat)." But in this gospel another expression is used which points into the same direction: "This is my body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19). "Given for you" is not the same as "given to you." When Jesus Christ says that His body is given for the disciples, He means that His death will benefit those who participate. The words "take and eat" are, in effect, the same in meaning as "this body is given to your benefit."

...and drink

The emphasis on receiving and using is repeated with the wine. Luke mentions that Christ said about the cup: "Take this" (Luke 22:17). Mark 14:24 does not mention a command to take, but, while the disciples are drinking, Christ explains: "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." Christ reveals in these words that His death will benefit more than just the few disciples who are at that moment eating with Him.

In Matt. 26:27ff. we find both the commandment to drink from the cup, and the explanation that the blood is poured out for many. But this passage

is especially important because it also explains in what respect that blood of Christ will benefit the participants: the blood "is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Here we hear in what sense the death of Christ benefits the many: Christ died His violent death that the sins of many would be forgiven.

Drinking the wine means nothing less than through Jesus receiving the forgiveness of sins. The manner in which Christ's death brings forgiveness is not explained in the Lord's Supper, but this sacrament makes visible and tangible this promise of forgiveness.

The covenant

One more element is connected with the blood: the covenant. Mark 14:24 says: "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." In 1 Cor. 11:25 is spoken of the "new covenant."

What is the background of this expression? The text does not indicate that we have here a quotation or a reference to a specific Old Testament situation. But many texts of the New Testament speak of a contrast between the Old and the New Covenant. Then the "Old Covenant" refers to the Mosaic covenant, with its laws and institutions. The "New Covenant" refers to the newer relation between God and His people, in which the Mosaic laws have been abolished (see 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 4:24; Heb. 7:22; 8:8; 9:15; 10:16).

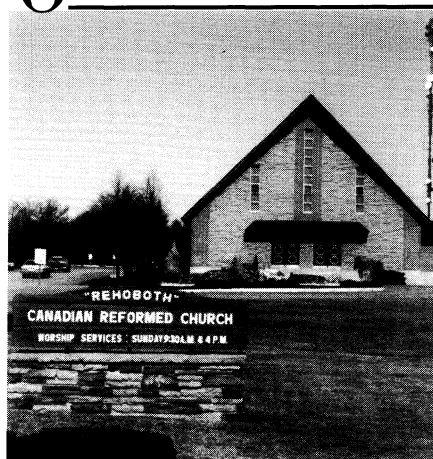
The covenant established at Sinai could not bring the solution. God lived among His people in a tabernacle, but separated from them through the sacrifices. These sacrifices could not really take away the sins of the people. But through the violent death of the Jesus Christ the new covenant is established. His death lays the final basis why the people can live in communion with God.

The center of the Lord's Supper

Now we can summarize the central content of the Lord's Supper:

- Body and blood symbolize the death of Jesus Christ.
- This death benefits many (more than the eleven!).
- Christ's death benefits many, because it is for the forgiveness of their sins.
- The relationship with God (the covenant) is based on it.
- The people should use Christ's body and blood as bread and wine: they

OUR COVER



stay alive by receiving in faith the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.


¹⁰W.L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, p. 506. Lane refers to the article on *sooma* by J. Behm in *TDNT* vol. 3, p. 736. J. Jeremias says about the origin: "Most authors join G. Dalman, who, in 1922, proposed *guph* as the equivalent of *sooma*," *The Eucharist Words of Jesus*, p. 198.

¹¹J.P. Versteeg, "Het avondmaal volgens het Nieuwe Testament" in W. Van 't Spijker, among others ed., *Bij brood en beker* (Goudriaan: De Groot, 1980) pp. 42ff.

¹²See J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, p. 200; "But then we must again reject *guph* as an equivalent of "body," because its complement is *nowhere* "blood."

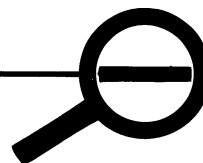
¹³The dictionary for New Testament Greek gives the following meanings of the word: 1. body of man or animal - a. dead body; b. living body; 2. plural: slaves; 3. bodies of plants and heavenly bodies, 1 Cor. 15:4. overagainst *skia*: the thing itself, Col. 2:17; 5. the Christian community; see W. Bauer, W.A. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago

and London: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed. 1979) pp. 799ff.

¹⁴See W. Bauer, among others, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 22, s.v. *aima*, 2.a.; see also the article of J. Behm, in *TDNT*, vol. 1, pp. 173ff. In the Septuagint the expression "to pour out blood" is also used, in connection with the sacrifice, for the blood which is poured out at the foot of the altar (Ex. 29:12, Lev. 4:7 etc.) but this meaning does not fit in the Lord's Supper. If this was the intended meaning, the words "at the foot of the altar" should have to be mentioned. 

PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



MERF and Egypt

Recently two reports were published on the work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) in Egypt. *Nederlands Dagblad* (12 March) reported that Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, chairman for MERF in Egypt, and Rev. V. Atallah, director of MERF, visited the Netherlands and our sister church in Groningen (Rev. L.J. Joosse) which organizes support for MERF. (It was on request of this church that the Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington West organized a MERF committee to help the cause from Canada.) *New Horizons* (March 1992) also carried an article (by Mark T. Bude) on MERF related activities in Egypt and described the work of Rev. Kamal in Malucca.

MERF's activities

MERF is headquartered in Larnaca, Cyprus from which it broadcasts the Reformed gospel once every week. As Rev. Atallah put it: "We do not believe in dialogue. Everyone needs the gospel and everyone must know that Jesus is the Son of God. That is why we seize every opportunity to evangelize." From the estimated 250 thousand listeners, contacts are made and MERF does what it can to stimulate the establishment of Reformed congregations. MERF also organizes courses in Bible knowledge for church members and officebearers who come to Larnaca on their own from different Middle East countries. Furthermore, MERF is involved in diaconal help. At the moment such help is espe-

cially given to Reformed believers in Iraq. It is clear from the published interview that Rev. Atallah is extremely grateful for the support received so that this vital work can continue. He also appreciates visitors from abroad who come to visit their centre and take an interest in the work. For the information of readers who may be going to Cyprus as tourists, Reformed church services are held at 57 Apostolides Street, Larnaca. You are most welcome.

The Reformed faith in Egypt

Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous is the leader of the Evangelical Church of Egypt. Since there is no word for "Reformed" in Arabic, the word "evangelical" is used. The Evangelical Church of Egypt was established through the efforts of Scottish and American missionaries about 140 years ago. This church maintains the Reformed faith as articulated in the Westminster Confession and has a total membership of about 50,000. Ninety per cent of Egypt is Muslim. Of the remaining 10%, the five million Coptic Christians form the largest group, followed by Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Dr. Istafanous teaches in Cairo. At the moment he helps Christian refugees from Sudan as much as possible, in cooperation with MERF and the local congregations of the Evangelical Church. These refugees are the result of Muslims killing Sudanese Christians and terrorizing them without any obvious in-

tervention by the authorities to stop the persecution. It was also reported (via the BBC) that Christians in the Sudan endure other forms of oppression as well. Christian homes have been bulldozed to the ground and a new home will only be built if one wants to become Muslim. It is touching how Istafanous notes that they want to help these people because Christians must not become depressed by such circumstances for they are to rejoice in what God has done for them in Christ. The joy of salvation must be maintained!

There are also accounts of some persecution in Egypt, but according to Istafanous, the Egyptian government does its best to end persecution by the Muslim majority. The authorities are still trying to get control over fundamentalistic Muslim organizations. One form that harassment and persecution takes is clear from the account found in *New Horizons*.

Malucca

Pastor Kamal is minister in Malucca, roughly 150 kilometres south of Cairo. Two years ago he had attended the Evangelical Study Centre of MERF in Larnaca and was greatly blessed. Besides his work as pastor and evangelist, he follows up individuals who write in response to the radio broadcasts from Cyprus. Mr. Mark T. Bude, general secretary for the Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC, describes his visit to Malucca and the situation there.

We had to leave our hired car at the paved road (Pastor Kamal's car broke down long ago and he cannot afford to repair it) and walk along a dirt road the rest of the way to the village. Malucca is nominally a Christian (as opposed to a Muslim) village of about 500 very poor farmers and shepherds.

As we began our walk, Pastor Kamal pointed out the mosque that the Muslims have built where the dirt road leading to the village meets the paved road. There are no Muslims in the village, so the mosque is unused, but it stands there just the same to give the impression that Malucca is a Muslim village. (All over Egypt, it seems, the Muslims go out of their way to hide or screen off from public view any Christian presence.) The believers in this village know that, unless the Lord intervenes, they will never receive permission from the Muslim-dominated government to build even a simple church.

In this village with its primitive living conditions, there is only one building with a concrete floor and it has been

made available for public worship. Bude describes how over 100 people crowded into the room and how they sang much and clung on to every word of his sermon (on John 14). There was an obvious hunger for the Word.

As in other Muslim countries, it is very difficult to spread the gospel. Every opportunity needs to be seized. But the sovereign Lord our God works in His own way. A story told by Bude illustrates that.

The Lord brings glory to Himself

Mr. Bude tells of an elder at a large church in Cairo.

Eight years ago he was driving up to Alexandria to bring a message, when suddenly a camel darted out in front of him and was struck by his car. The camel flew up in the air and crashed down on the roof of the car. The roof caved in on his head, breaking open his skull. He was rushed to the hospital and attended by a Muslim surgeon. (Two weeks earlier, this doctor had operated on a woman in their congregation. When she awoke from surgery and learned that everything

had gone well, she thanked the Lord. The surgeon told her that the Lord had had nothing to do with her operation – he, the surgeon, was the one deserving to be thanked.)

The elder's family and friends soon gathered in the hospital to pray. The surgeons operating on him thought he died on the table, and they turned away from him. Then this doctor noticed something and performed a procedure that he had never done or even dreamed of doing before. When the elder woke up, he thanked the doctor. But the doctor corrected him and said, "No, it wasn't me; it was the Lord your God – thank Him. I put my hands in parts of your brain where I had never been before. I felt like my hands were being guided each step of the way. Thank those people who have been praying for you."

The elder recovered, although he remains partially paralyzed. In light of the acknowledgement by the Muslim surgeon, Bude aptly noted: "It is truly marvelous how the Lord brings glory to Himself!"



NEW MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene

continued

Well, let's have some good news.

"You will perhaps remember that some time ago it was mentioned that brother A. had submitted our church building to a building association that awards prizes for, among other things, community projects. This past Wednesday the awards were announced. It was gratifying to learn that Project 90 took second place in its category! Apparently, the association was attracted to the small country church building look, in contrast to the grand scale of many new church buildings that tend to grab public attention. As its project supervisor, brother A. received a plaque which may already be hanging in the foyer by the time you read this."

Our readers may recall that "Project 90" was the project of the Grand Valley Church: the project to erect a parsonage and a church building. I haven't seen either the parsonage or the church building in reality, although I did see a picture of them. In any case, it is worthwhile to mention that an award was given for it.

Our members who are involved in the activities of "The Voice of the Church" as well as the churches that support this project financially often wonder how many people really are listening to the programs that are aired. The reactions received from listeners are few. Perhaps, as was suggested here

by someone, we should start offering Bibles or books or other literature, to be sent free of charge to those requesting it. Then we might get some more reactions and have a (still vague) idea how many tune in on the program.

For the (possible) encouragement of committees in other congregations I quote here from *The Sheepfold* of Orangeville. "Orangeville has indicated that DC103-FM is no longer interested in airing our program. We still wish to check out some other stations; however with the change to CKLA-FM 106 in Guelph (sister station to CJOY) we do reach a much larger geographical area than before. Although we are disappointed with the 6:30 a.m. time slot, we are told that the radio station does receive calls resulting from the broadcast and that a rule-of-thumb calculation suggests that for each call there are approximately 900 other listeners."

In Brampton "rezoning for parsonage on church property is being looked into." Our readers may recall that Brampton did acquire some additional property where their church building is located.

Brampton also sent a "Letter to Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* ... stating the church of Brampton's satisfaction with the current version of Hymn 1A."



I express the wish that the matter of Hymn 1A may finally be laid to rest at the forthcoming general synod. Thus far I have not read of any church that is in favour of any change in this respect. In this connection I also mention a brief item in the Port Kells consistory report: "From our organists, a proposal to practise Hymn 1C before the morning service for a while... This will be elaborated on at the congregational meeting." May I remark that we do *not* have a "Hymn 1C"? All we have is an alternate melody made available to the churches, whose reactions are to be evaluated by the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*.

The *News from the Canadian Reformed Churches in Manitoba* has made its appearance on the scene. It is a very attractive periodical, scheduled to be issued once every three weeks. For this time we glean from it only that in Winnipeg "A proposal is brought to have our own Mission Work. This is discussed. More information will be required and sought."

We are certain that the Coaldale congregation is looking forward to meeting in their new church building. "The anticipated completion date of the building is at the end of April; after that the organ builders will need about six weeks to install the organ. This would mean that the building should be ready for use by the congregation by about July 1, if everything goes well."

The brothers are still debating whether to have their own water and sewer systems installed or seeking connections with the town's facilities. The price for the latter is now \$75,000.00, which is less than was asked originally, but \$45,000.00 more than budgeted "for to install our own water and sewer systems." Long-term advantage of town connections is that "this makes further development on the property possible and it is less costly to maintain." The discussion is being continued, although by now a firm decision may have been reached. If so, we'll let you know next time.

"The matter of the consistory prayer before and after the worship services which was previously put on the agenda for this meeting is discussed. It is decided that we will maintain this practice in our congregation because the majority of the officebearers did not find the reasons to abolish this convincing."

We already did mention the break-in in the Abbotsford church building. A few more items from this congregation.

"During question period it is asked about using a microphone during congregational meetings. It is decided that speakers stand up when asking questions or paraphrased by the chairman." This is a wise decision. It is often frustrating when one attends a meeting to hear someone talking in the back but to be unable to hear *what* he is saying. Perhaps my hearing is not any more what it used to be, but there are more who complain that speakers at a meeting cannot be understood because they speak softly and remain seated. They should stand up and speak clearly, at least if what they are saying is worth listening to and receiving the attention of the meeting.

I still love to sit in on a classis and to follow the discussions, but sometimes I think, "I wished I had stayed at home and done some work, for I can't understand half of what is being mumbled here and there." If the meeting is held in a rather small area it is not too bad, but when, as is the case here in Langley, the tables are arranged in a wide circle in front of the pulpit, and if the brothers still speak as if they were sitting in their own consistory room, visitors may as well stay at home. Most of our churchbuildings can boast



of a sound system. Why not use it and make it much more pleasant for all present?

Chilliwack gradually finds itself among the number of congregations where growth makes it mandatory to look for means and ways to accommodate the growing number of worshippers. The committee of administration reported that "they also investigated some different ideas to increase the seating capacity in the church building." It is a reason for thankfulness when such measures are necessary.

Rev. J. Visscher joyfully reported the following. "A. and B. informed me that they were recently engaged and plan to marry this spring. Congratulations and may the Lord bless you during this time of preparation. (Incidentally, I may

mention that according to my sources, A. did it the right way. Before he popped the question to B., he first went and asked her parents in Ontario . That shows biblical style and class!)” Let our young people remember this.

Another point that should be remembered in every congregation is what Lynden’s consistory considered. “Turning off of the lights during the worship services was discussed. The ushers will be advised.” If I understand this last sentence well, the ushers will be told to turn the lights off as soon as the minister starts delivering his sermon. I may recommend the same practice to every congregation.

Sometimes people may say that they need the lights when the congregation is singing a Psalm or a Hymn. Even when the sun is shining brightly some may still have problems reading the words or the music without the help of the lights. But as soon as the minister starts delivering his sermon, no lights are needed. They should be turned off indeed. Not only is it a waste of money to leave them on, they also contribute considerably to a rise in temperature and especially in summer time this is the last we need. Did you every try to calculate how many kilowatt hours of electricity are being used by all those bulbs of two hundred or more watts each? Turn the lights off!

The consistory of the Maranatha Church in Surrey received a letter and approved the request contained therein regarding “video-taping of services and meetings (on advice of the mission workers in Brazil to present to the congregations in Brazil.” A brother “will be advised to make the necessary arrangements.... He has been asked to make a video tape of some aspects of church life here in Canada in order that it can be shown to the brotherhood in Brazil in the future. We have several times now enjoyed seeing what Brazil is like via this modern technology; the Brazilians are equally interested in knowing what Canada is like. For both sides it is great that all this is possible today.”

Now that the Port Kells church is going to get a minister, “the search for a manse is on.” Further, “during the congregational meeting it became evident that most of the members support the proposal to acquire the property located at the corner of 80th Ave and 202A St.” No definitive word has been received until the moment of this writing whether this acquisition did take place.

In Vernon a combined meeting was held of the consistories of the Canadian Reformed Church at Vernon and of the Orthodox Reformed Church of Kelowna. “Topic for the evening was ‘The Church’, as confessed in Arts. 27-29 of the Belgic Confession.”

Wherever a meeting of this nature is held, one can be almost certain that the confession concerning the church is one of the topics discussed, sometimes seemingly endlessly. I wonder whether it makes any sense to do this and whether this topic has not been blown up to such an extent that all the rest is forgotten. We can have extensive discussions about what our confession concerning the church means and what the practical consequences are for the life and course of action of a Christian, but when it comes to the point, we do not have to have extensive discussions about *what* we confess concerning the church. *That* is clear to everyone who can read. The more discussions about it, the greater the danger that personal ideas and interpretations take the place of what the church confesses and become the rule by which things are judged and measured.

Herewith we have come to the end of items from the Canadian scene, and briefly still turn our attention to Australia.

Bedforddale is the convening church for the forthcoming synod of the Australian churches. “A few brothers and sisters have asked why there will be no special church service before Synod Bedforddale 1992 commences. As you know, in 1990 the church of Armadale held a special church service. This was the first time in the history of the Australian churches. This is done regularly in the Netherlands and recently has been done in Canada as well.

“Consistory discussed the point thoroughly. The decision was to write to all churches, when information was passed on regarding the date of the opening of Synod 1992, that the work of Synod should be remembered the Sunday before (in) the church services of all local churches. In this way all congregations will pay special attention to this important work. All delegates will have the possibility to travel to Bedforddale during the Monday, when Synod 1992 will be opened that same evening.

“We should also remember that our minister, as chairman of the consistory of the convening church, will open the meeting in prayer, while in his opening speech the appropriate reference will be made to the Scriptures which will form the foundation of all deliberations during synod meetings.”

There is a slight mistake in the above: it has not just “recently” been customary within the Canadian Reformed Churches to have a prayer service on the eve of a general synod; this has been customary every since the first general synod was held in 1954.

Bedforddale decided that there shall be no prayer service on the eve of synod. And the question should be considered, indeed, whether we should not have one then also on the eve of a classis or of a regional synod. There is no difference in principle between a classis or a regional or a general synod.

On the other hand, we realize the importance of a general synod: there decisions are made which affect *all* the churches, and although it is true that the work of a general synod will be remembered in prayer throughout the churches, not only in official worship services but also in the family prayers, yet there is something in favour of having a special prayer service in the place where a general synod is to be held. However, it is not mandatory but just a custom here with us as well as in the Netherlands. It certainly is not a sign of deterioration or of taking things less seriously when a convening church decides not to organize such a service.

The Australian churches have a synod every two years. It is their only broader assembly. By the church at Kelmscott, however, “a proposal to Synod is being prepared to form Classes and in connection with this to have Synod every three years instead of two years.”

In the meantime, my new title has caught on, although it seems that I am getting some competition. Now I am called “one of our patriarchs” in the Abbotsford section of the Valley’s *Church News*. I don’t think that we shall see a competition such as the early church history showed between the patriarchs of Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome, a struggle which ultimately was won by the patriarch of Rome. Still, there is reason for concern as far as I am concerned. “Time will tell” was the name of a furniture factory in the place where I spent some seventeen years of my early life, and ... they went broke.

Once again: A fond good afternoon from one of your patriarchs.

Condemned on the Basis of a Fallacy

By W.W.J. VanOene

Last week I received a telephone call from a brother who was very upset and concerned about something he read in *Clarion*. No, it was not about something I had written; it was about the report on the Regional Synod East of November 13 and 14, 1991. He even spoke of "synodocracy." He urged me to write something about it.

I know that the very same concerns live with others. I did receive word of these concerns also from Ontario and I am in possession of the relevant classical decision as well as of those of that regional synod.

Now the very request of a brother or sister to write something about an ecclesiastical decision in itself is not yet sufficient reason to do it indeed. It becomes different when I share the concerns, which I do. And it becomes mandatory when, as is the case indeed, there is grave danger to the churches if one should keep silent. The course chosen by Classis Ontario North of December 14, 1990, as well as the one that came to everyone's knowledge through the brief report on Regional Synod East of November 13, 14, 1991, are detrimental to the churches. The relevant decisions are so hierarchical that one wonders how this is possible in truly Reformed churches.

The case

Let us first make clear what the situation, what the "case" is.

There is a minister who requires of his catechism students that they shall listen to certain tapes as part of their catechetical training. This listening is to be done at home. The minister has his own lessons for the hours of instruction he gives. Those who speak on those tapes are not members of one of the churches, but apparently the minister is of the opinion that it is good for the students that they become acquainted with what those others have to say.

One can doubt the wisdom of doing this with young members who have not yet come to maturity. One could even be of the opinion that there are dangers involved here. Our readers will know what I personally think of the use of tapes, either simply audio-tapes or also video-tapes. But this is not the point in question at all. The points in question are :

1. Does the minister point out what is wrong with the theories or thoughts of those whose tapes the students are to listen to, if there are any wrong ideas or thoughts contained in them?

2. Do these tapes replace the teaching by the minister or are they simply used as teaching aids?

3. Does a minister have the right to use any teaching aids such as tapes or books? And if he decides to use certain books, is he then restricted to books written by fellow-church members and is he then forbidden to use any writings by non-church members?

4. If a minister uses a teaching aid, either book or tape, does then thereby either the writer of the book or the speaker on the tape become the actual instructor?

Let us pay attention to each of these points.

Discussion of tapes

I do not know whether in the present case the contents of the tapes are discussed with the students. I trust that they are. If they are not, what is then the proper procedure? If any of the parents is concerned by the uncritical manner in which the ideas on the tapes are brought among the youth of the church, the proper channel is : discuss this with the minister. If no satisfaction is received, the way is open to the consistory. The consistory, in this case, reviewed the tapes and considered them Scriptural. There is no evidence in the whole procedure that the *contents* of the tapes was an issue. Thus we may

say that regarding point 1 we can leave this whole aspect out of the picture and out of the discussion.

Replacement of teacher?

One of the main points in the classical as well as in the regional-synodical decision is the assertion that, by using aids, a minister relinquishes his position as teacher of the youth of the church and lets someone else take over. Is this true?

There are several ministers in our midst who with their catechetical instruction use either *I Belong* by Dr.J.Visscher or *Everything in Christ* by the Rev. Cl. Stam. The books by Rev. Visscher require considerable homework. Does a minister, by using these books and by having the students study them, thereby relinquish his position as teacher? If a minister should confine himself to letting the students read and study these books, then they would replace him indeed. But there is no evidence that in the present case either books or tapes render the minister inactive or make him take it easy : "You listen to the tapes, so I can go for a walk."

But which minister among us could justly be accused of doing this?

Restricted to certain material?

When a minister uses teaching-aids, is he then restricted to books written or tapes spoken by members of the churches? Who could justly maintain this?

If I were still teaching catechism classes and if I considered it necessary that the students listen to a tape by a muslim mullah, then to discuss this tape and the propagated ideas in class, pointing out where the Lord teaches us differently and why we are to reject those theories, who could justly maintain that I would not be permitted to do this? Or if I required of my students that they read a book by a so-called Je-

hovah Witness, and then discussed this with them to place truth over against lie and Scripture over against human wisdom, where could I be accused of being remiss in my duty?

No one has the right to restrict a minister to certain material with his catechetical instruction. If he should pass this material from muslims or seventh-day adventists on uncritically, then, yes, then he could be criticized, but not even about his use of these materials, only about his failure to point out what is wrong in them.

There is an almost unbelievable confusion and lack of distinction in the classical and regional-synodical decisions.

Another instructor?

The decisive point at which the confusion and lack of distinction causes the whole derailment is the assertion that the writer of a book or the speaker on a tape becomes the actual instructor when the students are required to read it or to listen to it. And then you also get the rattling with the keys of the kingdom. And since it is asserted that a speaker on a tape becomes the actual instructor, one gets such nonsense as, for instance in the classical decision, that "the matter of the tapes is not a matter of the contents being faithful to the Scriptures, but a matter of the instructor not being bound by the Three Forms of Unity; (and) by having the students listen to and be tested on the tapes, the Consistory implicitly requires teaching by an outside instructor not bound by the Three Forms of Unity."

How off-track can you get! The instructor is and remains the minister who includes these aids in his teaching. It is of no weight at all whether the writer of a book that I use with catechetical instruction is bound by the Three Forms of Unity or the Subscription Form. I am and remain the instructor and I am bound by my signature under the Subscription Form. Unless it can be proved that I violate my promises by either teaching heresies or not rejecting everything that militates against the Scriptural doctrine, no one has the right to say anything about it. If the consistory, through faithfully visiting the catechism classes, is satisfied that my instruction is Scriptural, even though I also use material authored by non-Canadian Reformed writers or speakers, there is not one broader assembly that has the right to condemn me or the consistory, or

even to pass judgment on the fact that I use these "outside aids."

Once again I wish to state that personally I am not at all in favour or using either tapes or even materials coming from outside our own circles. I would dissuade any colleague from doing it. But that is not the point at all. The point here is that the consistory has satisfied itself that no false doctrine was being propagated at catechism classes, and that even when using aids, the minister remains the instructor.

Confusion continued

One might have expected that a clearer insight and greater ability to distinguish well would be found at regional synod. Alas, this expectation proved to be vain.

When, for instance, in its considerations, regional synod stated that "Classis has indeed the right to deal with the catechism teaching in a congregation when this is properly brought before Classis. Classis North did not lord it over the church at A. nor did it improperly interfere with local matters but acted according to the promises that we have given when we entered the federation," there is a complete lack of distinction. The catechetical instruction as such can never be brought to a broader assembly. One can only appeal a decision by a consistory by which one has allegedly been wronged. If a member complains to the consistory about errors being taught to the children and if the consistory declares that what is being taught is scriptural, but if the member is still convinced that his children are fed poison, then this member has the right to bring this particular issue in an appeal to a classis. He has, however, to demonstrate that what is being taught is contrary to God's Word. *But this was not the case at all.* What was at stake here was the use of teaching aids.

Regional synod showed the same lack of insight that we found with classis Ontario North of December 1990, for it also stated in its considerations that inclusion of tapes makes these tapes "in fact part of the instruction of students and therefore constitute teaching by an instructor not bound by the Three Forms of Unity." It is almost unbelievable that an ecclesiastical assembly can show such a lack of insight into the basics of a case.

This also becomes evident from Consideration 4. (and these considerations are the basis for denying the ap-

peal of the consistory involved.) We let Consideration 4 follow here.

"4. One of the major points of disagreement concerns the binding of the instructor to the Three Forms of Unity by means of the signing of the Form of Subscription. The consistory at A. misunderstands this consideration. To be bound to the Three Forms of Unity means that he who signs can be called to account by a consistory to this promise in case he should become delinquent. Because as churches we have entered a federation of churches, this binding to the Three Forms of Unity and the accountability is also a matter of the churches. Regional Synod agrees with Classis Ontario North that the catechism teaching should be done by a member of a Canadian Reformed Church (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:2)."

We ask: *Is the instructor in the church at A. not bound by the Three Forms of Unity?* Get off the notion that the author of a book that is being used as a teaching-aid thereby becomes himself the instructor. That is a fallacy, and on this fallacy is based the condemnation of a consistory that has not found any reason to forbid its minister to use these aids. On the basis of this fallacy a classis larded it over a church and a regional synod did the same.

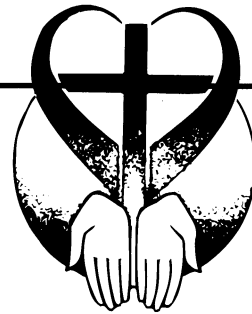
Churches beware! I do not know whether the consistory involved will appeal this wrong to the forthcoming general synod. I hate appeals, but in this case I would urge the consistory to seek removal of the wrong done to it and to all the churches. If they do and the general synod has to deal with it, I express the sincere wish and hope that any brothers who were co-responsible for the above-discussed wrongdoings, insofar as they have been delegated to that general synod as well as all others who are or will be delegated, may receive the Christian courage to reverse the wrong and to recognize again the right of a consistory to be "boss in its own house."



This article of Rev. VanOene will be followed, in the next issue, with a response written by Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, who was a member of the Regional Synod which made the decisions referred to.

The editor.

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



Children caring and sharing

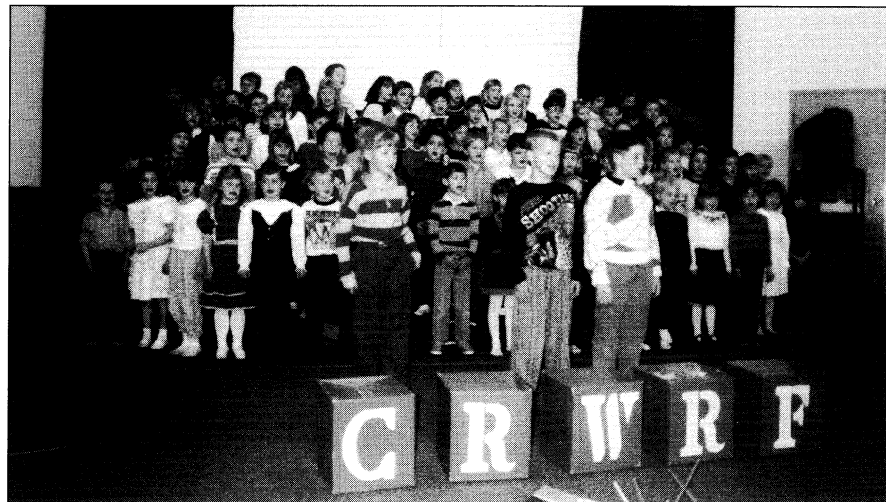
It is always gratifying to learn of children responding with Christian love and compassion to those less fortunate as the Gospel requires. We hear of groups organizing fund-raising activities, of students faithfully bringing money week after week to sponsor a needy child, and of others who make a special personal contribution. For example, we recently received a \$60.00 cheque from a boy who had asked his friends to bring a gift of money for C.R.W.R.F. to his birthday party in lieu of a present. What a great idea! We are glad to hear that concern for the needy lives in the hearts of our young. We as Christian parents and teachers do well to fan the flame.

On that note, we are happy to pass on the following article describing an assembly which focussed on the work of C.R.W.R.F. Many thanks to teacher, Diane Vanderboom, who organized the assembly and wrote the report for us. Any schools interested in receiving a copy of the words and songs for possible use in a similar gathering, are invited to contact us. Mrs. Vanderboom wrote that staff and students alike enjoyed the assembly and are now busy papering the halls with hearts, each representing a dollar given.

On Friday, February 14, 1992, the primary students of Credo Christian Elementary in Langley, BC presented parents and students with an assembly to promote the work of C.R.W.R.F.

The assembly began with a video which had the theme song "A Heart to Change the World." A 12 minute Video portrayed the work of relief work and mission aid in various parts of the world. The schoolchildren then paraded in singing this song. Once they were assembled at the front, they welcomed the audience and explained that the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund was formed in response to our Lord's commands.

Singing and Scripture reading were intertwined to bring the message:



*Dear Lord, wilt Thou not help us
Obey Thy great command
And send Thy blessed Gospel
Abroad through every land
May missionaries carry
The message of Thy love
The wonderful salvation
Christ brought us from above.*

Children were dressed up and acted the parts of children from the various countries that C.R.W.R.F. has helped. For example, little Amy VanderHorst was from Khanjanpur, and said:

Hi! My name is Sophia. I am from Bangladesh. Our country is very, very, poor! Many people here cannot even read or write. We don't get to go to school like you do. I'm so happy because the C.R.W.R.F. has helped me by sending people to teach me to read!

Similarly we heard the stories of Jeso, Hemoe, Lydia, Issachar, Idie, Omar & Kata. They each told of their troubles and how C.R.W.R.F. had helped them. Colour was added with the flags from the various countries being displayed as each child stepped forward to say his/her part.

The program concluded with the audience being encouraged in:

PRAYER - as stated in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, James 5:16

*CARE - as stated in James 1:22
and*

SHARE - We should share our money. Since it was Valentine's Day, a day about love, we were encouraged to show our love by giving money to a penny drive. For each dollar a class collected they would be given a heart to display in the hall.

The concluding song was:

*We are the children of the King
We want to laugh and we want to sing.
We want to share the joyful news
That Jesus Christ is calling you.
All over the world the message is the same
He died for you and then He rose again.*



Gifts for the work of CRWRF may be directed to:

**Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund
PO Box 85225
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4**

All gifts are gladly received. Donors of \$10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deduction.

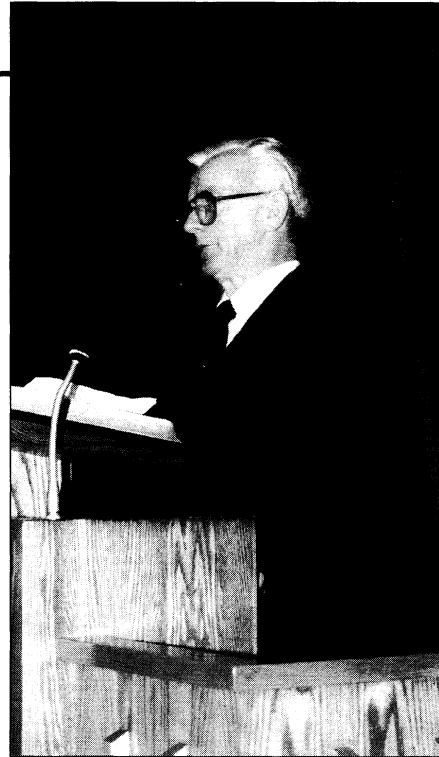
Annual Men's League Day Ontario

On Saturday, March 28, 1992, the League of Men Societies of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches held its annual league day in the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington West. From a large variety of places across Ontario (and even from Houston, BC!), brothers and sisters arrived in time for a morning of instruction, learning, fellowship, and bonding.

Brother G. Schutten, chairman of the League, opened the meeting at ten o'clock with the singing of Psalm 8, reading of Psalm 19, and prayer. In his opening speech, he pointed out that league days are meant to promote close cooperation between member societies in studying God's Word and the Confessions. On this particular day we would pay attention to Article 2 of the Belgic Confession which plays a significant role in the present unrest in the Christian Reformed Churches, but that also is well worth our own consideration. Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam had been found willing to instruct the audience on this topic,



Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam



Br. G. Schutten, chairman of the men's league



The turnout was good at the League Day

which he entitled, "How Does God Reveal Himself in His Works and Word?" The speech Prof. Van Dam presented will be published in this magazine.

After intermission a variety of questions was answered by the speaker. Topics included such issues as the length of the days in Genesis 1, the validity of Creation Science, the relation between God's creation and His providence, and whether or not we should encourage our children to become scientists. Dr. Van Dam closed the morning with prayer.

For people who came from far a lunch had been prepared. During the meal, there was ample opportunity to further discuss these and other issues that keep our minds occupied. It also provided an opportunity to enjoy and experience the bond of a common purpose in studying Scripture and Confession and the ramifications these have for our lives.

Both during the intermission and after the meeting, interested people could look at and buy books published by the Inter League Publication Board. The ILPB publishes books that are primarily intended for use as study material at the societies. To further promote this valuable work, a collection was held for ILPB as well.

Keith Sikkema ©

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I read with interest the January 17, 1992 issue of *Clarion* and in particular the press release for Regional Synod East held on November 13 and 14, 1991.

I recognize that a press release is of necessity a short summary of actual proceedings. As such it would not contain the details of the considerations that led this Regional Synod to a particular decision.

I was particularly concerned with the apparent direction suggested by the decisions of this Synod regarding the use of "a series of teaching tapes of someone outside the Canadian Reformed Churches." It seems that such use is to be prohibited.

I can understand that one ought to be selective and discriminating in the use of reference materials. The way in which a resource is used can be as important as the actual selection. However, there is a clear indication in this press release (regarding the Toronto appeal) that the decision is prohibition and not selective use.

What implications would this decision have for the use of other resources? Does the minister's library become suspect to the extent that the resources are written by "someone outside the Canadian Reformed Churches"? Is the issue

(and prohibition) here to be limited to no-print (i.e. tapes) resources only? What are the implications for the schools that our children attend? Will school boards follow this lead with a similar prohibition for such "a series of teaching tapes of someone outside the Canadian Reformed Churches" that might be considered of value in a Bible class (or even any other class for that matter)?

I recognize that the editor cannot answer the questions I've raised. I welcome this opportunity to raise them in the hope that as a church community we remain vigilant about the implications of our decisions. Distinctions and decisions of this nature carry decidedly sectarian suggestions. If there is more to these decisions than what the general readership has been made aware of then perhaps the press release ought to either be more complete or simply delete all details and consider it in closed session only.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise the concern.


E. Vanderboom
Langley, BC

Comment:

1. This matter is not unimportant. On the one hand, we should not make it bigger than necessary, and come to wrong conclusions. I do not think that

a minister's library with much study material that is not Reformed will become suspect. It is not the study material which a minister uses that matters, but that which he teaches and preaches as result of his studies. Here it is not a matter of study material as such, but of material used as contents of teaching. I was told that it was not the intention of the decision of the regional synod or the classis to prohibit in general any and all use of any and all study material from non-Canadian Reformed people, and this at all times. I agree that such a general prohibition would be completely wrong. Therefore, I do not see the danger that in our schools (and churches) such a restrictive law would impoverish the study possibilities. It is a matter of fact that there is much in the world around us and in the church that needs to be addressed and for which we do not have Canadian Reformed resources, either in books and booklets or on tapes.

On the other hand, we have to watch out that all the (especially) evangelical study material does not have the result that we become evangelical in our thinking and acting while losing our Reformed heritage, our Reformed line of thinking and acting.

J. Geertsema 

BOOK REVIEW

By C. Van Dam

Calvinism

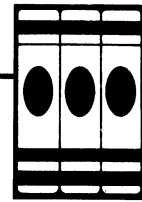
H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*. 6th edition, revised by Paul A. Marshall. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1990. Paperback, 221 pages, \$12.95 (U.S.).

Henry Meeter's book has become a classic introduction to the main concepts of Calvinism. This latest reissue has basically left the original text untouched. The revision by Paul Marshall, senior member in Political Theory at the Institute for Christian Studies in

Toronto, consists of the addition of three chapters, namely, on the Christian and Total War, Liberation Theology, and Political Hope. Marshall's contribution fits in very well with the design and scope of the book. There is also an excellent bibliography compiled by Peter De Klerk, theological librarian emeritus of Calvin College.

Reading through this book again for this review, I was struck by the simple and direct way in which Meeter engages his reader in the great theme of God's sovereignty. This is the central principle of Calvinism and it thus recurs again and again in the discussion.

The first part of the book deals with the theological ideas of Calvinism. Topics such as the place of the Bible and faith, as well as culture are ably dealt with and the chapter on the main theological tenets of Calvinism is particularly good. The second part of the book deals with the political ideas of Calvinism. Here too one finds much good and exciting material. The author deals with issues such as the origin of the state, the best form of government, the task and authority of government, the relation of church and state, civil liberty, the right of revolt, and internationalism. Many excellent points are raised and much



food for thought is given. Indeed, I would hope that this book be read and studied, also in the context of study societies. There is so much that is directly relevant to the many questions that current modern issues raise for us as Reformed believers. The publisher should seriously consider issuing a study guide with suggestions for further reading.

Since this book was first published in 1939 when Kuyperianism dominated the Reformed theological landscape, it is not surprising that some critical comments can be made on some debatable Kuyperian ideas. One wonders, for example, whether the expression "common grace" is not saying too much to describe God's restraining influence on degenerate man so that deeds of outward good are possible. (Cf. the criticism of K. Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, 44-47.) Another example is the use of

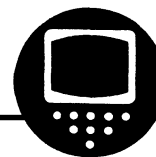
the phrase "sphere sovereignty" to describe the fact that each group of society has its own jurisdiction which is not to be impinged upon by another (e.g. the state cannot infringe on what belongs to the prerogative of the family). Can sovereignty be ascribed to a group in society? Other questions can be raised, including whether the concept of different "sacrosanct" spheres is justifiable (see Douma, *Another Look at Dooyeweerd*, 58-65). Here and there the book is somewhat speculative, especially on how it would have been if sin had not come into the world. However, this never really affects the main arguments.

Here and there more careful editing/updating would have been helpful. For example, to prevent wrong impressions references to the Anti-Revolutionary Party (pp. 120, 180) should at least have been footnoted to indicate

that this party no longer exists, but has been replaced by CDA (Christelijk Democratisch Appel) about fifteen years ago. A contradiction that could have been removed is that on page 72 we are told that the author of *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1547), a defence of liberty against tyrants, is unknown, but on page 145 he is rather confidently (and probably correctly) identified as Mornay (i.e. Philippe de Mornay du Plessis; see for more, R.H. Bremmer, *Reformatie en rebellie*, 19).

Of course these last comments are within the whole context mere quibbles and simply illustrate the pleasure I had in carefully reading through this very worthwhile book. It also ends with a fine final chapter (by Marshall) on political hope, that is the great hope that we have in Christ and His return. This book deserves to be read and studied. ©

PRESS RELEASES



Classis Ontario North, March 13, 1992

1. The Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, chairman of the convening church at Ottawa, opens the meeting. He reads Eph. 1:15-23, requests the singing of Hymn 40:1, and leads in prayer.

2. The delegates of the church at Orangeville examine the credentials and declare them to be in good order.

3. Classis is constituted with the following officers: Revs. R.N. Gleason, chairman; P.G. Feenstra, clerk; W. den Hollander, vice-chairman.

4. With regards to the memorabilia, the chairman congratulates the church at Burlington West with the fact that the Rev. G.H. Visscher has accepted the call to that congregation. The chairman notes that the church at Burlington South was disappointed by the Rev. J. Koelewijn's declining the call extended to him, and that the church of Ottawa will become vacant upon the acceptance by the Rev. van Popta of the call to Taber, AB, which means that now the churches of Brampton, Elora, Lower Sackville and Ottawa will be vacant. To the Rev. den Hollander condolences are extended for the passing away of his

father-in-law. Finally, the chairman thanks the convening church for the preparations made for this classis.

5. The agenda is established and adopted.

6. Classis receives the following reports:

a. of a visit to the church at Lower Sackville, and of a visit to the church at Elora;

b. of the treasurer, br. J.J. Poort – received with gratitude;

c. of the church appointed for the inspection of the archives, Burlington South;

d. of the church appointed for the auditing of the books of the Fund for Financial Aid to Needy Students, Fergus;

e. of the church at Burlington West – audit of the books of the treasurer of classis.

7. The question period according to Art. 44 C.O. reveals that the church at Fergus needs advice in a case of discipline. In closed session advice is given.

8. Classis deals with the instructions of the following churches:

a. Church at Orangeville - re: a matter of financial support by the churches of Classis Ontario North;

b. Churches of Brampton, Elora, Ottawa, Lower Sackville, and Orangeville (re: House Congregation in Chatsworth) – re: the arrangements of preaching engagements: a schedule is submitted concurrent with the requested arrangements, and adopted;

c. Church at Burlington East – re: classis approval for the purchase of a cabinet for the purpose of storing the archives: granted;

d. Church at Elora – requests classis to review the support needed for the Fund for Needy Churches: Classis instructs the Committee of the Fund for Needy Churches to bring the quota in line with the required support.

9. The church at Burlington West requests classis to approve the call extended to the Rev. G.H. Visscher to this congregation. After due examination of the documents submitted, classis gives its approbation of the call.

10. The church at Ottawa requests classis to approve the honorable release of the Rev. G.Ph. van Popta from his service in the region of Classis Ontario North as of July 1, 1992. Classis grants this request and the Classical Certificate of Release is established and

signed by the moderamen as per Art. 9 C.O.

11. Classis makes the following appointments:

a. the convening church of next classis, D.V., on Friday, June 12, 1992, is the church at Toronto;

b. the proposed officers for next classis: the Revs. J. Huijgen, chairman, R.N. Gleason, clerk; P.G. Feenstra, vice-chairman.

12. Personal question period is held. The Rev. R.N. Gleason is delegated to represent the churches in Classis Ontario North at the installation of the Rev. G.H. Visscher, D.V., June 14, 1992, in the church at Burlington West.

13. Christian censure according to Art. 44 C.O. is not needed.

14. The Acts are read and adopted; the Press Release is also read and approved for publication.

15. After the singing of Hymn 41:1, 2 classis is closed in prayer.

For Classis Ontario North,
W. den Hollander,
vice-chairman e.t.

Classis Alberta/ Manitoba, March 17-19, 1992

1. *Opening* by Rev. R. Aasman on behalf of Edmonton-Providence. Singing Hymn 2:1, Scripture Eccl. 5:1-7, and prayer. Mention is made of calls declined by Rev. P.K.A. De Boer to Chatham, ON, Rev. R. Schouten to Ancaster, ON, and Rev. J.D. Wielenga to Surrey, BC, and of calls accepted by Rev. E. Kampen to Port Kells, BC and Rev. G.Ph. van Popta of Ottawa, ON to Taber, AB.

2. *Constitution* – Credentials were found to be in good order. Rev. R. Schouten of Calgary was unable to attend and was later replaced by his alternate, br. H. VandenHoven. Officers: Rev. J. Jonker, chairman; Rev. J.D. Wielenga, vice-chairman; Rev. R. Aasman, clerk.

3. Reports

a. Church of Inspection of the Books of the Treasurer is read and adopted. Classis sets the maximum amount of refunds for lost wages for delegates to Regional Synod at \$150.00 per day, \$600.00 per week.

b. Church for the Inspection of Classical Archives reports that the Archives were found to be in good order.

c. Delegates for Contact with the Provincial Governments report on their activities.

d. Report of the Classical Treasurer is read and adopted.

e. Rev. E. Kampen, Observer to the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC reports on the Presbytery meeting of March 3-5, 1992 at Denver, CO. He recommends continued contact for mutual benefit.

5. *Adjournment* – singing Hymn 2:4 and prayer.

Reopening – Wednesday afternoon, singing Hymn 40:1, Scripture reading Isaiah 40:1-5 and prayer.

6. Proposals

a. Edmonton-Immanuel requests classis to review the mandate of the Committee of Aid to Needy Churches. Classis decides that the existing mandate is satisfactory if executed properly and diligently.

b. Edmonton-Immanuel requests classis to dissolve the Committee for Aid to Needy Students and to leave the matter of financial support to the home-church of the student. Classis decides not to grant the request but to clarify the instruction given to the Committee to review its mandate.

7. Art. 44 C.O.

Questions as per Art. 44 C.O. are answered by the delegates, without need for discussion.

8. Correspondence

a. Letter from Classis Ontario-South (January 29, 1992) informing classis of its decision to direct the Christ American Reformed Church with its request for affiliation with the Canadian Reformed Churches to Classis Alberta/Manitoba.

b. Letter from the Christ American Reformed Church of January 30, 1992 with a request for admission to the federation of Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

c. Letter from the church at Carman, MB, informing classis of the request of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver that the church at Carman bring its request for admission into the federation to classis, and informing classis of the church at Carman's inability to deal with this request due to lack of time.

d. Segment of the Minutes of the meeting of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of March 3-5, 1992, sent by the Stated Clerk, with the tentative decision of the Presbytery to request Classis Alberta/Manitoba to meet with representatives of the Presbytery before granting the request of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver. Received for information.

e. Copy of a letter from the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver to the church at Coaldale, in reply to a letter the church at Coaldale had sent to this church. Received for information.

9. *Adjournment* – singing Hymn 40:2 and prayer.

Reopening – Thursday morning, singing Ps. 86:4, Scripture reading Isaiah 40:6-11.

10. Decision re: Denver

Classis decides:

1. not to grant the request of the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver to be admitted as sister church to Classis Alberta/Manitoba of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and to advise this church to seek affiliation with the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the O.P.C., which Presbytery received the initial request of the Denver Church for membership in the O.P.C. Regional Church;

2. to inform the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the O.P.C. of this decision.

Grounds:

1. the Canadian Reformed Churches have recognized the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as a true church;

2. the Reformed Confession states that those who draw away from the church or fail to join it wherever God has established it, act contrary to the ordinance of God (Belgic Confession Art. 28);

3. the recognized divergencies between the Reformed and Presbyterian Confession and Church Government have been judged by the Canadian Reformed Churches to be no impediment to the recognition of the O.P.C. as a true church, and therefore are not allowed to undermine and nullify the confessed ordinance of God concerning maintaining the unity of the church (Belgic Confession Art. 28).

11. Appointments

a. *Convening Church*: next classis: the church at Neerlandia; host-church: Edmonton-Immanuel; date: June 23, 1992; suggested officers: chairman – Rev. E. Kampen, vice-chairman – Rev. K. Jonker, clerk – Rev. J.D. Wielenga.

b. *Delegates to Regional Synod*: the ministers Revs. R. Aasman, P.K.A. De Boer, R. Schouten, J.D. Wielenga; alternates, in the following order: Revs. E. Kampen, E.J. Tiggelaar, G. Wieske, K. Jonker; the elders brs. W. Van Winkoop, J. Kuik, L. Bredenhof, J. Werkman; alternates in the following order: brs. C. Hoogerdijk, A. De Leeuw, A. Van Leeuwen, H. Tams.

c. *Observer O.P.C. - P.O.D.*: Rev. G. Wieske; alternate: Rev. R. Aasman. Al-

ternate "permanent address" for contact with O.P.C. - P.O.D.: Rev. R. Aasman.

12. *Question Period*

The delegates of the church at Carman request to record in the Acts their vote against the classis decision re: the Christ American Reformed Church at Denver.

13. *Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.* was not needed.

14. *Adoption of Acts, Approval of Press Release.*

15. *Closing*

The chairman thanks the ladies for their excellent service to classis, addresses classis with appropriate words in closing, asks classis to sing Psalm 145:1, and leads in prayer

For classis,
J.D. Wielenga

Anchor Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped, Inc.

The chairman, A. vanOverbeeke opened with us in prayer and read with us 1 Peter 1. He welcomed all those present. The agenda was established and the minutes of the general board meeting of Nov. 22, 1991 were adopted. A Property Committee has been appointed. Actions of the Executive Board as recorded in the minutes of Nov. 1 and Dec. 9, 1991 are ratified. The director's reports are discussed. Fred Ludwig is again working at Rosa Flora and is temporarily boarding with our director.

A copy of the newsletters will be sent to the deaconries of churches out-

side of Ontario. A fundraising evening for Anchor will be held Wed., April 8 at the Family Christian Bookstore.

The Committee's reports are presented and discussed. The S.I.L. Program has already two applicants. The Treasurer explains the budget to be presented to the general membership meeting on March 27, 1992, which the bookkeeper will also attend. The question of fees regarding membership and representation on the board will be discussed at an upcoming board meeting.

Following question period, E. Schouten closed with us and the meeting was adjourned.

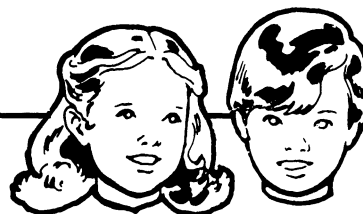
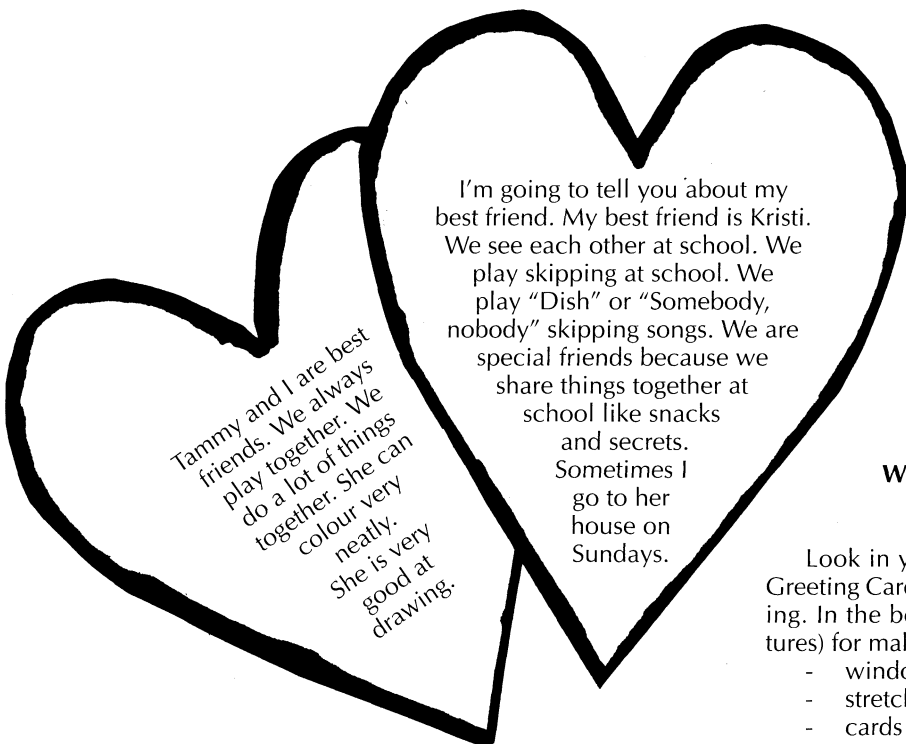


OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

Dear Busy Beavers,

Two Busy Beavers wrote about *friends*.



Want to make your own terrific

MOTHER'S DAY CARD?

Look in your library for a book called "Fun with Greeting Cards" written by a man called Joseph Leeming. In the book he gives clear directions (with pictures) for making

- window cards
- stretch-out cards
- cards with spatter prints
- cards with feather pictures
- cards with stenciled pictures

Sounds like fun?

Your Mom will love your very own card, I know!

It's super to share!

It's great to feel your friend thinks a lot of you!

Quiz Time!

WOMEN

Fill in the blanks with the correct name of the woman.

1. After _____'s husband died, she became David's wife, 1 Samuel 25:39-42.
2. Abraham told people _____ was his sister, Genesis 12:11-13.
3. Jacob had twelve sons and a daughter named _____, Genesis 34:1.
4. Among other believers, Paul saluted _____ in his letter to the Roman Christians, Romans 16:15.
5. The _____ visited Solomon, 1 Kings 10:1-2.
6. _____ spoke the word of God to Hilkiah the priest, 2 Kings 22:14-15.
7. _____ instructed her daughter to ask for John the Baptist's head, Matthew 14:6-8.
8. Jesus said to _____: "Woman, behold thy son," John 19:26.
9. Mary's cousin, _____, conceived a son in her old age, Luke 1:36.
10. _____'s faith kept her from perishing with unbelievers, Hebrews 11:31.
11. _____ saved her people from extinction, Esther 8:7.

(See answers)

Busy Beaver *Charla Meyer* has a puzzle for you that reminds me of this Bible text:
 "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness..." Galatians 5:22.

WORDSEARCH

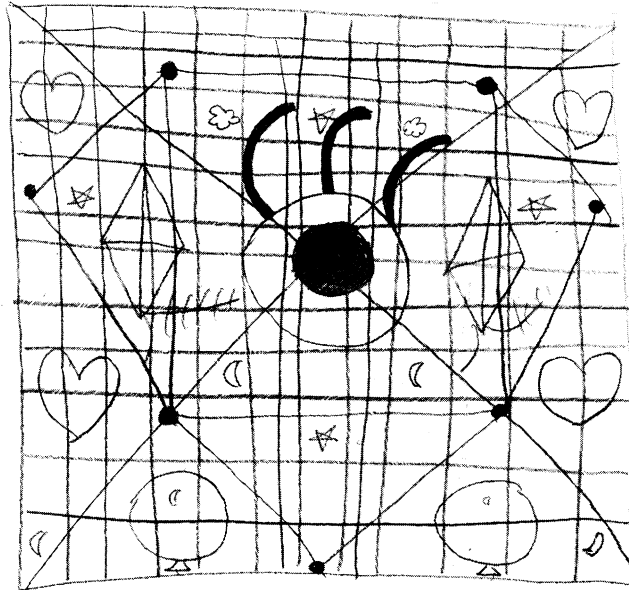
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B	I	B	L	E	L	H	D
B	C	B	D	U	U	R	S
T	R	S	R	M	F	I	I
H	I	A	O	E	E	S	N
E	V	O	L	N	C	T	G
L	X	Z	V	J	A	I	N
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Words: Bible Christian God
 Lord Praise Love
 Peaceful Sing Enjoy








*Try to find the words above in the puzzle!

PICTURE PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Vickie Aikema*



FIND:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. 1 eye  | 4. 4 stars  |
| 2. 2 balloons  | 5. 2 kites  |
| 3. 4 hearts  | 6. 4 moons  |
| | 7. 2 clouds  |

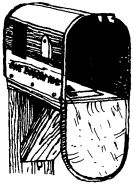
Birthdays

Very best wishes for a happy birthday to all the Busy Beavers celebrating a May birthday. May our heavenly Father bless and keep you all in the year ahead. Have a great time celebrating with your family and friends!



MAY

Harold Winkelaar	2	May Hofsink	15
Andrea Vanderhorst	3	Nellie Bosveld	16
Anne-Marie Van Popta	3	Kimberley Driegen	16
Miranda Barendregt	4	Deanna Wierenga	17
Karen Bartels	4	Deborah Verhoeff	18
Jodie Lodder	5	Beth Kingma	19
Heather Krabbendam	6	Rachelle Van Veen	20
Bianca Vanden Beukel	9	Lee-Ann Beintema	22
Julie Buitenhuis	11	Ruby Knol	23
Rebecca Hekert	11	Brian Jager	24
Tim Verhey	12	Steven Vandavelde	26
Robert Vandergaag	14	Tesha Hopman	29
Nicole Aasman	15	Christina Bredenhof	31
Rachel Broekema	15	Anna Hordyk	31



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Charla Meyer*. We are happy to have you join us. Everything about our Club is right here in Our Little Magazine, Charla. We hope you will join in all our activities and enjoy them!

I see you have been a real Busy Beaver, *Vickie Aikema*. Yes, I like your stationary, and I thank you for sharing your puzzles and riddles. Are you glad Spring is here, Vickie?

Hello, *Karen Terpstra*. It was good to hear from you again. Thank you for your letter.

How are your music lessons coming, *Francine Van-Woudenberg*? I'm sorry to hear you'll be losing your best friend. Maybe she'll become your pen pal, Francine? Thanks for the poem!

How is your new dog doing, *Teri Oosterhoff*? Thank you for your letter and the interesting puzzle. Thank you, too, for letting me know your birthday. Now I can put your name on the birthday list! Bye for now, Teri.

Hello, *Alyssa Lodder*. How nice to hear from you again! Thank you for the picture and the cartoon. Write again soon.

Thank you for the letter and the puzzle, *Crystal Dekker*. How is your puppy doing? She sounds like lots of fun to play with outside, now that it's Spring!

Do your neighbours keep horses, *Thelma Blom*? Sounds to me as if you enjoy keeping pets. I can see you're excited about graduating, too. Thank you for the picture, Thelma. Bye for now.

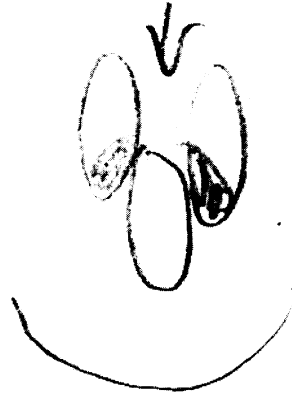
Hello, *Jason Vandeburgt*. That was a very good fortune in your cookie! And very good pictures in your letter! Thank you, Jason. Write again soon.

Thank you for your letter, *Crystal DeJong*. It was good to hear from you. I'm glad you had such a good time with your friend. Bye for now, Crystal.

Answers: hab 11. Esther
Women: 1. Abigail 2. Sarah 3. Dinah 4. Julia 5. Queen of Shebah 6. Huldah 7. Herodias 8. Mary 9. Elisabeth 10. Ra-

CARTOON

from Busy Beaver *Alyssa Lodder*



Be happy!

FOR YOU TO DO

!! SURPRISING SNACKS !!

Can you find out **four** surprisingly different liquids different butterflies sip through their "drinking-straw" mouth parts?

Can you find out a salamander's favourite foods?

For your reward, send your answers to

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

Time to say "Good-bye," Busy Beavers.
Hope to "see" you all next time.

Love from your
Aunt Betty



With thankfulness to our Father in heaven we announce the birth of

JODI ANN

Born March 20, 1992

A little sister for *Rachel, Bradley, Ashley and Lauren*

George and Rolean Tamminga
(nee Hulzebosch)

748 Carluke Road W.
RR 2, Ancaster, ON L9G 3L1

We thank the Lord for entrusting to our care

KARLEE JENNIFER

Born March 8, 1992

A sister for *Dayna and Jared*

Charles and Bonnie Slaa
(nee Veenendaal)

63 Abingdon Crescent N.E.
Calgary, AB T2A 6W8

The Lord in His goodness has entrusted into our care one of His precious gifts, a baby girl whom we named

HEATHER NICOLE

Born March 26, 1992

A little sister for *Michelle and Brittany*

Roland and Janice VanAndel
2393 Edith Avenue
Burlington, ON L7R 1N6