



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 41, No. 10

May 22, 1992



“While He blessed them”

By C. Van Spronsen

“While He blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.”
Luke 24:51

The Gospel according to Luke shows a beautiful structure also in certain parallels between the beginning and the end of his account of Jesus’ life on earth. It begins and it ends in the temple. It begins with some faithful people being in the temple courts and a heavenly messenger announcing the birth of the herald of Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah, the priest, in the temple. That is the beginning of the Gospel, the Good News.

The book ends with the Christ ascending into heaven and His faithful congregation of disciples praising God in the temple. It begins with faithful people praying in the temple court while the priest Zechariah burns the incense offering. It ends with Jesus Christ, the High Priest, lifting up His hands and laying His priestly blessing upon His congregation. The Gospel begins with angels announcing great joy which will be for all people and it ends with the disciples returning to Jerusalem with great joy!

Much has happened in between! The one and only sacrifice which could pay for the sins of the world has now been brought. The cup of God’s wrath was drunk to the last drop. Even His close friends had stood by stunned and shocked without understanding why all this had to happen to Him. Even His resurrection at first met with total unbelief and so the risen Lord has opened the Scriptures for them as well as their minds. After all, they shared in His exaltation and they will continue to enjoy the fruits of all His labours. They were to be His witnesses and so the Lord had prepared them for this task by remaining with them for another forty days.

Now the time has come. The High Priest must now enter the true sanctuary, heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb. 9:24). His ascension is not the end of His mediating work but now He continues to lay His high-priestly blessing upon His people after the sacrifice has made full atonement for all their sins.

The Lord continues as Mediator and one of us. He changed location. “He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.” He did not disappear, neither disintegrate. He did not become an angelic being or spirit but that same Jesus who ate with them, who touched them, who held their children in His arms, whose hands were blessing them as He ascended – He ascended into heaven in His physical being. It is real! He is there until He will come again. “This same Je-

sus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

The disciples were not troubled when He left. On the contrary, they were filled with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God. In this great moment of exaltation the Lord Himself draws the closest link between His exalted state and that of His Church which He leaves behind here on earth. He leaves while He blesses them! That is the last picture, the last image the disciples have of Christ here on earth, ascending up to heaven. That is the picture they passed on to us: a blessing Lord. His church remains here on earth with the hands of Jesus Christ the High Priest extended over them in the process of laying His blessing upon them, the fruit of His sacrifice.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, there is a gigantic statute representing Christ, standing high on a mountain, overlooking the city, with His arms stretched out over the multitudes of people far down below. We may not encourage such an image of stone but we certainly would encourage a greater awareness of the reality illustrated by this image. Christ ascended into heaven as the Head of the Church but in order to pour out His heavenly gifts on us so that we may continue His work here on earth and reap the harvest of His sacrifice. The disciples were not impoverished when Jesus left but greatly enriched. They were filled with great joy and praised God!

No wonder! Jesus left them while He blessed them. His blessing is not merely a wish or a prayer but an effective, real power coming from the one and only High Priest. His blessing is a power just like His Word is a power unto salvation. When he lifts up His hands to bless, the blessings will pour forth. Now they are under the umbrella of His heavenly blessings. The gifts of the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon them. The work of Jesus Christ continues from heaven through His disciples here on earth. Jesus had charged them to be His witnesses and explained that fulfillment of the Scriptures requires that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). The charge has been given and now the risen Lord takes up His position in heaven from where He will orchestrate this final gathering together of His church through His believers. So He leaves, while He blessed them.

These blessing hands are the guarantee that Christ’s work will reach its goal and destination. He will enable His disci-

ples to fulfill their mandate to preach the Gospel to all nations beginning from Jerusalem, from the temple. This mandate is being continued by the Church today and we may rely on the power of this same blessing of which we are reminded every worship service again when the minister of the Word, in the name of Jesus Christ, may also lift up his hands and lay the blessing of the Lord upon the congregation. Behind the earthly servant the congregation may see Jesus Christ and His uplifted hands stretched out over them as His people, His beloved flock for whom He laid down His

life as a sacrifice for all our sins and now He lays His priestly blessing upon the reconciled congregation.

The first disciples responded with great joy and by continually blessing God in the temple. With great courage and boldness they went about their mandate to preach the Gospel to all nations because they knew that the Lord with His blessing would be with His Church always to the close of the age. May the joy and enthusiasm of these first disciples still abound today since God's people today have the same rich promises and may look forward to Christ returning in the same way as they saw Him going into heaven. **C**

Country or Conglomerate?

By W.W.J. VanOene



On May 18, we shall celebrate another Victoria Day. To many people this means that they have a "long weekend," and can go away from Friday evening till Monday night. For us it means that here we have an opportunity to reflect briefly on our country as a nation. No one is to expect a profound political analysis of the present or well-founded and argued outlines or expectations for the future. What follows are just some observations and more or less loose remarks.

Every citizen of our country should be concerned about its present condition as well as about its future, for the very methods that are being employed to keep our country together are factually nothing but means by which it will unavoidably become more and more divided. Instead of growing gradually into one nation, Canada develops increasingly into the direction of a conglomerate of all sorts of different groups that are even encouraged to retain and preserve their own identity and particular character. The whole concept of "multiculturalism" will divide our nation at an accelerating pace.

True, no one should despise or discard his past, or throw out all that he brought along from the old country. Herewith we are not referring to the rich spiritual heritage that we as Reformed Christians are to treasure and to pass on to the following generations. What we have in mind at this point is what made the nations from which the

immigrants have come what these nations are, with their own characteristics, historical background, and development. A nation, or a person for that matter, that ignores or denies its own past has no future. And a person who denies his love to the country from which

he came will be unable to love the country that allowed him to enter and become one of its citizens.

But not forgetting and even treasuring what one had or brought along from one's country of origin is not by far the same as continuing as if one were still

Clarion THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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

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

Advertisements: \$6.50* per column inch

* Including 7% GST - No. R104293055

Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

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in the old country or as if one were living in a colony in one's new country.

Bringing along one's own history, a person has the obligation to contribute this to the country he has chosen, so that a new and richer "culture" may result, a culture that is not a conglomerate of all sorts of different cultures but a new culture with its own specific and distinguishing character, and one that in its "one-ness" reflects the efforts of all contributing nationalities. It is only in this way that one will be able to discover and speak of nationalism.

"Nationalism" is defined as "Devotion to one's own country." It is this nationalism that is so badly lacking in our own country.

In this respect there is a remarkable difference between Canadians and our neighbours south of the border. When travelling through the United States, one sees many flags in front of homes and other non-public buildings. During the Gulf War there was an abundant display of patriotism. The "Stars and Stripes" could be seen almost everywhere. For example: in Lynden, Wash., the streets were lined with flags, and homes and cars displayed the yellow ribbons that assured the troops in the field: We are with you and proud of you all!

North of the border, however, there was an apparent coolness and indifference, even though also our men and women were serving in that war.

Recently ceremonies were held at the Memorial at Vimy Ridge where many Canadians gave their lives during the first world war. It has been said that their valour and courage made Canada a nation in its own right in the eyes of the other nations.

During the ceremonies, our Prime Minister also delivered an appropriate address with the usual platitudes. How can a country and how can a government that is committed to "multiculturalism" produce or stimulate nationalism, love for one's own country? Such commitment and its persistent execution rather promote division and disunity.

In the long run it leads to the necessity to recognize as many "distinct societies" as there are contributing groups and elements in our nation.

When considering the present state and when visualizing what such an attitude must lead to, one cannot but think of the admonition of Scripture "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of the neighbour." Exactly the opposite is

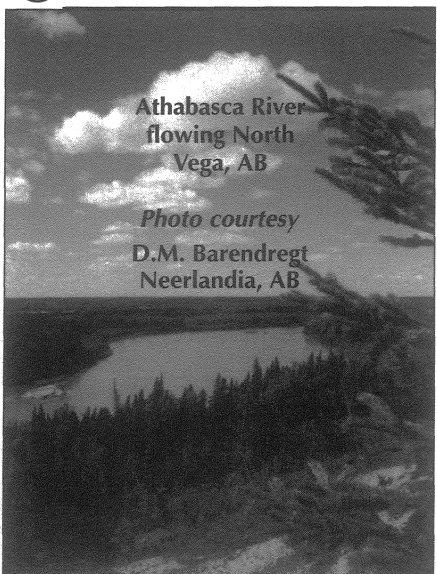
seen all around us: they all seek their own "good" and know only one goal: to promote their own interests and to make certain that they get their wish.

Recently *Canadian Scene* passed on that "The Year 1993 has been officially named the Year of Cross-Cultural Understanding in the city of Montreal," and it added that the federal Minister of Multi-culturalism and Citizenship, Gerry Weiner, in congratulating Mayor Dore on his initiative, "stated that in cities where such commemorative years have been held, 'there has been a marked increase in the awareness of racism in the community and what it takes to fight it. There has been a greater sensitivity to the issues of cross-cultural understanding. Not the least of these issues are the recruitment of minorities and the training of people in public service to meet the needs of all members of the community.' "

Our country will never eliminate racism by promoting multiculturalism and by making it obligatory to have a certain percentage of the workforce or staff consist of members of "visible minorities" or of women.

It is not a cheap solution nor an easy answer to all questions when we state and maintain that true unity can be found only when all citizens learn what the Lord tells us to do: not seek one's own good but the good of the neighbour. This will never be achieved if we follow what is basically the pattern of the prince of darkness: divide and rule,

OUR COVER



set up the one against the other. If this trend continues, Canada will more and more become a conglomerate of diverse groups instead of being one country where nationalism, dedication to and love for one's country, will be found. Our country may even cease to exist as such!

It is not surprising that in the same issue of *Canadian Scene* the following passage draws our attention.

"The British philosopher Edmund Burke stated that 'people will not look forward to posterity who never look back to their ancestors.' But that is exactly what we are doing. Our history is so badly neglected that young people can pass through the school system and graduate from university without knowing anything about how our parliamentary system evolved or how confederation came about. Even such a major event as the War of 1812 is barely known, though historians agree that it set the seal on Canada as a free and independent nation.

"In the United States, the sites of major battles in the Civil War are preserved as parks which remind Americans that a price had to be paid for upholding justice and right. In Canada, many battlefields where Canadians defended their land against invaders remain unmarked, often buried under paved roads or industrial plants."

Let us, without neglecting our own past and without denying our own identity, seek the good of our country and of the neighbour, opposing all racism as well as all other divisive forces and show true nationalism, dedication to and love for our country, a country in which we enjoy freedom to worship the Lord and in which we have the opportunity to communicate the riches we have received from our God with all others, whatever their background or country of origin.

Ruler Supreme, who hearest
humble prayer,
Hold our dominion in Thy
loving care;
Help us to find, O God, in Thee
A lasting, rich reward,
As, waiting for the better day,
We ever stand on guard.
God keep our land glorious
and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard
for thee!



How does God Reveal Himself in His Works and Words?³

By C. Van Dam

In the previous article, we saw how God's glory is seen by creation obeying God's commands. According to the Bible, what we call laws of nature are in reality nature obeying God's commands and decrees. There is a certain regularity and predictability in nature only because God is faithful to His covenant and consistent in His wishes. The "laws of Nature" can, therefore, not be treated as autonomous and unchanging.

More on what the Bible reveals respecting our topic

At this point an objection could be raised. But the Bible is not a scientific textbook is it? Can we really use the Bible in scientific study of creation? There are several issues here that need to be recognized. It is true that the Bible was not written by God to serve as a handbook for geology or chemistry. However, does that take away from the authority of the Bible respecting these scientific disciplines? The point is: does a lack of scientific detail in the Scriptures automatically mean that it has nothing to say and that we can thus exclude God and rely only on what He has to tell us in His book of creation? That approach would be a bad mistake for the real question is whether the Bible contains relevant information for the sciences. We have already seen that it does. Only from Scripture do we, e.g., know that a personal God sustains and governs this world. Not natural autonomous laws, but God makes it run. The Bible is normative and authoritative for all of life, also for science (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Furthermore, only the Bible can tell us with authority and truth what happened at the beginning of time and what will happen in the future.

Only the Bible can inform us that God created a perfect world and universe, that there was a fall into sin, and a terrible flood, and that there will be a restoration one day after the judgement of fire. This framework is relevant for science. Science can not be sure of what happened at the beginning, or what will happen in the future. Science can only be sure of what God is doing now and even that knowledge is very limited, for scientists are finite human creatures.

This truth of the finiteness of man is clearly revealed in Scripture. It is, for example, demonstrated by God's response to Job's questions concerning God's government of the world and in particular his life.¹ God reminds Job that Job is only a creature. He is not God. In the course of God's answer to Job, God speaks of the stars and weather and says (Job 38 NABS):

³¹Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?

³²Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear [probably "planets"] with its satellites?

³³Do you know the ordinances of the heavens or fix their rule over the earth?

³⁴Can you lift up your voice to the clouds so that an abundance of water may cover you?

³⁵Can you send forth lightnings that they may go, and say to you, "Here we are?"

All these questions expect "No!" as answer. A key question is "Do you know the ordinances [*huggôt*] of the heavens or fix their rule over the earth?" (v. 33). We have run across this word "ordi-

nances" before. It refers to God's law and rule over creation. Man may be able to deduce all kinds of laws of nature and draw up all manner of working hypothesis. But, he will never be able to give *the* answer to the secret of the workings of creation. For behind creation, behind this book of natural revelation, is God's inscrutable command and ordinance. He is in charge and man will never be in charge. For if man were to be able to reproduce this ordinance of God that he could make the stars leave their course, well then man would be as God! How finite man is. He cannot even determine the weather properly for the next day, much less control it. Man can come up with all kinds of formulas, and it is part of his cultural mandate to do so. He is able to grow in understanding of the world and the universe, but our scientific laws can never produce obedience in creation. We can analyze, but cannot rule as God.

It may be helpful at this point to briefly discuss four basic truths or principles that should be kept in mind when using the Bible, also regarding scientific topics.²

Principles in using the Bible

In the first place, the Word of God is clear or perspicuous. This means that believers who read the Bible are not dependent on specialists, be they in science or theology, in order to understand the basic message that comes to them there. When the child of God reads and studies Scripture, humbly submitting himself to the Word and asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then the Word *is* a light on his path, a lamp before his feet (Ps. 119:105). Believers are

able to judge and are called to judge any interpretations of Scripture that are suspect (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15; 1 John 2:20). This clarity of Scripture does not imply that there are no difficulties in interpretation or perplexing passages. It therefore also does not deny the need for the scholarly study of Scripture.³ On the other hand, children of God do not need to feel that they are at the mercy of science to inform them of how and what happened, for example, at the beginning. The Bible is clear on what it says and demands it be taken seriously.

In the second place, God's Word is self-sufficient and self-authenticating. It does not need our reasoning and proofs to show that it is trustworthy and true. As we confess in Article 5 of our Belgic Confession:

We believe without any doubt all things contained in them [i.e. the holy Scriptures], not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they contain the evidence thereof in themselves; for, even the blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled.

One must, therefore, resist attempting to prove the Bible scientifically on contested points, like creation, the flood, the sun's standing still etc. Such proof is not necessary.

Thirdly, God's Word explains itself and is its own interpreter. Behind the many books of Scripture is the one Author, namely God. This means that there is a basic unity underlying all of Scripture. One part of the Bible can therefore be used to explain another part. If there are difficulties in understanding parts of Genesis, then relevant information found elsewhere in the Old Testament or New Testament can and should be used.

Finally, God's Word has the last say. If there is a real contradiction between what men say and what God says in His Word, God's Word must be maintained and the word of man must be put aside. Scripture never conflicts with facts. God does not contradict Himself in His revelation in creation and in the Bible. We need to remember that, if we are to understand rightly, we are to read the data of Creation through the glasses of the Scriptures. The one means, the Book of Creation, is not understandable without the other, the Book of Special Revelation. That is

because our minds have been darkened by sin and we cannot truly understand creation without the Bible.

Although there actually cannot be a conflict between the revelation in nature and the Bible, conflict does arise when scientific theorizing is influenced by a denial of the Word of God. The theory of evolution, along with all the presuppositions that inform it, is a good example of this. Conflict can also arise if Scripture is wrongly understood. If one insists that Scripture does not allow you to believe that the earth revolves around the sun instead of vice versa, then one goes further than Scripture. However, although mistakes in understanding Scripture have occurred and are possible, we should not now relativize all interpretation of Scripture, but we should be careful that we do not go further than Scripture does. Christian endeavour in science, done on the basis of Biblical presuppositions and within a Scriptural world view can never come in conflict with Scripture. Secularized science can. "But then we have in essence a conflict, not between science and faith, but between unbelief and faith."⁴

One's understanding of Scripture may never be subjected to the condition that it must fit the current scientific theory. Faith must never be put over against rationalism as if it is some sort of contest. What Scripture teaches must always be fully reckoned with. We accept it in faith and do not need "proofs" from science or any other discipline that it is true. Without minimizing the labours of science, it is in a sense only man's attempt to understand God's creation. As a *human* enterprise busy with God's glorious work, science therefore has a modest place and its theories are only that and nothing more.⁵ At the same time, science that recognizes the place of God can begin to show us the greatness of God, namely His power, wisdom, and faithfulness as seen in His creation work.

In conclusion

In conclusion and summary, let us briefly note Article 2 of our Belgic Confession. As we read it through, we will notice that the contents of this article have already been demonstrated from Scripture.

How God Makes Himself
Known to Us

We know Him by two means: First by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe which is

before our eyes as a most beautiful book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to *perceive clearly the invisible qualities of God, namely, His eternal power and deity*, as the apostle Paul says in Rom. 1:20.

Notice we know *God*, not all kinds of so-called scientific facts which are elevated to revelation and are to decide on issues like the world's origin or homosexuality. We know God from His handiwork (think, e.g., of Ps. 19 and the heavens), His providence (He sustains everything), and His government (He commands creation, commands we cannot duplicate!). It is terrible that precisely that which reveals God, has been reduced to an experimental arena for theories that refuse to take God seriously and in many cases seek to undermine His Word! Working scientifically is for many by definition ignoring God! The seriousness of this revelation of *God* in creation (and therefore ignoring it) is clear from what follows in Article 2.

All these things are sufficient to convict men and to leave them without excuse.

In other words, God's wrath abides on those who refuse to see the revelation of God in His creation, preservation, and government of the universe. God does, however, provide a way out. The article continues:

Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word as far as it is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.


Scripture gives us all the information we need to know God as fully and clearly as is necessary for His glory and our reconciliation. The Scriptures also give us what we need to combat the current crisis on how God reveals Himself. The Psalmist said it well. "In Thy light, we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

¹For what follows in this paragraph I am indebted to Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*, pp. 22-25.

²The following appeared in slightly different form in C. Van Dam, "Bible and Science: some basic factors," *Clarion*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1989) pp. 54-55.

³See further on this topic, e.g., H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, I (Kampen: Kok, 1967; this ed. first pub. 1906), pp. 445-451.

⁴J. Van Delden, *Schepping en wetenschap*, (Amsterdam: Buiten & Schipperheijn, 1977) p. 57.

⁵On the above see J. Byl, "Science and Christian Knowledge," *Reformed Perspective*, Vol. 2, No 6 (1983), pp. 4-9. 

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper⁵

By N.H. Gootjes

In this last article on the meaning of the Lord's Supper we begin with discussing the wine as element. As we saw in the second article, there is a movement that rejects the use of wine in the sacrament. Other people are not so rigorous as to deny that wine was used at the institution, but they think that wine can just as well be replaced by something else.

The wine

To begin with that first objection, it cannot be denied that Jesus Christ used wine when He instituted this sacrament. At the passover meal wine was drunk, and Jesus used this wine. Neither can it be denied that at the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Corinth wine was used, for some got drunk (1 Cor. 11:21). But is it important to maintain that it should be wine? Can grape juice not be a good substitute? Why wine?

It is sometimes thought that the choice for wine was determined by the colour. The red colour is to remind the people of Christ's blood. Now wine can have another colour than red, but it seems that the passover ritual required red wine. The Bible, however, does nowhere give any attention to the colour. Just as there is no similarity between the bread and the body of Christ (then the meat of the passover lamb would have been used), so also the use of the wine is not based on similarity in colour with blood.

Wine, however, was exceptional in that the people did not usually drink wine. Bread was daily food, but the common drink was water (see Is. 3:1). This holds true in New Testament times, otherwise Paul need not have said to Timothy: "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine" (1 Tim. 5:23). Wine is exceptional.

Wine belongs to special occasions, and particularly to festivities. Wine was drunk during the festivities at the sanc-

tuary (Deut. 14:26). It was used at festive meals (Job 1:13) and at weddings (John 2:13). It is part of the feast which the Lord will prepare for His people (Is. 25:6). God has given wine "to gladden the heart of man" (Ps. 104:15).

The function of the wine in the celebration of the Lord's Supper is, to give a festive character to this meal. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is an occasion for great joy (see also Acts 2:46). Within the celebration of the Lord's Supper especially the drinking looks forward to the drinking with Christ in His Kingdom (Mark 14:25).

Here we detect the reason why the Lord used two elements in the sacrament. The Roman Catholics withhold the wine from the congregation. They think that there is no need for the laymen to drink the wine, since the grace of the sacrificed Christ is received fully through the bread. To be sure, both the bread and the wine refer to the same death of Christ (1 Cor. 11:26). But they represent Christ's death in a different way. In the bread He is presented as the bread of life: we can only stay alive through Him. In the wine He is presented as the cause of our joy. When we think of the death of Jesus Christ we will become sad, for we realize that our sins made his death necessary. But the wine shows that to our sadness great joy should be added. Through His death Christ has worked salvation for us, and that is joy indeed. We express this joy in songs of praise to God (Acts 2:47).

Wine belongs to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. What then to do for those brothers and sisters who for some reason cannot drink wine? They should not be forced to drink the wine. But since it is an individual problem, individual solutions should be found.

The cup

We have the custom to pour the wine from a pitcher into a cup during the

celebration of the Lord's Supper. We know, however, that at the first celebration the wine was not poured out at that moment. The cup had been prepared beforehand, and had been standing there for some time, before it was drunk.

But even though the Lord's Supper was instituted at the passover meal, the Supper may not be equated with this meal. We have to ask whether the words of the institution emphasize the pouring out of the wine. The answer is: No. There is a consistent emphasis on the breaking of the bread, but not even once is the pouring of wine mentioned. The verb "to pour out" is only used in connection with Christ's blood: "This is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). The custom to pour out the wine at the table is probably the result of a tendency to equalize the elements.

Another question is, whether the use of the cup is important. Protestant theology has always drawn attention to the fact that the second word at the Lord's Supper was not said about the wine, but about the cup. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). This formulation has always been used against the Roman Catholic theory of transubstantiation. It is impossible that Jesus Christ means that the cup changes into his blood. But then the first word cannot mean that the bread changes into the body of Christ.

But after the Roman Catholic theory was rejected, not much was done with the cup. There was also no special need to discuss the cup since everywhere one or more communal cups were used. But now that the communal cup has been questioned for hygienic reasons, we have to investigate whether a specific meaning is connected with the cup.

About the cup which Jesus made into the cup of the Lord's Supper, we

read: "And He took a cup..., gave it to them, and they all drank from it" (Mark 14:23). "From it" can only refer to "from the cup." The text can only mean that they all drank from the same cup. The communal cup is indicated in a different way in Matt. 26:27: "And He took a cup, ...gave it to them saying: 'Drink of it, all of you.'" The receivers of the cup together share in the blessings of Christ's death.

The words of institution show that the cup is a meaningful element of the Lord's Supper. The joyful results of Christ's death are shared within the congregation. In a time when individualism threatens the community of the church it is important to maintain the communal cup as a sign that we together with so many different people, who are not all our friends, need and receive the fruits of Christ's salvation work.

Again, after the meaning of the cup has been established, it is possible to make accommodation for special situations. The church already in 1581 decided on special rules for a celebration where lepers were present. Synod Leeuwarden 1920 did the same for other contagious diseases.²¹ Yet the general rule is that communal cups reflect best the intention of the Lord in the institution of the Lord's Supper.²²

The table

Over against the Roman Catholic understanding of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice to God, the Reformed have emphasized that it is a meal. Therefore they replaced the altar by a table. The table was placed in full view of the people. But there was no unity in the way they used the table.

Three practices have existed within the churches of the Reformation. The first was that bread and wine were brought by the ministers and elders to the people who remained sitting in the pew. The second was that the people walked up to the table, and received there the elements and ate and drank standing. The third was that the people went forward and sat at the table, and there partook of bread and wine.²³

All three can be traced back to the 16th century. But none is original. At the passover where the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples reclined at the table (Luke 22:14). In the apostolic church the Lord's Supper was celebrated in connection with a communal meal, as far as we know. This shows that even in the first century they did not just copy the

first celebration. Since the Lord's Supper is a meal, it is probable that it was celebrated at a table, but this is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians. Nowhere in the institution is special attention given to the fact that the Lord's Supper was celebrated at a table. The table is indirectly important, to emphasize the meal character of this sacrament. Therefore we can use the table in such a way that it contributes most to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, given the local opportunities.²⁴

But on one occasion the word "table" in connection with the Lord's Supper receives special attention. In 1 Cor. 10:21 is said: "You can not partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." This text must be explained in the context. Paul is discussing the question whether Christians can participate in a sacrificial meal for heathen gods.

Paul has already stated that idols do not exist (1 Cor. 8:4). But this statement cannot be used as an argument to participate in heathen sacrificial meals. Even though the idols do not exist, the demons do. They are the ones who in fact have prepared these sacrifice meals (1 Cor. 10:19, 20). By partaking of such meals the believers would in fact become partakers of the table of demons. The church at Corinth should know that such a behaviour is very dangerous. It would provoke the Lord to jealousy (vv. 22) and they know what happened when the Lord is provoked (vv. 7-10).

This command not to partake in a sacrifice meal was a hard one for the Corinthians. It meant that they could no longer be a member of social societies. These societies were very important for the social contacts. They offered assistance to their members when they would become poor, they took care of them when they would fall ill, and they organized the funerals of the members. But the most important aspect was the social contact the members could enjoy with other people. Just as today it was important then to know the right people.

These societies, however, adopted a god as protector and held their gatherings and meals under the auspices of that god. Therefore Christians were not allowed to participate in these social activities. This meant a serious restriction on their social contacts. Because these societies were so pervasive, Christians could not participate in political and social life. They could not become civil servants, for then they would have to sacrifice to the emperor. This in turn

led for some to their death, when under Nero the Christians were forced to eat food sacrificed to the emperor.

The Lord's Supper is the table of the Lord, and shows the communion with God and with Jesus Christ. This communion requires that one stay away from participation in any festivity of the social societies. The Lord's Supper requires staying away from everything that is tainted with other religions.

Gifts from the table

Yet another meaning of the Lord's Supper can be seen when we consider that it was first celebrated as a part of a communal meal, as is indicated in 1 Cor. 11. The members of the congregation brought food, each according to his means. These meals served not only the communication between the saints, but also the communion of the saints. The poorer members of the congregation received food at these occasions. Such meals were called "love (meals)."²⁵

This combination of a celebration before the Lord and support for the needy already had a long history behind it in the first century. When Israel appeared before the Lord at the harvest feasts, they had to come, not only with their families and dependents, but also with those who had no fields and therefore no harvest. They were the Levite who was living within the town, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widows (Deut. 16:11, 14). All these people shared in the fruits of the harvest. They probably also received what was left of the tithe after the celebration (Deut. 14:22-27). And once every three years they received the whole tithe (Deut. 14:28, 29).

This custom is present in 1 Cor. 11. When Paul discusses it, he has no problem with the fact that the Lord's Supper was combined with a meal for the whole congregation. But he does have a problem with the way it went in Corinth. For the rich, who had brought much, began to eat on their own. And so they got drunk, and the poor remained hungry (1 Cor. 11:21).

The fact that poor sinners receive the riches of Christ at the Lord's Supper should lead to financial care for the poor in the congregation. The Lord's Supper does not only direct our love towards Jesus Christ, but also toward those who with us participate in the gifts of Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the offering plate at the table. This is certainly not meant as a kind of admission fee to the Lord's Supper. The meaning is that God's people, in gratitude

for the grace for poor sinners shown at the table of the Lord, now express this gratitude by caring for the poor. The collection at the table should be for the work of the deacons.

Eschatological perspective

The Lord's Supper has one more important meaning, indicated right at the moment of its institution. Probably before the Lord's Supper was celebrated by the disciples, Jesus Christ said: "I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16).²⁶ The Lord's Supper looks forward to the time when the Kingdom of God has come on the earth. Then Jesus Christ is again in their midst. He will participate in the great celebration of which the Lord's Supper is only a foretaste. That will be the fulfillment of the joy of the Lord's Supper.

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper today, we should feel that our joy is not complete: Jesus Christ is not yet there to celebrate it with us. The Lord's

Supper should make us long for the time when He will join us.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the Lord's Supper is full of meaning. The sacrament is celebrated regularly in the congregations. This is according to Christ's ordinance. But the repetition and our inattentiveness can easily lead to a shallow and individualistic celebration of it. A clearer understanding of the richness of this institution can contribute to a richer experience of our Christian faith.

²¹See for these decisions F.L. Bos, *De orde der kerk* ('s Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Guido de Bres, 1950) pp. 230ff.


²²At this point I would like to add a remark of K. Schilder which deals indirectly with this situation. In one of his Press Reviews Schilder passes on a report that some people had left the local church they belonged to and established another because in their former church individual cups had been intro-

duced. Schilder does not think that the church that had introduced individual cups had through that fact become a false church, and that this is a good reason to establish another church, see *De Kerk* (ed. J. Kamphuis; Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960) vol. 1; pp. 369 ff.

²³See the illustrations in W. van 't Spijker, *Bij brood en beker*, resp. pp. 174; 139; 222.

²⁴I prefer the sitting at the table, where the idea of a meal and of eating and drinking occurs in its natural environment. But this should be balanced by the opportunities in large congregations. Repetition of the formula and having many "tables" does not contribute to an attentive participation.

²⁵The name occurs in the epistle of Jude, v. 12. See the article "Love Feast," written by D.H. Wheaton, in W.A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), pp. 660ff.

²⁶Mark records as word after the drinking of the cup: "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God," Mark 14:25. So Jesus Christ said this more than once during the hours of celebrating the Passover. The expectation of Christ is also mentioned in Matt. 26:29 and 1 Cor. 11:26. 

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Loving Yourself?

Should you love yourself? If you would listen to the advice of many teachers, counsellors, writers and ministers of religion, your answer would be: "Yes, I should love myself. I should love myself deeply, completely and without reservations. I should have an unconditional love for myself."

From many different sources, people are being encouraged to feel good about themselves. The term "self-esteem" has become more common than the word "sin." Self-esteem means having a positive self-image. It means that people value themselves highly. They see themselves as glorious and wonderful individuals.

But according to many present writers, this very desirable quality of self-esteem is actually extremely rare. Most

people are said to have very low self-esteem. They don't think much of themselves. They harbor negative thoughts of their own worthlessness. And in case we should be inclined to see this situation as insignificant, many figures are brought to our attention to demonstrate that low self-esteem leads to violence, suicide, abuse, drug use, teenage pregnancy and other woeful plagues of modern life.

Since a lack of self-esteem is perceived to be the cause of most of our societal diseases, it has become public enemy number one. Nothing is seen as more crucial to modern life than to eradicate feelings of worthlessness. Through schools and counselling and preaching, everybody must be educated to realize that they are truly admirable and magnificent. All of us must

learn to joyfully accept ourselves and to believe in ourselves.

Let's imagine that you believed this new philosophy of self-esteem. It's evening and time to update your diary. Instead of the traditional, "Dear Diary," today's entry might begin with this heading: "Dearly beloved self." Or: "Esteemed Me." Or: "To a Very Important Person." And it would continue with words like this: "How great it was to be Me today. I really enjoyed Myself. Instead of feeling down, I just celebrated Myself. How odd that it took so long for Me to realize just how admirable I am. Now I can hardly imagine being different than what I am. It doesn't matter what other people think about Me. I just feel in my heart that I am really Somebody. I like Me! How great I am!"

“Detesting yourself”

No doubt Gloria Steinem would applaud a notation like this. So would Robert Schuller. Oddly enough, so would Dr. Dobson. But at this point I would like to draw your attention to some familiar words from the language of the church. Think back to the last baptism in your local church. The minister read from the Form for Baptism which says that baptism “signifies the impurity of our souls, so that we may detest ourselves, humble ourselves before God and seek our cleansing and salvation outside of ourselves.”

And, since it’s the time of the year when we often witness public profession of faith, why not listen to the second question of the Form: “Do you *truly detest and humble yourself* before God because of your sins and seek your life outside of yourself in Jesus Christ?”

We find the same phrases in the Form for the Lord’s Supper: “Let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, *detesting himself*, may humble himself before God.”

And if you look through the Prayers at the back of the *Book of Praise* you will find admissions that we are all “poor wretched sinners...born in sin and corruption.” In the prayers “we accuse ourselves.” We confess that we are not “worthy to be children of God.” Undoubtedly you have heard similar language from your own minister.

It would seem, then, that Reformed thinking sends us into a violent head-on collision with trendy self-esteem philosophy. The exhortation to “love yourself” cannot be combined with the confession that we should “detest ourselves.” Instead of bringing a toast to our own glory, we abominate ourselves and confess that we are worms before Him who is Holy.

According to Scripture, self-esteem is the very least of our human problems. In fact, the Bible takes it for granted that we have a strong tendency toward not low, but high self-esteem. It warns us not to think too highly of ourselves. It puts us on guard against the horrid but universally prevalent sin of pride. Instead of building up our self-esteem, the Scriptures spend considerable effort in destroying our natural egoism and self-centeredness. The Bible assumes that, by nature, we humans have a vastly-inflated sense of self-worth. We build ourselves up and tear others down. We honour ourselves but ignore the honour of Almighty God.

A prescription for self-love?

We all know that the Bible commands us to love God first of all and our neighbour as ourselves. We are called to esteem the Lord and the neighbour, but to deny ourselves. That is the way of the Kingdom of God. But many allege that the Bible also contains a prescription for self-love. It is their opinion that the summary of the Law as the Lord gives that to us in Matt. 22, also implies that we should love ourselves. After all, does not the second great commandment instruct us to “love your neighbour *as yourself*?”

In answer, it may be said that the summary of the Law in Matt. 22 contains only two commandments, not three! The Lord does not exhort us to love ourselves. Instead, He takes it for granted that we love ourselves in the sense that we look after our basic needs. Very few people forget about their hunger, their thirst, their need for warm clothing, shelter and so forth. They have a natural concern for the comfort of their own lives. In the same way, says the Lord Jesus, we must develop an abiding concern for the well-being of our neighbour. Are his needs being met? Can I help? Sadly, our natural selfishness makes it all too easy for us to forget about our neighbour!

Thus, throughout the Bible, we are admonished to humble ourselves. The Bible attacks our self-flattery; it destroys our self-confidence. God does not save us because we were so lovable. Sometimes, when you read the self-esteem literature, you get the impression that God’s salvation is hardly surprising. Considering how wonderful we are, it was actually inevitable that God would save us! But Scripture says that Christ died for the *ungodly*. We were reconciled while we were yet *enemies* (Romans 5:6, 10). “God shows His love for us in that while we were yet *sinners* Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Self-esteem or Christ-esteem?

The miracle of the Gospel is that despite our unworthiness, and regardless of our deep-seated pride, the Lord was pleased to save us. We are ugly sinners with many defects, but the Lord is going to make us beautiful saints. That’s no credit to us, no reason for pride, but rather cause for praise!

Our identity, our self-image should be shaped not by what we naturally are, but by what God has made and is making of us. We live by grace. Our feelings about ourselves must be formed by God’s grace. He makes us aware of His


love for us in Christ Jesus. He wants us to know that even though we are vile in ourselves, yet He makes us His treasured possession. He tells us that His delight is in us.

So what do you do when you are constantly ambushed by feelings of worthlessness? First of all, you must see that you are, in fact, an unworthy sinner. But then you must also believe God’s grace in Christ Jesus. You must know that in Christ, God is making you beautiful so that you can glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

So we may say that the answer to what is called “low self-esteem” is high Christ-esteem! We think very highly of our Saviour. We honour Him above all. To Him be all the praise and glory! He restores us and makes us new creatures.

The result of high Christ-esteem is that you will be able to accept the kind of person you are compared to other people. Even if others deride you, living a Christ-centered life will enable you to accept your talents, your gifts and your appearance. You will live for Christ and by the power of Christ’s Spirit and so you will also desire to dedicate your whole existence with all you are and with all you have to the service of the Lord.

Can we feel content with ourselves? Certainly. But only if our feelings are the result of pursuing righteousness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Self-esteem is never a goal in itself. People who set out to find self-esteem are sure to find only pride. But people who set out to love the Lord above all and who serve their neighbour sacrificially, will also discover the inner peace and contentment that goes with being a servant of the Lord. C



CHURCH NEWS

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By C. Van Dam



An Update from our Theological College

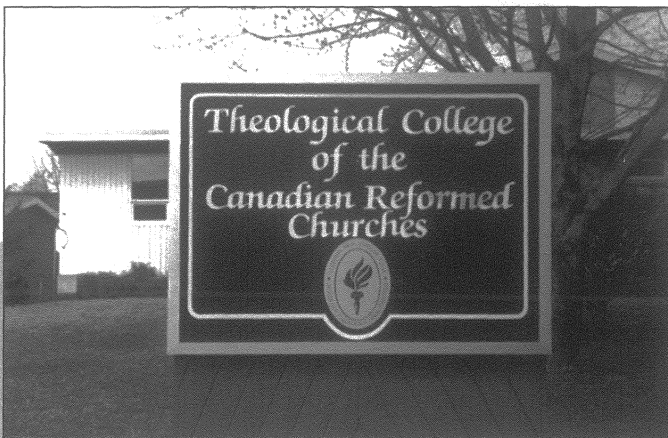
There are a number of things which we would like to share with you, the readers, who support the College with your prayers and gifts. The items which I would like to touch on cover quite a wide range.

Let us begin with pausing at the fact that another one of the workers of the first hour, Mrs. C. Lindhout of the church at London, was called on March 29 (at the age of 81) from this earthly life into the glory of her Lord. She, along with her husband, served the cause of the College by being involved from the very beginning with the Women's Savings Action. Their diligence in taking care of the collected monies did much to further the effectiveness of the support that came from the churches for the library. We remember her contribution with great gratitude. May the Lord continue to sustain and encourage br. Lindhout.

Special gifts

Back in 1988 the library had received from Mr. R. Winkel in Edmonton a copy of the first edition (1637) of the Dutch States General Bible (Staten Vertaling). Since it needed to be repaired and rebound, it had until recently been at the binders. It has now returned repaired and beautifully rebound in a new leather cover from Mr. John van Huizen, bookbinder in St. Catharines. This was done at a cost that did not reflect the countless hours it must have cost him to get this large work into such a beautiful final condition. Out sincere thanks! Appropriately, this edition of the Bible, which has meant so much for the Reformed faith, has been on special display the last few months.

From Mrs. C. Olij, widow of the late Rev. Olij, we received (via student J. Van Popta) a large number of back issues of the Dutch magazine *De Reformatie*. The result is that the library's collection of



this important paper is now complete. From Mr. and Mrs. Gunnink of Elora (Mr. Gunnink is principal of the Maranatha School in Fergus) we received a number of important books on church history and theology, including an 1865 edition of T. McLauchlan, *The Early Scottish Church* (from the first to the twelfth century). Dr. and Mrs. K. Deddens recently visited the College and he presented us with his, *The Service of Women in the Church* (1991). We are very thankful for all these gifts.

Another type of gift for the library came from Rev. G.H. Visscher. He recently received his Doctorandus degree (in New Testament) from our sister institution in Kampen and gave to the College a special study entitled, *The Son of David*, which he wrote in fulfilling the academic requirements for the Doctorandus degree. We congratulate him on reaching this scholarly milestone and thank him for thinking of the College as well.

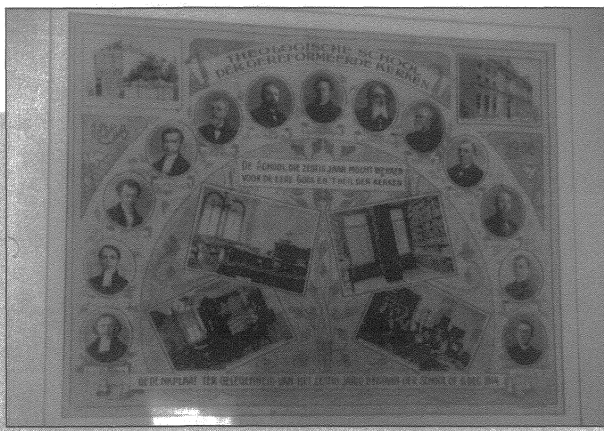
We now leave the library, but remain on the subject of books in coming to our next gifts. You may wonder what that could be. About a year ago, a special fund was established; namely, the Publication Foundation. Its purpose is to help finance the publishing of scholarly Reformed works that may not be attractive for commercial publishers. Some rather large financial donations were received for this purpose so that we have a total of over \$13,000 in this

special account. Preparations are underway to prepare for publication a series of essays on the significance of the work of the late Dr. K. Schilder with contributions coming from our senate as well as from elsewhere in the Reformed world. We will need to subsidize this venture, and therefore, also publicly in this column we wish to record our thanks for these gifts.

Finally, there is one more type of gift that I wish to mention. That is the gift of time that our library volunteers give so unselfishly of. Mrs. Allison Schutten has been with us now for three years and Mr. U. Krikke has joined us in January. His work for the library has even included making a special preservative for leather bound books and applying it! We very much appreciate the work of our volunteers.

Remembering the past

Our College's history is relatively short. It only goes back to 1968. Yet, there are already nine men who have been appointed and who either have departed from this present life or who are no longer in active duty. It was therefore decided that appropriate framed portraits of these labourers in the training for the ministry should be displayed in the College. This process has now been completed and we wish to acknowledge the expert help of Marieke Geertsema in bringing this project to a successful conclusion.



It was also with a view to remembering the past that Mr. A. Van Egmond of Smithville gave a most thoughtful gift for which we express our appreciation. He donated a large framed plate (from 1914) commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Theological College in Kampen. On it one can find the thirteen portraits of the professors who then served. A most educational reminder of God's gifts in the nineteenth century. It hangs in the room where the senate and governors hold their regular meetings.

Special visitors

We were privileged to have special visitors who happened to be in the area and who gave of their expertise. On

Dec. 3, Dr. Elaine Botha, Professor of Philosophy at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education gave a thought provoking lecture on "Does Theology have Philosophical Presuppositions?" On Feb. 25, Rev. Benny Giay spoke on how the people of Irian Jaya interpreted the Gospel on first hearing it. This was not a theoretical message learned from books. Benny Giay is a Papuan who was born in the Western Highlands and his lecture indicated how many stumbling blocks there are in the correct understanding and appropriation of the Gospel. It was a powerful reminder of the necessity of God's grace for believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. On March 17, Dr. Botond Gaal,

Professor of Systematic Theology and principal of the Reformed Theological Academy, the University of Debrecen in Hungary visited the College and briefly addressed us on the situation in Hungary with respect to the Reformed faith and life.

We are blessed to have the College in the midst of so many supporting churches. One benefit of this is that the special expertise that exists in the community can be called upon. With thanks for their willingness to share their gifts I may mention that Dr. H. Scholtens, M.D., Mr. H. Van Dooren, M.S.W., and Mr. H. Sieders, funeral director, were able to make valuable contributions to different courses of study in the past semester.

A visit of a somewhat different nature is also a pleasure to report. On March 27, Miss R. Beijes and Miss J. Ravensbergen carefully shepherded the Grade four class of the John Calvin School in Smithville through the College. It was a delight to see the eager faces and to be reminded of the important place that the College may have in the midst of the churches.

May the Lord continue to bless the work at the College. **C**

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



Let us start our journey in Australia. Not many particulars are to be mentioned concerning church life there, but we do not want to bypass the brotherhood there altogether.

In the first place I would like to mention an ambitious plan that has been drawn up and cherished by the ministers. It is something to be considered also for regions in Canada where similar possibilities exist.

Study Course

" For some time the ministers here in W.A. – the retired ministers included – have been making preparations for a comprehensive study course. It seems that we will be able to make a start in the near future.

" Whether this will be realised depends on a sufficient number of participants. In order to give those who feel in-

terested an idea of what we have in mind, we may provide them with the following provisional outline:

" The full course is subdivided into the following sections:

" 1. The Bible: the Bible as a book, its various authors and styles; how to read and interpret the various Bible books (prophecy, historical books, epistles, etc.), the canon, the contents of each Bible book, the history of Bible translation.

" 2. Our Creeds and Confessions, their history and contents; the most important confessions of other churches.

" 3. Our liturgy, the main lines in its history; worship in the New Testament and in the ancient Christian church; the development of the Lord's Supper into the Mass; worship in the Middle Ages, the great significance of the Reformation; the development of the Reformed churches since then; the

history of the various parts of the *Book of Praise*; the song section, liturgical prayers and forms.

" 4. Church history: its main lines; the history of our own churches and sister churches and contact churches. A special sub-section will deal with Mission work and evangelism, sects and other religions.

" 5. Church life, including our Church Order, its character and purpose, its history and contents; some important synodical decisions, other forms of church government.

" 6. Ethics: various topical issues: marriage, euthanasia, abortion, in general: our Christian lifestyle; all with their Scriptural data.

" There may even be room for another section:

" 7. Various political, social, and economical issues."

Did I say too much when stating that this is an ambitious program? I wish the brothers well and am almost certain that there will be a sufficient number of participants to get the whole enterprise going.

What I appreciate mainly is the general participation by *all* the ministers in Western Australia. There is little that is more frustrating than doing one's best and then receiving the cooperation of just a few, leaving one wondering what all the others are doing for the membership in general. One of my colleagues once said to me: "There are colleagues of ours who are being praised for their faithfulness and staunchly Reformed stand, but who never did the least thing for the membership in general." I hope from the heart that the Australian plan will be realized and will stir up brothers in Canada as well.

One more thing from Australia. The information contained in the consistory report is not altogether clear to me, but if I understand it well, I regret the position the Bedforddale consistory took. First the quote.

"From the Law Society requesting comment on whether any change is required on the present law regarding confidentiality between a lawyer and his client and whether this protection in law ought to be extended to others, e.g. doctors, ministers of religion etc. Consistory sees no need for change."

It was the word "protection" that made me think: "Too bad that the consistory said that no change was considered necessary." Is this protection of confidentiality between a minister and a member of the church already guaranteed by the law? Then no change would be necessary indeed. Does the law already contain the provision that a minister of religion can not be compelled to divulge matters made known to him or confessions made to him in his capacity of a minister of the Word, not even in a court of law? If not, I hope that the consistory will change its stand, for such a provision is extremely important.

Flying to Vancouver without a stopover in Honolulu, something which can be done only in one's imagination, we mention a few things about the Fraser Valley.

"Abbotsford and District Ministerial Association requested input into a booklet on the history of the churches in the district." Two brothers "will write up a little something on the history of our church for this booklet."

The Abbotsford consistory with the deacons decided "to suggest to the foundation (for Superannuation, VO) to increase the benefits to retired ministers to make it more attractive for small vacant churches to call 'aging' ministers."

I am almost certain that the brothers know better, but the wrong impression is given here. The Foundation for Su-

perannuation does *not* give any "benefits to retired ministers," but makes payments to the *church* that has obligations towards a retired minister. There is still the widespread erroneous notion that the Foundation sends cheques to retired ministers. This is not the case. It is the church whose minister one remains, also upon retirement, that determines what he shall receive and makes sure that he receives it. In order to make it easier for this church to call a second minister, it receives a certain amount from the piggy-bank of the churches to which it has contributed.

To some extent it would be a dangerous situation if the contributions by the Fund to the churches that have a retired minister covered completely the amount a church considers sufficient to "provide honourably for his support," as we find it expressed in Art. 13 of our Church Order. It would lead to a loosening of the bond between church and minister and to a strengthening of the wrong impression that retired ministers "are paid by the Fund."

Now that they are going to get a minister, it became mandatory for the Port Kells Church to look for a manse. They succeeded in finding a property with a suitable house on it, while, at the same time, there is sufficient room for a church building, although the latter is still a dream.

Vernon, on the other hand, was allowed to officially dedicate their church building, and they did so – as we heard – while several members of the sister churches were also in attendance and rejoiced with the congregation. As usual, we expect a report in *Clarion*.

Some general news from the Fraser Valley has to be reported as well.

"During the last several months some members of the Canadian Reformed Broadcasting Committee 'The Voice of the Church,' have been very active to prepare for television broadcasting. When it came to our attention that the Abbotsford studios of Roger's Cablevision were available to us free of charge, we decided unanimously and thankfully that we should pursue also this avenue to have the Word of God proclaimed.

"The first television broadcast will be a pilot project. Great care is taken that the program is Scripturally sound and professionally acceptable. The taping for the pilot project will take place soon."

In Coaldale the Committee of Administration received the mandate from the consistory with the deacons "to look into the possibility to install the necessary wiring in the building for the future possibility of video-taping." It is a somewhat circumstantial way of putting it, but it will be clear, I assume.

The building referred to is the new church building of the Coaldale church, as our readers will already have understood. We mentioned before the possible connection with town water and town sewer. Apparently a definite conclusion has been reached, as, "after considerable discussion about the possibility for further development of the property and the need expressed by some elderly members for a home for the aged among us," the consistory with the deacons "instructs the committee to pursue hook-up in the town system for a cost not exceeding \$80,000."!

Nearby Taber is also looking for a parsonage and it appeared that they had to increase the amount they were willing to spend on such a house. Even so, it appears a very low price when I compare the amount set in Taber with the prices for suitable housing here in the Fraser Valley.

The bulletin of the Manitoba churches contained an extensive report by the brothers who visited the synod of the Reformed Church in the United States. It is too long to insert in our column, but perhaps Rev. DeBoer could enlighten us all through an article in *Clarion*.

The Rev. Den Hollander wrote in *The Sheepfold* of Orangeville about the developments in the Chatsworth area. We first pass on part of what he wrote, and then will insert a few lines from the report on the consistory meeting. He wrote that the consistory with the deacons "could unanimously agree with the request and committed itself to a similar presentation of this request to the Classis Ontario North of June 1992 for concurring advice in this matter. If this advice is received as desired, then there will be a very joyous institution coming up, most likely on July 5, the Lord willing."

The official consistory report told us that "The chairman welcomed eight brothers representatives of the Chatsworth House congregation. They are at this meeting to present a request for institution in the near future. The request from the Chatsworth congregation is then first tabled... After an in-depth discussion, with great thankfulness to the Lord for all His blessings, it was decided to grant the Chatsworth brotherhood their request for institution. The request will be presented to Classis, the Lord willing, June 12, 1992."

Note the correct wording, please. "The Classis Ontario North of June 1992." It may seem like riding a well-known horse that I mention this every time anew, but too many, also among the ministers, still write: "the meeting of Classis," or "Classis will meet." Please, please, stamp this out, for it fosters the erroneous concept that a classis is a more or less permanent body that "meets" once in a while. A classis is held, it does not meet.

The Orangeville consistory received a "Letter from the church at Fergus, proposing to have a 'joint phone directory' with the churches at Grand Valley, Elora, Guelph, Orangeville, and Chatsworth. This is agreed to in principal." (Should read: "in principle." We speak of the "principal reason" = the main reason, but one decides something "in principle," that means basically it has been decided to do something, while the execution of this decision depends on various factors or conditions.)

With this venture I should like to recommend the method followed by the Western Australian churches, the ones in the Perth Metropolitan Area. They publish only one list, not a separate list for each of the churches, and this list is alphabetical. Behind each name of a family or a single member it is indicated to which of the churches this family or member belongs. It saves much time, especially if one does not know precisely to which church a specific family or member belongs. Besides, if one moves from the one church to the other, all that has to be done is change the address in the list. It won't be necessary to "white out" the name from the membership of the one church to insert it in the list of the other church.

Toronto's minister will receive a "mini sabbatical" in recognition of having completed six years of uninterrupted service to the congregation." It consists of two extra weeks of holidays, six "free Sundays," six Sundays on which the minister has to conduct only one service, and two weeks made available for "writing."

As in other places, so in Toronto advertisements were placed in which the Bible course "A Gift from Heaven" was offered. An earlier bulletin mentioned that "Brother A. reported on behalf of the Home Mission Committee meeting of Jan.21," that "forty-nine replies were received for the

Bible course." In a following bulletin we were told that "Thus far seventy-one people have responded and thirteen participants have sent in the answers to the questions in the first lesson. Thirteen counsellors from our congregation are involved in this work."

In Hamilton "so far the *Spectator* ads have been used by thirty-five people in the last six months." Encouraging news.

Watford has the same trouble as Grand Rapids and many other churches: the Bibles and *Books of Praise* in the pews are in a deplorable state. Too often parents let their small children play with these precious books. Especially now that it becomes more and more difficult to obtain a sufficient number of copies of the Revised Standard Version we are using, it is the more important that we deal very carefully with the books we have. I have always doubted the "wisdom" of having Bibles and *Books of Praise* in the pews, and look at it with great joy and satisfaction when I see older ones and younger ones carry their own, personal Bibles and *Books of Praise* when coming to church. This also promotes carefulness.

In Watford "as a result of discussions held at the congregational meeting it was decided not to buy any more Bibles for the pew, except for guests as necessary." In Grand Rapids "one item concerned the condition of the Bibles located in the pews. As of the first Sunday in May, these Bibles will be removed, and the consistory requests every one to remember to bring Bibles and *Books of Praise* to the worship service."

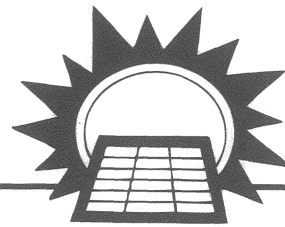
London's consistory received "from the School Board a letter indicating again the desire to work together on finding suitable property for expansion and/or relocation." It will be good when there is such a cooperation that the moneys are being used most economically and to the greatest advantage of all concerned. Cooperation should be encouraged, although we should remember that church and school should be kept separate. The church is there as a fruit of the work of and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ; the school is there as a result of the demand by the civil government that the children shall receive instruction in all sorts of subjects to a certain level. That we are permitted to have this instruction given on the basis of the Word of our God and in harmony with the confessions of the church does not alter the character of the school as such. Only when we keep these two separate, difficulties will be prevented.

Chatham's consistory "after lengthy discussion, has decided to discontinue the afternoon celebration of the Lord's Supper. It has been noted that less and less ("fewer and fewer" VO) members are making use of it. As you may know, quite a number of our churches have made this change for some time."

A final item: Chatham's consistory decided to put the mileage remuneration at 20 cents per kilometer. "This puts us in line with other congregations." Not quite, for insofar as I have read about it, other congregations put it at 25 cents. A nickel may no longer be highly regarded in our society, but when a minister has to travel two hundred kilometers this nickel per kilometer does put some weight into the scales, doesn't it? I write this freely, since it does not concern me personally in the least. But I have colleagues, you know. (No letters of thanks, please!)

Cheerio
VO
C

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you see and hear.

Acts 2:32-34

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last month we mentioned that the Church continues to celebrate Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost, year after year. These celebrations belong together: without Christmas there would not be Good Friday, without Good Friday no Easter, without Easter no Ascension. But Pentecost, how does that fit in?

While our Lord Jesus was on earth, everyone could listen to Him. He spoke openly; He showed signs and miracles to all who wanted to see them. When He was crucified and dead, everyone knew about that. Our Saviour was buried in a tomb, and that was the end of Jesus of Nazareth according to most people. Except maybe to some people who heard the rumour that the disciples had stolen His body and buried it somewhere else.

Easter followed Good Friday: Jesus rose from the dead. However, not everyone knew about that. Jesus, the Conqueror of death, only showed Himself to some people. He did not speak in the synagogues, or at the temple, and He did not appear to large gatherings of people. He only met some people who believed and confessed that He was Christ, the Son of God. To everyone else Jesus was gone; His name disappeared with Him, He was dead and buried.

On the day of Pentecost Peter tells the people who came together, that Jesus is not a finished chapter. There were tongues of fire on the heads of the apostles, and they all spoke in different languages. Those signs were brought about by Him whom they thought dead and buried. Peter explains the connection between Jesus who was buried seven weeks ago, and today's gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter tells about Easter and Ascension, and he explains that the Jews do not understand Pentecost, because they do not know God's mighty works. While the Jews stopped at the grave, God continued on without them. God worked from Golgotha to Easter, to Ascension, and now to Pentecost. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the proof that Jesus Christ lives, and that nobody ever can ignore it. While everybody tried to forget all the memories of Jesus, God remembered His promises: the Lord Jesus Christ received the Holy Spirit, and He poured that gift in its full abundance out over His disciples. The disciples were the first ones to receive the Holy Spirit. But

this gift of the Holy Spirit did not stay in Jerusalem, He travelled on and He will travel on until He has reached the ends of the earth.

All those who truly believe the birth, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Saviour, will understand how Pentecost fits into the list of celebrations. Christ Jesus came to earth to restore the damaged relationship between God and His people. After Jesus' return to heaven the Holy Spirit helps to keep that restored relationship whole. If we do not honour the Holy Spirit we will never experience God's peace. Then we will get entangled in the world of sin and unhappiness. Only with the help of God, the Spirit, can we fight sin and evil and await the return of our Lord.

When we cry, "Abba! Father!"
The Spirit witness bears
That God made us His Children
And we, with Christ, are heirs.
The Spirit, as the first fruits
Of glorious liberty,
Helps us await with patience
What we do not yet see.

Hymn 27:4

Birthdays in June:

Joan Koerselman

Box 1312, Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

Joan will be 35 years old on June 17.

Daniel Stroop

193 Diane Drive, Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

It will be Daniel's eleventh birthday on June 20.

Beverly Breukelman

Box 666, Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

Beverly hopes to celebrate her 30th birthday on June 30.

Happy birthday to all three of you!

Until next month,

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

On Receiving Ministers from Non-Sister Churches...

Reactions

“Academic” or “Ecclesiastical”?

We must be thankful for the two attempts (of Dr. De Jong and Rev. Van Oene) in the previous *Clarion* to clear up the confusion around what Dr. De Jong called “Receiving ministers from non-sister churches.” Several eyebrows are being raised here in South Ontario. Another damage to our “public relations”? The call to keep the C.O. and respect synodical rules and guidelines is not luxury.

Yet, Dr. De Jong adds a confusion of his own, although he is not alone in this respect. On p. 140 in *Clarion* he elaborates on “the academic level of the (classis) examinations” and he repeats that term “academic” three or four times. He even adds that in such a classical examination “the ability to read the Holy Scripture in the original languages” must be examined.

One wonders what the function and qualifications are of (more than) fifty percent of classis’ members who have not been trained in theology, let alone in “the original languages.” One even wonders whether the average minister is capable to conduct such an “academic” examination.

Of course, the “academic level” is a pre-condition for ecclesiastical exams (the candidate must have his degree) but the ecclesiastical exam cannot, may not, should not be a repetition of the academic one!

Talking about confusion.

Let us rehabilitate the elders by such rules that they can fully partake in such examinations; sometimes even better than the minister whom these elders have to supervise in his preaching and teaching.

A truly ecclesiastical examination may well be harder for the candidate coming straight from the “academic level.” He has to come down now to the level of those who for the Lord Jesus Christ were object of primary concern: “the little ones.” During an ecclesiastical examination classis, that is the members of classis, would ask, can the man preach? Does he have the gift of understanding the Scriptures as the testimony of the Holy Spirit? Can he teach Reformed doctrine to young and old? Would he be a good pastor of the flock in his communication with the sick, the old, etc.? Can he conduct public worship properly, which also means: can he pray as the mouth of the congregation? Ask him to explain the Covenant, infant baptism, divine providence in biblical style.

Indeed, such an examination, for which the candidate could leave home his Latin, Hebrew and Greek (elders do not understand those languages, usually), could block the path of a brilliant “hebraicus” who would prove unable to “translate” his Hebrew into morsels of bread of life in pulpit, class room and sick room.

Anyway, let the brethren candidates sweat a bit more for those “easy

classis exams.” And let us restore, where needed, the dignity of the ecclesiastical examinations.

Brotherly,
G. VanDooren
Burlington, ON

A reply

Dr. J. De Jong’s article *On Receiving Ministers from Non-Sister Churches* (*Clarion*, Vol. 41, no. 7, pp. 139-141) leaves me somewhat puzzled and raises several questions.

The author makes reference to a press release from which it is apparent that a certain minister coming from the Christian Reformed Church is obligated to undergo two examinations and states that therefore “this case is being treated in a way analogous to the admittance of *candidates* to the ministry” (139).

In 1965, the General Synod of Edmonton spelled out the specific requirements for admission to the classical examination of ministers from non-sister churches. Prof. De Jong lists them all. The one of importance to me right now is the last requirement that these kinds of ministers must submit themselves to an examination “on the level of the preparatory and peremptory examinations” (139). The author is therefore correct in saying that “Synod Edmonton 1965 never thought of re-

quiring these kind of ministers to go through two examinations" (140).

In light of this I can understand why Prof. De Jong asks how the double examination imposed by Classis Ontario South came into being. He feels that somehow the "background appears to lie in a question which the church of Brampton directed to the General Synod in 1989 in Winnipeg" (140). This puzzles me. I was at that time the minister of the church of Brampton. The consistory was well aware of the ruling of Edmonton 1965, but noticed that this ruling was not followed by Classis Ontario South of March 25, 26 and April 1, 1987. This classis had admitted a minister from a non-sister church by means of a colloquium doctum (see "News Medley" *Clarion*, Vol. 41, No. 7, pp. 142/143). The matter was also dealt with at Regional Synod East of October 15, 16, and 22, 1987 (*Acts of Regional Synod*, Art. 6e, VI, 3).

Because of the apparent confusion and in order to simplify matters, Brampton asked General Synod Winnipeg to clarify which of the two levels of examination the churches should follow. In other words, only *one* examination, but which one?

The church at Brampton made this request in order to avoid the use of different approaches within the federation so that ministers joining the Canadian Reformed Churches would all receive the same treatment. What we sought to prevent was that one classis, e.g. Classis Pacific, would require such a minister to submit to an examination at the peremptory level while another classis, e.g. Classis Ontario North, would consider an examination at the preparatory level to be sufficient. That is the reason why Brampton sought "clarification so that one system of examination is used throughout the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches" (*Acts*, Art. 163, B.2, p. 126).

Apparently, Synod Winnipeg 1989 saw the merit of this overture because it did not deny Brampton's request. In its judgment Synod upheld all the requirements of Synod Edmonton 1965, but ruled: *one* examination but on the more comprehensive peremptory level.

Therefore, how Prof. De Jong can state that this decision of Synod Winnipeg "seems to have been the occasion for a misunderstanding" is beyond me. His conclusion that "its effects (i.e. effects of the ruling of Winnipeg [GN]) has been to treat ministers entering our federation from non-sister churches as

candidates" seems to be far-fetched. The double examination is not an effect of Winnipeg 1989. That is reading a lot into a decision which a simple reading of the decision does not allow.

Again, Rev. De Jong is correct that "Synod Edmonton 1965 never thought of requiring these ministers to go through two examinations" (140). I am convinced: neither did the General Synod of Winnipeg 1989.

That is why I am also perplexed when our brother writes,

Hence, it would be wise for the churches simply to hold to the decision of Edmonton 1965, without introducing new policies or changes. Then at least, a "two-examination policy" would be avoided (140).

I ask: What "two-examination policy"? Such a policy does not exist. Not in the decision of Synod Edmonton 1965, nor in the decision of Synod Winnipeg 1989. In the meantime, it is the latter decision that stands at the present time. To suggest, therefore, that the churches simply hold to the decision of Edmonton 1965 while at the same time saying that it is not necessary to appeal the ruling of Synod Winnipeg is not wise at all. It is an unguarded suggestion and one that is contrary to Reformed church polity.

Where, then, does the confusion of two examinations come into play? It is more than a matter of misunderstanding. I believe it has to do with the consideration whether a minister who wants to join our federation of churches comes with or without a congregation. Prof. De Jong feels the only difference of a minister with or without a congregation is of a financial nature. I believe it involves more.

I am sure there is no difference of opinion on whether a minister with a congregation is still a minister. Of course he is. He is serving a church as shepherd of the flock. There is no difficulty either when a minister becomes emeritus. He is still a minister because he remains tied to the congregation he served last. Also our Church Order, Art. 11, makes a special provision in case of dismissal. This special provision holds for three years. If the minister has not received a call after three years he will lose his ministerial status.

Therefore, the real difficulty at hand is the question: Is a minister without a congregation still a minister? I think we are dealing with a new phenomenon here, something we have not had to deal with before in the history of the

Canadian Reformed Churches. Not that I know of, at least. Perhaps we are still "testing the waters." And maybe here lies the reason for the confusion.

The important question that needs an answer is whether a minister has or maintains his ministerial status apart from a congregation he serves. I am convinced the answer to that is: he is no longer a minister. That may be a difficult thing to say, but I believe that to be the case. A minister's office is tied to the church he serves. If a minister leaves the congregation he serves without a call to serve elsewhere, he severs all ties. That is one of the consequences of his decision. Once the tie is severed then his office is also gone. You can say: He has studied for the ministry, but he is no longer *in* the ministry. He is a *former* minister. Someone is only in the ministry when he is tied to a congregation. For example, should I for whatever reasons feel compelled to leave the church I serve and sever all ties with it, then my ministerial status ceases to exist. I do not believe Reformed church polity knows the concept of: once a priest, always a priest.

Dr. De Jong did not address this crucial aspect of the matter. To that end his concluding quotation from H. Bouwman¹ does not prove anything with respect to a minister without a congregation. I certainly concur that the validity of these vows remain and ought to be recognized when a minister comes with a congregation. But the validity of his ordination vows come to an end when he severs his ties with the church he serves.

Do I now have the watertight solution to the difficulty at hand? Not really, because we are treading on new territory. Exceptional circumstances require exceptional measures. Still, these measures must fall within a correct church political framework.

By way of suggestion, then, would it not be better for any classis to follow more or less this procedure and line of reasoning:

Br. N. is no longer a minister but has for many years served as one. The required documentation is there to prove it (Synod Edmonton 1965). Therefore we can proceed with the examination on the peremptory level (Synod Winnipeg 1989). Upon successful completion of the examination he shall be declared eligible for call within the churches (Art. 4 Church Order). The brother is allowed in the pulpits of the churches

but cannot administer sacraments. Upon receiving a call he can be forthwith ordained as minister in the Canadian Reformed Churches. In this way we will also avoid the confusion that on the one hand a former minister is treated as a candidate while on the other hand he is recognized as a minister of the Word who can administer the sacraments.

I believe this important issue merits further discussion and deliberation because as churches we may be faced with similar circumstances in the future. Hopefully this reply is a contribution to that discussion. I, for one, would love to hear more about it. If any one can provide some historical precedents how these matters were handled in the past in our churches, I would be very pleased to learn about it.

G. Nederveen

¹I could not find any references to “*vestiges* or *traces* of the original form of the office” in Calvin’s *Institutes*, IV,5,11, on which Bouwman’s quote supposedly is based.

Regarding a “Colloquium” and Two Examinations

(*Clarion*, Vol. 41, No. 7, April 10, 1992)

With great interest I read two submissions, one from Dr. J. De Jong “On Receiving Ministers from Non-Sister Churches” and one contained in the column “News Medley” from one of our “patriarchs,” as he lovingly reminds us, the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene.

I can basically agree with the remarks made by Dr. J. De Jong, but I wish to make a comment on what he wrote. Further, my main reaction will be addressed to Rev. VanOene, who, in my opinion, does not do any justice to the assemblies involved in the decision-making process.

By way of introduction: with respect to Rev. P. Kingma’s “preaching” in Denver, Rev. VanOene uses some strong terminology, “Are retired ministers no longer subject to the Church Order, and can everyone do what is good in his own eyes?” Rest assured that Rev. P. Kingma at all times seeks to act in accordance with the adopted order of the church. The sentence, “[Rev. Kingma]

preached there [in Denver] this past Lord’s Day, and is filling the pulpit today as well,” is an unfortunate rendering of the bulletin editor. Rev. Kingma merely spoke “an edifying word” in the Sunday gatherings at Denver (as other ministers have done in other places). The writer of *News Medley* would have done better to investigate properly what really had taken place than to come with such patriarchal pontifications.

There was once a more far-reaching decision made, supported by a classis in the West (!), to allow a minister not only officially to preach in a non-sister church (at Rippon, California) but even to administer the sacraments there! Where were then the cries of concern at the introduction of “some new sort of church polity”?

Further, the matter of the Rev. B. Hofford’s *colloquium*, which is again brought to the fore as proof of “some new sort of church polity” has been dealt with at Regional Synod East 1987, where it was agreed that an examination should have taken place. The churches have already rectified this matter and safeguarded the good order without patriarchal help. Rev. VanOene is kicking open the proverbial gaping door.

Besides, in the case of Rev. Hofford, the question of an examination instead of a colloquium was discussed at Classis Ontario South of March/April, 1987. The brothers did not at all “ignore” the decisions of past assemblies. On the contrary, such an accusation is utterly unfounded. The classis in question properly considered that the decisions of 1965 speak about a minister who is *eligible for call*, and considered that Rev. Hofford was *not eligible* since he came with his own congregation. Therefore it was concluded, with all due respect for previous decisions, that the procedure in 1965 did not provide in the situation faced by classis. Hence it was decided to go the route of a colloquium.

In retrospect, this may have been an unwise decision, but it is not fair to write, “...the decisions of previous assemblies are being ignored...” and “...Apparently the brothers never consulted the Acts of various General Synods...” They *did*, and concluded that Edmonton 1965 did not provide in the case at hand. Decisions of previous major assemblies (e.g. Edmonton 1965) are not always as clear-cut and all-emcompassing as the participants at such assemblies would later have us believe.

The situation of the Rev. T. Hoogsteen is different in that he did not come with his congregation. By that time, not only Regional Synod East 1987 but also General Synod 1989 had been involved in the interpretation of the rules of 1965. It had been decided that the way to entry into the ministry in our churches—with or without a congregation—is via the proper procedure of examination.

Classis Ontario South of September 1991 decided to take the route of two examinations on the basis of a report of a Committee ad hoc, which advised that such examinations were required in the given circumstances. The first examination (preparatory) would determine *eligibility* for call, while the second (peremptory) would determine *suitability* for ministry. A point which also played a role was this: what if the minister declared eligible does *not* receive a call, will he then still have the status and rights of a minister in the churches, and if so, for how long? Should not also the churches be safeguarded in such matters and be not unduly burdened?

This brings me to my comment on what Dr. De Jong wrote. Dr. De Jong is not entirely on the mark when he suggests that “the *only* difference that arises in these two situations [i.e. coming with or without a congregation] is of a financial nature.” For me the major problem lies in the *status* which such a minister receives while having (yet) no congregation, a status which must be clearly defined and be finalized through a call which is properly approbated (with or without another examination) or subsequently terminated.

So indeed, while recognizing the Lord’s way with this brother and accepting his ordination (thus abiding by the “dogmatic principle” which Dr. De Jong raised), Classis received him as a minister but then, trying to do the right thing, followed with him formally the way of a candidate. Here is where I now agree (having read Dr. De Jong’s submission) that perhaps one examination—at the peremptory level as Synod 1989 stated—may have been sufficient. I would have no objection if this was made a clear rule, for it would remove an unforeseen vacuum in the 1965 decision. We should agree: if no call is forthcoming, the “minister” would in time lose his status as such in the churches, and this should be specified beforehand.

The bottom line is: the various classes Ontario South under present scrutiny did not act in ignorance or try to introduce some new sort of church polity. They tried to work with the existing rules according to their best insight. Rev. VanOene's enlightening comments

are always welcome, but his admitted *harsh judgment* is undeserved. But, then again, "patriarchs" are entitled to special emissions.

With filial greetings.

Cl. Stam

Note from the Editor: Since Rev. Stam responds partly to Dr. De Jong's article, we present it here, even though the reaction is mostly addressed to what Rev. VanOene wrote. The latter may react in a next issue.

In Response

Several reactions were received with respect to my article dealing with ministers who come to us from churches with which we have no sister church relationship. I will deal with them in the order I received them.

Rev. VanDooren

With due respect, I must admit that I do not see the "confusion" which the Rev. VanDooren finds in my article. I never spoke about an *academic* examination, but about the *academic level* of the ecclesiastical examinations. And the Rev. VanDooren knows that the churches have set certain academic standards for admission to the ecclesiastical examinations. It is also in the interests of the churches to see to it that these standards are maintained.

I fully agree that the ecclesiastical examination cannot and may not and should not be a repetition of the academic one. But I think it is asking too much to have the candidate "come down" to the level of the "little ones" in his ecclesiastical examinations. He must be examined primarily with regard to his doctrinal integrity and general ability to fulfil the requirements of the ministerial office. And why should he not show to the elders that he masters the reading of the Scriptures in the original languages? After all, that is the first prerequisite for "understanding the Scriptures as the testimony of the Holy Spirit."

Let's not make false dilemmas! It takes a minister with a solid academic training to be able to reach the flock in a simple and direct way with the riches of Scripture, and feed them with the treasures of Reformed doctrine.

Rev. G. Nederveen

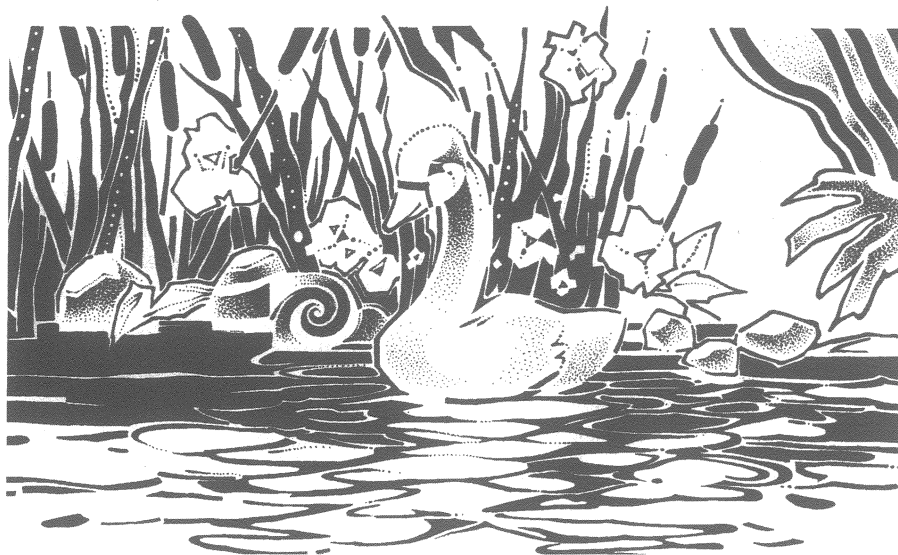
1. The Rev. Nederveen seems to have difficulty with the connection be-

tween what I called the "two-examination policy" and the question directed by the church of Brampton to Synod Winnipeg 1989.

Let me stress at the outset that I only put this forward as a possible explanation of how Classis Ontario South came to its decision to require two examinations from a minister coming to the churches as an "outsider," i.e. having no ecclesiastical bond with the churches. For me the connection lies close at hand because the church of Brampton asked Synod at which level the incoming minister should be examined, the preparatory or peremptory level—implying (as does the Rev. Nederveen) that there are *two* levels involved in the ecclesiastical examinations, and not one. But this is confusing academic matters with ecclesiastical ones. The point of my article was the General Synod Edmonton 1965 spoke of *one* level, not two. Introducing the notion of two levels into this decision confuses academ-

ic and ecclesiastical matters, and some of this has carried over into the decision of Synod Winnipeg 1989. So it seemed to me a first step on the way to the decision of Classis Ontario South to set two examinations.

2. The Rev. Nederveen feels that my suggestion to simply hold to the decision of Synod Edmonton 1965 is a suggestion "contrary to Reformed church polity." But what grounds does he have for making this kind of a statement? Since when is the call to hold to a lawful decision to be construed as "contrary to Reformed church polity?" I pointed out in my article that the decision of Synod Winnipeg 1989 does not essentially change anything with respect to the decision of 1965. My only concern was to prevent misunderstandings from gaining a foothold in the churches. The decision of Edmonton 1965 has not been annulled, overturned or abandoned. At most, it has not been *understood*.



3. The Rev. Nederveen argues that if a minister leaves a congregation which he served without receiving a call elsewhere, he severs all ties, and ceases to be a minister. He is no longer a minister, but a *former minister*. The Rev. Nederveen feels I did not address this “crucial aspect of the matter.”

However, I believe I did address this matter, and I disputed the point of view which the Rev. Nederveen now defends. It is true that we reject the Roman Catholic position that the office, once given, can never be lost. But Calvin and the Reformed also rejected the position that the office arises out of the congregation and is entirely dependent on the tie to the congregation.

The Rev. Nederveen makes what is in my view an artificial distinction between the minister who comes with his congregation, and the one who does not. Of the former he says: they retain their ministerial status, because they have a congregation. Of the latter he says: having no congregation behind them, they lose their ministerial status. He then admits that he does not have a final solution “because we are treading on new territory.”

Why is this distinction artificial? It makes the status of the office depend on whether there is a group of followers or not. To be sure, if a minister in a non-sister church *resigns* his position, leaves them and goes over to a different style of life, he forfeits his office. But if he calls the people to the true worship of the Lord, and then is either forced out, or comes to a point where secession is the only resource left, then even if he is alone, he comes to the church as a *minister*.

And what is new here? Are we really treading on new territory? Why? Ministers of all kinds have been coming to the Reformed churches for years, and the office was always acknowledged. Some examples: In 1893 the Synod of Dort said that ministers of the Netherlands Reformed Church (the State church) could be admitted to the ministry in the Reformed churches upon an examination with respect to their knowledge of the Reformed doctrine and church government by the classis with the presence of the deputies of the regional synod, and after they have signed the Form of Subscription for Ministers, and supplied a good attestation of their doctrine and conduct.¹ In 1914 a similar provision was made for

ministers coming from what here are the Free Reformed Churches.²

In a note the Rev. Nederveen says that he could not find any reference to vestiges or traces of the original form of the office in the *Institutes* IV, v, 11. But then I ask: how does the Rev. Nederveen read Calvin? Calvin says in the passage quoted: “There remain bishops and parish rectors. Would that they strove to preserve their office. For I willingly grant them that they have a godly and excellent office, if only they would fulfil it...Yet...more ridiculous are those who wish to seem and be called lawful pastors of the church, and yet do not wish to be such.” Here Calvin grants to the false shepherds of Rome their office, but says that they do not exercise it properly. In other words, he allows the existence of the office, but denies the *legitimacy* of the office in the Roman church. This is exactly the point that Bouwman was making.³

4. Taking all this into consideration, I have great difficulty with the proposal which the Rev. Nederveen puts forward. For he places the matter under Art. 4 C.O., but forthwith ignores the provision of Art. 5 C.O. The latter article clearly limits ordination to those who have *not* been in the ministry before. The Rev. Nederveen’s position is that those who have been in the ministry before must be ordained again when they come to the Reformed churches, because they did not take a congregation along. In my view, a second ordination like the one Rev. Nederveen is suggesting should only take place if a minister has resigned from a church and has not been in the active ministry for some time, or if he comes from a sect so far removed from Christian practice that the ordination vow is nothing but an empty incantation with no resemblance to the gospel whatever. These, however, are not the normal circumstances from which ministers come to the Reformed churches, and make profession of the Reformed faith. Normally this transition occurs from a church with a background and credal basis similar or identical to our own.

It is true that a minister must be bound to a certain church, as Art. 6 C.O. prescribes. A “minister at large” is essentially foreign to our church order. Thus, one who is declared eligible for call after successfully completing the peremptory examination only has ministerial status for a *temporary* and not a

permanent period. If no calling is forthcoming, this status is eventually lost in a way similar to that in Art. 11.

Rev. Cl. Stam

The bulk of the submission of the Rev. Cl. Stam is directed to Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, and for the most part I will leave all response to him. However, toward the end of his letter the Rev. Stam says with regard to what I wrote that there is here still a problem with the “*status* which such a minister receives while having (yet) no congregation, a status which must be clearly defined and be finalized through a call which is properly approbated...or subsequently terminated.” Not having dealt with this problem, I am, in Rev. Stam’s words, “not entirely on the mark.”

Here I wonder what the Rev. Stam is referring to. I do not see any “problem” here, nor do I see any need for the status of the minister concerned to be “clearly defined.” The person in question is a *minister of the Word*. What further definition is needed? One should remember that these are exceptional situations, and the church order does not need to give special definitions for exceptional situations. For over four hundred years these provisions have proved adequate.


It is true that this ministerial status is lost if no call is forthcoming (as I mentioned above). This corresponds with the provision of Art. 6 and is analogous to the provision of Art. 11. But this is not having one’s status “finalized,” as the Rev. Stam puts it, because the minister’s status is definitive as it is. The examination procedure is only meant to facilitate the proper and lawful *exercise* of the office.

I hope that at this point my position on these matters is clear. I appreciate the interest that the article has generated, and I express the hope that it may contribute to a better understanding of our duty in these situations.

J. De Jong

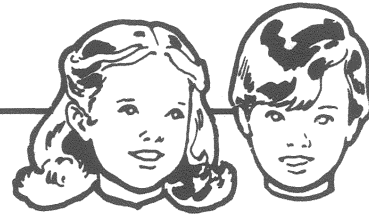
¹See H. Bouma, *Kerkenordening van de Gereformeerde Kerken*, (Enschede: J. Boersema, 1948), p. 44.

²See Bouma, p. 45.

³In *Institutes*, IV.ii.12 Calvin calls these traces “some marks of the church (that) remain” (*permanent aliquot Ecclesiae symbola*), under which also the sacrament of baptism has normally been included. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Let us of Christ our Lord
and Saviour Sing....

He into glory was received,
For He the battle won.
Now at the Father's side He reigns:
Christ Jesus, God the Son!

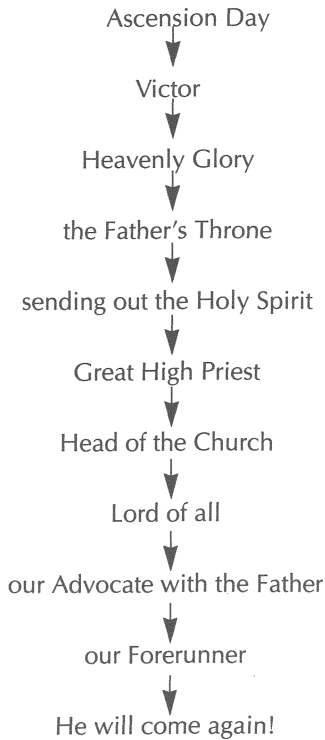
Hymn 20:6

Ascension Day always comes on a Thursday. So we don't go to church. No church service to celebrate this wonderful and glorious Christian *feast day!*

Maybe you'll say,
"Oh Aunt Betty that sounds *old fashioned* to call Ascension Day a feast day!"

You're right. It really does sound old fashioned. "Feast" makes us think of a long table covered with dishes of turkey, ham, etc. and more!

But now think of



See what I mean about *Ascension Day* being a glorious Christian *feast day!*

How about singing Hymn 19 and Hymn 20 after supper, to *celebrate!*

Quiz Time!

THEY CALL IT HOME

Bible Quiz from Busy Beaver *Cheryl VanAndel*
Match the name of each person below with his/her respective home.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. _____ Abraham | a. Bethany |
| 2. _____ Mary & Joseph | b. Bethlehem |
| 3. _____ Paul | c. Uz |
| 4. _____ Mary & Martha | d. Jericho |
| 5. _____ David | e. Ur of the Chaldees |
| 6. _____ Job | f. Haran |
| 7. _____ woman at the well | g. Sychar |
| 8. _____ Lot | h. Moab |
| 9. _____ Ruth | i. Susa |
| 10. _____ Hagar | j. Nazareth |
| 11. _____ Barnabas | k. Ramah |
| 12. _____ Daniel | l. Sodom |
| 13. _____ Rachel | m. Anathoth |
| 14. _____ Zaccheus | n. Tarsus |
| 15. _____ Samuel | o. Tekoa |
| 16. _____ Jeremiah | p. Egypt |
| 17. _____ Amos | q. Judah |
| 18. _____ Rebekah | r. Mesopotamia |
| 19. _____ Mordecai | s. Cyprus |

(See answers)

For Older Busy Beavers Challenge!

How many Psalms and Hymns can you find that refer to the Ascension of the Lord Jesus?

Please include the text or stanza, like this:

Hymn 20:6

Psalm 110:1

BIRTHDAY WISHES

JUNE



"Happy June birthday" to all these Busy Beavers. May our heavenly Father graciously keep you all in His care, and bless you as you grow (up!) another year older. Have a super day with your family and your friends!

Erin Welfing	June 4	Ivan Sikkema	20
Lisa De Haas	6	Marnie Stam	20
Laura Bol	7	Kent Van Vliet	20
Kayla Koopmans	9	David Burger	21
Lee-Anne Vanderwoerd	9	Esther Leyenhorst	21
Vanessa Aikema	10	Garrett Penninga	25
Mark Alkema	11	Evelene Plug	27
Maria Stel	11	Ben Bartels	28
Joni Buikema	12	Bradley Bartels	28
Eric Vandergriendt	12	Kristen Jagt	29
Karen De Boer	17	Tracy Lynn Malda	29

ENOUGH OF BUILDINGS?

Try some Sports
by Busy Beaver *David Aikema*

R E C C O S T G
O C R M C S O A
W A S T A L M T
G R A F F Y R E
B A S E B A L L
L L A B T F O S

Look for:

soccer
baseball
softball
race
golf
tag



BUILDINGS WORDSEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Marcia Rook*

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

Can you find:

~~house~~
school
store
shed
barn
church
museum
palace
arena
hall
post office
bank
~~bakery~~
factory
apartment
shack
trailer
shop
library
cabin
cottage
hut

Riddle Chuckles

from Busy Beavers *Joanna Vink* and *Vickie Aikema*

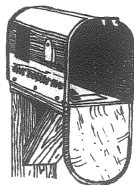
1. What did one eye say to the other eye?
2. What's as big as an elephant but doesn't weigh anything?
3. Why is it cheap to feed a giraffe?
4. How do fireflies start a race?
5. Why did the clown tell a joke to the eggs?

Super
Pretty
Robins
Impressive
Nice
Good



by Busy Beaver *Jodie Lodder*

From the Mailbox



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

Welcome to the Club, *Jason Linde*. You drew a good picture. Keep up the good work! Write again soon, Jason.