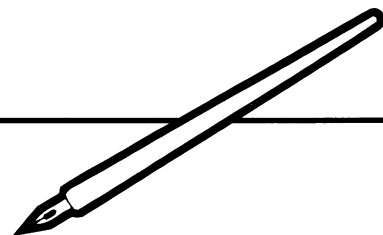




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Obedience of Faith

When still a young student in Kampen (1909-1914), Dr. K. Schilder wrote a remarkable article in a student weekly. It was written in connection with a meeting of the Kampen section of the Dutch Christian Student Society. Schilder must have noticed the difference between what we today would call the evangelical way and the Reformed approach.¹ Schilder first describes how the evangelical believer can so easily and freely speak with others about his life with Christ, his religious experiences. Evangelicals are so much more “gemoedelijk,” Schilder says. This word is hard to translate. It contains the noun “gemoed” which means one’s feelings about something. It expresses mind, thinking, and emotion. The meaning of this Dutch word is closely related to the English “experiential.” Schilder writes that “in general Reformed believers are the least ‘gemoedelijk’ among all Christian groups.”

Why is this so? Schilder explains

For Reformed believers the Bible is everything. The Bible is for him the Word of God. The Bible is the norm and guideline for his piety. The experiences of his heart may only rest on what the Bible teaches him as truth. Therefore, first of all this Bible and, per consequence, the *contents* of his faith, his confession, has to be firmly established in his consciousness. He wants to be able first to harmonize this contents of his faith completely with his dogmatical insights. Only then he dares to trust his personal experiences which his religious conviction...gives to him. As long as a good Reformed believer does not have certainty for his head, he rather tells his *heart* to keep silent, at least when his is completely himself. The Reformed believer does not at all hold in contempt religious experience,² and no one attaches greater importance to the mystical union with Christ than he. However, above and before everything else he comes to himself and to others with the demand: your experience must be sound and your mystical union with Christ can only then receive her full value when you have the biblically correct relation with Christ. This means: when, also in your belief regarding his person, his work, his natures, his essential being, you give him the honour which is due to him, and for which the Bible, not your subjective ideas, offer you the true motivation and the right insight.

The young Schilder, continues to characterize the difference between the non-Reformed evangelical and the Reformed believer in the same line. The evangelical believer stressing the heart, the religious experience, has no problems with all kinds of different views and opinions in matters of doctrine. The one can believe this and the other can believe that; it does not really matter. Each experiences his faith, his mysti-

cal union with Christ in his own way. However, the Reformed believer wants to have his doctrine straight. This means that he likes to debate and discuss doctrine first, rather than his inner experiences of faith. Schilder says:

This is, from the side of the Reformed believer, not a matter of being intolerant, but it is the consequence of his faith in the Scriptures. For him his confession in its entirety and in all its parts is important for his life. He who drops one link of the chain of salvation-truth, rejects, according to him – anyway in theory – everything. Reformed people are, before everything else, believing. Non-Reformed people are, before everything else, religious. ...Is it now correct to point to the Reformed believer as cold and intellectual? It certainly is not. No one confesses stronger than he that a faith with the head (the intellect) only, while the heart is not touched, is *dead*.


This line of thinking of the young Schilder has remained with him during all his years of service in and for the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. He followed here his Master who also always lived by what is written, and who said: “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15, cf. 14:21, 23ff; 15:10, etc.). He followed also the apostle Paul who expressed the goal of his apostolic task of preaching the gospel with these words: to work “obedience of faith” among the Gentiles (Rom. 16:26). Obedience of faith is only possible in abiding by what is written as this is written. In order to do this, Schilder also wanted to remain faithful to the confession of the church. On this path he led and wanted to lead the churches. And it was this line of thinking, this scriptural thinking, that led him to avoid more and more the term mystical in a positive way.

It was also the consequence of this insight in the meaning of faith that Schilder went into debate with so many others. He did not judge (in the sense of condemn) these other believers, also not evangelical believers. On the contrary, he wanted to discuss their ideas and views with them in the light of the truth of the Scriptures. For him, the Word of God was the norm for his own faith and for the faith of everyone else, in everything. This view drove him in his polemics. God’s Word is the norm, not man’s subjective faith. To what God says in His Word we have to submit ourselves in our conduct, also in our thinking. For Schilder a living faith always is obedience to what is written, is living by what the Word says. This is what he preached. This is what he taught. This is what he also practiced.

And this is what we and all Reformed people, yes every believer, should hold on to. Not our subjective faith is the norm but what is written in the Scriptures. And we add, following Schilder: a helpful tool to do this is given us in the confession of the church. Faithful adherence to the confes-

sion will help us in abiding by the truth of God's Word. In this way there will be true faith, that is, obedience of faith. Then, indeed, we do not judge, that is, condemn others. But we judge the words and actions of ourselves and of others in the light of God's Word, as we are called to, in a spirit of humbleness and love. The apostle John writes, in the context of abiding by the truth: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of

God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). And Paul writes that we are to "take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught" and that we have to "avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Once again: not experience, not subjective faith, but God's written Word remain the norm for our thinking and acting. This is scriptural. This is Reformed. 

Some Information about Synod Lincoln

By J. Geertsema

The prayer service

On Monday, November 2, the prayer service for the Synod of Lincoln was held. It is the custom that the chairman of the preceding synod conducts this prayer service. Accordingly, Rev. Cl. Stam, the chairman of the Synod of Winnipeg in 1989, conducted this service. His text was 2 Tim. 4:9-11. The apostle Paul writes here to Timothy

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful for the service.

Rev. Stam began with saying that Paul wrote this letter shortly before his death. The text is part of what seems a number of highly personal notes of the apostle who was suffering in prison. They seem very tragic notes. The apostle, awaiting death in prison, has to miss the company of dear friends. However, there is no tragedy here. The apostle Paul has the world-wide church gathering work of Christ in mind, even now. He is still busy with the fulfilment of his apostolic task, reaching out to the brotherhood in Christ and reaching up to God to whom he is going to depart soon.

Rev. Stam summarized the message of the text in the following way: In his last notes the apostle Paul reaches out to the brotherhood. Therefore,

1. there is sorrow over unfaithfulness to the brotherhood;

2. there is involvement in the reaching out to the brotherhood;
3. there is a longing for the strengthening of the brotherhood.

Ad 1. It is evident that in our text we do not have some last tragic personal notes of an apostle who is expecting to die as a criminal and who sees his life's work come to an end in

such a manner. On the contrary, our text is a description of the ongoing work of Christ Jesus through Paul and his fellow workers in the service of the gospel, even in that situation. The letter is addressed to Timothy who is urged to come to Paul. Timothy has to hurry. There is not much time left for Paul. Why does he want to see Timothy? Was



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that because the apostle needs to be comforted since Demas has deserted him? No, it was not. The work of the gospel was at stake. The letter shows that Timothy needed encouragement and strengthening in his faith. The one officebearer strengthens here the other. Paul is doing church work.

For, indeed, Demas has deserted Paul. Paul gives as motive the love of Demas for this present world. Paul calls this "desertion." This strong and sharp word expresses Paul's deep sorrow. It is desertion at such a critical time. The apostle is in prison and expects to be killed. There is persecution. In such a situation it is important that the leaders stand firm in their faith as examples for the flock. Demas, however, became unfaithful. His love for this present world grew. The expression "this present world" means this world that is passing away. The pressures of being with Paul in his imprisonment became too much. Demas saw no future for himself anymore in staying with Paul under the present circumstances. He did not want to die. He wanted to live. Thus he deserted Paul. In doing so, he was not only unfaithful to the apostle but, above all, to Christ and the cause of the gospel. He was unfaithful to the brotherhood. This was a trial for the apostle. But what is more, it was a warning for the church. The church was being deserted in the midst of a crisis.

There is a lesson for us in this text. It is always important that we remain faithful to each other in the church and that we do not desert each other. This counts in particular at significant moments. It is also an important lesson for us now that we meet as synod. We must be able to hold on to each other and labour together in the work of Christ for the brotherhood.

Ad 2. Our text shows us also Paul's continued involvement in the activity for the brotherhood. Paul writes to Timothy that Crescens went to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. About Crescens not much is known. He is mentioned only here. Titus is known from the letter of Paul to this fellow worker, as well as from other places in the New Testament. Titus was able to build up where things were lacking and where troubles existed. These two men had left the apostle. But this leaving was not a deserting. It was a leaving in order to continue the work of gathering the brotherhood. Crescens went to Galatia. It has been suggested that this Galatia is not Galatia in present Turkey, but is the name for

Gaul in southern France. If this is true Crescens will have continued the work of Paul in the west. Paul wanted to preach the gospel of Christ also in Spain. It is possible that Crescens went to this field in southwestern Europe. Whatever the case, it is evident that Crescens went on with the work of preaching the gospel in the service of Christ.

The same must be said of Titus. He went to Dalmatia. This is a region in what was Yugoslavia, west of Greece, across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. It was part of the mission field of Paul. Titus, therefore, continued the work of the apostle in this area. Titus does not belong with Paul in Rome to support the apostle personally. Titus belongs on the mission field, busy in this work of the Lord. Thus, through these two fellow workers the apostle is also himself still involved in the work for Christ. He can pray for them and for the work they do. He can rejoice in the progress of the work of the Lord. The increase and the preservation of the church continue in this way. The apostle may have to depart but the work goes on. Paul can be in chains but the Word of God is not fettered. It is true, we do not have here a tragic ending of the life of the apostle. We have here the progress of the worldwide work of God. This is also today the important issue. The on-going work of the Lord in our world is what we are called to serve in our work at the synod, when we deal with our international relations.

Ad 3. Paul is also strengthened in the brotherhood. He writes that Luke alone is with him. This is not a remark that shows despair. Luke, the physician is serving Paul. It shows God's care. Then there is also Paul's word about Mark. "Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful for the service," that is, the service of the gospel. In Acts 13 we read that, in the first part of Paul's first missionary journey, Mark deserted the work. Paul saw it as a set-back for the gospel. This is why the apostle Paul did not want to take Mark along on the second journey. Barnabas had a different opinion. This dispute caused a separation between Paul and Barnabas. Often such alienations do not end in reconciliation. However, in this case there was healing. While Paul once found Mark useless, the apostle writes here in a different way about Mark. Mark is very useful for the service of the gospel. Now the apostle Peter calls Mark "my son." It could be that Mark was an important liaison between Paul and Peter. We see here the true unity in the church. This bringing of Mark consolidates the unity of the brotherhood. Dif-

ferent personalities in the Lord's church are one in the unity of faith. They are one for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the gospel of Christ.

Here again we have a lesson and guideline. It can be hard sometimes to forgive and forget things that happened in the past. As members of the synod, we are to work together in mutual recognition. Together we have to stand for the word of the Lord in our discussions, also in the matter of appeals that deal with things that happened in the past. Christ builds His church. This is the message in the apostolic words, with which the brotherhood is strengthened. The work of Christ goes on in this world. This work we may serve in order that Christ is glorified in us.

After the service those present met and spoke together and wished the brothers delegates strength and wisdom.

The opening of the synod


The next morning Rev. G. Snip, as minister of the convening church, spoke his opening word and welcomed the brothers. Since I was not present, I cannot report on what he said. A moderator was chosen. Rev. J. Visscher was elected chairman. Rev. Cl. Stam became vice chairman. Rev. R. Aasman received the task of the first clerk and has to take care of the Acts, while Rev. D.G.J. Agema, as second clerk, is charged with the correspondence of the synod.

When the synod was constituted, the different advisory committees were appointed and the different items on the synod's table were divided. I give here the four committees and an (incomplete) division of the items:

Committee I: Rev. J.D. Wielenga, convener, Rev. D.G.J. Agema, and the elders A. Witten and P. Vandergugten; their main item is the matter of our relations with Churches Abroad.

Committee II: Rev. W. den Hollander, convener, Rev. J. Visscher, and the elders J. Werkman and J. Schouten; they are to prepare the matters of the Theological College and of the *Book of Praise*.

Committee III: Rev. P. Feenstra, convener, Rev. R. Aasman, and the elders P. Meliefste and H. Faber; this committee's task is to prepare proposals in the matter of a number of appeals.

Committee IV: Rev. C. Van Spronsen, convener, Rev. Cl. Stam, and the elders W. Smouter and P. VanderPol; their main items are the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the request of the American Reformed Church at Denver, and an appeal from the church at Toronto. 

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R.A. Schouten

How to read the Book₃

Having given our attention in previous articles to the wider and narrower context in Bible Study, we will now go on to address a different matter: the personal context. The Bible does not speak in a vacuum. It is addressed to certain people. We say that the Bible is a covenant book. This means that it speaks directly to you who are God's covenant people. It is your book!

Well, when God's people read this their Book, they soon notice that it is not a message which you can ignore. Instead, it is a Book which makes demands of the reader. It commands them, comforts them and challenges them. It never leaves them neutral. From beginning to end, this is a Book which needs a response, not just an intellectual response, but a response arising from the depths of our hearts.

Application

I hesitate to use the word "application" because of its misuse in certain circles. In various kinds of evangelical publications (even in "study Bibles"), you find all kinds of attempts to "apply" a certain part of Scripture to our lives today. For example, I just heard a "sermon" about King David and the matter of Uriah the Hittite (by a well-known evangelical preacher). The basic point of this sermon was: if you tell one lie, you'll soon be telling a lot more. This is the kind of "application" we don't need. The Bible was not written to teach a great number of moral "lessons." If you find a commentary which takes this approach, it probably isn't worth your while.

Also, I think we should resist the idea that "application" is a special component of Bible Study which we always do at the end of our study. Often, as we are studying Scripture, we will find ourselves overwhelmed by the majesty and glory of our God. The salvation He works in history is astounding. What greater application can there be than to fall down in reverent wonder before Him who is the Holy One?

All the same, there is place for a separate consideration of application.

Allow me to suggest the following questions as a guide. Ask yourselves: What does the Lord show us about Himself in this passage? What *promises* are given in this passage, whether explicitly or implicitly, which ask for our faith? Ask yourselves: do we really believe these promises? What does this passage show us about my Saviour (whether explicitly or implicitly)? What *warnings* are there in this passage? With what sins in our own lives does this passage confront us? What *commands* of God are there in this passage which we must obey? What must change in our lives because of what we have learned in this passage? What does this passage say about the task of the church?

In thinking about "application," we must remember that the Bible is the account of God's mighty deeds. Not man, but God is the central character. What God does comes to a focus in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we may ask at any given time: where is Christ the Lord in this passage? Once we can see an answer to this question, we will soon know the answer to a further question: where am I, a Christian in this passage? For where Christ is, there are His people, too.

The whole Bible, although it contains a library of 66 books, is really *one* story, the true story of the saving work of God in Christ Jesus. When you come to understand this, you soon feel yourself caught up in the story. When the Lord speaks about Christ, He is addressing you, too!

Finally, it is proper that Bible Study ends in prayer. In such a prayer after Young People's Society or after your personal Bible Study, you will thank the Lord for the new or renewed insights you have received and you will ask Him to give you His Spirit to help you think and live in the light of the Scriptures.

It goes without saying, of course, that Bible Study should also be preceded by prayer. We ask that the same Spirit who inspired the Word would also illumine our minds and prepare our hearts to receive the Word. At the very beginning of our study, we need

to confess that understanding the Bible is possible only for spiritual people (1 Cor. 2:14,15). All the methods and tools described in the previous articles will not help those who do not first seek the help of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Is Bible study necessary

Some of you might be inclined to say: this kind of Bible study is great for ministers, but not for me. I'm just an average person. I'm not able to do all the things about which you have written.

In answer to such concerns, it may be said, first, that we don't have to read the Bible in this way *all the time*. There is still a very important place in our Christian lives for regular, daily Bible reading, for example, at meal times. At these times, we won't always have opportunity to really delve into the Scriptures or to get out our Bible Study toolbox.

But we are saying that *in addition* to daily Bible reading, there must also be serious Bible study. Often this will take place via a Bible Study group. If you go to Bible Study after preparing in the ways described in these articles, you are guaranteed a very fruitful and edifying discussion.

To go to Bible Study without preparing yourself in the way described (not necessarily in exactly the same way) would be irresponsible. When people fail to pay attention to the larger, narrower and personal context of Scripture, they will be prone to twisting it or, at the least, missing the point that is being made. Serious, persistent Bible Study honors the Lord who took such a special care in having the Bible written for us.

Furthermore, if only ministers are studying the Word of God, how can church members test their preaching? Some of you who read this article will one day be called to serve as elders in various congregations. Part of your task then will be to ensure that the preaching in your church is faithful. How can this task be fulfilled if you are ignorant of the Bible?

To further commend to your heart the importance of Bible Study, I would suggest you read the following pas-

sages: Deut. 6:4-7; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; Col. 3:16; 1 John. 2:14. I'm sure you can find other passages which bring a similar message.

Is Bible study possible?

There may be those who still insist that this kind of Bible Study is only for ministers of the Word. In answer, I would point out that the kind of study done by ministers reaches even further. For example, ministers base all their study on the original text of Scripture which comes in the form of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages. Furthermore, ministers as a rule have much more time available for this kind of work. Then, too, they have more study tools at their disposal which may be too complex for many church members without theological training (not to mention that they are usually too expensive!). We should also consider the fact that the minister has been ordained to preach. His study is usually directed to the proclamation of the Word in the midst of the congregation.

In principle, however, the method of study used by a minister is indeed the


same one which you must use in your preparation for Young People's Society. Therefore, another title for this series of articles could be: "A Day in the Life of a Minister." That there is similarity between what you do to prepare for Young People's Society and what a minister does in his study need not really surprise anyone.

If you want to understand a novel, you will have to learn something about the methods used by a professor of English literature. Indeed, it takes a number of years of training in elementary and high school to learn how to read ordinary books properly. The more you learn about literature, the more you will appreciate or abhor the novel you are reading. Therefore, I would also say that the best training school for serious Bible Study is the preaching of the Word in your own church. All the points that have been made in these articles will receive ample illustration from your own minister.

Is Bible Study hard? Of course it is. Everything really valuable is hard. Does it take a long time to learn this method?

Well, it does take more time than it takes to watch a hockey game.

But to those who are thinking, "I'll never be able to master all the procedures and methods described in these articles," I would say: don't you remember what it was like when you learned to drive? At first, when you had to look over your shoulder in order to change lanes, you swerved all over the road. Trying to coordinate the clutch and the gear-shifter proved nearly impossible. Whenever you tried to turn on the heater, you started the windshield wiper instead. But now that you have been driving for a year or two or more, you hardly think about all the different things you have to do. Instead, you can relax and enjoy the experience of driving.

So it is with Bible Study. You must first learn and practice the rules. This can be frustrating for a while. Even ministers of the Word have to work very hard to gain understanding of Scripture. If you persist, however, you will eventually have the exhilarating experience of reaching new levels of understanding God's Word. 

The Union of 1892 Today₂

By J. Geertsema

The second evening

Opening

In commemoration of the Union of two Reformed Church federations in 1892 in the Netherlands, the Burlington Reformed Study Centre organized three evenings under the common theme "Reformed Identity and Ecumenicity." The first evening was a "meeting" of Free Reformed and Canadian Reformed views on the Union of 1892 (reported on in the previous issue). The second evening, held on October 8, 1992, had as sub-theme "Concerned/Former Christian Reformed Churches and Canadian Reformed Churches – How close are we?" The main speakers were Rev. Cl. Stam, minister of the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, and Dr. T. Plantinga, professor at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. After the speeches, they formed a panel together

with Rev. J.S. Gangar, minister of the Orthodox Reformed Church at Wellandport, Ontario, and Rev. G.H. Visscher, minister of the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington-West.

In his opening word of welcome, the Rev. J. Mulder expressed his thankfulness for the "tremendous turn-out" of both the previous and of the present evening, and for the fact that there was such a large number of young people showing "their interest in these matters concerning the church of our Lord." The large auditorium of Redeemer College in Ancaster was filled. He said that it was good to talk about the "factual differences," but that this should be done "not in terms of conflict and antagonism but in terms of harmony and understanding." And when we discuss the differences "not in the light of what we like or what we are used to, but in the light of God's Word and our common confessions," then "we will con-

centrate on the question whether the matters in which we are *not so close* are really barriers to seeking unit.

Rev. Cl. Stam

Rev. Stam discussed first the similarities and then the differences between the concerned and former Christian Reformed [CRC] and the Canadian Reformed people. The unity is in the first place that we have a *common basis*. We "both want to submit unconditionally to the Scriptures as the infallible and normative Word of God. The independent CRC people see the problem in the CRC most of all "as a matter of *hermeneutics*: how to approach and explain the Bible." They also "desire to be fully bound, today as of old, to the Reformed Confessions.... Since we believe that Scripture and confession (in which the Word of God is faithfully and truthfully confessed) are the basis of the Church of Christ, and since we both

wish to hold to this basis, we are one in the true faith, and there lies upon us all the calling to express and maintain this unity in every respect (Ephesians 4)." When the council of Mount Hamilton CRC separated from the CRC federation "it pledged...to 'seek affiliation with *confessionally like minded churches.*' This is the principle of true ecumenicity which we also wholeheartedly accept."

Our unity is, in the second place, that we share "the same *historical background*" of the great Reformation, of the tradition of Dort (1618-1619), of the Secessions of 1834 and 1886, and the Union in 1892. Although, "there is an important *gap*, ...the events surrounding the Liberation in 1944." Some of the older generation "recall the bitterness of that schism. We must somehow together come to a better understanding of what *really* happened in 1944, and seek to remove the stereotyping and caricatures which exist about that period." It is "basically offensive" for us to be called "the Schilder group" because "the issue never was the person of Dr. K. Schilder, but one of doctrine and church polity!" Rev. Stam said he has "the impression lately that most independent Christian Reformed Churches through their recent experiences know a little more about what it means to be ostracized and expelled." This can make them "a little more sympathetic to the cause of 1944."

Coming to the differences that separate us, Rev. Stam mentioned a number of points. First there is the fact that the "liberated" churches have "benefited greatly from the insights of Dr. K. Schilder and his contemporaries." Building on the work of Kuyper, Schilder also gave "an important scriptural and confessional correction on the (scholastic) theories of Abraham Kuyper, ...for example, with respect to Kuyper's theories of *common grace*, the *pluriformity of the church*, and *'sphere sovereignty'*." The fact that many in the independent CRC are "still caught up in Kuyperian thinking...is a greater hindrance than some think." A concrete point is here the different approach of the doctrine of the church. Schilder and others (in line with the men of the Secession) stressed the confessional distinction between the true and the false church over against the Kuyperian philosophical theory of the pluriformity of the church. Schilder's normative approach (opposed to Kuyper's speculative theory) did not mean that he (and

the liberated churches) saw themselves as the only true church, but that he (and they) wanted to maintain and "apply the *norms* for being church of Christ as revealed in Scripture (Art. 29)." Studying this and other matters could "open our eyes for the real gain of the Liberation of 1944, not just for the past, but *for the present.*"

A second difference is "the issue of cooperation in the schools," which "has caused much bitterness." Many CRC members "said: we may not be one in *worship*, but why can we not cooperate in the *schools*?" Canadian Reformed own schools was seen as "a clear sign of isolationism and even sectarianism." Although there was, and still is, no agreement on this point among the Canadian Reformed people, Rev. Stam said, "we believe that it is precisely the same reason which prompted many former CRC members recently to break away from the Christian school in the St. Catharines area. If things go wrong in the church, will this not inevitably have its impact in the schools? Do we not believe that life is one and that there exists a unity between home, church, and school?" Rev. Stam also mentioned the "ethical crisis": How can one who is called a heretic and schismatic with respect to the church on Sunday, cooperate as brother in the school on Monday? "We have come to understand that the lasting basis for cooperation in all kinds of organizations lies in the unity of faith that is experienced in communal worship which becomes concretely visible at the Lord's table....It may well be that sometimes the Canadian Reformed school societies have gone too far in taking certain consequences in this respect, but the underlying principle of the unity of home, church, and school, all guided by the one Word of God, should be appreciated."

In the third place, we might differ in our "view on the necessity of a *church federation*. Following the Dutch synodical Reformed Churches, the CRC "adopted a hierarchical church polity....The danger now rises that many independent Christian Reformed, having liberated themselves from the existing synodocracy, are going in the direction of *independentism*, stressing the importance of the *local church* at the cost of the federation of churches, for instance on the point of the marks of the true church. Also this matter needs further discussion.

A fourth point of differences, related to "church polity," is that of "all kinds of

church practices." Although we both emphasize "congregational worship which focuses on the preaching of the Word," there are differences, for instance, in the "approach to the *preaching.*" We stress the redemptive-historical approach rather than a topical preaching. Further, there is the difference between the *Psalter Hymnal* and the *Book of Praise*. Discussion about possibilities and limitations on this point is needed too.

Coming to a conclusion, Rev. Stam said that there are still differences that divide us, why undue haste to come to unity must be avoided, but that "we must also realize that there is more which binds us." Therefore, steps must be undertaken, also locally, to become acquainted with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ" and to "discover what we do have in common in our Lord and Saviour."

Dr. T. Plantinga

Dr. Plantinga began with the remark that there are the "liberated" Reformed churches since the 1940s. He asked whether "genuinely Reformed churches for centuries to come must call themselves liberated," or whether it would "suffice to be 'just plain Reformed?'" The speaker met people who said not to like what is going on in the CRC, but who never would be liberated. Plantinga, therefore, wanted to deal with the questions what it means to be liberated and whether "CRCs need to be liberated."

Before answering these questions, Dr. Plantinga first wanted to clarify what he means when speaking of the CRC. For him, the CRC is "the church as it has defined itself throughout its history by its confessional adherence." It saddens speaker that "many CRCs are drifting away from their Reformed moorings and are denying their roots in secessions that took place in 1834 and 1857." They "are undergoing a crisis in which their very identity is at stake." The situation is now so that many people in the CRC "are very close to the beliefs of Canadian Reformed people," while some are "so far removed from Canadian Reformed thinking that they would have to regard talk of church union as a waste of time."

Dr. Plantinga divided the differences in three areas:

"(1) A different fundamental pattern in certain matters of everyday thinking and church life. (2) Growing differences in church order. (3) A history that we as CRC people do not

share with the Canadian Reformed people, i.e. the events of 1944 and their aftermath."

Before going into the first point, Dr. Plantinga made clear that the Canadian Reformed Churches never made doctrinal statements beside or beyond the Three Forms of Unity, as the CRC did in 1924 on the point of common grace. He pointed to Dr. K. Schilder who "wanted to leave room in the Reformed Churches for the thinking of such men as Valentijn Hepp and H.H. Kuyper" but did not want to see "their thinking elevated to a level of a binding commitment" which just happened in 1942 and following years. Thus, if the Canadian Reformed people follow Schilder, there is room for those who have a view that differs from that of Schilder.

However, what is then a difference? According to Dr. Plantinga, this is "the tendency to think in terms of absolute contrasts, of black and whites, when dealing with situations in which many of us on the CRC side see a lot of grey. He took as example "the famous question of 'the true church.'" He pointed to the Westminster Confession of 1646 which says in Art. XXV, 5, "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ but synagogues of Satan." Although this confession

has no official standing in CRC circles...many CRC people do think along just such lines when it comes to the question of the true church. When the Belgic Confession speaks of the true church in Article 29, we do not find in this article an endorsement of black-and-white thinking, such that a church (or federation of churches) either possesses the marks wholly and purely or lacks them, in which case it is "a" false church – or, as some like to say, "the" false church. The process by which churches deviate and surrender the marks that are essential to being a true church takes time. We believe that churches can fall away in part...And we also believe in the possibility of reformation....In short, we believe that the notion of the true church must not be understood in black-and-white terms.

Dr. Plantinga referred to the seven churches as they are described in Rev. 2,3. There he finds the opposite of "a black-and-white approach." The Belgic Confession, too, does not support

the suggestion that only one church group or denomination in one area" can bear the marks of the true church. But "some Canadian Reformed people...are inclined to suppose that since their own congregations do manifest the marks of the true church, therefore they are the *only* true church in town, and that any other churches in town not affiliated with them in one federation must therefore be false churches."

Dr. Plantinga said further that he sees the same black-and-white thinking patterns in connection with our practice regarding Christian education, binding so much school and church together, while many of us seem to have much little appreciation for Christian education outside or our own circle, such as in Redeemer College.

The second area in which Dr. Plantinga noticed differences was that of the Church Order. Here the CRC has drifted quite a bit in an hierarchical direction, while the Canadian Reformed churches operate by the principles of the "Doleantie." On this point Dr. Plantinga expressed his appreciation for what we have.

Dr. Plantinga saw "the most significant difference between our two church communities" in the area of church history. The liberation of 1944 is part of our history, and members of the CRC "could never make the events of 1944 part of their history." Without being able to dive into the matter of the Liberation in the context of his speech, Dr. Plantinga thought it would not work if we were to ignore 1944. On the CRC side there should be a studying of and a growing appreciation for the events of 1944. Otherwise the efforts to come to union will fail. This can be asked because when two people get married, they want to know each other, including each other's history.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Plantinga stated that union at this moment, October 1992, is not possible. We do not know each other yet, and thus we do not love each other sufficiently yet for a marriage. But we have to work towards it. Much work has to be done "out of love for the Lord and His children."

Responses

In his response, in particular to Rev. Stam, Rev. J.S. Gangar stated that he and his congregation do not want to go the way of independentism. He sees the Canadian Reformed people as brothers and sisters. But he warned that we must

not be pre-occupied with our history. Basis is, and has to remain the Word of God and true piety. We have to watch out that we do not go the way of the division of 1 Corinthians. Our allegiance is to Christ and to no one else. Him we have to follow. Also a matter as a hymnal should not divide us.

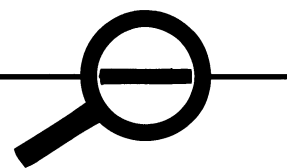
Rev. G.R. Visscher began with pointing out that in several places former Christian Reformed members were very well received in Canadian Reformed churches and felt at home there. The acceptance showed in the fact that several became officebearer. In response to Dr. Plantinga he remarked that Dr. A. Kuyper's teaching about the pluriformity of the church leads to the acceptance as church of everything that calls itself church, while Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession gives clear direction here. He ended with saying that we need each other.

In answering some of the questions, Dr. Plantinga dealt, among others, with the question why former CRC members should not immediately join the CanRC, and whether it was right to leave a sick mother. Rev. Stam reacted to what Dr. Plantinga had said about the black-and-white thinking, stating that the two appeals of the Canadian Reformed Churches to the CRC in 1963 and 1977 (recently published again by Dr. Plantinga) called the CRC membership "brothers and sisters. Over against the black-and-white approach is the danger of calling everything grey.

As reporter I may make the remark that quite a number of times in our magazine this black-and-white automatism is rejected as being *the* Canadian Reformed point of view. I shall not deny that we sometimes may have given cause for such an image, but I can also say that it is often attached to us without valid ground, and that it should be clear that it is not our typical Canadian Reformed doctrine. We adhere to Scripture and to our Reformed confessional standards.

This concludes the report of the second evening. When there are readers who would like to hear or read everything that is said at these evenings they can purchase now already audio tapes that contain the speeches and the responses as well as the answering of some questions. Soon also a booklet will be published which will contain the same as the tapes present but also the written answers to more questions.





The “Liberation” from and the struggle in the CRC continues

This summer’s attempt by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) to compromise on the issue of women in office has clearly failed in terms of keeping the CRC happy and united. Indeed, in several ways it is starting to look more and more like history is repeating itself. Just as in the years around our ecclesiastical Liberation (Vrijmaking) of 1944 the major assemblies assumed powers over the local church and deposed officebearers in spite of their being true to their calling and the Scriptures, so protesting CRC consistories are discovering that lording over faithful officebearers and churches is alive and well in the CRC. Indeed, on more than one occasion events in the CRC are being likened by former members of the CRC and conservatives in the CRC as parallel to what happened in our own history almost fifty years ago.

Events are moving rapidly and I have been told that there are now about 30 groups or congregations (with a total membership of over 5,000) who have left the CRC to continue as independent Reformed churches. There are now eight new independent churches in the greater Grand Rapids and west Michigan area, and new churches are also found in Lynwood, Illinois (where the meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches are held; Neerlandia, Alberta; Agassiz, BC; London, ON; Ancaster, ON; and Dunnville, ON. In this Press Review we will focus on three congregations well-known in the CRC, Dutton CRC (Dutton, MI), Mount Hamilton (Hamilton, ON), and Messiah’s Congregation (Brooklyn, NY). The information for this *Press Review* comes chiefly from *Christian Renewal* (14 September and 12 October, 1992).

Dutton

The Dutton CRC (which is a close neighbour of the American Reformed

Church at Grand Rapids) has been sending in protests and appeals to CRC synods for years. After the synodical decision allowing women to “teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care,” the council of the Dutton CRC voted unanimously to secede from the CRC and the congregation subsequently sustained this by a margin of 85%. At a subsequent regular session of Classis Thornapple Valley (Sept. 15), classis declared that the council’s actions were schismatic and that the elders and deacons should be officially removed from office in the CRC and that their minister, Rev. P.T. Murphy, had the status of one deposed from office for leaving the CRC.

Prior to this case, “one pastor, three elders, and one church council had been deposed for allegedly divisive activities. However, Classis Thornapple Valley’s action in the case of Rev. Paul T. Murphy apparently marks the first successful attempt to declare an officebearer deposed after he had seceded” from the CRC. What a horrible irony that those who strive for the truth that they had pledged to uphold and who struggle for the true ecumenicity in truth and faithfulness to God are judged unfaithful and schismatic, and even after the fact are considered unworthy of office and deposed! The legitimacy of such a classis is brought into doubt by such decisions. According to the CRC’s own confession, persecution of true believers is a mark of the false church (Art. 29 Belgic Confession).

Messiah’s Congregation

What has just been mentioned can also be applied to the events surrounding Messiah’s Congregation. This church, pastored by Rev. S.M. Schlissel, was declared by Classis Hudson (Sept. 23) to be “outside the fellowship of the CRC.” Reasons included that the congregation

never recognized the April classis’ deposition of Rev. Schlissel. Rev. Schlissel has been a fervent fighter for the Reformed faith in the CRC, and yet, chiefly for that reason, he ends up being deposed and his congregation ends up being declared outside the CRC. At the same time, the CRC tolerates the election of women officebearers in Washington, DC, Grand Rapids (Madison Square, Grace, and Eastern Avenue), and Toronto (First CRC), and more are on the way. No one seems to believe that similar disciplinary action will be taken against these churches. It is clear which direction the CRC as a whole is going. In a sense Rev. Schlissel can be thankful that he is where he has counselled countless members of the CRC to be, outside the CRC with integrity.

Mount Hamilton

The Mount Hamilton CRC is pastored by Rev. R.J. Sikkema and is located “just around the corner” from the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church. In late August the council of the Mount Hamilton CRC decided to lead the congregation out of the CRC because the recent Synod did not show any signs of repentance or turning back. This sparked an organized reaction from those wanting to remain in the CRC, even to the extent of involving the civil magistrates. The court ruled against the consistory, effectively blocking the council’s right to hold a congregational meeting. Those wishing to remain in the CRC also asked classis “to suspend immediately all officebearers who voted to secede, or allow us to declare these officebearers to have forsaken their offices in the CRC, and together no longer form the Council of the Mount Hamilton Church.” Classis decided, among other things, that those withdrawing “can no longer function as officebearers in the CRC” and that

“members of the seceding council who have chosen to lead the congregation in ‘withdrawing from the CRC federation in order to affiliate with confessionally like-minded churches’ can no longer function as officebearers or as directors of the legal corporation known as the Mount Hamilton CRC.” Although these officebearers were technically not deposed, they were stripped of all their authority over the congregation as originally constituted and entrusted to their care. According to the council this was done without due regard for the Church Order. Among other things, council was not even allowed to defend itself. They were stripped of their authority over the original congregation because their desire to remain faithful brought them in a collision course with a hierarchy structure that sustains liberal developments in the CRC but has very little patience with those who wish to remain

faithful to the Scriptures and the confessions of the church.

In his letter of resignation to classis, Rev. Sikkema wrote in part:

It has become more and more clear that...the CRC is heading in a direction that is at variance with that historically followed by the CRC.

At the heart of the matter lies the new hermeneutic [way of interpreting Scripture, cvd]. It is the new hermeneutic that is leading the CRC...through the actions and decisions of the synods to subject the historicity of Adam to scientific research; to condone speaking of God, and to God, in language that no longer reflects an obedient response to the Scriptural revelation; and to make non-Scriptural distinctions between what are, and what are not, to be confessional or salvation issues. Thus the CRC...is in

danger of assigning “more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God” [Art. 29, Belgic Confession]...

Brothers, I plead with you, give serious thought to these matters! The devil is going about like a roaring lion, seeking those whom he may devour. He is seeking to undermine the foundations of the Reformed Churches! If he can but remove one stone – one tenet of the faith! – of that foundation, he knows that the rest of the foundation will crumble, in due time.

May the eyes of more and more in the CRC be opened to what Rev. Sikkema and others see so clearly and not compromise themselves. And may the gracious head of the church gather together all those who love the Reformed faith.



COLLEGE CORNER

By C. Van Dam



Many reasons for gratitude

In the last while the Theological College has been the happy recipient of a number of gifts and we would like to share with you this good news, as well as other pleasant events at the College.

Books

A most precious addition to our collection is the small dogmatic work of Casper Olevianus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, entitled *Den Vasten Grondt (The Sure Foundation)*. This brief exposition of the Christian faith was published in 1579 and appears to be in its original binding. It is the first Dutch edition and one can only wonder who may have been strengthened and encouraged by its contents during a time of persecution and war against Spain, and subsequent ages. Brother L.T. Van der Meulen of the church at Barchhead sent us this gift, as well as a copy of a late 18th century Psalm book, as well as *Geschiedenis der Martelaren (History of Martyrs)*, being an 1883

reprint of the 1671 edition. It details the history of those who died for the faith, especially in the sixteenth century.

Mrs. C. Olij, widow of the Rev. C. Olij, again sent us books from her husband's library, this time a large number of valuable brochures and leaflets from the history of the Reformed Churches, especially in the years leading up to the Liberation of 1944. Mrs. P. de Wit of the church at Port Kells, B.C., also gave to the College a number of books from her late husband and br. L. Geusebroek of Burlington donated quite a number of back issues of *Christianity Today*, enabling us to fill out our collection. Brother R. Janssen (of Inheritance Publishing in Neerlandia) contributed a number of new dutch titles which were useful for our holdings. Rev. G.H. Visscher of Burlington-West gave us a good micro-fiche reader.

From Rev. K. Bruning we received a copy of the fruit of his pen in a booklet entitled *Serve the Lord with Gladness.*

The Church on her way to the Year 2000 and from the Inter-League Publication Board two copies of Dr. K. Deddens' outlines on Philippians. Dr. H. Beck of Germany sent us a fine study in which he deals with the relation of Bible and science and Dr. I.H. Du P. van der Walt of South Africa contributed his dissertation on modern ecumenical discussions on baptism to the library.

Needless to say we are most thankful to the different donors for all these gifts!! We are also encouraged by them as tokens of the fact that the College is a school of the churches and church members from across this large country support the work also in this way.

A first bequest

A gift of a different nature for which we are also very thankful is that we were remembered in the will of the late Mrs. C.L. van der Kulk-Oosters of the church at Rotterdam-Noord, the Netherlands. The 19,088 guilders which were

received in this manner were placed in a special account and invested. The Property and Finance Committee decided on this course of action in order to start a special fund for the eventual necessary expansion of the physical facilities of our library. Our library is growing and before we know it we will have to deal with the matter of creating more room for our books. Now we have a beginning of what we hope will be a growing fund so that the churches will not be burdened unnecessarily!

This bequest reminds us that remembering schools like the Theological College in one's will is an excellent way to help reformed institutions.


Other news

We are happy to announce that Miss Margaret B. Van Der Velde who recently finished her studies for the Master of Library and Information Sci-

ence degree at the University of Western Ontario and is now working for the College one day a week as a library cataloger. Her presence is a great asset since we were actually short staffed on cataloguing and we welcome her into the College community. We also continue to value the volunteer help given by Mrs. Allison Schutten and Mr. Y. Krikke who assist Catherin Mechelse. It takes a number of people to run a library and we are grateful that things run so smoothly.

In the last weeks we were privileged to have a number of guest speakers at the College. On October 16, Dr. C.P. Venema, Associate Professor of Doctrinal Studies at Mid-America Seminary in Iowa, lectured on "Functional Inerrancy" in which unscriptural modern ideas on what constitutes the trustworthiness of Scripture were closely examined. On November 3, Rev. H.

Versteeg visited the College with his wife and brought very close to us the work of mission in Irian Jaya by means of a video production. He underlined the great need that faces the young churches there and challenged the students to consider working in this part of the Lord's vineyard. On November 10, Rev. R.E. Grossmann, Assistant Professor of Ministerial Studies at Mid-America spoke on redemptive history and liturgy, showing the biblical riches of a covenantal and Reformed understanding of worship.

In conclusion, both students and teachers consider it a great privilege to be busy fulltime studying and learning about the great works of God as revealed in Scripture and evidenced in church history. May the Lord continue to bless this work that the school of the churches may remain a blessing for the churches. 

Graduation Evening

Dr. K. Schilderschool, Grand Rapids, U.S.A.

On June 12th, 1992, the Dr. K. Schilderschool of Grand Rapids held its graduation evening, completing fourteen years of Reformed education. We are thankful to the Lord, that He has blest us in letting us do this important work, and we pray that we may continue this work for many years to come. In these past 14 years our school has become well-known in the community and in the state of Michigan. We've had letters from the state recognizing our students' high level of academic achievement upon their graduation.

We are thankful to the Lord, that He has given us teachers, who through strong Reformed ethics are able to teach His children and so are receiving the tools necessary to build His kingdom in today's society.

Keeping this in mind the article you are about to read is the commencement speech given by Mrs. Selden, one of our teachers, at this year's graduation.

We as board were so moved by her speech and, convinced of its importance, we thought all who care about Reformed education would want to

read it, especially those who have not yet chosen a career.

Please read this article very carefully.

Thank you
on behalf of the board,
Martin Verhey Jr.

Graduates, students, fellow teachers, parents, and friends:

This evening, we as students, teachers, parents, and school association members should be very thankful for the accomplishments of this past school year. Our hard work and financial support have again resulted in two students reaching important milestones in their educational careers. Our students have scored well above average in the Iowa Skills test, affirming again the quality of the education offered here. Although we are relatively small in number, we have managed to complete another school year – all twelve grades intact – with only two full-time teachers, some part-time teachers, and several teacher's aides.

In spite of all these accomplishments, however, a crisis confronts our school. The crisis that we are facing is not the moral crisis that we often hear afflicts the public educational system – we are not concerned this evening with the drugs, violence, disease, and sexual immorality that plague public schools. Yet the crisis that we are facing is serious, and it can be resolved by only one group of people – the students.

Tonight I am giving all students here – from those who have just completed first grade to those who are still in college and not yet sure of a career direction – a homework assignment. You will not need a pencil or paper or a calculator or even a computer to complete this assignment. You will need only your brains and a few minutes of time. You will all need to finish this assignment by Monday, before your brains are so far away on summer vacation that there is no bringing them back until September. What I am asking of each of you is that you listen to what I have to say and consider whether you might be part of the solution to the problem we are facing.



The problem I am talking about is a severe shortage of teachers. This is not news to any of us. Our own school board has advertised for a third full-time teacher in the *Clarion* and has not been able to hire anyone for this fall. In the same issue of *Clarion* in which our school advertised, approximately twelve other Canadian schools were advertising for about twenty-five to thirty teachers. The Teachers' College in Hamilton is not producing enough teachers to meet even the needs of Canadian schools. The American Reformed church in the United States is growing, and as more churches join our federation, more schools, eventually needing more teachers, are springing up.

It seems odd that among a people who understand their obligation before God to provide a Reformed, covenantal education for their children that there should be such difficulty finding teachers. The teaching profession should be held in high regard, and young people should aspire to be teachers. In all seriousness, I would like the students – young ones and older ones, young men and young women – who are here this evening to consider becoming a teacher. It is a profession that demands great abilities, a deep commitment, and much wisdom. It is also a profession that offers many rewards, although wealth is not among them. Most importantly, it is

a profession that offers an opportunity for great service to Christ's church.

To make this a fair assignment, you students need to understand the responsibilities of a teacher's job. Some of you may be thinking, "I know what a teacher does – he or she teaches long division, or how to diagram a sentence, or gives spelling tests, or stands outside at recess to watch us, or sits at home evenings devising horrible homework assignments that drive me crazy." While it is true that some of these things are included among the teacher's tasks, educating students is far more than teaching first graders that $2+2=4$ and grading high schoolers' science tests. Education is moral – it is "giving people the tools to more fully love and serve God and their neighbour."¹ (That, by the way, is one of the important reasons we must not send our children to public schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade; public schools will not, and, in fact, cannot provide our children with a moral education.)

This makes the teacher's task much more complicated. Teachers, who have been delegated part of the parents' authority, rule the schoolroom in the name of God. They are responsible to act in conformity with the word of God and must discipline in love and justice.² Teachers teach their students how to do long division to the glory of God – that is,

they not only teach students how to do long division, but they teach them the full weight of God's relationship to long division.³ As students graduate from our school, they should not only be able to understand what nouns and verbs are, they should also have a deeper understanding of God's law and their obligations to obey it, something that can never be measured by the Iowa Skills test. A bumper sticker popular among teachers says, "If you can read this, thank a teacher." Perhaps we should revise it to read, "If you can read this, and read it to God's glory, thank a teacher."

By now you may be thinking, "Why would I want to be a teacher? It sounds a lot harder than I thought – all this stuff about teaching in conformity with the Word of God and assuming part of the parents' authority." The first reason you should become a teacher is you have the ability to do so. We know from Scripture that we have all been given certain talents, and God has given us those talents for a reason – to use them. That is why some of us become ministers; others, business professionals; others, health care workers; others, farmers; and still others, teachers. So what are the abilities and characteristics that make a person a good teacher? An enthusiasm for people – young children, teenagers, or young adults – is very important. Patience is certainly a virtue in this field as well as the ability to communicate information so that it is easily understood. You must be able to motivate people, to act with good judgment. You will need to have a solid understanding and awe of the depth of your responsibility. Creativity is also important – you will be dealing with many different personalities, all of whom do not learn in the same way. Finally, if you choose to teach high school, you will need to have an aptitude for a specific subject area, or – in the case of our teachers here – several subject areas, such as math, English, history, foreign languages, or science.

You may now be thinking, "I have some of those qualities but not all of them – so I guess I shouldn't be a teacher." If you really desire to be a teacher and have most of these qualities, you probably can work to improve your weak points, something all teachers must do continually. I, for example, must continually strive to be more patient, a virtue that does not come naturally for me. That is what your education now and college and experience are all about.

A Puritan author once wrote, “Seldom was any knowledge given to keep, but to impart.”⁴ The second reason you should be a teacher is you have been extended a very great privilege – a Reformed, covenantal education – and you should want to make sure that others receive this same privilege. Knowledge is not given to us so that it can lie dormant, serving our own purposes when we want it to. You have been given knowledge, and you will be required to impart that knowledge, especially if you become a parent, something that probably most of you will become. But if you have the desire and abilities to be a teacher, you have the opportunity to pass that knowledge on even further than your family – to your students. A college professor of mine would, on frequent occasion encourage me to become a teacher. (I didn’t want to be a teacher.) When I would ask him why he was so sure I should become a teacher, he would always say, “I think you have something to say.” Those of you with the benefit of a Reformed, covenantal education, without a doubt, have something to say.

The third reason that you should consider becoming a teacher is that there are great rewards. The greatest reward is knowing that you are providing an invaluable service to the church – you are educating the covenant children and preparing them for the day when they will assume the leadership roles in the church. There are also more personal rewards that come from giving people the skills they need to succeed in life. Two years ago, I had the opportunity to teach reading to the first graders. They were learning basically from scratch. One of the greatest rewards I have experienced as a teacher was sitting in on an assembly this past year and listening as those same first graders, now second graders, took their turns reading from Scripture. While what I taught those students will be a very small part of their overall education, it was personally very rewarding to know that I have helped to lay the foundation for the rest of their learning.

Some of you will argue that there are just as many reasons for not becoming a teacher. If you do not have the desire or abilities, then you certainly should not become a teacher. There are a few common reasons people have for not considering the teaching profession, and I would like to address those briefly. First, many people will not consider teaching because the financial compensation is very limited – in other

words, there’s not much money in it, as most teachers will testify. Although this is a sad commentary on the value our culture places on teachers, it is true. However, the school association by whom the teacher is employed is obligated to ensure that the teacher receive a salary that will allow him to meet the needs of his family. Teachers have unique opportunities that other workers do not have to supplement their income, particularly during the summer months. For instance, I have a teacher friend who earns a significant amount of money during the summer working for a landscaping company that is owned by a teacher. Before you rule out teaching because of low pay, examine your own motives for desiring money. Do you desire wealth so that you can be more financially supportive of Christ’s church, or do you simply desire it for personal gain and satisfaction? If the latter is true for you, then you need to rethink your motivation and your reason for not becoming a teacher.

Another reason young women, in particular, give for not becoming a teacher is that they just want to become a wife and mother, and all of that education would go to waste. The first problem with this reason is that no woman who is a wife and mother is *just* a wife and mother, as if that were the only job left for women incapable of any other type of work. Being a wife and mother is a God-ordained position, one which carries with it great responsibility. As well as changing diapers and preparing meals, mothers are teachers to their children, and what better way to prepare for

this important role than to become educated to be a teacher? Education is only a waste of time if we do not use it to improve ourselves and those for whom we are responsible.

Finally, teaching is not a profession that is as respected as it once was, and for this reason many young people will not consider it. In today’s society, the prestige of an occupation is determined by how much money it commands rather than the importance of its contribution. In this culture, professional athletes and fashion models are regarded much more highly than teachers. However, we, as members of Christ’s church, understand the importance of the teacher’s role in the covenant community. It is a job with great importance, one that is essential to the life of the church. It is a job for those with strong commitment, solid character, and much wisdom. So don’t fall into the world’s trap of placing little value on the teaching profession. Give the teaching profession the significance that God gives it – the important task of training covenant children to more fully love and serve God and neighbour.

I am speaking primarily to students to encourage you to consider the teaching profession as a career. I am also speaking to parents, though, because you are the ones who shape your children’s values and guide them to their futures. If you think your child has the talents and desire to be a teacher one day, encourage him or her. Help your children to understand the importance of teachers to our church. Without teachers, there can be no school, and without school, we cannot meet our obligations to God as parents and church. So this evening I encourage you students to consider the profession of teaching – a work with great “fruitfulness” and “everlasting results.”⁵

¹Mary Pride, *Schoolproof*, Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1988, p. 17.

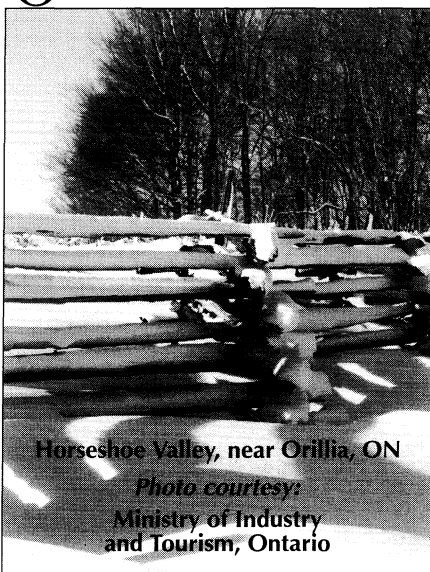
²Louis Berkhof, “Authority: The Christian School and Authority,” in *Foundations of Christian Education*, Dennis E. Johnson, ed., Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990, pp. 112-14.

³Jay E. Adams, *Back to the Blackboard*, Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982, pp. 22-23.

⁴Joseph Hall, in *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*, I.D.E. Thomas, comp., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977, p. 164.

⁵Cornelius Van Til, “Antitheses in Education,” in *Foundations of Christian Education*, Dennis E. Johnson, ed., Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990, p. 24.

OUR COVER



Horseshoe Valley, near Orillia, ON

Photo courtesy:
Ministry of Industry
and Tourism, Ontario

PRESS RELEASE

Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Hamilton, ON, Thursday, September 10, 1992

Opening. The chairman, Rev. Cl. Stam, opened the meeting with the reading of the third letter of the apostle John. In his prayer he asked the Lord's blessing upon the meeting.

The brothers were welcomed. A special welcome was extended to Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, being present as Principal of the College, and to Prof. J. Geertsema who was, upon the request of the Senate, allowed to attend all the meetings of the board and of the committees for this coming academic year. Prof. Geertsema was designated by General Synod 1989 to be Principal for the period of September 1, 1993 to August 31, 1996. Absent with notice was Rev. B.J. Berends. He had been prevented to attend. The chairman spoke appropriate words in connection with what had been read from God's Word.

Agenda. A few matters were added to the agenda after which it was adopted.

Officers. For this meeting the same executives were re-appointed. They were: Rev. Cl. Stam – chairman; Rev. P. Kingma – vice-chairman; Rev. M. VanderWel – secretary; Br. C.G. Heeringa – treasurer.

Minutes. The minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of September 5, 1991, were adopted.

Executive Committee. The secretary, Rev. M. VanderWel, submitted his report. It had the attention of the board.

Academic Committee. This committee reported on its activities and made a proposal regarding promotional visits of Professors. The board ratified it.

Finance and Property Committee. The committee submitted its Tenth Annual Report for the period commencing June 1, 1991 to and including May 31, 1992. The report fairly represents the major activities of the committee for the fiscal year 1991-92. It was received with thanks.

A proposal to amend By-Law Number 1 regarding ministers who have been appointed Governors and retire during their term will be forwarded to the forthcoming synod.

A decision regarding Sabbaticals of Professors for the benefit of their work, of the College and of the churches will be submitted to the general synod for approval.

Financial statements for the year ended May 31, 1992 were submitted and approved.

The treasurer, br. C.G. Heeringa, presented the proposed budget for the fiscal year 1992-1993. The budget was adopted as proposed.

The 1992-1993 budget requires an *increase in contributions* by communicant members of \$6.00. The assessment will increase from \$55.00 to \$61.00 per communicant member commencing January 1, 1993. This increase met the approval of the board.

The auditor's report of July 31, 1992, presented by Mrs. A. Spithof was ac-

knowledged. The forthcoming synod will be asked to appoint Mrs. A. Spithof as auditor.

Tuition fees were set for the Academic Year 1992-1993.

A proposal will be sent to the coming general synod to appoint a governor in the place of br. A.L. Vanderhout whose term as a member of the board is ending this year.

Convocation Committee. The report presented by this committee was gratefully received.

College Visitors. Rev. C. Van Spronsen and Rev. P. Kingma reported their visits made in the Fall of 1991, November 18-20. Rev. Cl. Stam and Rev. M. VanderWel reported their visits made in the Spring of 1992, April 29, 30 and May 1. These reports were received with thankfulness.



ACCEPTED the call to the Maranatha church in Surrey, BC; for mission work in Brazil

Rev. E. Venema

of Loppersum and Westeremden, the Netherlands

CALLED to Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton, AB

Rev. J. Moesker

of Cloverdale, BC

DECLINED to Vernon, BC

Rev. W.B. Slomp

of Houston, BC

DECLINED to Neerlandia, AB

Rev. D.G.J. Agema

of Attercliffe, ON

The **American Reformed Fellowship** invites you to worship with us in Florida. Each Sunday from December 6, 1992 to April, 1993, we meet at Palmview First Baptist Church, 49th Street at U.S. 41 across from Skyway Village in Palmetto. Our public gatherings are at 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Bring your lunch and enjoy a social hour between the services. If no minister is available from one of the American or Canadian Reformed Churches, we will listen to taped services or have a reading service. A collection is held for general expenses.

For information in Florida call (813) 955-4497. In Ontario please call (416) 563-8383. Our mailing address is c/o Mr. M. VanderVelde, 4219 Mountainview Road, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Rev. P.G. Feenstra

RR 3

Chatsworth, ON N0H 1G0
(519) 794-4733

Senate's Report. Each professor submitted a report on the work done in his department. These reports were received with gratitude.

The lecture schedule 1992-1993 was adopted.

Principal's Report. The Principal, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam reported on his activities. The board took note of this report with thanks.

Librarian's Report. The librarian, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, reported on the development of the library. This report was gratefully received.

Registrar's Report. The registrar, Prof. J. Geertsema, reported that the following students had requested admittance: Terrence Kelly Devries of the Canadian Reformed Church at Cloverdale, BC; Richard John Eikelboom of the Free Reformed Church at Byford, Western Australia; Theodore Edwin Lodder of the Canadian Re-

formed Church at Ancaster, ON; Jason Philip Van Vliet of the Canadian Reformed Church at Cloverdale, BC.

Interviews with these prospective students were reported. The board decided with gratitude to admit them to the course of studies.

Suggestions were made regarding promotional action for the training of future ministers at our College.

College Visitors. A visitors' schedule for the academic year 1992-1993 was made up:

For the Fall of 1992 Rev. B.J. Berends and Rev. P. Kingma were appointed. Rev. J. Van Rietschoten was appointed alternative.

The Spring 1993 visit will be decided at a later date.

Appointments. The board reappointed the emeriti Professors Rev. Dr. J. Faber and Rev. L. Selles as members of Senate.

A draft-report re: appointments was read and approved to be sent to the general synod.

Press Release. Due to the late hour it was decided to let the executive handle the Press Release.

The Acts. They were read and adopted.

Closing. The chairman, Rev. Cl. Stam, who had served as a member of the board during a period of nine years spoke a word of fare-well to those who would continue in the board and he addressed those who, together with him, were going to retire from membership of the board.

Br. A.L. Vanderhout, who also had served in the board for nine years and was now to retire from this active service, led us in prayer of thanksgiving.

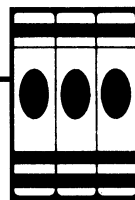
The chairman closed the meeting.

For the Board,
P. Kingma



BOOK REVIEWS

By G. Nederveen



Chantry, Walter J., *Praises for the King of Kings, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, paperback, 114 pages, \$5.95 U.S.*

Walter J. Chantry ministers at Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. His book is a meditation on three psalms, Psalm 2, 110 and 45. Psalm 2 has as heading "A Philosophy of Life." It depicts the attacks of the world against the Lord's anointed. Psalm 110 is treated as "The Coronation," the crowning of Christ as King of kings. Psalm 45 receives the heading "His Coming Again" and is explained in terms of the second coming of Christ for His bride, the church.

Every interpretation takes a certain approach. In explaining Scripture passages, especially from the Book of Psalms, there are basically two approaches. One is to first of all try to understand the psalm in its historical setting. In this approach the setting of the time period in which it was written plays an important role. The meaning of the passage is considered foremost from

the perspective of the poet who wrote it and then used as a window to Scripture as a whole. In this method there is an initial fulfillment in its own time and an ultimate fulfillment in Christ in whom all Scripture has its fulfillment.

The other approach is to treat the passage as directly messianic. That means: whatever is written in the psalm is not applied to the time it was written. Rather, is treated as a prophecy about the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever is written down skips many centuries and is directly and only applicable to Jesus as the Messiah.

Chantry has made the conscious choice to treat the three psalms under consideration as directly messianic. For me, there lies the weakness of this book. I miss the aspect of when and why the psalm was written. It leaves me with a sense of emptiness in not explaining the historical background and significance of each psalm. In an effort to make these psalms contemporary, there is not much exegetical depth. Perhaps that is too much to expect in a meditative work. But perhaps also,

proper attention for the time in which it was written would have deepened the meditation.

It is obvious that the author has a deep reverence and love for the Word of God. He compares Scripture with Scripture. He is certainly right when he writes,

This volume is not written for the hurried person who is grasping for some media bite along the way, a minute with Jesus and no more. It is intended for the searching heart which acknowledges that it is worth giving time and extended thought in order to see the King in His beauty [p. 9].

On the whole I have much appreciation for Chantry's treatment of Psalm 2. He stuck to the psalm and gave a fine meditation on it. He offers delicious tidbits of insight and clarity. His exposition on Psalm 2 is well worth some unhurried reading and reflection.

The author also does a nice job explaining how this psalm is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Psalm 2 speaks about the iron sceptre and Chantry explains this

in light of Revelation 19:11-16 where Christ is portrayed as the one who will rule the nations with an iron sceptre.

One point I question is when Chantry writes on page 26 that Christ kept the last six commandments of the law perfectly. Maybe I did not grasp fully what Chantry was trying to convey by just mentioning the last six commandments. But as I read this I right away wondered: Did the Lord Jesus not fulfil the whole law and keep the whole law perfectly? Do we get a whiff here of the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ?

I also find it unfortunate that the author constantly uses the name Jehovah rather than LORD. A better and preferred rendition of the Hebrew name would have been Yahweh.

As I read the next two sections my enthusiasm diminished with each section. Psalm 110 is not of the same calibre as the previous one. Still, it contains many beautiful and worthwhile elements. To give you a flavour of his style let me quote how Chantry contrasts David's reverent way of speaking about the Christ and how some people today speak about Jesus. He writes,

...when David spoke of Messiah to come, he did not refer to Him as "my son"...he called him "my Lord"....

There is much of modern religion and modern religious literature that have become flippant. Some speak to Jesus and about Jesus with the same casual, backslapping familiarity that they would use in talking with a peer. "Hey, Jesus," and "Good morning, Jesus," and "Let's give Christ a hand" (as if He were a performing artist). We hear of "getting high on Jesus" and so forth [p. 58, 59].

It is clear that Chantry does not approve of such a disrespect for Jesus who is indeed the King of kings.

One last comment on Psalm 110. What struck me is that the author in dealing with Psalm 110:4 (which speaks about a priest after the order of Melchizedek) did not make any mention at all of the fact that Melchizedek is also mentioned in Genesis 14.

Walter Chantry's treatment of Psalm 45 impressed me the least. Because he approaches this psalm as directly messianic he states without proof that "the king of this psalm is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 85). I wonder if that is really true. I see no reason to doubt that this wedding song was composed by the sons of Korah to be sung at the marriage of a king of Israel.

In Chantry's interpretation, Psalm 45 is "spiritualized" to the point that it has lost all meaning as a wedding song for its time. He speaks about spiritual ears and spiritual nostrils (p. 88). My sense is that Chantry did not stick to the psalm and relied more on other Scripture passages to make the psalm a song for the coming again of Christ as bridegroom. Throughout you find many snippets of texts but not always taken in context.

There are many quotes from the Songs of Solomon which are all applied in a figurative sense. The woman is the church. The Song of Solomon does not deal with a loving relationship between two flesh and blood people but is allegorized as the relationship between Christ and His people.

I could write more. But I believe it has become clear that my main objection to the book is not so much what was written. My main disagreement is the initial approach to the psalms as directly messianic. In the process a lot of depth is lost that could have enriched an otherwise fine meditation.

Balkenende, William P., *Love in Times of Reformation, Neerlandia, Inheritance Publications, 1991, paperback, 105 pages.*

This is a historical novel which takes you back to the first years after the Reformation. It is part fiction, part fact. Some of the names are real and relate true historical happenings. The story serves as an eye opener to some of the struggles some of the followers of the reformers had to endure. As such the book is recommended reading.

Whether the book will reach the young teenagers for whom it is intended is the big question. The reason: the book lacks in a major way for the Canadian reader. The setting of the story is in the Dutch province of Zeeland. Names of places are frequent but they do not mean much if you cannot place them. What I missed was a *map* which would help the reader to identify places. It will help one to better understand the story as well. I certainly hope that a map will be included in all other endeavours Inheritance Publications may have in translating historical novels about Holland or other places.

At times the translation is stilted which really betrays the fact that it is a translation. One other aspect I found unfortunate is the Bible quotations from the King James Version. Why? Was that done to reflect the time period it de-

CORRECTION

Re: Book Review – *The Secret Mission*, Page 457, *Clarion* Volume 41, No. 21.

Price should be:

\$12.95 + \$2.25 Postage/handling
– Canada

\$10.95 + \$1.50 Postage/handling
– U.S.A.

J.G.

scribes? I believe the readers would be better served with quotes from the Revised Standard Version with which most of our people are familiar.

Van Reest, Rudolf, *Israel's Hope and Expectation, Neerlandia, Inheritance Publications, 1991, paperback, 331 pages.*

This is one of the best novels I have read of late. I found it captivating and hard to put down. Here is a book that is not time-bound and therefore it will never be outdated.

The story takes place around the time of Jesus' birth. It is written by someone who has done his research about the times between the Old and New Testament period. The author informs you in a easy style about the period of the Maccabees. Captivating is the story of intrigue and scheming at the courts of Egypt, Rome and Jerusalem.

Van Reest is a good storyteller. His love for the Bible and biblical times is evident from the start. He shows a good knowledge of the customs and mannerisms in Israel. Many fine details add to the quality of the book. You will be enriched in your understanding of the ways in the Old Testament. E.g. it tells you that the olives which were used as oil for the lamps had to be picked when they were not too ripe. Otherwise they would create too much smoke (p. 9). Or you learn that shepherds were not accepted as witnesses before a judge (p. 13).

Dr. T. Plantinga provided an excellent and lucid translation. I hope this book will find its place on the bookshelves in many homes, and that it will be read by young and old.



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Busy Beaver *Joshua Burger* wrote about his summer holiday.

I thought you would enjoy his story. Here it is.

"This year we had a super camping trip. We went with some friends of ours. We got up on a Monday at 4:00 a.m. to pack. It took a long time to get there, at least 4 hours, but finally we arrived at Fisherman's Island State Park in Charlevoix Michigan.

We unpacked our two tents, the one was for the girls and their parents while the other one was for the boys.

The next day we had some candy and left it out on the table that night. While we were sleeping we heard some munching. We awoke but did not dare look out because we thought it was a bear. The next morning we checked it out and saw a whole bunch of racoons' footprints. We noticed that the bag of candy was ripped open, one of the candies was half bitten and was spit out a few feet away. Also the peanut butter jar was found a few feet away from the table, half of it was eaten.

During this vacation we played volleyball on the road. It was funny because whenever a car came we would lift the net up. Once there came a big truck and we thought we had to take the net down, but he made it...

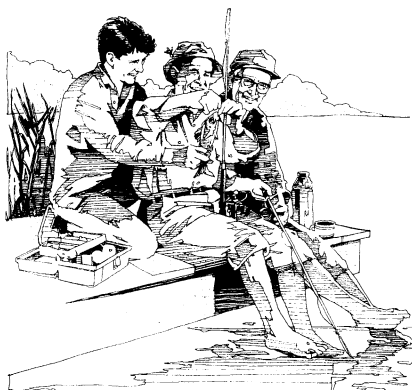
We also played volleyball in the water a couple times. It took my dad and his friend about an hour to set it up, they had to use rocks and what not to make it stand. But we had a lot of fun anyways.

We had a good time at the beach too while doing our treasure hunt. One of the things we had to find was a fish. Our leader found a huge dead salmon. She came running down the beach all excited shouting "I have one, I have one," and guess who won? We did!

The last day of our vacation I went fishing, but all I caught was a stick. On our way back to our campsite my friend told me to look up in the sky. I saw a helicopter, while I was watching it, we went down a steep hill. It felt like my stomach was inside out!

Finally the dreaded day arrived, we had to go back home... We left on a Saturday and came home at 9 at night.

The Lord willing we will go again next year."



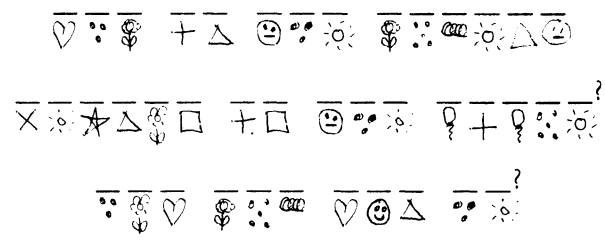
Quiz Time!

QUESTIONNAIRE

by Busy Beaver *Sarah Hovius*
Genesis 5:27

Key:

- | | | | | |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| A = ☺ | G = ✓ | M = ÷ | R = ★ | W = ♥ |
| B = ♀ | H = ☞ | N = □ | S = △ | X = ℂ |
| C = ~~~ | I = + | O = \$ | T = ☹ | Y = xxx |
| D = ~~~~ | J = :: | P = X | U = ★★ | Z = ☹ |
| E = ☼ | K = □ | Q = ☒ | V = † | |
| F = * | L = :: | | | |



SEARCH-A-NAME

by Busy Beaver *Elisa Vandergaag*

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

- | | | | |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Kayla | Emily | Ann | Rob |
| Robert | Marya | Ali | Jessica |
| Jack | Brian | Jill | Bill |
| Garrett | Elizabeth | Rachelle | Ken |
| Art | Greg | Stephanie | Alex Glen |
| Matthew | Karen | Martin | Mitchel |
| Elisa | Tyler | Ed | |

WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver *Hannah Verhoeff*

A H A R D B E N I F S C D E	Look for:	ate
A N M I G H T N R U T O W N	cold	stop
L G O S A T H Y E N O M T A	today	walk
O W I W O M A N J N P S O B	does	water
N A K K Y R E V E Y L E O Y	face	town
G T E M A W N O E H P C K E	every	keep
D E E K D O E S G O B O P S	coat	fine
D R P L O R C O A T E N A C	gave	along
Q R O A T G A S V T D D I U	ride	sat
V C H W W X F Y E D I R R Z	hope	bad
	second	hard
	now	might
	hot	turn
	grow	money
	woman	took
	funny	pair
	yes	

SECRET CODE

by Busy Beaver *Sarah Nobel*

Key → A B C = 1 2 3

23 8 1 20 4 15 25 15 21 3 1 12 12

1 23 9 20 3 8 20 8 1 20

12 9 22 5 19 9 14 20 8 5

19 1 14 4 ?

19 1 14 4 23 9 20 3 8 !

BIRTHDAY WISHES

You celebrate your birthday in December? Here's wishing you one *Super!* day along with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father bless and guide you in the year ahead.

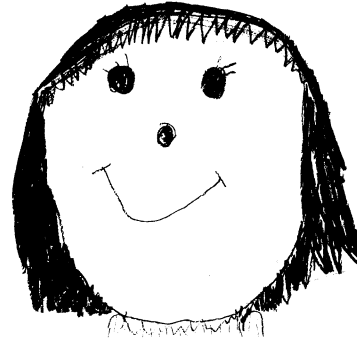
Congratulations! Many happy returns!

December

Kristi Viher	1	Dorothy Ondersma	17
Heidi De Boer	7	Christina Bergsma	18
Russell Werkman	7	Jacqueline Bikker	19
Jolena Dehaas	8	Aileen Feenstra	20
Sarah Hovius	9	Hilmer Jagersma	23
Leanne Beukema	10	Joni Dekker	24
Brian Janzen	11	Monica Bartels	26
Alana Bergsma	13	Elizabeth Vanderpol	26
Michelle Hordyk	15	Alice Van Bostelen	28
Lisa Burger	16	Daniel De Gelder	29
David De Boer	16	Miranda Hulst	29
Richard Feenstra	16		

ME!

by Busy Beaver *Melissa Hovius*



Canada: IT'S YOUR COUNTRY!



Test your knowledge of our country. See how many blanks you can fill in.

You can find answers in an atlas or an encyclopedia, too.

1. Canada's most famous waterfall is _____ Falls.
2. _____ is Canada's largest province.
3. The longest river in Canada is the _____ River.
4. The highest peak in Canada is Mt. _____ in the Yukon.
5. Canada's largest national park is _____ National Park, home of a large herd of buffalo and the nearly extinct whooping crane.
6. _____ is the largest city of our country.
7. Canada's largest sea or bay is _____ Bay.
8. Canada has countless lakes. The biggest is Lake _____.
9. Canada has a very long coastline including many islands. The biggest island in Canada is _____ Island.

Send your answers to:

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c/o The Busy Beaver Club
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