

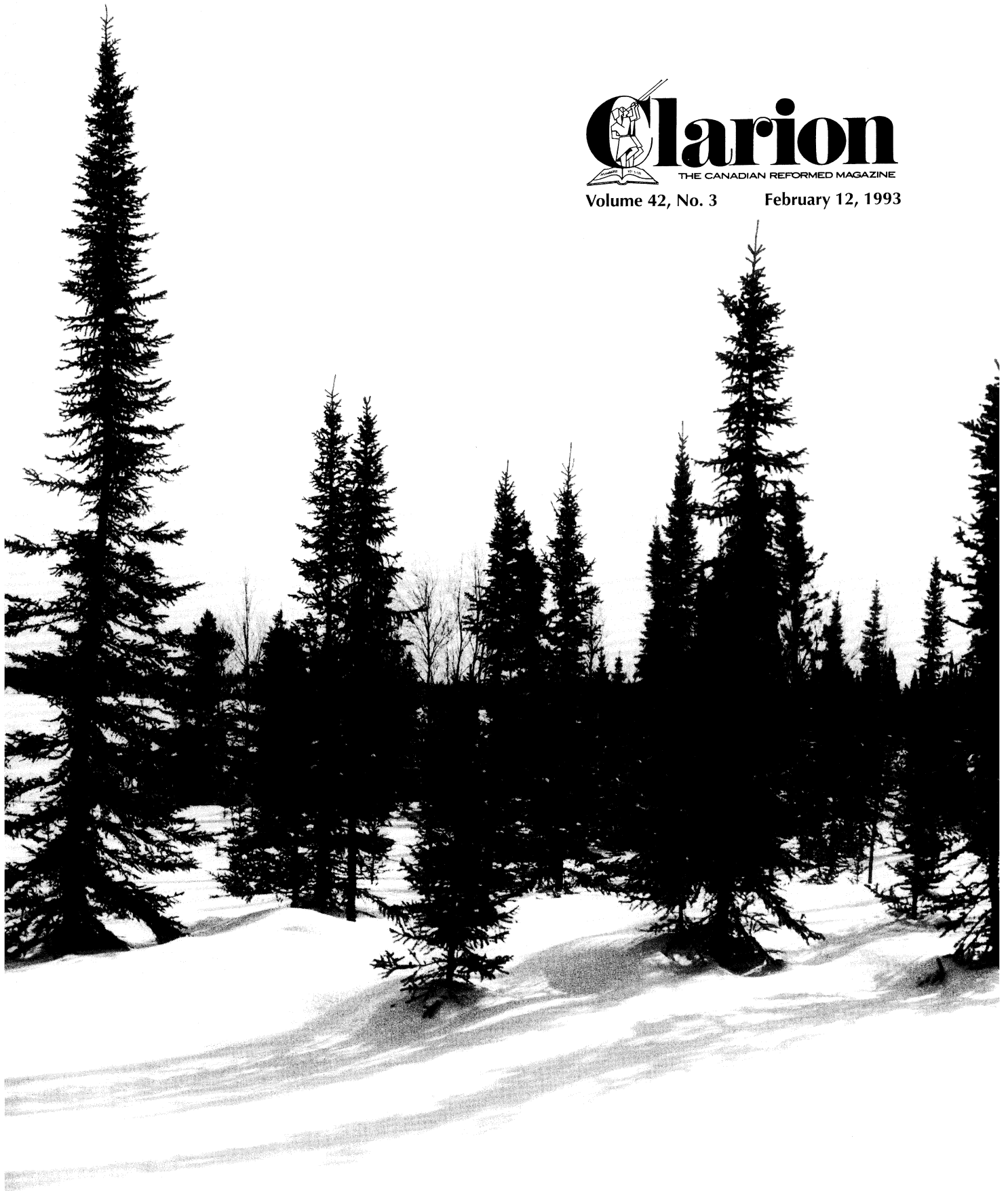


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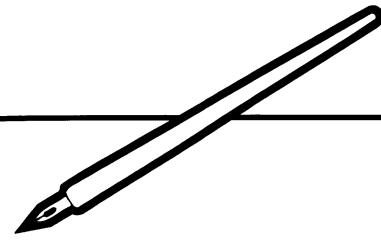
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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By J. Geertsema



More Reflections on Reflections

In the previous issue we began a conversation with Rev. Schouls of Vineland, Ontario, about what he said in the meeting of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches (ARC) in November of last year in Lynwood, and published in *The Messenger* (of December 1992). He gave a specific advice to the independent Christian Reformed churches which have formed a provisional federation and have given it the name "Confessional Fellowship," while remaining part of the broader organization of the ARC, together with individual concerned congregations within the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The advice of Rev. Schouls, presented as realistic, was that the different "Reformed denominations and churches" come to "the creation of a real, workable form of cooperation." Rev. Schouls thought that this could work better than forcing a unity upon the different churches. For such a forced unity would work as dynamite in the different "denominations and churches."

Rev. Schouls continued with the following description of this unity that he sees as more realistic:

If the ARC may be used to give birth to a new denomination made up mainly of the currently independent churches, such a body, together with some of the existing denominations and churches, could then function in a relationship of *federal* rather than *organic* unity. Matters such as theological education, missions, diaconal concerns and even pension and insurance plans for church workers could be dealt with under such a broad umbrella. Recognizing each other as churches of the Lord and respecting one another's distinctive qualities without trying to force them into one common denominator may, for the first time in our generation, give opening for real Reformed ecumenicity.

If I understand this well, what Rev. Schouls suggests is that the ARC will grow into a broader organization than it is at this moment. Members should become all the different Reformed "churches and denominations" in North-America, such as the Free Reformed Churches, the Confessional Fellowship of Reformed Churches (Independent CRC), the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and probably the Netherlands Reformed Churches, as well as those "individual" Christian Reformed Churches which are concerned and conservative but which



are still part of the CRC. Thus, besides whole federations of churches also individual congregations can be members. I find such an organization a rather strange phenomenon and quite unrealistic. For instance, how would such an organization do joint mission work and have a joint theological training for their future ministers? I mention a few questions. Does this mean that such mission work will be organized and supervised by a board that exists of synodical delegates from the different "denominations"? Or will this mission work come under some kind of private mission boards consisting of individual members from the different "denominations and churches"? Would this also mean that our "tradition," or rather, principle, that mission work is done by a local church with its consistory with the cooperation of other local churches preferably within the same classical region should be abandoned? The Canadian Reformed Churches have their mission work organized in this way because we found this manner in the New Testament,

the church at Antioch sending out Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). Mission is the task of the churches, rather than of boards consisting of individual members. Further, as Reformed Churches, we, and this includes the Dutch sister churches of the Free Reformed Churches, have always fought for a theological training of the churches, living together in a federation, for the churches. "Hamilton" is a church seminary, just as "Kampen" and "Apeldoorn." And if I am not mistaken, the Free Reformed people would like it very much if they could also afford such a church seminary for their future ministers. It is different with Mid-America Reformed Seminary. This is not church-affiliated, although it is set up specifically for and within the CRC, but it functions under a board of individuals, most of whom belong to the CRC. Is Rev. Schouls willing to give up the principle of the Secession of a church-seminary? I doubt very much whether, for instance, the Netherlands Reformed Churches would accept such a joint seminary. Rev. Schouls rejects the acceptance of a "common denominator" for the different federations (denominations). Does he accept it in the theological training of all future ministers? As for the matter of combined pensions, how would it work for those churches that are still in the CRC and have their pensions from it? More questions could be raised, but these are enough to show that such a broader "federal" organization is not really so much more realistic than an "organic" organization.

However, my main objection is that such a "federal" organization of some church federations and some local churches which still live within a non-affiliated federation which is seen as unfaithful to and deviating from the Word of God would bring us in conflict with what was stated in the "Act of Secession" in 1834 and was repeated in the "Act of Liberation" in 1944. I quote from the former (in translation) as it can be found in G. Keizer's book *De Afscheiding* (The Secession; Kampen; Kok, 1934, pp. 575-576). The elders and the members of the church in Ulrum declared that, on the basis of a number of facts mentioned, "it had now become more evident that the Dutch Reformed Church was not the true but the false Church according to God's Word and Art. 29 of our confession, and that, therefore, the undersigned declare herewith (i.e. with this Act, J.G.) that they, according to the office of all believers Art. 28, separate themselves from those who are not of the Church, and that they, thus, do not want to have fellowship (i.e., communion of saints, J.G.) anymore with the Dutch Reformed Church until it returns to the true service ("waarachtige dienst") of the Lord." Immediately after these words, the elders and members continue with stating that they "declare further that they want to practice fellowship (communion of saints) with all truly Reformed members, and want to unite with every gathering which is based on God's infallible Word, at whichever place God may have established it, therewith assuring that we hold on in everything to the old Forms of Unity." They declared further that they wanted to hold on to the Reformed form of liturgy and the Reformed Church Order of Dort.

I highlight here the words "and want to unite with every gathering which is based on God's infallible Word, at whichever place God may have established it, herewith assuring that, in everything, we hold on to the old Forms of Unity." It should be clear that this uniting mentioned in the "Act of Secession" speaks of the "organic" unity of local churches in one and the same federation and not of a kind of "federal" form of a more loose unity as Rev. Schouls suggests. We



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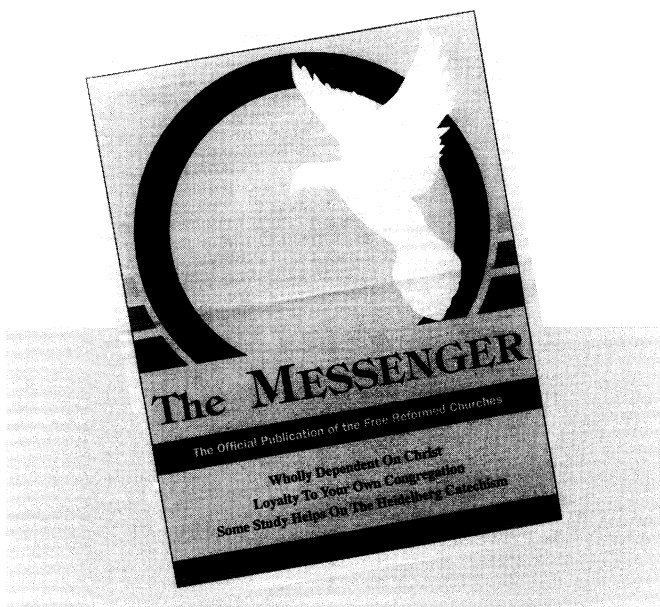
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can say that the “Act of Secession” speaks the normative language of God’s Word and of our common confession. Does this, then, not mean that, in his advice to the ARC, Rev. Schouls does not maintain this confession, normative, obedient speaking according to God’s Word? Is, according to Rev. Schouls, what was said in the “Act of Secession” in 1834 in today’s situation not normative anymore because it is now unrealistic and not feasible? Does obedience depend on the situation? Is it not rather so that the confessed norms of God’s Word themselves do not change, and that obedience to those norms, although difficult, does not change either? It is good, in my humble opinion, that this advice of my colleague met with disagreement at the ARC meeting.

Rev. Schouls continues:

What we envision, then, is the ARC developing into a structure enabling concerted action on a scale considerably higher than that striven for by such bodies as the Reformed Ecumenical Council (which is no longer a viable option for us due to its weak stand on some of the same matters that have caused you to leave the CRC) or the International Council of Reformed Churches, yet stopping short of organic unity into one denomination.

If some such development does not take place, we do fear that the ARC may lose not only its momentum but also a God-given opportunity to mean something for the larger Reformed world.

I look at the Alliance of Reformed Churches in a different way. In light of what is said above, we do not need and should not have permanently a national organization beside the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). The Alliance was set up as an organization of conservative, concerned Christian Reformed Churches, looking for help from and unity with other conservative and Reformed churches. The ARC has now resulted in the organization of the Fellowship of Reformed Churches, so that now this Fellowship and the ARC are two different entities. According to the manner of speaking of the Secession (as well as the Doleantie and the Union of 1892), such an alliance with churches within the CRC cannot forever continue to exist. If separation from the CRC is a matter of obedi-

ence to God’s Word and the Reformed confession today, and if the CRC does not “return to the true service of the Lord,” not seceding from it will become an act of disobedience. And, let us face it, obedience and disobedience cannot “dwell” together as brothers or sisters in the same house. Moreover, in 1892 the Free Reformed people did not join the Union because, among others, they objected against Abraham Kuyper’s teaching on the church, his pluriformity of the church concept. Does Rev. Schouls not accept this Kuyperian pluriformity concept when giving his advice of a “federal” unity of denominations?

The last paragraphs of the article in *The Messenger* obviously do not belong to what Rev. Schouls spoke at the ARC meeting, but are addressed to the Free Reformed readership. He wrote:

These are some of the thoughts expressed at the meeting. Some disagreed. Many of the independents warmly agreed. Some considered it a challenge. We did not mean to come in boldly and challenge anyone – that was hardly our place – but if our suggestions are received as a challenge, so be it. We repeat here, in the same spirit, in a genuine attempt to give guidance to others who are in very difficult and painful circumstances.

What repercussions, if any, this will have for our own church life remains to be seen. It is our task to be watchful and to strive for the protection of those principles which caused our fathers of 100 years ago to say to the proposed union, “Not at this time.” We ought also to remember that they said, “Not at *this* time.” We must always be ready to give content to the words solemnly attested to at every one of our synodical meetings, “that we desire to receive into our church community any who agree with our confession.”

The Lord Jesus, the King of the Church, also knows of the discussions that were held in the Lynwood Independent Christian Reformed Church. He will lead His Church further. May we receive such grace that we will always be found in agreement with His ways – individually – but also corporately, as churches bearing His Name.

When my colleague writes *that* the Free Reformed in 1892 said that at that time the union with another Reformed Church federation could not be realized yet, he must be aware that the union meant here is not a “federal” union of denominations but a union of churches in one and the same federation. And when he writes at the end, “May we receive such grace that we will always be found in agreement with His ways – individually – but also corporately, as churches bearing His Name,” I add, “Amen.” In accordance with what our Reformed fathers said in the “Act of Secession,” we, (liberated) Canadian Reformed churches, have said and want to maintain the following words written down in the “Act of Liberation”: “We decide that we . . . further want to practice fellowship (i.e. communion of saints, J.G.), as soon as this can be done, with all believers, wherever the Son of God has gathered them or also ever will gather again, – all who are found willing to stand . . . on the basis only of the adopted forms of unity.” When the Act speaks of “believers wherever the Son of God has gathered them or . . . will gather them,” we speak of churches.

If we do not want a union of local churches in one and the same federation, the Act of Secession and the Act of Liberation place us in the corner of sectarians who consider their own specific characteristics more important than confessional obedience, how difficult this may be to achieve. **C**

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Saint Are You A Saint?

What is a Saint?

According to Roman Catholic thought, saints are people so holy that they serve as role models for the faithful. Further, they are so close to God that they can intercede for those who pray for their help. The Roman Catholic Church has more than 2,500 saints on the list; however, the Vatican is now considering 1,000 more candidates for sainthood.

The Pope, upon recommendation of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and advised by his cardinals, decides whom Roman Catholics may recognize as saints. The Congregation will have received a nomination from a local Bishop somewhere in the world.

The candidate must have been dead for at least five years. There has to be a sign from God that the nominee was truly holy. The sign usually is an inexplicable cure that occurred after someone prayed to the candidate to intercede with God. Formerly, two miracles were required. Under new rules proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in 1983, only one miracle is needed for a potential saint to be canonized.

This cult of the saints * is far removed from the biblical teaching of sainthood. In the Bible, "the saints" are simply the body of believers. Those who believe in Christ are saints. The apostle Paul addressed many of his letters to "the saints" in a certain city. In the book of Acts, "saints" is one of the several names for Christians (Acts 9:13,32,41; 26:10).

The Hebrew and Greek words behind the English word "saint" are words for holy. Saints are holy ones. God makes them holy. God separates people from defiant humanity. He isolates them for Himself. He marks them as His own and allows them to serve Him. Their holiness, their sainthood, rests completely on the work of God in Christ Jesus.

Here is the good news. You don't need to be dead for five years to become a saint. You don't have to do a miracle. You don't need to pass rigorous investigation by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Believers in Christ are saints. Followers of the Lamb of God are saints. People washed clean of the guilt of sin by the blood of the Lord Jesus are saints.

But God does even more. Not only does He clear us of the *guilt* of sin by the blood of Christ; He also washes away the *pollution* of sin by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us. He makes us holy. The Holy Spirit shapes us more and more into the image of Christ, the Holy One of God. We become temples, places fit for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

As we Reformed people know, God gives us this grace freely. We deserve damnation because of our sins. But in His free grace alone God declares us saints for the sake of Christ Jesus. Then He goes to work in our lives through the power of His Holy Spirit making us more and more holy.

This grace is free, not cheap. It is costly. It cost the Son of God His life! This free grace calls us to holiness. It calls us to saintly living. Pious living.

Cheap grace is assuring people they are saints without demanding holy lives. Cheap grace is handing out the body and blood of Christ without disciplining those who stubbornly refuse to be holy as God is holy. Cheap grace is

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

30. Q. Do those who seek their salvation or well-being in saints, in themselves, or anywhere else, also believe in the only Saviour Jesus?
- A. No. Though they boast of Him in words, they in fact deny the only Saviour Jesus.¹ For one of two things must be true: either Jesus is not a complete Saviour, or those who by true faith accept this Saviour must find in Him all that is necessary for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:12-14; Gal. 5:4.
² Col. 3:15; 10:7; 10:14; 10:17.

preaching that God will live in us and move among us and be our God while forgetting the urgent call to be separate from the world and to touch nothing unclean. Cheap grace is not warning people that the Spirit of God will not dwell in those who will not glorify God in their bodies.

God, who saved us freely out of pure grace, calls us to holy living. He calls us to a complete lack of compromise in a life lived in obedience to the Word of God. God calls us to obey the Ten Commandments and to conform to the standards Jesus Christ set in the Sermon on the Mount. A church will decay from the inside out if there is no personal holiness in the lives of its members.

Saints are not "holy-rollers." Saints are not goody-goodies or namby-pambies. Saints are vigorously and radically obedient to God.

Between the two well-known paragraphs of Article 29 of the *Belgic Confession* which speak about the marks of the true church and of the false church there is a lesser known paragraph describing the marks of Christians, of saints. Read it. It's important.

May it spur each of us on to greater obedience to the command of God: "You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy."

Note:

* See what *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. and A. 30 and *Belgic Confession*, Articles 22 and 26 say about this cult. **C**

Improving Personal and Family Worship¹

By R.A. Schouten

Because of the significance of worshipping God at home, elders in the Reformed churches often inquire about personal or family worship during their annual visits. They ask questions like these: Do you read the Bible at meal times? Does the father in the family bring the needs of the family before the Lord? Do you have discussions in the family about the portion of the Bible you have read? Is the sermon discussed in the family? Do the parents teach the children how to pray?

Answers to these questions are sometimes alarming. Elders often hear that family worship is under a great deal of pressure. Indeed, also in the Reformed churches, meaningful family worship is increasingly rare. Even where it is practiced, families will confess with sorrow that it lacks depth and relevance.

The present situation is a reason for concern. It has always been a conviction of the church that the Lord requires more of His people than only corporate, public worship. Therefore, in addition to attending worship services on the Lord's Day, Christian believers for many centuries have had the practice of home worship. At set times on each day, they put aside their work in order to read the Bible and to pray to their Father in heaven.

Especially the Reformation of the 16th century gave a mighty impetus to such practices. The results were seen in increase of faith and growth in godliness. A further result was a greater joy and more active participation in public worship. When there was daily home worship of God, the public worship of God on Sunday was naturally meaningful and vibrant. Without home worship, however, people came to experience public worship as artificial and contrived, having no connection to the rest of life.

Because churches which do not encourage and practice family worship soon become formalistic and sterile,

lacking real love for the Lord and His service, we will give some attention to these matters in the next weeks.

What is worship?

Before we get into the subject of improving family and personal worship, we should try to define our topic. A basic point is the distinction between "serving" the Lord and "worshiping" Him.

The "service" of God is a broader category than the worship of God. Serving God concerns our relationship to Him in the midst of daily life. We serve God where He has called us. This means that in all our daily endeavours, we seek to glorify God. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:31, *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Consider also Eph. 6:5: *Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*

But what does it mean to work, play, eat and drink to the glory of God? Does it mean that we are called to have regular prayer and Bible reading breaks at 10:00, 12:00, and 2:30? Well, of course, that wouldn't be a bad idea. But to glorify God in the midst of daily life means, above all, that we live in *obedience*, to the Great King. The structures of our life must reflect the law of the Kingdom. How do we serve and glorify God in daily life? By being honest, by working hard, by keeping our language clean, by developing our talents, by being good citizens, by showing submission to lawful authority, by showing patience, kindness and compassion, and by honouring all the obligations of our various relationships.

Thus, in both working and eating, believers serve the Lord. Often, busy as they are in their daily work, believers glorify God spontaneously and without

conscious awareness. Obedience is integrated into their lives.

What, then, is worship? We may say that worship is *concentrated service* of God. In worship, we set aside time to exercise our minds and spirits in the praise of God. In a direct and conscious way, we bring glory to God. In the course of our overall service to God, there must also be those special, consecrated moments and hours, when we focus single-mindedly on Him.

A common phrase of prayer well expresses this distinction between service and worship. We say things like this: "Lord, we come before You," or, "Our Father in heaven, we come before Thy throne." When we say that we are coming before God, we do not, of course, deny that we are always before God. For God is omnipresent. Yet, in prayer, we seek His presence in a special way. We seek His face!

To use an analogy, imagine a strong monarchy, such as existed in England a few centuries ago. Think of a peasant in such a Kingdom. He always has to reckon with the Law of the King. At all times, he has to take into account the will of the Sovereign. He must live as a servant of the King.

Yet, this does not mean that the peasant is obligated to consciously focus his mind on the sovereign at all times. He is not required to bow day and night to the King. However, if and when the peasant gets an audience with the King, he behaves differently. Now he shows his reverence in a direct way. He bows. He follows the protocol of the court. If he is invited to eat at the King's Table, then he has unique fellowship with his King.¹

In the same way, we should maintain a distinction between ordinary service and direct worship of God. Worship is special. It is "bowing down" in mind and spirit before the Great King (see Psalm 95:1, 2, 6). It is confessing that God is, indeed, King over our entire lives. It is acknowledging that He is the

owner of our lives. Sometimes you can hear the slogan, "all of life is worship." This is inaccurate. If all of your life is indeed worship, then you are living in disobedience. Worship is the special, concentrated service of God.

This worship is only possible if we also know beyond any doubt that we are really the people of the King, His holy nation, His Royal Priesthood, the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand (see Ex. 19:6; Rev. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Worship, then is a special meeting between the covenant Lord, the Great King, and His special people, Israel, the church. Because the King is holy, while the people are in themselves un-

holy, this meeting is only possible through the sacrifice of Christ. His worthy blood makes us able to come into the presence of God.


Corporate and family worship

For the purpose of this discussion, we have no space to study in detail the need for corporate worship. The Bible gives us a vast array of instruction about the need for the people of the Lord to seek His face in congregational worship. There, we call upon His Name, we listen to the instruction of His Kingly voice and we praise His glorious Name in singing (see Ps. 84, Ps. 122, Heb. 10:23-25; 12:22-24; etc.). This

public worship has an official character. The Lord is directly represented in this worship by His officebearers, who speak in His Name.

God clearly does require corporate worship. However, does the Bible also demand personal and family worship? On the basis of both biblical example and biblical precept, the answer must be positive.

(to be continued)

¹ This analogy is borrowed from Frank J. Smith, "What is Worship," *Worship in the Presence of God*, eds., Frank J. Smith and David C. Lachman (Greenville: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992), 14. 

The Tithe: Its Enduring Value

By P. Aasman

Part I, *The O.T. Institution*

1 Introduction

When people enjoy fellowship with God, then they know that they are enjoying an immense privilege, that God is being very kind to them. When a person enjoys this privilege, it is to be expected that he should respond by wanting to give to God a sign or token of thanks.

The history of sacrifice or giving has as long a history as that of mankind's fellowship with God. In the history of giving, the institution of the tithe occupies a position of critical importance. This institution was already in use long before Moses' time, but at Mount Sinai, the tithe became law for God's people Israel. For more than half of the 2000 years since Christ's ascension, civil law required that Christians continue to give the tithe to the church.

Even for us, who generally do not believe that God still requires the tithe, the institution itself remains an important starting point when we begin to think on how we should give a gift to God. And that is how it should be, because the tithe has enduring relevance for God's people today.

For some people, the relevance of the tithe lies in this: it indicates *how much* we must give to God. For others, its relevance lies in that it indicates more generally *how* we must give to God. I believe that its relevance lies in both aspects: both how and how much we should give to God.

Our discussion will proceed on the confessional basis of Article 25 of the Belgic Confession:

"We believe that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and that all shadows have been fulfilled, so that the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians. Yet their truth and substance remain for us in Jesus Christ in whom they have been fulfilled."

But in order to apply B.C. Article 25, we must first examine the institution itself as God gave it to Israel. It is a futile enterprise to discuss the enduring relevance of an O.T. institution without first understanding its original relevance. But to understand the original relevance of the tithe is in itself no simple matter. This will occupy our attention for the greater part, after which we

will proceed to consider its relevance to the N.T. church.

2 The institution itself

2.1 The pre-Mosaic tithe

It is important to observe from the beginning that the tithe was almost universally practised in the ancient world. Few civilizations were unacquainted with it. It was practised by the Babylonians, the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, Arabs, the Syrians, Carthaginians and Lydians, the Greeks and later the Romans.¹

That is not to say that the tithe which Israel gave was the same as the tithe which the nations gave. There were significant differences but the key difference was this: other nations gave the tithe with mixed motives (both religious and political), while Israel gave out of a purely religious motive. The tithe which other nations gave was stored up at the temples of their gods so that the temples became great treasuries. But pagan temples were usually under royal control so that the nations never gave simply to their gods. The giving of the tithe amounted, to a cer-

tain degree, to giving tribute to their earthly sovereign.² But Israel's tithe was, as we shall see, given entirely to God, and instead of storing it up in rich treasuries, God gave it all away especially for the ministry of the gospel.

Important to observe too is that believers had been giving a tithe to God for centuries before God required it in the Mosaic law. When Abraham had rescued Lot from the invading army of Chedorlaomer, he returned home laden with booty, and he met Melchizedek, priest-king to God Most High to whom he gave a tithe (Gen 14). This was how Abraham showed his thanks to God. We also read that when God promised Jacob that he would take care of him when he went to his grandfather in Mesopotamia, then Jacob promised God that he would give to him a tithe of whatever riches he should acquire while there (Gen 28:22).

It seems quite reasonable, then, to conclude that the giving of a tithe was instituted by God in the very beginning of history as the proper portion that believers should give to Him as an act of worship.³ This would explain not only why it was natural for the patriarchs to give a tithe, but why also the other nations practised it – it was a vestige of true worship inherited from Adam and Noah.

This is significant in several respects. At Mount Sinai, God took a practice which He Himself had ordained long ago, which since had become nearly universal, and He re-sanctified it for His people Israel. It was necessary to re-sanctify the tithe since His people had to understand that there was only one person to whom they were giving the tithe: they were giving to God, so that God may do with it what He wanted. This is significant in one other respect too. Since Israel was well acquainted with tithing practices before God spoke about it at Sinai, God did not need to explain every detail about the tithe. This will explain why the tithe legislation, as we shall now examine it in some detail, seems so general and at times undefined. What we may have great trouble understanding, Israel would have understood intuitively because they had always tithed. This makes the study of the tithe institution itself the more challenging.

2.2 The Mosaic tithe

2.2.1 Passages related to the tithe

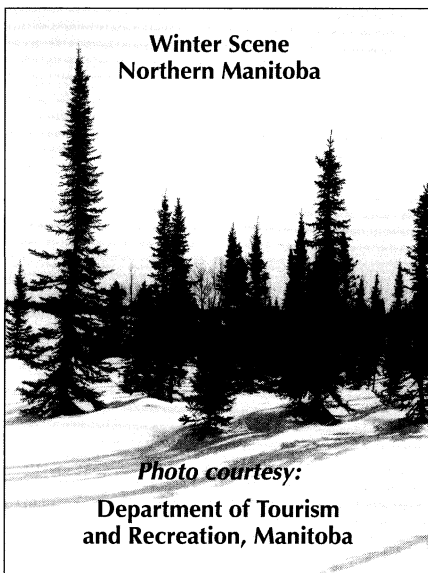
Our immediate goal is to come to grips with the biblical details concern-

ing the tithe. Its enduring relevance can only be determined after we have reached a firm knowledge of the institution itself. Coming to grips with the biblical details is no easy task because there are, apparently, inconsistencies between the various passages that describe the tithe. There are five relevant passages. We will consider each one individually and try to understand what is the central thrust of each particular passage. After that, we will consider the apparent conflicts between the passages, then we will see how biblical scholars have tried to solve them, and at last we will formulate our own conclusions. Only then will we proceed to considering the relevance of this institution for the N.T. church.

2.2.1.1 Leviticus 27:30-33

In this last chapter of the book of Leviticus, Moses instructed the people about making vows. A religious person will sometimes make a vow to God, but for whatever reason, it might happen that after vowing something to God, he might prefer to give something in place of that which he had vowed. In His kindness, God allowed a person to do so, but to prevent abuses, God required him to add 2/10ths to the value of the thing he vowed and give that in cash to God in place of his vow. If a man vowed 10 bushels of wheat to God, then he could change his mind, but then he would have to give the equivalent of 12 bushels of wheat in cash.

OUR COVER



At the end of the chapter, Moses added some words about the tithe. The tithe here is called "Holy to Yahweh." It already belongs to God, therefore, it cannot be pledged to God as an oath. However, it might happen that a farmer would like to keep the tithe of his crops instead of giving it to God. Perhaps he had a bad year and he needed all the seed in order to plant a crop next year. Whatever the reason, God allowed a person to keep his tithe, so long as he paid an extra fifth. Again, this would prevent abuse.

This passage indicates that one out of every ten animals had to be given to God as a tithe. Of course, the tithe was given only on the annual increase of the herd.⁴ Also in this passage, God tells His people that although it is possible for them to redeem their crops, they may not redeem an animal because an animal was potentially a sacrifice to God.⁵

What is of special interest here is that Leviticus 27 is the first passage in the law that mentions the tithe, yet it speaks about the tithe in an incidental fashion. This is further evidence that tithing was well-known to Israel before the giving of the law.

2.2.1.2 Numbers 18:21-32

In this passage, God tells Israel what the tithe was to be used for. This passage identifies the tithe as something utterly unique in the world. The tithe was not to be stored up in treasuries in the temple. Instead, God wanted it to be used to support the ministry of the Levites.

God says here, "To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, their service in the tent of meeting." (v. 21) When the land was divided among the tribes, each tribe received its own region, except for Levi. Instead, Levi received a tithe of all of the income of the rest of Israel as its inheritance. Here we read that they received this in turn for their service in the tent of meeting.

Numbers 18 however, indicates that another tithe had to be paid. The Aaronic priests also had no land, for Aaron was a Levite. Aaron and his sons after him who served inside the tabernacle and at the altar, were supported by the tithe given by the rest of the Levites. Thus, the Levites paid a tithe just as the rest of the people did. Only the Aaronic priests did not give a tithe.

2.2.1.3 Deuteronomy 12:6-19

This passage describes all kinds of offerings and gifts that Israel would bring to the sanctuary: burnt offerings, sacrifices, votive offerings, freewill offerings, firstlings. Scattered throughout the passage, we also find details about the tithe.

But here we find something very surprising. God tells His people that when they bring their gifts to the central sanctuary, then, says God, "you shall eat before Yahweh your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households in all that you undertake, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you." (v. 7) God added that they were to take the whole family along when they go to the sanctuary: "You shall rejoice before Yahweh your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your menservants and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you." (v. 12)

It is not stated directly, but it is implied that when they bring the tithe to Yahweh in His sanctuary, then they will have a happy feast with the whole extended family, also with their pastor, the Levite (see on this footnote 13) so that altogether, they might eat the tithe.

Deuteronomy is different from *Numbers* for while *Numbers* dealt with the current situation when Israel was still in the wilderness, *Deuteronomy* looks forward to what Israel would soon enjoy in the promised land. But what is not so clear in chapter 12 becomes more clear in chapter 14.

2.2.1.4 Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Here Moses elaborated exclusively on the tithe itself. The detail found here suggests to us that Moses was instructing Israel in something new. We find a detailed list of what the tithe consisted of: grain, wine, oil and the firstlings of their herds and flocks. But then we read, "if the way is too long for you so that you are not able to bring the tithe... then you shall turn it into money... and spend the money on whatever your appetite craves; and you shall eat there before Yahweh your God and rejoice, you and your household. And you shall not forsake the Levite who is within your towns" (v. 24-27).

We find two big surprises here. First, it is directly stated that the tithe was to be enjoyed in a great feast in the temple in Jerusalem by the family that gave it. Second, God seems to encourage the people to cash in their tithe if the way

was too far to carry it all the way to Jerusalem. Certainly, we find no restrictions nor penalty laid down such as we found in Leviticus 27.

But later in this passage we come to a third and bigger surprise. We read in verse 28, "At the end of every three years, you shall bring forth all the tithe of your produce in the same year, and lay it up within your towns." On the third year the tithe was not to be brought to the temple so that God might give it to the Levites but it was to be stored up in every town throughout Israel as a kind of relief agency for the poor, the sojourners, the widows and orphans. This gives rise to all kinds of questions, but we will wait with them until a little later on. Some of the questions, however, are directly addressed in the next passage.

2.2.1.5 Deuteronomy 26:12-15

This passage elaborates on the third year tithe. God required that on the third year, the head of the household must come to Jerusalem and swear before God that he had given the whole tithe into the relief warehouse in his own town and that he had not defiled it. This was necessary because on this year, they did not present the tithe for scrutiny at the temple.

2.2.2 Some perceived problems

Having looked briefly at these five passages relating to the tithe, we discover some divergencies, or apparent contradictions. More can be identified, but basically there are two problems. First the lesser one and then the more major one.

2.2.2.1 Cashing in the tithe

In Leviticus 27 God flatly forbids anyone from not bringing in the tithe on the livestock. The animals are potential sacrifices and therefore may not be exchanged for cash. As for the rest of the tithe, it can only be changed into cash when a person pays a penalty of 1/5th. In contrast to this, Deuteronomy 14 actually encourages believers to bring cash instead of the actual tithe. These passages seem contradictory.

2.2.2.2 Many different purposes

More disturbing is what seems to be a variety of different purposes for the giving of the tithe. Leviticus 27 simply calls the tithe holy to Yahweh. Numbers 18 tells us that the tithe was to be given to the Levites because this was their inheritance. Deuteronomy 12 sug-

gests that the tithe could be eaten and chapter 14 confirms this by describing how Israel was to eat the tithe in a joyful feast. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 14 instructs the Israelites to lay their tithe up in their hometowns every third year for the relief of the needy and Deuteronomy 26 expands on this. What are we to make of all this?

2.2.3 Resolving the problems

There are three different ways of resolving these differences.

2.2.3.1 Two tithes

One interpretation suggests that we accept that Israel was supposed to give two different tithes to God. The starting point for this interpretation lies in the difference between Leviticus 27 and Deuteronomy 14. In the one place God discourages the exchange of the tithe to cash while in the other place God seems to encourage it. The contradiction is removed if we suppose that God required Israel to give two distinct tithes. One tithe was holy to God. It was carefully surrounded by stiff regulations. The animals pledged in this tithe could not be exchanged and produce could only be exchanged at a heavy penalty. This would be the tithe that God gave to the Levites for an inheritance. The other tithe was not bound by such rigid standards because it was not to be given to the Levite, but was to be consumed in a massive feast with the family at the temple of God. However, on the third year, instead of consuming this tithe in a feast at the tabernacle, it was to be laid up in their towns for the support of the poor.

This is the interpretation held by many Jewish rabbis and it is favoured by many Reformed exegetes (Aalders, Noordtzijs, Ridderbos and Kroeze).⁶

This solution is sometimes presented as an acceptable biblical solution over against the interpretation of liberal theology. Critical scholars observe that there are contradictions in the Pentateuch concerning the tithe, and they take this as evidence that there was an evolutionary development of the tithe. At one time, the tithe was to be brought to the temple for a feast. This was the oldest form of the tithe that one might expect in a simple agricultural society. It reflects a spontaneous, joyful and voluntary religious action. Over time, however, the spontaneity was tied down by legislation drafted by the priestly class to their own advantage. Eventually, the priests grew powerful

and passed laws so that instead of each worshipping family consuming the tithe in a meal, it was given to them for their service in the temple.⁷

The notion that God had actually instituted two distinct tithes provides an alternate and biblically acceptable synthesis of the data concerning the tithes.

2.2.3.2 Three tithes

One problem with the above interpretation is that it is rather arbitrary to say that there were two tithes and not three. The five relevant passages clearly describe three different uses that were to be made of the tithe (one for the Levite; one for the feast; one for the support of the needy). If one will try to harmonize this problem by proposing multiple tithes, then the most consistent application of this solution would demand that there are three tithes.⁸

This is the oldest interpretation. Most of the Rabbi's held to this idea. It is reflected in the Apocryphal book of Tobit (1:6-8) and in the writings of Josephus (*Antiquities* XX.viii.8). It was held by the early church fathers Jerome and Chrysostom.

2.2.3.3 One tithe

I have two problems with the idea that there were multiple tithes. The first is that more than one is burdensome, but more importantly, such a synthesis of the biblical data is entirely unnecessary. An approach that shows more sympathy to the notion that there is one tithe will prove more plausible.

2.2.3.3.1 More than one tithe is too burdensome

When Joseph ruled Egypt, then he instituted the extraordinary taxation of 2/10ths on all the produce of the land (Gen. 41:34). This contributed to the perception that the Egyptian rulers were cruel and harsh. Can it be expected from the God who set a people free from slavery, that He should require as much or even more from His people as their gift to their God? If that were so, then believers might well wonder if Yahweh were not just another harsh master.

This becomes more significant when we recall that the tithe was not the only financial obligation which believers had toward Yahweh. God forbade farmers from harvesting the corners of the fields and from gleaning the fields over a second time. God required that they bear the loss of this produce for the sake of the poor. Fur-

thermore, God required that the first-fruits of all the produce be given to him. And more, Israel had to give every firstborn male animal to God as sacrifice and he had to pay a redemption fee for the first son born in his family. Besides this, there were the required sacrifices for cleansings, and sin offerings which had to be given, not to mention thank offerings and freewill offerings which, while not strictly required, would certainly be offered periodically by believers.⁹

When the gifts which an Israelite would and must give should be tabulated, one soon discovers that in any given year, he would be giving about one tenth to Yahweh besides the tithe. If God required two tithes, then an Israelite would be giving more than any nation in the world – nearly a quarter of his income. If God required three tithes, then the total religious obligations would reach nearly a half of Israel's income. Is this reasonable to expect?

2.2.3.3.2 The Levites did not need one whole tithe

The fundamental purpose behind the institution of the tithe was to support the Levites. This was the first stated purpose in the Pentateuch, and in the other two purposes, the Levite is always mentioned. God said that the tithe was intended to be their inheritance since they did not receive their own tribal region in the land of Canaan.

In this connection, there are some significant statistics. First, we should realize that there are actually 13 tribes. Twelve tribes received land. One tribe did not. Twelve must support the one. If all the tribes were about the same size, then clearly, the Levites would need less than one tenth of the produce throughout the land. However, from the census figures of Numbers 1 and 3, we find that Levi is nearly the smallest of all the tribes. From these figures, we find that there were at least 27 Israelites per Levite.¹⁰ If everyone in Israel should give to the Levites one whole tithe each year, then the Levites would be the wealthiest tribe in the land by a vast margin.¹¹

We should realize too that the Levites had other sources of income besides the tithe. God gave them 48 Levitical cities, four cities in each tribe. These were part of their inheritance along with the tithe.¹² Around these cities they were allotted pasture lands, "for their cattle and for their livestock and for all their feasts"(Lev. 35:3).

With this enlightenment, we would not expect that God would require that the whole tithe each year be given to the Levites. It simply was not necessary.

2.2.3.3.3 God never demanded more than one tithe

If we carefully follow the scriptural data, we discover that God never required more than a single tithe from His people.

Throughout the year, Israel was to set apart the tithe of all their income, whether it be from fields, herds, vines or orchards. Israel was to be very vigilant about this because the tithe is holy to Yahweh. When the tithe was complete, they were to bring it to the temple to present the tithe to the Lord. It belongs to God, and therefore it had to be given to God.

But Deuteronomy indicates to us that when the tithe was taken to the Lord, then everyone in the family went along, as well as the poor people of that town – the widows, orphans and the landless sojourner, and as well, their own pastor, the Levite.¹³

Each family was to go to the sanctuary *en masse*, taking with them the entire tithe. If the distance to the sanctuary was great, they could exchange the tithe for cash (except for the animals – they had to be brought to the sanctuary since they were potential sacrifices). When they arrived in Jerusalem, they gave the whole tithe to God. God then gave a part of the tithe back to the family so that they might enjoy a feast, celebrating how God had blessed them in the past year.

Of course, we must not imagine that the family could possibly consume the whole tithe in one sitting! The very idea that a family could devour a whole 1/10th of their yearly income in a feast is preposterous. If they could do that, then the 9/10ths that remained at home would certainly not be enough to feed the family until the next harvest. We must assume that after presenting the tithe to God, that God gave only a part of the tithe back for a feast. The rest of the tithe, the major part, would then be given by God to the Levite as his inheritance, as indicated in Numbers 18. And, as we have seen, a reduced tithe would provide more than amply for the annual needs of the Levites.

Thus God ensured that Israel would be a nation of cheerful givers. No one should bring tribute to his great and bountiful God without doing so will-

ingly, indeed, with joy. It is not hard to see that the giving of the tithe to God would be a highlight in the year, especially for the children and the needy. God was no hard master. He made sure that His people could rejoice before Him and be happy under His sovereign grace.

The details of the tithe unfold in a very natural order in the Pentateuch. Israel, at the foot of Mount Sinai would have expected that God required the tithe, since it was almost universally practised, therefore, Leviticus 27 simply describes what the tithe would consist of. In Numbers 14, we again find what one would expect – the tithe is to be used for the support of the Levites who have no specific tribal region in Israel. But Deuteronomy is the book that anticipates the joy and fellowship of living in the long awaited promised land. What Israel expected of Canaan comes close to what the N.T. believer expects of heaven. Therefore, a new element is introduced in this book – the element of joyful participation with the Levite and the needy in the use of the tithe. Deuteronomy introduces an element of wholesome fellowship where God's blessings are regarded as the possession of all Israel. People ought neither feel burdened by obligations nor oppressed by poverty.

But God made further provisions to prevent that the unfortunates should be afflicted by poverty in the promised land. In Deuteronomy 14 and 26, God introduces something new into the whole sabbath cycle. You will recall that God had instituted an elegant cycle of sabbath years. Every seventh year, the land was to have a year of rest. It was a national holiday so that Israel might devote themselves to studying the law.

In Deuteronomy 14 and 26, God introduces into this cycle special regulations regarding the tithe. On the third and sixth year, Israel was to make a very unique use of the tithe. Instead of bringing it to the temple of God and giving it there, and receiving back from God a portion for a meal and seeing the rest go to the Levite, God commanded Israel to store the entire tithe in warehouses in their own towns so that 1/10 of the entire production of the town might form a kind of social assistance fund for the next three years. These local food banks were to be for whoever might need it in the community.

Deuteronomy 26 indicates that this tithe was to be given to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow

(v.12). The Levites remain the first named recipient of this tithe, but because they have been so richly provided for in the regular tithe, and because they generally had so much else to fall back on (their own lands and herds), we would expect that they would easily be able to share a large part of this tithe (if not all of it) with the less fortunate people in their community.

2.3 Some conclusions regarding the O.T. tithe

1. The very act of giving a tithe to God was a liturgical act of worship to God.
2. The tithe is holy and must therefore be treated with utmost respect. Every tithe of the animals must be brought to God unchanged but the tithe of produce can only be kept at a 20% penalty.
3. The holiness of the tithe is not violated by practical considerations for the sake of convenience, therefore, if it was too far to bring sacks of grain and other produce to the temple, then it could be sold and the money could be given to God.
4. The tithe was not to be given to God as an onerous obligation performed in cold holiness. It was to be a joyful act of willing submission to God. The meal connected to the giving of the tithe emphasized that when we have communion with God, He will bless and feed us. There is joy and comfort in such communion.
5. The giving of the tithe to God has a horizontal dimension. God's goodness confessed in the giving of the tithe will overflow in acts of goodness toward our fellow man so that no one in our community will have reason to weep under the burden of poverty.¹⁴
6. Yahweh is the God of freedom and liberty. This alone should incline us toward accepting that there could only be one tithe.

This brings us to the end of our survey of biblical data regarding the O.T. institution of the tithe. Having observed the original relevance of the tithe to our O.T. brothers and sisters, we are now prepared to apply Article 25 of the Belgic Confession to this institution and see what is the "truth and substance" of the tithe which remains for us N.T. believers.

(to be continued)

¹The great Greek statesman Demosthenes regarded the giving of the tithe to be a religious duty; see Pieter A. Verhoef, "Tithing – A Hermeneutical Consideration," in *The Law and the Prophets*, J.H. Skilton, editor, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company: Philadelphia 1974) 116.

²M. Wischnitzer describes archaeological digs wherein it was found that temples in the 14th century B.C. city of Ugarit were clearly under royal control, in his article, "Tithe" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 15 (Encyclopedia Judaica: Jerusalem, 1972) 1156-57; C.L. Feinberg notes the difference between Israel and the other nations in that Israel alone gave the tithe out of purely religious motives, in his article, "Tithe" in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* vol. 5 (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, 1975-76) 756.

³Thus Henry Lansdell in *The Tithe in Scripture* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1963) 18-20. Lansdell cautiously concludes by saying that this is purely a hypothesis that answers the fact of universal practice.

⁴A. Noordtzij observes that Philo and the Mishna held that the tithe was only paid on the increase of the herd, but Noordtzij rejects this since he held that Lev. 27:32 indicated that a tithe had to be separated from the whole herd; see his *Bible Student Commentary: Leviticus* [1940], (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, 1982) 280.

⁵See Lev. 27:9,26. G.J. Wenham points out that since animal sacrifice is the heart of O.T. worship and since *Leviticus* is the book that gives precise details concerning the sacrificial procedure, therefore, this passage highlights the fact that animals cannot be redeemed, in *Leviticus* NICOT (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1979) 343.

⁶This is cited by Verhoef, op cit, 119.

⁷Verhoef cites A.R. Hulst as a proponent of this school of thought, *ibid*, 118. A relatively recent and scholarly presentation of this position was given by H. Jagersma, "The Tithe in the Old Testament," *Old Testament Studies*, vol. XXI, 1981.

⁸I disagree with the statement of Verhoef when he writes, "For want of explicit data, we shall have to refrain from a categorical conclusion with regard to the exact number of tithes that were demanded by the Mosaic law," op cit, 119. He leaves open the possibility that there were three tithes on the grounds that the Mosaic law was not sufficiently detailed for liturgical life in Israel.


⁹This point is well brought out by H. Lansdell as he presents a case study of what an average Hebrew farmer would end up with in his own granaries after all his obligations had been paid; op cit, 37-40.

¹⁰Nu 1:46 tells us that there were 603,550 males 20 years and older in Israel, not counting the Levites. Nu 3:39 tells us that there were 22,000 Levite males a month old and older.

¹¹Compare G.J. Wenham's remark in *Numbers TOTC* (Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, England, 1981) 145: "The tithes, firstling and sacrificial offerings which the priests and Levites received would have constituted a huge income for them if the nation had been faithful in paying them (cf. Mal. 3:10; Hg. 1)." Wenham supposes, by citing these two late O.T. passages, that Israel never was faithful in paying the tithes. This is statement is not substantiated by evidence.

¹²Lev. 35:2 reads, that these cities were "from the inheritance of their possession."

¹³The local Levite was the O.T. pastor scattered throughout the land in every community so that he might teach Israel the law and apply it to the lives of the people. The curse uttered by Jacob over Levi became a blessing at Mount Sinai because they alone of all the tribes abhorred the golden calf that Aaron had made when Moses called the tribes to separate themselves from the image. God said prophetically by the mouth of Jacob,

I will divide them in Jacob
and scatter them in Israel. Gen. 49:7b
This became a blessing, for Moses said,
They observed Thy Word
and kept Thy statutes
They shall teach Israel Thy ordinances
and Israel Thy law. Deut. 33:9b-10a
¹⁴W. Eichrodt writes, "God's goodness overflows in goodness toward our fellow man," in *Theology of the Old Testament* vol. 1 (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1961) 153. 

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



To start with: thank you, all of you who sent us your best wishes for the new year. Some just gave a personal message on a bulletin. This is greatly appreciated, as it makes matters so much more personal. I should like to use this opportunity to again thank all who so faithfully send the local bulletins, so that this column can be continued. Even though I do not let everyone know personally how much it is appreciated, each and every one may be convinced that your diligence is gratefully recognized. I was also happy that *The Pilgrim's Voice* started speaking to me again.

Our forthcoming *Yearbook* will show the statistics of church growth as far as the numbers are concerned. There are also other signs and proofs of further development, which is another reason for gratitude.

The Ebenezer Burlington consistory report spoke of a letter "to the convening church of the March Classis with a proposal to form three classical districts instead of the two at present." With twenty-five churches in Ontario, this would certainly be feasible and advantageous. In due time we shall learn how this proposal was received.

The above concerned the formation of three classical districts (of "classes" in this case!); we now may report some progress in activities leading to institution of new churches.

At the consistory meeting of the Providence Church in Edmonton "A draft proposal was presented by brother A. on behalf of several consistory members regarding a possible future church in St. Albert. After preliminary discussion it was suggested that the members living in St. Albert be consulted in respect to this matter." This is all the information I have about this at the moment.

Another place where institution of another church is being contemplated is Abbotsford. The *Church News* shows that at a consistory meeting "Brother A. reports on the feasibility of church development in the Sumas Prairie area. He notes that between Whatcom Road and the Vedder Canal there are 190 members." The conclusion the consistory came to was: "in the case of church-development the request has to come from the members in the area."

This did not fall on deaf ears, and in a following issue we read about a "Notice of Meeting": A meeting is scheduled for February 5th, in the Abbotsford Annex "to which all who live in the general area east of Whatcom are invited and where we can discuss the benefits and disadvantages of instituting in the above-mentioned area." (Yarrow and Arnold)

I realize that the names in these notices may not mean much to many of our readers, yet I mention them as they may become familiar places to all church members.

No news can be reported about the Aldergrove area between Abbotsford and Langley, but this can change at any time, although possible institution in the Yarrow area (east of Abbotsford) may affect development in the Aldergrove area (west of Abbotsford) adversely. We'll see.

Having a new church building does not mean that now all problems have been solved. Sometimes it is said that you have to live in a house for two years before you build it, for then you know what you should have and what not.

Burlington East has a new church building, replacing the one that burned down. But now "people in the back of the church have trouble seeing the minister. It is suggested to raise the pulpit one step or even more, if necessary."

If people in the back of the auditorium cannot see the minister, he cannot see them either. This is dangerous especially if younger members occupy those back seats. But perhaps they found something in Burlington East to prevent the congregation of younger members in hard-to-see places!

Coaldale, too, has a new church building, but also there not everything appears to be one hundred percent as yet. "Letters were received from members of the congregation concerning building temperature, drafts, ice on the sidewalks, sound system, etc." Further, "A member requests changes to the pulpit." His request will not be honoured for the time being.

In order to lighten the financial burden somewhat, "the bookkeeper requests to approach certain members of the congregation if they would be willing to offer funds as debentures, to help fund the church building at lower rates." The Committee of Administration will look into this further.

Something strange happened in nearby Taber. The consistory published the following notice.

"Trinity Reformed Church of Lethbridge has asked that Rev. van Popta be allowed to lead its worship service in the evening of December 13 (7 pm service), since its minister will be out of town then. The consistory has granted this request for the following reasons.

"Trinity Reformed Church of Lethbridge is an independent church, not affiliated with any denomination or federation of churches which has excluded the Canadian Reformed Churches. It has seceded from the Christian Reformed Church and is in a state of looking around, seeing what it should do and where it should go as far as federational affiliation is concerned.

"Furthermore, our recent synod has appointed deputies (some ministers and elders) whose task it will be to promote ecclesiastical unity with Independent Reformed Churches. And so we, as Canadian Reformed Churches, are reaching out to those who, with us, are brothers and sisters of the same household of the true faith.

"At the same time the consistory would point out to the congregation that Rev. van Popta is in no way hereby setting aside his calling, which is to preach the gospel in Taber twice per Sunday. Similarly, the consistory would remind the congregation of its duty to attend the worship services at that place where God, through His lawfully appointed officebearers, calls the sheep who are living in a certain area together. For us that means here in Taber under the supervision of the shepherds God has granted."

What to think of this whole reasoning? That it is rambling. The sheep are reminded that their place is in Taber, but the shepherd is allowed to go and "lead its worship service" in a church with which we are not living together in one federation. What is wrong with a "reading service" when the minister is out of town? One cannot blame a consistory for trying to find a replacement, and we have, of course, no quarrel with that. But the congregation is reminded that they have "lawfully appointed officebearers," the minister, however, is allowed to conduct a service under the auspices of brothers who are not the "lawfully appointed officebearers" to whom the consistory refers.

I know beforehand how my remarks will be explained by some. They will be interpreted as another sign that I do not seek unity and that I put stumblingblocks into the way, or even constitute one. Let it be so, I have to say what I am going to say.

Was it K.Schilder who once said that true unity is never promoted by exchanging pleasantries? Perhaps it was not he who said it, but it is true and worth repeating.

What weight does the remark carry that the church mentioned is "not affiliated with any denomination or federation of churches which has excluded the Canadian Reformed Churches"? Did the Free Reformed Churches ever cast us out? Did the Reformed Church of America? Did the Baptists?

And then the remark that our recent synod appointed deputies for ecclesiastical unity! I foresaw an argument like this when many moons ago I expressed the wish that the proposal to do so would not be accepted by this synod. They did nevertheless, and that is their responsibility. In Taber, however, they already went far beyond that. The appointment of a committee for ecclesiastical unity becomes now an excuse already to act as if this unity had been achieved.

I thought that it is an established conviction among us that, as long as you are not yet married, you should not behave and act as if you are . Or am I mistaken in this?

Working towards unity? Definitely, it has my full support.

If we are invited to speak to others and to explain what keeps us separate and on what grounds we should come together, let's grasp the opportunity every time anew. But this is totally different from "Leading a worship service."

We return to the Providence Church in Edmonton. Rev. Aasman wrote: "This past week, I was before the Alberta Labour Relations Board with a young brother of the Immanuel Congregation, who has objected to paying union dues on religious grounds. We successfully argued that it was on religious grounds that our brother could not support this labour union." Reason for thankfulness.

Before we go farther West, we pay some attention to the Rehoboth Church in Burlington or, as they prefer it, the Church at Burlington West. "There was some discussion as to when it is appropriate to make visits re the birth of babies, since currently the mother's stay in the hospital is normally so brief. It is felt to be better to make these visits at home instead."

The membership of this church now stands (or stood?) at 686. "As a matter of fact," Rev. Visscher wrote, "more than half of the homes have been visited thus far. And contrary to the concern of the author of News Medley, I am still alive and well! (Although his concern is appreciated!)" Thank you, brother, but try to stay healthy.

What was not so healthy is the following: "A comment is made about the alarming number of pennies found in the collection bags!" Is this a result of the economic situation or of a diminishing dedication?

It may be that I quoted it before, but this phenomenon reminds me of what the late evangelist N.Baas once wrote in *De Reformatie*. He took care of a column under the title "Even Parkeeren" (Parking for a Minute), and it was always very interesting to read it. He, too, once paid attention to the quantity of pennies as compared to the infrequent appearance of guilders in the collection bags. At that time the voluntary contributions did not take complete care of the needs of the church, and collections for "the church" were held in every service. I recall one sentence in particular: "And when, on Sundays, the little Pennies bravely directed their little legs towards church, the Guilder family had migraine." Here in Canada we could call it the "Looney Family."

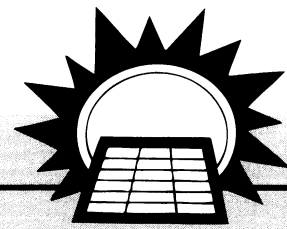
Do you recall that in Toronto they were planning on issuing a list of goods and services offered by the church members? In Smithers they also thought of something.

"Wonder what to do with all those good, grown-out clothes, boots, shoes, etc.? Take them to the church basement . . . for a free clothing exchange. If you don't have any clothes to bring, then come along for coffee and to browse around, there might be something there that you need, and it's for free."

One more thing for today. It is about Bunbury in Western Australia. It is being tried to work towards institution of a church there, too. "At present we in Bunbury boast a 'five family and one single gent' group." This did not prevent them, however, from establishing a "Bunbury Free Reformed School Association."

Herewith I have to take leave from our readers, hopefully for just a few weeks, although right now I have exhausted the supply of bulletins. And for this reason I wish you a fond good evening.

As always
VO 



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This month we begin with the mailbox and the birthdays.

Mary VandeBurgt sent me a very nice letter. She asked me to put the following piece in our column: "Like to thank everybody for 50 birthday cards and Christmas cards too. Thanks a lot. Love from Mary VandeBurgt."

Mary is doing very well, and was even Employee of the Year. Congratulations, Mary, and thank you for your letter.

Birthdays in March:

On the 3rd **Trevor Hofsink** will turn 15.

4589 Martha Lane, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B1

On the 12th **Gerry Eelhart** will be 31.

14511 - 62 Street, Edmonton, AB T5A 2A9

On the 15th **Jim VanderHeiden** is going to be 34.

Jim moved with his family to Attercliffe.

His new address is:

RR 1, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1

On the 18th **Roselyn Kuik** will be 19.

Box 93, Carman, MB R0G 0J0

In the past years another birthday was mentioned for March 3rd, namely of **Ruth Vanderpol**. She would have been 11 this year, but on December 19 the Lord took her to Himself. We are thankful for her that she could go Home, and could be spared much suffering. Our prayers are with her family; that they may receive strength and comfort from the Lord, while dealing with the loss of their loved one.

Ruth's family requested to address the readers of this column. I gladly comply with that request, thankful that they wanted to share the following thoughts with us.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On Friday evening, December 18, we attended the joyful celebration of Christ's birth at the Christmas program of Credo Christian Elementary in Langley. Our daughter Ruth was there too, near the piano, surrounded by her classmates. One of her friends was dressed in purple, because that was Ruth's favourite colour. Occasionally, one of the boys would lean companionably against the special walker that supported Ruth. "Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation..." Ruth's fingers moved gently in time to the music. Once in a while her mouth formed the words. We were so happy that Ruth could be here. We had not expected that she would live this long.

A little more than six weeks earlier, Ruth had been near death, suffering an acute attack of pneumonia. But that was not all. Ruth has been handicapped, both physically and mentally, since birth. Now it appeared that her brain was no longer able to direct her lungs to keep breathing. Life here on earth would require invasive surgery and permanent residence in the hospital on a ventilator. We

took Ruth home. She recovered enough so that she was able to return to school and to participate in what she loved best - music - learning songs for the Christmas program. The Lord allowed her to contribute to this festival on the last evening of her life. Early the next morning her Father took her home. As a Grade One cousin stated, "Ruthie is going to have Christmas in heaven with the Lord Jesus."

Over the almost 11 years of Ruth's life, we have been supported by the love and care of many brothers and sisters in the church community. We thank also the readers of "Ray of Sunshine" who faithfully sent Ruth a card for her birthday each March 3rd. We appreciated it very much, and always decorated our kitchen with a long string of birthday cards. Now, once again we experience an outpouring of love and sympathy from our brothers and sisters in Christ. One family included the following poem, which expresses eloquently what we have always believed about Ruth.

*He never knew his intellect was less than others
And that they called him just a "different boy"
But he could tell you that his name was Tommy
And just that knowledge would give him so much joy
He a covenant child...*

*Of God he had a very simple picture:
God was his Father, great of power, full of love
And Jesus was of course his Friend and Brother
Who lived in Heaven and could see him from above
He a covenant child...*

*He couldn't read one letter of the Bible
And dogmas he just couldn't understand
And yet his faith and trust were never shaken
He knew his Father would keep him by the hand
He a covenant child...*

*When illness struck that beautiful spring morning
He knew that God was going to take him home
Tommy had no fears and worries
He knew he didn't have to go the way alone
He a covenant child...*

*Although of sin he had no understanding
For he believed as simple as a child
God chose him to be one of His children
So that in Tommy He might be glorified
He a covenant child...*

From the Dutch song and poem,
"Koningskind"
Translated by A. Emmens

It was in this firm hope that we were able to love and care for one of God's very special children. We thank you for sharing in that.

Bill and Joanna Vanderpol and family

Until next month,

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I would like to make a few comments in regard to the article by Prof. J. Geertsema in the December 4, 1992 *Clarion* Vol. 41, re: "Are Our Men Forcing Our Women Into The Office of Elders And Deacons By Default?"

The title of the article gives the wrong message. Rather than present women as the option for ill equipped male officebearers, Prof. Geertsema's title should question the qualifications of our men as officebearers. The offices of elder and deacon are not open to all members on the basis of knowledge. Brothers alone are called to this task and they therefore hold the responsibility to seek knowledge.

In addition, Prof. Geertsema gives a partially fictional picture of consistory members before the worship service. It makes me wonder whether the reputation of the officebearers is being upheld.

However, the concern of Prof. Geertsema regarding the lack of attendance at Men's Societies is duly founded.

W. Bartels

Editor's (and author's) note: br. Bartels is right.

Dear Editor:

In the Year End issue of *Clarion* (December 1992), we find on page 563 a picture of the Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church building, and on page 568 one of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church building in Edmonton. Each of these buildings displays a very large cross.

I call this the romanizing of the Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. Wielinga is cited to contend that the cross is accepted as the "symbol of Christianity" (page 563). I would ask: which synod (in the Netherlands or Canada) has ever made such a decision? It "is also the sign of our hope," Rev. Wielinga concluded. It would seem that he and his congregation need an extra sign, *beyond* the Word of God, *beyond* the signs and seals that have been given us in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Rev. Wielinga thereby contradicts Lord's Day 25, 29 answer 79, and 35 question and answer 98.

"At the end of days, the sign of the Son of Man, the cross, will again appear in the sky," according to Rev. Wielinga. Where is this taught in God's Word? *Nowhere!* Apparently this construction is based on Matt. 24:30, where no mention is made of a cross. Rev. Wielinga's story concerning the meaning of the cross is based on pure fantasy, and is therefore to be rejected (even if names such as, for instance, Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and Origen can be attached to this fantasy!).

I sincerely hope that the crosses on and in church buildings of the Canadian Reformed Churches will disappear, and that we may learn by the example of Paul and Appollos "not to go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

H. DeJong

Dear Editor:

No Unnecessary Stumbling blocks Please!

The last issue of *Clarion* (Nov. 6, 1992) certainly provided encouragement to those desiring true Christian unity. First, we found Rev. Geertsema's report on the first of the three meetings on "Reformed Identity and Ecumenicity." Those of us who attended all three of those meetings, can certainly share the conclusion that "It was good to see such an interest in this question of how we can become one." In addition, the issue contained Dr. Gootjes' favourable review of *Seeking Our Brothers in the Light: A Plea for Reformed Ecumenicity*. Gootjes urges us to approach those reaching out to us in a positive spirit.

It was disappointing, therefore, to find in the same issue Rev. VanDooren's article "Once more – the *Book of Praise*." Are we really faced with such a stark dilemma – they must drop the *Psalter Hymnal* or we must drop the *Book of Praise*? With all respect to Rev. VanDooren's untiring efforts towards developing our Psalter, must the Genevan tunes really become a stumbling block to unity? Although Rev. VanDooren may argue that we are simply asking our ex-Christian Reformed and Free Reformed brothers and sisters to return to their "disowned" past, should we not recognize that they have

become attached to their current musical tradition?

Instead of insisting that "they should drop their Hymnals," ought we not, rather, simply announce – right up front – that we do not wish non-essential matters – such as the way we sing – to create an impediment to union? Could we not suggest some variation of the following alternative? The eventual united churches would agree that within each local church either one or both Psalters could be used in the short term. Eventually, a new Psalter could then be developed which would take elements of both. I have no doubt that proponents of the *Psalter Hymnal* in the united churches would agree that not all of its hymns are acceptable. On the other hand, the ex-Canadian Reformed members may then experience joy in occasionally praising the Lord in alternative methods and words.

Genevan tunes are not biblically mandated; let us not make them a stumbling block to those who prefer alternatives.

John Boersema

Dear Editor:

I am somewhat displeased by the three articles written by Rev. VanDooren in connection with the preservation of the *Genevan Psalter*. Before I give an account of my grievance, however, I would like to make it clear that I have great respect for Rev. VanDooren, yet I feel obliged to contest him on this point.

In the first of these three articles, Rev. VanDooren rightly points the reader to the musical and liturgical importance of the English-*Genevan Psalter*. We can certainly take some pride in using the first, and to my knowledge, the only complete English-*Genevan Psalter*. The many complimentary music and book review since its long-awaited completion are a testimony to that. The *Genevan Psalter*, secondly, is a symbol of the Reformed heritage of psalm singing and therefore we can take equal pride in singing the same tunes as the continental Reformed believers have sung through the centuries following the Protestant Reformation.

Despite these two noteworthy facts about the English-*Genevan Psalter*, I

question whether it really deserves the reverence and adoration we sometimes give it, and for our present purposes, whether it really deserves three defensive articles in *Clarion*. Remarks by Rev. VanDooren alluding to the role synod should play in preserving this part of our liturgical tradition borders, in my opinion, on some form of traditionalism. I do ask, how can we, sons and daughters of that great Reformation which stripped the church of human tradition, attach such prominence to the *Genevan Psalter* to have it enforced by synod for use in the Canadian/American Reformed churches (*Clarion*, Vol. 41, Nos. 15/16, pp. 330, 331)? Should we not, rather, be constantly re-evaluating the English-*Genevan Psalter* in terms of its musical appropriateness to the Psalm it accompanies and, secondly, its textual accurateness to the Psalm it portrays? Should we not also be open to those rhymings of Psalms which surpass the English-*Genevan Psalter* in both these respects (e.g. the Crimond version of Psalm 23)? Keeping an exclusive *Genevan Psalter* just might attach some form of sacredness to those tunes. I fear it already has.

In conclusion, I can respect Rev. VanDooren's plea for the English-*Genevan Psalter* and I greatly admire the work he has done in this regard. I simply ask, are we perhaps enshrining a human achievement a little too much? The Word of God comes to mind. We, men and women, are like grass and it fades. Our glory, our accomplishments are like a flower which, despite much beauty, falls. But thanks be to God, that in His sovereign power, His Word abides forever (1 Pet. 1:24, 25). May we forever stand in awe of that glorious, living tradition, for it is the power of God unto salvation.

Bill DeJong

Response

Re: Letters of J. Boersema and B. DeJong

Please remember: I started writing about our *Book of Praise* not to win "others" for it, but because I was perplexed by the readiness of some of "our own" to drop it.

Keeping it brief:

1. No, brother DeJong, I am not the old guy who is desperately clinging to something archaic. No, brother, the *Book of Praise* is not *enforced* (stress mine) by synod. Know your church history and your Reformed Church Poli-

ty. In 1954 the first General Synod, in order to prevent the (Chr. Ref.) Psalter Hymnal of marching into the pulpits and pews, appointed a committee to bring the age-old *Genevan Psalter* across the ocean. This was done unanimously. No, Art. 55 of the Church Order, together with the other articles, was not "enforced" upon the churches. It was agreed upon by the churches, and – again – unanimously. Thus, if you want to change all that, do not address me but the forthcoming general synod; you could start with the consistory. In the meantime try to find a "denomination" for me, where they do not agree upon a "Book of Common Prayer" or whatever liturgy. In case you find one, you will find chaos.

2. In answer to br. Boersema, I note that he already speaks about "ex-Canadian Reformed believers." He seems to look forward to that "ex" because he praises those who "have become attached to their current musical tradition." I certainly expect that from them but I also expect it from br. Boersema. Are you not "attached?" Should you not? These "ex" people will "then experience more joy" and you are obviously hankering after that greater joy. I had to think of my and your forefathers – many generations and not a "current (!) tradition" – who with their singing of the



**CALLED to Guelph, ON, and
Ottawa, ON**

Rev. H.M. Van Essen
of Hamilton, ON

DECLINED to Burlington South, ON

Rev. C. Bosch
of Kelmscott, W.Australia

Genevan Psalter, in the streets and at the gallows, were bereft of that "greater joy" that will come after having dropped the *Book of Praise*; and why not also the Church Order, and what else that is not (DeJong) "biblically mandated?"

I do not know what the future will bring, but for the time being I will try to keep "my nest" clean.

Letters like these leave me more "perplexed" than before.

G. VanDooren

PRESS RELEASE

Anchor

Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped

General Board Meeting, Dec. 23, 1992

The chairman, br. J. Witten, opened with Scripture reading and prayer. He welcomed all those present.

The agenda was established and the Executive minutes of the Sept. 4 and Oct. 2 meetings are ratified. Several questions are raised and answered regarding these minutes.

The various committees report on their activities and field questions from the floor. The Property Committee is looking into the cost of constructing several new rooms in the basement, more details will be forthcoming at our next meeting. The Public Relations Committee reports on a successful Male Orpheus Concert. Proceeds will

probably be in the range of \$2,000.00-\$2,500.00. Also, and Open House for our new Director and Assistant Director, L. Hekman and S. Hofsink respectively, has been tentatively set for Feb. 6, 1993.

The Treasurer presents the 1993 budget for the Anchor Association and a motion is made to accept this budget as presented. This is seconded and the budget is accepted.

Question Period is exercised. The date for the next General Board meeting is set for March 12, 1993. The Spring General Membership meeting is set for April 2, 1993.

The meeting is closed with prayer by br. K. Jager and the chairman adjourns the meeting.

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Did you see him standing close to his dad in the rice field?

He's on the cover of *Mission News* magazine of December 1992.

Think the tall swishy leaves of the rice plants are scratching his legs?

The sun must be hot because all the men are wearing wide hats!

Think the boy could be talking to his dad about rice for supper?

Is the other boy in the picture his friend, I wonder?



Inside *Mission News* magazine are pictures of the river and banana trees close to the boys' homes in Irian Jaya.

Also inside *Mission News* are pictures of kids in Brazil, a spindly armed baby, and three kids with their missionary dad, Rev. Kroeze.

And then there's the picture of Canadian kids at Fort Babine, BC!

You could find the homes of all these children on a world map or a globe.

Aren't they far from each other?

And yet they belong together!

Little boy of Irian Jaya, and little girl of Babine, we pray that the Lord will bless the work of our missionaries, and that we all may be faithful to our heavenly Father, no matter where we live.



Quiz Time!

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

from Busy Beaver *Christa Jansen*

Here is a word search of names and places found in Philemon and Timothy.

```

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

Look for:

Alexander
Antioch
Carpus

Demas
Ephesus
Eunice

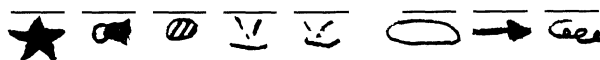
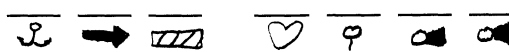
Luke
Macedonia
Mark

Paul
Titus
Timothy
Troas

PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Tim Linde*

A = ☺	G = ☞	L = ☞	Q = ☞	V = ☺☺
B = ★	H = ☞	M = ↑	R = ☞	W = ♥
C = *	I = ☞	N = ↑	S = ☞	X = ☞
D = ☞	J = ☞	O = ↑	T = ☞	Y = ☞
E = ☞	K = ☞	P = ☞	U = ☞	Z = ☞
F = ●				



TURN AROUND WORDS

Sometimes when you turn a word around you get a different, new word. For example, spell RAT backwards and you get TAR.

Here are clues to words that become new words when turned around.

How many can you get?

1. Turn around a word for a number and get a word for something with which you catch fish. _____
2. Turn around a word for a tool to cook with and get a word for something a baby often does. _____
3. Turn around a word that means "at this very moment" and get a word for something gained by a victory. _____
4. Turn around a word that means "not dead," and get a word that means "very, very bad." _____
5. Turn around a word for someone who isn't truthful and you'll get a word for something a train needs. _____

A PUZZLE!

Lynn is a third as old as her mother, who is five years younger than Lynn's father. Lynn's grandma is twice as old as Lynn's father. Lynn is ten. How old is her grandma?

(See answers)

KIDS CAN COOK!

Busy Beaver *Jessica Bos* sent in this favourite recipe to share with you.

Coconut-Chocolate Chews

- 2 cups white sugar
- 1/2 cup margarine
- 1/2 cup milk
- 6 Tbsp. cocoa

Blend well. Bring to a boil.

Remove.

- Add: 3 cups oatmeal
- 1 cup coconut
- 1 tsp. vanilla

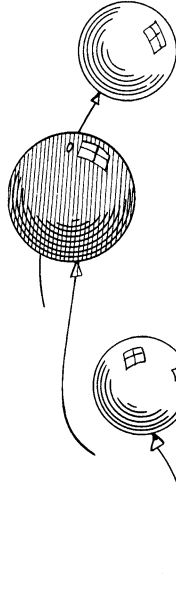


Mix well. Drop from spoon onto a cookie sheet lined with waxed paper. Makes about 24 cookies. Put in the fridge. When cool remove from waxed paper. Enjoy!

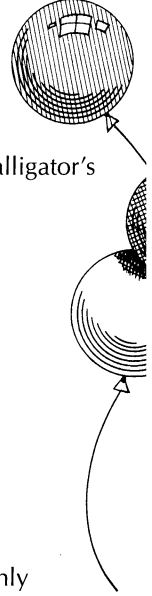
KNOCK-KNOCK JOKES

from Busy Beaver *Felicia Oosterhoff*

Knock-knock.
Who's there?
Philip.
Philip who?
Philip the gas tank, please.



Knock-knock.
Who's there?
Ron.
Ron who?
Ron faster, an alligator's chasing us!



Knock-knock.
Who's there?
Lettuce.
Lettuce who?
Lettuce in.
It's cold out here!

Knock-knock.
Who's there?
Boo.
Boo who?
Don't cry. It's only a joke!

Answers

Turn around words:

5. liar - rail
1. ten - net 2. pan - nap 3. now - won 4. live - evil

A Puzzle!

Lynn is ten. Her mother is 30. Her Dad is then 35, and her grandma 70!

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.
Keep busy!

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

