

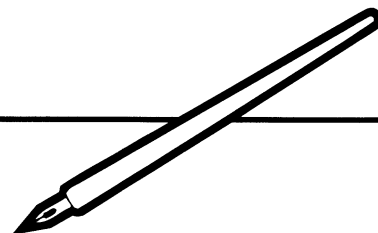


Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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By J. Geertsema



Style

The dominating factor of having a good time

We are entering vacation time again. Universities and colleges have closed down. Schools soon will follow. Vacation trips will be made – some close to home, others farther away. For some, daily work will go on. For others, especially mothers with school-aged children, work will increase with the children being at home. Nevertheless, for many there will be a time of relaxation, a break in the regular daily work.

In this context I would like to ask your attention for the issue of our Christian lifestyle, as is done also elsewhere in this issue. Of course, our lifestyle should always be Christian, whether we are at home, at work, or on vacation. However, during vacation, when we relax and are away from everything and everyone, intending to have a good time, we can be inclined to relax our principles and norms, too.

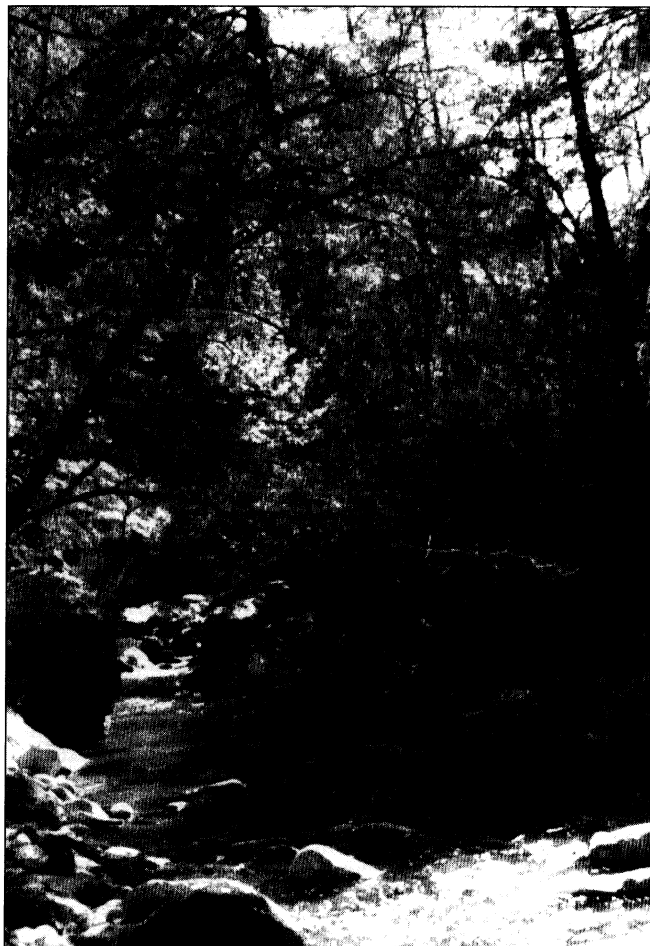
"Having a good time" is a dominating factor in modern life. It is evident in our words and in our activities, clearly showing that it has an important place in our minds as well. We wish each other a good time on a vacation trip. Upon their graduation, when the school years have been completed, students wish each other a super time in life. And when we go on a trip or spend some time at a campsite, we can enjoy it and really have a good time. When we are young and are busy building up our life, we can enjoy our studies or the job we have.

To wish each other a good time and to have a good time and enjoy things in life does not have to be wrong. In 1 Tim. 4:4-5 Paul teaches us that everything created by God is good, and must not be rejected if we thank God for it and if our enjoyment of things is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer.

However, having a good time for ourselves can become a priority in our life. It can become our only aim in life and determine all our thinking and acting. Having a good time can become our lifestyle. It can get us in its grip and we can become its slave. Then having a good time becomes the dominating factor in our life that drives us on. Having a good time becomes, in fact, our god, our idol. Idols are always deceiving slave drivers who promise the world but, in the end, lead to destruction. Paul connects idols with demons. Idols are the deceit of Satan, including the idol named Having-a-Good-Time.

The redeeming factor

There is only one true, trustworthy, faithful, redeeming God. Since He is the only true God, He is the only one to be worshipped and served; and since He is God, He is to be worshipped and served, not in our sinful human ways, but in His way as He has revealed it to us in His Word.



Faith in Him means that we recognize and confess Him as God and turn to Him, repenting from all sinful idolatry, and that we live with and for Him as His freed, thankful, and obedient children. It is obvious that this faith in God will result in an entirely different lifestyle.

Christ works this new lifestyle through the Holy Spirit with God's Word. The apostle Paul described this Christian style beautifully in 1 Cor. 10:31-33. So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

When we look attentively at these words and ponder them, it is easy to see that the first goal of a lifestyle that is redeemed from sin by Christ, is a life in which the aim of all

ur words and actions is the glory of God. Everything we do and plan to do should be in accordance with the holiness, goodness, righteousness, and wisdom of God. In other words, whatever we plan and do and say is to be in accordance with God's self-revelation, that is, with His Word as revealed in Scripture. Such a life will be pleasing to Him.

The apostle continues by speaking about the aim in the life of a Christian with regard to his neighbour. Again, what he says is clear. Negatively, we must not put any stumbling block on our neighbour's path that can cause him to sin against God's will. Positively, it means that we try to please all men by seeking not our own but their advantage. And the final aim of all this is "that they may be saved." This again is to God's glory. Pleasing all men cannot mean doing something that is in conflict with God's holy will. It remains to God's glory.

The words quoted above are Paul's concluding answer to the question whether a Christian is allowed to eat meat that comes from idol sacrifices and is sold in the marketplace. Paul has said that in itself there is nothing wrong with eating this meat, since the earth and what is in it belongs to the LORD. However, there are two definite restrictions. In the first place, if the meat is still linked to the idols by being eaten in a sacrificial context of idol worship, at the table of an idol, this eating is strictly forbidden; it is sin against the First Commandment (1 Cor. 10:14-22). In the second place, if buying and eating it in a private home would lead somebody else to sin, Paul says, it must not be one either.

Paul speaks here about the situation in which a brother in the congregation considered eating such meat forbidden in any place and at any time as being sin against the First Commandment. Paul warns: Your eating this meat as a member of Christ brings to the (weak) brother the message that it is alright to serve God and, at the same time, serve idols; that it is alright to believe in Christ as your Redeemer from idolatry and from all sin, and to live in sin. Evidently, this is an entirely false teaching. In v. 22 Paul asks: "Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" But your eating sacrificed meat would lead the weaker brother in this way to linking faith in Christ with living in sin.

Thus it belongs to the truly Christian lifestyle to live in such a way that we always, in all that we do, seek also the salvation of our neighbour. With respect to our unbelieving neighbour this means that, in our love for him, we do everything to avoid putting the stumbling block of our unholy life before him, so that with our sin we would make our words of invitation powerless and could prevent his coming to salvation in Christ.

A truly Christian lifestyle with respect to our neighbour in the church means that we seek to live holily with our heavenly Father in humble obedience to His commandments and denying ourselves and our having-a-good-time when necessary, that is, when (the manner of) our having a good time means that our brother might get the message that it is alright to be a Christian and have a great time for yourself instead of living in holiness committed to the Lord and His service first of all, as our priority in life.

Let us older ones set a good example for the youth of the church. And let the youth of Christ help one another to show a truly redeemed lifestyle to an idolatrous and lost world, to the glory of our triune God. Let us prayerfully continue to study God's Word in order to be able to apply it in our life, so that we can develop this Christian lifestyle. **C**



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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Style
— J. Geertsema266

A question regarding
“Confessional Unity”
— M. van Beveren268

Remember your Creator –
In search of a good time
— R.A. Schouten.....270

College Corner –
Another school year draws to a close
— C. Van Dam271

Wronged – J.H. Ulehake
— Translated by R.A. Janssen272

The opening of the Reformed
pre-school in Port Moresby,
Papua New Guinea274

Our Little Magazine
— Aunt Betty275

A question regarding “Confessional Unity”

By M. van Beveren

What follows is the speech of Rev. M. van Beveren, delivered at the meeting of Independent Christian Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches, held at Calgary on April 3, 1993, and organized by the Bethel Independent Christian Reformed Church.

The Speech Addresses the Thesis:

“The confessional unity that exists among Canadian Reformed Churches and the Independent Reformed Churches requires them to resolve whatever differences in practice exist among them, and seek federative unity.”

We like to express our thankfulness to the organizers of this meeting for providing the brothers and sisters of the Independent Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches with the opportunity to discuss the unity of the faith and the unity of the church.

The establishment of Independent Reformed Churches does not leave the Canadian Reformed people indifferent but raises the desire to know more about those who have taken decisive action in order to stand firm on the Reformed faith. At the same time the Canadian Reformed Churches are being confronted again with the commandment of the Lord that they seek unity with those who together with them are one in the faith.

That is why we are thankful for this meeting, and we express the hope that it is one of many more to come. Meetings like this one are necessary in order to get acquainted with each other and to remove prejudice and misunderstanding. Sure, more has to be done. I think e.g. of action of consistories and other bodies. But the meeting of today will help us on our way, hopefully.

The thesis which I am requested to address begins with the statement that *confessional unity exists among the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Independent Reformed Churches*, and that statement is then to serve as the basis for a discussion about how to resolve differences in practice and to come to federative unity.

Well, I have to say that I admire the boldness of the organizer of the meeting to state that *confessional unity exists*. I suspect that this formulation has been chosen to challenge the speakers of this afternoon, to force them to deal with that statement and to give their opinion. And indeed, to establish whether or not confessional unity exists among the churches is of utmost importance. We have to deal with it before we can speak about seeking federative unity. Otherwise we would run ahead of ourselves.

So, the first question which we have to discuss is: *Does confessional unity between the Independent Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches really exist?* That question needs a clear answer. And it would be wonderful and a reason for great thankfulness to the Lord, if we – both Independent Reformed Churches and Canadian Reformed Churches – could wholeheartedly say, yes, confessional unity exists among us! Then, of course, we could quickly switch over to the other parts of the thesis.

Yet, I feel compelled to begin with that opening statement of the thesis, and to say that I find it not only bold, but also very general, too general. This week I found in *Christian Renewal* a directory of Independent Churches. Thirty-two independent congregations

are listed, spread over Canada and the United States. What do I know about those churches? Some of them are listed as Orthodox Reformed, some as Independent Reformed, others as Independent Christian Reformed. Of course, I speak for myself, but I am sure that most of our Canadian Reformed people have the same question: what do we know of those churches? Yes, I even wonder whether our Independent brothers and sisters are acquainted with them.

Allow me to mention in this connection a remark of one of the participants of the Ontario Conference in October last year (the speaker was an Orthodox Christian Reformed minister). He said, “Not all Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches are of the same cloth.”

But let us confine ourselves to our province Alberta. In Edmonton we had a combined meeting of the consistory of the Independent Reformed Church here and the consistories of the two Canadian Reformed Churches. That meeting was very encouraging. And personally we are having contact with the active minister and the retired minister of the Edmonton Independent Reformed Church, and I have to say, those contacts are even more encouraging. But what do we in Edmonton know about the Independent Churches in Neerlandia, Calgary and Lethbridge?

What I want to say is, that at this moment it is difficult for the Canadian Reformed Churches to make that statement as we have it in the thesis about Confessional unity. There may be strong indications that that unity exists, yet, for now, I believe, that statement is *prema- ture* in its generality.

There is another question which we have to face, "What do we understand by 'Confessional unity'?" Is it: having the same confessions, the Three Forms of Unity?

Let me give you two examples to show what I mean. When after the war the first immigrants from the liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands arrived in Canada, several initially joined the Christian Reformed Church because they expected there to find confessional unity. But when they opened their mouth about what had happened in the Netherlands in 1944, they found out that the confessional unity was very thin. It existed only on paper.

The second example is this: in the 1960s the Contact Committees of the Christian Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches discussed the obstacles to unity. As a result of the discussions, Synod 1968 of the Christian Reformed Church removed two important obstacles, namely the Three Points of Kalamazoo of 1924 about Common Grace and the Statement of Utrecht 1905 which the Christian Reformed Church had adopted in 1908 about baptism and regeneration. One may say, there never before was a time when the two churches were so close with regard to so-called confessional unity. Yet, one year later, in 1969, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church said: we are not going to sever the relations with the synodical Reformed Churches in the Netherlands as you request, but you, Canadian Reformed Churches, better go back to the synodical Churches and establish correspondence with them.

Was there confessional unity? It appeared that the gap between the Christian Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches was wider than ever. On paper everything looked fine. The confessional documents were in order. But confessional unity was absent. For the question is not only, do the Churches have the Reformed confessions, but also, do they actually maintain them? The brethren of the Independent Reformed Churches know too well, I believe, that confessional unity on paper is not sufficient.

And now we come to that first question again: *Does, as mentioned in the thesis of this afternoon, a confessional unity among the Independent Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches exist?* If the thesis means just formal unity, we can perhaps say: yes,

because those two church groups both have the Three Forms of Unity as their doctrinal creeds. But, taught by the lesson of history, we cannot avoid the question: Do we have the same *understanding* of the confession?

Sure, we all have the same roots, we come from the same Reformed tradition, but it cannot be denied that there is between the Independent Reformed and the Canadian Reformed Churches a historical gap of almost 50 years. During those years we had a different history. We can almost say, we went in different directions; we have lost each other.

Let me again give two examples. Due to what had happened in the Netherlands in 1944 the Canadian Reformed have developed a strong covenantal approach in many areas. They hold clear views against teachings like presumptive regeneration and pluriformity of the church, views and convictions which may not be immediately understood by many in the Independent Reformed Churches. The Canadian Reformed Churches, in order not to lose what they had gained in the liberation, and derided by many around them, clung and still cling to their confession and to the treasures of their Church Order.

On the other hand, the brothers and sisters of the Independent Churches will not blame me that I mention the long-term influence from the synodical Reformed Churches to which they have been exposed in the Christian Reformed Church. I think of the so-called new hermeneutics, that is the new way in which the Bible is read and explained, the results of which are visible today in the discussions about creation and evolution, the attitude toward homosexuality and the decision re women in office. I could also mention the lack of discipline in cases of deviation from Scripture and confession.

Why do I mention all this? Because we need clarity, openness and understanding about each other's position. The unity at which we are aiming and which we are seeking here, is a unity in which we wholeheartedly accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ without reservations, bonded together through the faith in God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. As I see it at the moment, there is among us, Independent Reformed and Canadian Reformed people, generally speaking, much ignorance, miscon-

ception and distrust. If those matters which I mentioned are not addressed head-on before a federative unity would ever come into existence, we are not honest to each other and, I am convinced, we do not act in accordance with God's will. If we try to forget our past or hide our convictions, we – and that is a practical consideration – may be haunted later on by festering disagreements, which may eventually drive us apart again.

I realize that I did not deal with the whole thesis as it is formulated for this afternoon. But I spoke about what I believe is first and foremost.

What is necessary at this stage and required in God's Word, as I believe, is that with Scriptural humility and earnest desire to find each other, we use every opportunity to get acquainted, to understand each other and assist each other.


There are practical difficulties, of course, because the Independent Reformed Churches are wide-spread and far, and because they are not organized in a federation. But that should not prevent us from coming into action in the area in which we live, locally and regionally. Moreover, our consistories should be involved and, through the consistories, our members. If the congregations are left out, we cannot expect much result.

I would urge the Independent Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches to have another meeting like this and not to postpone till next year for instance.

I would urge the consistories to seek contact and have meetings and discussions together.

I would urge that we have congregational meetings together.

And now I return to the thesis of this afternoon. If we, by God's grace, come to the conclusion that *confessional unity* among the Independent Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches does exist, we have to obey the commandment of the Lord to seek the visible unity. And resolving the differences in practice – if they are just customs whereby no confessional faithfulness is at stake – resolving those differences should then not pose too many difficulties. I cannot elaborate on them now. We leave that for the next meeting!

May the Lord give us His grace that we all obey His will. 

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R.A. Schouten

In search of a good time

By the time you read these lines, the summer of 1993 will have arrived. It will be worthwhile to pause for a moment of reflection on this season. Summer surrounds many people with a host of leisure opportunities: barbecues and baseball, picnics and parties, dining and drinking, concerts and camping, swimming and shopping, reading and renovating, music and movies. For others, summer is a time of unusual busyness in their daily occupations. Also, many students have summer jobs which bring new and interesting experiences.

Motivations

We may ask: What motivates people in their varied summer activities? Of course, many of these pursuits are in themselves good and beautiful. What do we find, however, if we look behind the overall pattern of summer life in Canada? Is not pleasure-seeking the dominant drive? Nearly everyone is in search of a good time. Canadian society is hedonistic.

The great pleasure-quest should not really surprise us. The Scriptures say that, in the last days, men will become lovers of self. They will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (see 2 Tim. 3:2-5). The "last days" had already started in the time of the apostle Paul, and they continue in our time. We do live in a culture of the flesh. The lust for pleasure dominates our society. The demand for quick, preferably instant, gratification says that whatever gives me maximum pleasure at this moment is the thing I choose.

However, it is dangerous to speak in generalized terms about the hedonism of Canadian society. By nature, every human being is a hedonist. Also in us who believe, there remains something of the old nature which seeks pleasure above all. In Eph. 2, the apostle speaks

about spirit of evil at work in the unbelieving world. He goes on to say: *Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.*

Many desires live in the body and mind of the human creature. Our human nature is always grasping for experiences we believe will satisfy us and give pleasure. For example, we desire a hearty meal. We'd like a cool drink. We'd love to have a special friend. We feel we need a relaxing vacation. We would really enjoy a get-together with friends. When the Lord gives us what we desire, we experience pleasure and happiness and we give thanks to Him.

Thus, there are legitimate desires and legitimate pleasures. The problem is the presence of many unlawful passions. Yielding to them can definitely give momentary pleasures. But in the long run, giving in to such passions is very hurtful and destructive.

Sometimes, it can be hard to separate the good from the bad. It can happen that as we pursue legitimate goals, deceptive passions sidetrack us. For example, it is perfectly lawful to seek a partner for marriage. The hunger for companionship and the sexual drive are not sinful. However, as we seek to satisfy the kinds of desires, there are many pitfalls. A godly desire easily becomes a perverted passion. Therefore, believers will seek satisfaction of their desires only in ways the Lord has permitted in His Word.

A futile pursuit

The peril of the passions is their stress on the here and now above everything else. If people can have fulfillment in the present, who cares about

the coming Kingdom of God? As far as the passions are concerned, what counts is how I feel right now.

We are all aware that the passions promise a great deal. They lead us to believe that a good life can be found by following our own desires. Do what you please and you will be content. Satisfy your selfish lusts and then you will be really living.

But the fact is that the passions are deceitful. They lie. They make the good and pure life commanded by God to look bad and unappetizing. On the other hand, they make evil and disgusting things to seem very appealing. Because of the continuing influence of deceitful passions, it is a real struggle for us as Christians to keep our spiritual vision clear. We are easily led astray.

Furthermore, our situation is made more difficult because Satan, the supreme master of disguise, plays on our passions. The evil one can conceal the putrid odor of sin under the exciting aroma of sensuality. He can hide the ugliness of his rotting kingdom under a surface glitter of fun and games.

Thus, there are many forces acting in us and on us which try to suck us into the great pleasure-hunt. But the sad reality is that following the passions is futile. The passions are vain. They cannot deliver the happiness which they promise.

In 2 Peter 1, verse 4, the apostle tells us that there is corruption in the world because of passion. Corruption means decay. It means that everything falls apart and breaks down. Well, says Peter, this worldwide degeneration comes about because people follow their passions. It happens because people do whatever they feel like doing instead of submitting to the will of holy God.

In Galatians 6, verse 8, we hear a similar message: *He who sows to his*

own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. Lovers of pleasure will only experience increasing misery. They indulge themselves but are soon disappointed. Now they need new and higher thrills; they want to attain a higher plateau of pleasure. This cycle continues until they burn out in the heat of passion or until God takes them in His judgment.

A better goal

The Word of the Lord reveals that this self-centered, pleasure-hungry way of life is a real threat for believers, too. It is not so that believing young people are immune to the culture of hedonism.

For example, the apostle Peter states: *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance* (1 Pet. 1:14). Then, in

chapter 2, verse 11, he continues on the same theme: *Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul*. Peter obviously takes it for granted that believers can be enticed by the passions. In fact, he tells us that the passions are waging a war of aggression and conquest against the souls of believers.

Of course, we should not exaggerate the situation. Many Christians have learned much about self-control. Day by day they put to death the deeds of the flesh. They have wisdom. They see through the emptiness of the passions.

In Titus two, verses 11 and following, the apostle tells us that the grace of God had appeared in Jesus Christ and is training us to renounce worldly passions. However, please notice the

present tense. God's grace is *training* us. The training is not yet finished. So we are definitely still vulnerable to the passions.

Let us therefore remember that we reap what we sow. If we sow to the flesh by living according to the passions, the result will be misery. Those who devote their lives to the search for a good time will find hell. But if we sow to the Spirit, by seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness, then we will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And the eternal kind of life begins now! Real fulfillment and so true joy come not by chasing the pleasures of a moment, but by humbly seeking to know and to do the will of God who sets a high standard for us when He says: *You shall be holy even as I am holy*.



COLLEGE CORNER

By C. Van Dam



Another school year draws to a close

The exams have been written and most of the students have left for the summer. This is a good time to update you on what has happened at the Theological College.

Graduates

If all goes as expected, we will have five graduates this year. Four Canadian Reformed graduates who will go to the appropriate classis (Ontario South or North) to make themselves available for call within the churches and Alfonso D'Amore who will eventually return to Italy to labour there for the Reformed faith in the area of Naples. The four Canadian Reformed students whom we expect to graduate are: James Slaa, Clarence Vander Velde, John Van Pop-ta, and John Van Woudenberg. It appears that there will probably be about five new admissions this fall. We are very thankful that we can both present

graduates to the churches and also receive new students who in turn will, D.V., some day present themselves to the churches. These are surely tremendous gifts from the hand of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

Events of note

Since the last College Corner was published in November, 1992, the event that has impacted the most on the College community was the unexpected death of Professor L. Selles on March 4, 1993. Although he was retired, yet he was still so often in the College and involved in all the meetings of the senate that his retirement was to be understood in a very limited way. He also continued to labour on his outlines on 2 Corinthians right up to his death. Enough has been written in *Clarion* to show our appreciation and gratitude to the Lord for his gifts in Professor Selles.

Let me only add here that we miss him and cherish fond memories of his exemplary humble devotion and dedication for the service to which His Saviour had called him.

One consequence of his being called to glory was that his books were made available for the College library, a gift that is much appreciated.

On November 30, 1992, Rev. H. Versteeg visited the College and gave a video presentation on the mission work in Irian Jaya. The purpose was two-fold: to inform and to stir up interest for mission in this part of the world. His presentation was appreciated and he certainly gave much food for thought. The needs in Irian Jaya are great and it would be wonderful if the College could also make a contribution here by seeing some of its graduates enter this important field of labour.

Special gifts

Before we speak of special gifts, we would like to recognize first of all that the normal giving by the churches both in Canada/U.S.A and Australia is of utmost importance and without that constant support we simply could not exist. The same is true of the untiring efforts of the Women's Savings Action. They provide *all* the funding for the library and without them the necessary tools for study and teaching would not be there. At the same time, it is always a pleasure to mention special gifts for it demonstrates again the love and interest that there is for the College in the churches.

Dr. J. A. Godschalk, one of the first graduates of our College, visited us and presented a copy of his doctoral dissertation, *Sela Valley. An Ethnography of a Mek Society in the Eastern Highlands, Irian Jaya, Indonesia*, which he defended at the Free University in Amsterdam. This volume contains the result of many years of careful anthropological and linguistic research and study which involved living for years

among these people. We congratulate him on this achievement and express the hope that this study will also be useful for the proclamation of the gospel among the Mek people. From another graduate of our College, Drs. H. Boersma, we received a copy of his Master's thesis done at the State University at Utrecht and entitled *Justification and Bifurcation. The Controversies of Richard Baxter with Thomas Blake and John Owen*. This historical dogmatic study deals with Baxter's doctrine of justification and the controversy it generated in the seventeenth century. We also congratulate him on this achievement and wish him well as he works to finish his doctoral program.


From Brampton (br. A. Keep) we received a Dutch copy of F. O. Busch's authoritative work on the life of the Herods. From Barrhead, Alberta, br. and sr. Van der Meulen sent us an authenticated fourth century Jewish oil lamp, as well as a copy of the Frisian New Testament translated by Dr. G. A. Wumkes (1933). Finally, it can also be

noted that an anonymous donor left some books for the library in the College foyer one day in April of this year. A number of those could be placed in the library.

Needless to say, we are very thankful for all these gifts!

Visits

In the past few months we were again reminded how it is never too early to inform the youth of the church of the Theological College. The grade two class of Timothy Canadian Reformed School in Hamilton visited the College as part of their program and so did a number of Canadian Reformed children who were being home schooled!

Visitors from across Canada, from Australia, and even from Korea, passed through our premises this last semester and we appreciate the interest shown very much. The living bond of the churches with the College of the churches is vital. May the Lord continue to bless the school of the churches. 

Wronged

The following article was written in Dutch by Rev. J.H. Ulehake (Minister of the Gereformeerde Kerk [vrijgemaakt] at Leusden) in the Gereformeerd Kerkblad (Reformed Church magazine) of the central provinces in the Netherlands. In this article Rev. Ulehake latches onto an article by Prof. Dr. W. van 't Spijker (Professor at the Theological University of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken [Free Reformed] at Apeldoorn) in De Wekker. Rev. Ulehake's article was then placed in the Gereformeerde Kerkbode of the three northern provinces in the Netherlands (vol.49, no. 8, Feb. 26, 1993). This article has been translated by Roelof A. Janssen.

Wise words

"There is an unwritten rule which works perfectly, a difficult situation in the churches can only be solved when the Church Order is maintained. If one wants to make it impossible to solve a sensitive matter, e.g. since certain persons are involved, then one should brotherly and kindly start improvising in order to come to a solution. That is an efficacious way to direct the whole matter to the vague landscape where

swamps and impassable marsh lands exclude any possible way out. One disappears for lack of solid ground."

These are wise words of Prof. Dr. van 't Spijker in his, always interesting, column "Marginaal?" (= marginal, in the margin) in *De Wekker* of Jan. 15, 1993. The reason for this article was a matter concerning a minister in the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the U.S.A., who, because of personal circumstances, got into difficulties. "A synod declared with a small majori-

ty of votes, that they have no confidence in him. And now the whole case is stuck as solid as a house," because they started to judge on a personal basis without the rules of the Church Order.

Formalistic?

Prof. van 't Spijker, thus, pleads for abiding by the Church Order in Ecclesiastical problems. This is a very ordinary and Reformed advise. But not everyone agrees with this. Also in our churches this style is sometimes criti-

cized as being *formalistic*. One is then afraid that rules go above the people, and that people and their circumstances and feelings are being sacrificed to the rules.

Now it is possible, of course, that the rules of the *Church Order* and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction are being maintained in a very formalistic manner. But that is not the goal of the Church Order. It was not formulated for that purpose. Neither have the Churches adopted it for that reason. No, the *Church Order* begins with the beautiful Article 1: *For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there be*"

Disorder

Alas, in the congregation of Christ one finds disorder time and again. Sin is not excluded there. The devil is always trying to sow chaos and discord. Always again there are misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts between brothers and sisters, and between the consistory and members of the congregation. Let us not forget however, and be thankful, that many problems have been solved in a brotherly manner. Brothers and sisters have found each other again. But there are also cases that remain unsolved and stand between those involved. Then conflicts increase rather than decrease. Soon the first letters of appeal come, first to the consistory, then to classis, and so on.

Wronged

In the well-known Article 31 of the Church Order it is said: *"If anyone complains that he has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly, he can appeal to the major ecclesiastical assembly."*

When is this the case? *When has someone been wronged?* When is someone allowed to feel wronged? Children, for example, feel wronged so very quickly. They claim very soon that they have been wronged. Usually, however, it means that they did not get their way! And they are upset. They become angry and contrary. Sometimes you cannot get anywhere with them for a while. Every parent knows about such cases.

Now it is also possible that this happens in the church. There, too, we live together with others, while everyone has his opinion on the many issues and takes a certain standpoint. Therefore

also in the church not all sing the same tune. The different opinions can clash, and stand opposite each other. A conflict arises. What, then, is wise?

Not too wise

In Ecclesiastes 7:16 we read a remarkable word: *"Be not righteous overmuch; neither make yourself overwise; Why should you destroy yourself?"*

This is a remarkable word, for on the whole the Preacher speaks highly of wisdom. It is an item of which one does not soon get too much. The Preacher highly recommends wisdom. According to Prof. Aalders in *de Korte Verklaring* (Brief Annotations) on Ecclesiastes, the form of the verb does not express a *being wise or becoming wise*, but an *acting as if one is wise, a pretending to be wise*.

We must not make a caricature of wisdom. Thus, someone who is reckless and a daredevil seems brave. But recklessness and being a daredevil has nothing to do with real bravery. It is its caricature. A real wise man, says the Preacher, *"discerns both time and judgment"* (Eccl. 8:5). He knows his limits. But the seemingly wise man insists on his own view. His view, his opinion, has to prevail, if necessary at the cost of much, even of everything. It becomes very dangerous when someone identifies his own insights with God's cause; when his own right is linked directly to God's right. Then a compromise is usually no longer pos-

sible, and there is no way back, for this would be a betrayal of God's cause. And this cannot be done. So, then one goes to the extremes. The matters have to be investigated to the very bottom. The lowest brick has to be brought up. One wants the last drop, at all cost! This causes the endless appeal cases in the ecclesiastical way until one has obtained his justice. And if this does not work, one breaks with the church since one did not get ones right. Or rather, since, in fact, the church has trampled God's right, and has become a false church.

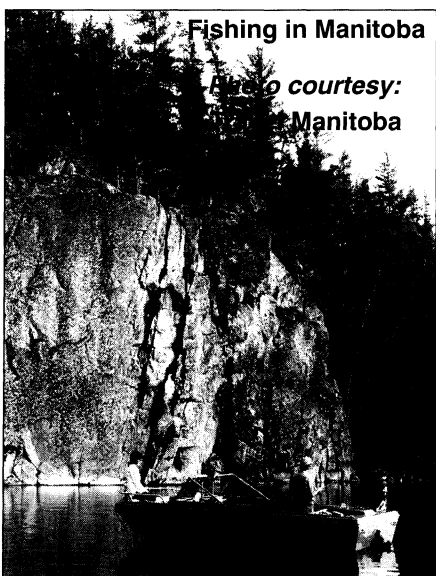
It all looks quite impressive; very pious as well, and very wise and righteous. Yes, it seems that way. But it isn't by far! And eventually the destruction appears about which the Preacher speaks. The contact with reality is gone. One becomes bitter and cynical. One becomes lonely, for good friends do not know what to do anymore and turn away. Also the immediate surrounding suffers. Wife and children must come along in the isolation. Others are demanded to do the same. At the major assemblies, where the appeals are being dealt with, committees are formed. Many brothers have to struggle with large files for several days. They meet in order to prepare a draft-pronouncement. Then the ecclesiastical assemblies get together, sometimes for two or three sessions, in order to come to a conscientious conclusion.

How major a demand is made on the time and energy of many brothers! They, too, are sometimes perplexed about the nature and the size of a problem.

Sometimes people make it very easy for themselves and very difficult for the ecclesiastical assembly. They simply present a letter to the meeting in which they state that they feel wronged by a pronouncement or a decision. However, they do not state why and on which grounds. A package with correspondence is added from which the assembly has to search out for themselves what the objections are. Then, these people feel wronged again when the assembly declares the appeal inadmissible for that very reason and says that it cannot deal with it this way. This reaction of the assembly is called formalistic.

People should realize that when they want to write an appeal it is a first

OUR COVER



requirement to state clearly *against what and why* they appeal. They have to come with grounds and arguments.

The well-known *Brief Explanation of the Church Order* by Joh. Jansen says (2nd printing, page 144): *"The following rules apply: 1. Presentation of the matter in ones own words; 2. Citation of the decision of the minor assembly in its official wording; 3. Submission of the grounds on which the appeal against the decision rests; and 4. Request to declare on the aforementioned grounds that the decision is incorrect."*

If one has difficulty with this he can ask someone to help, can he not?

Consider before you start

However, let everyone consider the question beforehand why he feels wronged. And let no one think too quickly that his own right is on the same line as God's right. Also, every appellant should consider which price he demands when he goes the way of appeal. Ecclesiastical assemblies are sometimes accused of being formalistic. But they get the best results if they act according to the adopted rules of the church in difficult and sensitive situations, as Prof. van 't Spijker said. This acting according to the rules must not be done in a harsh and hard

way but with gentleness and wisdom.

I shall conclude with quoting the end of Prof. van 't Spijker's article:

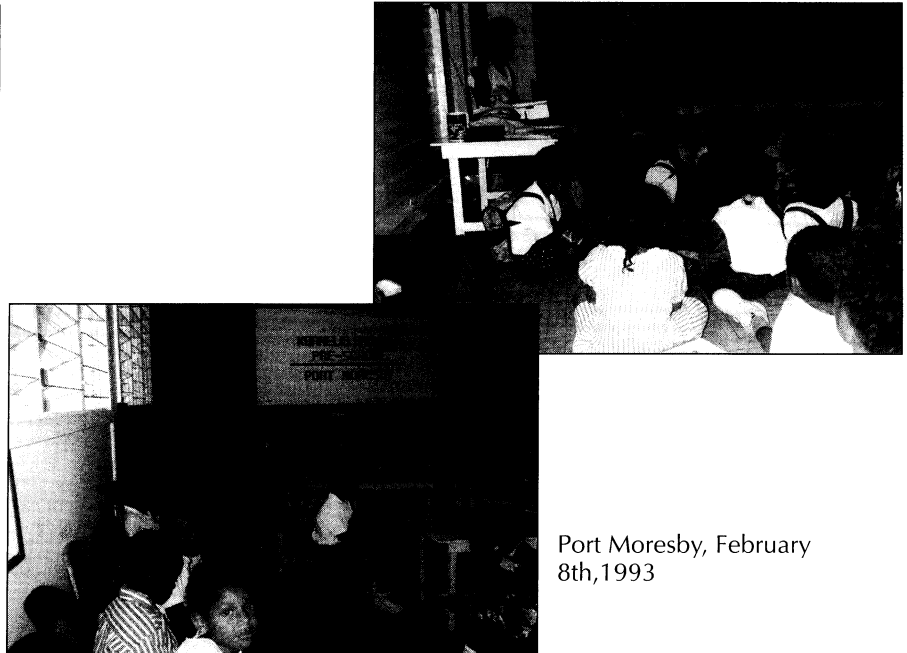
"We have promised, in the churches, to abide by the Scripture, the Confession, and the Church Order. This seems to be a sequence with diminishing value. However, in reality this whole matter begins at the end [the Church Order], that is, with the verifiable fact that we have promised to abide by the ecclesiastical order. It can be checked whether there was such an abiding by this adopted order. If one wants to make a matter unsolvable, then keep the Church Order closed." ©

The opening of the Reformed pre-school in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

It was a festive and joyful day for the Reformed Church of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby. On Friday, the 5th of February, 1993, **KORNELIUS BRUNING PRE-SCHOOL** was officially opened.

It also was a milestone in the history of the young congregation in the country of the Papua's.

Several years ago a group of refugees from West Irian came regularly together for a sort of Sunday worship service on the Hohola premises of Mr. Marjen, one of the leaders of those people. It happened that the Free Reformed Churches in Australia came in contact with the group whose members had a Reformed background thanks to early mission work in the home country Irian Jaya. That contact resulted in a more intensive cooperation between the Australian Churches and the refugee-Papuas. The Churches in Albany and Armadale were able to organize much help to develop church life in Port Moresby and its environment. The minister of Armadale has worked in Papua New Guinea for several periods since 1985. The encouraging fruit was that the Reformed Church of Papua New



Port Moresby, February 8th, 1993

Guinea was instituted on Easter Sunday 1988. Since then Rev. J. Koelewijn has served in the ministry of the new congregation for about two and half years, while after his departure the church in Albany has made use of several brothers

to assist the brotherhood in PNG in the well and woe of the congregation. One of the most urgent items on the agenda of the consistory and congregation was the future of the youth of the church. The brothers were convinced that Re-

formed education was essential for the young people and the future of the church. The preaching and discussions gave strong support to this aim. A **School Association** was formed and a **School Board** was quickly chosen and appointed. Initiatives started, plans were made, and a programme of preparations was worked out; talks with government bodies were held; and the congregation became more and more active to give practical help to reach the aim of the foundation of Reformed Education in Papua New Guinea.

On Friday, the 5th of February, 1993 the first target was reached. The whole congregation was together in the church hall with the presence of Rev. and Mrs. Bruning who were in Port Moresby for another work period.

The Speaker of the government attended the ceremony as representative of the Papua New Guinea Government.

It was a dignified meeting. The Word of God was opened and applied. The Speaker of the House, His Excellency Honorable Bill Skate, MP, delivered his address and unveiled a foundation stone. Mrs. Bruning was asked to cut the ribbon. And the Reformed Pre-School, **KORNELIUS BRUNING PRE-SCHOOL**, Port Moresby, was officially opened.

The School Board had chosen as motto for the Reformed education: **"IN THY LIGHT WE SEE LIGHT."**

With this the new Pre-School may be a very little sister of the University in Kampen, the Netherlands.

Rev. K. Bruning received the opportunity to address the congregation and its guests. His main theme was that the

education of the children of the church may happen in the light of God's covenant promises beginning with the 40 children registered for the year 1993.

With singing and prayer the Lord was thanked for His abundant blessings and asked for His lasting love and care in order that this first step may be followed by a further extension of Reformed education.

The congregation was stimulated to pray and work for this great aim and to sacrifice for the implementation of this calling. The School Board also thanked brothers and sisters in Australia and in other places for the assistance given to reach this milestone. It also recommends the work of the Lord in Papua New Guinea to the love and spiritual support from all those people who with us want to serve in the coming of God's Kingdom. C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

"My Dad is special . . ." wrote one Busy Beaver.

Here are some Father's Day stories written by Busy Beavers. Enjoy!

"My Dad is nice and special because he plays with us and he sometimes makes us breakfast. He sometimes takes us to baseball and most of all he takes us to all kinds of restaurants and camping. My Dad buys us some things to eat if we are good. My Dad is special because he helps me write on the computer."

"On Father's Day I gave my Dad a card with potato prints on it . . . I wrote my favourite verse in the Bible, Josh. 24:15 on a piece of paper. I wrapped the present, signed the card and gave it to him to open. (Now it's in the empty fish bowl on the fridge. That's where paper presents go!)"

"On Father's Day I woke up, got dressed and ran downstairs. I was talking to my Dad for a while and suddenly remembered it was Father's Day. I jumped up and gave him a hug and said, 'Happy Father's Day.' Then I ran to where I had put his card and got it. I ran back to my Dad and gave him the card. Inside the card was a pocket. (Heh! heh! wouldn't you like to know what was in there!) And in the pocket was a bookmark, homemade. It was kinda boring on Father's Day. Oh well, it's over now!!"

"For Father's Day my brother Scott and me gave my Dad a mug; and I got to wrap it. He said he liked it. An hour later he drank from it. And my Mom drank from her Mother's Day mug."



"My Dad is special because he sometimes makes us breakfast. And he plays with us. Sometimes he takes us to the baseball game. I didn't make a Father's Day card, but we made a calendar. On it, it said 'Happy Father's Day!' It is nice. And the calendar is very small. When we are doing funny things he goes to get the video camera and he videos us. It is fun!"

Quiz Time!

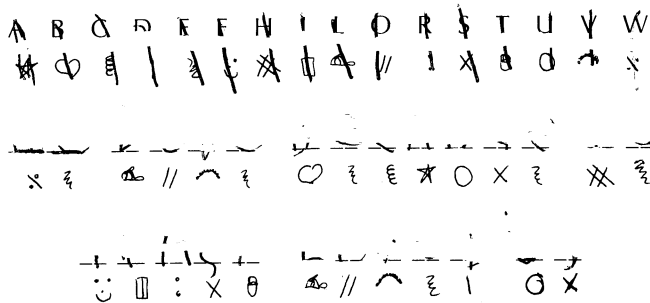
THEY KNEW PAUL

Around the time of Pentecost we often think of Paul and the other apostles' missionary work. The following people were associated with Paul. Match the proper statement with the person.

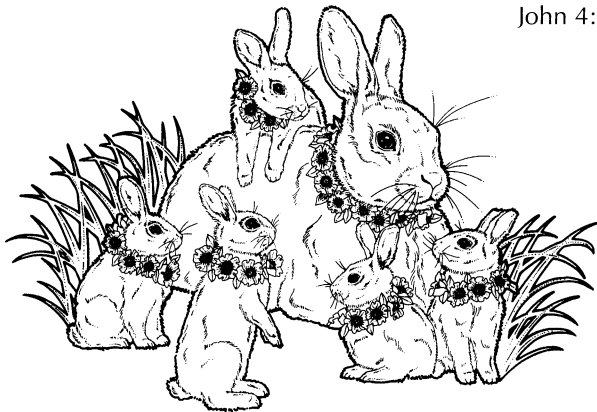
- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Asked "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:25-30 | a. Felix |
| 2. Said "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" Acts 26:28 | b. Julius |
| 3. Led the silversmiths in protest against Paul. Acts 19:24, 25 | c. Barnabas |
| 4. Left Paul in prison in an effort to gain favour with the Jews. Acts 24: 26, 27 | d. Tertullus |
| 5. Sent Paul to Caesar. Acts 25:12 | e. a nephew |
| 6. Sent with Paul to settle a dispute in Jerusalem. Acts 15:2 | f. jailer |
| 7. Arrested for harbouring Paul. Acts 17:5 | g. Publius' father |
| 8. Guarded Paul on the trip to Jerusalem for trial. Acts 27:1 | h. Demetrius |
| 9. Told Paul of plot to kill him. Acts 23:16 | i. Festus |
| 10. Paul healed him of a fever. Acts 28:8 | j. Jason |
| | k. Agrippa |

PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Jaclyn Hulst*



John 4:19

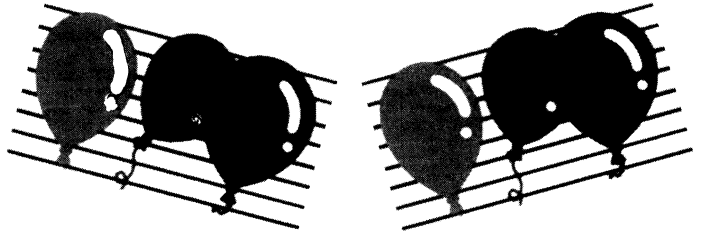


ANIMAL RIDDLES

1. Where does a bunny go when its coat needs grooming?
2. How does a pig get to the hospital?
3. What do snakes do after they have a fight?
4. What happened to the frog's car when the parking meter expired?
5. What did the beaver say to the tree?
6. Why are skunks so smart?

(Answers below)

from Busy Beaver *Cheryl Jelsma*



JULY BIRTHDAYS

All these Busy Beavers celebrate their birthday the same month as our country! One Busy Beaver even on the very same day!

To all of you very best wishes for a very happy day celebrating with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father keep you all in His love and care.

Kristin Vandergugten	1	Jeremy Koopmans	14
Amanda Hoeksema	3	Henrietta Breukelman	15
Joanna Vink	3	Rachel Wierenga	15
Linda Verhey	5	Andrea Feenstra	17
Heather Muis	6	Eric Brown	19
Richard Schouten	6	Denise Hoeksema	20
Sara Plantinga	7	Karen Terpstra	20
Donald Van Leeuwen	7	Vickie Aikema	23
David Aikema	9	Cecilia Barendregt	25
Tim Hordyk	12	Trina Jelsma	26
Janine Swaving	12	Nicole Roodzant	30
Lorelle Barendregt	13	Evellyn Bos	31

A game called . . .

MARBLES

Need: Marbles, and a flat place.
And a friend!

Divide the marbles. Put 4 marbles (2 of yours and 2 of your friend's) in the middle of the flat place. Spread 4 more marbles around the flat place. One person hits their own marbles (not the 4 centre ones). If it hits a marble he/she gets the marble and the one they shot. If they don't hit a marble you leave it.

from Busy Beaver *Ashlea Jagt*