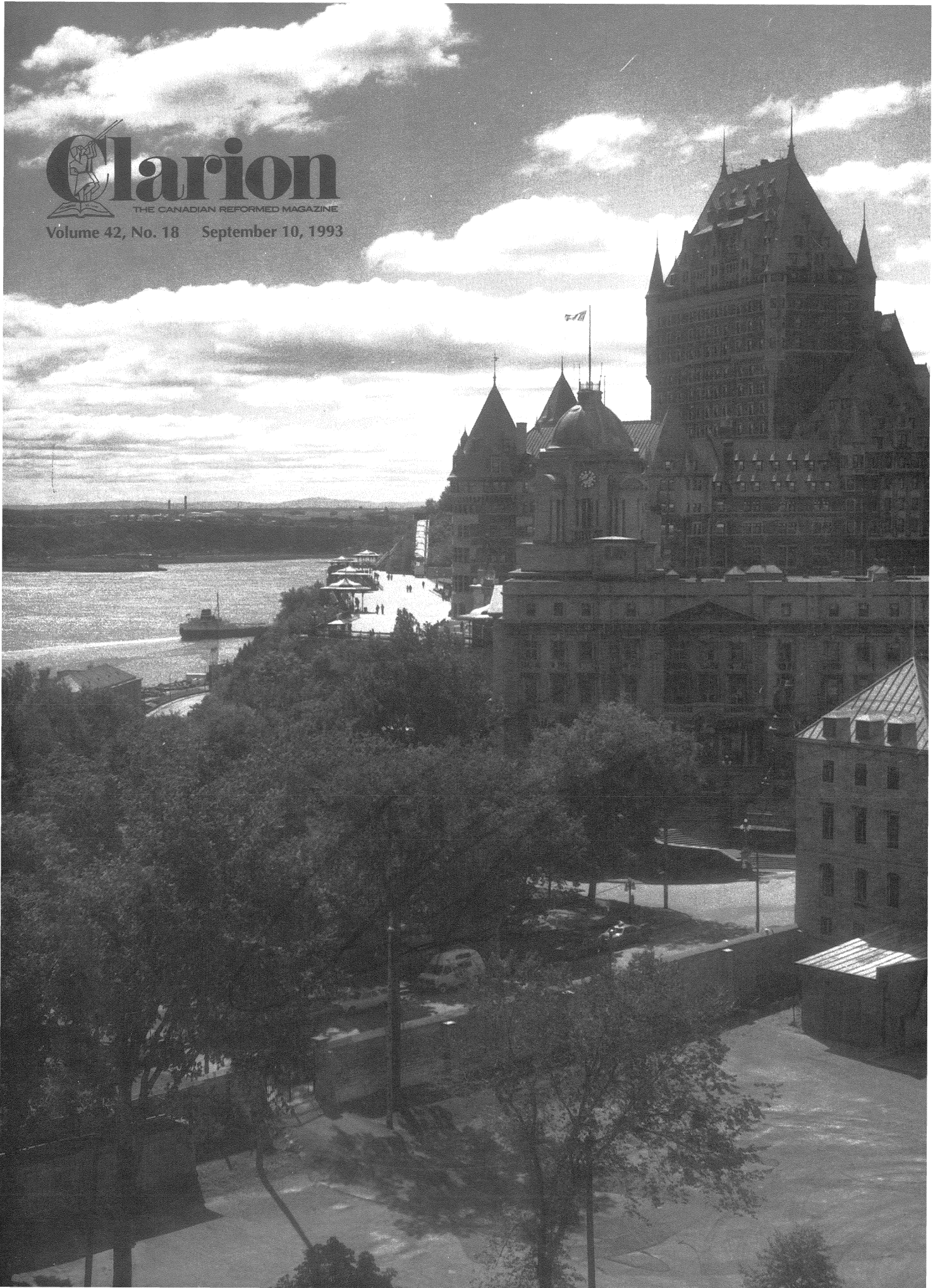


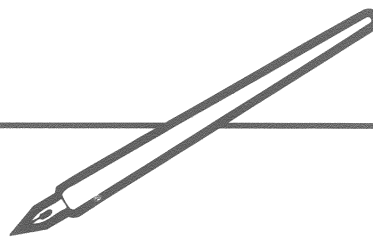


# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 42, No. 18 September 10, 1993





## To Stay or to Leave?

Since the decision of the Christian Reformed Synod of this past summer to open all the offices in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) to women, more congregations have left the CRC and become independent churches. (See the Press Review elsewhere in this issue.) One conservative minister, however, consciously decided to stay and he explained in the official periodical of the CRC, *The Banner* (July 12, 1993), why he made this decision.

### Why we stayed

The reasons of Rev. J. Blankespoor for staying are of interest because he uses the late Dr. K. Schilder to support his decision.

I remember the late Dr. Klaas Schilder of the Netherlands speak about the unity of the church. He said church unity is like a stream. A stream moves, he said, which may stir up mud and debris. He said the church is like a stream. Even if a denomination is confessionally scriptural and adheres to the Reformed faith, things can be going on – mud and debris – that are not good.

Despite the mud, Schilder said, the Holy Spirit continues to work in that church. But sometimes a little stream breaks away from the main stream. When that little stream reaches a sharp bend, the water stands still. The mud settles, and one can even see the bottom.

“Then people are apt to say, ‘Isn’t that pretty? The water is so clear,’” Schilder said. “No. No,” he said. “That water has become stagnant. It has left the stream.” Schilder was implying that Christians ought to stay in the stream. He was also saying that we ought to keep the stream clean.

But what if the church becomes apostate and liberal?

I see three different answers in Reformed-church history. The first answer Rev. Blankespoor gives is to stay as long as possible, that is until you are expelled, as happened to Schilder. Indeed, this is an honourable way. The second answer is simply to leave, but “those who leave are abandoning the stream of the church and work of the Holy Spirit in their denomination. Comment. Have those who left, simply left? Were they not forced out because their ecclesiastical protests were getting nowhere and their consciences could no longer justify their remaining in the CRC? Was this not the work of the Holy Spirit? The third answer Rev. Blankespoor gives is “to stay in the denomination even though there may be mud in the stream.” This is his choice, premised on the fact that in his view the CRC is confessionally biblical and Reformed. He wants “to remain part of that stream that is the CRC.”

Does Rev. Blankespoor do justice to Schilder in using him in his defence to stay put and not join others who have

left? It is difficult to judge the particular reference that he gives for no published source is given. Schilder did speak of the church as a stream (e.g., *De Kerk*, II, 261), and Schilder certainly did not favour leaving a church too soon (e.g., *De Kerk*, II, 134). However, Schilder also said more. In this article I will need to restrict myself, but I would like to draw attention to three points that Schilder made in the context of the centennial of the Secession of 1834 from the Dutch Reformed Church.

### A church must be held accountable

In the first place Schilder stressed that those who have been raised in the tolerant Dutch Reformed Church should be unceasing in their efforts publicly to force that church to a decision. A church must be held accountable to its official papers (*De Kerk*, II, 126, 130-132). It may be that Rev. Blankespoor has this in mind, but I do not read that in his article. He does say “let us battle against the greatest enemies of the Christian church today: lethargy, complacency, and indifference.” Then he adds, “Let’s strive to keep the truth, but not at the expense of unity – and to keep unity, but not at the expense of truth. We need both.” To say that the truth must be preserved, but not at the expense of unity, is a loaded statement. Given the context, this can readily be interpreted as not being the language of Scripture, (nor of Schilder). According to Scripture, the church is the pillar and bulwark or foundation of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). It is impossible for a church to remain a church if it does not safeguard the truth.

### A church maintains the Word

This takes us to a second point. Schilder wrote that a church which rejects the Word of God is schismatic. In that sense Schilder said, the Dutch Reformed Church is schismatic for it does not keep itself to the Word (*De Kerk*, II, 133). Rev. Blankespoor writes that “To say that our synods have disregarded the authority of the Word of God is a strong accusation. I am convinced it is false.” He backs up his positive evaluation by the fact that in the Acts of past synods “one finds 111 kinds of references to the Word of God. You may not agree with the interpretations synods reach, but to say that they ignored the authority of the Word is simply not true.” It should, however, be noted that a multitude of references to Scripture does not in and of itself prove a humble obedience to the Word. The issue is obedience to God’s norms and authority also as the Word must impact on the life of the church at the end of the twentieth century. Over against the spirits of the age must stand the Word of God as the norm in the life of the church. (See next page.)

Rev. Blankespoor continues by noting that “there are things going on in the CRC that we don’t like and don’t agree with.” This takes us to a third point from Schilder.


### A church demands obedience

Schilder stressed that if a church be recognized as a church then she must be obeyed. One must subject oneself to the church for the sake of Christ her head. Where there is no subjection, there is no recognition that the church is there (*De Kerk*, II, 135). With this emphasis, Schilder was following Calvin (*Institutes*, IV.ii.10). Of course the related point is that if an assembly cannot be obeyed then it must be placed before a clear decision. Both Calvin and Schilder acknowledged the need for patience as long as one can improve a church, but it can never go at the expense of the truth or conscience. One must be able to obey the church! One must maintain a true concept of unity, in the exclusive sense

of unity in the doctrine and in the striving for that doctrine and for the unity that such doctrine works (*De Kerk*, II, 136).

### Obedience to God comes first

In view of the above, it will come as no surprise that Schilder was a fervent defender of the Secession of 1834. He warned those who had remained in the Dutch Reformed Church not to place the institute of the existing church ahead of obedience to God’s demands. That would bring them into situations in which one is forced to do things that go against one’s conscience, yes against God’s demands. Obedience to the Lord builds up and institutes the church (*De Kerk*, II, 228-230).

This is the principle that needs to be kept in mind, also by those within the CRC who are in distress because of deviation from the Word of God in the church which they have served and loved for so many years. We wish them God’s blessing as they seek to be obedient to His will. 

---

## Back to ARPA

By J. Geertsema

### Historical introduction

As Reformed people, we have our political calling in the nation to which we belong. In Canada we realize this in the present situation. In the fall there will be a federal election. Moreover, I was recently reminded of this calling when I read parts of a book with addresses delivered at a symposium in Amsterdam in April 1990 at the occasion of the commemoration of the birth of professor Dr. K. Schilder one hundred years earlier.<sup>1</sup> The particular address to which I refer was delivered by Dr. J. Meulink, and has as title, “Schilder en de Politiek” (Schilder and politics, pp. 95-104).

Dr. Meulink begins with saying, “Just as many theologians in his days, Schilder, too, had a lively interest in politics. He wrote about a great variety of subjects.” Meulink mentions (Germany’s) national socialism and a number of other political parties and movements in those days, specifically in the Netherlands. Schilder, he writes, was not a politician but he

was a confessor of the gospel who discerned in the light of God’s Word

the principles that were in the background of political movements and parties. From his anti-revolutionary point of view he considered it his calling to warn for false ideologies. (“False” means here in conflict with the truth of Scripture, J.G.) Hereby in particular the problem of the relation between faith, church and politics kept him busy (p. 95).

In October and November of 1992, I wrote three editorials on Schilder’s views regarding education, politics and so on. One of them had the title “Not even the breadth of a thumb.” It was the literal translation of the title of a brochure of Schilder. He wrote it in his spiritual warfare against two specific political parties and their influence in the Netherlands in 1936.

The one was itself national socialistic. The other proclaimed peace through disarmament in the situation of the threat of Germany’s national socialism, and was, in that way, a direct support for Hitler’s national socialism. The title was a quotation from Dr. Abraham Kuyper’s statement, “There is not an inch (‘not the breadth of a

thumb’) within the entire domain of our human life of which Christ, who is the sovereign of all, does not say, ‘Mine.’”

Christ Jesus received all authority in heaven and on earth. All knees have to bow down before Him in humble submission. This Lordship of Christ over all and everything is linked with the fact that He, through whom God created all things, is the Redeemer of what God created. Therefore, Christ must be acknowledged as the only and true Redeemer and Lord of all of created life, including that part that we call politics. This is God’s revealed will in the gospel.

From the gospel it is clear that Christ’s redemption work has a negative and a positive aspect. Negatively it means deliverance from the rule of Satan and sin. Positively it is deliverance unto the restored service of God. When Christ is proclaimed the Redeemer of all of created life, this holds the promise of His delivering life from unbelief and rebellion against God and of His bringing all of it back under the dominion of God’s Word. Acknowledging the rule of Christ is for us on earth humble sub-

mission to the rule of the gospel, that is, to the rule of God's Word.

On this basis of the gospel, Kuyper said that there is not an inch of our entire life which Christ does not claim "Mine." Schilder followed Kuyper in this biblical, Reformed thinking and was in full agreement. This is why he considered it his calling to place the philosophy or ideology of political movements in the light of God's Word, as confessed in our Reformed standards, and, with it, in the light of the claim of Christ as Redeemer-King. For this same reason Schilder felt obliged to help others in discerning the biblical truth from unbiblical, humanistic, deceit, not only in theological but also in political movements. Schilder saw and maintained the biblical antithesis between Christ and Satan, truth and lie, faith and unbelief, church and world (cf. Gen. 3:15 and 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1) for all of life.

### Back to ARPA

After this introduction I returned to our political calling today. In my opinion, this calling is not so much that we form an own Reformed political party. A political party has as aim to get eventually a representative in parliament, either provincially or also federally. This is simply out of reach within the Canadian system for a Reformed Party. Further, again in my opinion, a so-called general Christian political party is not our calling either, for both practical and principial reasons. Practice of life and history teach us that setting up and maintaining a general Christian institution will easily lead to compromises. And the small number of truly Reformed people will become a disappearing minority within such a general Christian Party.

However, this does not mean that we have no political calling. In the light of what is said above, this calling can be clear: confess Christ as Redeemer-King also for political life and place it under the authority of God's Word as we confess this. Therefore, we are to discern the political ideas and actions of our days in the light of the Scriptures. This means, in the first place, study Scripture and confession, as well as the political movements and parties with their ideologies. It means in the second place, on the basis of the results of this study, to come to actions. Such actions can include writing down and publishing the results of our studies in order to help others to discern true from false. It can mean also writ-

ing letters to members of the federal and provincial and local government bodies. We can further organize public meetings where members of these governing bodies or those who seek to be elected are invited to reveal their ideas and answer questions about their standpoint in different matters, and so on.

Therefore, back to ARPA.

What is ARPA? ARPA stands for Association for Reformed Political Action. We have to do here with local societies. These associations were set up, more than ten years ago, in a number of our congregations. Going through the *1993 Yearbook*, I discovered that we still have ARPAs in Lincoln, Smithville, Barrhead-Neerlandia, Carman, Winnipeg, and the Fraser Valley. The members of these associations wanted to help each other as Reformed confessors in the execution of their political responsibility. For that purpose study meetings were held to learn to understand what our political calling is as Reformed people and what Scripture and confession teach us concerning the relation of church, faith, and this field of politics. Further, the members discussed the federal, provincial and local political situations in order to involve themselves actively, for instance, by writing letters, or by inviting a member of parliament to speak for them about certain political matters.

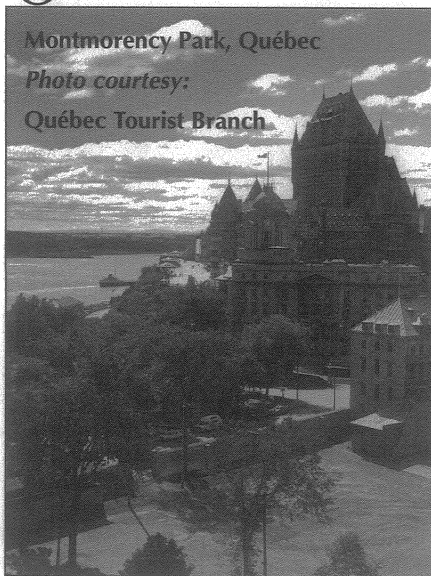
Understandably, these associations have as basis Scripture and the Reformed Confession. This basis is a unit-

ing force and gives unity in direction and activity. In the confessional isolation is our strength. This is an old and approved Reformed rule. The troubles presently with the CHP are, in my opinion, the consequence of a basis that proves to be too broad and, for that reason, too vague. Therefore again, let us go back to ARPA.

We have to help each other in discerning the ideas and philosophies and practices of the different political parties. The older generation among us, grown up in the Netherlands and able to read books and brochures about the Reformed view with regard to the field of political life, should help the younger generation to build up such a Reformed view for themselves in our situation in North America. *For every new generation has to make the biblical Reformed view its own through hard work, through intense study and in the way of receiving it from the preceding generation.* Without this hard work such a biblical Reformed view will get lost and we are in great danger of taking our political "insight" and "wisdom" from the world around us. Of course, this counts for all fields of life, also that of theology, psychology, education, and so on. Therefore, I hope that these local or regional Reformed political associations are not only in existence on paper (in the *Yearbook*) but also alive and functioning. And I would like to suggest that such ARPAs will be established where they do not exist yet. Much work remains to be done by every new generation. The task will end only when Christ returns and brings the history of this present world to its conclusion.

May our Lord Jesus Christ give us dedicated Reformed (young) people who are able and willing and full of enthusiasm to build up their knowledge and insight in this field; who are also willing, with full commitment to the Lord and His church, with much hard work to help and lead others. Let such ARPAs also be the supportive background for those among us who have a position in local governments. ☾

## OUR COVER



<sup>1</sup> These addresses were printed in a book, *Geen Duimbreed!* Facetten van leven en werk van Prof. Dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952 (Not an inch! Facets of Prof. Dr. K. Schilder's life and work), edited by Dr. J. de Bruijn and Drs. G. Harinck, and published by Ten Have, Baarn.

# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R.A. Schouten

## Working on Worship<sub>3</sub>

*In part two of this little series, something was said about appropriate attitudes and dress for worship. We also touched on the modern hunger for novelty and we ended by speaking about the evangelistic power of the true worship of God. In this article, the last, we speak about how God regulates His own worship and how He forbids formalism.*

### Regulated worship

The basic point to remember in our present discussion is that the Lord regulates His own worship. Presbyterians are accustomed to speak of the "regulative principle." By this they mean that in worship we may only offer to the Lord the things He has Himself commanded. What human imagination finds pleasing to the Lord may in fact be highly insulting to Him. Who are we to invent the form of worship?

Lord's Day 35 articulates the same principle: "We are not to make an image of God in any way, nor to worship Him in any other manner than He has commanded in His Word." The proof texts mentioned under Answer 96 make for fearful reading. They indicate that the Lord is exceeding particular as to how He is worshiped. We dare not insult Him by bringing before Him in worship the sin-tainted products of human imagination.

What then does the Lord require of us in worship? Lord's Day 38, in its explanation of the fourth commandment gives a summary of the scriptural content of worship: hearing God's Word, using the sacraments, public praise and prayer, Christian offerings for the poor. In all times and places these elements have formed the basic pattern of the worship of God. The pattern is a God-centered and a Word-centered liturgy.

Those who desire to enliven the worship service by various innovations need to ask themselves: has the Lord commanded this or that to be offered to

Him in worship? If the answer is negative, who dare introduce it nonetheless?

Furthermore, it needs to be asked whether the desired changes would really enliven worship. What we sometimes call "lively" and "meaningful" and "exciting" may only indicate our addiction to the superficial. Is the modern hunger for newness not like the hunger of an addict? He needs increasingly heavy dosages of artificial stimulants.

When we lose our fascination with the self-revealing God in worship, when reverence and awe diminishes, when the focus is more on human beings than on the Lord, then there will always be a longing for new experiences and new forms of worship. God and His

Word will not compel interest, nor will the biblical style of reverent praise.

### Formalism

All this is not to say that a lawful critique of formalism is impossible. Formalism may be defined as "going through the motions." It means to engage in the outward activities of worship without the engagement of heart and mind. It means to close your eyes and fold your hands during the congregational prayer without actually paying attention to what is asked of the Lord and without entering into that prayer. Formalism is shown when people listen to the Law of God but have no intention of obeying it in the regular pursuit of holiness. When mouths form



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pious words while hearts are far from God, this is formalism. Giving offerings without giving the heart likewise constitutes formalism. Formalists tolerate the preaching of the Gospel, but they do not truly receive it. They surely believe that going to church is the whole duty of man.

This tiresome ritualism offends God. Frequently His prophets condemn it. I mention only one passage: *What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New*

*moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; (Is. 1:11-15);*

So-called worship which lack true faith and real love for the living God is vain. In other words, it's a waste of time! Do we want to spend our time on Sundays in activities which weary God? So it will be if by our sham worship we attempt to disguise our unbelieving and unrepentant hearts.

Thus, as said earlier, there is a lawful place for a critique of formalism in

the church. However, when we suspect that worship is becoming formalistic, whether for ourselves or others, the solution is not to invent new forms. Without faith, the new forms, too, will soon be formalized. Whatever the nature of the form, without faith the worship will be bogus.

The solution to formalism is to breath life into the old, regulated forms of worship. This life comes via faith! Worship in this life is ever a matter of faith. We do not see Christ. We do not hear the voice of God directly, but through His written Word. The glory of heaven is not revealed. We draw near to the throne by faith, in the power of the Spirit.

Where faith is lacking, there will arise the inevitable craving for new experiences which would justify going to church. After all, a person can't go to church for nothing! Something understandable has to happen in the service to make it appealing.

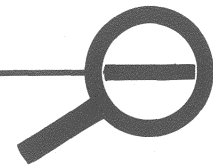
The point, however, is that all the "happenings" in the church service are experienced by faith! It takes faith to see that God's New Testament dwelling place is really lovely! It takes faith to know that the Lord Jesus is with His Church in worship. If people don't have faith, they will demand something to satisfy their senses, for without faith you live by sight, by experience and by the hunger for novelty.

Thus, we conclude by asserting that the true, spiritual worship of God must have a *heartfelt* quality. Not merely adherence to the biblical form of worship is adequate but to use those forms in faith – that really pleases God and gives glory to Him.

We can also say that, ultimately, only this kind of worship truly satisfies man. What pleases God is totally fulfilling for us, too, not in the sense that drugs fulfill and satisfy an addict, but in the sense of a real, vibrant, growing relationship with the Lord! When we worship the Lord in spirit and truth, we finally become fully human!

### A suggestion

Finally, let me make a suggestion for the new season of Bible Study beginning in September. Use the book *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy* by the Rev. G. VanDooren as a guide and reference volume for a six or eight week study about the meaning of worship. In my opinion, this would contribute to a more understanding and exuberant worship-experience. C



## The CRC Synod and the Concerned

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) of this past summer took a number of decisions that had significant impact on the concerned within the CRC.

### Messiah's CRC appeal

The officebearers of Messiah's CRC in Brooklyn, N.Y. appealed to synod protesting Classis Hudson's suspension of their minister, Steve Schlissel, from the ministry of the Word in the CRC. According to *The Banner* (June 29):

Synod zipped through the case that produced the longest report (12 pages) and perhaps some of the most fiery debate in the CRC. With hardly a pause, delegates rejected the appeal of council members regarding Schlissel's suspension on the following grounds:

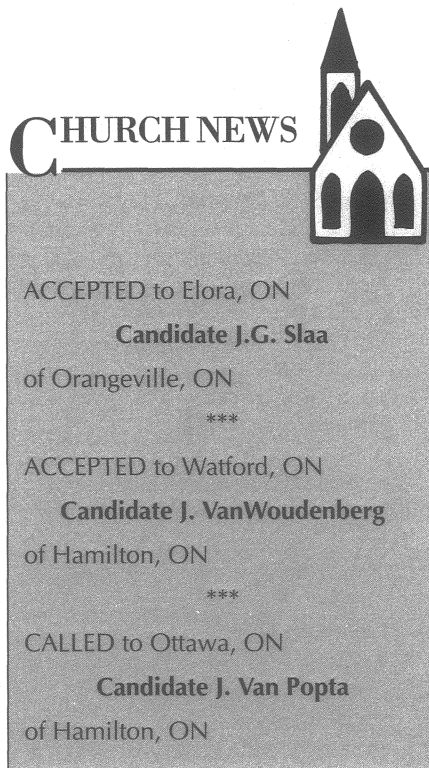
- Church Order does not specify that a local church council is the only body that may initiate and impose special discipline.
- On the basis of synodical precedents, a classis may suspend and depose a minister without a request from its congregation or council.
- The classical interim committee of Classis Hudson did not violate proper procedures or use improper material as evidence in this matter.

This decision clearly strengthens a long ongoing trend in the CRC to a more hierarchical authority structure, with the major assemblies on the top. There is no evidence in this decision of the classical Reformed principle of the primary place of the local consistory in the disciplining of an officebearer. Since this principle is still in the CRC Church Order, the first ground is in direct conflict with the rationale of their adopted Church Or-

der. Now bad decisions from the past are used to justify another bad decision.

### Congregations and ministers who leave

The synod decided that a pastor and church council who no longer belong to the CRC may not appeal their dismissal to synod. Rev. R.J. Sikkema, former pastor of the Mount Hamilton CRC, had appealed to synod for a reversal of his dismissal from the ministry by Classis Hamilton. Not that he and the council wanted to be part of the CRC again, but they needed more time to put the church's affairs in order, in accordance with rules for withdrawal outlined by Synod 1970.



**CHURCH NEWS**

ACCEPTED to Elora, ON  
**Candidate J.G. Slaa**  
of Orangeville, ON  
\*\*\*

ACCEPTED to Watford, ON  
**Candidate J. VanWoudenberg**  
of Hamilton, ON  
\*\*\*

CALLED to Ottawa, ON  
**Candidate J. Van Popta**  
of Hamilton, ON

Concerned ministers who left the CRC over the past year were dealt with in different ways at the classis level. Some resignations were accepted with regret and others were deposed. In response to overtures expressing concern about the different treatments given, the synod decided to adopt the advisory committee recommendations that encouraged flexibility depending on how a minister acted during the time up and including his leaving the office.

Synod also decided that churches who have left must stop using the name "Christian Reformed Church." How such a decision is to be enforced is not clear, but the possibility of future legal action exists.

### Women in office

For the second time (the first was 1990) in three years, synod decided to give churches "the option to nominate, elect, call, and ordain qualified women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist." The decision came after nine hours of debate and a secret ballot of 95 for and 88 against. Because this decision requires a change in the Church Order it can only take effect after being approved by next year's synod.

The editorial in the synod issue of *The Banner* characterized this decision as "an adjustment to cultural developments that have overtaken a position of the church that was long taken for granted." Must cultural developments determine the agenda and actions of a church? Should the church not be moulded by the Scriptures rather than the spirits of the age? Concerns such as this have prompted more churches to leave in the wake of this decision.

### More secessions

New secessions have taken place in Delavan, Wisconsin, Ponoka, Alber-

ta, and South Bend, Indiana. Already in April, a new congregation had also been formed in Guthrie, Ontario. All these new secession churches are quite small, but all have attendances considerably larger than their membership. All except the church at South Bend are joining the Alliance of Reformed Churches.


The CRC has always had a large group of Korean churches, especially in California, in her midst. With the decision to admit women to the offices, these churches feel betrayed given last year's decision not to admit them to the special office. The four largest Korean congregations in Los Angeles have already decided to leave the CRC and eleven others are in the process of leaving. These churches represent about 3500 members, more than half the

membership of all Korean churches in the CRC. Indeed, of the 47 Korean congregations in the CRC, these are the largest and financially strongest. At a meeting held in early August and presided over by Dr. J.E. Kim, the Korean churches decided to establish a Korean synod, independent of the CRC on October 18 of this year. This is seen as the beginning of what will be called the Korean Reformed Presbyterian Church in America. Besides the 15 congregations just mentioned, 40 others (from other church federations) have also indicated that they would participate.

### Stirrings in Iowa

Because of unrest about the direction of the CRC, the First CRC in Orange City, Iowa, planned to have a congregational meeting on August 23

to address these concerns. Four items in particular are in the forefront: the decision to admit women to the offices, the refusal of synod to condemn ministers who approve of homosexuality, the refusal of synod to condemn the use of "God as mother" terminology, and the growing trend at synod of deviating from the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions.

Up to now no secession has taken place in North-West Iowa. The discussion of these concerns could turn out to be a first step in that direction. Mid-America Reformed Seminary is just outside Orange City and several of the professors are members of First CRC in that city. 

Sources: *The Banner* (June 29, 1993), *Christian Renewal* (August 1993), *Nederlands Dagblad* (August 10, 1993).

## Canadian Reformed Home Registry

Some time ago at a officebearers conference in BC, it was suggested to set up a network to provide placement opportunities for Canadian/American Reformed teenagers. It has become apparent that at times some young members of our church community have difficulty functioning in their own home, and who, the officebearers believe would benefit from moving to a different location within our church community.

The deacons of Cloverdale wrote letters to all churches, explaining the organizational setup and purpose of this project. Reactions were received from various churches and explanations were provided. We have now arrived at the point that this project can be launched. Hopefully, it will be of benefit, and serve the purpose intended. We believe passages of God's Word speak of such situations, for instance, 1 Peter 4-9 where the apostle Peter states "Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another."

The structure of this project is as follows. A committee has been established consisting of the Chairman of the Cloverdale consistory, Chairman of the Cloverdale deacons, and a registry coordinator/administrator. Any matter to be dealt with by this committee shall be completely confidential, shared only by the committee members and parties directly related.

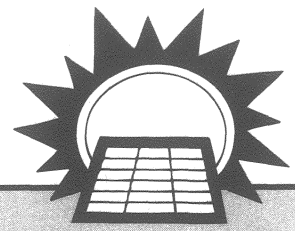
The committee has recently communicated with all the Canadian/American Reformed consistories, explaining the parameters of the Canadian Reformed Home Registry, inviting participation in this project.

If this committee can be of benefit to certain situations, please do not hesitate to contact your local consistory for further information. It is our aim to have the committee set up, and functioning by October 1, 1993.

Yours in Christ,  
R. Aikema, J. Moesker, C. Van Vliet



# RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

John 10:11

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Bible we read many times about shepherds. There were many shepherds in Israel: Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, to name a few. The prophets talk about shepherds, and in the N.T. the Lord Jesus often mentions shepherds in His teachings. Because there were many shepherds among the Israelites it was easy for them to understand those stories. To be a shepherd was not easy. A shepherd had to lead his flock often through dangerous passages in the mountains. There were many dangers: the sheep could fall into deep crevices or ravines, they could hurt themselves on brambles or sharp thorns. There were also wild animals, or even robbers, that would try to catch and kill the sheep. When a sheep would wander off from the flock, it would almost certainly get lost and be killed. A good shepherd had to always be watchful: keep an eye on all the sheep and help them, or even fight for them, to keep them out of danger. The shepherd knew the way in the mountains, and would bring the sheep through dangerous trails to green pastures with food and water. As long as the sheep would stay close to the shepherd, they would be safe.

In Psalm 23 David writes about a shepherd. He says there, "The LORD is my Shepherd." When we read or sing that psalm, then we say the same thing, "The LORD is my Shepherd." That is the reason why we, as believers, like Psalm 23. It is a psalm of comfort to us. And in John 10:11 the Lord Jesus calls Himself the good Shepherd. The Shepherd of all those who believe in Him. When we really think about what that means, we become very happy. We just have to see ourselves as one of the sheep following the Shepherd. As long as we stay close to Him and follow Him, we are safe. We don't have to worry about getting lost, we just follow the Shepherd. Sometimes the path is dangerous or scary, but He is with us. Sometimes enemies try to snatch us away, but the Shepherd will fight for us. As long as we stay close in the flock with the other sheep, we are safe. We do not have to worry about a thing, for the Shepherd knows what we need and will lead us to green pastures and the still waters. Even when we try to find our own way and leave the flock, or get hurt, the Shepherd will find us and bring us back to His flock.

But that sounds a little too nice and too easy. Sometimes we think we are following the Lord as our Guide, and yet we have to face difficulties: illnesses, loneliness, handicaps, loss of dear ones, unemployment, we can make a long list of things. Where is then the good Shepherd? Did we get lost after all? No. He is still there. The Lord is there, and He will comfort us, and enable us to cope with the difficulties. He is there with His Word and the sacraments to remind us of His promises. In v. 4 of Psalm 23 it says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil." When those difficulties are there in our lives, then the Shepherd is lead-

ing us through a dark valley. But He is still going ahead of us. All we have to do is to follow the Shepherd. He knows what we need, He knows what lies ahead of us. Let us never lose sight of Him. Put all your trust and faith in Him, "fear no evil," for the Lord is our Shepherd.

When we follow the Lord, our Shepherd, we do not have to fear. But that is not all, we even can be happy for being God's children. He will not disappoint us, for He bought us with the blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord will protect us and take care of us, and keep us out of reach of our most dreaded enemy, Satan. Nobody can take our faith away from us, for in Christ our protection is safe. The victory obtained by Jesus Christ is our guarantee for a safety that can never be broken. The Lord does not promise us that everything will be easy in our lives. But He does promise us that He will surround us with His care and protection as our perfect Father. Our real Home is the house of our Father. The good Shepherd leads us Home. We take the road that He shows us. We cannot see everything that lies ahead on that road. We can only take small pieces at a time. But we can be sure that it is the right way Home. We cannot get lost. God is with us, every step, on that sometimes very difficult road. But at the end of that road is our Father's House. Sooner or later we all will reach that Home safely. And then we will be Home for good and ever.

*The LORD my Shepherd in His love defends me.  
I shall not want; in pastures green He tends me,  
Makes me lie down, His care and mercy showing;  
Leads me where peaceful streams are gently flowing.  
He for His Name's sake surely will restore me;  
In paths of righteousness He goes before me.*

Psalm 23:1

## Birthdays in October:

**Alan Breukelman** will be 27 on the 17th  
2225-19th Street  
Coaldale AB, T1M 1G4

**Nelena Hofsink** will be 33 on the 22nd  
Bethesda Clearbrook Home  
32553 Willingdon Crescent  
Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2

**John Feenstra** will be 35 on the 25th  
"ANCHOR" Home, 30 Road, RR 2  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

**Mary Ann DeWit** will be 37 on the 28th  
Bethesda, 6705 Satchel Road, Box 40  
Mount Lehman, BC V0X 1V0

I wish you all a happy birthday!  
Until next month,

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

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# A Few Thoughts about Confessions

By G.Ph. van Popta

In the past while I have had several opportunities to discuss with fellow Canadian Reformed people the point of how we should evaluate our confessions. The conversations centred on the question whether the Three Forms of Unity are the only faithful summaries of the Word of God or if there are other faithful summaries out there somewhere in the world.

The Canadian and American Reformed Churches form a confessional community. We love our confessions. By way of the Three Forms of Unity, solidarity of faith is maintained among us as believers and as churches. We thank and praise the LORD God for illuminating de Bres, Ursinus, Olevianus, and the fathers of Dort and enabling them to write beautiful and accurate summaries of the divine doctrine. May the LORD God give us the courage to "offer (our) backs to stripes, (our) tongues to knives, (our) mouths to gags, and (our) whole bodies to fire," rather than deny the truth expressed in these confessions (see introduction to The Belgic Confession).

However, we must watch that our great love for and loyalty to our confessions do not lead us to an incorrect evaluation of them. How *do* we evaluate them? Are they summaries of the doctrine of God's Word or *the* summary of the doctrine of God's Word? Do we see them as accurate and faithful expressions of the Reformed faith or as the *only* such accurate and faithful expressions? Can the Reformed faith be voiced by way of other confessions, or do the Three Forms of Unity provide the only valid vehicle?


Reformed churches historically rooted in the Netherlands hold to the Three Forms of Unity. The Belgic Con-

fession was written in what is now Belgium in the French language. We borrowed the Heidelberg Catechism from Germany. Only the Canons of Dort are truly home grown. The Three Forms of Unity are rather eclectic, but they complement one another beautifully. The Belgic Confession is our banner. By it we let the world know what we believe. By holding to the Heidelberg Catechism, we have a teaching tool surpassed by none. The Canons of Dort keep us firmly in the doctrine of the free and sovereign grace of God against the pernicious Arminian heresy rampant upon the North American continent. Via the Three Forms of Unity, we, as Reformed believers and churches, confess our faith.

But this does not mean that there are no other valid expressions of the Reformed faith. There are other Reformed believers and churches in the world who also confess the Reformed faith, but by way of different confessions. The Swiss Reformed churches adopted Heinrich Bullinger's Second Helvetic Confession, 1566. The French Reformed churches embraced John Calvin's French Confession of Faith, 1559 (adopted by the Synod of La Rochelle, 1571). The Reformed in Scotland professed their faith by way of the Scots Confession of Faith, 1560. The Protestants of England adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647. The true Reformed faith was confessed by Reformed believers in different parts of the world via different confessional statements. Let us not absolutize our confessional statements and consider them as the only possible way in which biblical truth and the Reformed faith can be expressed. Let us not believe in our confessions. Let us rather confess

what we believe by way of commonly accepted standards.

This is not to say that there are no differences between the various confessions. We can distinguish broadly between two sorts of standards. There are those which emphasize God's saving love towards miserable sinners. They very quickly begin to speak about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. The Scots Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism are examples. Then there are those which place greater emphasis on the truth of the faith. They begin with affirmations of the truths of revelation in Scripture before discussing the saving activity of God. Examples are the Second Helvetic Confession, the French Confession and the Belgic Confession. These two types of confessions are compatible as we show by embracing both the Belgic and the Heidelberg.

If one compares various confessions, e.g., the Three Forms of Unity with the Westminster Standards, he will not find the identity of sentiment nor of expression he may wish to find. As fellow Reformed believers holding to different sets of standards, we need to discuss these differences openly and honestly as we strive for concrete unity. However, he will also see that those who faithfully confess the Reformed faith, although by way of different confessions, stand together on one side of the line which separates those who confess to be saved by grace apart from works and those who would save themselves either by works or by an imagined free will. Although differences exist, he will rejoice in the concord exhibited. And so we will be able to walk together, without compromising the true faith, in mutual charity and with forbearance. 

# Stupid

By W.W.J. VanOene

*The Nederlands Dagblad of July 3rd took over some "Pastoral Notes" by the Rev. J.H. Veeffkind. These "Notes" are worth to be repeated for our readers. I have tried to retain the original flavour as much as possible.*

"So you have a different service today?" one of those who came to the service asked me last Sunday afternoon. It was not "service of the Word," but a "service of the ear"; not of speaking but of listening. This opposition is not completely correct, for in order to speak one has to have listened first; the preacher is the first one preached to. But something is clear: it is something special when as a minister you are not *standing* in the pulpit but *sitting* on a chair. It is something special for yourself, for your friends, and for your family. A free Sunday is a completely different Sunday; nothing *has* to be done, all sorts of things *may* be done. The pressure is off the kettle; it is very relaxing – being normal just like everyone else. This "normal" is now precisely so "different." For example, you are allowed simply to go to church with your family.

Understand me well: there are people who, either by nature or from grace, love to go to church twice. These people are very fortunate, I think.

I myself am not composed like that. I am more like my cousin who as a child was singing at the top of his voice: "Jerusalem, within your courts I'll praise the LORD's great Name," but then had to be lured to church with the aid of peppermints. After all, he also became a minister, so this doesn't mean all that much. When I myself was a child, we "played church" at home. "At home," that means: in the shed, and the kitchen steps were the pulpit. My brother was the minister (he still is), my sister the elder (then already, and then we are speaking of the thirties!) and I myself was the scarce audience which, however, was expelled from the church be-

cause of inattention and disturbing the order (that, too, started very early).

Between brackets – and this for the liturgically minded among us – at the beginning of the service, at the foot of the pulpit, the "elder" said to the "minister": "Happy New Year." In the course of the years I have heard quite a few elders utter many good wishes at such a moment and place, but never this classic one. Something to be followed up?

I do go to church twice a Sunday, of course, and sometimes even three times. And this because of my office. But, to be perfectly honest, when I have a Sunday off, I don't mind staying at home once. "Daddy has to babysit today" is something that would do only when the children were small. "Daddy has a headache" is an excuse that can be used a little longer and, besides, it is true once in a while, most certainly on a double day of rest.

But also without such an ironclad alibi I certainly am not always stamping and pawing to go to church and definitely not when you have already heard a "good one" in the morning. And I can assure you that it is soon good when you hear so few of them. A hungry shepherd is the least critical sheep. . .

And yet – I can so easily get into the feelings of people who think: "I'm sitting here nicely in the sun" (in summer), "cosy in my warm home" (in winter), and therefore I'll skip once today (during the whole year). I, too, have those thoughts; I, too, know that feeling.

But do you know what is so strange? When I do go to church in spite of that (I cannot justify staying at home before my children) then I enjoy it so much and it works so liberating that you don't have an inkling of it. Even if there is only one sentence from a sermon or one line from a song. And there is much more with us: grace is not merely *distributed*, grace is *being poured out* – upon your own poor self, upon your poor people, and upon a poor world.

And then I feel like shouting loudly to all those people who on Sunday afternoons continue to sit in the sun or in front of the TV: "People, don't do such a stupid thing!" Or, to say it with Andre van Duin: "Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid!"

For by means of the admonitions grace is implied. And where there is forgiveness, there is life. Hear, O citizens, hear!

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I was reading the August 13, 1993, issue of the *Clarion* and on page 342 I read "The Rev. C. Ebbings (OPC) spoke for Mid-America Reformed Seminary, sharing greetings and information with the delegates." I know of no Rev. C. Ebbings in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. I do know that there is a man by the name of Greg Eddings who is involved in the development at Mid-America and who does happen to be a member of an OP church. He is not a minister in the OPC.

Whoever it was who spoke I take it he was speaking for the Mid-America Seminary and I am sorry you identify him as OPC as this gives the impression the OPC had some kind of spokesman at this meeting.

Yours in Christ's service,  
Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk

By Aunt Betty

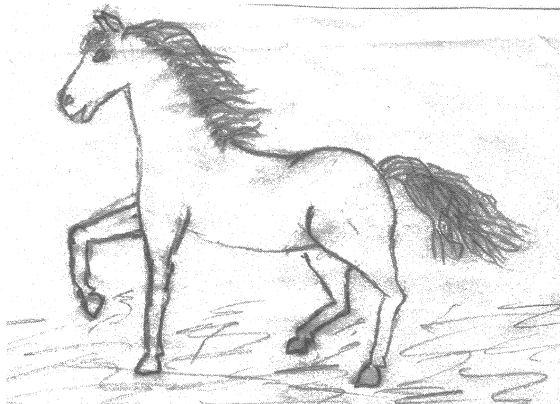


Dear Busy Beavers,

Wow! What a lot of letters I got!  
Thank you, Busy Beavers for your letters, stories, pictures,  
puzzles, and more!  
I enjoyed every bit of it!  
And now let's share the goodies around.  
Let's start with what Busy Beaver *Francine Van Woudenberg* has to share.  
Enjoy!

## Wild Horses Running

*Wild horse running, across green meadows  
he goes.  
Off to his destination which nobody knows.  
He's off to his herd, to warn them danger  
is near.  
While he herds them together they strongly  
sense his fear.  
Then off they go, a mass of flying manes  
and tails.  
They come to a large crevasse, and over each  
one sails.  
Suddenly their way is blocked, by a man on a  
swift mare.  
The herd separates, surges around him,  
missing him by a hair.  
They turn sharply, round a mountain, to the  
forest beyond,  
Where they charge up a steep hill, down the  
other side, around the pond.  
They surge on, into the woods, breaking  
through a large mass of low, bushy trees,  
Then they are safe, hidden in their secret  
hiding spot  
Where they can finally feel at ease.*



## Quiz Time!

### WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

By Busy Beaver *Cheryl Van Anandel*

Unscramble the words below to fill in the blanks in the sentences

WEHBRE _____	SNACBUPLI _____
LKUE _____	CATS _____
NEPRSET _____	YUSUR _____
CEORPPHY _____	RAMSAIA _____
ELRAPABS _____	SICSDIPEL _____
ITRUSERRECON _____	

1. A snake is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Luke wrote the books of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The word "rabbi" comes from the \_\_\_\_\_ language.
4. Jacob's well was in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Followers of Christ are called \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Tax collectors were known as \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Foretelling of future events by divine revelation is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Interest on borrowed money was called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Jesus used many short stories called \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Rising from the dead is referred to as \_\_\_\_\_.



## PICTURE CODE

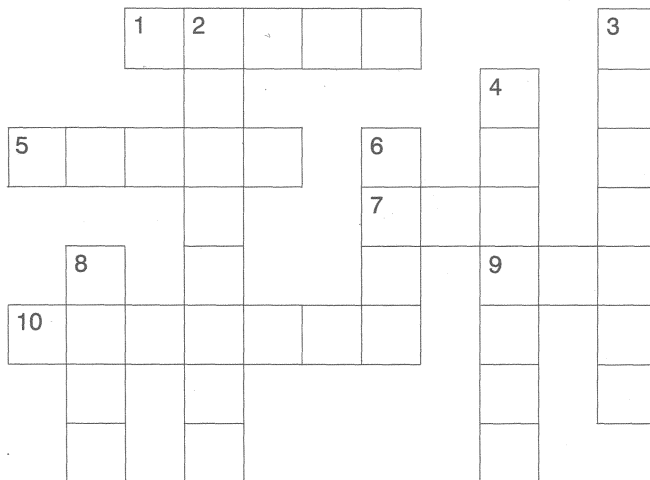
By Busy Beaver *Ruby Knol*

A - □	H - 0	O - 7	V - ♥
B - 0	I - 6	P - L	W - 田
C - 3	J - ?	Q - m:	X - 田
D - ▽	K - ~	R - {}	Y - ◇
E - 4	L - ss	S - □	Z - 3
F - 8	M - 0	T - 0	
G - Y	N - 0	U - Δ	

BUS : \_\_\_\_\_  
 0 Δ □ ◇ 0 4 □ ♥ 4 ss  
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 9 ss Δ 0

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

By Busy Beaver *Tim Sikkema*

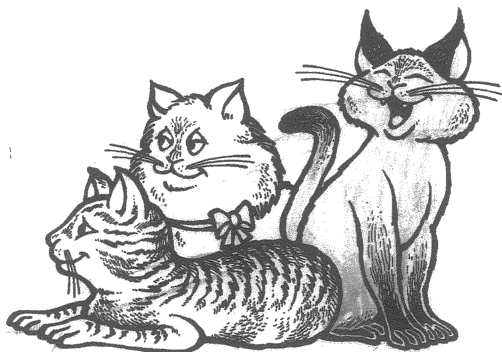


### Across:

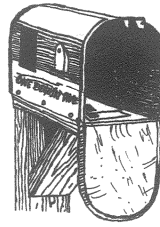
1. Animal with "pyjamas" on
5. Striped cat
7. Type of monkey
9. Australian ostrich
10. Animal with a long neck

### Down:

2. Animal with long nose
3. Antarctic bird
4. A fast spotted animal
6. "Prison" for animals
8. King of the beasts



## From the Mailbox



Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Sarah Kampen*. We are happy to have you join us! What did you enjoy most camping on Vancouver Island, Sarah? Bye for now.

Congratulations on your new sister, *Corrine Heemskerck*. I know babies are cute and fun, because we have one in our family, too!

What happened to the baby bird you found at your friend's house, Corrine?

Thank you for writing and sharing your quiz, *Amanda Tamminga*. I see you like keeping the Busy Beavers busy. How was your summer, Amanda?

I liked your picture, *Anna Kampen*. And thank you for the puzzle, too. How do you feel about being in school again, Anna?

Hello, *Cheryl Van Anandel*. I see you have been busy! How did you enjoy the summer? What was the best part of going back to school for you, Cheryl?

How is Mickey doing, *Jessica Dehaas*? Are you enjoying your club, Jessica? Sounds to me as if you had a very good summer!

You saw some pretty interesting things at the sea shore, *Charlene Veldman*. I see you are a math fan. Thanks for sharing Charlene. Have fun with your new math!

Hello, *Carolyn VanLeeuwen*. It was good to hear from you again. Thanks for sharing. How was your summer, Carolyn?

Are you looking forward to playing in the band again, *Ruby Knol*? How are your calves doing? And how do you feel about being in school again? I hope you get a pen pal soon, Ruby. Thanks for sharing!

I can see you are pretty excited about that parade, *Janina Veldman*! And I think you had a great time, right? I hope you'll write and tell us more. Bye for now, Janina.

I see you have been very busy, *Sharalee Vandebos*. Thank you for sharing your puzzles. How was your summer, Sharalee?

How did it feel going to the university for your music exam, *Francine Vanwoudenberg*? And how did your camping go? I'll be looking forward to hearing from you about your new minister, Francine!

So how is your chess game coming along, *Tim Sikkema*? I admire you for learning such a hard game! How did you like the books you got for your birthday? Maybe you will write and tell us about them? Thanks for your puzzle, Tim. Bye for now.

### PEN PALS WANTED!

Amanda Grit (age 11)  
 264 Edenwood Crescent  
 Orangeville, ON  
 L9W 4M7

Ruby Knol (age 12)  
 Box 176  
 Neerlandia, AB  
 T0G 1R0

Who would like to exchange letters with these Busy Beavers?

Don't delay. Write today!

Busy Beavers, it is time to close our *Summer Quiz Contest*.

If you would like to send in your answers, please do it right away.

Till next time!

Love to you all,  
 Aunt Betty