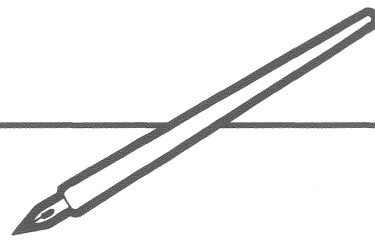




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A Christless Commons

On February 18, 1994, the Members of Parliament in the Canadian House of Commons voted to delete the name of Jesus Christ from the prayers uttered in the House.

Each session of Parliament opens with prayer. These prayers represent a vestige of the more or less Christian heritage of this country. The founding fathers of Canada believed in God and His supremacy. They thought it good to begin sessions of Parliament by calling upon the Name of God. Until this past February 18th, prayers could be offered up to God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was considered good to ask God's blessing upon the proceedings for the sake of Jesus Christ.

No more

The Name of Jesus Christ is not to be mentioned in prayer in the House of Commons. They have deleted the Name of our Lord. They have banned the Name which is above every name, put in on the index of words not to be used in the House of Commons. Jesus Christ is not politically correct.

The Honourable Members of Parliament would have done better to delete *prayer* from the House of Commons. Better not to pray at all than not to pray in the Name of Jesus Christ.

To whom are the Honourable Members of Parliament praying since February 28, 1994? Are the Members praying to a generic God? Is there a no-name brad God out there somewhere to whom all people can pray whether they be Muslim, Jew, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Pagan, Atheist, Agnostic? . . .

Better not to pray at all than to pray to a non-specific God

The apostle of Christ wrote: *"For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords' – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist"* (1 Corinthians 8:5,6).

The apostle of Christ wrote: *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5).

There is only one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is only one mediator. His name is Jesus Christ. There is only one way to God the Father. Through Jesus Christ. There is no access to the one only God but by way of Jesus Christ. He, only, is the Way. A prayer which ex-

cludes the Name of Christ is not a prayer. A prayer which leaves out the Name of Christ is pagan mumbo-jumbo.

Christ, the King, has been excommunicated from the Commons. The Sovereign of the Dominion of Canada has been barred access. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, worthy of all honour, has no place in the midst of the Honourable Members.

There is a sad irony here

Only recently the two Scripture passages engraved on the Peace Tower were spruced up. On the one side of the Peace Tower, which points to heaven from between the House of Commons and the Senate, you will read these words: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea." (Psalm 72:8, KJV).

These words were thought to be appropriate for the Dominion of Canada, a land straddling a continent, touching three seas, the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Arctic. The founding fathers of this country acknowledge that the King of whom Psalm 72 speaks, Jesus Christ, the Son of David, has dominion over Canada.

By way of the Peace Tower all Canadians proclaim that Jesus Christ rules Canada from sea to sea. Since February 18th, the Name of the King and Lord of Canada has been banished from the prayers in the House of Commons.

On the other side of the Peace Tower you will read these words: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). The vision referred to is the Word of God as it came to God's people by way of the visions of the prophets. Where there is no vision, where the Word of God is no longer heard, there people perish. There you will find death.

The Word of God proclaims that the only way to the only God is through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ. The Honourable Members have consciously, purposefully rejected this Word. Death follows.

On the last day, the day of the return of Christ, when Christ will forcefully bring His kingdom from heaven to earth, then all will bow before Him. The Church of Christ will bend her knee before Him in adoration and thankfulness. We will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. His foes will also kneel in front of Him, but, as Psalm 72:9 says, only to lick the dust. He will plant his foot upon the necks of those who hated His Name so much they excluded it from the prayers in the Canadian House of Commons on February 18, 1994, the day the Commons officially became Christless. **C**

Theonomy and Christian Reconstructionism¹

By R. Aasman

I INTRODUCTION

In recent years, terms like theonomy and Christian reconstructionism are being used and discussed in Reformed and Presbyterian circles. Although many identify theonomy and Christian reconstructionism as being the same thing, there are distinctions. Let us define our terms. Literally, theonomy means the law of God; and the implication of this is that one is bound to God's law. For instance Herman Ridderbos in *The Coming of the Kingdom* speaks about the theonomy of the gospel: within the kingdom of God there is the demand to keep the law of God.¹ Who of us would not call ourselves theonomists in the sense that we are under the law of God in Jesus Christ as Paul speaks about it in 1 Cor. 9, and as we confess it in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 32-44 and that therefore our ethics are based on God's law?

Nevertheless, more recently, the term theonomy has been coined by people with the basic methodology or hermeneutical approach to Scripture which advocates a continued normativity of the moral and judicial laws of the Old Testament, along with the penal sanctions of the Old Testament for today; and in their opinion, these are not only for the Church but for society as a whole.

What is the relationship between this theonomy and Christian reconstructionism? Christian reconstructionism takes the basic hermeneutical approach of theonomy to Scripture and starts to apply it in a concrete way in order to transform or reconstruct every area of life in this world to conform to the law of God. Reconstructionism also is post-millennial in that it optimistically believes in a world-wide dominion of Christ where the kingdom of Christ penetrates every section of life. This will

happen as every aspect of life bows in obedience before the law of God. In fact, the civil government is to enforce the Old Testament laws and sanctions so that society is to be reconstructed as a Christian society. We should understand that every reconstructionist is a theonomist, but not every theonomist necessarily has all the distinctives of reconstructionism.

There have been many bitter attacks against theonomy in the press in recent years, especially because of statements by theonomists which advocate, for instance, that the civil government should execute homosexuals. To be fair, it must be pointed out that theonomists do not advocate forcing their reconstruction

program on society. Rather, this has to be taught and preached to society till almost all accept it. Then there will hardly be any homosexuals and other similar problems which would require execution. This program could take hundreds of thousands of years.

The reason for theonomy's popularity rest squarely on the religious wasteland created by liberal theology and on general social deterioration. Many people in the USA, for instance, are really upset by the lawlessness throughout society and are looking for a blueprint to rebuild morals and values and thus save American civilization. It is attracting American evangelicals, fundamentalists and some charismatics – people who



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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – A Christless Commons — G.Ph. van Popta	106
Theonomy and Christian Reconstruction: — R. Aasman	107
Remember Your Creator – Call Upon God: — R. Schouten	110
Ray of Sunshine — Mrs. R. Ravensbergen	112
A Visit to Scotland — J. Visscher	113
Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland — J. Visscher	116
...a servant and a steward — Yul Krikke	118
Press Release	119
Letter to the Editor	120
Book Review — J. De Jong	120
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	121

are interested in seeing their faith take control of every aspect of life, including social and political spheres.

The proponents of theonomy are varied. The father of American reconstructionism is Rousas J. Rushdoony who wrote *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. He is unique among theologians in that he wants to maintain Old Testament dietary laws. Another theologian is Gary North, who is well known for his economic policies and also his acerbic way of writing. He wrote the introduction to Greg L. Bahnsen's book, *By This Standard*, in which he disdainfully warns that theonomy is where the action is, and anyone who does not go along with it will be out of the ecclesiastical limelight.² Then there is James Jordan who is such a moderate that it may be asked whether he is a true reconstructionist. But the real dogmatist of the group appears to be Greg L. Bahnsen. Because of his clear and articulate way of presenting the basic tenets of theonomy, his works deserve the focus of our attention.

There are some very obvious attractions to theonomy. It emphasizes the infallibility of Scripture; it also emphasizes the sovereign grace of God and man's utter dependence on God for every gift; and there is the very clear directive to be a living and practising Christian in every aspect of life. There is much to be appreciated here. The question is: do theonomy and Christian reconstructionism present a correct interpretation and understanding of Scripture? This article will attempt to answer that question.

II BASIC TEACHING OF THEONOMY

1 Relationship of Old and New Covenants

At the immediate outset of his book, *By This Standard*, Greg Bahnsen states his basic methodology: *we presume our obligation to obey any Old Testament commandment unless the New Testament indicates otherwise. We must assume continuity with the Old Testament rather than discontinuity.*³ Bahnsen warns against those who would stress discontinuity between the two covenants such as the dispensationalists, as well as those who are squeamish about applying the strict laws of the Old Testament to today's society. A key word for Bahnsen is "exhaustively" – Old Testament laws must be kept exhaustively, in minute

detail. The key passage for Bahnsen and all theologians is Mt. 5:17-20 where Christ says during his Sermon on the Mount: *Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them.* He offers an exegetical study of this passage in his *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*. (p.39ff). Bahnsen translates and exegetes verse 17 to mean that Christ came to confirm, establish or ratify the Old Testament law. That means: show the Old Testament law's continuing authority and validity – not one jot or tittle shall pass away from the law until heaven and earth pass away. Based on this translation and exegesis of Mt.5, Bahnsen speaks of the abiding validity of the law in exhaustive detail and the continuity of the covenant. Here is the key to his methodology for interpreting Scripture. He immediately adds that not everything in the Old Testament is to be literally observed – he recognizes the progress of redemptive history and the factor of Old Testament shadows. What is not to be observed is localized imperatives, cultural details, administrative details for Israel, and ceremonial laws. He speaks of the ceremonial law as the redemptive rituals which have been rendered outwardly inoperative or out of gear because of the coming of Jesus Christ. His understanding of Gal. 3 and 4 which speak of the law as the tutor till Christ, is that it applies only to this ceremonial law. In other words, what is to be exhaustively kept in the modern day is Old Testament moral and civil law, including Old Testament penology.

On what basis does Bahnsen presume such continuity between the Old Testament and New Testament? Bahnsen, together with Gary North in his book *Unconditional Surrender*, and other theologians, stress the immutability of God. Bahnsen explains this in chapter 5 of *By this Standard*. God does not change: He does not change His justice, His standards, His person – God does not change! Thus He is not a God of double standards, operating from a different standard in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. God has one moral code, one law, that is the same for all of history. Theologians say: as soon as people recognize that today and start keeping the Old Testament laws exhaustively, then America can be rebuilt as a Christian nation, enjoying her peace and freedom. It is the institutional churches of the last few decades that have sabo-

taged this continuity and they are to blame for much of society's ills.

In chapters 11, 12 and 13 of Bahnsen's book, *By This Standard*, he attempts to show how the New Testament supports Old Testament law. The New Testament really does not contain much in the way of law because it relies on the Old Testament for that and presumes that we will turn to the Old Testament for directives of God's revealed will. Naturally, the famous passage of 2 Tim. 3:16,17 – *all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching* – is used to show why the New Testament does not need to contain many laws. Here are a few of Bahnsen's examples which show how the New Testament supports the Old Testament. The rule of two or three witnesses in Deut. 17:6 is supported by Jesus Christ in Mt. 18:16 which speaks of two or three witnesses in discipline matters. The condemnation of homosexuality and bestiality in Lev. 18:22 and 20:16 is supported by Paul in Rom. 1. The rule of Deut. 25:4 which speaks about not muzzling an ox when it treads the grain is supported by Paul in 1 Cor. 9:8-14 where he applies this law to ministers who live from the gospel. It is through such examples – not too many of them at that – that Bahnsen makes the conclusion that New Testament clearly relies on Old Testament laws and their application for today.

As far as the categories of law are concerned, Bahnsen countenances two: moral and ceremonial.⁴ He is adamant that judicial or civil law is part of the moral law. In fact, he teaches that the judicial or civil law is merely the moral law illustrated in concrete applications. (In order to make clear what we are talking about, he uses this example: the moral law says you must love your neighbour; this moral law is applied in a concrete way in a judicial or civil law such as Deut. 22:8 where God's covenant people are commanded to put a parapet on the roof of their house for the protection of their neighbour). Bahnsen is doing two things with this teaching. In the first place he wants to avoid placing the judicial law on the same level in redemptive history as the ceremonial which would abrogate its use in the New Testament. In the second place he wants to stay in line with the confessions of his Church. The Westminster Confession states in XIX. 4: *To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not*

obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may remain. Most would conclude from the Westminster Confession that general equity is the moral law, and the general moral precepts which underlie the specifics of Israel's judicial law remain, but those judicial laws themselves are no longer in use. But Greg Bahnsen says that judicial laws are simply illustrative precepts which apply the moral law – for instance, prohibiting incest, homosexuality, etc. He admits the outward forms of these judicial laws are no longer binding – in agreement with the Westminster Confession. But their general equity, that is their underlying principles, are abiding. Now those underlying principles of the judicial case laws are to be applied in an equitable way cross-culturally, from Israel to today's society. Thus the law of putting a parapet or fence around your roof in Israel is applied cross-culturally to today by putting a fence around your swimming pool. In this way Bahnsen stresses the continuity of Old Testament laws exhaustively – only adapt them from Israel's culture to our culture today. Clearly, for Bahnsen, the underlying principles of the judicial law means maintaining the entire substance of the law with only a minor outward cultural adaptation.

Now the major point for theonomy is the purpose of this law. This is explained in chapter 21 of *By This Standard*. Besides the very obvious purpose of the law which is to define sin, drive the sinner to Christ and be the pattern for sanctification (I might add that this is beautifully explained by G.B.), there is also the political use of the law which is to restrain the evil of unregenerate men. A key passage for Bahnsen is 1 Tim. 1:9 and 10, *the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient.* In his opinion, he is firmly in the line of Calvin and Luther as to this political use of the law. This use of the law is not meant to save anybody but simply restrain ungodly men and be a deterrent. It is the civil magistrate who will have to fulfil this use of the law by using the laws of the Old Testament. This brings us naturally to the second part of the basic and distinctive teaching of theonomy: separation of Church and state.

2. Separation of Church and State

Theonomists such as Bahnsen and North have biting criticism for anyone who dares to suggest that Old Testament law and politics are fulfilled in Christ

and no longer have literal application for governments today. To understand Bahnsen it is important to follow his line of logic. You can see it worked out, for instance, in chapters 24-26 of *By This Standard*. He says: God's moral law is for all men. This is seen in Rom. 1 where Paul speaks of men knowing God from His creation which leaves them without excuse, and in Rom. 2 where he speaks of Gentiles who show that what the law requires is written on their hearts. Now that moral law for all man which was present among men from the very beginning of the world was standardized in the laws for Israel. Therefore it is only logical that all men who know and are bound to the moral law should, still today, turn to the moral law standardized for Israel and make full use of this great blessing of God. The key text for Bahnsen is Deut. 4:5-8 where Moses speaks of the surrounding nations marvelling at Israel's God and at the law given by God to His covenant people. From this Bahnsen draws his very basic conclusion that God gave Israel the law so that it could eventually become the law for the world. To substantiate this he points out how God used secular rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, calling them his servants. This is upheld by Paul in Rom. 13 where secular rulers are to be obeyed as men who have authority from God – they are called God's ministers. The logical conclusion is that if the secular ruler is God's servant, then he must use God's law as laid down in the Old Testament.

OUR COVER



This includes Old Testament penology, such as the laws of restitution and the death penalty for a variety of serious sins. Strikingly, Bahnsen says penal sanctions of God's law are not culturally variable. How do you change the outward form of the death penalty? A person who commits bestiality is to be put to death. Period! And it is the state that must do this. There is no way that capital punishment in Israel is fulfilled in the excommunication of the Christian Church. Church discipline is another matter altogether and it is something which does not address the ills of society.

This last point of distinguishing between what the New Testament Church does and what the state does becomes a tricky matter for Christian reconstructionism. Bahnsen works that out in the following manner in chapter 27 of *By This Standard*. In the Old Testament there is a clear distinction between Church and state, typified by the clear distinction between Aaron and Moses. Basically it is the task of the Church to be the agency of redemption. As for the state it has no redemptive purposes and its civil laws have no redemptive effect. Bahnsen uses as example the laws for the stranger and sojourner in the Old Testament. God was concerned with social and political issues independent of religious issues. This relation of Church and state in the Old Testament is to be reflected in the relation of Church and state today. Bahnsen does not draw an exact parallel between Church-state relations in the Old Testament and New Testament, but his point is that the law revealed to Israel as a state is still valid for our present day society.⁵

A key passage for Bahnsen is Mt. 28:18-20: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* Jesus Christ is the King of kings who will judge magistrates for the way they rule. He therefore commissions the Church to do something for society in that it is to teach the nations about socio-political morality and the validity of the Old Testament law.⁶ Christianity has to be a salt and a light to the world also in the socio-political sphere of life. In this connection we should also note what Gary North writes in *Unconditional Surrender* where he makes a clear distinction between Church and kingdom, emphasizing the Church is not the kingdom – but it is the agency of the later.⁷ The kingdom of God is as broad as the world and it is the goal of

God's dominion assignment. God is not just the God of his Church, but He is the living God over all creation. As Christ made clear in Mt. 28, Christians must take the law of God into every section of the world in order that there may be a Christian society and a world-wide dominion of God. This brings us to the final basic and distinctive teaching of theonomy: postmillennialism.

3. Postmillennialism

Bahnsen teaches that postmillennialism is not integral to theonomy, though it is to Christian reconstructionism.⁸ We should take note of his cautionary remarks. However my reading suggests that theonomy naturally leads one to postmillennialism, that is to say, a certain kind of postmillennialism. Combining that with the fact that we are also examining Christian reconstructionism, it is necessary for us to look at postmillennialism. Gary North writes about it more extensively in *Unconditional Surrender*.

Strictly speaking, the postmillennialism of the theonomic movement envi-

sions a future glorious age for the Church here on earth, where there will be widespread worship of God. This is not to say there will be no sin, or a utopia. Naturally this fits in with the distinctive teaching of Christian reconstructionism. It is a very robust movement which envisions a restructuring of society along the lines mentioned above, which will culminate in a glorious age where almost all men will serve Christ. There will be peace, law and order, and prosperity. Gary North's interpretation of Mt. 24 for instance, sees the wars and rumors thereof as a time that will pass in history, and then will come the golden age of peace, prosperity and of Christ's world-wide dominion as the devil is bound.⁹ It is up to men to subdue the world for the glory of God, and then there will be the increased possibility of Christ's return – for his enemies will be made a stool for his feet. The Church is to be on the attack, and in the end it will only remain for the angels to do the mopping up. The Church is to be confident and muscular

– get rid of that defeatist attitude so typical of dispensationalism which allows the world to descend into its spiritual morass and decay. This is dominion theology. Its tool is the law. In keeping with Mt. 28 the world is to be put under the discipline of the law, in order to inaugurate the millennial rule of the Christ, and then the end can come.

(to be continued)

¹Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of The Kingdom* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975), p. 291.

²Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), p. xxvi.

³Bahnsen, *Standard*, p. 3.

⁴Bahnsen, *Standard*, p. 135.

⁵Bahnsen, *Standard*, p. 289.

⁶Bahnsen, *Standard*, p. 321.

⁷Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), p. 230.

⁸Greg L. Bahnsen, *No Other Standard* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), p. 52.

⁹North, *Surrender*, pp. 303ff.



REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Call Upon God²

As discussed in the previous article, prayer is dialogue with our kingly Creator-Redeemer who reveals His Name to us in Scripture. As we listen to the Scriptural teaching about prayer, we notice that there are many things which we ought to bring before the Lord.

Thanksgiving

In the first place, there is *thanksgiving*. The content of thanksgiving is vast, as extensive as life itself. For in God we live and move and have our being. If we realize that we owe life itself to God, and that He sustains us from moment to moment, thanks will never be far from our lips.

As we overhear the inspired saints in the Psalms, we find them praising God for His wonderful deeds of creation and

salvation, for His steadfast love, for specific acts of deliverance, for the expansion of the Kingdom, for food and drink and family, for the beauty of the earth and for many other things indeed.

If we listen to the thanksgiving of the apostle Paul in his various letters, we observe His genuine gratitude for the faith of all Christians, for the triumph of the Gospel in the world, for the love of other Christians toward himself, for the divine supplying of all needs, for the growth of the Church in love and knowledge of Christ.

Paul also leaves us with exhortations to be faithful in giving thanks, not only in good situations, but in all circumstances (I Thess. 5:18). We may think that our lives are a dreadful misery but we are not in hell. Therefore, even

in persecution or in sickness or economic distress, there is ample reason for abounding in thanksgiving (Col. 2:7). Again, the more we nurture the knowledge of God through the study of Scripture, the more we will be sensitive to the river of grace and peace irrigating our lives from day to day and so we will increase in appreciation.

Adoration

Closely connected with thanksgiving is *adoration* and *praise*. In prayer, we declare our love for God and we proclaim before Him His greatness. Very often in the Scriptures, we hear the saints listing in their prayers the many revealed works of God.

For example, Daniel begins his prayer in chapter nine of his prophecies

by saying: "O Lord, the great and terrible God, who keepest covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. . . ."

Or, consider the beautiful manner in which Ezra begins his penitential prayer as recorded in Neh. nine: "Thou art the LORD, thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and thou preservest all of them; and the host of heaven worships thee" (vs. 6).

For another dimension of this adoration of God, consider how in many of the Psalms, the authors list in great detail the attributes of God (see, e.g. Ps. 100:6; 145:8-9).

If our prayer life becomes stale, would it not be a great thing to be recharged by contemplating in Scripture the astounding perfections and works of God? Would not such study awaken our love for God? From our full hearts fresh words would flow forth again to Father in heaven. Too often our prayer is stifled because our theology is impoverished. We have a miniature deity and so our prayers are also slight and without ardor.

Confession

A necessary component of prayer is *confession of sin*. Apart from humble remorse, the sinner need expect nothing from God. Prayer that pleases God must reflect an awareness of our unworthiness to draw near to the King. Such prayer relies not on personal merit, but on divine grace. Nothing kills prayer more quickly than a spirit of pride and self-righteousness.

With Daniel, the godly will always pray like this: "O my God, incline thy ear and heart; open thy eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy. O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive . . ." (Dan. 9:18).

Because of our personal unworthiness, prayer is always in the Name of Christ. In Him, the forgiving favor of God becomes manifest. He is Jesus who saves His people from their sins (Mt.1:21). He paid for those sins and today He intercedes for His people. When they call upon God, their prayers are heard for the sake of Christ who sits at the Father's right hand. His holy Name makes it possible for miserable sinners to seek the Father's ear. We may come to the throne with boldness and

confidence only because Christ is there as our Advocate. God's throne is dreadful and awful, but Christ has changed it to a throne of grace. Therefore, we have boldness and confidence of access to God (compare Heb.4:14-16; 1 John 2:1; Eph. 3:12).

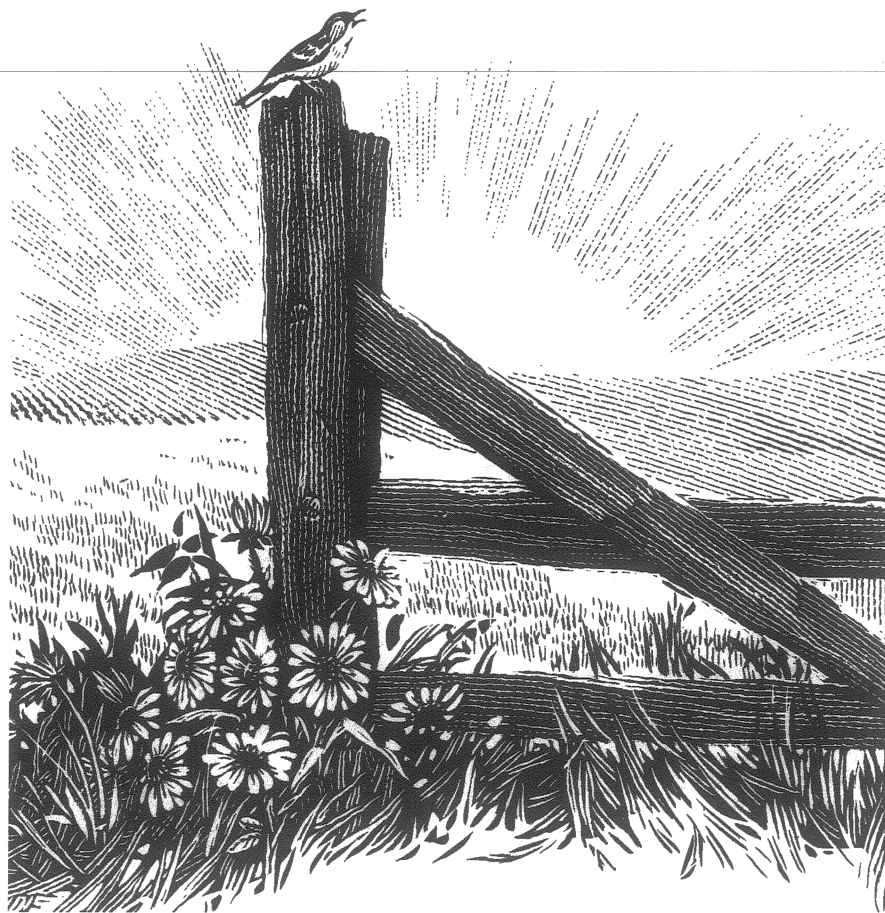
Prayer

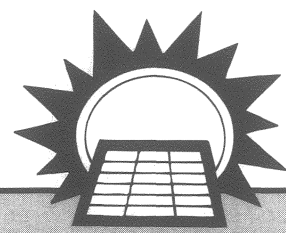
A further ingredient of drawing near to God is actual *prayer*. We often use this word to describe the whole act of coming before God, but it actually refers specifically to the bringing of our requests to the Lord. People who know their great deficiencies will have many requests. They know that without God's unceasing help and grace, they are paralyzed for Christian living. Without Him, believers know, they can do no good. Outside of communion with Him, they are useless for His Church and Kingdom. What motivates true prayer, then, is the sense that we are beggars before God. We have nothing, while all riches are His.

On the other hand, nothing kills prayers so effectively as a sense of self-sufficiency. The delusion of humanism is independence from God and the refusal to admit need. Many people in our society call upon God only in the moment of extreme crisis, when all other resources have proved obviously ineffective. However, while desperation can drive people to prayer, it can never keep them in prayer. Only a continuing sense of weakness and emptiness will lead us to seek the face of God who can fill us and make us strong.

In order to encourage our prayers, the Bible reveals God as a generous Father to His children. Indeed, He appears to us in Scripture as the "overflowing fountain of all good" (compare Ps. 145:7, 9; 100:5). He says: "ask and it will be given you" (Mt. 7:7). By revealing Himself to us in His bounteous goodness, God attracts us to Himself so that we feel free to bring our needs before Him.

(to be continued) **C**





By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“and He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.”

Matthew 4:23

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this chapter Matthew is telling us about Jesus. The Lord Jesus must have been very busy. He did not have very much time, and there was so much to teach and so much to preach about. When the people found out that Jesus was healing the sick, there was an endless line-up of people, all waiting for their turn to be healed. No wonder: you would go to Him blind, or deaf, or unable to walk, or with a terrible illness, or as an epileptic, and you would go back home seeing, hearing, walking, healthy. That was almost too nice to be true and yet it was true.

Why did the Lord do that? Why did He take so much time healing people, whereas eventually they would get sick and die, for everyone has to die sometime. Did He do it just to impress the people? Can we find comfort in what we read about Jesus' actions, especially when we are daily confronted with our diseases or infirmity?

Healing people was not the only thing Jesus did. It says, too, that He traveled around and preached the gospel. He was able to preach like no one else. Jesus could not only proclaim that God's salvation would come, but He Himself brought that salvation. He did not only say, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand," but He preached the gospel, "I am the beginning of God's new Kingdom of grace and mercy, in which the forgiveness of all your sins is granted to you." He tells the people that God rules through Him, saving their lives from the power of sin. That is the promise of God's new Kingdom. Included in that promise are all kinds of rich treasures, for when the sins are forgiven, the consequences of sin will be gone as well. The consequences of sin are all the misery, difficulties, sicknesses, handicaps, and every other cause of unhappiness. Forgiveness of sins and sickness just can't go together. Therefore, because in Christ Jesus there was no sin, all the infirmities had to be removed out of His presence. That is how Jesus preached Himself as the gospel of the new Kingdom. All the healings He performed came together with the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins.

What does that mean to us today? Everything that is damaged or out of order in life is still caused by sin. Of course we can never say that it is a personal thing. Nobody gets punished with a disease or a handicap for his/her personal sins. God tells us differently. But because there is still sin in the world, much sin!, that's why the consequences of sin are still here, too: much unhappiness, many terrible diseases, much imperfectness, many handicaps. Yet there is comfort for all those who look for and pray for Christ's guidance, and for

all those who believe and confess that through Christ's suffering there is complete forgiveness of all our sins. When Jesus healed and preached, the people got the proof and a foretaste of what was to come. It was a promise for the future, not only for the people who saw the miracles and were healed, but also for us. Through Him any injury, limitation, loneliness, sickness, will disappear. For in and through Jesus Christ our sins will disappear. In Jesus Christ the love of God appeared into the world. And all those who believe in Him will have eternal life. The gospel that the Lord Jesus preached in Galilee is preached to us today. In Jesus Christ the love of God reaches for our heart, and via our heart it renews us, no matter how damaged and hurt our life may be. In Jesus Christ God restores life. All the sin and its consequences will be wiped out.

So we can read about Jesus Christ and all the miracles He performed. We still have to struggle on with our difficulties. But it is not a hopeless struggle; we are only in a waiting period. For Jesus Christ has performed the biggest miracle of all: through His suffering and His death on the cross He has cured and freed us from all our sins and misery.

*All the nations shall revere Thee;
All the kings of earth shall fear Thee,
For Thou shalt Thy city build,
To be with Thy glory filled.
Thou shalt set Thy congregation
Firm on Zion's strong foundation.
When we pray, Lord, Thou shalt hear us;
When we suffer, Thou art near us.*

Psalm 102:7

Birthdays in April:

Derek Kok

"Anchor" Home, 30 Rd., RR2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
Derek will be 24 on the 2nd.

Marinus Foekens

27 O'Neil Street
Chatham, ON N7M 3A4
Marinus will be 42 on the 19th.

Arlene De Wit

c/o P. De Wit
Barnston Island, Surrey, BC V3T 4W2
Arlene will be 33 on the 23rd.

I wish all three of you a happy birthday.
Until next month,

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

A Visit to Scotland

By J. Visscher

(In the Year-End issue of *Clarion* the first part of my trip on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches was reported on. Here follows the concluding portion.)

On to Scotland

Early on the morning of May 15, 1993, I left Hardenberg for Amsterdam and boarded a flight to Edinburgh on Air UK. The flight was uneventful, although I was shocked to see all the snow on the hills around Edinburgh. Apparently they had had a real torrential downpour the previous night and at the higher elevations it had turned to snow.

I was officially welcomed by Mr. Andrew Jack and his two sons. His father, Mr. Donald Jack, was the official organizer for the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, which had requested our churches to send a representative. I was then taken to the home of Professor Emeritus C. Graham, where I had lunch. That afternoon I tried to assist a son-in-law of Prof. Graham's in locating the Rev. J.J. Peterson of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (a man well-known to some of us as "Texas Jack"). Although we spent quite some time at the train station, we did not find him. We returned to the Graham residence where an excellent supper awaited us. Later that evening I was brought to my place of residence, the Ellwyn Hotel on Moira Terrace. The FCS is in the habit of lodging official delegates to their General Assembly at various hotels in the city at their own expense.

A Sunday in the Free Church

I was picked-up the next morning for worship by Mr. A. MacDonald, an elder in one of the Edinburgh churches. Rev. Cl. Stam and I had made his acquaintance in 1990. Together we went to the Buccleugh and Greyfriars Free Church in central Edinburgh. At 11:00 a.m. the service started under the leadership of a guest minister, the Rev. Robert Smith. He preached on Luke 23:34 and presented a very Scriptural,

Christ-centered sermon. The Psalms 123, 119, 8 and 20 were sung.

For your information it should be noted that offerings are placed in large brass bowls as one enters the auditorium. Whenever prayers are uttered, the entire congregation stands. Singing is done seated. The liturgy is very simple and consists of prayer, singing, Scripture reading and sermon. No vatum. and salutation are given, but there is always a benediction. In the morning the children left the service for Bible classes after part of the sermon was addressed to them. In the evening they remained throughout. Apparently that practice varies, as does the matter of Bible translation. Some churches use the KJV, others the NIV.

For lunch and the afternoon (including high tea) I went to the home of Elder MacDonald, along with Dr. C. Andrews, a retired medical missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia (PCEA), and Prof. Graham.

That evening at 6:30 p.m. I listened again to the Rev. R. Smith. This time his text was Job 19:23-27. Again the sermon was true to Scripture, sound in doctrine and warm in application. Altogether it was not as well-structured as the morning sermon, with the result that the preacher fell into repetition. (But then, what minister does not?)

After the service, Elder MacDonald took me to his house again where he attempted to feed me once more. (I have observed throughout my Scottish experience that this is a people who know how to eat. I am surprised that their dimensions do not more often reflect their appetite.) Later that evening I was brought back to my hotel.

The Opening of the General Assembly

Monday, May 17 turned out to be somewhat of a free day. I took the bus to the heart of the city, brought an official document to Rev. J.J. Petersen at the Carlton Hotel. (He had suddenly appeared the previous evening when he

walked into the evening service at B & G. Apparently he had arrived early in Edinburgh on Saturday, tried to contact Prof. Graham but had not succeeded, managed to get a good deal at one of the better hotels in town, and suddenly there he was.)

For lunch, I and a number of other members of the Free Church were taken to the Mount Royal Hotel. It was very good, even if it was lamb. That afternoon I went to the Free Church College which overlooks the heart of the city and historic Princess Street and spent my time reading reports that would be dealt with at the General Assembly.

At 6:00 p.m. the General Assembly opened with a prayer meeting at which the Rev. D. MacDonald, the retiring Moderator, preached a sound Biblical sermon on Is. 49:4-6. After the service, the new Moderator was installed. He was the Rev. Clement Graham, emeritus professor of the Free Church College and Principal Clerk of the Assembly. This was Prof. Graham's second time as Moderator. He had also been Moderator in 1969. As such he was being accorded a singular honour seeing that very few men have served twice in that position. It may be noted that he is in his mid-seventies and he was approaching fifty years in the ministry. (After seeing him in action as Moderator I must say that he did a most amazing job. Blending rich Scottish humour with a deep knowledge of Presbyterian polity, he led the Assembly with great skill.)

Later that evening there was the official Moderator's reception to which I was formally invited. It took place in the Assembly Hall of the College, a very old and ornate room, filled with historic momentos and an exquisite ceiling. After some short and humorous speeches addressed to the chairman, we were invited to help ourselves to food and refreshments laid out on an enormous table in the center of the hall. During this standing reception, I renewed acquaintance with Rev. Bill UnderHay

who serves on PEI, with Rev. Jim Gillies who serves in Glasgow and had been in Langley in 1989 and the Rev. John Macleod who serves in the northern Highlands and whom I had met at the ICRC (Edinburgh) in 1985.

Towards the close of the evening a video about the Free Church was shown and proved very informative. (I was going to buy a copy; however, it is recorded on the European format and has to be transferred. I was told that this would be done in the future and that then a copy could be ordered and sent. I hope that several copies can be purchased and that arrangements can be made for it to be shown in Canada in order to familiarize our people with the FCS.)

At the close of the evening, Rev. Petersen (who was now staying at the same hotel) and I were chauffeured back to the Ellwyn Hotel. Yes, you read right "chauffeured." From now on and for the duration of the Assembly, we are picked up every morning and brought back by a man in a black suit driving a black Ford limo. Another Free Church custom, it appears.

The Assembly begins its work

At 10:00 a.m. the Assembly was convened in the St. Columba's Church situated on the historic Royal Mile (a road which runs from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Palace, in between one finds all kinds of ancient buildings: St. Giles – the church of John Knox, Knox House, where the Reformer was born, etc, and places: a cemetery where Adam Smith of Wealth of Nations fame is buried.)

Prof. C. Graham as the newly installed Moderator gave his address entitled, "The Two-Fold Ministry of the Church." It was a very interesting piece of work, especially because it contained a lot of history about the Free Church. In it Prof. Graham reminded his audience about the temporal and spiritual ministry of the church. He especially elaborated on the temporal or social ministry of the church in terms of its diaconal calling. He pointed to Thomas Chalmers and his work among the poor in Glasgow. He spoke about Chalmers' vision for Scotland in which he saw a church and school in every village. He emphasized the fact that social needs are the business of the church by going back to Moses, the Psalms, the Minor Prophets, the Lord Jesus in Luke 4, Paul and James. The

Gospel, he said, must address the whole man in all of his needs.

After his address, the Assembly approved its customary letter of greeting and best wishes to the Queen.

Responding to the Canadian Reformed invitation

The Reporter of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, the Rev. D. MacDonald, then took the floor. He spoke about his recent visit to the Netherlands and Synod Ommen, noting that the Dutch churches were giving considerable support to the Presbyterian Association of England (PAE), that the Rules for Sister Churches had been changed removing the last obstacles to a sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands-Liberated (GKN). He welcomed Dr. J.C. Andrews of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. He mentioned the upcoming ICRC. Finally, he welcomed the representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches and spoke briefly about our churches.

In the ensuing discussion, it became clear that the FCS is on record as wanting and striving for the unity of the church. It desires to see one church of Jesus Christ in Scotland based on and committed to the Westminster Standards. A member of the Assembly also stood up and publicly expressed appreciation to the Dutch churches for the support being given to the Presbyterian Association of England. Finally, a number of comments were made and questions were asked about the Canadian Reformed Churches to which the reporter responded.

Thereafter, the Proposed Deliverances were moved. Number 7 reads, "The General Assembly gladly accept a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, in terms of the Rules for such fellowship agreed by both denominations." It was adopted without dissent.

By its actions the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland officially received and responded positively to the invitation of General Synod Lincoln 1992 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. It means that as churches we now have an additional sister church, or church in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Needless to say this sister exhibits some differences due to her Scottish background, Presbyterian polity and unique procedures; nevertheless, there is no doubt that in her confession

and walk she is Reformed and belongs to the same family of faith.

In the afternoon session the Assembly considered reports from the Publications Committee, the Eventide Homes Committee (dealing with retirement homes), and the Psalmody Committee. Attention was also paid to various letters received from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, The Reformed Churches of South Africa and the Free Church in Southern Africa.

Remembering the disruption

That evening at 6:15 the Assembly re-convened and a presentation was made to Prof. Graham who had been the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly for the last 30 years and would soon retire. His place will be taken by Prof. J.L. McKay, Professor of OT at the Free Church College.

Thereafter, the Assembly went over to a commemoration of the Disruption which took place on this day in 1843. In his opening remarks, Prof. Graham made a number of remarks that may be of special interest to us to the affect that the Free Church "craves an outward expression of the unity of the church" but then it must be on the basis of the inerrant Word of God as foundation, that they were celebrating a principle that night and not a name and that whether the Free Church continued mattered little as long as the truth of the Gospel was maintained.

These and other remarks were followed by an introduction by Prof. H. M. Cartwright entitled, "What Was The Disruption and What Did It Achieve?" He pointed out that the basic issue at stake was the headship of Jesus Christ over His church.

Next, some time was set aside to award prizes to the three Lyle Orr Award recipients. These prizes are given annually to young people of various ages who memorize the whole Shorter Catechism. (It struck me that in the Free Church there is a considerable stress on the Shorter Catechism and that children are encouraged, if they are able, to learn it all by heart. Something for us to consider in relation to all, or part, of the Heidelberg Catechism?)

Thereafter, greetings were received from various churches abroad. Dr. J. C. Andrews of the PCEA brought the offi-

cial greetings of that church. Rev. George Ball brought the official greetings of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and, as Reformed Presbyterians are wont to do, stressed the Solemn League and Covenants of 1643. Rev. J.J. Petersen of the OPC, a church which has a Fraternal Relationship with the FCS, brought greetings and also passed on some information about his churches to the Assembly (The OPC has 20,000 members, 170 congregations, 300+ ministers, 25+ missionaries. It is also back in Eriteria and has taken over the Kenya mission field from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Petersen mentioned that the center of the Reformed Church in America (PCA). Petersen mentioned that the center of the Reformed world is today in central Africa. There are more Reformed Christians there than anywhere else in the world.)

The Assembly also heard three brief speeches on the topic: "Why I Belong to the Free Church?" Finally, it heard an address by the Rev. F.A.J. MacDonald, head of the Scottish Bible Society and a Free Church minister on the subject, "Our Impact on Scotland Today." In it he pointed out the main theological issue today is the person of Jesus Christ and His two natures. He also dealt with Islam, which denies this and which is becoming more evident in Scotland. In addition, he showed that the Disruption of 1843 was not a clerical movement, but a movement of the common people. Today too the church as the people of God must be faithful and active.

The Queen's Representative addresses the Assembly

At 9:00 a.m. the Assembly opened and immediately went over into devotional exercises. A number of Scripture passages were read and a number of different members of the Assembly took turns praying for the needs of the church and its task in the world.

This was followed by the Report of Public Questions Committee. As the name suggests this Committee deals with public issues which are of particular concern to the life of the church and society. The Report of this Committee comments on and expresses dismay at the establishment of a national lottery, the erosion of the sanctity of the Lord's day, the increase in lawlessness. It also examined the role of the Deacons.

At 12:00 noon the Assembly received a visit from the Lord High Commissioner who is the Queen's repre-

sentative in Scotland. Accompanied by a large retinue of people, the Lord High Commissioner came and brought the greetings of the Queen to the Assembly. In a speech of about 10 minutes he made a number of fitting comments.

In the afternoon the Assembly received representatives from a number of different organizations: the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Lord's Day Observance Society, and the FIEC. In addition, a report was received from the Welfare of Youth Committee. This Committee deals with such matters as Sabbath (Sunday) School, education, youth camps, and publications. (In 1992 there were 22 camps in various places in Scotland and England held under the auspices of the FCS. These camps attracted 660 campers. They form an increasingly active role in outreach to young people. The FCS also publishes a magazine for young people called *The Instructor*.)

In the evening the Assembly dealt with a report from the Widow's and Orphans' Committee. This Committee sees to it that widows and orphans of ministers in the FCS are properly cared for.

After this it was on to the reception of more delegates. The Rev. F.A.G. MacDonald brought the greetings of the National Bible Society of Scotland.

Thereafter I received the floor. I first acted on behalf of the Dutch sister churches, translating and presenting to the Assembly the letter of the GKN. Finally, I spoke on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

I was followed by a representative of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland and of the British Evangelical Council. The latter is a loose organization of churches in England and Scotland who act together in matters of mutual concern.

After we had received the floor each speaker was presented with a copy of the newly published book, *Crown Him Lord of All*, edited by Cl. Graham. It should also be noted that earlier in the day I had been a guest at a special luncheon hosted by the Moderator.

More Assembly business

Almost all of Thursday morning and afternoon were spent dealing with various petitions and reports. Petitions were received from a number of churches, presbyteries and ministers. The petitions dealt with local churches who wanted to merge, with churches wanting further financial support, with ministers wanting to be released or retained.

The reports that were dealt with had to do with the Training for the Ministry and other matters relating to the Free Church College.

In the evening the Assembly received the report of the Foreign, Overseas and Jewish Missions Board Committee, as well as representatives from the various mission fields of the FCS. Words of greeting were spoken by men from the mission fields in Peru, Southern Africa, India, North America, Israel and Eastern Europe.

(It should be mentioned that one of the ministerial representatives was a certain Rev. David Miller. Earlier already this young minister had stood up and spoke some very positive words about the need for Christian schooling in the FCS, as well as on the mission field. In doing so he paid tribute to a very beneficial but brief exposure that he had, to Christian schooling in a school operated by members of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia in Launceston, Tasmania. In later speaking to him it turns out that he had been a pupil of the Principal of our Teachers' College, Mr. T.M.P. VanderVen.)

The Assembly comes to a close

The Assembly again convened at 9:00 a.m. for what was to be its last day.

More reports dealing with nominations, assembly arrangements, records, and printing of Acts were dealt with. Tributes were also read about elders and ministers who had died during the previous year.

It was decided to convene the next General Assembly D.V. on May 23, 1994 at 6:00 p.m.

Early in the afternoon the Assembly was brought to a close with fitting words and prayer by the Moderator.

Homeward bound

Early Saturday morning I was brought to the airport. I left Edinburgh on schedule, went to Amsterdam and from there caught a plane back to Vancouver. The trip was uneventful. The only negative note was the fact that KLM gave my assigned seat to someone else and placed me in the smoking section. What a fraternity of puffers sits in those last six rows and what an army of participants that section attracts from other parts of the airplane! The result was that I arrived in Vancouver early but feeling rather sick. I decided to make appropriate protestations to the offending airline.

In closing

A few personal comments are in order:

a) The action of the General Assembly in accepting our offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship means that the Canadian Reformed churches now have an official relationship with a fourth federation of churches. (The relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea was to be formalized later in September of 1993 at the ICRC in Zwolle.)

b) There is no doubt that in many respects the FCS does things in a different way than we do. Their polity, but even more perhaps their history, has led to the development of a Presbyterian church that is in many respects unique. Even a life-long Presbyterian like the Rev. J.J. Petersen was often surprised, if not perplexed, by the proceedings. To suggest that Presbyterians in Scotland are the same as Presbyterians in America or Korea is about as simplistic a statement as to suggest that all Reformed can also be lumped together as conforming in all things to the same mould.

c) To give you but one example of uniqueness: in the Assembly we rarely saw matters voted on with a show of

hands. Most of the time the brethren simply stomped their feet on the wooden floor of the Assembly Hall. Somehow the Moderator could discern from that whether a matter was adopted or rejected.

d) At first sight several practices in the FCS appear to be hierarchical. Take for example the fact that they do not really formally nominate a Moderator or hold an election between several brothers. At first glance this appears to be a case of backroom maneuvering. Further investigation showed, however, that the Moderator is nominated by the Assembly Arrangements Committee and that the nomination is usually based on the year of ordination. Those who have served the churches the longest, and are thus among the oldest, are given priority.

e) Time and again I was stuck by the fact that they do things so differently than us. They receive a lot more representatives at their Assembly. (Is that because they are so much older and more established than we are?) They deal with issues that we would not normally deal with at all. (Many of these matters seem to have a long history within the context of Scotland and its past upheavals.) Obviously then there are differences between our respective

churches, but I could find no evidence that they were of a major nature nor are they so surprising if one looks at the broader context and understands the history of these churches.

f) I came away with the overwhelming impression that while the FCS may be a small church, it is nevertheless a true one. It has been fighting the fight of faith for centuries. It has suffered much. Take only the oppression in the Highlands where sheep were more important than people and where many believers were terribly oppressed. Take the Disruption of 1843 when scores of ministers found themselves out on the street. The suffering in this land has been immense. Life has been hard. In many respects it is still a harsh life. Nevertheless, the Gospel is being proclaimed and there is a true witness to Jesus Christ and His Lordship. May God bless it in every possible way.

g) Finally, I must express my appreciation for the warm hospitality that was extended to me everywhere I went. I took it not simply as a reflection on my person but on the churches that I represented. The climate of Scotland may at times be cold and forbidding, but no one can say that about the hearts of our brothers and sisters in the Free Church of Scotland. C

Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland

Held From May 17-21, 1993 in Edinburgh

By J. Visscher

Esteemed Chairman, Members of the Assembly, Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our churches may not be all that well-known to you so let me begin with some background information.

The first Canadian Reformed church was instituted in the city of Lethbridge, in the province of Alberta, in April of

1950. The members were almost exclusively composed of immigrants who had come from the Netherlands. Since that small beginning more than forty years ago we have grown to a total membership of 13,536 spread mostly throughout Canada, with some members living in the United States. Today we are still experiencing a steady, if unspectacular, growth, mostly from within but also increasingly from without. At present we have 44 churches

and are growing at a rate of about one new church a year. We also have 42 active ministers, missionaries and professors, as well as 11 retired ministers and professors.

Our churches have their own institution for the training of the ministry called The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed churches located in Hamilton, Ontario. It is staffed by four full-time professors and has a current enrollment of fifteen students.

Our foreign missionary activity is centered in Indonesia (Irian Jaya) and Brazil. In Canada itself we are involved in missionary work among the native people. This work is presently being done in the northern part of the province of British Columbia. Our home mission work or evangelism work is done by each local congregation, frequently making use of radio broadcasts, literature distribution, summer Bible schools, and other efforts.

Although not directly tied to the churches, Christian schooling remains a priority and is available to most of the children in our federation. Locally parents have established primary and secondary schools with the result that today we have more than twenty elementary schools, six regional high schools, staffed by hundreds of teachers and populated with thousands of students. I should also add that most of these schools are not subsidized by the state with the result that parental costs vary from between \$3,000 to \$8,000 a year.

Moving from the internal to the external, our churches have formal relations with different churches in this world. We call that relationship "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" and have established it with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. Together with you, we are founding members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

As far as recent developments are concerned, the 1992 General Synod of our churches decided to offer to your churches a relationship called Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the details of which you are no doubt aware. Our Synod also accepted the offer of the Presbyterian Church in Korea to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. It decided to take up contact with the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to establishing it. It also decided to continue the contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Having passed along these words of introduction, let me speak more specifically to the occasion. I am here today as a representative of our churches and such a role always must be viewed as an honour. Still, I would go so far as to say that my presence here represents a special honour. Why? In the first place, because never before has a representative from our churches ad-

dressed your esteemed assembly. In the second place, if your Assembly decides to accept our offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship it will mean that our churches will be linked together in a common relationship.

In our terminology we would say that this makes us "sister churches." In other words, we become members of the same household. We recognize the need to work together, to assist and help each other, to encourage and, if need be, correct each other. And that is a great thing. Our world is a world of ever increasing apostasy and rebellion against the Lord and His Anointed One. The forces of unbelief advance. Meanwhile, it so often seems that the church of our Lord in this world is cowering in its foxhole, being bombarded from without and divided from within. It appears as if we are losing, not just the battles, but also the war.

Nevertheless, appearances are deceiving. We believe and we confess that in actual fact the situation is far different. This week Thursday is Ascension Day and what is that Day but a reminder of the fact that Christ Jesus our Lord is alive and active. He is reigning and ruling, gathering His people together, sending forth His Spirit, leading all things to that day of glorious consummation. Thus while at first glance things look hopeless for the church, the reality is that we have every reason for hope and confidence because we have such a great, active and living Saviour. He rules His church still.

In addition, there can be no doubt that He rejoices whenever His church in different parts of the world meets and seeks to express its common faith and life in Him. Yes, we have so much in common as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the same Saviour. We hold fast to the same Word of God. We confess the same truths in our creedal statements. We have often fought the same battles for the truth.

This year 1993 marks the 150th anniversary of the Disruption. As I read about it and considered the issues involved, I was struck by the similarities between the Disruption of 1843 and the Secession of 1834 which our forefathers in the Netherlands experienced. Both defended the authority of the Word to govern the life of the church, both resisted the encroachments of the state to determine the life of the church, both insisted that in spite of their numbers

that they were not starting a new church but continuing the line of the true church in their land.

Dr. R. S. Candlish, one of your leaders in the Disruption, said, "We are still the Church of Scotland – the only church that deserves the name, the only church that can be known and recognized by the maintaining of those principles to which the church of our fathers was true, when she was on the mountain and on the field when she was under persecution, when she was an outcast from the world. And, believing that we are not seceders from the church, but are the church separated from the State – believing that we are not a sect separated from the Established church, but that we are the Church of Scotland separated from the State, we hold ourselves entitled, without any disparagement to other religious bodies, to assume and act upon the principle that we are to maintain the character of the National Church of Scotland."

Brothers, the Canadian Reformed churches have studied your history, your confessions and your handling of the truth, and we are convinced that you are the Church of Scotland still. Your numbers may not be large but the truth knows no size. In men like John Knox, Andrew Melville, Thomas Chalmers, Robert Murray McCheyne, and so many others we see men of faith and Reformed conviction. The Lord Jesus Christ has raised them up to defend and preserve His church. He has done it in your history here in Scotland. He has done it in our history in Canada and in the Netherlands.

We have so much in common and therefore it is right that we extend to each other the right hand of fellowship and that as church of Our Lord Jesus Christ we recognize each other and embrace each other. May He enable us to be a hand and a foot to each other always. May in this small way His prayer that "they all may be one" be honoured and promoted. May we together as the Free Church of Scotland and the Canadian Reformed churches realize that our real name is one that knows no national distinctions and borders. We are the church of Jesus Christ. May He, with the power of His Word and Spirit, keep us faithful and keep us working until that great day when the church of toil and tribulation will be the church victorious and the church at rest. **C**

... a servant and a steward

By Yul Krikke

Sunday, Feb. 13 was a memorable and joyful day for the congregation of Burlington South. After being a vacant church for nearly four years they again received a minister of the Word, Rev. C. Bosch from Kelmscott, Australia.

Their former minister, Dr. J. De Jong, conducted the installation service. He chose as his text 1 Cor. 4:1-5. In his sermon on this text he posed the following question: "How is a minister judged?" In Corinth they judged wrongly: they used human elements in their judgement. The blueprint for the proper judgement is given in the text. He formulated the contents of his sermon in this way:

The church is called to a proper judgement of the ministry of the Word. He called attention to the following three points:

1. The call of their office.
2. The call with their office.
3. The commendation of their office.

He showed that a minister is a servant of Christ and also a steward of the mystery of God. In submission to God he must preach the mystery of God, which simply is the message of Jesus Christ, the Gospel. He pointed to the diversity of gifts among the ministers, and that they only must be judged on the basis of what they preach.

In the second place he paid attention to the call. Is he faithful to the Master? Is his deepest motivation to bring the Word? On this basis a minister should be evaluated, not on his manner of speech, or his appearance.

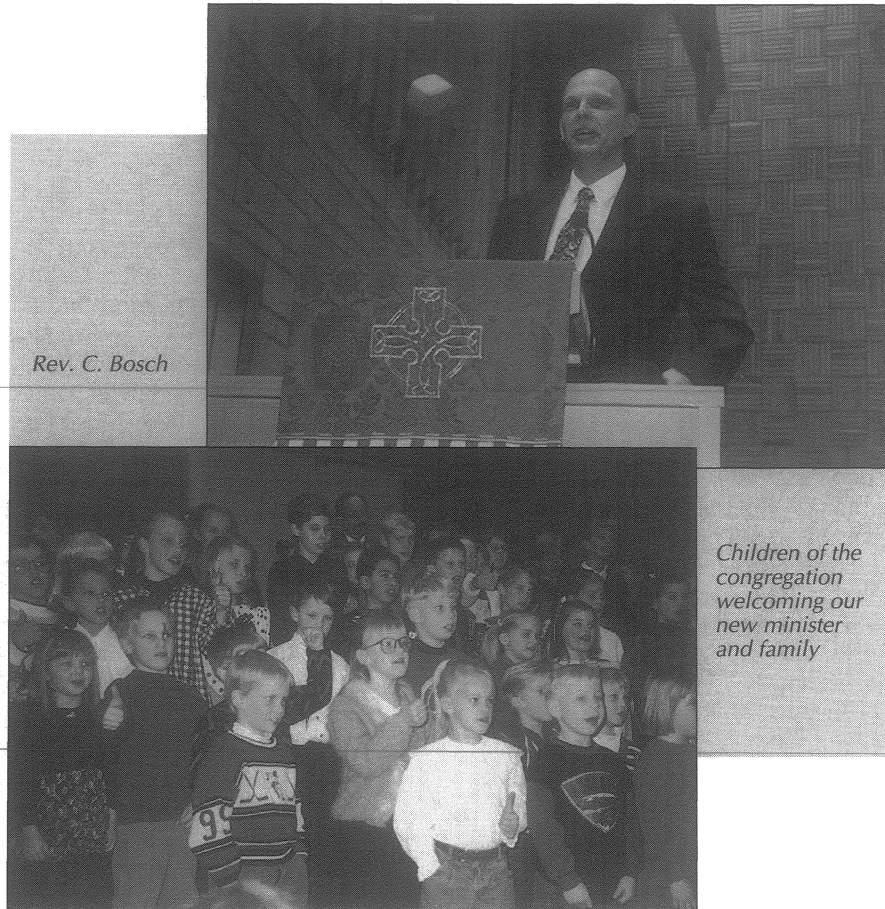
In the third place it was shown that the commendation of their office comes from God. And this is not according to human standards, but he is accepted on the basis of his work so the seed can be planted. Each one should be faithful in his office and each one will receive his due reward.

Dr. De Jong wished for the Lord's guidance on Rev. Bosch's ministry.

Then the installation took place. In response the congregation sang Psalm 134:1 and 3.

In the afternoon Rev. C. Bosch preached his inaugural sermon. His text was 2 Cor. 4:5.

He posed the question: What about his preaching? What will it be like?



Rev. C. Bosch

Children of the congregation welcoming our new minister and family

Then he stressed the fact that the importance in the preaching was that what Jesus Christ requires.

His theme was: Paul emphasizes the glorious purpose of the ministry, and Rev. Bosch stressed two points:

1. the claims of the Master
2. the work of His servant.

He said that the Old Covenant was fulfilled and that now we have the new dispensation of righteousness. There is progress in the history of salvation. We are being changed through the ministry, but not everyone would see the light of the Gospel, there are also false teachers. He continued to say that the light of life is not found in the brilliance of the preacher, but only in Jesus Christ. Covenant people can end up as blind fools if they do not recognize that Jesus is Lord. He voiced the wish that the preaching might focus on Christ, and that we all submit to Him, walk and talk

with Him, persuaded by the Gospel. We should all examine ourselves, and set our eyes on the Master.

In his second point he said that there was a better way than the party spirit which was present in Corinth, because we are called to serve God and the neighbour. The purpose of the preaching is that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. All are called to declare the wonderful name of Him who called us. He went on to say that a minister is not an errand boy, or a shepherd's dog. He is a shepherd who must lead his flock so that they all may grow together into that direction, the service of God.

He said also that we have that treasure in earthen vessels, so don't look at the servant; he is also full of faults. But we may live by faith. . .so we believe, so we serve; to rebuke, to teach, to comfort the sick, to tend God's flock. Rev. Bosch expressed the wish that his min-

istry might be a blessing and that we should all pray and work towards that end. The chairman, Br. P. DeBruin, spoke on behalf of the consistory. He thanked the ministers who had filled the void in the pulpit during the last 3 1/2 years, as well as the counsellors, first Dr. De Jong and later Rev. Visscher. Then he read the subscription form which Rev. Bosch signed. The following persons congratulated Rev. Bosch and the congregation:

Rev. Gleason on behalf of Classis North, Br. B. Van Straaten for Burlington East, Br. H. Harsevoort for Burling-

ton West and Dr. J. Dejong as former minister.

On Tuesday night Feb. 15, the South congregation met again for a welcome evening for Rev. Bosch and his family.

The chairman Br. P. De Bruin opened the evening: he read from Romans 12 and led in prayer. He welcomed all those present especially Rev. Bosch and family.

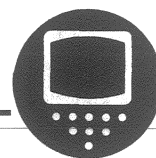
This was a nice evening. Many presented a contribution, either personally or together with others. The congregation made clear to the new minister and his family that they were happy with and thankful for their arrival. At the end,

Rev. Bosch addressed the audience with a few well chosen words and led in a prayer of thanksgiving. The audience sang Hymn 65:1,2.

Everyone then went to the gym where a huge welcome cake awaited the Bosch family who shared this delicious work of art with many brothers and sisters.

The church in Burlington South is richly blessed in having their own minister again. May his ministry find a rich entrance in the hearts of the brothers and sisters in Burlington South so that his work as servant and steward may bear fruit to the honour of the Master. **C**

PRESS RELEASE



Classis Ontario North, Feb. 4, 1994 convened by the Church of Elora in the Eben Ezer Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-East.

1. The Rev. J.G. Slaa called the meeting to order on behalf of the church at Elora. He asked the assembly to sing Ps. 145:1,3 and read Psalm 145, and lead in prayer. He welcomed the delegates present, informing the meeting that the delegates from Brampton hope to arrive later, together with the delegate of Lower Sackville.

2. The delegates of the Church of Chatsworth reported that the credentials of the delegates present are in order and that all primi delegates are present. None of the credentials contained instructions.

3. The Rev. Slaa then declared Classis constituted and requested the proposed executive officers to take their places: Pastor R.N. Gleason, chairman; Rev. P.G. Feenstra, clerk; Rev. W. den Hollander, vice-chairman.

4. The chairman, Pastor R.N. Gleason, expressed words of appreciation to the delegates of the church of Elora for the work of preparation of this Classis. He encouraged the vacant churches in our midst. Finally a special word of congratulation was addressed to the delegates of the church of Burlington South with the acceptance of the call extended to the Rev. C. Bosch of Kelm-scott, W.A. A word of special welcome was extended to the Rev. C. Bosch.

5. The agenda was established and adopted.

6. The chairman read article 5 C.O. in preparation to the colloquium of

Rev. C. Bosch. The documents pertaining to the call of the Rev. C. Bosch were submitted and found to be in good order. Pastor R.N. Gleason, appointed to lead the colloquium in regards to the doctrines and creeds of the Church, received the floor for this purpose. Following this the Rev. G. Nederveen continued the colloquium speaking with the Rev. C. Bosch about Church polity.

7. Classis observed that the colloquium was satisfactory and then proceeded to the approbation of the call. Classis decided accordingly. The chairman read the Form of Subscription which Rev. C. Bosch signed gladly, and led in prayer. In view of the installation, which will take place D.V. on February 13, 1994, Classis delegated the chairman to attend this installation.

8. After an intermission, in which the delegates took the opportunity to welcome and congratulate Rev. Bosch personally, the chairman re-opened the meeting and reports to Classis were submitted:

a. Treasurer of Classis: His report was received with thankfulness. The treasurer was discharged for his work in 1993 and reappointed for 1994.

b. Church for the inspection of the archives (Burlington-South): stating that the archives are in good order.

c. Church visitation report to the church at Brampton: this was read and received with gratitude.

9. Question period per article 44 C.O. was held: re: questions addressed to individual churches.

10. The Church of Chatsworth submitted a proposal to Classis regarding the Certificate handed to candidates

for the ministry who successfully pass a Classical examination. In closed session this proposal was read. The proposal was declared inadmissible due to late submission (Classical reg. art. 6a)

11. Classis received the following correspondence:

a. Report from the Committee for the Review of Classical Regulations: Classis decided to discuss the first six articles of the proposed revised regulations and leave the remainder to next Classis.

b. Request from the Church at Fergus re: inviting observers from the Free Church of Scotland. Fergus requests Classis to reverse the decision of previous classes inviting observers from the Free Church of Scotland in P.E.I. Classis decided to declare the request inadmissible.

c. Overture from some brothers of the Church of Elora re: decision of Synod Ommen 1993 on women's voting rights. Classis decided to declare this overture inadmissible.

12. Appointments: Convening Church for next Classis: Fergus
Date: June 10, 1994

Proposed executives: Rev. J. Huijgen, chairman

Pastor R.N. Gleason, clerk

Rev. P.G. Feenstra, vice-chairman

13. Personal question period was held.

14. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

15. The chairman requested that Psalm 99:2,3 be sung, and lead in closing prayer.

W. den Hollander,
vice-chairman at that time **C**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

In response to the 'News Medley' writer's invitation, allow me to reply to the second P.S. at the end of the most recent installment. In this 'post scriptum' he questions one of our ecclesiastical quirks, namely, that of writing reports of ecclesiastical meetings in the present tense.

While not being so bold as to claim to be an 'expert' in the field of grammar, I do agree with Rev. VanOene that the above-mentioned habit is "Dutch." After an exhaustive search (yes, it was tiring!) of various references, I conclude(d) that it is indeed common practice to write minutes (reports) of meetings in the past tense. (cf. Roberts' Rules of Order inter alia).

This would certainly also be more in line with the author's oft-expressed opinion that, once an assembly has con-

cluded its deliberations, it ceases to exist. Therefore, no "ongoing action." While we're on the topic anyway, allow me to make a few additional points. In the very same issue of *Clarion*, two reports of ecclesiastical assemblies appeared, the first written in the present tense, the second in the past tense. By the way, why were these reports placed in non-chronological order? It wouldn't have anything to do with major and minor assemblies, would it?

Speaking of 'Dutchisms', how about "deputies Regional Synod" or the use of the term "moderamen?" The latter term could not be found in any dictionaries I had access to. The only place it appeared was in a Dutch-English dictionary wherein it was translated as "synod(al) board." Or how about the use of "e.t." (for Extra Terrestrial perhaps?) after the name of a reporter? Again, no such standard

abbreviation could be found in an English dictionary. One could go on (ad nauseam perhaps), however, the point has been made.

If the purpose is to communicate clearly and succinctly, a greater attempt at consistency and the use of the correct terminology might be in order. We should do so 'with common consent' as it were!

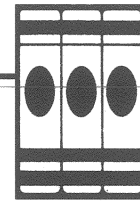
Perhaps a primer on ecclesiastical terminology by Rev. VanOene would be a welcome addition. As well, perhaps the Theological College faculty should consider sponsoring some mini-lectures on the subject for its students to avoid these interminable debates about ecclesiastical esoterica! Enough said! (Dutchism?)

Sincerely,
Harold J. Ludwig

(Born in Holland, educated in Canada, and schooled in life) **C**

BOOK REVIEW

By J. De Jong



D.B. Know, *Sent by Jesus. Some Aspects of Christian Ministry Today*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992, 79 pages, Price: \$11.95 (US)

Dr. D. Broughton Knox, who served for many years as principal of Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia, has written a little booklet dealing in particular with the office of the minister of the Word. Dr. Knox, who is presently retired, is obviously concerned about new trends in ministry, and this book is partly written as an apology for the Scriptural teaching of a full-time male ministry in the church. His main point is that the primary duty of the minister is preaching and teaching. Contrary to contemporary trends which he sees as detrimental to the life of the church, Knox argues that the minister should not become involved in all kinds of specialized helping ministries in the church today. He must be sure to be adequately prepared for what he does on the pulpit: preaching God's Word.

There are several points in the book at which one might raise certain questions or misgivings. For example, Knox repeatedly refers to the local congregation as a manifestation of what is essentially a heavenly reality. The church for him is essentially a heavenly organization. We would rather posit that, while its headquarters are in heaven, the church is gathered on earth through Christ's Word and Spirit. Also, Knox's defense of masculine terminology for God and a corresponding male-only full time teaching ministry is somewhat forced. He suggests that since the local church takes its character from the house congregation – the church in a house, Acts 2:46—it would be entirely inappropriate for the church to show a different structure of authority than found in the home. Hence, just as the husband is the head of the household in the home, so women cannot exercise authority over men in church. While I agree with Knox's essential point, I

have difficulty with the view that the church arises out of the house congregation. This was true in some but not in all cases. Should we then not be guided by what Scripture itself says?

However, the above comments are minor points, all of which the reader can consider and judge for himself. On the whole we can be thankful for this defence of the pastoral ministry in its Scriptural form, and we can appreciate the Scriptural arguments which Knox brings forward to support his view. As an appendix Knox has also included a series of principles for the conducting of the training for the ministry, and I was pleased to see that in many ways his set of principles matches the goals we are striving to maintain and pursue at the Theological College.

This book is particularly recommended to those interested in pursuing the ministry, or to those who are active ministers in the churches already. **C**

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I thought that it is time again to write a story. I will give the beginning of the story, and I'd like you to write the ending and then send it to me. Every Busy Beaver who sends in a finished story will get a REWARD!

I hope you will all send in how YOU think the story ends. Later, I'll put some of the stories in this magazine, so you can all enjoy them!

All the best writing!

Here's the beginning:

Chris and Michelle came running up the sidewalk, splashing through the slush. They pulled the door open, stopping only a moment to kick off their boots.

"Mom, Mom, guess what we saw just now!" they shouted.

Please send YOUR story to:

Spring Surprise Story
c/o Aunt Betty
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R2J 3X5

Quiz Time!

JESUS ASKED

Jesus asked many pointed questions. List the person to whom he asked each question.

- _____ 1. "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" John 3:12.
- _____ 2. "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" John 6:5.
- _____ 3. "Do you love me?" John 21:15.
- _____ 4. "But who do you say that I am?" Matthew 16:15.
- _____ 5. "Whom do you seek?" John 18:3-5.
- _____ 6. "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" John 18:22-23.
- _____ 7. "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?" Matthew 5:46.
- _____ 8. "What do you want me to do for you?" Mark 10:46-51.
- _____ 9. "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" Matthew 9:4.
- _____ 10. "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Matthew 9:28.
- _____ 11. "Do you want to be healed?" John 5:6-7.

ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Melanie Muis*

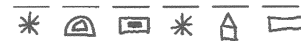
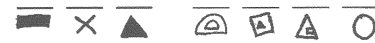
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WORD LIST

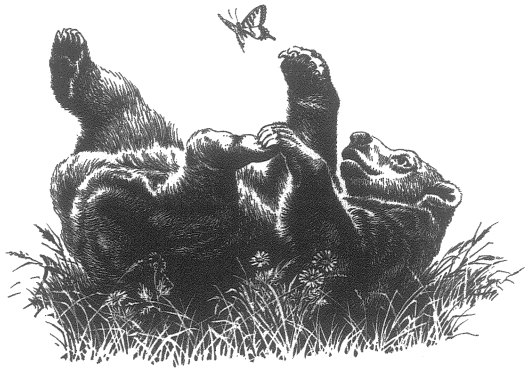
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Bird	Elephant	Mouse	Tiger
Cat	Fish	Pig	Turtle
Cow	Horse	Polar Bear	Wallaby
Dog	Koala	Rabbit	Zebra

HERE'S A CODED MESSAGE

from Busy Beaver *Anna Kampen*



A - *	H - X	O -	V -
B - ●	I -	P -	W -
C -	J -	Q -	X -
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E -	L -	S -	Z -
F -	M -	T -	
G -	N -	U -	



APRIL

Happy birthday to all Busy Beavers celebrating in April. May our heaven Father bless and keep you in the year ahead.

Janine Vanderhoeven	1	Tony VanOene	14
Clifford Vandersluis	2	John Witten	16
John Verhoeff	2	Jeremy VanderBos	17
Brad Bergsma	3	Jason Linde	18
Amanda Grit	6	Tammy Heemskerck	22
Jessica Vandergugten	6	Bonnie VanLaar	22
Alyson Bosch	9	Rianne Lodder	24
Jeremy DeHaan	9	Tim Sikkema	25
Allison Vander Veen	10	Elissa Faber	27
Hester Barendregt	11	Lynette DeHaas	29
Jolene Hulzebosch	11	Carrie Schuurman	29
Bradley Bergsma	12	Marlaine VanderHorst	29
Pamela Hulst	13	Jonathan VandenBos	30
Wendell Huttema	14		

FROM THE MAILBOX:



Hello, *Jaclyn Bartels!* Thank you for your letter. Even though you don't enjoy doing the vacuuming, I'm sure your Mom appreciates your help! I hope to hear from you again soon, Jaclyn. Bye!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Amanda Zwaagstra!* Are you enjoying the snow? I hope you had a good time skating. Your family probably enjoys your organ music. How old are you, Amanda? Bye!

Hello, *Joshua Sietsma!* Thank you for sending in the Quiz. I hope you enjoy all the puzzles and quizzes in this Little Magazine! Bye, Joshua!

Hello, *Danielle Ostermeier!* I see you like making word search puzzles for the other Busy Beavers to do! Thank you for making it and sharing it. What do you like to do in your spare time, Danielle? Bye!

Hi, *Melanie Muis!* Thank you for your neat letter! Can you do lots of things on your computer? It must be interesting to learn about fish and fishing. Did you do any other different activities? Bye, Melanie!

Bye for now.

Love
Aunt Betty 

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