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A Welcome to Denver

By J. Geertsema

In the Press Release of Classis Alberta/Manitoba held on March 8-9, 1994 at Edmonton, Alberta (*Clarion* of March 25 (vol. 43, no. 6)), we were informed that, after some proposals were rejected and others received, this Classis admitted the American Reformed Church at Denver into the federation of our Canadian and American Reformed churches. The credentials of this church were read and found in good order. Per consequence, the delegates of this church were welcomed. It was a difficult road, and it appears from the Press Release that the end of the difficulties is not in sight yet. However, I am happy that the majority of the Classis decided the way it did.

It started, as our readers may remember, in 1990, when Rev. M.A. Pollock was suspended as minister in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) in Denver. In fact, this suspension was the end of a process of events. Rev. Pollock was born and raised in Denver. Not interested in the service of the LORD when young, our Saviour changed this attitude and worked in his heart a hunger for the gospel. Not satisfied by the food given in a large Baptist church, he attended the services in the PCA in the place of his birth. At that time the desire grew to become a minister of the Word of the Lord. After having received his theological training, he became pastor in the PCA in Denver.

Through further study Rev. Pollock became increasingly concerned about the situation in the PCA where he served. He saw a lack of discipline and, in line with it, no fencing of the table of the Lord. It was open. With his concerns he went to his fellow office bearers. Some agreed, while others did not. In the end, his position as minister in the PCA was taken away from him. A small group went out with him and formed a house congregation. Contact was sought with the local Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Presbytery of the Dakotas. At first, it looked like they were growing in the direction of joining the OPC. A request in this direction was made. Rev. Pollock was examined by the Presbytery and accepted as minister in the OPC.

However, in the meantime two things happened. In the first place, contact was made with members of the American and Canadian Reformed churches. Instrument in this contact was Br. R. Bruintjes, a member of one of the sister churches in South Africa who was for study reasons in Denver and had joined Rev. Pollock's house congregation. In the second place, there grew with them a concern with regard to the situation in the local Denver-OPC churches that was similar to their concern regarding the PCA. The result was that from their side Rev. Pollock and his house congregation broke off the process of becoming members of the OPC, and that they adopted our confessional standards, the Three Forms of Unity, and our Church Order of Dort. They wanted to be Reformed instead of Presbyterian, considering the Three Forms of Unity on certain points closer to the teach-

ing of Scripture than the Westminster standards. They also had come to the conclusion that the Reformed Church Order with its emphasis on the local church is more in agreement with what the New Testament teaches about church organizations than the Presbyterian form of church government which is built on viewing the church in different levels, the local, the regional, and the national level. I may refer the reader here to an explanation of this Presbyterian view as it is published in the Acts of the Synod of Coaldale 1977, pp.95-101, esp. p.98. In the process Rev. Pollock requested the Presbytery of the OPC to release him from his vows, which they did without charging him "of breaking his vows" (cf Press Release, sub 10). When, in this way, this house congregation in Denver had become a Reformed church instead of a Presbyterian congregation, they sought admission to the federation of the Canadian and American Reformed churches.

Since the first contact with our churches was with people in Ontario, a request for affiliation came to the churches belonging to the region of Classis Ontario-South. This Classis came to the conclusion that, for geographical reasons, the request should be directed to the churches in the region of Alberta/Manitoba. This makes sense, since the churches in Alberta and Manitoba have official contact with the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC. The churches in Denver belong to this presbytery.

Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 1992 denied the request of the Christ American Reformed Church and refused to admit them to the federation. Support for this refusal came from the Regional Synod West of June 1992. A very important argument was the decision of the Synod of Coaldale 1977 to recognize the OPC as true churches.

Appeals against the decision of the Regional Synod came to the General Synod of Lincoln 1992. Basically, Synod referred the matter back to the Classis by considering that not a sufficient investigation of certain aspects had taken place. The reader can find this in Art. 127 of the Acts (p.89). The Synod Lincoln also referred to its own pronouncement regarding our "receiving of former OPC churches" in relation to our contact with the OPC. In my opinion entirely correctly, the Synod considered (Acts, Art. 72, II, A, 2, c, ii (p.51):

The "temporary contact relationship" [with the OPC; the quotations come from the decision of Synod Coaldale 1977, Art. 91 (p.42), J.G.] implies that ecclesiastical unity has not yet been achieved. Therefore, in the interim, it is understandable that when requests for admission reach the Canadian Reformed churches, these cannot be rejected simply by stating that the OPC has been declared a true church. Such situations may arise until substantial agreement is reached on the outstanding issues and the temporary contact relationship has led to "ecclesiastical fellowship."

There followed another investigation by a classical committee. Its conclusions were that the church at Denver could and should be admitted to the federation. The Classis decided accordingly. However, the deputies of the Regional Synod of the West could not give their concurring advice, with the result that the decision could not be executed. The Regional Synod of the West of December 1993 did grant concurring advice, so that the classical decision now could be effected. Now, in March, the decision of Alberta/Manitoba to admit Denver to the federation has been given effect.

In the Press Release it said (sub 8) that "the chairman reads the credentials for the delegates of the church at Denver and welcomes them." To this, I want to add here our welcome to this congregation and its minister. It is regrettable that this joining became such a struggle and that this struggle is still not brought to an end. What Rev. Pollock expressed at the Classis after the admission to our federation I repeat: "gratitude and the hope that we may live together in true unity, faithful to the Lord."



The problems around Denver

By J. Geertsema

The problems around the admission of the American Reformed Church at Denver into our federation is not over. The Press Release of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 1994 mentions that

The delegates of the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber object to the implementation of the classical decision which was supported by Regional Synod West to admit the American Reformed Church at Denver because of the warning expressed by Regional Synod West that admitting the American Reformed Church at Denver may well cause the Canadian Reformed churches to compromise their official stand vis-a-vis the OPC. The churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber have decided to appeal article 11 of Regional Synod West December 1993 to General Synod 1995. In the meantime the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber may well not be able to recognize the American Reformed Church at Denver.

I would like to ask these churches not to go this route of "in the meantime . . . not . . . to recognize the American Reformed Church at Denver." Certainly, the way of appeal to the General Synod of Abbotsford is open. But, can there not be a cooperation in the execution of the decisions of the Classes of March 1993 and March 1994 and of the Regional Synod West of December 1993,

such in line with the consideration of the Synod of Lincoln as mentioned before? The relationship with the OPC is still a "temporary contact relationship." "Ecclesiastical unity has not yet been achieved. Therefore, in the interim, it is understandable that when requests for admission reach the Canadian Reformed churches, these cannot be rejected simply by stating that the OPC has been declared a true church." And, in my opinion, it is reasonable to state that "such situations may arise until substantial agreement is reached on the outstanding issues and the temporary contact relationship has led to "ecclesiastical fellowship."

Therefore, cooperation "in the meantime" seems to be correct. As Canadian Reformed churches, we have recognized the OPC as true church, but because of a number of reasons, we have not come to the pronouncement that the time is there to come to full "ecclesiastical fellowship." If we are not that far, how can we compel another Reformed (no longer Presbyterian) church to join the OPC? Moreover, if, in the future, we, in synod, reach the conclusion that the time has come to establish this full ecclesiastical fellowship as sister churches, this must happen in the proper ecclesiastical way, that is, through a decision of our churches of our federation together. This means, by decision of a general synod. We should not make decisions on this point as individual churches.

Let us imagine that this would happen. Then still a number of matters, which pertain to the practical consequences of such a decision, would have to be decided upon. We are Reformed, both in confession and in church government; the OPC is Presbyterian. What does in this situation full ecclesiastical fellowship have to mean in the practice of our living together? It is easy to have sister churches in foreign countries. They are far away, sometimes, as in the case of the Korean churches, they speak a different language.

But it becomes different when we live beside each other in the same region or in the same place. Must ecclesiastical fellowship as sister churches mean full integration into one federation? This has been our way of thinking. Two true churches can for some time exist beside each other in the same place or area, but it should not be so. This is what we tell also to the Independent Christian Reformed Churches. With them the situation is easier in so far that they have the same confession and hopefully the same Reformed Church Order. But with the OPC things are different. Here the confessions contain differences and the Reformed and Presbyterian forms of church government do not mix since they have a different basis, the one being the local church, the other the church in different levels. So, how should such a fellowship as sister churches be realized? Must the one compel the other to change confession

and church government? Or can we let each other keep what we have?

But, let us now imagine that we come to the conclusion that we can have a sister relationship with the OPC. We acknowledge them as true churches; we accept that they maintain their form of church government, and we find ways to exist, anyway for the time being, beside each other, in our own federations with our own identity, but cooperating as much as can be done. Would this, then, mean that we forbid a Presbyterian congregation who comes to the conclusion that it is better, in the light of Scripture, to become Reformed and live within the Reformed federation, to do so? Or vice versa, would the OPC have to forbid a Reformed congregation to become OPC? Such a transition would not be a breaking with a federation of true churches of Christ. For both federations consist of true churches. Would we refuse to grant freedom of a transition? In my opinion, if we were to refuse to accept such an OPC church to join our federation when it made a request on the basis of serious and sincere study, we would bind their conscience. But it would be a binding above Scripture and confession. We would take the freedom in Christ away. Recognition of this freedom should be part of ecclesiastical fellowship as sister-churches of different background.

If this would be so in the hypothetical situation as described, how can we then in the present situation bind the American Reformed Church at Denver to the OPC and refuse their freedom of choice?

Let us also look for a moment at the consequence of the possible decision of the three Alberta churches not "to recognize the American Reformed Church at Denver." Will this mean that these churches do not accept or acquiesce in the consideration and decisions of our federation in Classes, Regional Synod and General Synod, not even for the time being, during the period of appealing to the General Synod of Abbotsford? Does it mean that here is the definite conviction that going along with the Classes decisions would be sinning against the LORD? If this is so, then what will happen if the Synod of Abbotsford will uphold the decision of the Regional Synod West and, by implication, of the Classes? Will they continue to refuse to cooperate? By making such a synodical decision our churches would, according to these

three Alberta churches, then harden themselves in this sin of admitting the church at Denver. The consequence would be these three churches see themselves forced to break the federative bond with the federation of churches that harden themselves in their sin? If you say today: cooperation in the admission of the Denver church is sin against God's Word, it will still be a sin when the General Synod upholds previous decisions.

Indeed the consequence would be clear: if sin is unacceptable now, it will be the same in 1995. I hope that it is also clear what I mean to say: in the present situation a refusal of cooperation in the classis seems to me not warranted.

On the other hand, we should not over-emphasize the divergencies between the Reformed and the Presbyterian confession and form of church government either so that churches that adhere to the Presbyterian standards and the Presbyterian form of government simply cannot be true churches. Here, too, we have to watch for driving things to unwarranted consequences.

Let me illustrate this with the matter of the doctrine of the covenant. Is this with the believers and all their children or with the elect? Both expressions are found in the Presbyterian standards. I quote again from the letter of the OPC as published in the Acts of the Synod of Coaldale, cf. p. 96f. It says that there "is dual emphasis in the Westminster Confession in its preservation of a conception of the covenant as made with believers and their children coupled with a perspective on the covenant, again arising from the impetus given by the forms of the Canons of Dort on the doctrine of election, which defines the covenant as made with Christ and in him with the elect. Parallel to these conceptions is the distinction between the church as visible and the church as invisible."

We can be very thankful that Dr. K. Schilder with others has pointed out the dangers of these parallel theological distinctions. The Kuyperian and Synodical consequence was, e.g., the assumption of a presumptive regeneration to which we said "no" in the Liberation. However, the OPC letter says in this connection that they reject both a presumptive regeneration and a "presumptive nonregeneration." (There are churches where it is presumed that their members are not regenerated unless they can tell they had a spiritual experience). Many of our Reformed fathers

accepted the distinction of a visible and an invisible church. Speaking of an invisible church was for them the consequence of maintaining the doctrine of pure grace, that is, of election. Both the "Liberated" point of view and the view that God's covenant is in its fullness with the elect, have existed in the Reformed churches throughout the centuries. People were able to discuss these things. Because of this historical reality we should watch out for driving things to their consequences by condemning Presbyterian confessions and churches because of such "weaknesses." I call them "weaknesses" because they are made within the framework of the doctrine of election and reprobation, which is our Reformed faith.

Driving things to their consequences in whatever form it occurs, without having an eye for circumstances and specific situations, is not good. It contains the danger of eating and devouring each other with the result of being consumed by one another (Gal. 5:15). C

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor!

In *Clarion* No. 4, February 25, was a report given of the Ordination of John L. van Popta. In it was written that I had, after having researched the history of our churches, including her Dutch roots, that "this was the first time, that a minister had filled the vacancy left by his brother." This statement was not correct. On the contrary!

When I asked if that might have happened, I wrote that this indeed had occurred: In the Reformed Church at Monster, Dr. Geerhard Kramer born June 12, 1870, had been ordained on December 16, 1896. But already on January 10, 1897, four weeks later he died.

His older brother Tjabertus, who then was serving since 1893 in Rottevalle, was called and installed in Monster, November 7, 1897. He has served there till his retirement October 1, 1933.

They were the sons of the Rev. Geerhard Kramer (1828-1915).

With brotherly greetings,
John de Haas

Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

“...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”
Acts 2:1-11

Babel Reversed

On the day of the Pentecost, God did a mighty work which reversed the mighty work He had done ages before in Babel. After the great flood, God told Noah and his three sons to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth (Genesis 9:1). But the descendents of Noah's sons didn't. They did not fill the earth. They stuck together. Rather than move out in families and clans to develop the earth, they clustered together. Instead of seeking their strength in God and His promise of a Redeemer, they sought their strength in human ability and solidarity.

There was only one language. People could communicate well. However, they realized that if they did not take some special measure, their unity would be destroyed as they grew and increased. They decided to build a city with a large tower. Its top would be in the heavens! This city, this tower, would be a rallying point for mankind. It would serve as a symbol of their unity and their human strength.

God foiled their efforts. He went down and confused their language. Suddenly there was confusion. “Babel” comes from the Hebrew word for confusion. God broke their human unity. He spread the people across the earth.

From the many nations He created, God chose one to begin His redemptive work: the Jews, children of Abraham, a descendent of Shem. God promised Abraham that He would make him a blessing to all the nations. Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, is the blessing. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus Christ poured the Holy Spirit out upon His disciples. They spoke about the mighty works of God in all the languages of the earth.

On the day of Pentecost, Jews and some proselytes from the four points of the compass – from what we today

call Iran and Iraq, Turkey, North Africa, and Europe – were in Jerusalem. The languages of the known world were represented. The Holy Spirit whom Christ poured out made the disciples proclaim in all the languages the mighty deeds which God had done through Christ.

God was reversing Babel. At Babel, God divided rebels and scattered them. On Pentecost, God began the work of bringing the nations of the earth together again. In the time of the Old Testament, God restricted His saving work to the line of Shem and especially the Jews. This was in order to bring forth Jesus the Saviour through whom God would once again open His arms wide to the world.

Today the mighty deeds of God are proclaimed in almost all the languages of the earth – in English as well. Christ has taken us up too, in His Pentecostal work. The mighty works of God are spoken of in the English tongue.

Revelation 7 tells us that the day is coming when all redeemed mankind will stand together before the throne of God. We will be part of a great multitude which will defy numbering, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues. Together, in all the languages of the earth, we will sing: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.” For we do not glory in our human abilities and power. We glory in the Lamb of God and His Spirit. **C**



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,
C. Van Dam, W.W.J. Van Oene, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
41 Amberly Boulevard
Ancaster, ON, Canada L9G 3R9

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REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Call Upon God⁵

(In previous articles, we considered the nature and parts of prayer and spoke about various conditions for prayer which is pleasing to God. Today we proceed to deal with various practical aspects of prayer).

Pray constantly

A basic rule of Scripture is: pray constantly (1 Thess. 5:17; see also Eph. 6:18, Col. 4:2). Although there be many times when we feel and act on the spontaneous desire to pray, there must also be prayer habits. We read of the early Christians that they were devoted to "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The point is that prayer may not be placed at the whim of our emotions so that we only pray when we feel like it. If we follow this method, the times when we feel like it will become increasingly less frequent. The Jews had the habit of praying three times a day (cf. Dan. 6:10). Often in the book of Acts we read of the ninth hour (3 o'clock) as the hour of prayer (see Acts 3:1; 10:30).

Of Christ, we read that He often withdrew to the mountain or wilderness in order to pray. Not infrequently, at crucial moments in His work, He would spend all night in prayer (see Luke 5:16, 6:12). He persevered in prayer in order to find from His Father strength for His saving work.

We are not bound by such rules, but we must feel ourselves bound to regular times of prayer. Apart from the prayer practices of our families and friends and apart from public prayer in worship services, there must also be quiet times in our daily lives where we go to a private place (Mt. 6:6) to call upon the Name of the Lord. Anything less than this is sub-Christian and leads to the erosion of faith and godliness.

Corporate prayer

Corporate prayer also needs our attention. Is there advantage in corporate prayer? We need not believe that when

two or three or more pray together that this prayer is therefore more effective, that somehow God is more inclined to hear just because there is group prayer.

Nonetheless, there are Biblical encouragements for and examples of corporate prayer. For example, in Acts 4, after the release of Peter and John from custody, we read that they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. "And when they heard it, *they lifted up their voices together* to God and said. . . ." (vs. 24ff.).

Here we notice that in response to a great danger for the church, there is a boldness and fellowship in prayer. Although the prayer is ascribed to the church as a whole, it is hard to believe that the whole group could speak together in this way "without some form of written prayer available for them all to read simultaneously or without a common form of words being learned off by heart previously; the view that the Spirit inspired each member to say exactly the same words reflects an impossibly mechanical view of the Spirit's working. It is, therefore, more likely that one person spoke in the name of the whole company."¹

Nonetheless, it is important to notice the unity of heart and mind in prayer. The prayer of the assembled brothers and sisters is unanimous (cf. also Acts 1:14). The same Spirit works in the hearts of all believers the desire to call upon the one Father. We know from the Bible that this unity in prayer and praise greatly pleases the Lord. In many places we are encouraged as church to be "in full accord and of one mind" (e.g. Phil. 2:2). In Rom. 15, verses 5 and 6, the apostle offers this prayer: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that *together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

In various places of Acts, then, we read about corporate prayer (1:14;

2:42; 4:24; 12:12). Most of these passages, however, have to do with the public worship of God which in those days took place in various rooms and homes around Jerusalem. Furthermore, we find no precedent whatsoever in Scripture for what today is often called "group prayer." A typical group prayer would involve people sitting or standing together, often holding hands, and taking turns in bringing petitions and praise to God.

People of Reformed background usually feel uneasy with such practices. They fear that this kind of prayer meeting has no Biblical warrant, that it usually leads to emotionalism, that it can lead to disorder and lack of reverence for God and that it can create a climate for ostentation in which the emphasis is on having our prayers heard by man rather than by God. They wonder what advantage such prayers have over the regular prayers which are led by one man who is usually, in any case, a leader in the congregation. Scripturally, it is indeed hard to see any advantage in group prayer. Unity in prayer does not necessitate audible participation by all the saints, but demands instead unity of heart and mind and active involvement when someone leads in prayer.

From church history, it also seems apparent that exalting group prayer seems to go hand in hand with diminishing the significance of corporate worship. Pietists such as Philip Spener and A.H. Francke in Germany reacted to a perceived sterility in the church by organizing groups within the church to gather for prayer and Bible Study. The goal was to stimulate and share Christian experience. Similar groups were organized in England by the Methodists (very influential in America) and later in the Netherlands during the so-called Revell.

While we can admire the zeal of many believers and writers of these pietistic movements, it is clear that they were not church movements. Instead of seeking the reformation of a

supposedly moribund church, the pietists moved the focus out of the church into the homes with their praying societies. The emphasis was no longer on good confession and right doctrine but on rich and warm experiences. Today, too, many Christians seem to value more the group meeting for prayer and Bible Study much more than the public worship of God. This kind of stress fails to take into account the Biblical presentation of the centrality of the corporate and official worship of God.

Prayer meetings?

Of course, it sounds unbelievably blind to oppose prayer groups. The point, however, is not that we oppose them, but that we need to see them in their proper place and to make sure that all things are done in a dignified and orderly manner suitable for a rev-

erent approach to the Living God. Indeed, who could be against believers coming together for prayer? No one could be anything but overjoyed to hear of such events. In fact, would it not be good if the weekly or bi-weekly Bible Study meetings would be combined with a more intense and detailed time of prayer? Would it not be good if ministers and/or elders would take a leading role in such meetings and also lead the assembled brothers and sisters in intercession?

After all, we live in the last days of the world. We live in a time of intense spiritual war. Enemies rage on all sides. We are weak. We are few in number. What is more natural in this urgent situation than for us to call upon the Name of the Lord with one heart and mind? We pray for the destruction of all those who oppose the Lord's Anointed One (Acts 4). We pray for the expansion and

preservation of the church. We long for the Return of Christ in glory. We pray for the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. We pray for all the members in their own situation.

Too often people want to solve problems in the church with all kinds of techniques and new strategies. In fact, however, the strength of the church is always found in the Word of God and in prayer. If the Bible is an open book and prayer is from the heart in church services, in our homes and in our group meetings, then we may expect a fuller and richer church life, a bolder confession and a more committed walk with the Lord. For God does not lie. He does give what He has promised. His Word is sure. He hears those who call upon Him and answers their cry. C

¹I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988), page 103..

William Tyndale's Concept of the Church

Part 1: Church and Congregation¹

By R. Faber

Introduction

A significant contribution to the reformation of the church in England was William Tyndale's translation of the Bible. With no support and little assistance, Tyndale produced an edition of the New Testament in 1526, and published translations of parts of the Old Testament from 1530 until 1534. Having profited from Luther's German translation and the writings of other continental reformers, Tyndale provided a version superior to the one by John Wycliffe. The Romanist clergy, however, noting that Tyndale's translation excluded words that were associated with such customs as penance, ceremonies, and confession to priests, decried the work as "poison in the vulgar tongue." And the college of bishops claimed that Tyndale's version would infect the laity with the "sickness of heresy." For it saw that Tyndale avoided vocabulary which papal decrees and other authorized documents had used to promote Romanist practices. In fact, wherever it was

possible, Tyndale translated the original Greek and Hebrew with English words which had not been forced into false usage by Roman Catholicism.

It is not surprising that Tyndale's translation received much criticism from the Roman Catholic bishops. Especially Thomas More, who was the spokesman for English Roman Catholicism, inveighed against Tyndale.

In 1529 More wrote a treatise, the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies and Matters of Religion*, in which he attacked the vocabulary of the new English Bible. More chided Tyndale for "mistranslating" several words of theological importance: the translator used "love" instead of "charity" for the Greek word *agape*, "senior" or "elder" instead of "priest" for *presbyteros*, and "repentance" instead of "penance" for the Greek *metanoia*. As one biographer observes, More declared Tyndale guilty of deliberately replacing theological terms with words not normally used by theologians.² And More tried to show that by means of these "radi-

cal" translations Tyndale was subverting the authority of the church and its doctrines.

Tyndale was obliged to reply to More, and he published *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* in 1531 to defend the vocabulary of his edition.³ The debate between the two scholars was more than academic bickering, for as W. Clebsch notes, "resistance to More's attacks on certain words was for Tyndale philological and literary but above all *theological*."⁴ The upshot of More's arguments was that Tyndale's translation was unauthorized, not sanctioned by the Roman Catholic church. With its unorthodox vocabulary, the English edition posed a threat to the authority of the church. More and Tyndale knew that the new translation of the Bible could become a powerful tool in the hands of the reformers. And More intended to halt the spreading of Tyndale's Bible by criticizing it forcefully.

One word in the new translation which annoyed More considerably was "congregation." Tyndale preferred this

word to “church” as a rendering of the Greek *ekklesia* and the Hebrew *qahal* and *edah*. Herein Tyndale was following the lead given by Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible into German, in which Luther had avoided the word *Kirche*, preferring instead *Gemeinde*. Both reformers wished to avoid a word which in the popular mind referred to the so-called Holy Roman Church. Yet Tyndale’s reasons for avoiding “church” were not merely epigonal, but were based upon his own observations of the government of the church in England, and of spiritual life. After all, it was for the English ploughboy that Tyndale had laboured.

As we investigate Tyndale’s concept of the church, we must bear in mind that Tyndale is noted as a translator, not as a theologian. Unlike some of the continental reformers, he did not produce a systematic theology in which the doctrine of the church is exhaustively expounded. His statements about the church are unconnected, and little effort is made therein to link ecclesiology to other doctrines. For the doctrine of the church, Reformed readers are accustomed to turn to Book Four of Calvin’s *Institutes*, to Articles 27-30 of the *Belgic Confession*, and to other Reformed confessions. However, because Tyndale was forced to defend, among other things, his translation of *ekklesia* with “congregation,” he did write extensively about the church.

An examination of the concept of the church as it was formulated by one of the first English reformers will prove fruitful. Tyndale’s writings reflect many scriptural ideas formulated by the continental reformers, especially Martin Luther. Whenever he deemed the thoughts of the other reformers sound, he incorporated them into his own writings, sometimes adapting them to the English setting. Tyndale was influenced also by other writers; John Hus, Huldrych Zwingli, and the followers of Wycliffe, the so-called Lollards, are but a few.³ Yet Tyndale does display his own concept of the church, especially as he was forced to develop it in his translation of the Bible. The purpose of this article is to reveal Tyndale’s reasons for using “congregation” and not “church” in his English translation of the Bible, and to make some observations about Tyndale’s concept of the church. In the second installment, I shall note those features in Tyndale’s ecclesiology which strike me as particularly Reformed, and shall also offer some criticism of his ideas. Perhaps an appreciation for Tyndale’s writings on

the church will serve to sharpen our knowledge of a doctrine which remains relevant at the close of the twentieth century.

1. Why Tyndale does not use “Church” in his Translations

As we might expect from a translator, Tyndale begins his *Answer* with an exposition of the meaning and usage of the word “church” in sixteenth century England. Tyndale observes that the word is used in different senses, and that some of these were promoted falsely by the Roman Catholic clergy to its own advantage. Since the word “church” may mislead the reader, Tyndale does not use it in his translation.

First Tyndale treats the literal meaning of the word “church”: “it signifies a place or house, whither the Christian people were wont in the old time to resort . . . to hear the word of doctrine, the law of God, and the faith of our Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁶ In short, “church” denotes the building in which the Word of God was preached. Tyndale goes on to describe the church building as it functioned before Roman Catholicism altered it. In the ancient church building the minister “preached the pure Word of God *only*, and prayed in a tongue that all men understood . . . and of him (all) learned to pray at home and everywhere, and to instruct every man his household (11).” Tyndale makes it clear that the function which the building performed in former times was unlike that of the sixteenth century building. He states that for his contemporaries “church” no longer implies

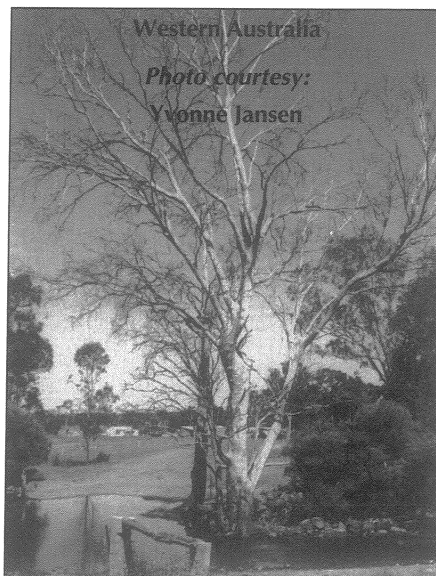
the place where the true Gospel is proclaimed. Indeed, he complains that in the so-called church of his age only voices without meaning are heard, and “we be fallen into such ignorance, that we know of the mercy and promises, which are in Christ, nothing at all (11).”

Tyndale avoids “church” in his translation because an important connotation of the word – the true preaching of the Gospel – is absent. Although he does not state so explicitly, Tyndale notes that one of the marks of the true church is lacking to the sixteenth century Romanist church. And as an advocate for reform, Tyndale is annoyed that Roman Catholicism had deprived “church” of this fundamental characteristic. It is unfortunate, however, that Tyndale overlooks the fact that the true church of Christ exists beyond human observation. Perhaps the decrepit state of the church in Tyndale’s time caused the reformer to think that the true church was not to be found in England. But we may say that the church which preached the gospel of Christ did exist and would always exist: the Word of God is everlasting. Careful and accurate use of the word “church” is therefore appropriate.

Tyndale also avoids “church” in his translation because it had come to signify the Romanist clergy, which he describes pejoratively as “a multitude of shaven, shorn, and oiled.” According to this apparently common usage the word could refer to the pope, cardinals, legates, bishops, abbots, or monks; indeed, to “a thousand names of blasphemy and hypocrisies (12).” In everyday parlance the entire hierarchy within Roman Catholicism was referred to by the word “church.” Tyndale offers many examples of this usage; one must suffice. He quotes a commonly heard saying: “You must believe in holy church [i.e. the clergymen], and do as they teach you (12).” Tyndale avoids translating the Greek *ekklesia* or Hebrew *qahal* with “church,” because the reader may get the impression that the existence of numerous Roman Catholic orders is justified by the word “church” in Scripture. Tyndale does not want to give this impression to the innocent reader who may not know that the Bible does not speak of monks, or abbots, or even of popes.

“Church” was used in the sixteenth century as an inclusive term for all those who *call* themselves Christians, “though their faith be naught, or though they have no faith at all (13).” Just as “Christendom” is used in modern times to designate all those who call themselves Christians, so too the word

OUR COVER



Western Australia

Photo courtesy:
Yvonne Jansen

“church” was used in the sixteenth century as a popular term for those who considered themselves Christians, although their thoughts, words and actions perhaps proved otherwise. Again, Tyndale suggests that the writers of the Bible did not employ the word for church in this sense; therefore he excludes “church” from his translation.

Tyndale also points out that the word “has, or should have, another signification: a congregation; a multitude or a company gathered together in one, of all degrees of people (12).” In this sense “church” refers to the *people* who are gathered together. And according to Tyndale the nature of that congregation is seen by “the circumstances thereof.” There may be a holy, righteous congregation, and there may be an ungodly, impious congregation. This distinction is based upon the two uses of *ekklesia* in the New Testament, as Tyndale himself knows well. Like the continental reformers, Tyndale uses Acts 19:32, 39, 41 (where the assembly in Ephesus is called *ekklesia*) as prooftexts that *ekklesia* is not used only to denote an assembly of Christians.

Tyndale explains what he means by “a company of . . . all degrees of people”: “church” is used for “the whole multitude of all them that receive the name of Christ to believe in him and *not for the clergy only* (12).” To the modern reader Tyndale may seem to be stating the obvious, but in sixteenth century England many were led to believe that the church comprised only the Roman Catholic clergy. Tyndale struggles against the misappropriation of the term by one elite group. He offers a host of scriptural evidence which shows that *ekklesia* refers to the body of *all* believers. One text in which we read that the church comprises both the laity and the clergy is Galatians 1:13, where Paul writes that he had persecuted the church of God. Tyndale explains that Paul had tried to destroy “not the preachers only, but all that believed generally (13).” Comparing Scripture with Scripture, Tyndale adduces Acts 22:4 as further proof that Paul uses *ekklesia* in Galatians 1 to denote all the members of the church. For there he writes about his persecution of “men and women” of the church. Space prevents the discussion of all the other texts which Tyndale mentions in his condemnation of the restrictive use of “church.” But the attention which Tyndale paid to this matter reveals to what extent the Roman Catholic hierarchy had appropriated for itself the word

“church,” and how it had excluded a vast number of believers.

While demonstrating that “church” refers to the laity as well as to the clergy, Tyndale offers another positive definition: “. . . throughout all the Scripture, the church is taken for the whole multitude of them that believe in Christ in that place, in that parish, town, city, province, land, or throughout all the world (13).” It is noteworthy that he speaks of the church local and the church universal in one breath. This is in keeping with the writings of the church in its early existence, during the apostolic and patristic eras. In one and the same sentence, Tyndale



William Tyndale
(From the painting in Hertford College, Oxford)

describes the church as the gathering of true believers in one place or throughout the world. It is interesting to note that the sharp distinction which many documents of the continental Reformation, and some modern theologians, have drawn between the local and universal church is not to be found here in Tyndale’s treatise.

It is also interesting to read that Tyndale knows of a more strict usage of “church,” whereby the word refers only to those who have been chosen by God’s eternal decree. “Sometimes it is taken specially for the elect only; in whose hearts *God* has written his law with His *Holy Spirit*, and given them a feeling faith of the mercy that is in *Christ Jesus our Lord* (13).” From the words italicized in the quotation one may note that Tyndale describes the body of the elect in terms of the *triumphing* God. Such language reminds one of

Calvin’s definition in *Institutes* IV.1.7: “Sometimes by the term ‘church’ it means that which is actually in God’s presence, into which no persons are received but those who are children of *God* by grace of adoption and true members of *Christ* by sanctification of the *Holy Spirit*.” Yet the differences between the two definitions are also telling: Tyndale avoids the word “grace,” opting instead for “mercy;” he gives the law of God a prominent position, and he does not speak explicitly of the sanctification of God’s adopted children. Yet, according to both reformers, the elect are those who have been chosen by God the Father, saved by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Spirit. As we shall observe later, Tyndale knows that a difference exists between God’s elect and the members of the manifest church.

2. Why Tyndale uses “Congregation” in his translations

Apart from the reasons stated above, Tyndale has no objection to the word “church.” Indeed, in the *Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, and in other writings, he frequently interchanges “church” and “congregation.” To Tyndale they are, insofar as we are able to tell, synonymous. Yet he is steadfast in his use of “congregation” in the English translations of the Old and New Testaments. And just as Tyndale offers reasons based on philology for the rejection of “church,” so too he offers philological reasons for the use of “congregation.” Yet it should be obvious that the philological debate is merely the tip of a *theological* iceberg, and the diction hides a mass of theological reasons which was destined to collide with the ship of Roman Catholicism.

Tyndale provides philological reasons for his choice of “congregation.” The word has a broad range of uses, Tyndale suggests, which reflects the broad range of uses which the Greek word *ekklesia* also possessed in the first century. Like the reformers on the continent, Tyndale knew that the Greek word *ekklesia* had been employed long before the New Testament church was established. It was a common term for the assembly of people at civic functions in Athens and other Greek city-states. Even in the New Testament *ekklesia* is used with this secular meaning; we noted above that in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 Demetrius the silversmith addresses a public assembly (*ekklesia*) in Ephesus. The word “congregation,” according to Tyndale, is – like the Greek word – a “more general term (13),” and therefore appropriate in this, and similar, contexts.

Tyndale chose "congregation" also in part because Erasmus uses words other than *ecclesia* in his Latin translation of the New Testament. Tyndale reminds his opponent that Erasmus, More's dear friend, also employs unorthodox language in the Latin translation, which had appeared in 1516. Though his tone is less than kind, Tyndale's point is well taken: the Church has no right to impose its language upon Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God. Tyndale knows well, of course, that More and the other clergy saw in "congregation" a purposeful rejection of the language which the church had made standard over generations. Whereas "church" was a word with Roman Catholic associations, "congregation" belonged to the diction of the reformers.

At the conclusion of the philological rebuttal, Tyndale recapitulates the reasons for rejecting "church" from his English translation. "Church" is a word which in the New Testament denoted a place where the Gospel was preached. It did not denote the clergy only, did not exclude the flock of believers, did not refer to Christendom in general, and did not refer to the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Since his contemporaries might

understand the word to refer to any, or any number, of these usages, Tyndale chose to avoid it. Tyndale argues positively that in Scripture "church" applied to an assembly of people. The assembly might be secular or sacred. In the early history of the church the word was also used for the body of God's elect, and for the mixed congregation of believers and unbelievers. Tyndale concludes: "inasmuch as the clergy . . . had appropriated unto themselves the term that of right is common to all the congregation of them that believe in Christ . . . and brought (the people) into ignorance of the word. . . , therefore in the translation of the New Testament, where I found this word *ekklesia*, I interpreted it by this word *congregation* (13)."

Tyndale's *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* does not end there. After treating the words "church" and "congregation," Tyndale explains his preference for other important words, such as "love," "favour," and "repentance." Thereupon Tyndale gives a lengthy reply to More's defence of the worship of images, pilgrimages, and prayers offered to saints. In several places Tyndale discusses the nature of the church, and shows that the truly Biblical ecclesiology is that of the re-

formers, whom More called the "pestilent sect of Luther and Tyndale." C

¹J. Faber zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet.

²C.H. Williams, *William Tyndale* (London: Nelson, 1969), 76.

³The fact that More wrote a nine-volume rebuttal, the *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532), attests to the gravity of the debate.

⁴W. Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 144.

⁵The influence of Luther's ecclesiology upon Tyndale is obvious; consider, e.g., Luther's understanding of the church as described by H. Prien, "Grundgedanken der Ekklesiologie beim jungen Luther," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 76, 1985, 96-119. The influence of Lollard writings upon Tyndale's theology is treated by D. Smeeton, *Lollard Themes in the Reformation Theology of William Tyndale* (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986), esp. 159-220.

⁶W. Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, ed. H. Walter (The Parker Society, Cambridge: University Press, 1850), 11; subsequent quotations from *An Answer* derive from this edition.

⁷In the *Institutes* (IV.1.7), Calvin would also refer to this usage of the word: "Often, however, the name 'church' designates the whole multitude of men spread over the earth who profess to worship one God and Christ" (trans. F.L. Battles, *Calvin. Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vol. 2 Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1960, 1021. Subsequent quotations of *Institutes* derive from this edition).

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

March 24, 1994

Dear friends,

Recently, John and Ruth Meerveld spent two weeks visiting the Children's Homes we support in Kenya as well as the Development Project C.R.W.R.F. funds in Malawi. The trip allowed them to assess the situation there as well as personally express our prayerful concern. This report deals with the visit to Kenya. Upcoming articles will look at education in Kenya and will focus on the development work in Malawi.

* * *

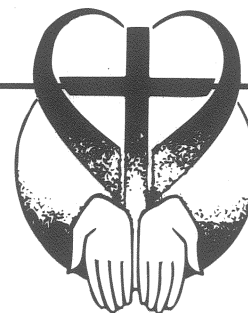
Kenya is an island of sanity in a sea of confusion, warfare, and hunger. Surrounded by Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan,

Uganda and Tanzania, it has long been considered a bright spot in the dark continent. Its colourful tropical beauty and numerous game parks have made it one of the most visited spots in Africa; tourism is vital to the economy. And thousands of aid workers and missions reaching out to Central and East Africa are headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya's capital. Here at least, in contrast to conditions in many surrounding countries, one can count on stability, on phones which work most of the time, on electricity much of the time. . . .

Yet Kenya too has its problems and they seem to be compounding. . . . The country is actually getting poorer annually, for a number of identifiable reasons. Though elections were held

in December of '92 in response to world bank pressure, the perception is that the country is not now in better hands. Daniel Arap Moi, sole leader for 14 years, was returned to power after a somewhat questionable election and the opposition remains so splintered along tribal lines, as to be largely ineffective.

Government corruption including the commonplace need for paybacks, kickbacks, bribes, etc., is so widespread that it has affected western investment. Sometimes setting up a business or a branch is more costly or complex than it is worth. Such disinvestment has contributed to a deteriorating economy, and unemployment is widespread. Few young people graduating from high



school or even university will be able to find a job.

Crime, has correspondingly also risen. Thousands trudge along the roads to the cities each morning, hoping to find work. Many, not finding it, turn to theft or worse. In Nairobi, for instance, most people now live in compounds, behind high fences, protected by guards and trained dogs against armed intruders. The influx of guns is blamed on the many Somalians who have found refuge in Kenya over the past few years. Whatever the reason, few expatriates in Nairobi venture out at night.

Population growth, though slowing, remains one of the highest in the world, contributing to the widespread poverty. A man when old can only divide his land up into so many parcels, and when his sons in turn age, there is very little to share among their offspring.

Lastly, the weather makes life more difficult. Kenya is experiencing below average rainfall for the third year in a row and the impact is huge. Everywhere it is dry; lakes have shrunk; fields are dusty. Crop yields have been significantly affected; many will know hunger this year. Some areas are so arid, one wonders how anyone can survive there. Water, especially clean potable water, has always been a problem. Now the need is critical.

Such problems are not out of sight in the children's homes we support in Kenya. However, it is encouraging to see them addressed at least. Having been involved at a committee level for so many years, we found it a real treat to finally visit the homes and see first-hand what is being done. Kees Rookmaaker of S.R.E.K. and Pastor Mathew Korir, National Co-ordinator for the Children's Homes, accompanied us on the four-day trek. The time spent travelling together proved very valuable, for many questions arose and could be answered, and the travel itself allowed a more comprehensive picture of life in Kenya.

The first day we travelled about nine hours (by four-wheel drive since only the main roads are paved), stopping at Nakuru National Game Park. Unfortunately, the flamingos for which the park is famous had fled since the lake is drying up, but we were amused by the warthogs, their tails pointing straight up as they ran, as if in response to a remote control. Graceful gazelles were also in abundance as were wildebeest, zebra and baboons.

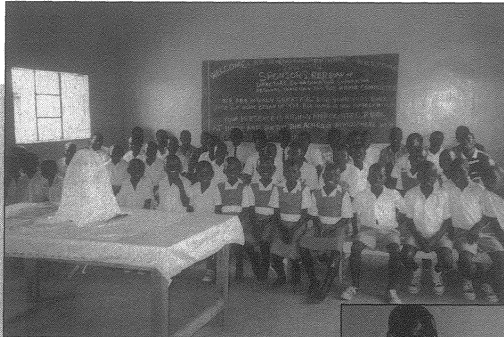
The next morning, the second leg of our journey took us over pot-holed roads into the remote West Pokot area where the Kodich Children's Home was

established in 1990. The landscape is incredibly dry; nothing grows save the odd tree and thornbush. The heat was oppressive – 38 degrees on the day of our visit.

We were wonderfully welcomed by the staff, local committee, and children, then treated to a feast, a tour of the buildings, and later a program of memorized songs and Scripture verses. There were the inevitable speeches also

– very humbling, for we were told repeatedly how they had prayed and longed for this day of meeting and were so happy we had come.

We were presented with gifts and were happy to reciprocate, giving a plaque for the home, special bookmarks for the staff and committee members, and "goody bags" for all of the 40 children. The bags, prepared by our committee, contained a small Canada



The Acheho children before beginning their program.

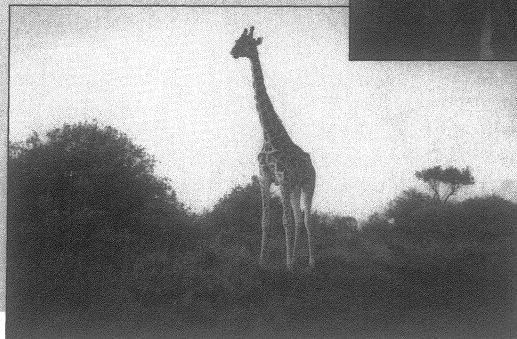
Supplies to feed 70 children plus staff at Acheho: basically several large sacks of maize and beans.



Mrs. Randa had gone to a great deal of trouble to make us welcome. Here she lights candles on a special cake she had baked.



The children at Kodich – all smiles as they show the gifts received.



An impressive sight for which Kenya is famous.

pin and an assortment of candy or "sweets" as they are called in Kenya. It struck us that the children had never before in their lives received such a gift. Incredible! It was also a pleasure to be able to hand over choir tapes donated by the Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus, and puzzles, games colouring books and crayons donated by the John Calvin School in Smithville as well as a few sponsor families.

These gifts are certainly unique and will be valued there for the children have so little. To have a change of clothing and to receive three meals a day (maize porridge, maize and beans and water) is considered a blessing. The possessions we have: our books, toys, cupboard full of clothing, sports equipment, appliances, the variety of foods we can indulge in – all these are unheard of luxuries. One realizes in visiting these homes, that we in the west live as only a small percentage of the world's population lives. How wealthy we are and what a responsibility we have to share what we have with others!

Though the children looked happy and well at Kodich, we were appraised of significant problems. The lack of water is of major concern for much of the year. (Rains fall only from March through May.) A nearby government borehole provides only a trickle and local inhabitants must line up each day to fill a container. A few containers for forty children plus staff is never enough.

Redt Een Kindt, in co-operation with the local A.I.C. committee has tried to address the problem by sinking its own borehole. To fund such a project, we sent thousands of dollars last year. A Christian contractor, valued for his integrity and willingness to work in this remote region had been found and the work proceeded.

At 75 metres, water was thankfully found, but unfortunately, the top of the borehole collapsed and valuable drilling equipment was lost. In the meantime, the contractor was involved in a serious road accident which put him out of commission for several months.

When he recovered, he was willing to try again and did so just a metre or so from the original site. Expectations were high that clean water would soon be in abundance at the home, ending the tiring, time-consuming line-ups and 10 km. trip over rough roads to the river to haul water and do laundry. However, in February of this year, just a few weeks prior to our visit, the search ended in mud – and despair. The home's manager, Pastor Joel Bergen, was indeed discouraged by this latest develop-

ment after so many months of hoping and praying for water.

To compound his discouragement, he has received threatening letters over the past several months from area leaders, warning him to leave. Though several tribes have lived in harmony in West Pokot for decades, last year, the largest group determined to purify the area and get rid of all others. Many have indeed heeded the warnings and left. Pastor Bergen fears for himself, his wife and two small sons. His trust in God and conviction that his work here at Kodich is a call, has enabled him to continue, but for how long is uncertain.

The A.I.C. committee discussed the issue seriously during our visit, even wondering whether all of the obstacles looming were telling them to possibly close the home. They concluded that God had led them to this area, that the children in this area are in desperate need of assistance and cannot be abandoned. However, the chairman promised to discuss the concerns at an area meeting in March to determine what course of action to take. Possibly they will search for a capable manager of the local tribal group. As for water, perhaps a used tractor can be purchased to haul water from the river each week.

Whatever the decisions, we left with mixed feelings, happy for the encouragement we could bring, yet with a burden in our hearts for this home. We share it with you, knowing that you too will take this before the throne of grace, asking the Lord to protect and sustain his children in this distant land.

The next day, we proceeded on to Acheho Children's Home, located in a sugarcane area: a more hospitable landscape than the arid West Pokot. Again the welcome was humbling. The children, staff, and local committee members were lined up in front of the home singing as we pulled up. The buildings had been spruced up and decorated with streamers in anticipation of this visit and Mrs. Randa, the manager, had done everything possible to make the day special.

After introductions all round, a detailed tour of the home, and a local feast eaten in the manager's home (including **tilapia**, a delicious local fish and **ugali** – maize flour cooked with water – a rather glutinous substance), we enjoyed a special program of songs, beautifully sung, and of course, the inevitable speeches. Africans love to make speeches! We had to take a turn too, and were happy to convey your interest, love and prayers for the children and staff here.

Again we opened up our battered suitcase at the end of the program and produced gifts for everyone, and again we were also honoured, this time with a beautifully carved walking stick and woven handbag. Before we left, the skies opened up in torrential downpour that even turned to hail. It was the first rainfall in a month and a half – badly needed, and our hosts told us in seriousness that our visit had brought special blessings.

It was indeed a blessing for us as individuals and as committee reps. to visit the homes in Kenya and see the work that is being done. We expected to find poverty there; we were not prepared for its depth and magnitude. The gratitude evidenced by committee members, staff and children alike for the monthly support given was also humbling. Our response was that gratitude to us was not necessary. As Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, as believers, we are only acting out of obedience to our Lord in reaching out to help others.

We feel that our (=your) money is well spent. The children in the homes are better off than so many others. They eat three times a day, are able to attend school, and receive basic medical attention when required. They also are taught to love and honour the Lord with their lives. What is missing, from our perspective, is the love and security that family afford. These children must be independent from a young age. Most, if not all, do however, retain ties with family members, and visit with them occasionally.

The thirty dollars a month we (you) send covers all food, clothing, bedding, etc. for each child and as well is used to pay school fees, staff salaries, and cover minor repairs and upkeep to the home. The amount has not risen in several years and remains adequate at this time, we were assured by "Dr. Kees" since the Kenyan shilling has devalued substantially over the past two years. This has meant increased difficulties for most of the population (salaries have not risen correspondingly in most sectors), but has meant that the purchasing power of our dollar goes further.

Do continue to pray for the children and those who care for them. We in the West have much material wealth; **moral** poverty is our Achilles' heel. In Kenya, people have so little, but the churches are full. Dependence on God seems to be a given and this fact holds hope for the future. We can learn much from those we are commanded to help, and in doing so we too are richly blessed. **C**

Is There Justice in Our Courts?

By C. Van Spronsen

Some things in our ecclesiastical life have been troubling me and I am sure these concerns are shared by others. Is there real justice in our ecclesiastical courts? Is there a fair hearing or are our numbers too small to be fair?

Let me give a case study. On the agenda of the last Regional Synod West there was an appeal/request of Classis AB/MB to judge whether the advice given by the deputies of Regional Synod ad art. 48 C.O. was correct or not. Deputies could not give concurring advice to a decision of Classis AB/MB. The procedure followed was that Classis voted on a proposal which was adopted by a clear majority. Advice was asked from the deputies who did not concur. Another vote was held with the same outcome. In other words, Classis had clearly rejected the advice of deputies and declared it to be incorrect.

Now Classis delegates eight brothers to Regional Synod who together with eight delegates from Classis Pacific are to judge whether the advice was correct or not. The question came up who could vote on this matter at Regional Synod. Could the delegates of Classis AB/MB vote which Classis had already clearly rejected the advice and declared it incorrect? Could they judge their own case again? Could the deputies vote who had given this advice in the first place. After some discussion it was decided that all could vote since there would be hardly anyone left who had not been closely involved in this particular case before!

My question and concern is whether justice is being done. Is this a fair hearing? The majority of the delegates at this assembly would not have passed as jury members in secular courts for the simple reason that they had already clearly expressed their opinions about the matters on hand. Are our standards in ecclesiastical courts so much different?

Sure, there was some uneasiness and discomfort about the procedure followed but Regional Synod went ahead anyways. Perhaps the fact that most

were happy with the end result compensated for the fact that the procedure followed may not pass the test of justice. Would it, however, not have been fairer to admit that Regional Synod was unable to do justice in this matter and that it should have gone to General Synod instead?

I recall more instances where a similar uneasiness arose at Regional Synods because too many members had already judged in the matter. Logically such situations will arise within our small federation. A Regional Synod at this stage of our federational life consists of delegates from only two Classes. Often the agenda will have appeals against decisions of one of the two Classes and at least half of the delegates of that particular Classis have dealt with the matter before. (All the ministers as well as probably some elder delegates).

It makes one wonder whether Regional Synods do have a real function in our ecclesiastical assemblies. Or are we simply too small for such a "luxury?" It made sense in the Netherlands where perhaps three to five Classes send delegates to one Regional Synod. Then there would still be a sizeable body to judge a matter even if the delegates of a whole Classis abstained. But does it really function in our federation? There seems to be little need for a Regional Synod (at least in the West) since it is regularly being postponed. When there are matters for the agenda we frequently run into the difficulty that appeals can hardly receive a fair hearing. Delegation to General Synod could be taken care of by the individual Classes just as well since we already generally attempt to have equal representation from each classical area. Deputies ad art. 48 C.O. could be deputies from a neighbouring classis which they in practice already are. What is left for a Regional Synod to deal with that could not be dealt with at a Classis or General Synod? What real function does a Regional Synod have to warrant the extra expenses and time it requires?

To meet the objection that it would take away the opportunity for appeals

CHURCH NEWS



The Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad has decided to delegate the Revs. E. Kampen and M. van Beveren to attend the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA), which begins on June 14, 1994. This decision was made because of a letter received from the Deputies of the FRCA in which they state "we would plead with you to send a delegation to our next synod." In light of this request, as well as the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches have never yet been represented at a Synod of the FRCA, and noting the close relationship of our churches, as also seen in their support of our Theological College, it was decided to send a delegation.

At the request of the Dutch Deputies, the Committee informs the churches that the Rev. A.J. Pol is available for call in the Canadian Reformed Churches as of May 1994. Since 1987 the Rev. Pol has been serving as missionary teacher in Sumba, Indonesia, on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

CALLED to Edmonton – Immanuel and Smithers, BC

Rev. J. Huijgen


of Fergus, ON

DECLINED to Smithers, BC for Home Mission

Rev. W.B. Slomp

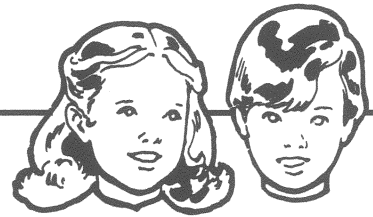
of Houston, BC

in between General Synods it could be considered to have the latter more frequently with delegates appointed by each of the four classes.

My main concern is whether justice is being done in our ecclesiastical courts. Or are there flaws in our system which could be avoided? In my opinion these matters are worthy of frank discussion and further evaluation. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Do you have a best friend?
A best friend is a wonderful blessing.

Here is what Busy Beaver *Marian Wierenga* thinks a best friend is.

"A best friend is someone who understands, who cares and who shows that she cares. Someone who will always be there whenever a helping hand is needed. Someone who will help you in the good and the bad times.

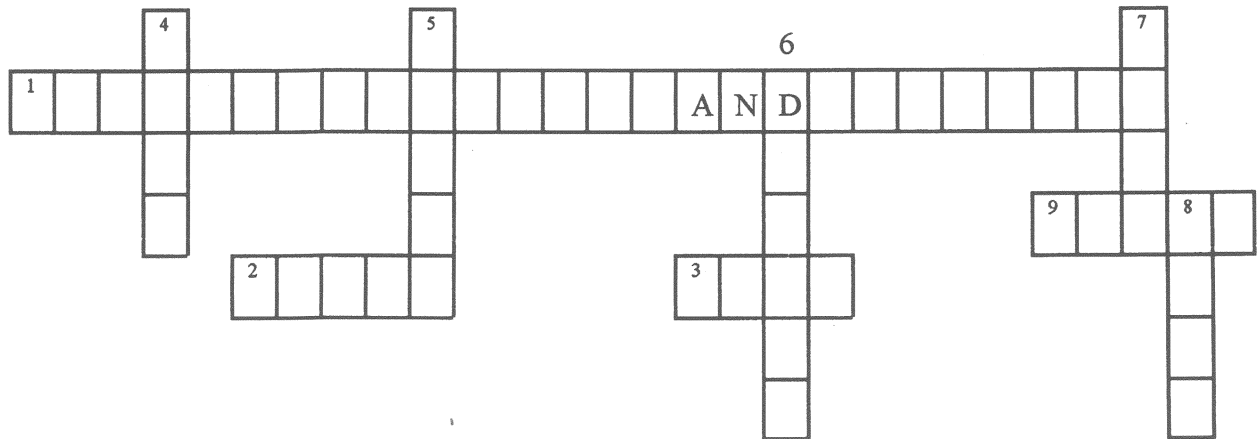
A best friend will always be honest with you, will tell and share with you all your and their secrets and will never hold anything from you. Someone who will be there to give you a shoulder to cry on, a hug when needed, and will always tell you that they love you. A best friend will be willing to listen if you are down. Your friend respects you for who you are and doesn't try to change you. A best friend will tell you if you do something wrong and will try to help you improve.

A best friend is a gift from God."

Quiz Time!

MEN OF THE BIBLE

By Busy Beaver *Rebecca Scholten*

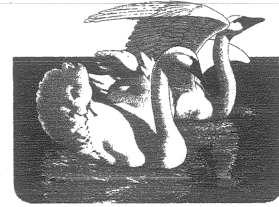


Across

- King Nebuchadnezzar cast these three men into the fiery furnace.
- Jethro was _____ father-in-law.
- _____ was Adam's first child.
- _____ was swallowed by a big fish.

Down

- _____ was the first man on earth.
- _____ died for our sins.
- _____ was cast into the den of lions for serving God.
- _____ was Jesus' herald.
- _____ was Adam's second child.



CHILDREN OF THE BIBLE

By Busy Beavers *Jodie Lodder and Jaclyn Hulst*

Match the name on the left with the description on the right.

- | | | |
|------------|-----|---|
| A. Isaac | ___ | 1. Was called three times in the temple by God. |
| B. Esau | ___ | 2. Killed his brother. |
| C. Ishmael | ___ | 3. Was a shepherd. |
| D. Cain | ___ | 4. Was to be offered as a sacrifice. |
| E. Joseph | ___ | 5. Had a coat of many colours. |
| F. Jacob | ___ | 6. Son of Ruth and Boaz. |
| G. Abel | ___ | 7. A hairy hunter. |
| H. Samuel | ___ | 8. The first son of Abram. |
| I. David | ___ | 9. Fled from the anger of his brother. |
| J. Obed | ___ | 10. His offerings were accepted by God. |

BIBLE PICTURE CODE

By Busy Beaver *Candace Schuurman*

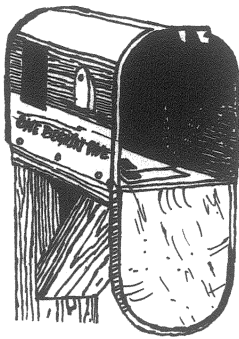
A ☹ B Ω C ♀ D ∞ E ∟ F ⚡ G ♀ H ≡ I ✕ J er

K & L ● M ●* N ■ O ♪ P □ Q → R ⚙ S ♠ T *

U † V ❖ W † X ⊗ Y ⊡ Z ✂

CODE:

☹■∞ ♀♫∞ ♠☹† *≡☹* ✕* †☹♠ ♀♫♫∞



From the Mailbox

Hello, *Tim Sikkema*! What a lot of writing you did in your March Break! I can tell you had a very good time with your friend. It must have been exciting to see the airplanes that flew in the war. Thanks for sending the puzzles. Bye for now, Tim.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Leo Knol*. What kind of animals do you have on your farm, Leo? Hope to hear from you soon,

Leo. Bye.

Hi, *Tamara VanderBruggen*. Thank you for your nicely decorated letter. I like stickers, too.

Are you enjoying spring now, Tamara? Bye.

Hi, *Alisha Dokter*. Thank you for sending in those interesting puzzles. Yes, I love spring too. Are you able to go outside now without a coat? Do you do gymnastics at school? Bye, Alisha.

Hello, *Tamara DeJong*. How was your report card? What is your favourite subject? How is your recorder practicing? Bye, Tamara.

Hi, *Crystal Dekker*. You sure have lots of friends at school! What kinds of games do you play with them? Have you started playing soccer yet? Bye, Crystal.

Hello, *Michelle Linde*. Congratulations on your new baby sister. I'm sure you are glad to have a baby sister. You probably help your Mom a lot with her. That's a pretty good joke you made with your sister's name. Bye, Michelle.

Hi, *Melissa Hovius*. Thank you for the nicely coloured picture. There are about twenty-five Clarions in one year, Melissa. Bye.

Hello, *Cynthia VanLeeuwen*. How many calves do you have on your farm now? Thank you for the nice picture of the pears. Bye, Cynthia.

Hi, *Jodie Lodder* and *Jaelyn Hulst*. You must have had a great time at the cottage in the March Break. Did you do any skating while you were there? Thanks for the puzzles! Bye.

Thank you all Busy Beavers who sent in their Spring Surprise Story!

ANIMAL CROSSWORD

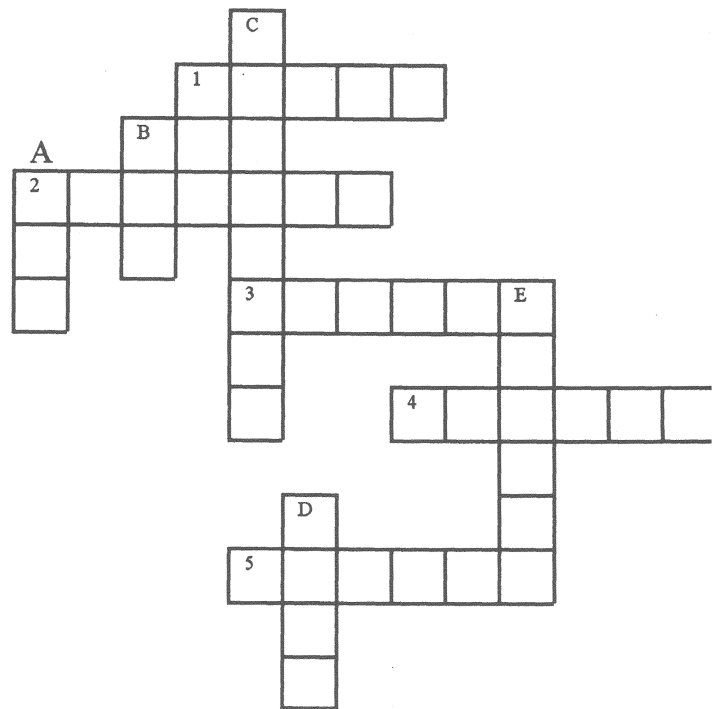
By Busy Beaver *Felicia Oosterhoff*

Across

1. Web-footed animal.
2. A baby hen.
3. Small furry animal with large ears.
4. Man who grows crops and keeps animals.
5. It has four legs, large ears and is very stubborn.

Down

- A. This animal chases mice.
- B. Animal from which we get bacon.
- C. Bird which crows when the sun comes up.
- D. Bird which is white or grey and coos.
- E. Large bird eaten on Christmas Day.



Answers to the Puzzles

A. Cat, B. Pig, C. Cockerel, D. Dove, E. Turkey
 Down
 1. Goose, 2. Chicken, 3. Rabbit, 4. Farmer, 5. Donkey
 Across
 Animal Crossword
 H-1, D-2, I-3, A-4, E-5, J-6, B-7, C-8, F-9, G-10
 Children of the Bible
 1. Shadrach Meshach and Abednego, 2. Moses, 3. Cain, 4. Adam, 5. Jesus, 6. Daniel, 7. John, 8. Abel, 9. Jonah

Love to you all,
 Aunt Betty

