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# The Antichrist: Principle, Power, People or Person?<sup>1</sup>

By J.E. Ludwig

(Speech delivered for the Men's League Day in London,  
March 26, 1994)

## Introduction

As you are probably aware, I was confronted with a choice of two topics for this day: either the Antichrist or our present discussions with the Independent Christian Reformed churches and where we are heading. As a rookie minister I immediately opted for the former thinking that it would be a far less thorny and delicate topic than the latter. My first reaction was: "The antichrist would be much easier seeing that all you have to do is dig up some books and articles, exegete some texts and you're done." At first glance it seemed more theoretical and futuristic, while the other more practical and timely.

As the study and the research grew, however, it became increasingly clear that this subject was not as "cut and dried" as I initially thought. The more you read, the more interpretations you discover about the antichrist. I tried to capture that in the title for this speech: The Antichrist: Principle, Power, People or Person? Question mark. Must we conceive of the antichrist as an ever-present principle of evil or as a undefined power of darkness? Is it more correct to speak about "antichrists" – a continued succession of people or THE antichrist – one final eschatological figure? Or can we combine various elements of these interpretations?

The reason for this diversity is undoubtedly based on the fact that the chief Scriptural texts dealing with the antichrist are not as literal and straightforward as we, perhaps, would like them to be. Leaving aside for the moment the letters of John, you could say that the main texts are: 2 Thess. 2 and Revelation 13 and 17. One NT scholar, when discussing various elements from that portion of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, wrote: "There are no darker words in the entire Pauline corpus than these, and any interpretation must be at best a hypothesis."<sup>1</sup> And concerning Revelation, you yourselves know how the apocalyptic character, the imagery and symbolism make for difficult exegesis.

By saying this, however, we do not deny the clarity of Holy Scripture. Rather, let us quote the words of the apostle Peter, who when referring to Paul's letters writes that "some things in them are hard to understand . . ." (2 Peter 3:16). The other factor to remember is that we have a limited, fallen understanding which sometimes stubbornly refuses to see the obvious meaning, interrelation, and implications of certain texts.

About this topic being "theoretical" as opposed to the other I was also wrong. No passage of Scripture is strictly theoretical. Every portion of divine knowledge revealed in Scripture has the practical application of working and

strengthening our faith in the Triune God – also what is revealed about the antichrist. To use the words of Paul to Timothy: "All Scripture is . . . profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Nor is this topic "futuristic." Admittedly, if you check any dogmatics textbook, you will find "the antichrist" treated in the concluding section: the doctrine of the last things, otherwise known as eschatology. You might infer from this, that the antichrist, whatever or whoever he is, is limited to the distant future, to the end of this age just before Christ returns upon the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead. This inference, however, is not altogether correct, for the church today IS living in the final period of the history of salvation. The epoch is designated in Scripture as "the last days" (Heb. 1:1), "the end of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11) and "the last hour" (1 Jn. 2:18). All these expressions refer to the time-period extending from Christ's ascension or from Pentecost to Christ's return. This topic, then, is most timely and appropriate.

Speaking about the return of Christ, let us keep that foremost in our minds as we delve into history and Scripture concerning the antichrist. The advent of Christ, not the antichrist, is the pivotal event of eschatology. It is the bodily, public, visible return of our exalted Lord which will end this age and usher in the age to come. That's the consummating act of the whole process of redemption. This manifestation of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). Whatever differences we may have with respect to the preceding events, that ought never to obscure the centrality of Christ's coming in great power and glory for the eternal salvation of the believers and the eternal condemnation of the unbelievers.

## Historical overview

Having said that, by way of introduction, I would now like to proceed with a brief, selective historical overview concerning the different views of the antichrist. That gives you at once an idea of how divergent the opinions really are.

### A. The early church

Beginning with the early church it can be observed that most of the earliest writers understood Paul's words about "the man of lawlessness" with reference to a definite person who would live on earth at the close of history and be destroyed by Christ. Take, for example, the "Didache" (The Teaching of the 12 Apostles) written probably around A.D. 120. The last chapter (XVI) is a call for watchfulness, and it says there: ". . . for when lawlessness increases, they shall



hate and persecute one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, doing signs and wonders," and it goes on to conclude with the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Ireneus, bishop of Lyons, (A.D. 140) in his explanation of 2 Thess. 2 remarked that the antichrist would be a Jew, springing from the tribe of Dan. He based this among other things on the fact that the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7.<sup>3</sup> A little further on, when deciphering the number 666, he asserts that the Antichrist will be one in power and position like the Roman Emperors.<sup>4</sup>

Hippolytus (A.D. 180) wrote an entire treatise on Christ and Antichrist in which he understood the Roman Empire to be represented by the Beast out of the sea and the antichrist by the false prophet.<sup>5</sup>

The notion that Nero was to rise from the dead (Nero redivivus) in order to be the antichrist was advanced as early as the third century by Commodian.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine (A.D. 354) in his book *The City of God* gave the following commentary on 2 Thess. 2:

"This is doubtless meant of Antichrist and the day of judgment. For this day, (Paul) says, shall not come until Antichrist arrive before it."<sup>7</sup>

### B. The middle ages

If we move on into the Middle ages the identification of the Antichrist as a political world ruler continues but side by side with that another strand of interpretation arises, namely, that he will be an ecclesiastical leader. Joachim of Floris (died: 1202) was the first to suggest that the Antichrist would be a Universal Highpriest (Universalis Pontifex) who would occupy the apostolic see in Rome.

The popes themselves, for example Innocent III (A.D. 1213), designated Mohammed as the Antichrist.

### C. From the Reformation onward

Since the Reformation and onward it has been common for Protestants to label a specific pope or the entire papal system as the Antichrist. Think of Luther's pamphlet "Against the Damnable Bull of the Antichrist" (1520) or of the many accusations in Calvin's *Institutes* against the Roman pontiffs as the personification of the Antichrist.<sup>8</sup> This use of the name "antichrist" as a collective term for all the popes is portrayed in the preface to the Canons of Dort. There the authors expressed their thankfulness that God had delivered his church "from the tyranny of the Roman Antichrists. . ."<sup>9</sup> The Westminster Confession expresses the same when in chapter XXV. 6 it states:

"There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be the head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God."

As you may have noticed from the recently published "Proceedings" of the ICRC that met in Zwolle last year, this particular statement within the Westminster Confession has been criticized for not doing justice to the antichrist as a final eschatological figure.<sup>10</sup>

This emphasis upon a religious leader has not, however, submerged the idea that the antichrist could be a political leader – at least not when the occasion was deemed warranted. Both Napoleon and Hitler, in their quest for a world empire ruled by one man, were called "the antichrist."



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In liberal circles<sup>11</sup> the tendency to interpret the Bible in light of pagan myths has also asserted itself with respect to the antichrist. According to them, this Biblical concept is derived from the Babylonian creation-epic which relates the struggle between the Chaos-dragon, Tiamat and the god of light, Marduk.

Other modernists<sup>12</sup> have applied Karl Barth's actualist conception of revelation to the antichrist. According to this view we should not try to systematize what Scripture says about the antichrist. All that is important is what the church at the moment of its existence (here and now) perceives as the antichrist, and that changes as history changes. As you can see this view does no justice to the Scriptural gives about the antichrist.

And finally, those who do not regard Satan as an individual naturally look upon the antichrist as an evil principle, a great system of falsehood hav-

ing various manifestations. Some find antichrist, then, in rationalism, others in humanism, existentialism and so forth.

This brings us to the end of our short historical survey. One thing has become clear, namely, the diversity of the understanding and application of this term. If we were to summarize the main conceptions then the list would be something like this:

1) the antichrist is a Satanic person who will appear at the end of this world;

2) he is a particular individual who can be identified at the present moment rather than as an eschatological person;

3) he could be an emperor, dictator, ecclesiastical figure or false prophet of Jewish, apostate Christian, or heathen background;

4) the term refers collectively to a group or succession of people;

5) there may be types or precursors of the Antichrist culminating in the "Man of Lawlessness himself";

6) he is a mythological figure of heathen origin;

7) the antichrist is manifested in radical "isms." C

*to be continued*

<sup>1</sup>G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1974, p. 560.

<sup>2</sup>P. Schaff, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, p. 382.

<sup>3</sup>Schaff, *ANF I*, "Ireneus Against Heresies" p. 559.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, p. 559.

<sup>5</sup>Schaff, *ANF*, V, pp. 204ff.

<sup>6</sup>Schaff, *ANF*, IV, p. 211.

<sup>7</sup>Augustine, *City of God*. London: Everyman's Library, 1972, Volume II, Book 20, chapter 19.

<sup>8</sup>*Institutes*, IV, 25-30.

<sup>9</sup>J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften*, p. 227.

<sup>10</sup>Proceedings, p. 188.

<sup>11</sup>Hermann Gunkel and his followers.

<sup>12</sup>P. Althaus, *Die Letzten Dinge*.

## PRESS REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



# Developments in the Ukraine

In the southwest of Ukraine, bordering on Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, is the province of Carpatho-Ukraine. Before World War II, this area used to be part of Hungary and is geographically separated from the rest of the Ukraine by the Carpathian mountain range. In view of its history, it is not surprising that this area is home to 200,000 Hungarians, of whom 130,000 are registered members of the Carpathian Reformed Church of the Ukraine. There are 92 congregations and 24 ministers.

This church is still recovering from a long period of Communist oppression and so efforts are underway by our sister church in Hattem, the Netherlands, and by Christ for Russia (of which Rev. N. Vogelzang is director) to strengthen the cause of the Reformed faith. The church at Hattem has sent out Mr. Ben van der Lugt to Carpatho-Ukraine, and will send out

Rev. M. Nap as well (to the Ukraine proper), once he has finished his preparatory studies in Kampen.

### Training ministers and missionaries

The focal point of B. van der Lugt's efforts will be helping in the establishing of a school to educate ministers and evangelists. Van der Lugt served for 17 years in Irian Jaya where he was active in developing education in that country and so comes to his new challenge with some experience. The idea is that the Karthapian Reformed Church will be in charge of the school, but that Van der Lugt with the Dutch churches will help with getting it off the ground. Because of the decimation of Reformed pastors under Communist oppression, such outside help is vital at this stage. They hope to get the school running by August of this year. Once this school is able to graduate future evangelists and ministers, the work of Rev. Nap on the

other side of the Carpathian Mountains in the heartland of Ukraine will be greatly facilitated. Native Ukrainians will then be able to carry the Reformed gospel further and further into Ukraine and under the blessing of God establish congregations.

If all goes well, a building will be leased for about 50 years at Nagyberék, about 8 kilometres from Bergovo, Ukraine. This building used to be a headquarters for the Communist Party and has many rooms suitable for classrooms.

At the moment there are about 30 Ukrainian theological students at Reformed seminaries in Hungary (in Budapest, Debrecen, and Sarospatak). The work is waiting for them. As Rev. N. Vogelzang noted, "Because of the persecution, the Carpathian church is strong and vibrant, large classes of 100 or more young adults for Catechism meet regularly."



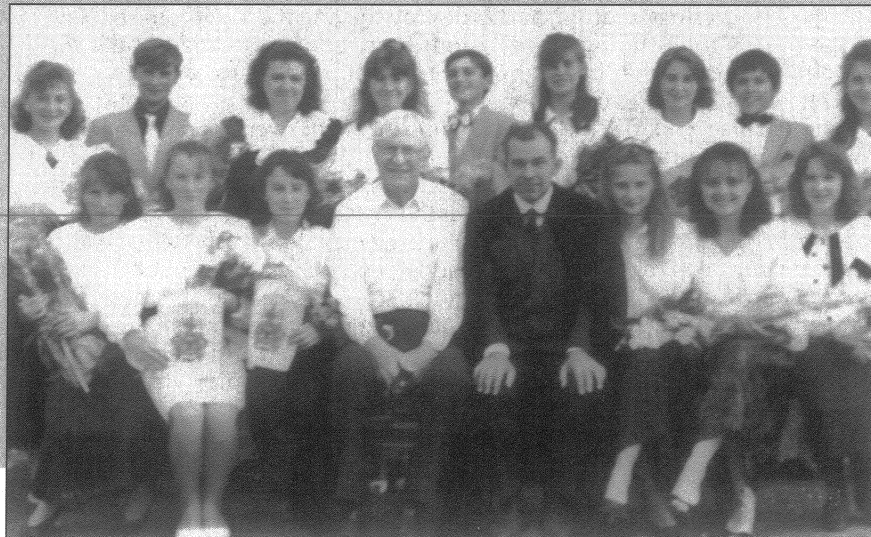


*Synod contractum in Beregovo, Ukraine.*



*Inspecting the new classrooms for the seminary at Nagbyderek. Right to left: Dr. C. Warmink, Rev. Horkay Lazlo, and librarian.*

*15 young people did public profession of faith, the first fruits of a new church in Magdybrony pastored by Rev. Horkay Lazlo, who pastors four others as well. The two men in the front row are, left to right: Rev. N. Vogelzang, director of Christ for Russia and Rev. H. Lazlo.*



### **Reformed secondary education**

Great efforts are also being expanded on redeveloping Reformed education among the Hungarian Reformed believers. The problems are however great for the once prosperous Ukraine has under the communists become very poor. Furthermore, local and central governments are slow to grant permits for the establishment of Reformed schools. Nevertheless, the first secondary school could be opened last September in Nagyberég with 36 students. These students are enthusiastic about the Christian education which

they are receiving and they spread the word among their peers. For the coming school year, over 100 students are already registered.

Many obstacles remain to be overcome however. There is a severe shortage of teachers and buildings. Although some Ukrainian students are studying in the recently opened Reformed teachers training school (Gaspar Karoli) in Budapest, it will be some years before they graduate.

In light of the great needs, the Reformed schools in Zwolle and Amersfoort which are run by members of the Reformed (Liberated) Churches in the

Netherlands have adopted two secondary schools in the Ukraine with a view to providing financial help (one in Nagyberég, the other in Nagydo-brony). The money raised will be used to help pay for the improvement of facilities, salaries of teachers, school supplies, furniture, and scholarships for needy students.

*The above was compiled from reports in Nederlands Dagblad, and Tot aan de einde der aarde, as well as from documentation provided by Christ for Russia (14152 E. Linvale Pl., # 303, Aurora, CO 80014 USA).*



# REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

## Antithesis or Synthesis?

Do we still know what the antithesis is all about? In Genesis 3:15 the LORD God established the antithesis between His kingdom and Satan's empire. Do we still know what that is all about?

Eve had listened to the serpent. The devil, in the guise of a snake, had led Eve down the garden path. Adam had followed along. Adam and Eve had sinned. They had eaten of the forbidden fruit. When God had come into the garden in the cool of the day, Adam and Eve had hidden themselves. But God, in His boundless mercy, had called them from their hiding place. He made them admit what had happened. Then God placed a curse upon the serpent – a curse which, at the same time, was the promise of a Saviour to Adam and Eve. God said: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* (Genesis 3:15).

The devil and mankind had become friends. Together they had conspired to bring sin into God's perfect creation. But God broke up the friendship. Instead of friendship, God placed hostility. This hostility would display itself in the stand that the seed, the children, of the woman and the seed of the serpent would take against one another. This enmity would show itself in the attitude which those who embraced the promise of God and those who rejected the promise and chose for the devil would have for each other.

There would be conflict between two camps, between those who chose for the devil and his lies and those who took hold of God and His promise. This conflict was played out in the very family of Adam and Eve. The enmity divided Cain and Abel. Cain hated the believer Abel so much that he murdered him. In the early chapters of Genesis we can read about Cain's godless clan and Seth's holy family.

The conflict, however, would not be resolved by Cain and Abel or any oth-

ers we read about in the early chapters of Genesis. The strife would be fought out by the serpent, Satan, himself and an individual member of the seed of the woman. That individual is Jesus Christ. The conflict was settled on the cross.

Satan hounded Christ to the cross. The serpent sunk his fangs into the heel of the Man. The snake hurt Jesus, no doubt. But on the cross, the Messiah crushed the head of the devil. God made good on His promise. He promised Eve a Saviour who would destroy the enemy. The promised Saviour bludgeoned the head of the foe by His death on the cross. On the cross Christ proved Himself to be the triumphant victor over sin, death and the evil one.


We live in a great time. We live after the victory of Christ. Christ, the Seed of the woman, has crushed the head of the serpent. But the devil is still a snake in the grass. He is still dangerous. You, young people of the church, are of the seed of the woman. You belong to that community of people who, by the almighty grace of God, embrace God and His promises. Christ has won the victory, but the final revelation and consummation of that victory needs yet to come. Christ will once for all show Himself victor on the day of His return. In the meantime, the enmity between those who belong to Satan and those who belong to Christ is still there. The line is lying in the midst of the world. Often it runs right through families.

Young people of the church! Are you aware of the antithesis? Are you conscious of the God-ordained line separating you from those who would follow Satan? An antithesis is an absolute contrast. Black and white are each other's opposites. Light is antithetical to darkness. Good is the antithesis of bad. There is only one line marked out in the world. Every individual falls on one or the other side of the line. No one can straddle the line. There is no neutrality. This has implications for the choices

you make in life. The big choices, such as, whom will you marry, who are your friends going to be, what kind of work are you going to do, where are you going to live. But also the small choices, like, what you are going to do this Friday evening, what video you are going to rent, what CD you are going to buy. No choice you make is neutral. Every decision you make, every action you take, every place you go puts you on one side or the other.

The trouble with us people is that we try to synthesize things. We want to have the best of both worlds. We want to be Christians, but we also want to get in on all the goodies the world has got to offer. We don't mind compromising obedience to God in order to have a bit of worldly fun now and again. I am no advocate of wet-blanket piety. There is nothing wrong with fun, but when we are having fun, let's remember that we are people of God. Enjoy life! Of course! But do so as a Christian. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Adam and Eve attempted synthesis. God destroyed the synthesis and replaced it with antithesis.

In Romans 12:2 Paul said that we are not to be conformed to this world. By "world" he meant the world in its fallen, rebellious state. We are not to attempt synthesis with that which is hostile to God. The kingdom of God and the empire of Satan are opposites. They cannot be integrated. Let us not try. Remember that you have been baptized. You have been set apart, distinguished, from the children of unbelievers.

I plan to follow this article with a series on the ten commandments in which I will work out the theme of the antithesis. In the meantime, let us hold to the promise of God spoken through the apostle Paul in Romans 16:20. After having spoken in verse 19 about the stark difference between good and evil, Paul said that the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet. We will share in the final victory of Christ. 

# William Tyndale's Concept of the Church

## Part 2: Reformed Elements in Tyndale's Ecclesiology

By R. Faber

### Introduction

In the treatise, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, William Tyndale defends the translation of *ekklesia* in the Bible with "congregation" and not "church." The reader will recall from Part One of this article that Tyndale prefers "congregation," since it does not lead the readers of the English Bible into thinking that the Roman Catholic church with its false doctrines and practices has its foundation in Scripture. Like the reformers on the European continent, Tyndale strives to establish a text of the Bible which is free of associations with Roman Catholicism.

Thomas More, the reader will also recall, in the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies and Matters of Religion*, attacked Tyndale for using unorthodox and revisionist language. It was obvious to all in England that Tyndale's translation reflected many Reformed ideas. And therefore More's treatise was not merely a critical review of the vocabulary of the new English Bible; it charged the "pestilent sect" of reformers with heresy. More defended the authority of the pope and the power of church tradition. He strongly restated the Romanist belief that the church is the sole, infallible source of divine truth. He argued that whatever the church states as true, the believers must accept as the Word of God. Indeed, More suggested, the church had existed before Scripture was written, and even since the writing of the Bible, the church has proclaimed other truths that are not contained in Scripture. The church, therefore, determines Scripture and is its only interpreter. Accordingly, More concluded, Tyndale's translation constituted a heretical subversion of the church and its authority.<sup>1</sup>

In *An Answer to Sir Thomas More*, Tyndale treats many of the "heresies and matters of religion" which More had discussed. The translator defends not only the vocabulary of his edition, but also the Reformed criticism of such matters as the position of the pope, the worship of images and relics, and pil-

grimages. In discussing these matters, Tyndale has occasion to touch upon the nature and role of the church. The relationship between the church and Scripture, and between the church and Christ its Head, are but two of the topics Tyndale broaches. In so doing, the translator provides us with one of the earliest English documents which promoted the Reformed doctrine of the church. In this article we shall consider some of the attributes of the church as observed by Tyndale. We shall observe the influences of the continental Reformation upon Tyndale's thought, point out the Reformed character of Tyndale's ecclesiology, and shall conclude with some notes of criticism.

### 1. The church is formed by God's Word

According to Tyndale, one attribute of the church is that it is formed by the preaching of the Word of God. "The whole Scripture, and all believing hearts, testify that we are begotten through the Word."<sup>2</sup> As proof for this attribute, Tyndale offers Romans 10:14: "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?"<sup>3</sup> He explains the text thus, "Christ must first be preached, ere men can believe in him. . . . And therefore, inasmuch as the Word is before faith, and faith makes the congregation, therefore is the Word or Gospel before the congregation (24)." In stating that the preaching of the Gospel and the resultant faith are needed for the formation of a church, Tyndale follows the continental reformers. It was Luther who had described the church as *creatura verbi*: a creature of the Word. Tyndale espouses this tenet of the Reformation and refutes the Romanist ecclesiology as expressed by More, according to whom the church is above Scripture and its sole expositor.

In his *Dialogue* More had argued that the Roman Catholic Church is superior to the Bible in part because it *predates* Scripture, and that therefore it alone is able to instruct the laity in the

meaning of Scripture and in the doctrine that it expresses. For this reason Tyndale's translation was so hated by the clergy, which realized the English Bible would undermine its authoritative position. But Tyndale, as A.G. Dickens notes, "firmly believed that the Bible came first and should invariably determine the doctrines, institutions and ceremonies of a Church which had come to bear little or no relation to that of the New Testament."<sup>4</sup> In stating that the church is a product of the preaching of the Word, Tyndale argues that the Church is subservient to the Word, and should conform to it.

Tyndale's reasoning follows that of the continental Reformers. Huldrych Zwingli, for example, had also written about the church's subservience to the Word. One may recall that of the sixty-seven theses which Zwingli published in 1523, several concerned the authority of Scripture. The first thesis reads: "All who say that the Gospel is invalid without the confirmation of the church err and slander God." Following Zwingli, Tyndale replaces the authority of the Romanist Church with the authority of Scripture. The church must obey the Word of God by which it is formed. There is no divine revelation besides the Word, and the church may not claim to possess truths outside Scripture. In stating that the church is a product of the Gospel, Tyndale refutes More's contention that the church is superior to the Word.

### 2. Faith is the basis of the church

We read in Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." Tyndale has already argued that the preaching of the Gospel precedes the formation of the church; now he argues that faith in Jesus Christ's saving work, which is granted through the preaching, is a cornerstone of Christ's church. Tyndale points out that all who are born anew and become children of God, are members of his church. Though one might question Tyndale's



exegesis of Matthew 16:18, his statement that “faith is the rock, whereon Christ built his congregation (31)” is true. And this faith, Tyndale writes, is the “foundation, laid of the apostles and the prophets; whereon Paul says (Eph. 2:20) that we are built, and thereby of the household of God (31).”

Following the continental reformers, Tyndale emphasizes the role of the saving work of Christ in the formation of the church. Without the satisfaction of Christ for the sins of the world, the church could not exist. After all, the church is Christ’s body (Colossians 1:18), “and every person of the church is a member of Christ (Ephesians 5:23b). Now it is no member of Christ that has not Christ’s Spirit in him (Romans 8:9) (31).” Especially Ephesians 5:23b supports Tyndale’s argument: “Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour.” Faith in the expiation of Jesus Christ unites members into one body, and those who do not share in this faith, do not contribute to the unity of Christ’s body. It is clear to Tyndale that “both they that trust in their own works, and they also that put confidence in their own opinions, be fallen from Christ, and err from the way of faith that is in Christ’s blood, and therefore are not of Christ’s church (33-34).” *Sola fide* is an important creed of the church.

Such line of reasoning leads Tyndale to the logical conclusion that the Roman Catholic church is not the church of Christ. For “he that has no faith to be saved through Christ, is not of Christ’s church. And the pope believes not to be saved through Christ (39),” for he teaches to put trust in penance, pilgrimages, ceremonies, and the like – which “all are the denying of Christ’s blood (40).” Since the pope has replaced Scripture with his own doctrine, and because the pope and the clergy have shown themselves in their conduct to be unholy, the Roman Catholic church cannot be the true church.

On the other hand, all those who “depart from them unto true Scripture, and unto the faith and living thereof” (45) form the true church. Members of the true church, Tyndale writes, “thou shalt always know by their *faith*, examined by Scripture, and by their *profession* and consent to live according to the law of God” (45). Evacuation from the false church, from “Babylon,” as the Second Helvetic Confession expresses it, is a necessity for all true believers. For Tyndale all believers should depart from the false church, namely, the Roman Catholic church. At a time when the only church in England was the Ro-

man Catholic church as controlled by Henry VIII, even departure from this congregation of Satan was virtually impossible. Notions of forming a true congregation of believers were still in infancy. Nevertheless Tyndale urges those who have faith to leave the Romanist church.

### 3. The church is an assembly of sinful believers

Tyndale’s most complete definition of the true church or congregation is expressed in his rebuttal of the Romanist claim that the church cannot err. Thomas More had argued that the Roman Catholic church was infallible. To this Tyndale angrily retorts that if by church More means the Roman Catholic church, then the church certainly does err! And he cites many instances in which the church of Rome erred from the truth of God’s Word.

But as for the question of sin within the true church of Christ, Tyndale posits that, whereas sin exists in all people, God forgives those believers who ask him. The church is “the whole multitude of all repenting sinners that believe in Christ, and put all their trust and confidence in the mercy of God; feeling in their hearts that God for Christ’s sake loved them, and will be, or rather is, merciful to them, and forgives them their sins of which they repent; and that he forgives them also all the motions unto sin, of which they fear, lest they should thereby be drawn into sin again (30).” The church consists of believers who are miserable sinners; yet it consists

of believers whose sins are forgiven. Quoting 1 John 3:9 (“no-one born of God commits sin”) and other texts, Tyndale states that the church consists of sinners who ask God for forgiveness and show amendment of life. The church comprises sinful *believers*, who are totally depraved and totally saved.

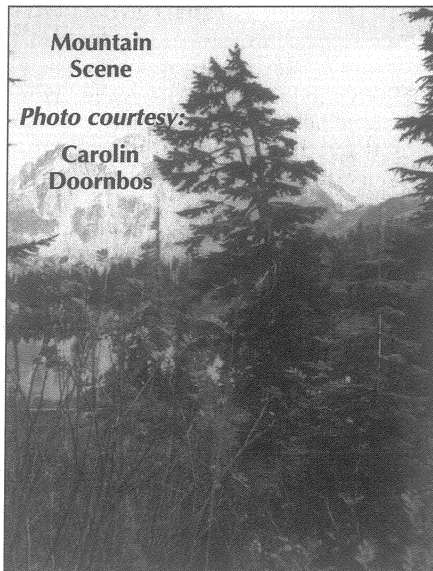
Tyndale does not forget the role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of believers, for he writes that it is the Holy Spirit which “keeps a man’s heart from consenting to sin (31).” In a sense, Tyndale dares to write, we are not sinners: “Not sinners if you look to the *profession* of our hearts toward the law of God, to our repentance and sorrow that we have, to the promises and mercy in our Saviour Christ, and to our faith.”

And yet, Tyndale writes, “every member of Christ’s congregation is a sinner, and sins daily (32).” 1 John 1:8 reminds us: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” Sin is a matter of fact, even in the congregation of Christ. “Sinners we are,” writes Tyndale, “if you look to the frailty of our flesh, which is like the weakness of one who is newly recovered out of a great disease, by reason whereof our deeds are imperfect; and by reason whereof also, when occasions be great, we fall into horrible deeds, and the fruit of the sin which remains in our members breaks out (32).” Yet, as Tyndale also reminds us, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses (Romans 8:26).

### 4. Hypocrites within the church

Tyndale also treats the matter of unbelievers within the church. Like the continental reformers, he knows that there are hypocrites within the body of Christ (44). For this attribute of the church the reformers were indebted to Augustine, who had explained (*de Doctrina Christiana*, III, 32) that the church is “mixed”: in the church believers mingle with unbelievers. Tyndale calls the church “double,” that is, consisting of the “fleshly” and the “spiritual.” Just as the disciples of Christ could not look into the heart of the betrayer Judas, so too one cannot know perfectly what is in the heart of the members of one’s congregation. The *Belgic Confession* also speaks of “hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church along with the good and yet are not part of the Church, although they are outwardly in it (Art. 29).” And Calvin, too, would write about those “who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance (*Institutes* IV.1.7). It is re-

## OUR COVER



markable that already in the first decades of the Reformation in England, the word "church" could convey the nuanced sense of *ecclesia permixta*, the "mingled church."<sup>5</sup>

### 5. The church is the gathering of the elect

We noted above that Tyndale describes the church as "double." He applies this sense also to the distinction between the elect of God (the "spiritual") and those not chosen to everlasting life ("the fleshly"). Tyndale explains: "there shall be in the church a fleshly seed of Abraham and a spiritual; a Cain and an Abel; an Ishmael and an Isaac; and Esau and a Jacob. . . a great multitude of them that be called, and a small flock of them that be chosen. And the fleshly shall persecute the spiritual (107)."

Tyndale sees this attribute of the church in his own times, in which the pope and the Romanists are the "fleshly" who persecute the little flock of Christ. Pretending and believing to be the true church, the Roman Catholics "go unto their own imaginations" and "the manner of service they fetch out of their own brains, and not of the Word of God; and serve God with bodily service (107)." On the other hand, the body of the elect, "runneth not unto his own imaginations," but seeks the Word of God. And the "little flock," as Tyndale calls the elect, "receives this testament in his heart, and in it walks and serves God in spirit (109)." It is not surprising that Tyndale should depict the elect as a small and oppressed group within a large body of so-called believers, for in England the number of true believers must have appeared small in comparison with the large and powerful Romanist Church.

### 6. The church as the flock of the Shepherd

Of the other attributes of the church discussed in Tyndale's *Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* one in particular should not be overlooked. In the treatise Tyndale repeatedly refers to the church as "little flock." This Biblical expression had been used by the Lollards before Tyndale, yet the translator appropriates it for his own reasons.<sup>6</sup> In several places of *An Answer* Tyndale uses the image of the church as a flock of sheep. The church is gathered by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Tyndale writes, "God, when He calls a congregation unto his name, sends forth His messengers to call (107)." The church is formed by the power of God,

and not by the impetus of man. The "little flock" is formed, guided, and fed by the Shepherd. The "little flock," because "they have run clean contrary unto that good law, they sorrow and mourn. . . . But the preacher comforts them, and shows them the testament of Christ's blood. . . . And the little flock receives this testament in his heart. . . (108)." This image of the church as Christ's flock is, as all well know, a Scriptural image. Therefore, one will not be surprised to learn that it appears in the Second Helvetic Confession and in the writings of the continental reformers. Indeed, the image of the church as flock is used by modern Reformed theologians also: K. Schilder saw in *congregatio* the ongoing, active, church-gathering work of Jesus Christ, the Shepherd.

When one appreciates Tyndale's depiction of the church as the flock of Christ, one understands more fully his reasons for preferring "congregation" to "church" as the translation of *ekklesia* in the English Bible. For the English word "congregation" derives from the Latin word for "flock," *grex*. Tyndale the translator is keenly aware of this etymology of the word, and despite his penchant for non-Latinate words, he employs this one in his translation. It appeals to him for it conveys a meaning which the Biblical expressions for the church also convey. To Tyndale, "congregation" is altogether an appropriate word.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, a number of critical observations of Tyndale's ecclesiology are in order. Although Tyndale discusses the nature and the role of the church in *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, he makes no attempt to present an exhaustive, systematic argument. Important essential and accidental features of the church are lacking to Tyndale's treatise. There is no discussion, for example, of the marks of the true church. Discipline within the church is not treated. There is no explanation of the relationship between the administration of the sacraments and the church. Matters which appear to the post-Reformation churches as crucial to ecclesiology are glossed over by Tyndale.

But one should bear in mind that Tyndale does not claim to put forth a complete doctrine of the church. And perhaps Tyndale's inchoate ecclesiology is to be explained by the circumstances in which he wrote. The refor-

mation of the church in England occurred after Tyndale's death. During his lifetime there were few attempts to reform the church on the scale attempted by Luther and the continental reformers. Tyndale was among the first to begin to call for change in England. By providing an English translation of the Bible Tyndale made the important first step toward reform.

There are many other features of Tyndale's ecclesiology which might be discussed critically; here I shall merely list them. Some have noted a development in the theology of Tyndale which might be called inconsistent. Luther and Calvin also developed their theologies over time, yet their more systematic approach to ecclesiastical reform caused them to be more complete and consistent. There is little evidence that Tyndale envisages a schematic reform of the church; he appears content to make changes within the existing "multitude." Others have suggested that there is evidence for a development toward legalism in Tyndale's thought.<sup>7</sup> His view of the covenant has been described as that of a contract between parties: Tyndale has been linked to the development of Puritanism. Yet again others have observed an emphasis upon individualism in the theology of Tyndale. Even in the language of Tyndale's English Bible one could criticize the translator. But when all is said and done, it should be acknowledged that the role of William Tyndale in the Reformation of the church in England was not a minor one. **C**

<sup>1</sup>For a summary of More's *Dialogue* and Tyndale's reply, see W.E. Campbell, *Erasmus, Tyndale and More* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1949), 124-154.

<sup>2</sup>W. Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, ed. H. Walter (The Parker Society. Cambridge: University Press, 1850), 24; future citations of *An Answer* derive from this edition.

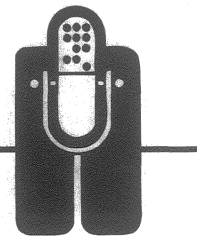
<sup>3</sup>Tyndale mentions two other texts for proof that believers form a gathering as a result of the preaching: John 15:3, John 17:17.

<sup>4</sup>A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken, 1964), 71.

<sup>5</sup>For discussions by other English reformers of the "mingled church" see P. Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), 225-262, esp. 228.

<sup>6</sup>For the influence of Lollard ecclesiology upon Tyndale's thought see D.D. Smeeton, *Lollard Themes in the Reformation Theology of William Tyndale* (Kirksville, Missouri: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986), esp. ch.6.

<sup>7</sup>See, e.g., W. Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 168.



Let us start our trip this time in faraway Western Australia. The churches there are preparing for their next synod. This is the only broader assembly they have, since the number of churches is still too small to form classes. To this one and only broader assembly each church in the federation delegates two office-bearers. And this brings particular difficulties for some.

The Rockingham church reported that they will not be able to send any delegates to the forthcoming assembly.

"You will have noticed that the last few synods have taken a number of weeks to work through their agenda. This means that the brothers who attend such assemblies need to be in a position to be able to give a significant slice of time to this aspect of church life. With our small consistory, now of three elders (one of the brothers died recently while awaiting open heart surgery, VO) and one deacon, the Rockingham consistory members are not able to do this. Therefore the decision not to attend is simply a recognition of the fact that none of the consistory members is in the position to do so. It's not that we don't want to, but that we simply can't, especially because our Synods have become so long."

In the meantime the "Bunbury group" is expanding. "There are currently ten addresses in Bunbury. Slowly there is growth, and, the Lord willing, there will one day be a school and an instituted church. (Currently the two families having school-age children are home-schooling, and it's going well)."

I would rather have seen the order reversed: an instituted church and a school, for I am convinced that institution of a church still has priority.

Also in Canada support is being asked for and given to the Middle East Reformed Fellowship. Rev. Huizinga informed the readers of the District Bulletin that he received the request to deliver some lectures for this organization, the lectures to be given on Cyprus. The consistory gave him permission to follow this up.

For some time now discussions have been going on among our sister churches in the Perth metropolitan area about the "Leasing of Commercial Properties." The point is that apparently some members own or part-own property that is leased to people who have their businesses open on Sundays. Several meetings of consistories were dedicated to this topic. Now the Armadale consistory wrote the following:

"Sunday observance discussion is held on the correct understanding of how we as Christians should observe the day of rest. The earlier decision of the consistory regarding the leasing of commercial premises is confirmed and will be published again as a reminder to the congregation.

"Leasing of Commercial Premises.

The consistory has seen the need to give direction in the matter of the leasing of commercial premises owned by church members.

The consistory has come to the following conclusion and advice in this matter:

The consistory urges church members who are in the position to lease out buildings to use every option possible when making such lease contracts to see to it that the Commandments of God, such as those dealing with morality and the keeping of the Sunday as the day of rest are promoted also in public life."

I realize that the increasing secularization of our nations and our societies brings specific difficulties and specific questions for us as Christians. One of these questions is how we shall use the possessions that the Lord has given us in His grace and generosity. I can also understand it when such questions are a topic for discussion at consistory meetings, too, once in a while.

Yet I am convinced that the way in which the Armadale consistory, among others, sought a solution is not the proper way to go. I am afraid that here the first step has been set on a road that will lead to an ever-growing "code of ethics for church members."

I presume that many of our members, if not all of them, have bank accounts. They expect to get some interest on their savings. In the meantime they allow the banks to work with their money. Banks sometimes finance building projects, such as shopping malls. My savings, too, are used for that. These shopping malls are open on Sundays. Should I withdraw my money from the bank? Am I co-responsible for this being-open-on-Sundays? And should a consistory make a pronouncement about this?

If consistories are obligated to pass a judgment on the permissibility of using one's possessions in a particular manner, where is the end? I could mention more things.

The place of the woman is in the house, we are convinced. Mom should be home when the children come home from school. But what if both parents work? Are consistories then to pass judgment on that and should they then condemn the "working mother" or rebuke the husband because he allows his wife to work? And if he refuses to admit that he should not allow his wife to do so, does he then become subject to admonition as well? I can foresee that all sorts of consequences are drawn from that. It is not inconceivable even that such a brother is not considered fit for an office in the church because he permits his wife to work. And are our school boards then also subject to admonition because they often are more or less compelled to ask sisters to come and teach for otherwise several classrooms would have to be closed?

Don't think that I would advocate that also the mothers seek employment outside the house. Nor do I deny that every one has the God-given obligation to see to it that he uses his possessions in such a manner that the Lord is served thereby and the coming of His Kingdom promoted. But my point is: if consistories are called upon and if it is their obligation to



form an opinion about and to judge all sorts of practical questions, then there is no end to it in the first place; and in the second place we are going to get a thick volume with all sorts of rules and regulations. For then consistories should form a judgment not only about the above questions but also, for instance, about the permissibility of owning shares in mining companies or in banks or in construction companies, and so on and so on. There is no end to it.

I would love to see a thorough treatment of the above questions by our professor of ethics! Perhaps, however, he is too busy with other things and perhaps there are questions that demand more attention than this point does.

In any case, we proceed. We return to Canada.

More and more congregations issue so-called "Liturgy Sheets." Most of the time they contain little more than what the congregation can read on the Psalm boards. But several people seem to like them. For the ministers, however, they often are a pain in the neck. The liturgy for the coming Sunday must be ready at least two days before. In some instances they are even phoned in on Thursday late afternoon, for they have to be readied on Friday.

Going by my own experience I must say that the sermons were prepared in the latter part of the week. To prepare other sermons soon after the Sunday did not work. Besides, there was so much other work to be done that frequently there was not even an opportunity to do much study for and work on the sermons for the coming Sunday. I was always happy when the sermons-preparation was completed at a decent time on Saturday evening. The songs were selected after this and as a result of it.

If one is required to make up a liturgy without having completed the sermon preparation, songs have to be chosen of which the preacher thinks later on: I now have found songs which fit much better and are much more in the line of the sermon. But as the sheets have been printed, he cannot change it any more.

Speaking of liturgy, the Chilliwack consistory decided that the congregation shall "stand for all singing." This was already the case in some other congregations. There is a certain anomaly in it when the congregation stands for the first and the last songs, in some instances even also when a Psalm is sung after baptism, but remains seated with all other singing.

In Calgary the congregation is still looking for suitable property on which to build facilities not only for the church but for the school as well. The opening of a school is scheduled for this coming September. One of the brothers from Calgary said to me: "I still can't believe it!" He was surprised at the goodness of the Lord in making their endeavours bear fruit this soon.

At the Coaldale consistory meeting "the minutes of the congregational meeting held February 28 are read and adopted. It was mentioned that many still could not hear comments or questions from the floor. For this reason, council decides to make use of the microphone mandatory at the next congregational meeting." And ever after, I hope.

We can only applaud this decision of the consistory. It is already a big step forward when members who have something to say at congregational or other meetings are required to stand up and speak audibly instead of remaining seated and mumbling from their chair. With all the equipment available nowadays no one will have to go home from a meeting without having heard only a small percentage of what was said. I always think: If it is not worthwhile

what you are going to say, keep your mouth shut; if it is, speak up!

What we cannot be so happy about is what the Rev. J.D. Wielenga wrote in connection with the admission into the federation of the Denver church.

"The churches of Barrhead, Coaldale, and Taber gave notice that they would appeal the decision at General Synod Abbotsford 1995, and that pending the appeal, they may refrain from entering into sister church relationship with the church. As a consequence, the ministers of these three churches will not participate in the peremptory examination of the minister of Denver at the next classis, scheduled for May 17 at Coaldale, of all places. Coaldale was chosen for convenience's sake, as the Ministers' Conference will be held here on May 18 and 19."

I wonder how it is possible that at the very same classis where a decision is taken the two brothers present from a certain church can already state that the *church* at A. will appeal the decision, a decision which the *consistory* has not even seen or examined as yet. But this aside.

Of course, it is everyone's good right to appeal a decision of which one is convinced that it is wrong. Although there seems to be a slight misunderstanding: a classical decision cannot be appealed to a general synod. But perhaps it is an incorrect formulation.

To the above we add at the same time what the Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta wrote in the Taber part of the bulletin.

"Your minister stated that he would not be able to participate as an examiner, as did two other ministers. This is not because of a desire to be contrary; rather, I have not been convinced that the Rev. Pollock did not break the vows he took in the Presbytery of the Dakotas in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Perhaps you remember that Regional Synod December 1993, left open the question of whether Rev. Pollock was guilty of breaking his vows. Classis determined . . . that he did not break vows but conducted himself in accordance with Presbyterian church polity. I have not been convinced by the evidence and must listen to my conscience."

And the positions taken as described in the above two quotations are then supposed to be in accordance with the otherwise so highly-praised Article 31 of the Church Order? Where does this article give anyone the right not to comply with a decision of which one is convinced that it is incorrect and which one is going to appeal? Is here the water shallower all of a sudden? Is one's "conscience" the criterium by which one is allowed to go?

It is possible that one is not convinced by evidence adduced. But is it then not one's duty to adduce evidence that the opposite is not just a *possibility* but a *reality*? Is one allowed to refuse compliance simply because one has not become convinced that something is *not* the case, and does one not have to accept the burden of proof that this "something" *is the case indeed*?

I don't understand it any more.

In this connection we should also pass on what the Rev. DeBoer wrote in the *Manitoba Church News*.

"Concerning point 2: This past Classis AB/MB noted this point and recognized that the OPC church polity does not require a person to exhaust the appeal route. *No one could point at a specific vow which Rev. Pollock may have broken.* (emphasis mine,VO) It may be wiser to exhaust the appeal route and we in our churches will insist on it but in the OPC it is possible for congregations to simply vote them-

selves out of the OPC federation. This would include a minister. Although the ARD did not really join the OPC, it did vote not to go ahead with its request to join it. Is that kind of vote not much the same?"

We go to Winnipeg.

"We are sure many of you have noticed in the last months that you have heard very little from your CASH FOR TRASH organizers.

"This is due to the fact that over the past year there have been fewer and fewer refund offers and to this point even next to none. Also the fact that "no-name" products are becoming more available to us, those products saving us lots of money for our grocery budgets."

The committee still will have a good look at it, "keep an eye out should anything worthwhile for funds still come along," but the profit realized thus far will be handed to the Ladies' Auxiliary.

In Burlington West the sisters also quit their endeavors, but will review the situation next fall.

Attercliffe-Lincoln-Rockway-Smithville (!!) on the other hand, continue their UPC clipping and also gather cash register tapes. Too bad that tapes from British Columbia cannot be used by them!

The Rockway consistory received a letter from the School Society of Smithville with "a request that we as Consistory not nominate school board members for the office of elder or deacon."

Yes, it is that time of year again when the term of some elders and deacons comes to an end and that others must be chosen to fill the vacancies. The consistories often face a difficult task as they may consider brothers who are also school board members most suitable for the ecclesiastical offices.

The church at Watford is struggling with its lack of room on Sundays.

At the congregational meeting "the big item on the agenda was about the churchbuilding. Perhaps the three options presented caught some of you off guard, but as consistory we instructed the building committee to come up with something that we all could work with and think about . . . As stated at the meeting, we are still at a very early stage of planning."

A brother from the building committee was at the consistory meeting. "He presented three different proposals for church-expansion/relocation with figures to back them up." Three locations are being considered: Watford, Kerwood, or Strathroy. A visit will be made to the church at Grand Valley "to study their building plans and existing building." "Meanwhile," Rev. VanWoudenberg wrote, "we continue to squeeze into our present building."

By the way, according to our latest yearbook the membership stood at 131, but in the meantime has grown to 145. For two months this summer the building of the Kerwood United Church will be rented again. This may be continued, depending on the circumstances.

The consistory also mentioned that the "status of blank votes when calling a minister or candidate was discussed. Consistory decided that blank votes do not count."

There is no such thing as a "blank vote." This is a misnomer. There may be blank *ballots*, but blank ballots are no blank votes. A blank ballot is proof that one did *not* vote. Consequently it is wholly correct to state that these blank ballots shall not be taken into account in any way.

At a congregational meeting in London "one of the points on the agenda will be: The pronouncement of the blessing by an elder during a reading service. The consistory is not presenting a decision, it only wants to hear from the congregation about this matter."

Rev. Ludwig also wrote: "On January 12 our committee met with the committees of London and Aylmer Independent congregations. We all submitted summary on the topic of the relationship between Scripture and confessions. There seemed to be a real concern on the part of the 'Independents' that with our strong stand on the confessions we elevate them on par with the Word of God. We assured them that such was not the case. The Word is infallible and inspired. The confessions are fallible and illuminated. The former has absolute authority."

I have noticed more often that others have the impression that we place the confessions on the same level as the Scriptures. In part, this may have been caused by a wrong formulation often found in the constitution of our societies, namely, that "The basis of the society shall be the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity."

This is wrong. It should read: "The basis of the Society shall be the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity." We do not have "the Word of God AND the Confessions," but we have the Word of God as the Church has summarized this Word in her confessions.

On the other hand, it surprises me greatly that specifically those who have seen the undermining of the confessions in the Christian Reformed Church are so afraid of a strong emphasis on the confessions. One would expect that they would rather be attracted by such emphasis (although not "over"-emphasis!).

If this were the only misunderstanding, however, things could be solved rather speedily, I think.

Herewith we have come to the end of the news medley proper.

Trusting that I have given sufficient material to spend some time in serious thought, I sign off, wishing you all a pleasant afternoon, a fruitful evening, and a restful night.

Bye for now.

VO

P.S. Encouraged by the comments received from Mr. H.J. Ludwig, I venture somewhat further on the path of terminology and expressions.

Is it correct, when introducing someone as "Mrs." to use the initials of her own given name(s)? According to me it is incorrect to do so.

It often happens that after the death of her husband a widow is not introduced as Mrs. John Adams, but as Mrs. Alexia Adams. This is not only wrong, it is frustrating also for people who did know Mrs. John Adams but did not know the given name of his wife.

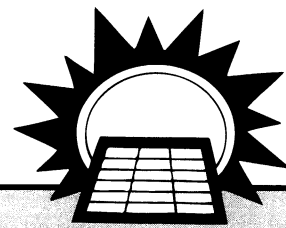
When a brother of one of the congregations passes away, only close friends and acquaintances will know the given name of his wife. When we write Mrs. John Adams, everyone knows who is meant.

The correct way is: Mrs. Abraham Lincoln; or: (Mrs.) Mary T. Lincoln, not: Mrs. Mary T. Lincoln.

May I have comments on this from knowledgeable brothers or sisters?

In order not to give everything at once, I'll leave it at this, but there is more to come.

C



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“...they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

Matthew 24:30

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last month we remembered Christ's resurrection after His death on the cross. With His resurrection He opened the way for us to eternal life. This month we will take time to remember what happened forty days after the resurrection: God's Son ascended into heaven. He returned to His Father's house in heaven.

That was again an unexpected happening for the disciples. After Jesus Christ's death on the cross they were sad and lonely. The news of His resurrection caught them by surprise, even though Jesus had often talked about it. Suddenly He was there with them. The disciples were very happy about that. They wanted to hold on to Him. But the Lord Jesus prepared them for His departure. He was not going to stay, and their time together would be very short.

And then it happened. Right before their eyes the Son of God was taken up into heaven. The Bible does not tell us much about it. About Christ's birth, death, and resurrection we read much more. Only a few verses tell us about the ascension. While the Lord Jesus was talking to His disciples, He ascended into heaven. Only the disciples saw it happen there was nobody else around. Yet, everybody who reads the Bible can find enough proof that it really happened. While Jesus was on earth He told His disciples that He would go to a place where they could not follow Him, and that He would prepare a room for them. At His ascension those Bible passages were fulfilled. He was in heaven, talking to the Father about His children, whose sins He had washed away. As a result we, God's children, can appear before the throne of the Father, freed from our sins.

Christ's ascension did not mean the end of His work as our Saviour. He had to go to heaven in order to continue His work. He would continue by sending His Holy Spirit. He prepared our salvation, and now it is secure in heaven out of reach of Satan. When Adam and Eve lived in Paradise, God would come down from heaven to visit them. That close connection between heaven and earth was broken by sin. But now, with Christ's ascension into heaven, He restored that connection again. God Himself cannot come down to talk to us, but Christ is our Spokesman in heaven. He prays for us to the Father. Because of our sins, our prayers to God are often confessed, incomplete, insufficient. We do not always know our needs, and do not know what to ask for. But Christ is there for us. With His human nature He understands our needs. He knows what is best for us. All our concerns, difficulties, handicaps, loneliness, sickness, or whatever our circumstances are, He knows. He takes care of us and places our situation into the Father's hands. Through His intercession we receive support in our God-given task. And the Holy Spirit, given to us by Jesus Christ, helps us to keep the communication between heaven and earth going through the reading of the Bible, the preaching of the Word, and our prayer. While Christ, in His human glorious body, returned to heaven, His Holy Spirit came down to us. That is how we are close to Him. He is with us always, and everywhere. There is not even the chance to escape Him!

*“Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?”*

*If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, Thou art there!”*  
(Ps 139:7,8)

Is Christ's ascension important for us in our every day life, or is it just something we talk about on Ascension Day? We are allowed to enjoy the consequences of His ascension every day. The unity between heaven and earth as it was in Paradise has been partly restored. As a result of Christ's redemptive work and His ascension into heaven He has reopened that connection. God the Father looks down on us, He speaks to us in His Word. In His presence we are able to do our work joyfully. We accept our task however difficult it may be, knowing that we do not have to do it in our own strength. In His presence we will try to please Him, and seek the things that are above. For we know that, as certain as He ascended into heaven, He will return again. Then heaven and earth will be completely restored. From that moment on we, God's children, will be gathered together. We will receive everlasting happiness, praising God and all His mighty deeds, for ever.

*Praise God and magnify His worth,  
O kings and kingdoms of the earth!  
Unto the Lord sing praises.  
To Him who in the heavens rides,  
Who in the ancient skies resides,  
From whence His voice He raises.  
Ascribe then strength to God alone,  
Whose glory is in Israel known,  
Whose might is in the heavens.  
He from His temple terror sows,  
But on His people strength bestows.  
To God let praise be given.*

Ps 68:12.

## Birthdays:

We have one more birthday for **May**. Most likely you will still be able to send a card in time. It is for:

### Bernie DeVos

“Anchor” Home, 361 30 Rd, RR2  
Beamsville, ON, L0R 1B0

Bernie's 19th birthday is on May 30.

Bernie has been living at the Anchor Home since last August. I am sure he would be happy with lots of birthday cards.

### FOR JUNE:

#### Joan Koerselman

Box 1312, Coaldale, AB, T0K 0L0  
Joan's 37th birthday is on June 17.

#### Daniel Stroop

193 Diane Dr., Orangeville, ON, L9W 3N3  
Daniel's 13th birthday is on June 20.

#### Beverly Breukelman

2225-19 St., Coaldale, AB, T1M 1G4  
Beverly's 32nd birthday is on June 30.

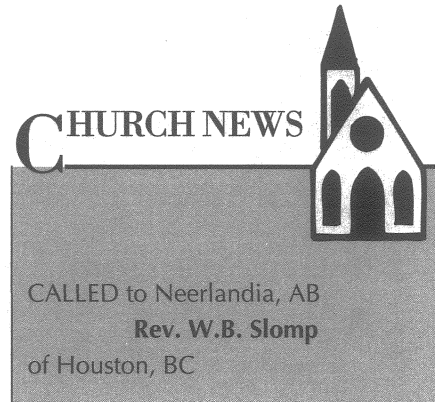
Happy Birthday to all of you and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

7462 Hwy 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0



# Annual Men's League Day, Ontario



On Saturday, March 26, 1994, the League of Men's Societies of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches held its annual League Day in the London District Christian Secondary School in London, Ontario. Some 125 brothers and sisters had come from near and far to learn about (the) antichrist. The spring's blue sky, and the opportunity for study and fellowship made it a fine day for everyone present.

Brother G. Helder, the vice-chairman of the league, opened the meeting at ten o'clock with the singing of Psalm 2:1 and 2, prayer, and reading of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. In his opening remarks he introduced the league's executive and summarized the main things the league does for its members. Central to its activities are the study of God's Word and the involvement in the Inter League Publication Board. He then gave the floor to the Reverend J.E. Ludwig of London, Ontario.

Reverend Ludwig addressed his audience on the topic, *The Antichrist: Principle, Power, People or Person?* He clarified that he had chosen this topic from two suggestions as the more theoretical and less controversial one – but admitted that his studies proved that the topic was both practical and controversial. The topic was practical, because we live in the last days and *all that* Scripture teaches us is there to strengthen our faith. It was controversial, as became clear from the variety of historical and current explanations Rev. Ludwig presented. Comparing several texts and passages, Rev. Ludwig then presented his understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning the Antichrist. He concluded that we need not despair, as God is always in control and works through Christ for our salvation. The call for us is to faithfully study the Scripture, which is and will be our only anchor – so that we may be prepared as the five wise maidens when the bridegroom comes. (The

speech will be made available to *Clarion* for publication).

After intermission, the meeting was reopened with the singing of Psalm 35:1,4. Rev. Ludwig then entertained various written and verbal questions, including the following. Will we recognize Christ when He appears on the clouds of glory? Does recognizing the Antichrist not take away the surprise of Christ's coming as a thief in the night? Is the number of the beast (666) a physical mark on people? As the church always goes through cycles of decline and revival, can we say that we are in the last decline? Would it be correct to say that Christ cannot come yet? After the discussion, we sang Hymn 40:1,4. Rev. Ludwig then closed the morning session with prayer.

A soup and bun lunch had been prepared with fruit for dessert. During the meal, there was ample opportunity to further discuss this topic and other issues that keep our minds occupied. It also provided an opportunity to enjoy and experience the bond of a common purpose in studying Scripture and Confession and what these mean for our lives.

Throughout the day, interested people could look at and buy books published by the Inter League Publication Board, which publishes and markets Reformed outlines for the study of Scripture and Confession. Among its latest publications are *The*

*Church in the Last Judgment* (Prof. Holwerda), a revised reprint of *Hebrews* (Prof. Selles), and a reprint of *Ecclesiastes* (Rev. Blok). Also available through I.L.P.B. are books from Pro Ecclesia Publishers in Australia, including recent work on *John 1-10* and the *Letters of John and Jude*. The I.L.P.B. has a sales representative in each Canadian Reformed church.

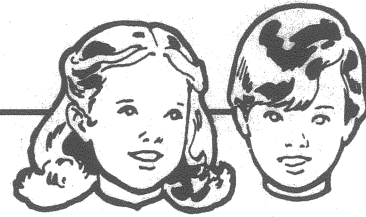
After lunch, short but informative council meeting was held with the delegates of the represented societies. Societies gave and were encouraged to suggest suitable topics for league days to the executive.

Keith Sikkema,  
for the League of Men's Societies. **C**



# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers,

*The Lord ascended up on high,  
The Lord has triumphed gloriously,  
In power and might excelling;  
The grave and hell are captive led.  
Lo, He went up, our glorious Head,  
To His eternal dwelling.*

Hymn 31: 1

Remember a short while ago when we celebrated Good Friday and Easter? Then the Lord Jesus first died, went into hell, and rose from the dead. That is wonderful news!

But now we have another special day. Ascension Day. That's when we remember that the Lord Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives. Then He promised them something. He told them to stay in Jerusalem until He sent them the Holy Spirit! This Spirit would make them able to do anything in Jesus' Name. As Jesus was talking, He started to rise from the ground. The disciples just stared. Finally a cloud came and they couldn't see Him anymore.

The Lord Jesus had gone back into Heaven. Now He could no longer teach His disciples and heal sick people. Why had He gone back into Heaven?

The Lord Jesus could not stay on earth because He had a new job to do. He was allowed to stand beside the Father's throne, and ask God to forgive the sins of all who believed in Him. Jesus could do this because He had paid for ALL those sins on the cross!

So, the disciples did not have their Master on earth anymore. But soon they were blessed with the Holy Spirit. He came to live in their hearts. So they went out and told everyone about their Saviour Jesus.

The disciples also knew that one day, their Lord would come back from Heaven, to live with His people. That day is still coming. Until it comes, let's pray, "Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!"

## Quiz Time!

### JOKES

from Busy Beaver Kristina Fennema

What kind of furniture polish do schools use?  
(Pledge of allegiance)

How do messy students write their reports?  
(With their pig pens)

Knock, Knock.  
Who's there?  
Roxanne.  
Roxanne who?  
Roxanne pebbles are in this meatloaf!

## JESUS' RETURN

As we celebrate Ascension Day, we look forward to His return. Fill in each blank with the proper answer about the second coming of Jesus.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The second coming of Christ is compared to what weather condition, Matthew 24:27?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The second coming is compared to what night visitor, 1 Thessalonians 5:2?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What virtue is encouraged as we wait for the second coming, James 5:8?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What did Paul tell Timothy to keep until Jesus returns, 1 Timothy 6:11-12,14?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Whose work did Paul say would be done before Jesus returns, 2 Thessalonians 2:9?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who will meet the Lord first when he returns, 1 Thessalonians 4:16?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What will be changed when Jesus returns, Philippians 3:21?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What will God do to all believers when Jesus returns, 2 Corinthians 5:10?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What is the last enemy to be destroyed at Jesus' return, 1 Corinthians 15:26?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What did Jesus say He was going to prepare for us, John 14:2?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. In what will Jesus return, Luke 21:27?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. What occupation did Jesus liken the judgment to, Matthew 25:32?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Who is the only person who knows when Jesus' return is, Matthew 24:36?

(See answers)



## PEN PALS WANTED!

Two Busy Beavers would like to exchange letters with other Busy Beavers. They are:

ALISA KRABBENDAM (AGE 12)

and

ROSIE KRABBENDAM (AGE 11)

Their address is  
6474 Dayton Drive  
Sardis, B.C. V2R 1V2

## CRAFT TIME!

Do you like squishing play dough in your hands?  
Isn't it neat to make things with play dough?  
If you answered "YES!" to these questions then this activity is for you.  
(Remember, ask Mom's permission to work in the kitchen!)

### Cornstarch Bread

#### Materials

10 slices white bread (you can use day old bread)  
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch  
4 tablespoons white glue  
2-3 tablespoons water  
mixing bowl

#### How to Make

1. tear crusts off bread - feed them to the birds.
2. shred white bread into fine crumbs in bowl.
3. add cornstarch and mix.
4. add glue and water, mixing with hands into a ball  
(hint- add more water if necessary)
5. knead until smooth and elastic.
6. model objects  
(hint- this dough cuts and rolls out thin and smooth )
7. Dry for several days until hard.
8. paint with acrylic paints, and spray when paint is dry with shellac or varnish.

#### Other Hints to colour dough:

1. separate dough into several balls
2. squeeze liquid or paste type food colouring into dough
3. knead well
4. if too dark, add more plain dough

Colours in this dough do not dry lighter or darker.



### BIRTHDAYS IN MAY

Here are the Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in May. We hope they have a very enjoyable day and the Lord's blessing in the year ahead.

Harold Winkelaar	2	Nicole Aasman	15
Andrea Vanderhorst	3	Rachel Broekema	15
Anne-Marie Van Popta	3	Kimberly Driegen	16
Miranda Barendregt	4	Deanna Wierenga	17
Andrea DeHaas	4	Deborah Verhoeff	18
Jeremy Feenstra	5	Michelle Linde	18
Jodie Lodder	5	Rachelle VanVeen	20
Amanda DeBoer	7	Charlene Barendregt	21
Laura Rook	7	Lee-Ann Beintema	22
Laura Vandenbos	8	Ruby Knol	23
Tetsje Riedstra	11	Tesha Hopman	29
Christopher DeBoer	12	Timothy Bartels	29
Erica Broekema	14	Anna Hordyk	31
Robert Vandergaag	14		

I promised you the answer to Busy Beaver *Tim Sikkema's* Code.

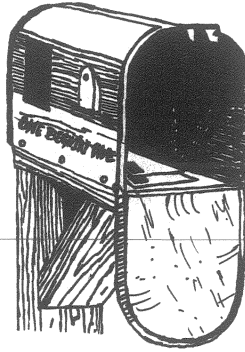
Here it is:

Title: Spring

Hint: Fall

Verse:

Spring is after winter cold  
And before the summer hot.  
It is when all the snow melts away,  
And when the floods come in our day.  
But it is also my birthday! Hooray!



### From the Mailbox

Hello, *Rosie Krabbendam*.  
How are you? Yes, I did get your last letter. What kinds of special things are you doing this spring? I hope you get a pen pal soon. Bye, Rosie.

Hello, *Alisa Krabbendam*. I was glad to hear you are doing well. What is your favourite subject in school? Hopefully you will

soon have a pen pal. Bye, Alisa.

Hi, *Candace Schuurman*. Did you and your best friend have a good time together in the March Break? What kinds of things did you do? It must be messy having your dad work on fixing up your house! I see you have pretty smart brothers. Hope to hear from you soon, Candace, Bye!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Kristina Fennema*! Thanks for the jokes you sent in already. Where is your new house, in town or in the country? I hope you have fun being a member of the Busy Beaver Club, Kristina, Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Virginia Jager*! Do you like your house? What did you do in your March Break? Bye, Virginia.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Rebecca Scholten*. Thank you for the crossword puzzle. Sometime soon it will be in the Clarion so the other Busy Beavers can enjoy doing it. Do your brothers or sisters get mad if you do all the puzzles first? Hope to hear from you soon, Rebecca. Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Amber Dykema*. Do you like collecting other things besides stickers? Does your puppy do tricks? Maybe your best friend is also a Busy Beaver. Please tell your friend Janese to send me a letter herself. Bye, Amber.

Hi, *Deborah van Beek*. Thank you for the poem and wordsearch puzzle. We'll be able to use them. Bye, Deborah.

Hello, *Deborah Voorhorst*. Glad to hear from you. Who do you play hockey with? I guess you do gymnastics in school, right? Thanks for the puzzle, Deborah. When is your birthday? Bye.

#### Answers to the Bible Quiz:

1. lighting, 2. thief, 3. patience, 4. commandment, 5. Satan's, 6. the dead in Christ, 7. our bodies, 8. judge them, 9. death, 10. rooms, 11. cloud, 12. shepherd, 13. The Father

Love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

