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The Confession of the Absolute Truth

By J. Geertsema

The human rights philosophy and the Word of God

Throughout the ages the church has again and again defended and held on to the truth of God's Word by way of writing down her faith in a creed or confession. The aim of the church with such a confession or creed is also to abide by the truth of God's Word. For that purpose the church binds itself to its creeds. The history of the church shows that in a reformation movement the church always goes back to God's Word as well as to the abandoned or discarded confessions, saying: this is the truth.

It is good to remember this in our present time. Our time is marked by the modern notion that there is no absolute truth. To state that there is such a truth is considered a social sin, in conflict with our human rights. It is everybody's right to have his or her own opinion and to determine his or her own truth. What is true for one person is not automatically true for the other. And what is true for me today might no longer be true for me tomorrow. Therefore, one must not say about anything: this is *the* truth.

This philosophy of our individualistic human rights holds a threat for the church. The temptation becomes intense to think and say in the church too: it is my right to have my own opinion and to determine for myself what is true, or, what is the truth of the Bible. You can hear people say: everybody reads the Bible in his or her own way, with his or her own background. Or, to use a modern expression: everyone reads the Bible in one's own context. And we must leave each other free in this respect. A Roman Catholic has the right to read the Bible in the context of his Roman Catholic up-bringing, a Reformed person with a Reformed background, in its different varieties, has the same right.

This reading of God's Word with an individualistic human rights approach, does not reckon with but denies God's right. Scripture says clearly that it is God's Word. Therefore, since God is the author, it is God's right to tell us how we should read and understand His Word.

The New Hermeneutic

The temptation to read God's Word from an individualistic human rights point of view becomes even stronger with the so-called new hermeneutic. The old hermeneutic has as basis that the Bible is God's inerrant and infallible Word in all that it says. God is the primary author. In His Word the only true God gives us the absolute truth.

The new hermeneutic views the Bible more as the book with the faith experiences of Israel and of the early church. Scripture is not first of all God's revelation, His Word that He speaks through inspired human instruments. No, the Old Testament shows us how and what Abraham and David and

the prophets believed. And the New Testament tells us what Peter and Paul and the other authors believed. In the different Bible books we have the theology of their human authors.

This new hermeneutic reasons further that within the wrappings of the description of the experiences and theologies of the human authors we have to seek for the Word of God and what it has to say to us in the twentieth century. For our culture, our world views differ so much from the culture and the world views of the Bible times, some two or three thousand years ago. We, so it is said, know so much more and we know things so much better than Moses, David and Paul.

This new hermeneutic says "no" to the question whether we, almost in the twenty-first century, can still be bound to the faith experience and theology of believers who lived some twenty or thirty centuries ago. Those people had views on the world and on God that fitted in their culture, so it says, while we, in our modern day and age, with our culture, have our modern world view. Therefore, according to the new hermeneutic, the message of the Bible must be re-interpreted for us, so that it fits our modern world view.

It is obvious that the divine authority of the Scripture is undermined with this philosophy. Scripture is no longer really the Word of God and no longer gives us God's revelation of His absolute truth. Moreover, not only the human Bible authors had their own faith experiences, it is the same with us. We too have our own faith experiences. Each reads the Bible in his own way, to find his own truth there, or what he sees (or wants to see) as being true for him.

It is clear that the spirit of our modern philosophy of individualistic human rights holds a great danger for the church. In the midst of this danger it is good to see what, at other times, the church did when contemporary philosophies or theologies attack its faith, that is, what it confessed to be the truth of God's Word.

God's Word

In this respect, first of all, the Church received her guidance from God Himself in His Word. The Lord Himself, through the service of the apostles, guided His church. He charged us to preserve and guard the truth and to pass it on to the next generation just as it was received. We are not to add or to take away from God's Word (Deut. 4:2, Rev. 22:18-19). Paul charged Timothy, "what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Everyone who comes with a gospel that differs from what Paul preached hears Paul's "let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8,9). And through Peter, the Lord warns

that we “must understand this that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own understanding, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). I repeat: the Bible tells us that it is God’s Word; therefore it is God’s right to tell us how we have to interpret and understand it.

In accordance with this charge, the church has, time and again, confessed what it as the community of believers received as God’s Word, God’s truth. I shall take two examples. The first one, from the early church, is the Athanasian Creed. The second one, from the days of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, is our Heidelberg Catechism.

The Athanasian Creed¹

The first two articles of this third ecumenical creed state (*Book of Praise*, p. 439):

(1) Whoever desires to be saved must above all things hold to the catholic faith; (2) Unless a man keeps it in its entirety inviolate, he will assuredly perish eternally.

The beginning of Art. 3 reads, “Now this is the catholic faith, that we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity:” Then the contents of this “catholic faith” is confessed. First, the articles 3-28 formulate the church’s confession about God as her triune God. Art. 28 ends this first part with the words, “So he who desires to be saved should think thus of the Trinity.”

The second part begins with an elaborate confession about the Person of our Saviour, His incarnation and His two natures, the divine and the human nature. After this, this second part concludes with confessing the same truth as stated in the Apostles’ Creed. The closing Art. 42 repeats what is said in Art. 2: “This is the catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved.”

The point is here: what did the church do by making its statements in the Articles 1-3, 28 and 42 of this Athanasian Creed? In the first place, it said that this creed contains the “catholic faith.” “Catholic” means that this faith is the faith of the universal church as it is gathered and spread over the whole world. The whole church believes it, as the community, the fellowship of the true believers. In the second place, the church declares that in this creed it confesses the true faith, that is, the apostolic teaching or the truth revealed by God in His Word. And because this faith is God’s truth, the church declares, we bind ourselves and everyone to it for salvation. The binding to this creed as to the “catholic faith” is a binding to the truth God revealed and gave to His church. Not individualistic human rights but God’s right is maintained here.

When in the sixteenth century the churches of the Reformation adopted confessions, they did the same. They said: this is what we believe and confess to be the true faith, that is, the truth of God’s Word. By binding each other as community of believers, in mutual agreement, to the adopted confessions, the churches bound each other in fact to the truth of God’s Word.

When we, as Reformed Churches today adhere to the confessions, we do the same, we hold on to God’s Word as His revealed truth. And we do so because God’s Word says that we have to preserve and keep His Word as we received it through His prophets and apostles. God’s Word still is the absolute truth today, to be believed and confessed by the community of His church, and in fact by all.

The Heidelberg Catechism

In L.D. 7, the Heidelberg Catechism, speaking about the true faith by which we are grafted into Christ, deals with faith in a twofold way. In Q. & A. 20-21 it deals with the *faith with which* we believe (our act of believing), and in Q. & A. 22-23 it deals with the *faith that we believe* (the contents of our faith). This twofold way of speaking about faith occurs first of all in the Scripture. In Rom. 10:10 Paul writes, “For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses (the contents of what he believes) with his lips and so is saved.” Here faith is the *faith with which* we believe. However, in Jude verse 3 the church is charged to “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,” while in verse 20 Jude admonishes us, “. . . build yourselves up in your most holy faith.” Jude speaks here about the *faith that we believe*.

In Q. & A. 21 the true *faith with which* we believe is defined as “a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word.” This “sure knowledge” or holding for true all that God has revealed for true is at the same time, as the other side of the same coin, “a firm confidence,” a trusting that all this revelation of God, with its message of salvation in Christ, is not only true for others but also for me. Thus, a true faith is knowing and trusting that all what God revealed in His Word is true also for me personally in the communion of the church.

The point I like to make here is that, though dealing with the *faith with which* we believe, the Catechism immediately links it with the contents of faith: “all that God has revealed in His Word.” In other words, the Heidelberg Catechism, or rather, we who have adopted and continue to adhere to this confession of our “catholic undoubted faith,” say that our believing, our *faith with which* we believe, can be distinguished but never separated from the true faith that we believe.

This *faith that we believe* is God’s revealed truth. It is delivered to the saints. This faith as contents of what we believe is spoken about in the second part of L.D. 7 (Q. & A. 22-23). Here the question is asked, “What must a Christian believe? The answer is, “All that is promised us in the gospel.”

Of this promising Word of God, this contents of our faith for which we are called to contend, the Catechism continues to say that “the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith teach (it) us in a summary.”

This summary of God’s truth, our “undoubted Christian faith,” is stated in the Apostles’ Creed, and, then worked out in Lord’s Days 8-22, themselves summary of this truth of God’s Word and contents of our faith. In other words, the early church said in its creeds: this is the truth of God; this is what the church is called by God to believe and does believe and confess. And the church in the sixteenth century held on to this earlier confessed truth, and worked it out from God’s Word in order to maintain it against the attacks in its own days. It repeated: this is our undoubted catholic faith; this is in summary the truth of God’s Word. The church bound itself and its members to her confession of the faith, and so to God’s revelation, to the absolute truth.

We will act wisely if we oppose the spirit of our time and abide by the truth, as the church confesses it, its humble repeating of what God has revealed in His Word. He who truly wants to live by the Scriptures as God’s errant and infallible Word, will recognize the need of adhering to the truth of God’s Word of promise in the community of God’s people.

¹*Book of Praise*, revised edition, 1993, p. 439.



The Antichrist: Principle, Power, People or Person?₂

By J.E. Ludwig

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

(The first instalment dealt with the question what was said about the antichrist in the course of history. This second instalment begins the study of God's Word on this point.)

Scripture on "the antichrist"

Let us now turn to Scripture to hear what the God of Truth Himself has revealed about the antichrist for us and our salvation. Almost all commentators agree that the key passage is that which the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul in 2 Thess. 2. This will form the central component of our study this morning, while we shall bear in mind that Paul as a Pharisee would have been keenly aware of the visions of Daniel. Paul did not write in a vacuum. The OT formed the basis and the backdrop for all his work. At this juncture, perhaps, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of the continuity and the unity between the old and new testaments. As Augustine put it: "The New Testament slumbers in the Old, the Old Testament is manifest in the New."

Closely connected with those verses from Thessalonians is what John has written in his first two letters, as well as in chapters 13 and 17 of Revelation.

A. Letters of John

You may have gathered from your preparatory study for this meeting that the word "antichrist" occurs only four times in Scripture, all in the first two letters of John (1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7). It is a compound of the preposition "anti" and the title "Christ." So literally it means: he who is against Christ. And "Christ," as you know from LD 12, refers to the Son of God who became man and was ordained by the Father and *anointed* with the Spirit to be our chief prophet, our only Highpriest and our eternal king. An antichrist, then,

stands diametrically opposed to the Mediator of the Covenant in His Person and Work.

In John's letters the word "antichrist" is used both in the singular and plural. 1 Jn. 2:18:

"Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming; so now many antichrists have come. . . ."

From the last part of this verse it is evident that John uses this term for those espousing and propagating a false doctrine. It appears that these people were originally members of the church who had withdrawn (1 Jn. 2:19) but were still active in trying to mislead and deceive the rest (v. 26) with their perversion of the gospel. He calls them antichrists (as well as deceivers and false prophets) because they denied the humanity of Christ. 2 John 7:

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ into the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1-3; 4:2).

In the context of the Johannine letters, then, you find a general application of the name for anyone who denies that the Son of God assumed our flesh and blood. This is not just a minor difference of opinion. No, it attacks the heart of the Christian faith for if the Word did not become flesh then there is no salvation of God for man. This denial is in effect a denial of the Father (1 Jn. 2:22) who promised that "Zion shall be redeemed by justice" (Is. 1:27).

Perhaps this usage of the term "antichrist" is derived from what our Saviour Himself taught in Matt. 12:30 where he says to the Pharisees: "He who is not with me is AGAINST (kata) me. . . ." From these words of our Lord you see that there is no neutral ground. No one can be ambivalent or indifferent toward Christ. If one is not for Him, he is against Him: an antichrist.

Besides this designation of present day heretics as antichrists, however, John also made reference to THE Antichrist who is coming. The first part of 1 Jn. 2:18 in the RSV reads as follows: ". . . you have heard that antichrist is coming." The definite article has been omitted because the editors of the RSV have followed the reading of a minority of older Egyptian manuscripts. The vast majority of the manuscripts, however, contain the definite article. And therefore the NIV is more correct when it translates: ". . . you have heard that THE Antichrist is coming. . . ." You might say: "Why make a mountain out of a molehill? Just one insignificant little word is missing. Does it make that much difference?" Yes, in this case it does because the function of the definite article is to point out. It was demonstrative in origin. It identifies the word it precedes as something determinate and familiar. It sets the thing or person apart from others.¹³ And that's exactly what John wants to demonstrate here: the many antichrists of his own day are distinct from the one Antichrist of the future.

Noteworthy is that the recipients of John's first letter had already been instructed about the coming of the Antichrist. That's evident from how John introduced the subject. He says: ". . . and AS YOU HAVE HEARD that the Antichrist is coming. . . ." Since the readers (probably churches in the province of Asia) knew about this truth, John does not go into the matter. He broaches the topic only for the sake of emphasizing the seriousness of the present situation. Those false teachers, then, are not just erring Christians; they are "antichrists" – with a small "a" you might say.

The next logical question to ask ourselves is: "How did these churches acquire the knowledge about the doctrine of the Antichrist as an eschatological person? From whom did they hear about

this?" Well, most likely through Paul's second letter to the church at Thessalonica. This is a very good possibility, especially if you note when Paul and John wrote their respective letters. John's letter dates from around the year 90 while Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is much earlier: A.D. 50 or 51.¹⁴

Even if they had learned this from one of the other apostles, (even John himself) the important point for us right now is this: the One whom John calls "THE Antichrist" is equivalent to Paul's "man of lawlessness."

B. 2 Thessalonians 2

Let us move on, then, to Paul's inspired teaching first paying attention to the concrete situation which prompted these words. The congregation there was living and acting in the delusion that the day of Christ had arrived or was just "around the corner." You can derive that from the opening verses of chapter 2: "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited . . . to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."

Paul had written a number of things in his FIRST letter to them about the return of Christ:

1) The dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air (4:16, 17).

2) The day of the Lord will be unexpected, "like a thief in the night" (5:2).

3) Along with that, he stressed the necessity of being prepared for it: "So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and sober."

Apparently all this had been misinterpreted, as if the final day had dawned. This had repercussions in daily life. Instead of praying for and working toward the day of Christ, they had stopped their work and were simply waiting for Christ to appear. Their reasoning, of course, was: "What's the sense? He's going to be here soon anyway!" You can understand therefore, why Paul exhorts them in chapter 3: "If anyone will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work" (3:10, 11).

However this situation began, it is not justified. Paul alluded to a few ways as to how this excitement and disturbance may have arisen. He mentions: by spirit, or by word or by letter pur-

porting to be from us" (2:2). You understand that this congregation lived during the time of the so-called "charismata," the period in which the Holy Spirit bestowed various gifts, including the gift of prophecy. Perhaps one of the brothers had stood up claiming to have heard a "prophetic voice" telling him that the return of Christ was imminent. Or someone else may have drawn attention to what Paul had previously said, and interpreted his word "sudden" to mean "immediate." and yet a third could have circulated a forged letter claiming that it was written by Paul, Silvanus or Timothy. Perhaps that is why Paul ends this epistle so forcefully: He concludes there in 3:17: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write."

Whatever may have ignited this inconstancy, Paul firmly maintains: "Let no one deceive you in any way, for (that day will NOT come,)¹⁵ unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. . . ." Before delving into the details we should acknowledge that Paul is indeed referring to someone who will appear at the close of the age, just prior to the return of Christ. We are not dealing here with an unbroken continuum of people but a unique individual. The term "man of


lawlessness" cannot be interpreted as a typical figurative expression, similar to our phrase "twentieth-century man."¹⁶

In the verses 3 and 4 about the man of lawlessness, Paul gives no indication that he means an abstract power or a principle of evil by this manner of speaking. This eschatological individual will be a human being, from the loins of Adam, like you and me. You can derive that from the fact that Paul calls him a "man" and a "son," but also the whole description here has a personal character. The Antichrist "opposes," "he exalts himself," "he takes his seat," "he proclaims himself." That he will be a distinct personage is, I think, obvious from the context. Who exactly he will be is not made known. We are not told, for example, his personal name, his social background, or his nationality. Any attempts at determining those details are nothing more than guesswork.

Paul distinguishes between two events that must take place before the advent of Christ. The Lord will not come unless:

- a) first the "rebellion" comes and
- b) after that the "man of lawlessness" is revealed.

The word which the RSV has rendered "rebellion" literally translates as "apostasy." "Rebellion" is a rather general



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term which we associate most often with civil or political upheavals. "Apostacy," on the other hand, specifically denotes a "falling away"¹⁷ in a religious sense. It means forsaking the Living God and His Christ. There will be a universal spurning of God's sovereignty and the justice of His law. So widespread will it be that Christ in His earthly ministry asked the question: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk. 18:8). It will be as in the days of Noah of which we read in Genesis that the "wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of his heart was only evil continually." Just as then all flesh had corrupted themselves and met with divine judgment so in the latter days. The rejection of the gospel will increase in intensity and scope as God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him. Indeed, such apostacy amounts to open and total "rebellion" against God. This does not mean, however, that God's elect will fall away from grace. God powerfully preserves them in that grace to the end (CD. V.3). The Good Shepherd knows his sheep and "no one shall snatch them out of his hand" (Jn. 10:28).

The apostacy provides both the conditions for and receives its fullest expression in the revelation of the man of lawlessness. That word "to be revealed" is used three times for him (vs. 3, 6, 8). That same verb, by the way, is used for the revelation of Christ on the day of His return, as in Luke 17:30 where you read: "... so it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." The basic meaning is: to roll away the cover, to expose, to bring to the light. Perhaps the threefold use of the passive indicates that the Antichrist will be manifested only in that time stipulated by God in His eternal decree – not a moment too soon, not a moment too late. That element will become more obvious when we get to verse 6 which is about the "restraining."

He is called "the man of lawlessness." From footnote "a" in your Bibles you are made aware that another possible reading is "man of sin." In the context of verse 8 where Paul designates the Antichrist as "the lawless one" and verse 7 which speaks about the "mystery of lawlessness" I would prefer to stick with the translation of the RSV – even though reading "man of sin" has strong support. In view of the fact that

"sin is lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4) there is no real difference between the two.

"Man of lawlessness." That title shows the essence of the Antichrist. He is the personification of everything that goes against the law of God. "Lawless" does not mean the absence of the law. He is not in that class of people of whom Paul speaks in Romans 2 that they are "without the law." Rather, this name connotes his unwillingness to practice or know the law, and his defiant negation of every single ordinance of the Most High. The Antichrist will be an active and hostile transgressor of God's commandments.

He is also called "the son of perdition." Up to this point in Scripture, that appellation has been used only for Judas Iscariot – the betrayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. It reveals to us the destiny, the end that he will face. "Son of Perdition" that means he will be plunged into utter annihilation and ruin. He will be the object of God's unabated wrath. There is not even a flicker of hope for him. He is a son of death and darkness. The same word is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe the punishment of eternal destruction for the wicked (Matt. 7:13). It is striking that John also used it for the scarlet beast in Revelation 17 which "goes to perdition" (v. 8, 11).

This name reaches ahead to verse 8 where Paul relates that "the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming."

In verse 4 Paul makes known the activities of the Antichrist. He "oppos-

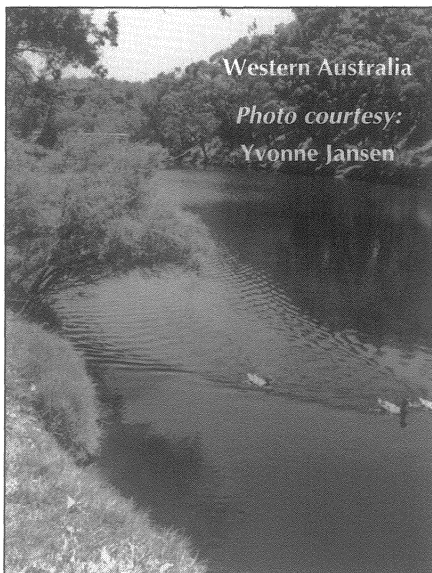
es and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." He is the opposing one. That reminds you of his master, Satan, who is called "the great adversary." This person is not content to form the opposition party. No, he exalts himself over and against everything divine: the word, the people, the statutes, everything of God. Anything that has to do with the worship of God he will destroy and set himself in the place of God. How reminiscent this is of the devil's achievement in Paradise, when he tempted Adam and Eve saying: "You shall be like God knowing good and evil." The antichrist will be the epitome, the culminating reality of that first Satanic suggestion.

"He takes his seat in the temple of God. . . ." This should not be understood literally, as if he physically sits down in the temple at Jerusalem.¹⁸ In the OT the temple was the dwelling place of God, where he was worshipped and adored. Figuratively speaking, then, the Antichrist will usurp that position. The craving for divine honour and glory will peak at the end of time in the man of lawlessness. What a contrast with our Saviour! Christ, though he was God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant . . . (Phil. 2:6ff).

Another alternative is to see the "naos" (the temple) as the church of God. In Eph. 2, for example, Paul speaks about the church growing "into a holy TEMPLE in the Lord." When understood in this way, it means, then, that the Antichrist will arrogate to himself authority over God's people, demanding that they worship him as God. This will undoubtedly result in great tribulation for the saints, as Christ prophesied in the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24:15ff). The word used for "proclaiming" emphasizes that he PUBLICLY declares himself to be God. The apostle is not speaking about a furtive, underground movement. The Antichrist will be unparalleled in the concentration of godlessness and immorality in his person. In him the hatred of Satan against God will reach its zenith.

It is instructive at this point perhaps to tie in the vision that Daniel received about the "little horn." Many of the features in Paul's delineation of the Antichrist are derived from that vision. You can see that with a quick comparison of the following elements:

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Yvonne Jansen

2 Thessalonians 2

Daniel 7, 8, 11

a) v. 3: the man of lawlessness	= 7:8: in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.
	= 7:25: he shall think to change the times and the LAW.
	= 8:12: and the truth was cast down to the ground
b) v. 3: son of perdition	= 7:26: his dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and destroyed to the end.
c) v. 4: who opposes himself against every so-called god	= 7:25: he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High.
d) v. 4: who exalts himself against every so-called god . . .	= 11:36: he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.
e) v. 4: taking his seat in the temple of God	= 11:31: Forces from him shall appear and and profane the temple and fortress and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.
f) v. 4: proclaiming himself to be God	= 11:37: He shall not give heed to any other god for he shall magnify himself above all.
g) v. 9: with all wicked deception	= 8:25: By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand
h) v. 10: with all power	= 8:24: His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints

Although these points of comparison are not identical, the similarities, you will agree, are obvious and not coincidental.

Amongst most conservative scholars,¹⁹ the "little horn" in Daniel represents Antiochus Epiphanes,²⁰ leader of a massive anti-Messianic offensive prior to the first coming of Christ. The closer the incarnation of Christ approaches, the more the concentration of hostile powers against the Messiah increases in violence. If you consider that prophecy (in this case visionary prophecy) often has "multiple fulfilments" we can view this one as having its first fulfilment in Antiochus, but then ultimately in the "man of lawlessness."

Based on what we have seen from Paul, the same increase in hostility will happen before the second coming of Christ. That is not meant to terrify us, but to prepare and comfort us for just as Antiochus, the lesser antichrist, was destroyed and Christ assumed our flesh, so the final Antichrist will be destroyed and Christ will take us unto Himself into heavenly joy and glory.

That Paul borrows terminology from Daniel shows us that there can be and there are forerunners of THE Antichrist who will appear before the

coming of our Lord. Indeed, all of world history is characterized by the enmity which God has placed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12). That great antichristian struggle is constant from the beginning to the end of the world. It's visible in the battles between Israel, the OT church, and the nations. David wrote about it in Psalm 2: "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed. . . ." Paul maintains that in verse 7: "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work. . . ." It is a "mystery" only in the sense that it is a truth that cannot be known apart from God's special Revelation. "The mystery of lawlessness," that's what John calls "the spirit of antichrist" which is in the world already (1 Jn. 4:3). This mystery, spirit or power NOW manifesting itself, will in the future bear the character of a final, decisive defiance focused in one person.

to be continued

¹⁹M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, #165.

¹⁴E.F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 268 and 449.

¹⁵These words are not found in the original, but derived from the preceding context.

¹⁶Contra F.F. Venema, *Wat is een Christen nodig te gelooven?*, p. 280.

¹⁷As the KJV has for this verse.

¹⁸Contra C. VanderWaal, *Openbaring van Jezus Christus*, I, p. 51.

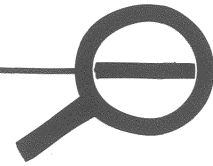
¹⁹For example, Dr. R.H. Bremmer, *Redeemer Versus Destroyer*.

²⁰Antiochus (215-163 BC) succeeded his brother, Seleucus IV Philopater as king in 175 BC. He ruled over the Seleucid (one of Alexander the Great's generals) kingdom of Syria. He encouraged the people to worship his own person in the form of Zeus. Hence he assumed the title "Theos Epiphanes" meaning "the Manifest God." **C**



DECLINED to Smithers, BC and Edmonton-Immanuel

Rev. J. Huijgen
of Fergus, Ontario



The Issue of Smoking

With the removal of a considerable amount of tobacco taxes, the smoking of cigarettes seems to be increasing significantly again. Study after study has shown the detrimental effects of smoking and yet many, also in our churches, are still smoking, or are even starting the habit. What should be done?

In the April issue of *The Messenger*, the official magazine of the Free Reformed Churches in Canada and the United States, this matter is addressed by Mr. Chris Van Doodewaard in a timely editorial entitled "A Burning Issue." The extensive quotes are from this article (with the subheadings added). Mr. Van Doodewaard begins by noting:

When our Free Reformed fathers came to North America they smoked cigars, pipes and cigarettes. They loved to settle down with a nice cup of coffee and an aromatic cigar. We used to say, "You're not a man if you don't smoke." We secretly (or openly?) snickered at those overzealous Baptists who proclaimed smoking a great evil. However, our ladies were not supposed to smoke, smoking was for men; men were masculine and strong. Men smoked.

The price raises questions

But men have also paid the price. For instance, lung cancer is the most common form of malignant tumour of the respiratory tract system, and it began increasing in frequency at an alarming rate about 1940. In 1980 it was the leading cause of cancer deaths in men and today it is also rapidly increasing in women. As a matter of fact, in the mid-80s nearly 6 million new cancer cases and more than 4 million deaths from cancer were being reported world-wide each year. To bring it a little closer to home: about 400,000 Americans die each year from breathing their own smoke. In

Ontario, where most of our churches are, over 14,000 residents die every year from smoking-induced lung cancer.

Did you ever stop to think how much grief is caused by so many deaths every year? Many people are fatalistic. They reason that if they will get it, they will get it. They will just "hope for the best." Or they may be optimistic. Just because there is a warning on the label, it doesn't mean that I will get it. Some say: my grandfather became 98 and he smoked like a chimney!

When we talk about smoking, many say that we should not be judgmental about others. You have bad habits too, they say, and therefore, mind your own business! What I do in the privacy of my own home is my responsibility and will affect no one else.

Is this true? Will your premature death not affect your loved ones? Doesn't your smoking affect the health of your spouse and children? Do you, by smoking, set a good example for your children? Isn't the likelihood great that they will catch the addiction and become smokers themselves? Can you by smoking be a good Christian witness in your environment? Do you not present a stumbling block to those who are struggling to quit the habit?

Reports about smoking are plentiful. Just ask the lung cancer society and you will have all the statistics you will (n)ever want to know. Let's see what the medical community has to say about smoking.

The medical evidence demands reflection

Mr. Van Doodewaard then gives a historical and medical survey of the detrimental effects of smoking and the deadly effect of nicotine. Nearly all lung cancer is caused by smoking and

400,000 Americans die every year from inhaling their own smoke. Even those who do not smoke are endangered by the passive inhalation of someone else's smoke.

Studies have shown that children are particularly sensitive to passive smoke and that pregnant women who smoke may harm the fetus. Smoking during pregnancy affects fetal growth and development due to increased carbon monoxide and decreased oxygen in the blood. Babies are smaller, sicker and more likely to be stillborn. In addition, babies born to women who used drugs during pregnancy may be addicted to the drug at birth.

Should parents of little children continue to smoke? Is this responsible Christian behaviour?

Since 1964, health warnings have been mandated on tobacco advertising, and the use of such advertising has been restricted. Most of the states in the United States, as well as the Canadian federal government, have passed laws to control smoking in public places such as restaurants and work places, where non-smoking areas may be required. In Toronto smoking is banned from all public places. American and Canadian airlines have prohibited smoking on flights lasting six hours or less. Among the military, the U.S. Army has been particularly strict in imposing smoking restrictions.

Are we getting the message?

The tobacco industry and many smokers regard anti-smoking measures as harassment, whereas many non-smokers defend the measures on the grounds that the government has a duty to discourage harmful practices, that public funds in one form or another are used to treat diseases caused by smoking, and that smokers pollute the air for non-smokers.

Smoking is not only a dangerous addiction, but it is also the source of many ailments and much suffering, both for the smoker, and for the relatives of the smoker who have to assist him or her through the various stages of life-threatening diseases which most smokers experience. A clinic in one of the southern States which specializes in the healing of complicated fractures, found that for (then) unknown reasons, it took twice as long for some patients to heal their bones as it did for others. It did not matter what kind of fracture the client had, but if it normally took, for instance, six months to heal, it would take twice as long for some patients: a full year for exactly the same fracture. This baffled them for quite some time, but after much research it was discovered that the difference was caused by smoking. In each case the non-smokers would heal in half the time. The reasons for this soon became evident. Substantial healing requires great amounts of oxygen. Lungs which are very polluted cannot supply much oxygen, and furthermore, if they are filled much of the time with smoke, resulting from a fire at the end of a cigarette, which uses most of the oxygen they need for their healing process, it is clear that all healing will be greatly delayed.

Some researchers have estimated that if Americans stopped smoking cigarettes, lung cancer deaths could virtually be eliminated within twenty years. Lung cancer has also risen rapidly in developing nations because of the spread of cigarette smoking, so that it has become the leading fatal cancer in the world today.

Although cigarette smoke contains many initiating agents, the cessation of smoking results in a negligible risk of lung cancer after a year or so. Can you think of a better incentive to stop smoking?

Need for Christian action

The evidence that smoking is dangerous and deadly is overwhelming. Yet many of our older people continue to set a poor example for our youth. Also, many young people are starting to smoke. Is it not time to act in a principled manner and decide that smoking is harmful, not only to your own

health, but also to the health of your children, especially teenagers and all who come within the reach of your smoke? Have we not allowed this terrible practice to go unchallenged far too long? Is it healthy for officebearers to smoke? Do they give a good example to the congregation?

In light of the above statistics, can there really be any doubt that smoking is harmful to our bodies? Let us hear God's Word on the matter: *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's* (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

These are searching questions, are they not? Perhaps those who still smoke are unhappy with this article. You may argue that other people have other bad habits. This is probably true. But is this an excuse for your addiction? Admittedly, it is very difficult to break out of an addiction. Despite the help available from various organizations many people apparently find it impossible to quit smoking. But surely, with God's help any addiction, including smoking can be overcome!

Is it responsible to have part of your resources go up in smoke when you can support a needy child in a developing country for the same amount of money? Even when you can afford to smoke, are you a good steward of your funds when a considerable amount of your money goes up in smoke annually? Is it not better to give it for the cause of the Lord, such as missions or evangelism? It will not cause illness, but instead spread the Gospel!

It seems that in this matter the world is providing better leadership than the church. By banning smoking from all public buildings and areas in large cities like Toronto, the children of this world show they are wiser than the children of light (Luke 16:8). Society has recognized the evil of smoking and its disastrous consequences for the health of the population.

Particularly the effect of second-hand smoke is seen as very dangerous. In light of this, what are we to think of Christian parents who smoke and pollute their little ones? It

is a fact that many smokers have children who smoke. In many cases they have been introduced to the habit by second-hand smoke and by the example of their parents.

Can we do anything about this matter? Should we do anything? I believe the answer is "yes." Churches which have implemented a NO SMOKING policy on their premises (and I believe that most of our churches have), are to be commended for their initiative and the love and care shown to their members. This policy shows that as a whole, the church recognizes that this addiction is unethical. But the church can do more:

1) We can pray for those who are addicted to the habit and striving to be delivered.

2) Each church which has not yet done so, may consider banning all smoking from all its premises, inside and outside buildings.

3) Consistories can decide to make smoking and its detrimental health effects on children (especially smoking of mothers-to-be) a topic of discussion at home visitations.

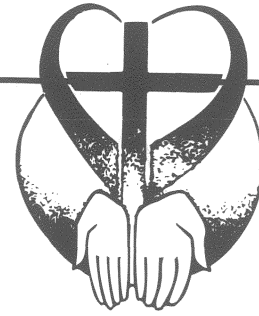
4) Church leaders can sit down with young people who are prone to take up this evil habit and urge them not to do so.

5) Family members and friends can support and encourage their brothers or sisters and so help them in the struggle to find a release from this dangerous addiction. **C**



The Warm Heart of Africa

By Ruth Meerveld



Since 1992, CRWRF has been privileged to support a fairly large development project in Malawi. Though still in its infancy, the project has made inroads in seventeen churches, affecting in some measure, the lives of hundreds of families. At the invitation of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee whose staff initiated and now co-ordinate the work, we recently participated in a formal evaluation of this project. Our time in Malawi (we spent the week from February 28 - March 6th there) was invaluable in lending a better understanding of what is involved in the work we support. The following article gives a few impressions of the country and the development efforts.

Our visit to Malawi, the country that bills itself as "the warm heart of Africa" began with touchdown at Lelongwe, the capital. The airport is small and picturesque, servicing only one flight a day on average. Driving south, we passed the mud and thatch houses that are typical of this country, and continued through miles and miles of maize stalks stretching high due to good rains. A few cyclists and the odd vehicle shared the road, but most people were using the most common mode of transportation: walking. Women, often with infants strapped to their backs, gracefully balanced large baskets or heavy loads of firewood on their heads. The pavement gave way to rougher roads as we neared Nkhoma, the base of the development work and of our activities for the week.

Nkhoma itself is lush and green at this time of year. Jasmine, frangipani, bouganvillea, cacti and ferns spread their bright colours and fragrant smells. The view is breathtaking: flowering trees in the foreground, mountain ranges and a patchwork of fields of every shade of green in the distance. It seems a tropical paradise.

In a few months, however, when the rains cease and the maize has ripened and been harvested, the countryside will shrivel and turn yellow.

That is a truer picture of the people's real state – for this is a country of abject poverty, one of the neediest in Africa. It has more people per square mile than any other country in Central Africa, and each family seeks to eke a living out of a mere acre or two. One need not look far to see the swollen bellies and listless, clouded eyes of malnourished children. Twenty-five percent of Malawi's children do not reach their fifth birthday. Even during our visit, though the crops looked lush, people were generally hungry, for last year's maize stocks had been depleted and the harvest was yet several weeks off.

In one village we visited, we saw two beautiful babies, born just that morning in a mud hut, a traditional birth attendant present. The newborns looked plump and healthy. An infant nearby however, was frail and hardly able to walk. The child was about one and a half and its growth had obviously been stunted. The mother, in response to questioning, said that she had stopped breastfeeding when her child had developed diarrhea, a logical step in her mind, but one that had had negative consequences for the child. This situation is typical of Malawi and many other developing countries. Infants are usually healthy when nursing. It is when weaned that nutrition becomes inadequate and the children are at risk.

The C.R.W.R.C. project we support attempts to meet the needs of such people, offering education in basic nutrition and literacy, providing assistance in agriculture and income generation so that families will have a little more to live on. The mother, mentioned above, needed to be educated (and our worker did advise her as to a better diet for her little one). She also needed an improved income, for education alone does not put food on the table.

The task is huge, and the job only just begun, but it is an auspicious beginning. Rowland and Jane VanEs, C.R.W.R.C. staff, moved here to Nkhoma, over three years ago, in response to a request from the Nkhoma

Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Malawi. This large church of Reformed persuasion, wanted assistance in setting up a development project which would begin to meet the needs of the very poor.

The work was stalled as it was just beginning due to a severe drought, the worst this area has experienced in decades. The VanEs's spent most of their time distributing tonnes of food to needy Malawians as well as to refugees from Mozambique. Over a million Mozambicans had fled the civil war that was engulfing their own country in chaos and terror to take refuge just inside Malawi's border. Last year, with the drought ended and stability restored to Mozambique, the refugees repatriated, and the focus could shift from relief to development again.

Five project co-ordinators have now been hired and have made promising steps in meeting very real needs. An agricultural co-ordinator, for example, has introduced fast-growing tree seedlings to many area farmers to meet the constant need for firewood. Inter-cropping is being encouraged to allow the tiny plots to produce more. Small loans for fertilizer allow a maize plot to produce 20-25% more than it otherwise would. Plans are underway to introduce goats and hybrid chickens in villages so that children will have milk to drink and eggs can supplement people's diets. Such small changes actually have major impact in this country where 90% of the population of 9 million still lives in rural villages and is dependent on the land. Resources are few; the land is everything.

In one village we visited, income-generating activities were being assessed to determine what "worked." Some projects, begun with the help of a small (approx. \$25) loan had definitely added income that could be used to buy some basic necessities. One man, for example, had raised cabbages with success. A woman had made a little extra from baking and selling buns. Other participants needed more education in sim-

ple accounting procedures to help them realize a profit.

People are not always keen to try new things, for traditions are of long standing. Nor is there much margin for error when one lives so close to the edge. If you only own an acre of land, from which you derive most if not all of your income, you cannot afford to try a new crop which might fail. Maize, which has proven reliable and not too labour intensive, is the safest choice.

So our workers patiently demonstrate and educate, and their efforts are beginning to pay off. A women's group proudly showed us a healthy peanut garden they were cultivating together. It will add welcome protein to their families' diets. Literacy classes are filled with eager participants. Under five health clinics monitor the weight and health of infants, seeking to address their needs and also to educate their mothers in quality care.

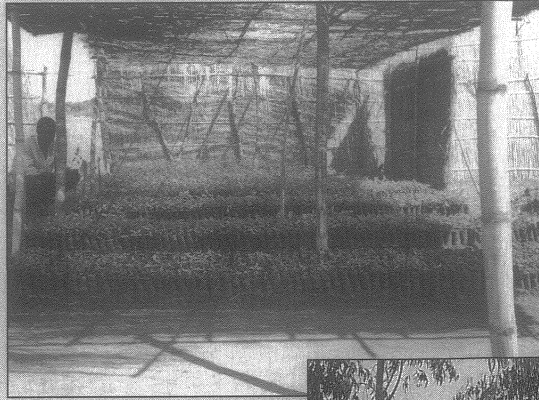
Though appalled and saddened by the magnitude and depth of the poverty we encountered, we were also encouraged by the efforts to bring hope and healing. Unlike so many high tech. aid projects which flounder when the donor leaves or machinery breaks down, this type of development is well thought-out and appropriate. It seeks to meet the people where they are and to bring them a step or two further. It is "do-able" and will have long-term benefits. It gives people a valuable sense of self-worth, of being individuals valued by God who do have a future and a hope.

May God richly bless what is being done in Malawi to reach out to those in need. Please pray for the VanEs and their staff and continue to support their efforts so that this vital work can continue. Let's continue to obey our Lord's command to "pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted." (Isa. 58:10) We need not doubt that such obedience will receive His blessing. **C**

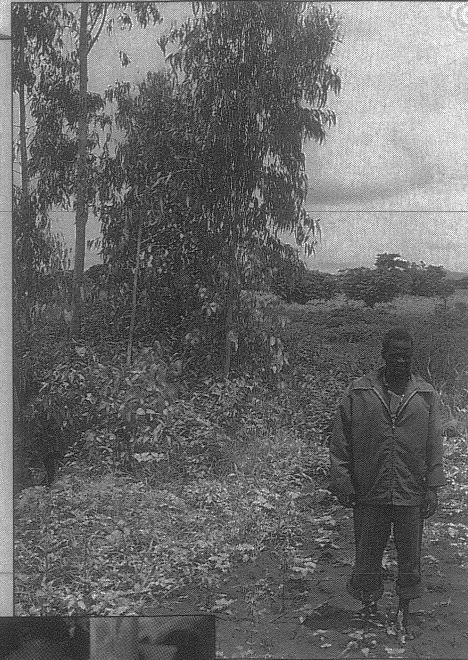
Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund
PO Box 85225
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4

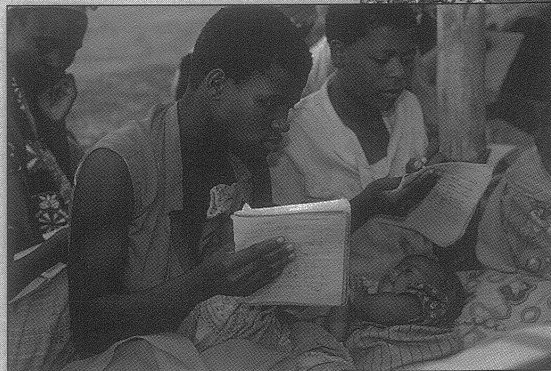
All gifts are gladly received. Donors of \$10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deduction.



Tree seedlings in the nursery are ready for planting.



This farmer has planted fast-growing tree seedlings which in two-three years will provide needed firewood.



Literacy classes are eagerly attended by women, many with babies in tow.



The national staff flanked by development workers. l. to r.: Rowland VanEs and baby Jennifer, Rev. Gande, Mr. Zalambalala, Mr. Kambewa, Mrs. Khombe, Mrs. Phiri, Jane VanEs.

A Reformed School in Blue Bell

By Bret C. Davis

Few people even notice the small tan and red building which houses the Reformation Christian School. For the world, this building, and more specifically, Reformed education, are insignificant and even disdainful.

Yet, if they could look through the eyes of faith, they would no longer see a puny school begun by members of a pitiful church. With God's Word as their light, their looks of idle curiosity or ridicule would be transformed to those expressing joy over the work of Christ in history. By faith, then, they would see this school as a notable cultural achievement, and a result of the prayerful labor of God's people.

Here in this school, culture as God intends it flourishes; for here the covenant children are instructed to serve their King by immersing themselves in the study of the world He has made. As this school lives out of the faithful preaching of God's Word, the lies of Satan are halted and the name of God is honored, and the children see the glory of their Father shining forth in all His works. The church, created by this living preaching of the Word of God, is the source of cultural life – for in the congregation, life itself has its genesis. Reformed people have rightly determined that the education of the covenant children in a Reformed school is a necessary extension of this

life. Here, the children will receive further instruction to equip them in their calling as prophets, priests, and kings.

The Association for Reformed Education in Blue Bell, in accord with the church order (Article 58), and following the example of our brothers and sisters, founded the Reformation Christian School three years ago. We have enjoyed the Lord's blessing on our school in the past and anticipate the future blessing of our Heavenly Father. The school has grown from 7 students to 16. Due to the gifts of God's people, a substantial library has been established, and a computer has been purchased to assist in the curriculum. We have made significant inroads in formulating a curriculum based on seeing Christ's significance in all of Christian culture. Currently, there are three dedicated teachers who, along with their obligations to their families, attend to the teaching with vigor. By God's grace, the school has come a long way in the past three years. The days when there was no school seem like a distant memory.

At this time, the major difficulties we face are financial and building needs. Although they are from a smaller congregation the members of the Association are able to support 60% of the school's budget, besides supporting the church. We are still seeking ways to rectify the remaining deficit on our own,

but are dependent on the gifts of others for now.

Because of government regulations, the Association has been forced to seek other means of housing the school; the modular unit now used is no longer permitted by the local authorities. Work has begun on remodeling the church building. Partial assistance has been received from the brethren in the Netherlands for this project.

Without the support of others in God's providence, we would not be able to continue. So while these matters stand as pressing needs and challenges to the school Association, even in these things, we are reminded of the Lord's blessing. As many of you can imagine, or maybe even remember, the formative years of a school bring with them unique struggles. However, as stewards of covenant children, we are not allowed the luxury of giving up in the face of any adversity.

The foundation has been laid to ensure Reformed education in the way of the covenant. We still stand in wonder at the establishment of this school. I believe that this first group of students will always be remembered by us as the first generation in the congregation in Blue Bell to have grown up Reformed. This is marvelous in our eyes. In the eyes of the world, all of this is utter foolishness; this is the heritage of God's people. **C**

BOOK REVIEWS

By R. Gleason

Magnuson, Roger J., *Are Gay Rights Right?*

Portland, OR.: Multnomah, 1990², 149 pp., approx. \$15.00 Cdn.

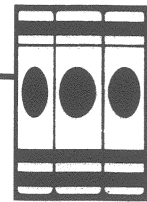
Mr. Roger Magnuson is a trial lawyer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was an honours graduate of Stanford University,

Harvard Law School and Oxford University. He is the author of a three-volume legal treatise entitled, *Shareholder Litigation*, that is used in law schools and libraries throughout the United States. He is also listed in *Who's Who in American Law*.

Even though this book was written specifically for the United States, there is a great deal which is quite rel-

evant for the Canadian reader as well since the homosexual movement in Canada closely parallels that of its neighbour to the south.

The value of the book can be explained from many facets. In the first place, Mr. Magnuson has a very easily readable style of writing. He is clear and to the point supporting his claims Biblically.



The five chapters in this little paperback are (1) Defining the Issues, (2) Who are the Gays?, (3) What are Gay Rights?, (4) Gay Rights and Religion, and (5) The Myth of the Victimless Crime.

Mr. Magnuson is not afraid to tackle illogical sentiments and expose them for what they are. For example, how many of us have ever said or heard it said, "Government is not there to legislate morality?" All too many Christians stand or sit quietly by when such a statement is made. We fail to ask, if government is not supposed to legislate morality, what is it suppose to legislate? Of course, such a statement about the State's involvement in morality intends to point out the separation between Church and State. But what is really being said is, "To the extent theology becomes embodied in law, it damages the social fabric."

That is, keep the Judeo-Christian ethic out of the State because the current State in Canada wishes to answer to no one. This means that the State desires to be *autonomous* (a law unto itself), ultimately answerable to no one, not even God. Magnuson puts it all into perspective for us when he writes, "Most reasonable people reject the old nostrum that "you can't legislate morality." They realize that law is nothing but a statement of minimum public morality that teaches members of society a basic course in right and wrong. (pg. 122)

If we but think of simple matters such as speed limit signs. Is speeding a moral issue which the government controls? Indeed, it is. What about theft, fraud, murder, rape and the like? Does government make laws governing those actions? I should say that they do. Unfortunately, Christians have become poor "apple sorters" when it comes to other fundamental moral issues.

But there is still a "hoot and cry" from those who want to have such perversions as "consensual homosexuality" (a euphemism for deviant sex between, for example, two men or two women) out of the jurisdiction of government. This is the "idea that some crimes have no victims and therefore are not society's business. The law should keep its nose out of people's affairs, the theory goes, unless harm is being done to someone else." (pg. 127) But is it really true that the bedroom is of such a private nature that no laws can govern that behaviour?

Certainly God decreed proper behaviour in the bedroom which excluded incest, adultery, rape, bestiality and homosexuality. On another plane, the government has done the same thing. Think, for example, about a crime that would have detrimental social consequences, such as statutory rape. Does the government have laws about that kind of "bedroom" behaviour? You bet! How about the "business bedroom" or brothel. Does the government make law concerning running houses of ill repute? Yes, it does. Let's take it a step further. Does the government make law concerning the number of wives a man may legally have in his bedroom? Yes. There are very strict laws concerning the prohibition of polygamy. For the same reason, "the law cannot ignore the influence of sodomy." (pg. 131)

In other sections of this most informative book Mr. Magnuson goes on to document the pressures of homosexual lobby groups in getting homosexuality stricken from psychiatric textbooks as "deviant" or "perverted" behaviour. He also discusses the number of partners that male homosexuals may have in a lifetime (sometimes in the thousands) and points out that 78% of homosexuals have been treated or are being treated for STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). He also points out that the "typical" pedophile will molest approximately 70 children in a lifetime.

I was very grateful that this book did intersperse some humour into a very "heavy" and emotionally laden subject. One of Mr. Magnuson's devices is to take things to their absurd conclusions. For example, he asks whether we should not move into other areas of life and accept other deviant behaviour just as we are supposed to accept homosexuality. Wouldn't it be possible to bring all of the exhibitionists out of the closet and propose a "Flasher's Pride" day. Or, we could initiate an "Adulterer's Pride" day or a "Proud to be a Pedophile" day.

The humour cannot override the seriousness of the subject matter of this book, however. As Christians we have been given both the Creation Mandates and the Great Commission. We are not at liberty to neglect either. As those who are required to do Kingdom ethics and have something to say to a perverse world, it is time that the church had something to say rather than remaining so strangely silent on the moral issues that face the country in which we live. **C**

Holwerda, B., *The Church in the Last Judgment*.

Translation by P.Y. DeJong of "De Kerk in het Eindgericht" *Populair Wetenschappelijke Bijdragen*, p. 163f. Published by the Inter-League Publication Board, (Box 783, London, Ontario N6A 4Y8), 1993. 51 pages. Reviewed by Rev. G.H. Visscher.

The I.L.P.B. has done us a great service by making available in print again the text of a speech that the late Professor B. Holwerda gave at a youth meeting in 1949. The speech gives us an overview of the book of Revelation and then deals specifically with Revelation 17 and its implications for the situation as in 1949. It was originally translated by Dr. P.Y. DeJong in the days when he was a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary. Comparing an earlier copy of that translation with the one provided by the I.L.P.B. it is apparent that quite some changes have been made either by the translator himself or through a subsequent editor. The chapter divisions in the new version also serve well to make the work more readable.

My only disappointment with this booklet however is the fact that an introduction or preface was not provided. The Board should realize that even in our own community not everyone knows anymore who the author was, nor will everyone immediately understand the significance of this speech for the time in which Professor Holwerda lived. Moreover, as the publications of the I.L.P.B. do go out further than Canadian Reformed circles, the need for such an introduction is all the more critical. Such an introduction might also have made reference to the discussion precipitated by this speech, and reflected the fact that Holwerda's central thesis is not one that met with agreement even among colleagues who were very close to him. Holwerda interpreted the great harlot of Revelation 17 to be the false church, whereas S. Greijdanus took the mainstream position which sees the harlot as the revelation of secularized world power in opposition to God. K. Schilder also sided more with the position adopted by Greijdanus, although the pointed out that the two positions are not mutually exclusive. In any case, the book stirred much debate and discussion, the matter was even taken further by

C. VanderWaal in his writings, but none of this is passed on to the reader. By the way, those who are interested could look up another one of Professor L. Selles' last works entitled "B. Holwerda's 'The Church in the Last Judgment: Forty Years Later'" (*Clarion*, Vol. 39, nos 23, 24, 25; 1990). It would also have been appropriate for the publisher to mention somewhere that the original version of this speech can be found in the book *Populair Wetenschappelijke Bijdragen* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1962, pp. 163-198).

None of this is to take away from the fact that the I.L.P.B. is to be thanked for making this work available once again. Even if one chooses to differ exegetically, this work is of more than just historical interest; anyone working with Revelation 17 would be foolish not to consider Holwerda's approach and many fine remarks. Moreover, here we have one of the few English versions of a man uniquely gifted by the Lord, and as always it is a joy and a delight to see the wonderful way in which Professor Holwerda prophetically applies the Word of God to the situation that the church was in at that time. ©

Selles, L. *The Letter to the Hebrews: A Series of Outlines.*

First revised edition. Published by the Inter-League Publication Board (Box 783, London, Ontario N6A 4Y8), 1993. 173 pages. Reviewed by Rev. G.H. Visscher.

In the same year that the Lord took Professor L. Selles to Himself in glory, some of the fruit of his labours for the Lord has come into our midst again. This revised edition of his 1969 publication was necessitated by the fact that the Bible translation which was then predominant in our circles, the King James Version, has been replaced by the Revised Standard Version with the result that many significant linguistic changes had to be made. Surely it would not do to use phrases like "at sundry times and in divers manners" when the Bibles in our possession have the simpler "in many and various ways" (1:1). The revision is not limited to the quotations from Scripture however; a major revision of the interpretation can be found, for example, with respect to Hebrews 7, and minor changes and additions have been made throughout.

Despite many years of study between the two editions, Professor Selles did not feel that his main positions regarding the author, readers and date of the letter needed to change; in that regard he was certainly in touch with the rest of the scholarly world which despite a great deal of discussion has not come any closer to certainty with respect to these background questions either. Thus we have once again the result of the kind of work for which many held Professor Selles dear – an interpretation which is dependable because he has carefully wrestled with the text, avoided any fanciful exegesis, content simply to make clear for us the rich message of

the Word of God. The work is meant to be no more than an outline; those who wish more detail will need to look elsewhere, but they will do well to continue to check other readings with the careful interpretation we are given here.

It is apparent that quite some editing has taken place and many paragraphs have been rearranged, much of this it seems through the appreciated assistance of Mrs. M. De Gelder. Also the questions have undergone careful scrutiny, although it is good to remember Professor Selles' caveat in the introduction that these questions should not be given priority lest they dampen the discussion. The I.L.P.B. has also made the final copy quite pleasing to the eye with its clear type and fine page layout. Personally though, I would have preferred that the paragraphs would be properly indented rather than divided by a line space, since this is a style which, though proper in letter writing, is not often found elsewhere. This revision also shows the need for authors and publishers not to depend their works too heavily on any one Bible translation, for now that the RSV too is likely to be replaced among us the obvious question is: will we need yet another revision?

On the whole though, the I.L.P.B. is to be commended for making this work available to us. As the board says in their opening words written in memory of Professor Selles: "*may these outlines . . . be of benefit to all who study the Letter to the Hebrews, knowing that in the Lord his labour was not in vain.*" ©

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Wow! Busy Beavers must really like spring, because I have received lots and lots of Spring Surprise Stories! It is really interesting to read them. Even though they all start the same, every story is very different. Since I promised you that I would put some in the *Clarion*, here are a few.

Chris and Michelle came running up the sidewalk, splashing through the slush. They pulled the door open, stopping only a moment to kick off their boots. "Mom, Mom, guess what we just saw now!" they shouted. "It must be pretty exciting," said Mom. "Yes," said Chris, "We saw a robin."

"Why, that's early!" exclaimed Mom. "We thought it was," answered Michelle. "Come on – Oh Mom, there's an-

other one! Come on, Chris. Let's play outside and look for more signs of spring." So they went outside again. All of a sudden Chris shouted "Look Michelle, another sign of spring, a Bloodroot, that beautiful flower!" "Yippee" exclaimed Michelle, "I love Bloodroots. But Chris, I'm hungry!" She checked her watch. "Wow, it's three thirty already," she said to her twin. "Let's go in for something to eat." "What will Mom say? We're so dirty," said Chris. So they went in. They were just done munching on cake, when they heard a car hum. "Oh! Dad's home from work!" yelled Michelle. When their dad came in they told him about the signs of spring. "It's certainly spring," he said to them. And it was!

By Busy Beaver *Jeremy Feenstra*

Chris and Michelle came running up the sidewalk splashing through the slush. They pulled open the door, stopping only for a moment to kick off their boots. "Mom, Mom, guess what we saw just now," they shouted. "We saw a tiny, red hummingbird!" "It was down the street, in front of the old house on the corner. It was cool!" By now their mother was almost as excited as they were. She said, "It sure is a sign of spring. Maybe you can lead me there." As they rushed off down the sidewalk, there was lots of excitement. But when they passed the budding apple trees near the house and got close, their mother said, "That isn't a real one; it's a glass bird that catches the sunlight." "Oh, it isn't?" was the children's reply. They looked carefully and realized that she was right. Then they all walked home again, laughing and joking and even though it wasn't a real hummingbird, they celebrated anyway with an ice cream.

By Busy Beaver *Katrina Meerveld*

Chris and Michelle came running up the sidewalk splashing through the slush. They pulled the door open, stopping only a moment to kick off their boots. "Mom, Mom, guess what we just saw now," they shouted. "What?" said their Mom. "We saw a big fat red robin with a very big round belly. It was gathering twigs for a nest and we see buds coming on the trees." "Oh, that's nice," said their Mom, "spring is for sure coming now." "It sure is," they agreed.

By Busy Beaver *Sophie-Ann Ravensbergen*

Chris and Michelle came running up the sidewalk splashing through the slush. They pulled the door open, stopping only a moment to kick off their boots. "Mom, Mom, guess what we just saw now," they shouted. "What did you see?" asked Mom. "We saw a hurt bird Mom! It's lying in the snow and it can't fly. Can we take it home? Please Mom?" they asked. "Where is the bird?" Mom said, "I'll take him home for you." So Chris and Michelle ran out the door shouting, "Hurry, Mom, hurry!"

When they got to where the bird was Mom picked it up very gently and carried it back home. Once in the house she said, "Chris, get a box and Michelle, you get some old tea towels." She put the tea towels in the box and laid the bird very gently in the midst of the tea towels. Mom went to the phone and called the Bird Rescue Association. Mom described what she thought was wrong with the bird and the lady said to bring the bird to the Belmont Veterinarian Clinic. Mom hung up the phone and they all piled into the car. Mom put the bird in between Chris and Michelle and they drove away. When they got there the vet examined the bird. He said it would have to stay for a week.

Chris and Michelle waited and waited. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday . . . finally the week was over. They were very excited and couldn't wait for Mom to start the car. "Hurry up Mom!" they yelled. They drove to the clinic. Chris and Michelle ran inside. They saw their bird hopping around in a cage. "He's better!" they shouted. The vet said to Mom, "When you get home, take it to the place you found it and let it go."

So they drove home and went to the place that Chris and Michelle had found it. Mom opened the cage and the bird flew away. Michelle whispered, "Come and visit us sometime." Much to her surprise, the bird did visit them and pretty soon they could pet it. "I hope we find some more hurt birds so that we can tame them," Chris said. "I hope we don't because I don't want a lot of birds to be hurt." said Michelle.

By Busy Beaver *Laura Muis*

Quiz Time!

BIBLE CODE

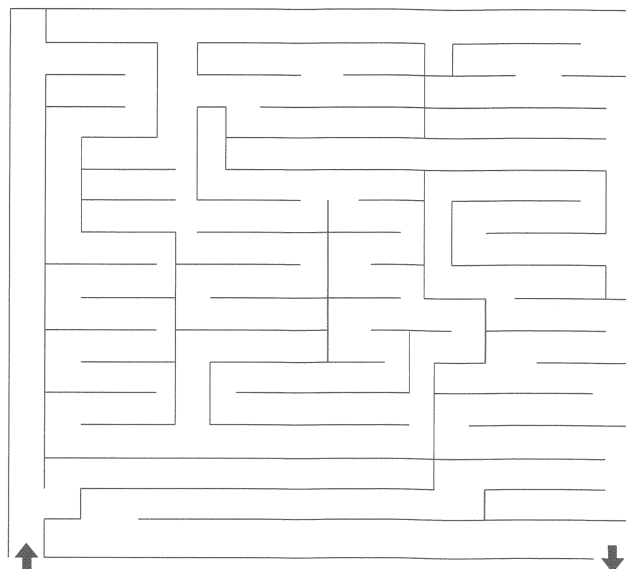
By Busy Beaver *Rosie Krabbendam*

A - ♡	F - ∞	K - V	P - ∩	U - ⊕
B - H	G - ∞	L - 3	Q - ∩	V - 4
C - ♡	H - □	M - ∩	R - ∩	W - >
D - ↑	I - ◇	N - △	S - ∩	X - III
E - ⚓	J - ∩	O - ∞	T - ⊕	Y - IV
				Z - II



MAZE

By Busy Beaver *Cecilia Barendregt*



CHILDREN

Match each child with something connected to his childhood.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Moses, Exodus 2:3 | a. sacrifice |
| 2. Jesus, Luke 2:7 | b. seven sneezes |
| 3. Jacob, Genesis 25:26 | c. red hair |
| 4. David, 1 Samuel 17:39-40 | d. not a family name |
| 5. Joseph, Genesis 37:3 | e. ark (basket) |
| 6. Samuel, 1 Samuel 2:18 | f. heel |
| 7. Isaac, Genesis 22:6-13 | g. coat of many colours |
| 8. Shunammite's son,
2 Kings 4:35-36 | h. linen ephod |
| 9. John the Baptist,
Luke 1:60, 61 | i. sling shot |
| 10. Esau, Genesis 25:25 | j. manger |

June Birthdays

Happy Birthday to You!

Very best wishes for a super day celebrating your birthday with your family and friends. May our Heavenly Father bless and guide you all each day in the year ahead.



Tanya Meints	1	Jennifer VanderVelde	18
Erin Welfing	4	Ivan Sikkema	20
Esther Snyder	5	Kent VanVliet	20
Sarah Kampen	5	Jocelyn Schoon	22
Sharon Bartels	6	Evelene Plug	27
Rebecca Kruisselbrink	6	Bonita Feenstra	27
Laura Bol	7	Reuel Feenstra	27
Felicia Oosterhoff	8	Natasha VanVeen	27
Kayla Koopmans	9	Ben Bartels	28
Lee-Anne Vanderwoerd	9	Bradley Bartels	28
Vanessa Aikema	10	Tracy Lynn Malda	29
Eric Vandergriendt	12	Renee Kruisselbrink	29
Jason VanderHorst	16	Melissa DeBoersap	30

ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

By Tamara Dejong

O	J	H	D	O	G	S	Q	R	M	U	C	Find: ANIMALS DOGS CAT TOAD HOGS GEESE DUCK PIG GOOSE
N	K	R	O	P	Q	M	C	D	I	M	A	
M	L	F	A	G	D	U	C	K	R	S	T	
E	C	T	M	E	S	Q	W	Z	C	O	Q	
P	W	X	Y	E	N	T	M	U	A	M	B	
A	W	A	M	S	M	G	U	O	R	C	K	
N	X	B	O	E	I	T	T	W	X	Y	R	
I	Y	D	Q	P	U	C	Z	H	C	U	O	
M	Z	F	S	T	X	F	T	A	G	M	Q	
A	T	H	U	M	T	H	M	E	O	O	E	
L	U	J	W	Y	N	L	N	Q	O	M	L	
S	V	C	L	Y	K	P	Q	J	S	S	M	
K	M	O	N	K	E	Y	S	Z	E	E	Y	

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

I would like to thank all the Busy Beavers who have sent me the Spring Surprise Story until now.

I hope everyone enjoys reading the stories in this Little Magazine. Look for more next time, too. But because I have received so many stories, I won't be able to put them all in. Instead, I'll put your name in if you sent a story. I hope all of you enjoy your reward!

Here are all the Busy Beavers who have sent in their ending to the story. Thank you all!!

Sharalee Vandebos	Sophie-Ann Ravensbergen
Jonathan Vandebos	Miranda Barendregt
Rebecca Kruisselbrink	Jodie Lodder
Jocelyn Schoon	Reuel Feenstra
Katrina Meerveld	Jaclyn Hulst
Lydia Penninga	Monica Bartels
Tamara Dejong	Bonita Feenstra
Amanda Zwaagstra	Jaclyn Bartels
Cecilia Barendregt	Adena Feenstra
Virginia Jager	Jeremy Feenstra
Laura Muis	



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Renee Kruisselbrink*. Spring must be a very exciting time on a farm! Do you have any other animals on your farm besides the calves and your dog? I guess you like your teacher very much! Bye Renee.

Hi *Katherine Wiersma*. Sorry about your name not getting on the Birthday list. We'll remember it next time. Thank you for thinking up the code for the other Busy Beavers to do. Bye, Katherine.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Katrina Meerveld*. What kinds of books do you enjoy reading? What is your favourite time at school? Bye Katrina.

Hi, *Henriette Vandekamp*. Thank you for the well-illustrated code you sent in, but could you tell me more about yourself? I'd love to hear more. Bye, Henriette.

Hi, *Virginia Jager*. I can see you've been busy. Thank you for the puzzles you sent in. How is your little brother doing? Bye, Virginia.

Hi, *Jocelyn Schoon*. You draw quite well. Thank you for the pink "spring picture" you sent me. Bye, Jocelyn.

Hi, *Rebecca Kruisselbrink*. Thank you for your neat letter and story. Hope to hear from you soon. Bye, Rebecca.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Yvonne Bysterveld*. You and your class must have had a very fun day on your teacher's birthday, back in March! Thank you for the code. Bye, Yvonne.

Answers to the Bible Puzzle

1-e, 2-f, 3-f, 4-i, 5-g, 6-h, 7-a, 8-b, 9-d, 10-c

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

