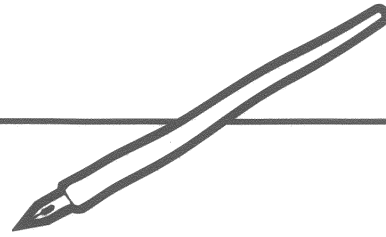


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God's Word and Infant Baptism

Questions of doubt

Recently I had a conversation with someone about infant baptism and the fact that time and again members of a Reformed church become confused on this point. Raised in a Reformed church, they grew up in the conviction that infant baptism was right according to the Word of God. But discussions with doubting Reformed people and with Baptists changed this conviction. Does the Bible not say that he who believes is saved? Do we not read in the book of Acts that those who had come to faith in Christ Jesus were baptized? And with respect to the covenant, does not God only then really establish and have His covenant with people when they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and accept this covenant relation with God? How can God have a covenant relation with those who do not believe or who cannot believe yet? Does not the word covenant mean that there is a living relationship? How can someone who has not been regenerated have a living relationship with God?

Questions like these appear to have quite an impact. Moreover, such questions of doubt regarding the correctness of infant baptism receive support from the argument that there are members of the church, old and young, who maintain a lifestyle that belies faith in Christ and the presence of a living covenant relation with God.

It is not my intention to deal here with the whole matter of the infant baptism, and with all the arguments from Scripture which show clearly that children belong to the covenant together with their believing parents. But two aspects I like to ask attention for, the nature of the covenant and the character of God's Word.

The nature of the covenant

Let us imagine a member of the church who was baptized but who does not live in faith for and with the LORD but shows a total indifference for the LORD and His service. His lifestyle indicates that he is not regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Can God have a covenant with such a person? Or must we conclude that in such a case God's covenant cannot be present? If we would look at the situation in this way and say: such a person does not have a living relation with God; therefore, God does not have His covenant with that person.

If we reason in this way, we make the covenant dependent on man, or rather on the believer and on regeneration. For we say: if there is no regeneration and life in faith, there cannot be the covenant with God. But this is not biblical. God made His covenant with Abraham and His seed in their

generations. He established His covenant with His people Israel. It is clear that throughout the Old Testament this people includes the children. But not only children. It included the believers but also the disobedient and indifferent. That is why the latter were said to break the covenant. And one can only break the covenant if one has received a place in it. The covenant is personal but not individualistic. It is evident, therefore, that God establishes His covenant with His people and gives Himself to His people as their God, independent of human faith and regeneration.

This can become even more clear when we look at the character of God's speaking.

The character of God's Word

In the two previous issues we discussed that God's Word is a promising Word. When God speaks His Word to us it is a promising speaking. He addresses us in Christ, in promise. In LORD'S DAY 7, Q.& A. 22, we confess that the contents of this promising speaking of the LORD is our triune God Himself. In His Word He promises Himself to His people as their God in Christ.

In this promising speaking God reveals Himself as He is for His people. The two things of revealing Himself and promising Himself must be combined. God promises Himself in exactly that way in which He reveals Himself. In other words, He gives Himself to His people according to His self-revelation.

This promising Himself brings along God's requirement that those whom He addresses respond with faith. They are called to believe in God as their God precisely as He reveals Himself. I may again refer to 2 Cor. 7:1, where the apostle shows that God's speaking is a promising speaking, saying, "Since we have these promises. . . ." These promises are formulated in the preceding verses, among others, as "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." and "I will be a Father for you, and you shall be sons and daughters for Me, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:16, 18). In other words, God's promising Word, "I am the LORD your God, and you are My children" does not depend on regeneration or faith. It calls to faith. It requires faith. There is first God with His address in the covenant. Then there is the calling to believe that comes with it.

God's promising Word addressed to children, too

Since in the covenant God comes first with His promising speaking, this speaking can be addressed to both adults and children. Peter said on the Day of Pentecost: "For the

promise is for you and for your children." Moreover, we read that the apostle Paul addresses the children directly in Col. 3 when he writes, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." In Eph. 6:1ff. this address to children is more extensive and even more obviously God's will for children in the covenant as it is expressed in the Fifth Commandment, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'in order that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.'" Just as God addressed the children in the Old Covenant, so He does in the New. In both dispensations God's speaking is a promising speaking also to children who belong to Him.

It is in agreement with this manner of speaking in Scripture that we confess in LORD'S DAY 27, Q.& A. 74, the following ground for the baptism of infants: "Infants as well as adults belong to God's covenant and congregation. Through Christ's blood the redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit, who works faith, are promised to them no less than to adults." God's promising speaking, requiring faith, keeps coming to the adult believers. In the same way it also keeps coming to their children. Parents and children in the covenant and in the church are called to react to God's promising speaking with the "amen" of faith.

Is a little baby still unable to respond with faith? Of course, it is. God knows that. He is our Creator! This means, that God comes with His call of faith according to the age and the ability of the child to listen and to understand. And in the way of the child's listening and obeying to its God-fearing parents God works out His electing grace in the life of the child. We do not forget that faith is not only God's requirement but also God's own work. We can believe, and so can a child, because God makes alive through His Holy Spirit, through the gospel.

Thankfulness

During the past month I attended two worship services in which a group of young people made public profession of their faith in the LORD as their God. Every sincere public profession of faith is a gift of God. It is also the amen of faith in response to God's promise, "I am the LORD, your God; I will be a Father for you for Christ's sake, and you shall be My son, My daughter." In every profession of faith in which a person say "amen" to the LORD as He promises Himself, we see the faithfulness of the LORD.

However, such a profession of faith is not the end. It does not mean that now we have reached our destination. Rather, we have reached one of the milestones in our life. Now we have to go on to live with our promising God. God will continue to address us and speak to us, promising to be our God in Christ as revealed. And the LORD continues to call us to respond to His promising speaking with faith. Yes, this call comes with even greater force to us. Having made profession of faith, we have given our word of promise to the LORD.

God addresses also the children in His church and covenant. You are Mine. I am your God. Therefore, obey your (God-fearing) parents. For that is pleasing to the Lord. And in that way of faith it will be well with you and you will live everlastingly on this and the coming new earth. **C**



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Two or Three? A Look at the Reformed View of Office¹

By J. De Jong

Recently the offices have been in discussion in the Reformed churches. There appears to be less certainty today concerning the number and the task of the offices. About thirty years ago, Prof. J. Kamphuis could write: "The New Testament does know of the office of the minister, elder and deacon."¹ Today this would not be said as easily anymore in the Netherlands. And among us as well questions concerning what an elder may or may not do have come up. These questions concern in particular the words of the blessing, the raised hands with the blessing, and – to a lesser extent – the administration of the sacraments.

It is not my intention to discuss the developments on these matters as this is taking place in the Netherlands. There are enough capable people there who can give adequate direction on these points. But I would like to use the occasion of the discussion to consider these matters from a scriptural perspective. Naturally we cannot be exhaustive. So I have chosen to focus on the question: must we think in terms of two or three offices? Or should we consider other models? In other words, is the familiar triad of minister, elder and deacon to be revised? Or can we continue to work with it?

My thesis is that we should retain the "three-office" view. To argue this point I would like to look at some Scripture passages concerning the offices, then consider the stand of the Reformed confessions, and finally make some conclusions for today.

RECENT CHANGES

That a change has occurred in the view of the office of the minister is noticeable in the revision of the Form for the Ordination of Ministers of the Word.² After quoting Eph. 4:11-12, the old Form for the Ordination of Ministers of the Word makes a direct reference to the pastoral office with the words:

"Here we see among other things that the pastoral office is an institution of Jesus Christ."³ In the thinking of the authors of this Form, there was a direct line from the New Testament to the pastoral office of the day. The new Form has a much more detailed circumscription at this point. It says:

In the early Christian Church this task was fulfilled by the apostles. They, in turn, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, appointed elders in every church. According to 1 Timothy 5: 17 there were elders who ruled the congregation. Some of them were also called to labour in preaching and teaching. The latter *are now called* ministers of the Word.⁴ [emphasis added]

One notices that the new Form sees a much wider gap between Paul's references to the office in Eph. 4 and the office today. Today's minister of the Word cannot be directly found in the New Testament. His office has grown out of an historical development. And the name of the minister (v.d.m., as he was called) is essentially a later invention. In fact, says the Form, we give the minister his name.

How did the new approach to the office come into the Form we adopted? Essentially we took our revisions from the changes made in the Netherlands. At the time, perhaps no one sensed that there was a new view of the office inherent in this new Form. However that may be, the result is that we have embedded in our Form a new understanding concerning the office of the minister of the Word, viz. that this office is not *directly* traceable to the New Testament.

It is not my intention to criticize or even to critically trace the development inherent in the revision of the Form. It was clear to all that the old Form was rather cryptic in its treatment of the ministerial office. Some scriptural data essential to the ministerial office were

passed over. Thus, no one can dispute that revision was needed. However, we should prevent misunderstandings from arising with respect to the office of the minister. For while the old Form clearly presupposes a three-office view, the new Form reflects more ambiguity on this point. It posits that the third office, the office of the minister, has no direct foundation in the New Testament, but is only a logical extension of a development already present in the New Testament. And the formulation could easily be misunderstood to say that this office represents only a man-made addition to the organizational pattern of the church described in the New Testament. Indeed, the revision of the Form raises the question just exactly what part of the minister's office is based directly on Scripture, and what part of it represents later historical developments.

The element of ambiguity in the new Form is easily traced. It states that some leaders were set apart to preach and teach, according to 1 Tim. 5: 17, and then it asserts: "To them was entrusted the ministry of reconciliation." Yet we know that this was specifically entrusted to the *apostles*. In the new Form there is an implicit jump from the apostles to the ministers of today. If anything, the new Form then leads to a two-office view, with the office of the minister of the Word introduced rather abruptly, and with a certain degree of silence as to the precise fixation or circumscription of this office. This raises the question whether in fact we can base the office of the minister of the Word as we know it on the New Testament.

SOME EVIDENCE

If we turn to the New Testament, we discover that there are several reasons for thinking in terms of a three-office rather than a two-office view. Let us consider these in turn.

1. Pastors and teachers

First, we turn to the text which was used by the old Form of Ordination, and is still quoted in the New Form, Eph. 4:11-12. The fact that two functions are connected by the apostle (pastors and teachers) indicates that these offices were closely connected. In fact, we may think here of one office. But which one? In the past, the terms **pastors** and **teachers** were connected most frequently with the office of the minister. Today, they are seen more commonly as elders. Nevertheless, there is a clear delineation of *two* functions in the text! As S. Greijdanus said:

Because of the one article, these are referred to as one group. The first word is broader than the second. . . . The meaning (of the first word, JDJ) is expressed in the usage: to be shepherds, or: to shepherd. Teaching or instructing, being a teacher, is a specific manifestation or expression of this; that is, it is the exercise of the office of pastor in a specific sense.⁵

The broader task of all elders is to rule and govern the flock, Acts 20: 28.

But this government is closely connected with teaching. The congregation is led and directed by the proclamation of the Word! Therefore we may see the teachers as *pastors* who teach, i.e. ministers of the Word.⁶

In this passage the exact lines of the permanent offices are not clear. That is why the passage was used in the Reformed tradition to defend the office of the doctor as a fourth office in the church. This was Calvin's explanation of the text. While he may have read too much into the text as far as the offices were concerned, he was correct in isolating two *functions* in the passage.

2. 1 Timothy 5:17

This passage is similar to the preceding one in that it speaks about one group or office, but also alludes to two distinct functions. So W. Hendriksen says that "already in Paul's day a distinction began to be visible between those whom we today call "ministers" and those whom we still call elders.⁷ There is a wider body of elders who have the general oversight, but from them there is also a narrower group who have a more specific task to perform, i.e. teaching and instruction. And as in the preceding passage, so here we cannot avoid a reference to two distinct *functions*.

Calvin takes this passage as referring to two distinct offices, the second being the pastors or ministers of the Word. This explanation has been increasingly questioned in recent years. But, as in the case of the preceding text so here, we must at least credit Calvin for pointing to two distinct functions. Hence while the full contours of a distinct office have not emerged, the lines of a third office are clearly visible.

3. Ministers

Next we may turn to the New Testament use of the term *minister*. The verb "to minister" has first a very general usage in the New Testament, pointing to any kind of service. For example, when the Lord Jesus says that He came not to be served but to serve, (Mk 10:45) he uses the term "serve" in a very broad sense. The "serving at tables" referred to in Acts 6:2 is also a general usage of the term. And in Rom. 16:1-2, Phoebe is called a "deaconess," a term which describes a more general service in the church. But the term *minister* is most often used in the specific sense of those who labour in the Word and doctrine. The term is applied to Christ Himself (Gal. 2:17, Heb. 8:2), to Paul, (Rom. 15:16, Eph. 3:7, Col. 1:23, 25), and to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6), as well as other fellow-workers, (Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7, 2 Cor. 1:19, 1 Tim. 1:2). In these references we notice that the term is specifically applied to the apostles, and those who continued the apostolic task in its specific character as ministry

of the Word. Timothy and Tychicus were preachers rather than elders. Thus the term **minister** (Gk: *diakonos*) is then used primarily for one who laboured in the Word.⁸

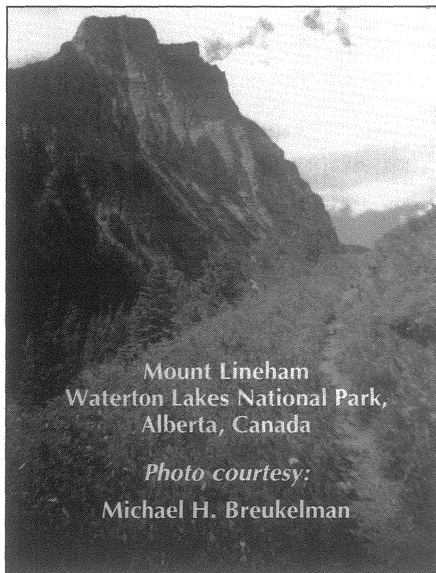
Of particular significance is the usage of the term *minister* in Hebrews. For here it is connected to the service of the priests in the Old Testament, cf. Heb. 7:13, 8:2. The point of the letter here is that the ministry of Christ is far superior to the ministry of the Levitical priesthood, since it represents a heavenly ministry. Just as in the Old Testament, the priest ministered at an earthly altar, so Christ stands as minister before the heavenly altar of His sacrifice, and administers the blessings of this heavenly sacrifice to His people.

Although there is no explicit reference to the sacraments, one can discern sacramental imagery throughout these chapters. The altar has been replaced by the table of the Lord! The earthly sacrifice is now fulfilled in the heavenly sacrifice.⁹ Christ is the essential minister (*diakonos*) of the heavenly blessings for the church. The ministers on earth are only representatives and agents of His work. So the early church soon tied the administration of the Word with the sacraments, and connected these to the task of the *minister* of Christ. Indeed, the application of the term **minister** to Christ in this context leads one to conclude that especially those who are in other places called *ministers* (Paul, Timothy, Tychicus) were those specifically charged with this ministry, i.e. the ministry of the Word *and* sacraments.¹⁰

4. The laying on of hands

A third consideration pointing to a distinct third office concerns the laying on of hands as referred to in 1 Tim. 5:22. Besides the evangelists of Acts 6, Timothy appears to be the only recipient of this ceremony as referred to in Scripture, 1 Tim. 4:14 and 2 Tim. 1:6. It is clearly a ceremony of ordination. Although elders participated in it, we do not read of elders receiving it. And in 1 Tim. 5:22, Paul gives the injunction not to be hasty in the laying on of hands, indicating that some testing and training is essential for those who are to be considered eligible for this ceremony. Were these brothers to whom Paul refers then not elders? Possibly they were, since this injunction occurs in the context of a series of injunctions dealing with elders. However, possibly we find here more specific focus on the second function mentioned in 1

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Tim. 5:17, namely, those who labour in the word and doctrine. It stands to reason that because of their special task, they more than others need to be carefully tested.

All this does not clearly depict a distinct office, but certainly points in the direction of a special ceremony for those who were set apart for the work of the church in teaching and preaching. The task of teaching and preaching was so comprehensive that men were needed who were able to give themselves wholly to this work. So crucial was this function in the church that Timothy is admonished to be very careful concerning who is admitted to this task. This task also appears to be the most closely associated with that which the apostles and evangelists did in the early stages of the life of the church. Here, however, the functions appear to be more localized, i.e. attached to specific places.

5. Stewards

Next we may consider the office of the **steward**. Paul, who at one point calls himself a minister, also calls himself “a steward of the mysteries of God,” 1 Cor. 4:1. Now these mysteries refer in particular to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the rich treasures of wisdom and knowledge as found in Him. It would be incorrect to see an exclusive reference to the sacraments in this passage. Yet, one may ask: are these sacraments to be excluded here?

In my view one should not exclude the reference to the sacraments in this and other passages which use this term, 1 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 1:9; 3:4,9; Col. 1:26,27; 4-3, 1 Tim. 3:9, 16.) For this term always points to the *fullness* of the revelation of God which includes the knowledge and wisdom of Christ in all its aspects. Secondly, when Paul uses this term, he deliberately distinguishes the gospel from the sacred rites and practices of the Greek mystery cults of the day. Third, the term *sacramentum* is a translation of the Greek, *mysterion*, and it was very early in the history of the church that the term *mysteria* (mysteries) came to be used for the sacraments.¹¹ Fourth, one may also read into the image of a steward an administering or dispensing action. The steward was the person who managed in and administered the affairs of the house. This image applies most suitably to the administration of the Word and the sacraments together.

If we recall that Paul draws the closest connection between the apostolic office and the office of *diakonos*, minister, then we have reason to see here also a reference to a distinct office charged with labouring in the Word and the sacraments. And if this appears to be too far-reaching of a conclusion, we may at least assert that the ministry of the Word and the sacraments are consistently closely tied together in the New Testament.¹²

6. Angels

A final consideration centers on the words of Rev. 1:20, which refers to angels of churches. Commentators are for the most part divided concerning the interpretation of the term **angels** in this and the following verses (2:1,8 and so on). However, the term certainly lends itself to thinking in terms of one or more figures who had the responsibility for the welfare of the congregation, and who were charged with bringing the Word of God to the congregations. An angel is a messenger, and here one thinks of the message of Christ to the church. The picture of Christ walking among the lampstands with the messengers in His hands indicates that those who bring His message are so directed by Him that they are to bring only His Word. Thus we may think of a special group which has a special calling to administer the Word of Christ to the flock.¹³

SUMMARY

These then are six New Testament pointers or allusions to the specific office of the minister of the Word. Even if one would say that the specific profile of today's minister of the Word cannot be read directly in the New Testament, the lines from the N.T. are strong enough to indicate that the contours of this office are already present there. In other words, the name “minister of the Word” as it applies to those who labour particularly in the Word and doctrine today is not a *man-made* label given apart from the data of the New Testament; rather, it is an appellation based on data present in Scripture itself.

It also seems clear that although we do not have exact delineations of our offices in the New Testament, there is insufficient evidence at the present stage of study in the New Testament to change the practices we have grown familiar with in the Reformed churches over the years. More about this next time, D.V.

¹¹This remark can be found in the brochure, “According to the Scriptures and the Reformed Creeds?” *Een vraag aan allen in The Christian Reformed Church (United States and Canada)*, p.5. This brochure was directed to the CRC churches when they introduced revisions into their Church Order in the period 1959-1965.

¹²On this change see A.N. Hendriks, “The Place and Significance of the Offices in the Congregation of Christ” in *Diakonia*, IV/2 (Dec., 1990), pp. 31ff.

¹³See the first edition of the *Book of Praise*, p. 526. This Form is a translation of the Form adopted by the churches at the Synod of De Hague in 1586.

¹⁴*Book of Praise*, 1984 edition, p. 619, emphasis mine.

¹⁵S. Greijdanus, *Ephese – Philippenzen (Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift* (2nd. ed., Kok, Kampen, 1949), p. 91 (my translation).

¹⁶H. Bavinck sees this office as an office of elder out of which the office of minister grows, cf. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* IV, (4th ed., Kok, Kampen, 1930) p. 325. He says: “When Paul says in Eph. 4:11-12 that Christ gave some to be apostles and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers, then he makes clear that both of these last-mentioned persons did not occupy essentially different offices, but exercised functions in the congregation that were closely connected but yet mutually distinct,” (my translation). He then first states that there were two offices, but that in Scripture itself we see the birth of a third office arising from the elders, *Ibid.* 342, and 371. Bavinck says the latter term, (teacher) then became the specific title of the minister of the Word, cf. p. 400.

¹⁷W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1957), p. 180.

¹⁸So also H. W. Beyer in G. Kittel, (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley) Vol. 2, p. 89, sub: *diakonia*.

¹⁹See on this point F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (NICNT), (Revised Edition, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1990), p.220 (on Heb. 9:15): “The basing of the new covenant on the death of Christ is a New Testament doctrine not peculiar to our author; it finds clearest expression in the words of institution spoken by our Lord over the cup. . . .” Calvin, too, sees many references to the sacraments in this section of the letter to the Hebrews, and so ties Christ's ministry from heaven with the ministry of Word and sacraments on earth. See on Heb. 9:12: “For as far as Christ's flesh is quickening, and is a heavenly food to nourish souls, as far as His blood is a spiritual drink and has a cleansing power we are not to imagine anything earthly or material as being in them.” And on Heb. 9:20: “For what Paul testifies in 2 Cor. 1:20, that all God's promises are yea and amen in Christ – this happens when His blood like a seal is engraven on our hearts, or when we not only hear God speaking, but also see Christ offering

Himself as a pledge for those things which are spoken." (*Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, (translated by John Owen, Baker Book House reprint, Grand Rapids, 1984) pp. 203, 213.

¹⁰When Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:17, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel," his words should not be taken as an indication that word and sacrament were separated for him. As a minister of Christ and an apostle, the mandate also came to Paul to go and baptize and teach all nations, Mt. 28:19. However, in his case there was a certain division of labour, by which the administration of baptism was more often left to those fellow workers who followed him. The mission to the Gentiles, with which he

was charged in a more specific way, was a task of such enormous magnitude that his time was devoted almost entirely to preaching the gospel. But the passage makes clear that he shared the *rights* of a minister of Christ – preaching and administering the sacraments. See also 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

¹¹On this point, see G.W. Bromiley and R.S. Wallace's comments in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 256, sub **sacraments**: "the word [*sacramentum*, JD] also found a wider ecclesiastical use for signs of sacred things, whether in the more general sense of any earthly sign with a heavenly meaning or in the more specific sense of divinely given covenant signs, i.e. circumcision and the Passover in the O.T.

and baptism and the Lord's Supper in the N.T. This usage explains why *sacramentum* commended itself as an equivalent of *Gk mysterion*, which generally refers to the hidden things of God that cannot be known except as God discloses them. Conversely, *mysterion* itself forms the background for a proper understanding of the sacraments.

¹²Calvin also thinks of the sacraments in connection with this passage, cf. *Institutes* IV.iii.6. He applies this passage specifically to *pastors*, i.e. (for him) ministers of the Word.

¹³See T. Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*. Vol 1, (KNT, 1-3 ed., A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig/ Erlangen, 1924), p. 210. C

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Learn to Discern

For Christian believers, the term "critical thinking" usually has bad connotations. It makes them think of arrogant philosophers or unbelieving Bible scholars who exalt human reason above the truth of God. After all, so-called "higher criticism" of Scripture, which regards the Bible as just another example of purely human literature, has led many folks away from the faith.

Rightly then, believers fear the worldly idea of critical thinking. However, there is another type of critical thinking which ought to be normal for Christians. There is a need for a critical, Christian mind. Such a mind examines and evaluates everything it meets in the world according to the standard of Scripture. In every generation, there is an urgent need for young people who learn to discern.

If people do not learn to be critical thinkers, they will become gullible Christians, easy to deceive. If believers don't learn to discern, they will be duped by every fad of modern thought and life.

Believing everything

The book of Proverbs has a great deal to say about people who are "sim-

ple." Sometimes, Scripture uses the term "simple" in a positive way to describe those who are innocent or guileless. Also today, the word can mean a person who lives naturally, without pretension or affectation. More often, however, "simple" means something negative. The term is used of people who could and should have known better than to get sucked in by some ungodly idea or practice.

For example, Proverbs 14, verse 15, states that, "The simple believes everything, but the prudent looks where he is going." Here the word "simple" means a person who fails to discern. He lives with surface impressions, never stopping to consider the validity of his thoughts and actions. He lives the unexamined life. Mostly, he believes what everybody else believes. He buys into the cultural assumptions and values of the world around him without a second thought. Quickly and readily, he says his Amen to the prevailing world view of his time.

In this connection, we may recall that G.K. Chesterton somewhere said that when people cease to believe in the God of Christianity, they believe in anything. They imagine they believe in

nothing, while, in reality, they believe virtually anything. In the same way, the simple person of Prov. 14:15 puts his faith in anything that happens along his mental, moral and spiritual path. He does not discern the background and the implications of the ideas in which he naively puts his trust.

Led astray

Obviously, the results of being simple in this negative sense can be destructive. Those who lack discretion and discernment can walk straight into moral trouble (compare Prov. 9:4, 16). Because they don't stop to think and consider in the light of God's Word, they are led astray. What is more important, the simple are prone to mental deviation. Their thoughts become corrupted. Without realizing what's happening, they start thinking like pagans, with the same assumptions and values.

Another result of being "simple" is vulnerability to heresy. The simple have no protection against anti-scriptural ideas. We need to realize that heretics rarely announce themselves. They don't tell the church that they are repudiating the Gospel. They never say: "Listen to me, I'm a heretic, and I'll

lead you away from the Faith." Instead, wrong-thinking teachers usually claim to be orthodox. They claim that their opinions are within the boundaries of Scripture and Confession. In many cases, they genuinely believe themselves to be orthodox.

Before heresy becomes publicly visible and audible, there can be a long process of diluted Christian thinking. Under the surface of church life, the bond of faith to all that God has said to us in His Word is weakened. It can happen that the thinking of a whole generation in the church is no longer shaped by Scripture. Sometimes, the issue is not so much what a certain teacher or thinker or writer says that is wrong as what he doesn't say that is right. His silence about key issues of the day can be an indication of emerging deviance. The Bible even warns us of people who bring in heresies secretly (2 Pet. 2:1). The destructive work of the heretic is aided by our natural preference for error. Heresy sounds good to our ears (compare 2 Tim. 4:3).

For a long time, church life can go on quite calmly, but then suddenly the wrong thinking of the false teachers comes to the fore. All of a sudden, the church has to deal with people who deny the historicity of Genesis one or of the miracles of Christ. All of a sudden, there are people in the church who say that while God's Word is infallible, it isn't inerrant. In other times and places, there are folks who sever the bond between justification and sanctification or who challenge the doctrine of the Trinity or the position of women in the congregation or the traditional teaching of the church about homosexuality.

On guard

The emergence of the error seems sudden. However, the particular error is only the manifestation of a wrong kind of thinking which has now come to a logical conclusion. What we need in the church is the ability to discern that wrong thinking in its very beginning. We need to detect the wrong thought processes before they come to the surface and bear fruit. We need to call people away from thinking which despises God's revelation or twists it to suit our own fancy. We need critical thinkers who evaluate every word and every thought and every opinion by the standard of Scripture itself. As we fill our minds continuously with the sound and good doctrine (compare 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:3), we'll be able to discern.

If we don't learn to discern in these critical areas of doctrine and ethics, we will find that wrong ideas will do a pernicious work in the churches (compare 2 Pet.2:1). Once these ideas gain a following, they eat their way like gangrene through the people of God (2 Tim. 2:17), eroding faith and corrupting morals.

Let's take careful note of the biblical warning to be on guard for false, deceptive teachers. We need to examine every teaching because the Holy Spirit is not the source of all of them (compare 1 Jn. 4:1). If we don't test constantly, we'll soon end up with a completely different Gospel (Gal. 1:1, 7; 2 Cor. 11:14). The Scriptures inform us that Satan conceals his true intention. He is able to disguise himself as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:13). He is a liar and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). If we don't learn to discern, we'll be easy prey for people who love the lie more than the truth; we'll be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles (Eph. 4:14). In short, we'll be simpletons who listen to anybody and believe anything because we no longer firmly adhere to the living Word of God (compare here 2 Tim. 3:6).

Do you want to be exploited by wrong-thinking, false-hearted teachers and philosophers and theologians and writers of books and makers of culture? Do you want to be duped? Of course not. Then learn to discern! Learn to probe empty talk with hard questions. Learn to look under the surface of glittering ways of life. Search out the assumptions in arguments. Cast down every proud thought which exalts itself against the authority of our God and His Word (compare 2 Cor. 10:5). Ask yourself: what is the starting point of this thought or this lifestyle choice? Does it show submission to God? Is it built on scriptural or on secular assumptions? We need to meet the danger of false teaching with spiritual discipline and doctrinal precision. We need Christian, critical thinkers who know God's Word and the Confessions of His church. Otherwise, we will be duped!

Critical thinkers will expose the futile thoughts and corrupt morals of unbelieving man. Their discerning investigation will reveal the terrible prejudice of modern thinking and living against God and His Anointed One, Jesus Christ. By means of their searching examinations, these eagle-eyed believers

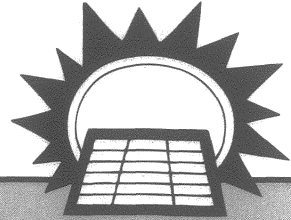
will demonstrate the pathetic futility of such rebellion against the Lord. They will show that thinking and living outside the framework of God's truth leads only to trouble and confusion, not to mention self-contradiction. In a word, critical Christian thought will expose the vanity of life without the Lord.

Critical thinkers are not proud. They are themselves humble children of the Lord who strive to submit all their thoughts and lifestyle choices to God's Word. They are teachable students of Jesus Christ. Day by day, they learn by God's Holy Spirit to deny themselves and follow their Master. Thus, being a critical thinker involves the constant discipline of worship, prayer, Bible study and obedience to the Lord's commandments. Without this firm basis, we'll run the risk of expressing what is merely our own opinion as absolute truth. Here the word of Prov. 18, verse 2 comes to mind: "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." When our critical thinking is firmly based on divine truth, then we energetically can defend the faith and critique its enemies while maintaining a position of gentleness and reverence (1 Pet. 3:15) and showing perfect courtesy toward all men (Tit. 3:2).

Christian skeptic

What now does critical thinking mean in a very practical sense? It means being a doubter of every thought that emanates from the unregenerated mind and heart of man. Critical thinking means putting some distance between yourself and worldly ideas and lifestyles. It means not saying Amen so quickly to whatever catches your fancy. Critical thinking means reading slowly, watching for background ideas and presuppositions. Critical thinking means walking slowly, too, being careful where your feet lead you, lest you be tempted to sin. Being a critical thinker implies radical skepticism toward what we hear every day in the various media. It means questioning closely the origins of popular slogans and commonplace viewpoints.

In short, being a Christian, critical thinker means that we live in the reality of the antithesis established by God (Gen. 3:15). Recognizing that there is perpetual conflict between the truth of God and the lies of unbelief and sin, we guard our hearts with all vigilance (Prov. 4:23), lest we also be deceived. **C**



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?

Matthew 6:30

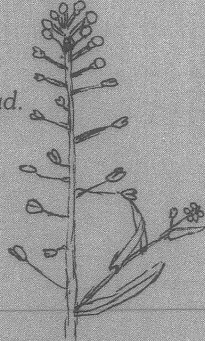
The Song of the Shepherd's Purse Fairy

Though I'm poor to human eyes
Really I am rich and wise
Every tiny flower I shed
Leaves a heart shaped purse instead.

In each purse is wealth indeed –
Every coin a living seed.
Sow the seed upon the earth –
Living plants shall spring to birth.

Silly people's purses hold
Lifeless silver, clinking gold;
But you cannot grow a pound
From a farthing in the ground.

Money may become a curse:
Give me then my Shepherd's Purse.

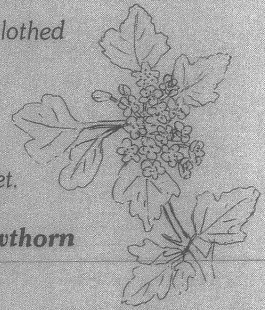


Shepherd's Purse

The Song of the May Fairy

My buds, they cluster small and green;
The sunshine gaineth heat:
Soon shall the hawthorn tree be clothed
As with a snowy sheet.

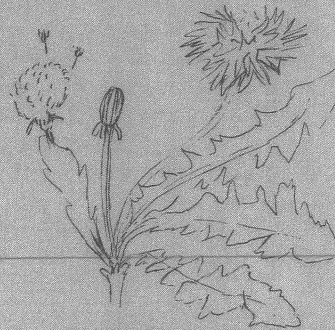
O magic sight, the hedge is white,
My scent is very sweet;
And lo, where I am come indeed,
The spring and summer meet.



Hawthorn

The Song of the Dandelion Fairy

Here's the Dandelion's rhyme:
See my leaves with tooth like edges;
Blow my clocks to tell the time;
See me flaunting by the hedges,
In the meadow, in the lane,
Gay and naughty in the garden;
Pull me up – I grow again,
Asking neither leave nor pardon,
Sillies, what are you about
With your spades and hoes of iron?
You can never drive me out –
Me, the dauntless dandelion!



Dandelion

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

These delightful poems I found in a little bundle, "Flower Fairies of the Spring" by Cicely Mary Barker. The Author must have been a very close observer of all the different flowers. With a little imagination she personalizes each flower with its own characteristics. So each flower stands out as a little individual.

We can learn something from reading these poems: It is good to pay close attention to all the amazing things that take place in God's beautiful creation.

Especially in the spring we stand in awe. All through the cold winter months everything outside seems to be dead and frozen. But as soon as the snow is melted and the frost gone, everything springs to life. Little green sprouts are hidden in the grass, buds on the trees suddenly are bulging, and little brave flowers dare to show their colours. Soon everything bursts to life, you can hardly keep up with all the different flowers. But if you pay close attention to them, like the author of the poems did, then you learn to know the Lord and His immeasurable wisdom. To each flower He gave its own colour and

size. Some have beautiful colours, others do not show very much. Some are big and tall, others are so tiny, you have to bend down to see them. Some attract bees and butterflies with their smell and their honey, others have an unpleasant smell or thorns, and keep everyone at a distance. Each of them has their own place and function in God's creation. He created each one of them with a certain purpose.

Some of that is the same with people. They are also created by the Lord. To them are also given individual characteristics. Everyone is different. Some are small and live quiet lives. Others are domineering, they speak up easily, they have many friends, and are always busy with this and with that. Some people are very smart, they learned a lot at school, and have important positions. Others are not so smart, maybe they have a job in a workshop. Some are always happy and friendly, others often complain or are grumpy. Some are very handsome and like to be seen. Others think that they are not attractive and they don't want to be seen. The list goes on and on, there are so many differences.

RAY OF SUNSHINE

Now what do we do with all this information? What if we happen to be someone who is not smart, not handsome, but shy, sick, handicapped, unable to make friends, and so on? Does that not give us a reason to look at people who are much better off, and to become unhappy or grumpy?

No. For we should never forget that we are God's children, created by God, our Father. We don't "happen to be" someone. God made us who we are and what we are. And if the Lord made all those flowers with a certain purpose in mind, then how much more purpose did He put into making us! God made the flowers to cover the earth, but He made us in His own image. He made us to praise Him, and to serve Him, and to live as His children. No matter what we look like, in God's eyes we are all precious. He made His covenant with us, He also sent us His Son, who paid for all our sins. He gave us everything He has, and He is with us from day to day. He helps us through difficult times. He listens to our prayers. He knows our needs. He will never desert us. With the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, He ensured to us that there will come an end to all the imperfectness of our present lives. Because we know that His promises are sure we can be, with His help, happy now. For we, just the way we are, are more beautiful and precious to God our Father, than the most beautiful and colourful flower in all His creation!

*Know that the LORD in His good pleasure
Has set the righteous ones apart*

*To be His own, His chosen nation.
He therefore hears my supplication;
He takes my misery to heart.
Be angry, but refrain from evil;
Commune within your heart, be still.
At all times bring right sacrifices.
Rely not on your own devices:
Trust in the LORD and heed His will.* Psalm 4:2

Birthdays in July:

James Buikema

"ANCHOR" Home, 361 30 Road, RR2
Beamsville, ON, L0R 1B0
James 33rd birthday is on July 4.

Charlie Beintema

29 Wilson Avenue, Chatham, ON, N7L 1K8
Charlie's 19th birthday is on July 20.

Jim Wanders

538 Wedgewood Drive, Burlington, ON, L7L 4J2
Jim's 33rd birthday is on July 28.

Tom VanderZwaag

His address is also at the ANCHOR Home
Tom's 41st birthday is on July 29.

I wish you all a happy Birthday.

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

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

The Unofficial Version

By S. Vandergugten-VanPopta

*By way of exception – received beside
the official Press Release. Editor*

Classis Alberta/Manitoba May 17/18, 1994

It was almost nine o'clock, Tuesday morning. The last few stragglers dashed through the unusual but welcome spring rain into the spacious foyer of Coaldale's beautiful church building. Warm handshakes and hellos were the order of the day, as ministers, elders, brothers and sisters from Western Canada and beyond greeted each other warmly. A sense of anticipation filled the air. For the first time in recent memory, Classis Alberta/Manitoba was convening in Coaldale. Important, per-

haps even controversial, items were on the agenda. And once the classis had adjourned, the Western Canada Ministers Conference would begin . . . an eventful few days.

Time to start

Shortly after nine, the 20 delegates and the two deputies from regional synod took their places at the tables. Seated alphabetically according to church, they formed an elongated oval where normally the pulpit was situated. The pulpit had been moved far to the one side. From there, two men, Rev. M. Pollock of Denver and later Br. Hans Boersma of Carman, would deliver their sermon proposals.

Rev. R. Schouten, representing Calgary, the convening church, opened the meeting. In his prayer he voiced the heartfelt desire of everyone present that all deliberations, discussions and decisions would be made in a spirit of harmony, without acrimony, and in true accord with the Word of God.

It was not long before the first contentious issue hit the table. The convening church had examined all the delegates' credentials, and having concluded that these were all in good order, proposed to have the previously designated executive take its place and declare classis constituted. Rev. J. D. Wielenga, speaking on behalf of the consistory of Coaldale, questioned the

validity of the credentials of the Denver delegates. Coaldale argued that the vote of Classis Alberta/Manitoba, Mar. 1994, had in reality rejected the advice of Regional Synod West Dec. 1993 to admit the church at Denver. When the vote was taken at Classis AB/MB Mar. 1994, of the 18 delegates, 9 were in favor, 8 against and one abstained. According to Classis AB/MB regulations, a decision is considered adopted if "more than half" the delegates present and eligible to vote are in favor. In this instance, nine was not a majority. However, no one was aware of this at the time; so, in error, the decision was made to admit Denver. Was this decision valid? That was the question facing classis now.

Coaldale suggested that classis first constitute without Denver to deal with the validity of the decision of last classis. The convening church argued that nothing could be discussed until classis had been constituted. It would be better to discuss the status of Denver with Denver at the table. The majority of the delegates chose this second route.

Classis constituted

So classis was constituted with Rev. R. Aasman of Edmonton-Providence as chairman. The agenda was established. The main items were the two examinations, a report from Rev. K. Jonker, observer at the March meeting of the Presbytery of the Dakotas, and requests for aid to needy churches: Barrhead and now Denver.

The first issue that needed resolving was the validity of the "irregular" decision of the previous classis with regard to the admission of Denver. Coaldale proposed to have the current classis rescind the decision, and request General Synod Abbotsford 1995 to give judgment on the concurring advice and the questions raised by Regional Synod West Dec. 1993. A lively discussion followed. One brother argued that the Mar. 1994 Classis had accepted and recorded the vote as acceptable. The decision has already been implemented and is hard to undo. Rev. Schouten hoped that the wrangling about Denver could come to an end. Classis should acknowledge its mistake, but living according to the rule of love sometimes means having to live with the consequences of our mistakes. Classis should act in love towards Denver.

Rev. Wielenga countered that love is effectuated by acting according to the agreed-upon rules. Love should not be based on subjective feelings and moti-

variations. Rev. Wielenga indeed loves and cares about the people at Denver. Do they want to become part of the Canadian Reformed federation on the basis of an illegal vote? Would that be showing love to Denver? Rev. Pollock has publicly expressed his awareness (in various Dutch papers) that Denver's admission is a cause of great crisis in the Can. Ref. Churches. Is that showing love? Why not let the Can. Ref. Churches sort things out at Synod 1995, and then reapply?

After several rounds of discussion, classis decided to acknowledge the mistake it made at the previous classis, but not to rescind the decision. That decision has since been implemented; Denver is in. Classis also decided that the objection to the mistake should have been raised at the classis which made the decision.

In letters addressed to classis, the churches at Taber and Barrhead expressed concerns similar to those of Coaldale. The chairman read the letters. Taber gave notice that it intends to appeal regional synod's approval of admitting Denver, especially since regional synod itself warned that doing this might compromise our official stand *vis-à-vis* the OPC. Taber also cannot consider settled and binding the classis decision to admit Denver, since the motion was in fact defeated. Barrhead's first concern was similar to that of Taber's first point. This church also has grave concerns about the manner in which Rev. Pollock was released from his vows made in the OPC. These three consistories instructed their delegates not to participate in the examination of Rev. Pollock.

A remarkable lunch

It was time for lunch. The Coaldale ladies were providing for the members of classis. The rest of us went to a local restaurant. The menus came around. The waitress rattled off the special of the day. Irony of ironies! It was the Denver sandwich! The majority ordered it. It was delicious. No indigestion here!

Classis resumed. Rev. Pollock's documentation, including his academic degrees and an attestation from the church at Denver, was examined. A brief discussion of the validity of this attestation ensued. For some of the delegates, the question of the vows of Rev. Pollock in the OPC remain problematic. These were vows taken before the Lord. However, it was as if an air of inevitability had settled over classis. With one last warning Rev. Wielenga pointed out the

heavy responsibility classis was taking on itself. He prayed that this assembly might realize what it was doing, and doing with open eyes.

Rev. Pollock took his place at the pulpit. The delegates, the Grade 7, 8 and 9 students and teachers of Coaldale Christian – taking advantage of this rare opportunity to visit a classis – the B.C. ministers and other audience members took their places in the pews.

Rev. Pollock's text was Eph. 2:1-4a. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins . . . But God. . . ." Today we see the worldwide extent of evil and sin. In this segment of Ephesians, God Himself gives the description of the human condition as the result of man's fall into sin. Rev. Pollock states as theme: Man by nature – Our true human condition before being made believers.

We see: 1) We were dead. 2) We were enslaved. 3) We were condemned. Paul wants to show us the contrast, what we are in ourselves and what we are in Christ. The good news is so good only because the bad news is so bad. We were not just walking in sin, we were enslaved to the devil. There is no thought of a free will here. And we are condemned by God whose wrath is a personal, righteous, constant hostility to evil. The text does not end this way. We were dead, but God. . . . We were enslaved, but God. . . . We were condemned, but God. . . . God took the initiative and did what we were unable to do. We find all we need and more than we need in Jesus Christ. "All blessing honour thanks and praise, to Father, Son and Spirit. . . ."

Time for testing

After the sermon proposal, classis went into closed session to evaluate the sermon proposal to decide whether to continue the exam. Before too long we were all welcomed back. Rev. Pollock was informed his peremptory exam would continue. Although the three churches who were not participating in the exam could have chosen to leave the table at this point, none of them did. Here followed what can only be called a grueling three-hour examination in 8 different areas: Old and New Testament Exegesis, Scripture Knowledge, Diaconology, the Confessions, Ethics, Church History and Church Polity. Rev. Pollock more than held his own, considering that he is still new to our church federation and our way of doing things.

Rev. VanSpronsen, as a Deputy of regional synod also had a few questions

to ask Rev. Pollock particularly about the latter's stand toward the OPC. He replied that he regards the OPC Church in Denver as unfaithful, but that there is an earnest desire to see things resolved. They are in contact with the OPC in Denver. They can work within the context of the Can. Ref. Churches' recognition of the OPC, as long as the divergencies are not minimized. They want to resolve the situation in Denver. Rev. VanSpronsen then asked if there is a distinction between a false and unfaithful church? Rev. Pollock replied that he lacks the ability to allow a responsible opinion about the whole OPC. They went by what they encountered in Denver. There the situation was so serious with regards to confession and practice that they could not step in. He did not want to speak further than that. There remains an earnest desire to seek true unity with the OPC in biblical face to face discussions. He has no intention of hindering this process. Rev. VanSpronsen's final question: Had the church in Denver considered waiting until 1995, after Synod Abbotsford, to reapply? Rev. Pollock replied that they did not feel responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They did not feel that they should wait with heeding the Lord's call to unity because of possible consequences. They needed to do what was right. No arm twisting was involved. The consequences were not in their hands. Let them fall where they may. With this the exam concluded.

Harmony prevails

By this time it was 6:30 p.m. . . . time to eat once more. At 8:15, during closed session it was decided that Rev. Michael Alexander Pollock had passed his exam. The chairman read a statement from the Deputies of Regional Synod, who expressed regret that neither classis nor the ARCD had chosen to wait until after the General Synod 1995 to implement the decision of Classis AB/MB Mar. 1994. The chairman congratulated Rev. Pollock, and requested him to sign the subscription form. Rev. Pollock then made his way around the table to each of the delegates to receive their congratulations. Despite the tense hours this was a happy moment. Rev. Wielenga took this opportunity to assure Rev. Pollock that at no time had his concerns been of a personal nature. He hoped that Rev. Pollock understood his position.

Anyone who keeps up with things in the Canadian Reformed Churches

knows that Classis AB/MB has been the home of quite a number of controversial issues. We think of the times when DeHaan and DeBruin were regular items on the agenda. We might think that the brothers in AB/MB are always at each other throats. This is simply not the case. These brothers have learned to hammer away at the issues without stepping over into attacking the person. There was no evidence of animosity or rancor. In fact, it seemed that those who contended most vigorously with each other at the table of classis were the ones who sought each other out during coffee and mealtimes. Let us take example from these brothers as we move forward to Synod Abbotsford 1995.

Classis presses on

Classis decided to press on. Two of the elders would be leaving this evening. Br. Hans Boersma's documentation was examined and approved, and at 9:00 p.m. it was his turn at the pulpit. His was a Pentecost message. The text: Acts 2:1-4. At Pentecost Christ wants to bring the Gospel of joy. We may see Christ in action. Jesus Christ, the exalted Lord, fills His New Testament church with the Holy Spirit. We may see three aspects: 1)the position of the Church, 2)the presence of the Spirit, 3)the proclamation of the gospel. Jerusalem and the temple was full of people keeping the Feast of Weeks. The disciples, about 120 strong, were gathered together obediently waiting for the promised Holy Spirit. It is in this small group where the action will be – not at the temple. This is the beginning of the N.T. church. Pentecost is indeed a feast of joy. Since that day the N.T. church has been filled with the Holy Spirit. We may never separate the Spirit from the Word. But even at Pentecost there is not a sermon on the Holy Spirit. Peter preaches Christ. The Spirit is sent out by Christ and refers us back to Christ. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and Christ wants to use us for the proclamation of His kingdom. Reason for wonder, amazement and joy!

Closed session deliberations once more came to a good conclusion. The preparatory exam of Br. Boersma could continue. Since this exam was for the purpose of declaring this brother eligible for call, only three areas were examined: Old and New Testament Exegesis and Confessions. This exam was shorter, but also thorough. Br. Boersma's years of study toward his Doctorate in Holland were evident in his commanding

knowledge of Scripture. Once more closed session. Once more a positive result. It was 12:30 a.m. Rev. R. Schouten had turned 33 in the meantime. All the delegates congratulated Br. Boersma. The clerk would send notice to *Clarion* that this brother is eligible for call.

Classis decided to continue its agenda at 9:00 a.m. and wished the Bros. DeBoer and Stevens a safe journey to Calgary and beyond. We sang, we prayed. We wearily walked to our cars and drove to our homes through the still unusual and still welcome spring rain.

Note: This is what I saw and heard. If it conflicts in any way with the official Press Release, I take full blame for any discrepancy. SV C



Dr. J. Boersma

has been declared eligible for call in the Canadian and American Reformed Churches by Classis Alberta/Manitoba, May 17, 18, 1994.

Rev. M. Pollock

has been examined by Classis Alberta/Manitoba, May 17, 18, 1994, and has been received as a minister within the Federation of Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

CALLED AND ACCEPTED to Neerlandia, AB

Rev. W. Slomp

of Houston, BC

CALLED to Aldergrove, BC

Rev. P. Aasman

of Grand Valley, ON

NEW ADDRESS:

Rev. B.R. Hofford

7279 Azalea Drive., SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
Phone: (616) 698-5085

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the Editor of *Clarion*:

It is regrettable that Prof. J. Geertsema chose to publish such a one-sided picture of the events surrounding the "Problems around Denver." (*Clarion* Vol. 43, pp. 182/3)

It is further regrettable that he chose to begin his article of this same title with a quotation from the Press Release of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March, 1994.

From here he begins to make a plea for cooperation based on his opinion that, "such situations may arise until substantial agreement is reached on the outstanding issues, and the temporary contact relationship has led to ecclesiastical fellowship." I begin with some quotes from the first article "A Welcome to Denver."

Prof. Geertsema writes, "it looked like they were growing in the direction of joining the OPC." The fact is that Rev. Pollock had been received as a member of the OPC., welcomed as a candidate for the ministry, and further had declared his intentions by taking vows to this end.

Prof. Geertsema writes, "in the meantime two things happened. First, contact was made with members of the American Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches. Important questions need to be asked and answered on this point. First, had this contact not been made where would Rev. Pollock and his followers be today? Answer: In the OPC. Second, was this contact instrumental in guiding Rev. Pollock away from the OPC and into the Canadian Reformed Churches? Answer: Is there any doubt?

Why is this important? Answer: because our General Synods have steadfastly maintained in spite of several attempts to have the decision overturned, that the OPC is a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was this church that Rev. Pollock had taken his vows in.

The second thing that happened was that "there grew with them a concern with regard to the situation in the local Denver OPC." Important questions concerning our Confessions must be asked on this point. Is it possible that a concern with regard to the situa-

tion constitutes grounds for leaving a Federation? Not according to our Confession, B.C. Art. 27 & 28. Did then, the OPC give Rev. Pollock reason for leaving? Not according to Art. 29, B.C. When similar problems were encountered within the PCA what happened? When he approached the assemblies of the PCA the result was that he was suspended. Was this the case in the OPC? Quite the contrary! Rev. Pollock's concerns were met with acknowledgement and he was encouraged by the Presbytery to remain in the OPC in order to "help them attain to a more perfect and Reformed church." (minutes POD (Presbytery of the Dakotas, 1991). Did he do that? Answer: No. He left and sought fraternal relations within the Canadian Reformed Churches. Prof. Geertsema writes, "they wanted to be Reformed instead of Presbyterian." Is this possible according to our Confessions? Do we indeed have a choice? Would Prof. Geertsema grant the same liberty to members of our churches who would rather be a member of the Independent Reformed Church across town? After all, at least they are Reformed. Prof. Geertsema writes, "they had come to the conclusion . . . that the Reformed Church Order is more in agreement with. . ."

I have to ask why then didn't Rev. Pollock apply the principles therein to this situation in Denver? C.O. Art. 31. Prof. Geertsema writes with reference to a classis decision that Rev. Pollock did not break his vows. The fact is that Rev. Pollock answered affirmatively during a Session of POD, Mar. 5-7, 1991, the following questions, among others, 1) Do you sincerely approve of the confessions of faith and catechisms of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture." 2) Do you approve the government, discipline and worship of the OPC. Indeed, in a letter to *Clarion* (Oct. 9, 1992, Vol. 41,) the consistory of the ARCD, acknowledged that Rev. Pollock broke commitments to the OPC, and had involved himself in sinful errors. Further, the POD of Mar. 1992, expressed its grief "that Rev. Pollock," without due process, broke "with the

church to which he belonged and the body to which he had vowed submission." Prof. Geertsema quotes Synod Lincoln, Art. 72, ll. A,2,C,ii (p. 51) I refer him to Regional Synod West, Dec. 8/9/93, Art. 11, consideration 4: "the Canadian Reformed Churches also should consider whether they would compromise their official stand *vis-à-vis* the OPC, by accepting the ARCD."

Clearly here was an opportunity to diffuse a potentially divisive issue. The churches could have agreed to postpone the implementation of the concurring advice until the churches in common could decide at the upcoming General Synod.

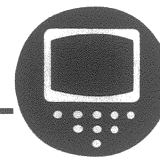
Allow me to steal a quote: "A just cause has nothing to fear from a short delay." Alas, it was not to be. And what was the result? The reputation of three churches whose only goal was to preserve the integrity and maintain the decisions of its major assembly has been tarnished.

Prof. Geertsema writes, "It is easy to have sister churches in foreign countries. They are far away . . . But it becomes different when we live beside each other. . . ." Incredible! Is he suggesting that if the OPC were in Brazil, we would have been sister churches long ago? How is this possible? Are we guided by Scripture and Confession or aren't we? I could go on and report in detail how the original decisions not to accept the ARCD were overturned without new grounds (Regional Synod Dec. 8/9/93, Art. 11, cons. 3). I could also report that the final classis decision to accept ARCD was actually defeated by classis' own regulations, namely, lack of a required majority of members present. However, what purpose would it serve?

I conclude with Prof. Geertsema's plea for cooperation. By implication he asserts that the churches at Barrhead, Taber and Coaldale are not cooperating. I maintain that these churches are merely trying to preserve the validity of Scripture and Confession according to Art. 31 C.O.

With brotherly greetings,
E. Tams





Classis AB/MB, May 17-18, 1994

1. *Opening:* At 9:00 a.m., May 17th, the chairman of the convening church at Calgary called the meeting to order. He requested the singing of Ps. 47:1,2, read John 18 and led in prayer. He then welcomed the delegates of the churches as well as Rev. C. VanSpronsen and J. Visscher who were present as deputies of Reg. Synod West. He also welcomed the many ministers of the Classis Pacific region who were present in order to attend a Ministers' Conference immediately following classis. Various noteworthy matters within classis were remembered. The credentials of the churches were examined and found to be in good order. The church at Coaldale objected to the seating of the delegates from the church at Denver because the decision of the previous classis to accept the concurring advice of Reg. Synod West to admit Denver was made illegally against the Regulations of Classis AB/MB. The chairman of the convening church ruled that this matter should be dealt with by classis after constitution. This position was supported by the delegates. Delegated to classis were the following brothers:

Barrhead:	Elder J. Vanderdeen; Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar
Calgary:	Deacon H. DeBoer; Rev. R. Schouten
Carman:	Elder J. Kuik; Rev. P.K.A. Deboer
Coaldale:	Elder I. Veurink; Rev. J.D. Wielenga
Denver:	Elder D. Stevens; Rev. M. Pollock
Edmonton Imm.	Elder T. Hoeksema; Elder H. Noot
Edmonton Prov.	Elder B. Muis; Rev. R. Aasman
Neerlandia:	Elder B. Tuininga; Elder W. Vanlaar
Taber:	Elder J. Moedt; Rev. G. Ph. van Popta
Winnipeg:	Elder D. Dewit; Rev. K. Jonker

The executive officers suggested by the previous classis were invited to take their place. The chairman was Rev. R. Aasman, vice-chairman was Rev. R. Schouten and clerk was Rev. P.K.A. Deboer. Classis was constituted. The Pro-

visional Agenda was adopted with several additions as follows:

2. A letter from the church at Coaldale concerning the validity of constituting classis with acceptance of the credentials of the delegates of the church at Denver was declared admissible. The following motion was made, seconded and defeated:

Classis acknowledges with regret that Classis March 1994, Article 2C, was in error, when it declared the motion to decide "that it has received concurring advice to admit the church at Denver into the federation." According to Classis Regulations, Article 7,C.2, the motion ought to have been declared defeated as it did not gain the vote of the majority of the delegates present and entitled to vote.

Classis judges: that adherence to the rules adopted by the churches requires as yet to declare the motion defeated and to submit the decision of Reg. Synod Dec. 1993 with the questions it put to the churches to General Synod Abbotsford 1995.

Classis decides: by absence of concurring advice acceptable to Classis, to continue to hold the decision of Classis Oct. 1993 to admit the church at Denver in suspension, and to rescind the admission of this church by Classis Mar. 1994 and to advise the church at Denver to wait for a decision of Gen. Synod Abbotsford in the matter of their request for affiliation with the Can. Ref. Churches."

The following motion was made, seconded and carried:

Having considered the request of the church at Coaldale to "acknowledge the mistake made by Classis, Mar. 1994, to rescind the decision to admit the Denver church to the federation and to request Gen. Synod Abbotsford 1995 to give judgment on the concurring advice and on the questions raised by Reg. Synod West 1993," Classis decides to acknowledge the mistake made, but not to rescind the decision because a) Classis AB/MB decided to receive the concurring advice of Reg. Synod W. and implemented it by receiving the church at Denver into the federation and b) the objection to the mistake in interpreting the vote should have

been raised at the Classis which made the decision.

3. After lunch break, the chairman requested the singing of Ps. 121:1,4. A letter was read from the church at Taber containing its objection to the decision of the previous Classis AB/MB to consider that it had received concurring advice from Reg. Synod W. Dec. 1993 to admit the church at Denver. Taber gave notice in this letter of its intention to appeal this decision of Classis AB/MB. In the meantime, Taber stated that it would not be able to participate in an exam of the Rev. M. Pollock.

A letter was also received from the church at Barrhead objecting to the same decision of the previous classis, on grounds that the cautionary considerations of Reg. Synod W. should have prevented classis from admitting Denver. Barrhead gave notice of its intention to appeal and also instructed its delegates not to participate in an exam of Rev. Pollock.

Both Taber and Barrhead also gave notice that pending their appeals, they would not be able to regard Denver as a sister church in the federation.

4. The documentation for the peremptory-level exam of the Rev. Pollock was found to be in good order. The Rev. Pollock then presented a sermon proposal on Eph. 2:1-4a. In closed session and with the advice of the deputies of Reg. Synod W., it was decided to continue with the rest of the examination. Rev. Pollock was therefore examined in the following subjects: O.T. and N.T. exegesis, knowledge of Scripture, Doctrine and Creeds, Church History, Ethics, Church Polity and Diaconology.

5. After a supper break, the chairman requested the singing of Ps. 89:1. In closed session and with the advice of the deputies, classis decided to sustain the examination. The deputies, however, expressed their regret that Classis AB/MB and the church at Denver did not wait for implementation of the decision of Classis March 1994 to admit Denver until a ruling by General Synod 1995. Rev. Pollock was informed of this decision and congratulated by the chairman. The chairman welcomed him as a minister in full standing within the federation. Rev.

Pollock then signed the subscription form. The delegates were given opportunity to congratulate Rev. Pollock. A Psalm of thanksgiving was sung.

6. The documentation for the preparatory-level examination of Dr. J. Boersma of Carman, MB, was found to be in good order. Br. Boersma presented his sermon proposal based on Acts 2:1-4. In closed session, it was decided to continue this exam. Br. Boersma was then examined in the areas of O.T. and N.T. exegesis as well as in the doctrine and creeds of the church. With gratitude it could be decided that Br. Boersma may be declared eligible for call within the Can. Ref. Churches. Permission was given to speak an edifying word within the churches for a period of one year. The chairman and the other delegates congratulated Br. Boersma. A Psalm of thanksgiving was sung. The chairman led in prayer and thanksgiving. The meeting was adjourned until the morning.

7. On Wed., May 18th, at 9:00 a.m., the delegates again came together. The chairman requested the singing of Ps. 127:1, read Psalm 127 and led in

prayer. Roll call showed two delegates to be absent with notification.

8. A report from the committee for Aid to Needy Churches, containing a letter from the church at Denver requesting financial aid was read. The following notion was made and carried: *a) The request of the church at Denver be returned to the committee for Aid to Needy Churches in order to be dealt with properly. b) The churches are encouraged to support the church at Denver during the interim. c) The committee send its findings and proposals to the churches in the classical area at least eight weeks before the date of the fall classis.*

9. The Providence Can. Ref. Church at Edmonton reported that it had checked the books and records of the treasurer of classis and found them to be in good order. The report was received and the Providence Church thanked.

10. The report of the AB/MB Classis Observer to the stated meeting of the Dakotas Presbytery of the OPC, held on March 15 and 16, 1994 at Winner SD, was read and gratefully received for information. It will be attached to the Acts

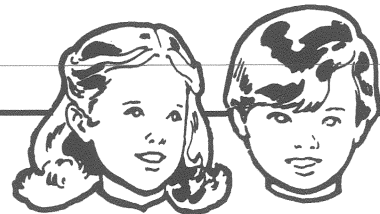
of Classis for the information of the churches.

11. Question period was held according to Article 44 of the Church Order. Examiners were appointed. It was decided to add a third minister to the Committee for examinations. Carman was appointed as the convening church for the next classis. This classis will be held, Lord willing, on Oct. 11, 1994 at the Immanuel Church in Edmonton. The following were proposed as officers for the next classis: chairman: Rev. J.D. Wielenga; vice-chairman: Rev. R. Aasman; clerk: Rev. R. Schouten. Personal Question Period was held. Brotherly censure according to Art. 34 of the Church Order was not needed. The Acts were read and adopted. The Press Release was read and adopted. The chairman thanked the delegates for their cooperation, requested the singing of a Psalm, led in thanksgiving and declared classis closed.

For classis,
R. Schouten,
Vice-chairman at the time
C

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven," Ecclesiastes 3:1.

It is almost the end of the school year again. Another year of school work over, and time for a rest, your holidays. Can you see why I quoted that text from the Bible?

The LORD makes a time for you to learn and do your work, but after that there is a break.

What do you plan to do in your holidays?

Some families will go to the beach.

Others love camping in a park.

Staying at a cottage for a couple of weeks is a favourite, too.

Maybe you will make a long, (or short) trip by car to visit some friends.

Why don't you write me and tell me what your family is going to do this summer?

And . . . Busy Beavers, watch for the next *Clarion!* Inside it will be the Super Summer Quiz Contest! More on that next time!

Quiz Time!

SPRING WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver Ashlea Jagt

A L M A Y T O R P B A P R
U O K R S O T R L Q C S C
N L O R C A R E D B R I O
T K O T R K V B K E V L V
B P L A Y O L O W L O K E
E O L Q L L R O T O E T N
T P S T I P L O T L E O A
T Q T R R F R S P L N K N
Y O P O L S T O K O I L T
R A K L C U E L T R H O T
O R T B D P L O K E S U N

Find these words:

love
covenant
May
shine
care
sun
play
people
April
flowers

OCCUPATIONS

When God called the following people, they were busy working at something. Match the person with what he or she did for a living.

1. Moses, Exodus 3:1
2. Gideon, Judges 6:11
3. Elisha, 1 Kings 19:16-19
4. Lydia, Acts 16:14
5. Priscilla and Aquila, Acts 18:3
6. Zacchaeus, Luke 19
7. Luke, Colossians 4:14
8. Baruch, Jeremiah 36:4
9. Deborah, Judges 4:4
10. Esther, Esther 2:17

- A. Farmer
- B. Seller of purple cloth
- C. Shepherd
- D. Judge
- E. Thresher
- F. Scribe
- G. Queen
- H. Tentmakers
- I. Tax collector
- J. Doctor



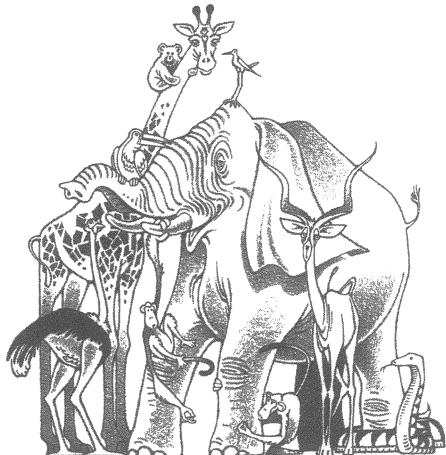
SOLVE THE CODE!

By Busy Beaver *Alisha Dokter*

T E L O D R V H S
 D # ⊗ * ☆ ⊕ ◇ △ ○

○ ⊕ ⊕ ◇ ⊕ D △ #

⊗ * ⊕ ☆



CRACK THE CODE!

By Busy Beaver *Lisa vanRaalte*

A - ☺	F - ☹	K - □	P - □	U - ●
B - ♪	G - ☹	L - ▭	Q - ☹	V - ⊕
C - ○	H - △	M - ⊗	R - ✕	W - ⊕
D - ⊖	I - ▽	N - ⊗	S - ☺	X - √
E - ☹	J - □	O - ⊕	T - ☺	Y - ♥
				Z - ◇

☹ ✕ ☺ ▽ ⊗ ☺ ▽ ☹ □ ⊕ ✕ ⊖

☺ □ □ ⊗ ☺ ☺ ▽ ⊕ ⊗ ▽

☹ √ ☺ ⊕ □ △ ▽ ⊗ ☺ □ □

☹ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ □ □ ☹ ▽

(Psalm 117:1)

JULY BIRTHDAYS

These Busy Beavers celebrate their birthday in the same month as our country! To all of you very best wishes for a very happy day celebrating with your family and friends. May our heavenly Father keep you all in His love and care.

Deborah van Beek	1	Lorelle Barendregt	13
Kristin Vandergugten	1	Jeremy Koopmans	14
Amanda Hoeksema	3	Henrietta Breukelman	15
Joanna Vink	3	Rachel Wierenga	15
Heather Muis	6	Karen Terpstra	20
Richard Schouten	6	Vickie Aikema	23
Sara Plantinga	7	Kimberly VanderVelde	24
Donald VanLeeuwen	7	Cecilia Barendregt	25
David Aikema	9	Trina Jelsma	26
Tim Hordyk	12	Melville Buist	29
Janine Swaving	12	Evellyn Bos	31

Answers to Bible Puzzle

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

Hope you all have a very happy and safe summer holiday!

Love to you all
 Aunt Betty

