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Current Issues in Church History¹

By J. De Jong

The divine hand in world history

The title given to me for this conference does give me somewhat of a free hand in deciding what I should speak about. Church History is so broad that there is a host of issues which one could treat. However, I have decided to touch on two areas which in my view have cardinal importance for the way teachers deal with this subject in our schools. First, I propose to deal with the question concerning God's hand in history, and from there move to the more limited issue of God's hand in the history of His Church. The second question is then a more detailed examination of one aspect of the first question.

Why are these issues so significant today? In my view, the greatest threat to the proper teaching of Church History today is *relativism*. This perspective says that although the Bible gives authoritative explanations about why things happened as they did in Biblical times, we lack such authoritative explanations today, and cannot directly apply Biblical narratives of the past to our situation. For example, although the writer in 2 Kings 17:17ff. could attribute the exile and its accompanying humiliation to Israel's sin, such a direct connection of cause and effect is not possible today. The ancient writers were, after all, inspired agents of God. We, on the other hand, are in a more limited position, and can only work with what God has revealed in the past. In opposition to such a relativistic standpoint, we are challenged to maintain absolute standards in teaching Church History. Yet we must maintain these standards in a proper way, not with arbitrary applications of selected passages of Scripture or a prejudiced reading of historical events, but with the application of Reformed principles drawn from Scripture.

The problem defined

The discussion concerning the question of man's ability to discern the hand of God in history originates for the greater part in the historiographical perspectives developed by Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876). This well-known Dutch statesman and historian authored the famous lectures, *Unbelief and Revolution*.¹ These lectures formed a clarion call to his countrymen, urging them to abandon the course of the supremacy of reason, and follow the sound words of God's revelation in the development of national life. Groen contrasted revelation and revolution. And – as the title of his lectures indicates – his fundamental thesis was that unbelief with respect to God's revelation is the *cause* of the revolution as it raged through Europe from the end of the 18th Century on.

What was the nature of the causality that Groen posited? J. Kamphuis calls this causality a covenant-qualified causality.² Although Groen used natural causality in physi-

cal science as an analogy in explaining what he meant, he did not mean to refer to a mechanistic or fatalistic pattern in history. Kamphuis notes that Groen certainly did not neglect the role of human responsibility. On the contrary, this is one of the dominant themes in his lectures. But Groen defends the Scriptural principle that one reaps what he sows. For example, Groen readily applied the words of 1 Sam 2:30 to his own time: "those who honour me I will honour, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed." He also made frequent use of Jer. 6:19: "I am bringing evil upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not given heed to my words. . . ." Groen applied this in particular to his own country. It was a land without the gospel, and so, as he said, without God and without hope in the world, Eph. 2:12. Through the Reformation the gospel came to the Lowlands. But now that message of healing was being rejected. Therefore God could not but send His punishments to a people who had rejected Him.

The standpoint of Groen has been subjected to a good deal of criticism, both from within and outside of Reformed circles. It would take us too far afield to consider all of this criticism. However, I would like to pay attention to one voice of criticism in particular, that of a high school history teacher who taught at the school across the road from where I lived in my student days in Kampen. This teacher, H.G. Leih, defended the proposition that one cannot readily discern the hand of God in history.³ Leih is critical of Groen's stand. He also takes issue with P.K. Keizer's approach to the teaching of church history, since he finds that Keizer all too readily draws a parallel between God's actions and the actions of men with all their weaknesses and shortcomings on earth. A telling example that Leih refers to in order to prove his point is Keizer's statement with regard to William of Orange and the Dutch resistance in the 1570s. Keizer says:

God's church did not reach for weapons of war in order to defend itself. The LORD himself rose to save His people, in His time and in His way, in answer to the many supplications sent before His throne by the heavily persecuted church.⁴

Leih's problem with this approach is whether one is permitted to make such bold statements about God's own actions in our world. He asks: do we have a certain *instrumentarium* by which we can discern certain causes which non-Christians can hardly discover? Can God's dealings be pointed out concretely, and are they scientifically verifiable?⁵ R.H. Bremmer has expressed similar reservations concerning the approach of Keizer. And while he endorses the general approach of Groen, he disputes the application of the term "causality" to historical forces. According to Bremmer, the term "causality" belongs in physics, and cannot be used in

normative science.⁶ So the fundamental issue here is: how do we use Scripture in analyzing historical events, both in church and in world history? How far can we go in pointing concretely to the hand of God?

A confessional approach

It is not my intention to give a detailed evaluation of all the points of view here expressed. In fact, Miss J.L. Van Esen has provided a good summary of the positions involved, and has, I feel, gone a long way to chart the appropriate course to follow.⁷ For she refers quite emphatically to the line of the confession as found in Lord's Day 9. And this confession forms a safeguard against making superficial causal links. One cannot operate with a few passages of Scripture, but one must apply a confessional perspective, i.e., a perspective which summarizes the teaching of Scripture.

A confessional approach will keep the broad sweep of revelation and its essential principles in mind. Prof. K. Schilder fought against any form of dualism between God's history and that of man. He also fought against any dualism by which God would be relegated to the edge of our history, or by which he would be turned into an equal partner in it. God is transcendent, yet reveals Himself as immanent in the world. We cannot cut off God from the world, but when we acknowledge Him we must see Him in all His works. And the center of His work is found in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, true God and true man – He is the center of all history, and His work forms the constitutive principle for a Christian view of history.⁸

Clearly, passages like Genesis 3:15, Revelation 12, and the drama of the antithesis between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent are key elements to keep in mind in developing our church history lessons. From the perspective of the antithesis, the teacher must introduce and develop the ideas of the offensive of the gospel in the world, the persecution of the church, and the insuperable power of the preaching of the gospel as a determinative factor in world history.

In all this there is advising theodicy. A recurring theme in the Old Testament is that God brings the violence of the wicked upon their own heads, (see e.g., Jud. 9:57, 1 Kings 2:6, 9, 44). A cardinal rule for church history is: "Blessings are on the head of the righteous . . . but the wicked falls by his own wickedness," Prov. 10:6, 11:5. Scripture uses the expression "find out" with regard to sin, as, for example in Nu. 32:33: "your sin will find you out." Sin cannot be hidden, but ultimately is always discovered and rewarded. Thus, just as sin is a factor in historical events, so is punishment. And all things lead to the vindication of God's elect, and the ultimate destruction of the reprobate.

However, one cannot apply this principle in specific cases as a direct reader of God's counsel and plan for the world. For at the same time, we must be aware of the apparent contradictions observed by the poet Asaph in Psalm 73. Sometimes the wicked prosper, and the righteous are afflicted. This can continue for long periods. Within God's theodicy there are hidden turns and pathways which far surpass our understanding. Anyone attempting the specific recognition of God's hand will also keep this aspect of His theodicy in mind.

Central scriptural passages

One could isolate a host of Scripture passages which back up the confessional approach sketched above. Let me

simply mention a few more significant passages. Eccl. 3:11 says God "has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." These words indicate that although we have in the Word of God a principle which transcends the regular course of events, even with that Word we cannot discern the whole counsel of God. We have in Scripture all we need to know for our salvation. But we cannot curiously pry into God's counsel beyond the limits he has set.

This requires that we remember the word of the Lord Jesus with respect to the blind man in John 9. His blindness was not a result of his own guilt, "but that the works of God might be made manifest in him," Jn. 9:3.⁹ And in Luke 12:1-5, Jesus warns His listeners not to apply a superficial causality with respect to tragic events. The victims of the falling tower of Siloam were not to be reported as worse sinners than the rest of the inhabitants in Jerusalem. Such a skewed causality was also applied by the friends of Job, and it was on this point that they needed correction, despite the fact that in general terms their statements were valid. Their words were not wrong in themselves, but they erred in the specific application of their words to Job.

In this regard, Bremmer is correct in pointing out that some of Keizer's use of Scripture is too direct.¹⁰ At one point, for example, Keizer makes the statement: "Dutch history shows many parallels to the history of Israel (Psalm 106:7).¹¹ While one may find similar ebbs and flows in the history of the two nations, there is a danger that one reads the pattern of Biblical history into his national history. In fact, the essential critique, in my view that must be directed against Groen's approach is that he applies texts of Scripture to the whole nation rather than to the church. More accurately, nation and church were too closely identified in Groen's thought. In other words, he was directed in his thinking by the notion of the national church, and this colours his use of Scripture.

A confession of God's providence that is truly anti-revolutionary in the classic sense of the word is one which recognizes that God has a purpose in all He does. Sometimes the wicked prosper, and the righteous experience adversity. One cannot draw an automatic link between *temporal* blessings and obedience, and disobedience and *temporal* adversities. Groen's proposition with regard to historical causality had a deeper perspective. He wanted to show that if a society chooses the way of unbelief, and eliminates God from the sphere of political and social activity, it can only end in revolution. It must declare the people to be absolutely sovereign, with the result that there is no basis for authority in society.

In summary, we must maintain the reference to the hand of God in teaching both church history and world history. But we must do so strictly in the light of the confession. This requires a careful and consistent use of Scripture. With regard to the world history the application of Scripture will necessarily be more restricted. One should not draw automatic parallels between ancient Israel and various other nations today. But the general truth applies: where there is no vision the people perish, Prov. 29:18. And in the case of Church History, it must be clearly pointed out that the line of the seed of the serpent ends in death, while the promise of victory holds good for the seed of the woman, even though this involves hardship and persecution to the very end. Only a perspective like this gives hope and confidence for future generations, so that they may take their place and fulfill their task in the unfolding drama of the counsel of God.

Text of a speech given to the Church History Conference organized by the Curriculum Assistance Reformed Education Committee, held on July 7, 1994 in Hamilton. An adapted version of this speech will be published by the Committee at a later date.

¹See H. Van Dyke, *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*. (Wedge Publishing Foundation, Jordan Station, 1989), pp. 293-561.

²J. Kamphuis, *De hedendaagse Kritiek op de causaliteit bij Groen Van Prinsterer als historicus* (De Vuurbaak, Groningen, 1971), p. 24: ". . . it must be acknowledged that the causality to which Groen repeatedly called attention was the causality of the Covenant which governs history in promise and threat.", (emphasis JK).

³H.G. Leih, *God's hand in de geschiedenis? (Over geschiedenis onderwijs op de christelijke school)* (2nd. ed., J. H. Kok, Kampen, 1977). p. 94.

⁴P.K. Keizer, *Church History. A textbook for High Schools and Colleges*. (Translated by T.M.P. VerderVen, Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, 1990), pp. 132-133. One readily noted that Keizer makes a good deal of references to Groen.

⁵Leih, p. 36.

⁶R.H. Bremmer, *Er staat geschreven! Er is geschied! Introductie tot het leven en werk van Groen van Prinsterer als getuigend historicus*. (Willem de Zwijgerstichting, Apeldoorn, 1981), pp. 67-68.

⁷See J.L. Van Essen "God's Hand in History" cited in Van Essen, J.L. and H.D. Morton, *Groen van Prinsterer. Selected Studies*, (Wedge Publishing Foundation, Jordan Station, 1990), pp. 89-100.

⁸K. Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?* (J.H. Kok, Kampen, 1935), p. 68. See also B. Kamphuis, "De geschiedenis: vicieus of lumineus?" in J. Douma, et. al. *K. Schilder: Aspecten van zijn werk*. De Vuurbaak, Barneveld, 1990, pp. 90-118.

⁹G.C. Berkouwer, *De voorzienigheid Gods*, in the series *Dogmatische Studiën* (J.H. Kok, Kampen, 1950), p. 209.

¹⁰Bremmer, *Er Staat gescreven! Er is geschied!*, p. 68.

¹¹Keizer, p. 132.



Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Exodus 19:1-9 and Acts 2:1-4

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. . . ."

PENTECOST

Pentecost was a Jewish festival marking the end of the grain harvest. In the Old Testament, it is called the Feast of Weeks. It occurred seven weeks after Passover. In the New Testament it is called Pentecost since it was celebrated on the fiftieth day (seven weeks) after Passover.

It was a harvest festival. Pentecost was one of the three annual festivals upon which all the male Israelites were to appear before the LORD at the temple in Jerusalem. On this day the people of Israel recalled with reverent and thankful wonder how God, who had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, had brought them to a land flowing with milk and honey. The harvests were abundant, gifts of God's grace. The people were thankful. They celebrated.

It was a harvest festival, but the Jews also observed Pentecost as the anniversary of the day upon which the LORD had given His people the Law. From Exodus 19:1 we learn that the people of Israel came to meet the LORD at Mt. Sinai on the third new moon after God had brought them out of Egypt. As it turns out, this is seven weeks after the first Passover (Exodus 12).

The LORD God who rescued Israel from Egypt and was bringing them to a land where they would have abundant harvests met them at Sinai to give them His law of thankfulness. God said: "You must keep my covenant; you must obey my law." The people answered: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

But they didn't.

They did not keep God's law. They broke it, time after time. The history of Israel, since the days of Moses, is a litany of broken promises. The people, because of their sinfulness, could not keep the law.

What was God to do? He could not change His law. His law stands firm. It must be obeyed. What was God to do? Change the people! Almost 900 years after God first handed down the law to Israel, He promised that He would change the people. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised the exiled Jews in Babylon that He would one day write His law upon their hearts – not upon external tablets of stone but upon the internal tablets of their hearts (Jer. 31 :31-33).

God told them even more through the prophet Ezekiel. The LORD God said that He would put His Spirit within them. He would make them walk in His statutes. He would make them observe His ordinances.

God made good on this promise on the first Pentecost after the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven. God poured the Holy Spirit out upon His church, collectively and individually. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Has the Holy Spirit changed your heart from one of stone to one of flesh? Has He changed you from being a rebel who disobeys to a servant of the Lord, a child of the Father, who obeys out of love and thankfulness?

The promise is that all who repent and believe in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Believe in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will make you a dwelling place of God.

Struggle for the identity of the church¹

By C. Trimp

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In the short series of articles which we recently devoted to articles 27 and 28 of the Belgic Confession, we noted that the Reformed churches have had to bear a certain burden, ever since the Union of 1892. The confession was accepted in its normativity for the unity of faith and church. At the same time, there were enormous uncertainties with regard to the practical meaning of this normative text. Both before and after 1892, dominating spokesmen of the First as well as the Second Secession were developing certain theological theories. These were not only intended to bring the ideas about the church closer to the contemporary problems of the church and of Christian life; rather, the people who developed these theories also wanted to create some order in the confused church scene. The confusing facts of reality must be clarified to the intellect and must be eased over for the consciences of the church people.

It is no wonder that the debate has never since come to rest in the Reformed churches. Eventually, many people's thinking became dominated by the well-known theories of Kuyper: "pluriformity of the church," "mystical body of Christ" and its "manifestation" in an institution. It was easy for Bavinck's ideas to accommodate this line of thinking: "true" and "false" church are two notions which indicate two extremes on a scale from right to left, but which are never entirely realized; each church is "less" or "more pure, or impure."

These insights caused a continual friction between, on the one hand, the words and intentions of Belgic Confession (arts. 27-29) and, on the other hand, the developing opinions within the confessionally Reformed churches.

We now continue our orientation by means of a new series of four articles. Two matters will demand our particular attention: the meaning of B.C. art. 29 and the meaning of K. Schilder's contribution to the debate.¹

The crucial year 1920

1. The Buizer Appeal (I)

1920 was a significant year in the history of the Reformed churches. For our present purpose, it is useful to pay attention to a remarkable appeal from C.M. Buizer, a member of the church of Middelburg. In 1917, Buizer had submitted an appeal to his consistory in which he pointed out the inconsistency between Kuyper's and Bavinck's theories and the text of the confession with respect to the church (B.C. arts. 27-29). Buizer did so in no uncertain terms. After going to classis and regional synod, this appeal ended up at the general synod of Leeuwarden (1920). The hour of decision had arrived, at least so it appeared.

Buizer himself was a convinced supporter of the ideas of Kuyper and Bavinck. But he declared in all honesty that these ideas were not in accordance with the accepted doctrine. Thus, in a proper fashion, by means of an appeal, he put something on the agenda of the ecclesiastical assemblies which had already been an issue within the Reformed churches for a long time.²

2. The Expansion of the Confession

The Buizer appeal coincided with various requests from the churches to "expand" the confession. The committee report at the synod Leeuwarden, written by H. Bavinck, stated that since the confession had been accepted, errors had increased and had spread more widely than ever before. On the other hand, the views on certain elements of doctrine had changed and had been clarified.

These considerations made the committee conclude that there were various parts of the confession which no

longer met the "demands of the present time." This judgement concerned three topics in particular: the authority of Holy Scripture, the church, and the relation between church and state (in other words, B.C. arts. 3-7, 27-29, and 36). Synod Leeuwarden appointed deputies to study this matter of modernizing and possibly expanding the confession.³

The history of these deputies does not really yield a very encouraging story. In 1923, they reported to the next synod that they had nothing to present because they had not been able to find proper opportunities to do their work. The next synod of 1923 extended the mandate, but at the following (regular) synod (Groningen 1927) there was a request of the deputies to be relieved from their mandate and not to be reappointed. They wrote to synod that in their view "there is still no room among us" for elaboration on or expansion of our confession, whether that be by way of new articles or an apology, or by way of a "rejection of errors."⁴

Synod decided to limit the mandate of the deputies to matters surrounding the authority of Holy Scripture. The result, the so-called "Arnhem Articles," were turned down in 1930 (synod of Arnhem). This meant that the ten-year long expansion project fizzled out to nothing.

3. The Buizer Appeal (II)

Going back to the synod of Leeuwarden (1920), it can hardly be said that this synod put in a lot of effort to treat the appeal from Middelburg in a worthy manner. Apparently, they did not realize that a time bomb was nearing its time of explosion. According to the reporter to synod, H. Bouwman, Buizer's complaint was more a complaint against a particular interpretation of the confession than a complaint against the confession itself. Synod agreed with this opinion of the reporter and declared that brother Buizer had not really brought an appeal against the confession, but had only formulated his objection to a

particular interpretation of it. In a single sentence it was stated that synod did not agree with this interpretation. For the rest, the matter was passed on to the new deputies for “expansion of the confession,” who would have to take care of a more refined formulation or explanation of synod’s position.⁵

All in all, this peculiar way of dealing with the appeal meant (1) that the obvious meaning of B.C. arts. 27-29 was said to be “an interpretation” that was not shared by synod; and (2) that synod apparently read Kuyper’s theories into the text of the confession, with the help of certain terms, such as “visible” and “invisible,” “pluriformity,” and “less or more pure church,” over against “the” true church. In this way, an authoritative foundation was being laid for the denial that brother Buizer had launched a real appeal.

Later it appeared that this shaky structure was supported by the teachings of H.H. Kuyper, A.G. Honig, and K. Dijk in the years prior to and after 1920. For, with reference to these three theologians, the above mentioned report of the “deputies for expansion of the confession” states that the confession “by no means excludes” the notion of pluriformity (this is indeed one of the few assertions that the deputies came up with in their seven-year mandate).

Contrary to all expectations, however, this weak statement of 1920/1927 had quite a future. In 1939, it was treated as “the legitimate interpretation” of the confession! When synod Amsterdam 1936 appointed deputies with a view to the “doctrinal problems,” they wrote the following about the squabbles surrounding the interpretation about the “true church”:

Thus, general synod 1920 has stated unequivocally that it rejects the opinion that there would only be one true church and that the true church is limited to its institution. Here we have an official interpretation of the confession with regard to what is now called the pluriformity of the church. In the present case, deputies consider this the main thing.⁶

What had been called “an interpretation which (the confession) by no means excludes” had, within twelve years, developed into an “official interpretation of the confession” and into “the standard teaching!”

Restoration of confessional normativity

At this point, many readers are probably wondering with some aston-

ishment what the sense is of these peculiar stories of the olden days. The present section deals with the answer to this question. The year 1920 has yielded more memorable events. While synod was meeting in Leeuwarden, elsewhere people were setting up a magazine called *De Reformatie*.⁷ This meant the origin of a paper which would soon assist K. Schilder in giving leadership within the Reformed churches. Starting in 1920, Schilder was intensely engaged with the questions of his time. The issues surrounding the confession of the church could not possibly escape his attention.

It is obvious that Schilder wanted to read the confession in an honest way, that is, not in subjection to a Kuyperian or post-Kuyperian interpretation. His starting point, however, was in more than one way a difficult one. He had to take position against the great leaders of the older generation: Kuyper and Bavinck. In addition, there would soon be a synod decision which wanted to read the opinions and theories of these leaders into the formulation of the confession. There were many so-called “youngsters” (“jongeren”), who were no longer impressed with B.C. art. 28 which had once motivated the fathers of the Secession to depart from the Netherlands Reformed Church.⁸

More and more, Schilder had an eye for the church-critical function of the confession, and he appropriated this function with an increasing intensity. He considered it his calling to state his opinion that the Reformed churches

were called to place themselves under the criticism of their own confession.

Schilder was not in the least impressed with the theories about the church developed by Bavinck between 1888 and 1920. He was of the opinion that the Reformed churches must not accommodate the theoretical constructions of Bavinck and Kuyper regarding the relation to other ecclesiastical fellowships in the Netherlands. We may not adapt the confession to our practices or predilections but must place ourselves under the criticism of the confession.⁹

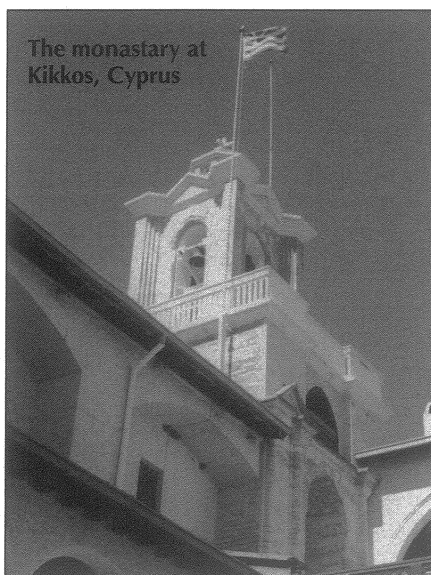
This is the way in which Schilder has tried for decades to restore or to maintain an awareness of a confessionally determined normativity. After all, he saw how the seriousness of the ecclesiastical separation was played down by means of ideas such as “pluriformity” and “invisible church.” Thus, the serious character of the deplorable ecclesiastical situation was played down, and the awareness that much ecclesiastical separation must simply be called “sin before the face of God” was paralyzed.

All polemics in the direction of the “Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken” must be considered from *that* angle. Precisely because the schism between both denominations (“Gereformeerd” and “Christelijk Gereformeerd”) was unnecessary and illegitimate, it must be healed. When there is spiritual unity, this confessional concord ought to demonstrate itself in the institutional life of the church. If this does not happen, it is precisely the *institution* of the church which will manoeuvre itself into a dead-end street.

Schilder’s continuous appeal reached a lot of people. However, it also aroused great internal resistance, for the theories from the Kuyperian era were exposed as untenable historically, dogmatically, philosophically, and exegetically.

Schilder has had to bear the consequences! He was portrayed as the man who regarded the Reformed churches as the “only saving” church institution. He was suspected of “absolutism,” “exclusivism,” “perfectionism,” and “legalism” with respect to the reformation of the church. Actually, it was *Schilder* who should have launched an appeal against the confession! After all, the synod of 1920 had accepted the “doctrine” of the pluriformity as the legitimate interpretation! Thus, Schilder not only deviated from the “standard opinion,” but opposed “the standard teaching” – according to the report of 1939 which has already been cited above. To give an

OUR COVER



impression of the atmosphere of that report we shall give one quotation: "the least" that could have been expected from Schilder (and others) was an appeal "without preceding discussion and publication." "What is at stake here is the authority of our synods to establish the confession and, if necessary, to interpret the same." Really, that's what it says, on page 6 of the report.

In pondering these statements from 1939, one gets an impression of the atmosphere in the Reformed churches since 1939 with regard to the way in which the Kuyperian and Bavinckian heritage was dealt with. Kuyper said straight out that his opinion was not in agreement with the confession. That was serious enough in itself. But the difficulties started to mount when between 1920 and 1940 Kuyper's opinion was first propagated as a "possible" interpretation and then as "the legitimate" interpretation of B.C. art. 27.¹⁰ This fraudulent interpretation especially gathered force since 1936, with the help of church political means. Thus, it was in particular this matter which contributed to the worsening climate. Thunderstorms were gathering in this climate. They would create many calamities in the Reformed churches.

We live almost fifty years later. We have discussions about the church and our confession concerning it. In these discussions we are faced with the question what we can learn from K. Schilder concerning the understanding of, and the manner of dealing with, the Belgic Confession. In these matters we need to watch out for the creation of myths surrounding a great name from the past or free ourselves from them.

¹In the upcoming articles we must speak a great deal about the views of K. Schilder. All quotations have been taken from K. Schilder, *De kerk*, 3 vols. (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960-65). Therefore, the quotations will only mention volume and page number. The collection of essays which has been published on the occasion of the Schilder symposium in 1990 is entitled J. Douma et al., eds., *K. Schilder: Aspecten van zijn werk* (Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1990). In quotations, this title will be shortened to *Aspecten*.

²C.M. Buizer's appeal may be found in the Acts of synod Leeuwarden 1920, pp. 240-44. There is an overview of the text and context of this appeal in A.D.R. Polman, *Onze Nederlandsche Geloofsbelijdenis* (Franeker: Wever, n.d.), III, 229-30; and in H. Steen, *De kerk* (Kampen, 1936), pp. 122-23. K. Schilder referred to this appeal in 1940 as "adding fuel to the theological fire" (III.7).

³Cf. the Acts of synod Leeuwarden 1920, art. 40 and appendix 6, pp. 152-54.

⁴See the Acts of synod Groningen 1927, arts. 186, 191, 193, 222, 224, and appendices 121-23. For the quotation, see p. 198.

⁵Acts synod Leeuwarden 1920, art. 118 and appendix 32 (p. 239).

⁶The official title is "Report of deputies according to article 212 of the Acts of the General Synod of Amsterdam 1936, to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches, convened in Sneek, August 29, 1939, part II (concerning the pluriformity of the church and common grace)," p. 6.

Article 212 of synod Amsterdam 1936 states the following: "Synod, observing the fact that opinions are put forward in our churches that deviate from what have thus far been the standard teachings; and that, on the one hand, the proponents of these opinions believe and affirm that they are entirely in agreement with Scripture and the confession, while, on the other hand, many in our churches have raised the question whether these propagated opinions are indeed in agreement with Scripture and the confession; being of the opinion that such uncertainty may not be continued; decides

(1) to appoint at least seven deputies *ad hoc*;
(2) to give these deputies the mandate:

a. to investigate the contents of these opinions, which concern the following topics (in alphabetical order): common grace, the covenant of grace, the immortality of the soul, pluriformity of the church, and self-examination; and to test their fidelity to Scripture and the confession; and

b. to report at the next synod and to serve synod with their advice.

⁷For the many details, see G. Harinck, *De Reformatie: Weekblad tot ontwikkeling van*


het gereformeerde leven 1920-1940 (Baarn: Ten Have, 1993), pp. 38ff.; and my comments in *De Reformatie*, 65 (1989-90) 465ff. (series of five articles on the "development" of Reformed life).

⁸Schilder only received support from a number of older contemporaries, such as Rev. G. Doekes. He had clearly put forward his position against the theories of A. Kuyper in his book *De moeder der gelovigen* (*The Mother of the Believers*), "Ons aller moeder" ("The Mother of Us All") (Goes, n.d. [1910]). This book is a collection of expanded articles from *De Wachter*. It is a delightful book which clearly shows the good tradition of the Secession. Cf. L. Doekes, "G. Doekes en de Wachterbond," in D. Deddens and M. Te Velde, *Vereniging in wederkeer: Opstellen over de Vereniging van 1892* (Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1992), pp. 163-78.

⁹Cf. I.438-43 on Bavinck's minor contribution to the doctrine concerning the church. In the same context Schilder complains that Bavinck has removed the sting from B.C. art. 28. He expresses his appreciation for the remark of Buizer that the term "pluriformity" is unclear and vague (cf. also II.432).

In 1939 and 1940 Schilder wrote important analyses of the events of 1920. Cf. II.396ff., 425-41; cf. also III.42. In his opinion, Buizer's appeal had (still) not been dealt with (III.5, 12ff.).

¹⁰Cf. Schilder on the "reversal of roles" in III.6ff. On this, see also J. Kamphuis, *De Reformatie*, 46 (1970-71) 47. H.H. Kuyper's comments at synod Amsterdam 1936: see *De Reformatie*, 16 (1935-36) 433; G. Harinck, *Op. cit.*, pp. 330ff. C



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Middle East Reformed Fellowship Canada

Mission Among the Arabs

Via the MERF Canada-Committee of the Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-West, I was asked to go to Larnaca, Cyprus from July 25-August 5, 1994, to participate as instructor in the training program offered at the MERF Study Centre there. Besides giving lectures, I would be able also to get a first-hand, close-up view of the work being done through MERF.

It is the purpose of MERF to reach people in Arabic-speaking, Muslim nations. The island of Cyprus appears to be an ideal location for this kind of work. It is situated just north of Egypt (where the main contacts are), and slightly west of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Cyprus is therefore easily accessible for people from these countries. Since the Greek-Cypriot portion of the island is an open democracy of general Christian orientation, an organization like MERF has little difficulty functioning there.

In terms of climate, Cyprus is typically Mediterranean, hot, humid, and hazy in the summertime. I heard that it had not rained on Cyprus for three



The Troodos Mountains, Cyprus

months. On August 2, we had a smattering of rain, only a few drops which dried up before the next ones fell. The rainfall took less than a minute; so much for summer rain! Of course, the Fall, Winter, and Spring are much cooler, while there is significant Winter snowfall on the Troodos mountain range.

Arabs and Westerners alike soon feel at home on Cyprus. At the same time, Cyprus has an excellent infrastructure, is clean, tourist-friendly, and enjoys a high standard of living. There is very little crime, the family structure is mostly intact, and the Cypriots are generally friendly and cooperative. Although the official language on the island is Greek, many of the locals are quite fluent in English, so that there are very few communication problems.

The history of MERF

The Middle East Reformed Fellowship was first located in Lebanon, but the civil war there and the Israeli occupation, as well as Syrian presence, necessitated a move to another, safer place where the work would not be impeded by local problems. The island of Cyprus was chosen, and it proved to be an excellent choice. See the interview with Rev. Viktor Atallah elsewhere for more detailed background.

The headquarters of MERF are located in the coastal city of Larnaca, where presently also the major airport is situ-



The International Evangelical Church, Larnaca, Cyprus



During the lectures . . .

ated. MERF has a "training centre" there, which also functions on Sundays as "The International Evangelical Church" with the clear notation "Presbyterian-Reformed" (see picture elsewhere).

This centre is quite large, has a suitable auditorium, a lecture room (which also functions as a dining area) a large kitchen, and dormitories (with showers and bathrooms) to accommodate groups up to fourteen people. There is also some room for refugees (from Iraq and elsewhere) to stay temporarily at the centre.

MERF also rents office space in a nearby apartment, where the important recording studio for the radio programming is located. There is a flat near the beach which is rented to accommodate visiting instructors. The whole operation is spread out over too many different buildings, and therefore (as the work expands) there are plans to integrate all these facilities into one building on the location of the present training centre site. From the way things are operating and growing, I can see this as a necessary and important step.

Unforgettable

On a personal level, I may say that I spent two unforgettable, extremely enjoyable weeks on Cyprus with its unique blend of Western and Middle East culture. What a lovely island! The weather was hot, and the humidity was high. After walking half a mile, I discovered that my shirt was soaked with sweat. In the heat of summer, Cyprus is certainly not a place for those with serious cardiovascular or respiratory ailments. But the accommodations were excellent (I had a "room" in one of the offices), the cuisine was exquisite, and the scenery was breathtaking.

My time was spent mostly with preparing and giving lectures, one hour sessions in English, with Arab translators at hand. The morning began officially at 9:00 a.m. with devotions, and the lectures commenced at 9:30 a.m., depending on the day until 11:30. The afternoons were simply too hot for any sustained activity. Then it is "siesta" time, and all the stores and shops close their shutters from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The lectures continued again from 6:00 p.m., while supper was served at 8:30 p.m.

Many discussions took place after and outside of the lecture sessions. In these two weeks there was a rather intensive contact with all the participants. This is pleasant, but can also be very tiring. Fortunately there was time left to do some exploring, shopping, swimming, and sight-seeing. MERF organized a day-trip by "bus" across the Greek-Cypriot sector of the island, from Larnaca to Nicosia (the capital), and back via Li-

massol, another coastal resort. During this trip we visited the famous Greek-Orthodox monastery at Kikkos, where also the grave of the late President Makarios is located. Quite an experience, indeed.

In Larnaca itself, I visited an old (medieval) fort, which has seen many invaders come and go, and paused at what is believed to be the tomb of Lazarus, who is reported to have been bishop of Cyprus in the apostolic time. A church is erected to mark the site.

Cyprus was the first island visited by the apostle Paul on his first missionary journey. The island still has a strategic position in the expanse of the Middle East.

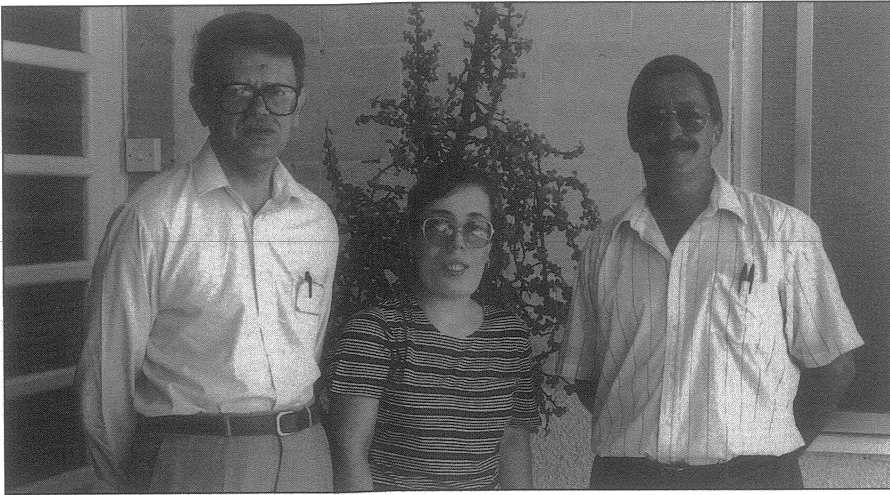
The Augustine Program

My task was to participate in the 73rd study term of what is known as "the Augustine Program." This course is designed especially to instruct pastors, evangelists, elders, teachers and students further in the Reformed faith. MERF has already conducted many of these seminars with Reformed lecturers from all over the world participating: New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Scotland, the U.S.A., and Canada. I was the first "Canadian" instructor, although it should be mentioned that Rev. W. Huizinga of Armadale conducted a similar program a few months before I arrived. My predecessor in Hamilton was also my predecessor in Larnaca! So far more than 1,200 men and women from Arab nations have been taught at the MERF centre.

The lecturers are chosen only from churches which have demonstrated faithfulness to the Reformed standards. Since MERF's goal is to promote the Reformed doctrine, great care is taken to



The 73rd Augustine Program participants



From Left to Right: Rev. Ronald Christie, Scotland, Nezwa Dzirk, translator, Rev. Cl. Stam, Hamilton

invite only Reformed/Presbyterian ministers of good repute. It is the hope of MERF that also other Canadian Reformed ministers will participate in these programs on a regular basis, so that our churches can have real involvement in the actual work.

My colleague and counterpart in this session was the Rev. Ronald Christie, pastor of the Free Church of Scotland in Glasgow, also editor of the Free Church magazine, *The Monthly Record*. I had already met him a few years earlier at a meeting in Glasgow, so we could renew and intensify our acquaintance. He took it upon himself to teach a Biblical topic, and dealt with the first letter of Peter. I was assigned to give a brief overview of the Reformed doctrine.

It was a great pleasure hearing Rev. Christie's sound and accurate explanation of Scripture. I was often personally moved by his insight and words. It is my hope that one day he may come to preach in our churches in Canada, so that many more can benefit from his gifts.

In my lectures I dealt with the following topics: sovereign grace, the covenant of God, creation and fall, total depravity, election, the way of salvation, regeneration, and the millennium. The emphasis clearly needed to be laid on the Biblical basis and practical implications of these teachings of Scripture.

I quickly discovered from the feedback that my original outlines had to be radically revised to meet the needs and the situation of the men who were receiving the instruction. The main concern is not the influence of Islam (as I had thought) but the impact of modern

evangelical thinking, Arminianism, and even some dispensationalism.

The lectures often led to lively discussions, which continued long after the sessions were closed. I was surprised at the overall Bible knowledge of this group of men. Anyone who goes to teach at the MERF Centre in Larnaca must be prepared to revise and adapt in a flexible manner. It was confirmed to me that this was the experience of many who had preceded me in this work.

The participants

Our specific group consisted of eleven men, eight from Egypt and three from Sudan. These men were carefully selected on the basis of committed Christian conduct and eagerness to learn more about the Reformed faith. The selection of the participants is supervised by Dr. Istafanous, a well-respected professor in the Evangelical Church of Egypt (Synod of the Nile), a close associate of Rev. Atallah, and head of the department of Systematic Theology at Cairo Theological Seminary (for more details: see the interview with Rev. Atallah).

There were in our group two ordained pastors, four students of the Cairo Theological Seminary, two high school teachers, one elder, and one evangelist or lay leader. Some of the members of the group spoke English quite well, especially Rev. Karam Faraq Azab, an associate pastor in Cairo, who had also studied from 1983-1986 at Westminster Seminary (West) in California. Rev. Karam often functioned as able translator into Arabic.

For these men it was undoubtedly a unique and memorable experience to

participate in the Augustine program. The peace, tranquility, and prosperity of Cyprus certainly contrasted sharply with the traffic jams, noise, and poverty often seen in Cairo. They could hardly envision a society where there was no predominant, pervading Muslim influence. They considered themselves blessed to have a respite from the hectic life back home and to have all time for the study of God's Word. These men were truly grateful for the opportunity granted them through MERF. As one of them put it: this is the most remarkable experience of my life!

A special word of sympathy must be written about the three students from Sudan. In fact, they are refugees, living in Cairo, who are supported by the Evangelical Church of Egypt and also helped by MERF. These men cannot return to Sudan, for their lives will be in great danger there. There is presently a civil war raging in Sudan, in which the northern Sudanese (Muslim Arabs) are trying to eradicate the southern Sudanese (black Christians). These men have not seen their families for many years and do not even know how many family members are still alive. They have no real status in Egypt, may not work, and must live from charity on a day-to-day basis. Apparently there are countless others like them, living in the cities of Egypt.

Elsewhere I hope to write more about their plight. But these three men with their ready smiles and sad eyes truly warmed my heart. Every day I wondered what could perhaps be done for them. They indicated that they would like to correspond with Reformed Christians in Canada. Anyone wishing further information, may contact me about this matter.

Every lecture day was started with devotions, conducted mostly by Rev. Atallah, but also by the two Egyptian pastors. I was struck time and again by the reverence and piety of these men, and the joy with which they sang God's praise. There were 23 lectures in total, given mostly by Rev. Christie and myself.

Rev. Donald Poundstone, formerly of Portland, Oregon and presently OPC missionary in Cyprus and program-coordinator for MERF, also presented some lectures and attended each session. I really enjoyed the fellowship with him and his family. We could freely discuss many points of agreement and difference with respect to church doctrine and polity. We also talked together about the relations between the

OPC and the Canadian Reformed churches, and what could possibly be done to improve the situation. I believe that I met a brother and gained a friend.

All in all, it was not a heavy schedule, such as we might expect in a North American or European setting. The pace of life is simply slower in the Mediterranean. The heat is an incumbent factor. But the participants had to receive and digest a great deal of instruction, much of which was quite new to them.

Other staff

In order to run a training centre with two-week courses, MERF must, of course, have certain steady helpers. The idea is to keep staff costs to an absolute minimum so that all the funds can be channelled to the work of broadcasting and to those who need it most: the oppressed Christians in Muslim territories.

At this point I must mention John and Regina Ramaker of Eindhoven, the Netherlands, members of our sister-church there, who function as "house-parents" in the MERF centre at Larnaca. This (retired) couple, who enjoy good health, help to keep the place running, and also take care of the cleaning and cooking.

John Ramaker functions as a general handy-man, who attends to all the needs of the participants, and gives constant encouragement as well as dispense required medication. Regina Ramaker is an excellent cook, who has managed to combine European cooking style with Egyptian cuisine in such a way that everyone is satisfied. The Ramakers have for this purpose in the past also visited Egypt. I understand that they have now signed on for a pe-

riod of five years! May the Lord bless them in this wonderful work.

Also Carolyn Poundstone helps on a daily basis with cooking and serving. Mrs. Poundstone took care of my wash as well, and I am grateful for her help and hospitality.

The assistance of these persons is invaluable to make the Study Centre a welcome and functioning place. Also, since the Poundstones and Ramakers have arrived, Rev. Atallah and his wife, Lisa, can devote more time to their family and to the Arabic radio programs. For many years the Atallahs did all the work alone, and they desperately needed and joyfully received this help. I am deeply moved by the dedication, joy, and love with which all these brothers and sisters do their work in Cyprus. Surely the Lord is at work through them!

There are others, too, whom I must mention. There is Najwa Rizk, a young Arabic woman, who functions as translator and secretary. Her health is not good, but her effort is excellent. There is also Najwa's mother, Warde (Rose) Rizk, who plays a significant role in the radio broadcasts, addressing Muslim women throughout the Arab world. There are the Iraqi refugees, who help out whenever required. One of them, Jeannette Yousif (and her three children) has just moved to Canada, after being sponsored by the MERF Canada-Committee.

One finds in Cyprus a colourful array of dedicated Christians who give much time, work, and prayer to the advancement of the Gospel in the Middle East. Let us remember them in our prayers, for the work is difficult, and some are far away from their own homes and families.

The work of MERF

At this point in the report, now that you have met the main characters, it may be useful to give some information regarding the work of MERF. Much is given in the interview with Rev. Atallah, but I may make some brief remarks here.

MERF is an organization which seeks to function as a *service* to the Muslim world to present the Reformed doctrine. Since it is not possible to do this work in a conventional manner (i.e. sending a missionary to a certain place) because the Muslim world is closed to any missionary activity, MERF seeks to work through *existing churches* and contacts in the Middle East. A good network of contacts has been built up. It is the purpose to strengthen these churches and guide them in the Reformed faith.

MERF does not want to be a parachurch organization, that is, an organization which neglects existing churches. The idea is to work for and with established churches. To access the Muslim world, one simply needs to go via the existing Christians there. MERF seeks the help of all churches committed to the Reformed faith. It is hoped that all the member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), who wish to conduct mission in the Middle East, will operate via MERF because it has the best location, the necessary local contacts, and the required credibility for the work. I became convinced that there is no other realistic way for us to influence the Muslim world than in this manner, via the method of MERF.

MERF seeks to receive and utilize the support and help of faithful churches around the world in a concerted effort. Ministers from these churches are asked to participate in the training programs. So we, too, can be *directly* involved. These churches are encouraged to organize their own local or national MERF Committees to coordinate support and pass on information in their own countries.

MERF takes a four-fold approach to the Middle Eastern nations: evangelism (especially through radio broadcasting), church extension (building up existing congregations), Biblical training (especially through the two-week training sessions at Larnaca) and diaconal aid (through volunteers and under guidance of local churches). It is clear that the radio broadcasting and the training programs form the heart of this important task.



Mrs. Regina Ramaker, house-parent in Larnaca

Accountability

The question may be raised whether MERF is organized in a responsible ecclesiastical manner. Are church funds being used for the right purpose and in a proper way? Some discussion on this point arose in the Netherlands, and even caused one of our sister-churches which initially sponsored MERF to step back. There were some personal factors involved here, and others have picked up the slack, but the question remains: how exactly is MERF organized?

There is an independent board of directors, consisting of Christian Arabs from various Middle East lands. These men have all committed themselves to the Reformed faith and wish to be publicly accountable in this respect. Since the situation in Muslim nations is dangerous and repressive, it is not advisable to publish the list of directors. Some of these men are daily risking their lives.

MERF has adopted a decisive statement of beliefs and principles. This statement can be received by any church wishing to have it. It is clear, Biblical, and Reformed. The interviews with Rev. Atallah and with Rev. Poundstone attest to this reality.

In order to have some ecclesiastical binding, MERF has enlisted the official support of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, of which both Rev. Atallah and Rev. Poundstone are ministers in good standing. Quarterly reports of their mission work are sent to their Presbytery in the United States. As such, these men are under the Presbytery's supervision.

Also, MERF's (financial) books are audited annually by an independent, respected auditing firm. All the relevant information of this audit is sent to the Missions Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and is presented every year to the General Assembly of this Church. So there is complete willingness and full openness with respect to doctrinal supervision and financial accountability. Furthermore, all local or national committees may have full access to pertinent information. We need not fear that the funds are being misused in any way, as far as is humanly possible.

It may appear that the ecclesiastical character of MERF is not clearly defined. The independent board of directors has the final say. But the local Arab involvement and direction is necessary for this organization to succeed. It is dangerous to work in Muslim areas,

and Christians are subject to all kinds of persecution there. Recently a minister in Iran, associated with MERF, was murdered in his prison cell. Muslims who react by letter to the MERF broadcasts, can be executed even for sending it. Therefore the need for security is great. Much care and caution must be exercised so that the lives of Christians under Muslim dominion are not endangered. An excerpt from the contents of one such letter from Saudi Arabia makes this quite clear:

"I am a Muslim by birth, not because I chose Islam but because my father chose it for me and I found myself Muslim without choice. Now I have discovered the truth of the one who said: look unto Me and be saved (Isaiah 45:22). I need your help. Please help me. How could I escape my present tragic circumstances? If they know of my new faith, I will definitely have my head cut off after much torture. Help me please."

It seems to me that under the given circumstances MERF has been properly organized and can meet our ecclesiastical scrutiny. There is really no other way to conduct mission work in the Middle East than in this manner through indigenous Christians in Arab lands.

Rev. Michael A. Flin of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand has rightly called MERF "possibly one of the most significant missionary organizations in the world and certainly in the wider Middle East region" (*The Mustard Seed*, Newsletter, July/August 1994, Vol. 4, No. 4).

Canadian involvement

From the interviews you can learn that MERF would like to see Reformed churches in Canada and the United States become more involved in the Middle East.

First of all, this must be done through a greater awareness of what is presently being done, so that our prayers may be multiplied. Secondly, MERF requires funds to continue and to expand its work. All our churches should contribute somehow, via the existing MERF Canada-Committee (under the auspices of the consistory of the Rehoboth Church at Burlington-West) or via a committee that may be expanded to include all the churches who wish to support this work. Thirdly, our ministers should be permitted to participate regularly in the training programs in Cyprus. It is not altogether impossible that in time there may be an

opportunity for a minister from Canada to be sent out on a full-time basis by the churches here for mission work via MERF just as the OPC has done.

Since MERF needs to upgrade and expand its facilities, a special drive could be held, when required, for the building project. In due time, I presume, the MERF Canada-Committee might ask your attention for this.

Sunday services

In closing, I want to give some information on the Sunday services in Larnaca, Cyprus. These are held in the auditorium of the Training Centre.

There are two services in the morning, one at 9:00 a.m. in English, and one at 11:00 a.m. in Arabic. On the first Sunday I was there, I spoke an edifying word in the Arabic service, with Rev. Atallah translating. Quite an experience for me, it was!

The second Sunday I spoke in the English service, while Rev. Christie spoke in the Arabic one. The services were conducted in an orderly, Reformed manner, and the congregation was attentive and reverent. Some interesting notes: the whole congregation spoke the "amen," all the singing was done standing, and the Scripture reading was responsive. Something to ponder, perhaps?

In the evening at 6:00 p.m. there are gatherings for praise, prayer, and Bible study. The English gathering was conducted by Rev. Poundstone. This was followed by refreshments and fellowship. Two beautiful Sundays!

The Arabic services were truly of international composition. Rev. Poundstone counted ten nationalities represented: Philippines, Canada, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Iraq, Scotland, Egypt, the Sudan, U.S.A., and Cyprus. There were no less than ten Iraqis present. That certainly gives another perspective on Iraq than that of "Desert Storm." The Lord still gathers His people, also in Arab lands, right under the nose of men like Saddam Hussein.

When my plane lifted off the tarmac at Larnaca, I was thinking of Psalm 8. I shall never forget my stay in Cyprus, and I hope that many colleagues may also become involved in this work.

"O Lord, our Lord, Thou God of our salvation
How glorious is Thy Name in all creation."

Cl. Stam, Hamilton,
August, 1994. ©

FOR THE RECORD

A Reply to "A Question of Art. 31 C.O.?"

Certain statements made by Rev. Van Oene in "A question of Art. 31 C.O.?" (*Clarion* March 25/1994) cannot be left unchallenged, while many others must be left unanswered by lack of space allotted to me by *Clarion*.

Definitely a question of Art. 31 C.O.!

The issue was if, in accordance with Gen. Synod 1986 (Acts Art. 85) concurring advice of deputies Regional Synod is needed for the admission by classis of another church into the Federation. Rev. Van Oene condemned Classis AB/MB (Nov. 1993) in *Clarion* Nov. 19, 1993 for involving deputies for concurring advice, and he praised Classis ON-S (March 1987) for rejecting the decision of Gen. Synod 1986 and leaving the deputies and their concurring advice out of the decision-making process. In my response "Once again Art. 31 C.O.," I wrote the Rev. Van Oene should not have praised Classis ON-S, for it practised in fact a form of independentistic church-polity, in violation of Art. 31 C.O. In his reply of *Clarion* March 25, 1994, Rev. Van Oene contends that Art. 31 was "not the issue at all."

Well, Art. 31 C.O. may not have been the issue at all for Rev. Van Oene, for me it was, although not the only one. It warms my heart, of course, to read Rev. Van Oene's emphatic support for the binding force of the decisions of the major assemblies and his aversion from the independentistically tainted church-polity of the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*, but that does not help much if he does not recognize that polity when he sees it, and praises it where it is practised, and still defends it when it is critically pointed out to him, like he does in his latest article. For in this article he writes that the Synod decision of 1986 is light as air. It has no weight, no binding force whatsoever, light as air. Why? Because Rev. Van Oene has found no proof, and no one has shown him any proof that the decision of Gen. Synod is based on

anything more than just a baseless assumption. I don't know whom he has asked for proof. I do know whom he *should* have asked for proof: the churches in General Synod. It is a sad situation if individuals and minor assemblies start ignoring decisions of major assemblies as light as air by their individual judgment that there are no valid grounds, while they make no effort to prove that implementing those decisions would bring them into conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order. Sorry, but that is *Nederlands Gereformeerde church-polity*, worse actually, for that polity at least requires to give account to the assemblies for not abiding by their decisions.

Needed or needless?

I am happy to read that Rev. Van Oene is not opposed to a provision which would require the concurring advice of deputies of Reg. Synod for the admission of another church into the federation. I am also surprised. After all, he wrote, be it incorrectly, in the Nov. 23, 1993 issue that it was correct that Synod 1986 did not draw up rules for that purpose. He wrote that admission of a church into the federation does not affect the whole federation, and that therefore concurring advice of deputies is not needed. In his latest article (March 25, 1994) he is nevertheless not opposed to such a provision, although rather not in the Church Order, for the C.O. must not become a sort of regulation, he writes, with all sorts of rules and directives. No, and certainly not of all sorts of *needless* rules and directives as Rev. Van Oene now seems to promote, at least not to oppose. But if such a provision is good and beneficial for the churches, as Synod 1986 judged, it may be better to include it in the Church Order itself. It will not be so easily overlooked, as it was by Classis AB/MB March 1992.

For the record

The last sentence brings me to the question raised in the anonymous quote

on top of the last column of Rev. Van Oene's article: "Why all of a sudden *now*, at Classis Oct. 93, and *not* at Classis March 92?" That question was raised by some delegates at Classis Oct. 1993, suggesting insincerity and playing politics by those who insisted on deputies – involvement. It was pointed out to the brothers that already at Classis March 1992 the non-involvement of deputies was acknowledged as an oversight. The decision not to admit Denver, although made without concurring advice of deputies, could nevertheless stand, because no consequences for the whole federation were involved, unlike if the decision had been to admit Denver.

In the second place it was pointed out to the brothers that in a letter to Denver by one of the churches dated September 14, 1992, the necessity of deputies-involvement was mentioned, in case of the resubmission of their rejected request as planned by Denver. The suspicions implied in the suggestive question "Why all of a sudden *now*, and *not then*," were unfounded: Not all of a sudden 'now', but all along, already, 'then', at Classis March 1992 the necessity of deputies-involvement was acknowledged, and ever since 'then' promoted, as the letter to Denver shows. The attack on the integrity of some brothers was unwarranted. Sad that this was not publicly acknowledged by the brothers but that the same refuted allegation had to turn up on the pages of *Clarion*.

Another suggestive question

Rev. Van Oene comes with his own suggestive line on page 144: ". . . and Art 31 C.O. applies to *all* the decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies!" I hear here the admonition to practice what I preach. And I guess it hints at my insistence the Classis AB/MB ought to place on its agenda the letters which the major assemblies send to Classis, and ought not to declare them inadmissible, a practice promoted by Rev. Van Oene, as appears from Yearbook 1994, page 149, and from positions

taken at Classis by men who make it known that they regularly consult Rev. Van Oene (no criticism implied, Proverbs 11:14). This practice deprives the assemblies who are called to implement the decisions of their major assemblies of the right and duty to test them on agreement with the Word of God and the Church Order, before implementing them. It eliminates a check and balance to make sure that the Word of God and the Church Order are not violated. Prof. J. Kamphuis writes as follows (in my transl.) on page 65 of his "Kerkelijke Besluitvaardigheid:" "One can also make a farce of Art. 31 C.O. by denying to those who are called to implement the ecclesiastical decisions, the authority to judge those decisions, or in any case by withdrawing the implementation of those decisions from the sovereignty and control of the Word of God and the Church Order."

If classis is called to implement the decision of a major assembly, then classis has the right and the duty to give opportunity to discuss and test that decision. The decision of a major assembly,

in case it is to be implemented by classis, belongs on the agenda of classis *by its nature*, and not via the local churches which may or may not decide to object at classis to the decision, and if they do object, may well be referred by classis to the next major assembly, on the ground that the decision is not on the agenda, and objections against it are inadmissible.

And Art. 37 C.O.?

Art. 37 C.O. also has a bearing on the issue. It stipulates that major assemblies have jurisdiction over the minor assemblies, a well-defined jurisdiction. It seems to me that this implies that like Classis sends its decision to the consistory, so the Reg. Synod and the Gen. Synod send their decision to Classis or Reg. Synod, depending on which assembly is called to implement the decision of the major assembly. And the respective minor assemblies carry out the decision, unless they judge that such would bring them into conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (Art. 31 C.O.). Compared with

f.i. Jansen's "Korte Verklaring", the commentary on Article 37 in Rev. Van Oene's "With Common Consent" seems to me lacking both in what it says and in what it fails to say. Confusion about the nature of the assemblies and their relationship to one another, can hardly avoid confusion about the way the federation functions. This is not the place to go deeper into this matter. Probably I exceeded already my allotted space. It is worth further discussion, though, for it may well be that here lies the key to the curious zigzag course Rev. Van Oene seems to be sailing: an "independentistic" tack followed by an "hierarchical" tack: Classis ON-South is not bound by the decision of Gen. Synod 1986 if it has no use for it, and Classic AB/MB must implement the decision of Reg. Synod 1993 without the right to first test it on agreement with the Word of God and the C.O. Plain sailing is something else.

J.D. Wielenga,
Coaldale, AB 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

From time to time in my discussions with others about the antithesis there is the inclination to think of the Christian side of the struggle with the world of unbelief as the antithetical side. We sometimes have the Christian position spoken of as the position of the Antithesis. Such a position can only mean that the struggle of the Kingdom of Christ is in antithetical relation to the struggle for the Kingdom of Darkness.

The article, "Antithesis or Synthesis?" (*Clarion*, May 6, 1994, Vol. 43, No. 9), is a case in point. In this article, Rev. G. van Popta claims that "God established the antithesis between His kingdom and Satan's empire (Gen. 3:15), "... instead of friendship, God placed hostility." I agree that there is enmity and hostility in the world, but I do not believe that God placed these. Satan is the one who brought about enmity and hostility. He is the one who suppresses and supplants. He is the Distortion, the

Lie. It is his Lie that is the Antithesis; it is the absolute contrast to the Thesis, God's Truth.

It is precisely this term – Thesis – that is the missing link in Rev. van Popta's article. If there is an antithesis (or anti-thesis) then there must be a thesis. Indeed, there could be no antithesis without there being a thesis. The antithesis is dependent on the thesis, but not so the other way around; that is, the thesis is not dependent on the antithesis. And yet, that's what we are being told in the above-mentioned article and that is what I'm hearing in conversations with others about the antithesis.

Now, just what could that Thesis be? It is God's Truth, His creation-order firmly secured in His Divine Will. God is the Creator of heaven and earth and He maintains and preserves it by His will. The Christian religion begins, not with Christ as Saviours, but with God, the Creator. Although the first Adam distorted this order, Jesus Christ,

the second Adam, reclaimed it. God's righteousness in Christ (Romans 1) calls us back to Life in terms of His Creation ordinances. That is why we should be speaking of the Christian religion as the *re-proclamation* of the Thesis. God's Truth was first. SATAN, the LIAR, the DISTORTER, came second. He repressed the Truth and supplanted it with his Distortion, the LIE, the Antithesis. This Antithesis can only exist as a distortion of the Thesis. This Antithesis is not reality but it is a figment of the imagination! We often act as if this Lie is reality and as if the Truth, the Thesis is some idealistic pie in the sky. No, the positive affirmation (God's Word, the Truth) is first: the Thesis. The Lie, that which supplants and represses the Truth is second: the Antithesis. Satan's Kingdom of destruction works *against* God's good and wise order for creation. Satan replaced the Thesis with the Antithesis (Romans 1:25-27) (the prefix "anti" means opposed to *in principle*).

People of the Antithesis serve the Lie; people of God serve the Truth. The Word of God posits this Truth: it sets us in the light of Truth. That Word is the POWER that liberates us from the darkness of the LIE.¹

As Rev. van Popta writes, "The Kingdom of God and the empire of Satan are opposites." They represent Thesis and Antithesis, respectively. Never can they be accommodated to each other. As long as there is Time there will always be a struggle between these two Kingdoms. But that struggle, that war, in *itself* is not the antithesis. The Kingdom of Darkness is the Antithesis. And, thus, in that struggle the people of God have not been placed in the antithesis, as Rev. van Popta claims. No, the people of God proclaim the Thesis; the people of the Lie proclaim the Antithesis.

True, black and white are opposites, but, really, black is the opposite of white, not vice-versa. Darkness is antithetical to light, not vice-versa. Bad is the antithesis to good, not vice-versa. If we are to be antithetical as Rev. van Popta would have us to be, then, perhaps that explains why so many of us are so paranoid about life. So many of our dealings are done out of fear, because we have adopted the antithesis as being reality. Such a "fearful" view of life results in reactions, into a reactionary way of life. Fear neutralized the work of the Holy Spirit! The life according to the Thesis, the Truth is proactive. Through it we can joyfully stand fast "in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and not be en-

tangled with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). The people of God, serving the Truth, rejoice for all the gifts of Christ. He *has* won and in Him we are more than conquerors. *That* is reality!

¹For the insights expressed above I am indebted to Dr. H. Evan Runner's lectures which were later published in his book, *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*, Wedge Publishing Foundation, Toronto, 1970.


J.A. Roukema
Aldergrove, B.C.

Reply:

I would just make a few comments in response to Mr. Roukema's letter.

When Mr. Roukema says that not God but Satan placed hostility and enmity in the world, then he is clearly wrong. Gen. 3:15 says: "I (God) will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. . . ." Man and Satan had become friends. God broke up the friendship and put enmity in its place. This enmity is what theology likes to call "the antithesis."

Furthermore, I was using the word "antithesis" in a simple way as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as follows: "The direct opposition between two things; contrast; the opposite." By this simple use of the word, the two kingdoms are antithetical to one another. I was using "antithetical" as a synonym for words such as: opposite, antagonistic, conflicting, incompatible and contradictory – which any the-



CHURCH NEWS

CALLLED to Byford, Western Australia

Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer
of Carman, MB

NEW MAILING ADDRESS FOR:

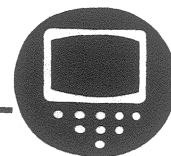
Providence Canadian Reformed Church
1 2905 - 122 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5L 2T8

saurus allows. I was not importing any philosophical baggage with the word "antithesis" as, I would suggest, Mr. Roukema does.

God calls us to oppose the kingdom of darkness with the light of His Word; in other words, He calls us to be antithetical in the simple not the philosophical sense of the word. We are to oppose and contradict the evil in the world and in our own hearts. That does not lead to paranoia, fear or reaction. We courageously and proactively expose the empire of Satan for what it is by opposing it with God's Word.

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta 

PRESS RELEASE



Classis Alberta/Manitoba of October 11 and 12, 1994. Convened by the Church at Carman in the Immanuel Church building in Edmonton.

1. On the evening of October 11, Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer calls the meeting to order on behalf of the Church at Carman. He asks the brothers to sing Ps. 136:1 and 13 and reads Ps. 92. He speaks a few fitting words on this Psalm in connection with Thanksgiving which we celebrated the previous day. He leads in prayer. He welcomes the delegates present, in particular,

Rev. W. Slomp who recently became minister in the Church at Neerlandia. Rev. DeBoer mentions that Rev. R.A. Schouten declined the call extended to him from the Church at Abbotsford, and that he, Rev. DeBoer, received a call from the Church at Byford in Australia.

2. The delegates of the Church at Carman report that the credentials of the delegates present are in order and that all primi delegates are present except for one; in this case the alternate

delegate is present. There are five instructions.

3. Rev. DeBoer declares Classis constituted and requests the proposed executive officers to take their places: Rev. J.D. Wielenga, chairman; Rev. R. Aasman, vice-chairman; Rev. R.A. Schouten, clerk.

4. The chairman, Rev. J.D. Wielenga, expresses the wish for a good Classis. He wishes Rev. DeBoer strength in coming to a decision regarding his call to the Church at Byford.

5. The agenda is established and adopted.

6. Committee for Aid to Needy Churches. It is decided to grant the support requested by two churches: the Church at Barrhead for \$12,000 and the Church at Denver for \$22,000 (Canadian funds). The Churches at Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber inform Classis that they will not grant financial support to the Church at Denver via assessments of the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches pending their appeals re admission of this church to the federation. The Church at Coaldale offers to help any church in the Classis which finds itself in a difficult financial position because of the non-participation of Coaldale in the support of Denver.

7. Committee for Aid to Students For the Ministry. The committee presents copies of the revised application form for financial assistance. The report is received with thankfulness.

8. Church Visitation Reports. Church visitation reports to the Churches at Coaldale, Taber, Carman, Calgary and Denver are read and received with gratitude.

9. The meeting is closed a little after 10 p.m. The chairman asks that Ps. 65:2 and 3 be sung and leads in prayer. Classis will reconvene at 9 a.m.

10. The chairman, Rev. Wielenga, calls the meeting to order on Wednesday morning, he asks that Ps. 72:1 and 10 be sung, he reads Phil. 1:1-18 and

leads in prayer. Roll call indicates all members are present.

11. The chairman reads the Form of Subscription which Rev. W. Slomp signs. The chairman wishes Rev. Slomp the Lord's blessings in maintaining his vow.

12. The Church at Carman has sent a proposal to the churches to change article 7.C.2 of the classical regulations. This proposed change would make abstentions not count in elections which require more than half the votes in order to be adopted. The proposal is adopted and reads as follows: Any motion or election by ballot receiving the support of more than half the votes shall be considered adopted. Abstentions shall not be counted.

13. The Church at Immanuel is granted pulpit supply once per month.

14. The Church at Winnipeg informs classis via instruction of regular meetings with the Independent Reformed Church of Winnipeg. This is taken for information. The chairman wishes the Church at Winnipeg the Lord's blessings in this contact.

15. Two appeals from members of the Church at Denver regarding the same matter are dealt with in closed session. A committee is struck and comes forward with a proposal which is adopted.

16. A letter from Mr. M.J. Hoogerdijk of Lethbridge is declared inadmissible.

17. Advice is given on a matter of church discipline in closed session.

18. Question period according to article 44 C.O. is held. The Church at Coaldale informs Classis of appeals to the next Regional Synod.

19. Appointments. a. Convening church of next Classis: Coaldale; suggested officers: chairman, Rev. W. Slomp; vice-chairman, Rev. J.D. Wielenga; clerk, Rev. R. Aasman; suggested date: Dec. 13, 1994 (alternate: April 25, 1995); place: Providence-Edmonton.

b. Delegates to Regional Synod: the following ministers are delegated: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer, Rev. R.A. Schouten, and Rev. J.D. Wielenga; their alternates are in order: Rev. W. Slomp, Rev. G. Ph. VanPopta, Rev. K. Jonker and Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar; the following elders are delegated: J. Jissink, J. VanAssen, I. Veurink and J. Voorhorst; their alternates are in order: J. VanderDeen, G. VanDijk, J. Kuik and H. Noot.

20. Personal Question Period is held.

21. The chairman notes that there is no reason for brotherly censure according to article 44 C.O.

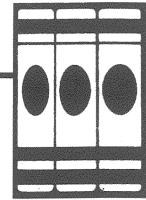
22. The Press Release is approved and the Acts adopted.

23. The chairman thanks the ladies for the refreshments which were provided. He asks that Hymn 10:1 and 10 be sung, asks the vice-chairman to close in prayer and then closes Classis.

R. Aasman
vice-chairman at that time. **C**

BOOK REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



A New Study of Ecclesiastes

Michael Kelley, *The Burden of God. Studies in wisdom and civilization from the book of Ecclesiastes.*

151 pages; no price. Contra Mundum Books (PO Box 32652, Fridley, MN 554432-0652) 1993.

This book is written with the sound conviction that Ecclesiastes as the Word of God has an urgent message for modern man. As the author summarizes the

message of Ecclesiastes, "man must relinquish his self-declared independence from God his Creator and Redeemer if he does not want to have lived his life truly in vain. God and His word must have undisputed sway over all that man does 'under the sun,' and true wisdom, knowledge and understanding, which are so inescapably necessary for the life-building activity of man, are dependent upon a faithful adherence to His authority and promise" (p. 149). Ecclesiastes makes this message clear in a neg-

ative way, showing what happens if man lives apart from the Word of God.

The author (who has a doctorate in Philosophy from Duquesne University and a theological education from Westminster Theological Seminary) derives the title for the book from Eccl. 1:13 (NIV): "I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!" Kelly in commenting on this verse notes that man's original God-given task was to exercise domin-

ion over creation and that included acquiring a comprehensive insight into the unity of life under God. Every facet of life was to be bound together. Today, life is often a duality of the religious (the area of grace to which God's Word can speak) and the secular (the area of nature where thinking does not need to be controlled by Scripture). But Scripture teaches that all of life must be brought into some relation to the gospel! "What a heavy burden God had laid on men!" This shows that the Preacher is aware how awesome, but also how necessary the task of investigating everything from a God-centred foundation is. Without that, life would have no underpinning (pp. 74-76).

To set the stage for his explanation of this part of Scripture, Kelley devotes the first major section of his book (pp. 9-60) to show what the Biblical vision of wisdom is and what man without God has made of it. He reminds his readers that Ecclesiastes is part of so-called "wisdom literature" and that wisdom is not the product of man's ingenuity, but of divine revelation (pp. 10-11). The fall into sin meant that also man's ideal of wisdom as man-centred had to be re-deemed to become God-centred. Kelley pauses at Solomon's wisdom because it is "unquestionably central" to wisdom in Scripture (p. 26). This wisdom "stood on the faithful covenant obedience to God and His righteousness" (p. 27) and it "was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt" (I Kings 4:30). Clearly, Solomon's wisdom was of tremendous consequence for God's people as a whole and Kelley is fond of speaking of "civilizational" wisdom and ideals (cf. e.g., pp. 30ff.). Not an altogether happy term (see end of this review), but the intent is clear. Kelley wants to distinguish

the broad Biblical view of wisdom from pietistic views which suggest that this wisdom is only important for one's person or soul. This intent of Kelley has our sympathy. God's Word and wisdom speaks to all of life, including, for example, politics. Although Solomon started with such promise, his sin showed that one greater than Solomon was needed, the Lord Jesus Christ (pp. 44-51). To drive home the contrast between Biblical wisdom and that of man without God, Kelley takes time to introduce some of the most important features of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek wisdom, indicating at the same time how our present civilization is more and more becoming heir to the pagan and humanistic ideas of old. Although not absolutely necessary for an exposition of Ecclesiastes, this detailed introductory section of his book has merit in giving depth of field and context to his discussion of Ecclesiastes.

The second major section of the book is devoted to an explanation of the Biblical text. This is not a verse by verse explanation, but deals quite effectively with thought units, – the key focus being on how Ecclesiastes can teach us about the needs of our civilization. A strength of this approach (cf. also the sub-title of his book) is that we are reminded that Ecclesiastes has a clear message for today! Although this approach is selective at times, it does give a sense of immediacy without sacrificing the necessary Biblical context. A weakness of this approach is that Kelley draws fewer lines to the New Testament and the redemptive work of Christ than he perhaps otherwise would have. In this respect the work of Rev. E. Th. van den Born on Ecclesiastes (1939) is more satisfying. I mention van den Born's name because

it is interesting for Canadian Reformed readers that Kelley uses all the major headings of E. Th. van den Born's work (p. 73 note) and van den Born's influence is noticeable in the exegesis as well. The general approach to understanding Ecclesiastes is the same.

Kelley's book deserves to be widely read and pondered. Especially if used in conjunction with outlines with a similar exegesis but more tightly linked to the text (such as M.J.C. Blok's *Ecclesiastes*, available from the ILPB), reading and studying this work will be richly rewarded.

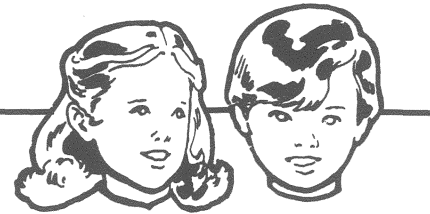
This is not to say there are no weaknesses. His argumentation is not always convincing. as e.g., on pp. 48f. where he writes that Jesus wanted to realize the same civilizational project that Solomon had earlier sought to accomplish and that the parable of building the house (Matt 7:24-27) implies the realization of some form of civilization. It would appear that for such civilizational argumentation to be persuasive, some discussion at least should be given to Christ's words such as "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36) and similar texts. Other items that raised questions are the description of Adam's original task as "re-creating" (put in quotation marks by Kelley) that which God first created (p. 15). Would the concept of the vicegerent not be more helpful here? Also, is it good to speak for instance of Egypt and Mesopotamia as covenant-breaking civilizations (p. 111) since it is only with Israel as His chosen people that God made his covenant and gave His laws (Deut. 4:7-8, 32-40; Ps. 147:19-20)? These examples are not given to dissuade one from reading this stimulating study, but only to give evidence of the great interest with which I read it.

Recommended!



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

At this time of year, you might see some older men and ladies standing in your town or city with boxes of little red poppies for sale. And you might be able to get one of those flowers at school to wear for a few days. Why do we wear them?

The poppy is to remind us of the soldiers who fought in the wars, a long time ago, maybe even before your Mom and Dad were born! They fought to help get freedom back for

many people. Lots of those soldiers died, but some are still living today. One of them might sell you your poppy!

God used those men to make sure that we would have the freedom to worship Him the way He wants us to. We can be very thankful to the LORD that today we may live in a free country.

Back to the wars. Some of you might want to read stories about life and adventures during the Second World War. Here are a few books about that:

"A Pocket full of Seeds," By Marilyn Sachs.

This book is about a Jewish girl in France whose family is taken away by the Nazis. Find out how she escapes!

"Journey Through the Night," By Piet Prins.

This is a four volume(book) story about a boy named John, who lives in Holland, when the Nazis take over that country. He has lots of adventures, and scares, during the war.

There are many more books that you could read about this. Ask your parents or librarians to help you find some. Happy reading!

Quiz Time!

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 (basked) |
| 6. Samuel 1 Samuel 2:18 | f. heel |
| 7. Isaac Genesis 22:6-13 | g. coat of many colours |
| 8. Shunamite's son, 2 Kings 4:35-36 | h. linen ephad |
| 9. John (the Baptist) Luke 1:60-61 | i. sling shot |
| 10. Esau Genesis 25:25 | j. manger |



"WHAT IS A FRIEND?"

by Busy Beaver Francine VanWoudenberg

A friend is loving
 A friend is caring
 A friend is honest
 A friend is sharing
 A friend is compassionate,
 A friend is kind,
 A friend always has someone else in mind.
 A friend is happy when you rejoice
 In hard times, reassures you in a soothing voice.
 A friend is patient; understanding too,
 A friend's always there, ready for you.
 In all times and circumstances
 Whether good or bad,
 A friend will share in all the experiences you've had,
 A friend is a treasure, worth more than gold,
 A friend holds all your secrets and keeps them untold.
 Since a real friend is someone very special to you,
 You can repay him by being a true friend, too.

NUMBER CODE

by Busy Beaver Esther Synder

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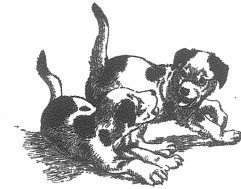
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D - 23	I - 18	N - 13	S - 8	X - 3	
E - 22	J - 17	O - 12	T - 7	Y - 2	

ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver
 Rachelle VanVeen



A W X A Y Z E L E P H A N T N D O X
 O E O Y E S U O M N O J Q R Z O B R
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 M O M L D I E Q U H M T S R Q P N E
 E Z D R E G I T O G R O U N D H O G

Find:

cow	mouse	sheep	hippopotamus
horse	elephant	goat	groundhog
pig	lion	bear	monkey
dog	tiger	wolf	
cat	giraffe	fox	

That's all for this time, Busy Beavers!
 Hope you're all enjoying the puzzles and activities!

Love to you all,
 Aunt Betty