



# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
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## *Eschatology*

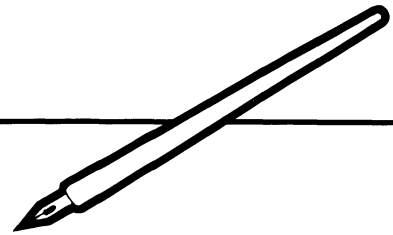
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- ☙ *The mustard seed, the leaven  
and the narrow door*
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*Numbers*

10:1-10

By R. Schouten



## Reorganized

This first issue of *Clarion* in the year of our Lord, nineteen-hundred-and-ninety-five, marks the beginning of a new phase for our magazine. Reorganization for the purpose of improving the magazine for our readers is the motivation for these changes.

The volume number on this present issue is #44, issue #1. This indicates that many have preceded us in producing and reading this publication. We want to build on the positive traditions while striving always for improvement in all facets of this humble bi-monthly journal.

In the first place, there will be some changes in the editorial set-up. Prof. J. Geertsema will continue on as the editor-in-chief. However, Rev. Rob Schouten and Rev. George Van Popta have been appointed to serve with Prof. J. Geertsema in a "core committee." Rev. Schouten will also serve as copy editor while Rev. Van Popta will serve as managing editor and will control the flow of copy to the copy editor, the editor-in-chief and the publisher.

Prof. Geertsema has a very demanding job as Professor of New Testament at the Theological College in Hamilton. Time constraints made it virtually impossible for him to continue at the present level of commitment. It is hoped that the addition of more persons to the work will lighten his load and allow for more efficient publication of *Clarion*.

Editorials will be provided on a rotating basis by Prof. Geertsema, Dr. J. DeJong, Dr. C. VanDam, Rev. G. Ph. Van Popta and Rev. R. Schouten.

Another change involves the passing of "News Medley" column to a new columnist, the Rev. C. VanSpronsen. This column was the idea of Rev. VanOene and has been filled for many years in his own inimitable style. Often controversial, sometimes complained about, but always read and usually appreciated, "News Medley" provided a sense of community for our far-flung federation. We hope that this may continue under our new contributor. We wish him well in his endeavour and we ask the churches to cooperate by sending bulletins to him regularly.


It is also our intention to begin a Reader's Forum type of column. Such a column can have a useful place in providing readers with a podium from which to express an opinion on a subject which they feel is important. Items published under this heading will not necessarily express the views of *Clarion* or its publisher. If you have any contributions, we encourage you to send an article of no more than 900 words, double-spaced, if possible on a 3.5" disk, to the editorial address.

Another concept being developed is that of a doctrine column. The goal of this column would be to provide refreshment for the saints by way of succinct statements and explanations of the body of Christian teaching. Think of it as a sort of Catechism primer. If you doubt whether *Clarion* authors have the ability to be succinct, we forgive you for that wavering and beg you to stay tuned nonetheless.

*Clarion* also promises to respond to all letters and unsolicited articles. As much as possible, we will endeavour to print all letters to the editor. We ask, however, that you keep them under 300 words. If they are longer, we reserve the right to edit or reject them. If too many letters are received on any topic, the editors reserve the right to make a selection. If your letter is refused, you will receive a written explanation. Although we do not wish to gag readers, only rarely will we publish a letter which responds to a previous letter to the editor.

We do realize as editors that the written word is fighting a hard battle to retain loyalty in a multi-media world. However, we are convinced that no other form of discourse offers the same possibilities for in-depth reflection and communication. We hope that *Clarion* can help to expose the banality of some secular media offerings, and satisfy the longing for something a little more significant than the evening sound bytes on television.

We realize that your time is precious. We hope not to waste any of it. The goal of our work will be to sometimes provoke and annoy you, always to make you think and reflect, to inform you and constantly to build you up in the Christian faith. We hope that our magazine may form one small part of the network used by God to help the Churches to maintain what has been given to them and to go on in faith to meet the challenges of our times.

We encourage you to share with us any ideas for the improvement of our magazine. Read it, talk about it, respond to it. All letters, articles, as well as poems, stories and songs intended for publication should be sent to *Clarion*, P.O. Box 1121, Taber, AB, TOK 2G0. 

### What's inside?

*A blessed new year to you! The changing of the year is always a time of reflection. We glance back at the year gone by and we look forward wondering what the new year holds. And Christians wonder: "Will the Lord return in this new year?" Christians are people who live with an eye open for the return of their Saviour. They are looking forward to the end, the eschaton, the end which will also be the beginning of eternal peace on the new earth. To help you in your reflection, we offer you three articles on the subject of eschatology – the study of the last things. They are written by pastors. You will not be overwhelmed with technical jargon; rather, the comforts of the gospel will be laid upon your hearts and you will be encouraged and challenged to live as one ready for the return of our Saviour.*

*As well, you will find some interesting reports of various ecclesiastical assemblies and a few other things.*

GvP

# Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 3:1-16

*“ . . . perfect health.”*

## HEALED BY THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

The man had been lame from birth. Chapter 4:22 tells us that he was more than forty years old. He had weak feet and ankles. He could not walk. Every day some friends carried him to one of the temple gates. He would lie there and beg money from people entering the temple.

The gate was called Beautiful. What a contrast. A poor, sick wretch, unable to walk, begging at the Beautiful gate. This lame man was a sign of the ugliness of sin. The Lord was not punishing him for any specific sin he had committed. He had been lame from birth. And yet his poor health was a symptom of the brokenness of life caused by the sin of man. If man had not sinned, there would be no sickness.

Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. The lame man asked them for money. Peter said: *“I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* Peter took hold of the man’s right hand and pulled him to his feet. The man could walk. For the first time in his life he walked. He entered the temple with Peter and John. Not only did he walk. He leaped and he jumped and he praised God.

What joy for this child of Abraham. For forty years he had been locked up in a body that would not respond to his commands to move. But now he could walk, he could run, he could jump. No wonder he praised God. God had created the human body to move. The intricate network of muscles, tendons and joints proves that.

The people recognized him. They were amazed. Peter seized the opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. He pointed out that neither he nor John had healed the man by their own power or piety; rather, the man had been made well by the name of Jesus Christ. The name of the Author of life had healed the man.

The Jews had killed Jesus, the Holy and Righteous One. They had asked for Barabbas, a murderer, and had killed the Author of life. But the Author of life could not stay dead! God raised Him up.

The Lord Jesus, the Author of life, is the great Physician. He heals us of our illnesses. He took our sicknesses

upon Himself. As Isaiah 53 comforts us, He was familiar with suffering. He took up our infirmities and carried our pains. The great Physician did so for the man at the Beautiful gate as well. The Lord gave him perfect health.

How many of us have perfect health? Not many, if any. We struggle with illness, disease, mental and physical weakness, paralysis. Let’s be patient. The Lord will heal us. Oh, perhaps not in this age. The Lord often calls His people to struggle with illness in this present age. The apostle Paul, who himself had the gift of healing, was not able to heal himself of the thorn in his flesh. He had to bear it for the sake of Christ. He had to learn that the grace of God was enough. Even if one bears a terrible thorn in his flesh, as long as he has the grace of God, he has enough. That’s what Paul had to learn. We all have to learn that and confess that.

It seems that on at least two occasions, Paul was not able to heal others. Paul’s friend Epaphroditus became so ill once that he almost died (Phil. 2:27). Paul had to leave his fellow worker Trophimus ill at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).

The apostles could not use the gifts of healing whenever they pleased. Today, the Lord Jesus, the merciful Physician, will let some of us remain ill. In His great wisdom He will not heal us in this age **so that the wonderful works of God might be made manifest on the day of the Lord’s return.** We have the promise that He will give us perfect health in the age to come. He has borne our illnesses. He will glorify His name by giving us complete health.

In the beginning of this new year, may that promise comfort you who suffer from cancer, neurological diseases, depression, paralysis, or other mental or physical infirmities. You wonder what 1995 will bring. Will it bring some relief or more suffering? Well listen, one day soon you will run and jump, you will walk and leap, you will laugh and shout, you will praise the name of Jesus Christ in the temple of God forever. You will enjoy *perfect health* forever.

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# The Mustard Seed, the Leaven and the Narrow Door

By R. Aasman

In Luke 13:18-24, our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about the kingdom of God in the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. Then He speaks about the narrow door to the kingdom of God. The question we have to ask ourselves is why Jesus Christ used these parables at this time and in this context? What was he communicating? To answer this we should look at verse 22. Here we have what appears to be a casual explanation of a typical day in Christ's ministry: *He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.* This is, however, a very important statement, even though its significance may not be immediately clear. What Luke is doing is reminding his readers that Jesus Christ has entered a special point, a new phase in his ministry. In this sentence Luke reminds us of what he wrote earlier in Luke 9:51: *When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Our Lord Jesus Christ was making His way to Jerusalem – to the city of humiliation and death, but also to glory! He knew that this was the will of His Father and there was nothing that could deter Him from the path which led to His death. As He made His way to Jerusalem – His face was fixed on it – He wove His way through the villages and towns of Israel to teach all Israel the true meaning of the kingdom of God. He taught that salvation has drawn near to the people of God; He was going to Jerusalem for them, to die for them; and so He was on the way to glory, the glory of God once again reigning in the hearts and lives of His obedient citizens.

But what was the response of the covenant people? We read about it time and again: scepticism, unbelief, intimidation and hostility. Jesus Christ was

burning in love for His people, His face was set to Jerusalem, and He wanted to gather them as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but they would have none of it! He was scorned by people as though He were their adversary. This also had something to do with the fact that Jesus Christ was not preaching about the kind of kingdom that they expected and wanted: the restitution of Israel to her former political and geographical glory. Christ spoke of a spiritual kingdom, one established in the death of the Mediator, one which would cause God to reign in the hearts and lives of obedient citizens of His kingdom. That, however, did not sit well with many Israelites: there is not much glory in one man dying for the nation. Consequently, Christ was heavily criticized and even hated.

This is the context in which the Lord Jesus now speaks in parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, and this is important to keep in mind for our understanding of the parables. He says: *"What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?"* Notice how carefully He expresses Himself, how He deliberates about the way to describe the coming of the kingdom of God. This is all the more reason to pay close attention and to think deeply.

## The mustard seed

The first parable is of the mustard seed: *"It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."* A mustard seed is very small and humble, which makes it an apt description of the kingdom of God in the present circumstances. The humbleness refers not to the small number of people who follow Christ, but it refers to the humbleness of Christ him-

self. We may think of his description in Isaiah 53. He is the Lamb of God who is not surrounded by pomp and glory, but his face is set to Jerusalem, He is surrounded by rejection and scepticism, and He is about to become a prisoner led to the slaughter. His is a life of real humiliation. But, does this indicate that our Saviour is a weakling, that He is tiny and insignificant, and that His kingdom is shaky? Not at all. Even as the humble mustard seed grows very quickly and gives protection from the hot sun to birds of the air, so does Jesus Christ whose face is set to Jerusalem, who shall lay down His life for the sheep, give aid and protection to all who draw near to Him in faith! The cross and grave is for many a sign of shame and it causes them embarrassment. But for those who believe, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Faith in Jesus Christ, joy and hope in His death and resurrection, leads to deliverance from Satan, sin and death. It leads to Christ setting the prisoners free, lifting up those who are bowed down, renewing the weak and enabling them by His Holy Spirit to live as obedient citizens of the kingdom of God.

## The leaven

Essentially the same message is found in the next parable of Jesus Christ, the parable of the leaven: *"It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."* Leaven or yeast is small and insignificant, it works quietly and mysteriously, but it has great effect as anyone who has seen bread rise knows. Notice that Christ does not speak of the yeast "put" in the flour, but "hid." He uses this word to describe His own person and work. During His ministry, Jesus Christ avoided fanfare

and publicity; to a large extent He even hid His identity as Son of God; and He spoke guardedly of His death and resurrection. Certainly when He hung on the cross, most people did not see this as the awesome act of God to redeem His people. And as for His being cut off from the land of the living and being laid in a grave, even His own disciples despaired. So much was hidden due to the unbelief and misunderstanding of the people. However being hidden did not indicate weakness. As hidden yeast works its way totally through the dough and affects it all, so the gospel of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection operates effectively, powerfully and totally on His people. Nothing can stop it: the gospel shall proceed powerfully to the ends of the earth, causing people from every tribe, tongue and nation to embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and causing a wondrous transformation of their lives. His Word shall not return to Him empty. The face of Jesus Christ is set to Jerusalem. Nothing shall stop Him and nothing shall stop the glorious, earth-shaking influence of His death and resurrection.

### Comfort and encouragement

In the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven there is comfort and encouragement. They show that there is salvation in Jesus Christ and there is security in His kingdom. Let us understand the message well. The point of comparison here is not so much the contrast of small and large. This is the point on which postmillennialism focuses: the kingdom starts small but slowly and surely it becomes large; much of the world will be christianized; the saved will outnumber the lost; the world will become a better place. This is not the message of these parables. Moreover it is a teaching which is difficult to reconcile with other Scripture passages which speak of great apostasy in the last days, as well as the persecution of the church (Rev.13). Still the message is very positive in these parables: do not be misled by Christ's humble beginnings; do not be turned off by a Saviour whose face is set to Jerusalem because He wants to become a prisoner and die. This is the way of glory and victory; it is the power and wisdom of God to redeem and preserve His people. There is nothing that can stop Jesus Christ or the establishment of the kingdom of God where God again reigns in the hearts and lives of obedient citizens.

We may think in this connection of what we confess in the Canons of Dort II, 9 in the context of God's decree of atonement: *This counsel, proceeding from eternal love for the elect, has from the beginning of the world to the present time been powerfully fulfilled, and will also continue to be fulfilled, though the gates of hell vainly try to frustrate it. In due time the elect will be gathered together into one, and there will always be a Church of believers, founded on the blood of Christ.*

How comforting this is also in our day. The gospel is the object of much ridicule in our society; unrighteousness flourishes everywhere; and the paganism of the New Age movement is widely embraced. Does that mean that the kingdom of Christ is unstable? Not at all! He is King and has all authority, and He remains victorious in gathering, defending and preserving His Church by Spirit and Word. No matter how insidious temptation becomes or how vicious the attacks of Satan and the world, nothing can snatch us from the arms of Christ. Not only should that message make us optimistic, but it should cause us to bring that message optimistically to the



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world around us so that many may hear and embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Indeed we rest in the confidence that the kingdom of Christ will surpass the kingdoms of the earth, the kingdom of darkness. That means His victory is sure and His purpose will be accomplished. That will be demonstrated at His return when Satan and his followers are cast into outer darkness, while all those for whom Christ shed His blood are gathered into the perfected kingdom of His Father.

What we now see in Luke's gospel is that in spite of scepticism and scorn, Jesus Christ continued to proclaim this message of joy and hope to all Israel. In the midst of all this, someone asks Jesus: "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" This question may have come about quite naturally and innocently because Christ constantly outlined the requirements for kingdom living, and that might have given the impression that only few could do that. Or it might have been typical of the scepticism which confronted Him: what kind of a king are you that you are so humble and so few follow you?! But as to the question whether only a few will be saved, Christ shows the kingdom is not a numbers game, it is not a question of how big or small it will be. The question is: *are you a citizen of the kingdom of God?!*

### The narrow door

Our Saviour is combatting the spirit of the age where many Israelites lived under the complacent attitude that if one is physically descended from Abraham then he is automatically saved. Just look at what Christ says in the verses following our text: *There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out.* Such a complacent attitude is still with us today where church members believe that membership in the church is a ticket to heaven, and meanwhile there is no living, vibrant faith which manifests itself in thankfulness and obedience. Entrance into the kingdom and sharing in its blessing is not an automatic thing – in fact, the door is narrow. In answer to the question whether few will be saved, Christ says: "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

The point here is not that it is so difficult to enter the kingdom of God unless one is an exceptional Christian.

Rather Christ is saying: there is a very specific way to enter the kingdom; the danger is that many may not find it; therefore make sure that you do! Christ uses the word, "strive." This is the same language used by Paul in passages like 1 Tim. 6:12 and 2 Tim. 4:7 where he speaks about, *fight the good fight of the faith, and, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* Clearly entrance into the kingdom of God calls for embracing Jesus Christ with a true and living faith, and for a life-long struggle in fighting against the opponents of the kingdom which are Satan, the world and our own sinful flesh. Kingdom living is offering one's life in holiness and obedience to the King!

This in no way denies that salvation is by grace alone (Eph. 2:8), nor does Christ intend for us to be plagued by uncertainty as to whether we are good enough to be citizens of his kingdom. Our comfort rests in the grace of God and that in spite of our sins and shortcomings, God will never turn away one who is cut to the heart for his sins, seeks forgiveness and desires to amend his ways. However in His covenant relationship with us, God in Christ calls us to a new obedience and holiness. To be complacent in the face of such a demand, to say I can wait before I settle down and start living my life in obedience to God, is to be squeezed from the narrow door. This has happened to many who heard of Christ but did not turn to Him in faith and repentance – they are locked out of the kingdom of God!

Therefore strive to enter the narrow gate. That means embrace Jesus Christ as the one who died for your sins and so redeemed you as a child of God. Daily read His Word so that you may be strengthened in the knowledge and confidence of your Saviour. Daily pray to the Lord in the name of Jesus Christ so that God may grant you His grace and Spirit to be enabled to live in righteousness and holiness. In this daily blessing you are then called to fight the good fight of faith, to run the race which is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. In the way that we live as husband and wife, raise our children, entertain ourselves, behave at a party, carry out our daily work, give of our first-fruits to the Lord, it must be clear that we are not playing the games of the world outside the kingdom of God, but by the grace of God,



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we have entered the narrow gate and live to the praise and glory of our King.

It must be clear who is the King that resides in our heart! This is not the way of humiliation. It is the way of glory. Because He who once set His face to Jerusalem and to death, is now seated at the right hand of glory in the new Jerusalem. He is preparing a place of glory for us who believe in Him, who walk in His ways and are preserved in His power and love.



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# Anytime Christianity

By R. Schouten

Is the great and glorious Day of Christ near? From a certain group of writers in recent years, this question has received a negative answer. These writers are united by their postmillennial beliefs. According to them, we are still in the infancy of the Gospel Age. The present world, they allege, is not “post-Christian” but “pre-Christian.” One day in history, righteousness will be the worldwide norm, while evil will be marginalized. Christ will return not to a world that still resists the Gospel, but to a world which expects Him, that is, to a largely converted, Christianized world. His coming in glory will be the icing on the cake, the culmination of thousands of years of Christian civilization. Hence, these writers are called postmillennialists, because they believe that Christ returns after the Golden Age, that is, the Millennium, which they understand as a phase of glory and prosperity for God’s Church on this earth and in this present history.<sup>1</sup>

## Last days madness

As a result of their beliefs, many postmillennial writers ridicule what they call “last days madness.” They decry the tendency of many Christians to be so infatuated with the signs of the times that they forget their cultural responsibilities. Insofar as the postmillennial critique is directed against premillennial writers like Hal Lindsay, we can express our appreciation.

If you go to your local Christian bookstore, you will discover the relevance of this postmill critique of last days madness. In a modern, evangelical bookshop, you will find a large quantity of highly-speculative literature about the Rapture, Armageddon, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, as well as about the restoration of Israel as God’s Chosen people and the rule of Christ from Jerusalem for a thousand years. This literature arises from the premillennial camp which dominates North American evangelical Christianity.

According to the premillennialists, Christ will come at the beginning of the thousand year reign. According to this system of thought, Christ will actually come back on several different occasions. First, He comes in secret to rapture his saints out of the world. Then follows a 7-year period of terrible tribulation during which the Antichrist rules the earth. At the end of this period, Christ comes again with His previously raptured saints, this time visibly, to overthrow the antichrist, establish His earthly Kingdom, centered in Jerusalem. During this era, the Jews will be converted, the temple will be rebuilt and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament restored. At the end of this thousand year period, Satan will be loosed again, there will be a short rebellion against God and then comes, at last, the End.<sup>2</sup>

The writings of the premillennialists can indeed be characterized by a certain madness. Each time a new development occurs in the Middle East, a whole spate of books comes quickly from the presses, each one professing to see in political events specific fulfillment of OT prophecies. When the crisis in the Middle East calms, the books languish on the shelves and are soon sold for discount prices to unsuspecting bargain-hunters looking for insights into modern geo-politics. As soon as a new emergency develops in world events, the cycle begins anew.

In this context of last days madness, we can appreciate how the hard hitting books of the American postmillennialists expose the ludicrous and inconsistent literalism in the premillennial interpretation of prophecy. Much to our delight, the postmillennial writers stress time and again that God has but one New Testament people, composed of both Jews and Greeks, and that the OT prophecies about the future glory of Israel are being fulfilled today in the Church. The Church is the “Israel of God” and “a holy nation, God’s own people” (Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:9). We be-

lieve that the premillennialist doctrine that God has a program for the Jews that is eternally distinct from His program for the Church is a serious error.

Despite our appreciation, some questions will be raised in this article about postmillennial ideas. Specifically, we will challenge the claim that “Christ can’t come back yet” because the world has not yet been Christianized. It should be understood that the claim of this article is not that Christ will return very soon, but simply that it is wrong to say that He cannot return soon. Contrary to postmillennialism, it is here asserted that we as New Testament believers should have an “anytime now” mentality with respect to the appearing of Christ in glory.

## Last days sanity

What is needed in the first place is a sane and sober understanding of how the Bible describes the redemptive-historical era in which we live. You may be interested to find out that the New Testament describes the entire era between the Ascension of Christ and His Return in glory as “the last days” (see Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2).

In 2 Tim. 3, verses one and two, Paul writes: “But understand this, that in the last days, there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy. . . .” In case, however, you might think Paul was referring only to a time far in the future, read verse five: “Avoid such people.” The inference we are to make is that the last days had already begun in the time of Timothy’s ministry.

Peter tells us in his second letter that “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions” (2 Pet. 3:3). The context shows that those scoffers were already present in the days when Peter wrote. Of course, for those were already the last days!

From references such as these, the overall structure of the New Testament doctrine of history becomes clear. The ascension and coronation of Christ, combined with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, mark the transition to the "last days." The "last days" constitute the whole Gospel era during which the Church from all nations is gathered and during which we see many "signs" of the ongoing work of the Son of God. So far, the "last days" have lasted nearly 2,000 years. The boundaries of this period are the first coming of Christ in humiliation and the final coming of Christ in glory.

### The day

Another way of looking at this New Testament concept is to realize that the "last days" form the period of history which ends with "the Day of the Lord." New Testament writings radiate hope and expectation for the "Day of the Lord." Between Christ's first coming and His great Day, there is no other event equal in importance. Whatever might happen in the intervening history pales in comparison to the importance of the first and second comings of Christ.

The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the end of the last days. Another way of saying this is that the Day of Christ means the end of "the present age" (see, for example, Matt. 13:39-40, 49) and the beginning of the "age to come" (Matt. 12:32).

It is no surprise, then, that the New Testament proclaims the Day of the Lord Jesus to be "near." Paul writes: "The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness . . ." (Rom. 13:12). And the writer of Hebrews tells the Christians not to neglect meeting together, as was the habit of some of them, but to encourage one another, "and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:25). One of the expressions used by the apostles when they encouraged the believers to be faithful and patient was, "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5; James 5:8).

In the light of the New Testament, therefore, we are to see the Day of Christ as always imminent. This momentous event can take place without further delay. The saints of the early days of the Church had a lively expectation of a speedy return of Christ. Their belief was: "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7). After all, doesn't the Lord Jesus Himself say, "Surely I am coming soon!" (Rev. 22:20). The New

Testament therefore teaches us that nobody is allowed to say, "The Lord can't come back yet; His day is not near, but far." People who say this contradict the apostles and so separate themselves from the catholic tradition of the Church. The norm of the New Testament is "any-day-soon-now Christianity."

### Success of the Gospel

Why do the postmillennial writers insist that Christ can't yet return? The major reason, as outlined above, is that they feel the Bible promises a glorious success for the Gospel which has not yet been achieved in history. Some of the Scriptural evidence presented by them includes Psalm 2:8; Psalm 47:2-8; Psalm 72; 98; 145; Isa. 2:2-4; Isa. 11:1-9; Isa. 42:4; Isa. 60; Isa. 65; Ezek. 47:1-5; Dan. 2:44; Matt. 13:33 (see article in this issue by R. Aasman); Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 7:9, 10. Most of these passages speak about the future submission of the nations to the Gospel and rave about the glory of Zion in days to come. Your understanding of the postmillennial position will increase a lot if you take the time to read these passages.

According to the postmillennialists, these passages teach a future era of spiritual and material prosperity for the Church, during which most people on earth will serve the true God. Zion will become great and glorious. Not only in the new creation, but also in this present age, the knowledge of God will fill the whole earth.

We do agree, of course, that the Scriptures speak about the constant growth of the Church. Already the OT preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8). Christ commanded His disciples to go to all the nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey Him (Matt. 28:18-20). In Matt. 24, we are told that the Gospel would be preached to all nations and that then the end would come. No longer was the Church to be largely a Jewish congregation, but a truly catholic body, with men and women and children from all kinds of cultures and languages. The New Testament temple is a house of prayer for people of all nations. Clearly, people who read the Bible could expect that the Gospel would go forth to conquer the hearts of millions.

The difficulty, however, lies in the attempt of the postmillennialists to quantify the success of the Kingdom of God. They say that Christ cannot come until the majority of the citizens of the

world are Christian. The Scriptures, however, never give any information about the numerical success rate of the Gospel in any particular era. We do know that the number of the saved from all ages will constitute an immense throng, but this is not to say that, at any given time, the Church will form the majority throughout the whole world. We do not deny that this could happen, but it is not promised in Scripture.

To those who feel that Christ's return must be preceded by a worldwide conversion on a scale never seen before, we could point to Colossians one. Already in this letter, the apostle Paul could say that the hope of the Gospel "has been preached to every creature under heaven" (verse 23). In verse six of Col. one, Paul writes about how the Gospel has come to the Colossians and about how "indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing." If already in Paul's days, the Gospel had gone to all the nations, how can we say that even now the Lord can't yet return because of the promise that people would be gathered from all nations?

A further difficulty in the postmillennial interpretation of prophecy is its frequent failure to grasp that many OT prophecies speak in one breath about the progressive work of Christ in history and the final work of Christ on His great Day. The prophets speak about glory for Zion; they speak about the justice of the Great Son of David being established over all the earth; they tell of the Kingdom of Christ becoming a great stone that fills the whole earth and about the wealth of the nations being brought into Zion. When the postmillers read such prophecies, they feel that their fulfillment will take place in the establishment and glory of the Church in this present age.

It is our conviction, however, that the passages mentioned above refer only partially to the establishment of the holy catholic church in this present age, while they receive their substantial fulfillment when Christ comes again to restore all things. It is on the Day of Christ that the Zion will finally be seen in its glory. Only then will justice be established in all the earth. It is in the perfection of God's Kingdom that there will be peace and righteousness from sea to sea. When Christ returns, then the stone will fill the whole earth. On that Day, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

We see all these things now only in part and by way of anticipation. What we have in this present age is only the merest foretaste of God's everlasting



Kingdom and the glory of Zion portrayed in Psalm and Prophet.

### This evil age

There are many texts which seem to be stumbling blocks for postmillennial interpretation regarding a supposed Golden Age. Chief among these are the passages of the Gospels in which Christ alludes to ongoing and wide-scale resistance to the truth. We think, for example, of Matt. seven, verse fourteen: "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Without much exegetical support, postmillennial authors tend to restrict this verse's application to the hardened and rebellious generation among which Christ then ministered (compare also Matt. 22:14; Luke 18:8).

We mention also the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30). This passage does not come with figures about the relative numbers of wheat and tares, but anyone in the work of agriculture knows about the vast proliferation of weeds in almost any field. The parable therefore implies that God's people and evildoers will coexist until the End without the Church gaining any kind of permanent dominion.

In Gal. 1, verse four, Paul characterizes the last days as "this present *evil age*." This age, clearly, is not the age characterized by the worldwide righteousness expected by the postmillennialists. In this context, we may also think of the way Paul describes Satan in 2 Cor. 4:4 as "the god of this world." Furthermore, we may recall the many passages where believers are warned about the continuing conflict between the "world" and the Church. Believers are in, but not of the world. They are not to be friends of this world, lest they be enemies of God. The picture of the New Testament is not that of a world being steadily defeated in this age by the Church, but of a constantly near and menacing power of evil against which Christians must be steadfast and firm. This continuing conflict between Church and world simply does not harmonize with a Church dominating all the nations under heaven.

Finally, the postmillennial idea of Christ's coming to a largely converted and Christianized world does not conform to the presentation of His return "as a thief in the night" and in such a way that "all the tribes of the earth mourn on His account," looking for a place to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb (compare Matt. 24:30; Rev.

6:16; 9:6). As Paul writes in 1 Thess. 5: "For you yourselves know well that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child and there will be no escape."

### Cultural relevance

The postmillennial authors are afraid that non-millennialists like ourselves will serve to encourage wide-scale evasion of cultural responsibilities. If we are pessimistic about "this present world," it must follow, say the postmillennialists, that we will not be too concerned about serving and obeying Christ in all of life. Because we are not looking forward to a Golden Age in this present world, the accusation arises from the aggressive postmill writers that we must be in the pit of despair and unable to work for Christ in politics, art, music, families, business, caring for the poor and so forth.

We want to go on the record to deny this accusation. To believe, as we do, that the night is far gone and that the Day is at hand, does not encourage evasion of cultural responsibility, but instead promotes a godly sense of obligation and accountability before the Lord Jesus who is coming soon to test all our works.

Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven (Phil. 3:20-21). By their union with Christ, they are already seated in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). This means that in the midst of this evil world they have to live already now the lifestyle of heaven. They are able to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within them. By living as citizens of the Kingdom of heaven in all spheres of life, they become culturally more relevant than anyone else. By their heavenly values and priorities and through the culture this lifestyle begets, believers become coworkers of Christ for the coming of His Kingdom in glory. Peter says that "since all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the Day of God" (2 Pet. 3:11-12). Who could be more culturally relevant than those who are holy and godly? The Lord Jesus Himself will establish all their holy works of faith in all spheres of life (1 Cor. 15:58).

### Misplaced focus

If the postmills want to question the commitment of the non-millennialists to work of service in all areas of life, we would also like to ask a question in re-

turn. Does not the dream of a Golden Age for the Church carry the great danger of distracting attention from the most important event of all, namely, the Return of Christ in power and glory? Is there not the genuine risk of preoccupation with the life of this present world, so that some begin to seek heaven on earth?

The consuming hope and focus of the Christian's life is not anything in this present evil age. Not earthly glory and material prosperity in this age for the Church is the believer's hope, but the Great Day of Christ. For people who live for that Day, a long earthly millennium is actually a disappointment. It holds no allure for us. We long for the Day of redemption, when we will be delivered from sin and freed from the weakness of our present body. We pray for the speedy return of Christ so that we may no longer have to live by faith but then by glorious sight of the Blessed Saviour.


Not the incremental advances of this present age, but the vast, cosmic changes of the Day of Christ command our attention and affection and earnest desires. Not the continuation of sin and death and suffering in a so-called Golden Age of the Church, but the stupendous wind up of history and the renovation of all things: this guides our hope and gives us patience in the day of trouble.

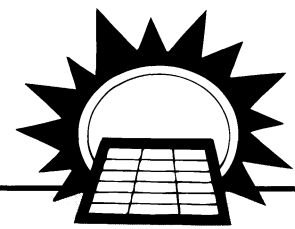
### The blessed hope

What is our blessed hope? It is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). For this Day we pray and persevere. For it we wait and work. For this Day, Christ Himself will preserve and guard those who call on His Name. Through easier times and harder times for the Church in this present evil age, the Lord Jesus will keep His flock safe. The great question therefore is this: do we love the Day of His appearing? (2 Tim. 4:8). He can come any day now.

#### Notes:

(1) For explanations of the postmillennial view, see L. Boettner, *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1957, 1991); Kenneth Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992).

(2) Useful critiques of the premillennial scheme can be found in T. Boersma, *Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle* (St. Catharines, ON: Paideia Press, 1978); John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Brentwood Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991); C. Vanderwaal, *Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy* (St. Catharines, ON: Paideia Press, 1978). 



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.*  
Matthew 6:33

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Very often we worry. We have all kinds of things to worry about: our money, our work, our family, our health, our future, our reputation, we can go on and on. Our worries can keep us awake at night, and make us unhappy in the daytime. We keep thinking about the same thing over and over again, and the more we worry about it, the worse it usually becomes. Nobody has ever solved problems by worrying about them. And yet we worry. . . .

But the Lord does not want us to worry. For He takes care of us, always. Matthew 6 is a beautiful chapter about that. There the Lord Jesus teaches the people that the Lord takes care even of the flowers in the field. How much more will He then take care of His children? And in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." That also shows how the Lord takes care of us.

Maybe we have enough food in the house, and money to buy more. But we are sick, or disabled, or we are grieving about a lost one. That prayer for our daily bread will not help us much then. If the Lord takes care of us, we would like to see that, too! How can we stop worrying if we have to struggle with our handicap, and never seem to get anywhere?

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread as an example of what we need to survive in this world. Our most basic need to survive is not our food, but our dependence from the Lord. So, if we pray to Him for our most basic need, the daily bread, we acknowledge our complete dependence on Him. He takes care of us in all our physical needs. We depend on Him for our food, clothing, shelter, health and safety. In that we are not all loose individuals. No, as people of the Lord we share all those things together. We are allowed to enjoy the good gifts we receive from the Lord. But we may never squander them, or forget to share some of it with those who need it. We can never say that it is our own because we worked hard for it and so we deserved it. Everything we receive is a gift from God. He can give it to us, but He can also take it away from us. There is nothing of which we can say, "This is mine." We can only see it as a gift from the Lord, and thank Him for it. That works the other way around as well. If we do not have something that we would really like to have, we can never complain, or demand it from the Lord. Whatever our circumstances are, God is in control. When He exposes us to difficulties in our lives, He will not leave us or forsake us. He needs to be praised by us, always.

Is that a very difficult, or maybe impossible task for us? Yes, it may be hard. We like to be in control ourselves. We do not like to be dependent, and to ask for help. We need a nice house to live in, a good job, a healthy body and as much luxury as we can find in the world. And we just want to stretch out our hands and take whatever we need. But that is not the way the Lord intends it to be. For such a hunger for material needs does not bring us anywhere. Maybe for a little while it would satisfy our appetite, but not for very long. Wealth and luxury and an easy life do not give us any satisfaction if we do not have peace in our hearts. And peace in our hearts is only there if we put our whole life in the hands of the Lord. We do not need a whole lot of money

for that, or a famous reputation, or a strong and healthy body and a lot of brains. All we need for that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love for the Lord Who give us His Son as our Redeemer. And all we have to do for that is give our heart to the Lord, and pray to Him for help and guidance. That is what we do when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." That means, "Take care of us also today. There are difficult assignments, there is much pain, much uncertainty, much loneliness, it is hard to make ends meet. But Thou art there, and Thou wilt take care of us also today." That everyday prayer for our daily bread gives hope and certainty and peace.

Are we all allowed to pray like that? Yes, all God's children have received that tool, because the Lord Jesus Christ has paid for all our sins. He makes it possible for us to appear before God's holy throne with our prayer for our daily needs. His Holy Spirit works the desire to pray into our hearts. He helps us to long for the things of the Lord, and not for the things of the world. He helps us to seek first His kingdom and his righteousness. And then everything else will be given to us as well. If we think of all our material needs, then there will be no rest, but only a hunger for more and more, and there will be no room left for the Lord and His kingdom. But when we listen to the Holy Spirit, God's things will be first in our lives, and He will take care of the rest. That means that also our future is safe in His hands. The difficulties that we have to endure now are not here to stay. For all those who seek first His kingdom and His righteousness the Lord Jesus Christ prepared a future of everlasting joy. That gives us hope, that gives us certainty, that gives us peace.

*No king is saved by his great army;  
By strength the mighty are not freed.  
A horse of war will bring no victory;  
In vain the warrior trusts his steed.  
But the LORD our Saviour  
Looks on those with favour  
Who His mercy trust.  
Yea, though famine grieve them,  
He will never leave them  
Prey to death and dust.* Psalm 33:5

## Birthdays in February:

### 12. Conny van Amerongen

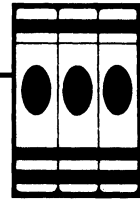
Conny moved away from home some months ago. She now lives in an apartment in Orangeville. This is a major change in her life, and we hope that she will continue to adjust to her new environment. We are thankful with Conny that this move was possible. Her new address is:  
35 Bredin Pky, #606, Orangeville, ON L9X 3X1

### 18. Cora Schoonhoven,

24 James Speight, Markham, ON L3P 3G4

Happy Birthday to both of you.  
Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0



## Renewing interest in eschatology

It is a blessing for Christians to think beyond the horizons of observable human existence. Abraham Kuyper had once said, "The majority of Christians do not think beyond their own grave." One is not inclined to dispute Kuyper on this point. Anything that might dispose us to think about the doctrine of last things (or eschatology) is, therefore, welcome.

The reformed churches have long needed a renewed interest in this area of doctrine since the Reformation of the 1500s did not focus much on eschatology. Geerhardus Vos says, "In the period of the Reformation the problem of the obtaining of righteousness before God filled the hearts and minds. For the time this forced the eschatological hope into the background."<sup>1</sup> This does not mean, of course, that they were silent on this subject. Calvin ran up against the Anabaptist idea that the human soul fell asleep after death and only woke up after the cosmic resurrection of the dead; he refuted this idea in his tract, "Psychopannichia." Many sections of his *Institutes* touch on the doctrine of eschatology as well (for instance, III.ix,x,xxv), but Vos' point is that Calvin, like the other reformers did not treat this doctrine systematically as they did the doctrines of God, of man, of salvation and of the church.

Many have criticized what appears to be a marginal place given to this doctrine in traditional reformed theology. Karl Barth, in his commentary on Romans (1919) characterized the position of eschatology as "a short and perfectly harmless closing chapter in dogmatics." Jurgen Moltman in his book *The Theology of Hope* (1967) stressed how essential eschatology is in the Scriptures, stating, "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatological, is hope, forward looking and forward moving."

Although it is well-known that both Barth and Moltman often strayed from the truth of God's word, they are correct in pointing out that eschatology

lies at the heart of the biblical revelation. Vos affirms this too when he writes that "the eschatological strand is the most systematic in the entire fabric of the Pauline thought-world. For it now appears that the closely interwoven soteristic tissue derives its pattern from the eschatological scheme, which bears all the marks of having had precedence in his mind."<sup>2</sup> Herman Ridderbos has shown, in his book *The Coming of the Kingdom* (1952), that eschatology lies at the heart of the gospels as well. It is, therefore, a valid conclusion to say that eschatology is central to the biblical message and therefore deserves thorough treatment in reformed theology.

Yet, Christians often shrink back from this area of doctrine. Such topics as the state of the soul after death, the nature of the final judgment, the tribulation, the antichrist, the millennium and so forth, are topics which Christians address only with some misgiving. But if it is true that the doctrine of the last things is central to the Scriptures, then Christians may not shrink back from it. This is all the more true when one considers the fact that many sects have deviated from the truth especially on the basis of outlandish eschatologies. In the recent past, the world was stunned to see how many human lives were sacrificed to bizarre eschatological dreams first of David Koresh in Waco, Texas, and then of the Solar Temple cult in Quebec and Switzerland.

To simply say that article 37 of the Belgic Confession contains all that reformed believers need to know concerning the last things is not enough. It is only a confessional starting point. The confessions are intended to help and guide Christians as they examine Scriptures. Such an address as was recently held at a Men's League Day on the nature of the antichrist is an excellent example of people being led from the confessions into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> Such topics should find their way more often onto the agenda of Bible study societies.

### ***The Return of Christ,* G.C. Berkouwer**

With that idea in mind, three books are here presented and recommended for the interest of the reader, each with its own virtues. The first book is that of G.C. Berkouwer, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology of the Free University of Amsterdam, entitled, *The Return of Christ*.<sup>4</sup> This is just one of the 13 volumes in his series on Dogmatic studies. One acquainted with his other works will find the familiar pattern which characterizes Berkouwer's other volumes: an in-depth study that interacts with underlying thoughts and presuppositions. Berkouwer's books are not always easy to read, but this volume is rewarding. His discussion in chapter 2 on the "intermediate state," that is, the status of the soul after bodily death until the resurrection, is penetrating; his treatment of OT eschatology in chapter 6 is refreshing since it not only puts to rest common misconceptions about this subject, but he draws out its significance. His 12th chapter entitled *Visio Dei* (the vision of God) is a topic which, as he says, "often receives only token appraisal in dogmatics," but demands thorough treatment since it is the central hope for those who love God. Berkouwer provides a delightful guided tour through the Scriptures and through the history of this doctrine. Students of the Bible will be no less interested in what Berkouwer writes on the nature of the new earth, the significance of Israel, the antichrist, the millennium and so on. Although this book is out of print, it can usually be obtained through reformed used book stores.

### ***The Bible and the Future,* Anthony Hoekema**

A book which is currently in print is written by Anthony Hoekema, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, entitled *The Bible and the Future*.<sup>5</sup> This is the first of his two major contributions

to the field of reformed dogmatics; his second is entitled, *Created in God's Image*. Many of Hoekema's chapters echo Berkouwer's (for instance, they both have chapters on "The Signs of the Time," "The New Earth" and "The Millennium"), though Hoekema departs from Berkouwer as well, especially in the first section where he shows, for instance, that the last days has its root in Genesis 3:15; in the second section of this book, he investigates other millennial views more thoroughly than Berkouwer. Nevertheless, there are many similarities between these books. *The Bible and the Future* is, however, more useful to the average reader. It has less depth, but at the same time, greater clarity of expression. It is also easier to find one's way through a particular chapter to discover a specific explanation which one might be seeking. This makes Hoekema's book a highly recommended volume to serve as a reference for eschatology.

### ***The Bible and the Life Hereafter,* William Hendriksen**

The last book is the most practical of the three. William Hendriksen, well-known for his commentaries on the NT, wrote *The Bible on the Life Hereafter*.<sup>6</sup> It is not a dogmatic handbook (although it could be used that way), but rather a study guide. It consists of 50 brief chapters, each ending with two sets of questions for discussion, one set based on the content of the chapter itself, and one set for further discussion. The title of each chapter is a question which is then answered, such as, "Is there Direct Contact between the Dead and the Living?", "Are Those Who Never Heard the Gospel Saved?", "What is the meaning of the passage, 'And so all Israel shall be saved'?", "What is Armageddon?". This volume comes highly recommended for systematic study. Although it was published 45 years ago, there are many copies in circulation since it has been reprinted at least 10 times.

Any of these three volumes will be an asset to anyone interested in eschatology and will serve to open up a chapter of doctrine which still remains a mystery to many believers. They will help to unfold both the centrality and essential simplicity of eschatology in the Bible.


<sup>1</sup> *The Pauline Eschatology*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.: Phillipsburg, 1930, preface.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>3</sup> See the speech of J.E. Ludwig, "The Antichrist: Principle, Power, People or Person?", *Clarion* 43 # 9,10,11; compare something very similar seven years earlier in the speech of J. de Jong, "The Anti-Christ and the Man of Lawlessness", in *Clarion* 36 # 25; 37# 1,2.

<sup>4</sup> Originally published in Dutch in 1961/63, translated into English by James Van Oosteran, and published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1979, 343 pages.

<sup>6</sup> Published by Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1959, reprinted 10 times by 1982, 222 pages. 

# Annual Meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches

## November 15-17, 1994

Once again, Lynwood, Illinois, was the venue for the annual meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC). Delegates from about 62 member churches came together to sing, fellowship, and debate issues pertaining to their future. What follows is a report of the highlights of these meetings.

After some rousing singing and a devotion, delegates rose to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity and the meeting was declared constituted in the early afternoon of Tuesday, November 15. Elected to the chair was elder Peter Elzinga (who is chairman of the Interim Committee) of Holland, Michigan and the position of vice-chairman went to Ed Kreykes of Sanborn, Iowa.

Since last year, more churches have again joined the ARC, both Independent Christian Reformed Churches as well as some Presbyterian churches. Also a Canadian Reformed Church (Chatsworth) has joined and was at the

meeting with two delegates, Rev. P. Feenstra and elder B. Kapteyn. About half of this congregation is composed of former CRC members.

After regulating some housekeeping matters, the meeting quickly went into committees which studied and prepared reports on the items of the agenda entrusted to them. That evening Dr. P. Y. de Jong gave a much appreciated address entitled "For Such a Time As This, - The Reformed Faith."

### **The Reformed faith for today**

In his speech Dr. De Jong spoke of three main issues: why the Reformed faith is necessary, what is the Reformed faith, and how should we best express the Reformed faith.

The Reformed faith is necessary in the present spiritual warfare, a warfare often denied as so-called churches seek to make friends with the world. He warned against compromise and rela-

tivism and urged his audience to stand up for the truth.

When it came to describing the Reformed faith, Dr. De Jong stressed the absolute sovereignty of God, the perspicuity of Scripture, and the doctrines of sin and salvation. He also stressed the indispensability of the church. Outside the church there is no salvation. This is not a kind of invisible church so that it does not matter to which church you belong, but a true church with the marks of such a church. Christ is always busy gathering His church. Further, he also mentioned the distinctive piety of the Reformed faith, the piety of obedience that springs forth from a true faith.

In answering the question of how we can best express our Reformed faith, Dr. De Jong noted that the church is divided. The gathering of the ARC also testifies to that. He challenged the Independent churches to organize in a Reformed manner and not to go the way of independentism. To those still in

the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), he noted the respect he has for them as long as their voice is still heard. But there is a corporate responsibility. It is not good enough just to withhold quotas. He urged the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. The Word will not return empty. To the observers he expressed gratitude for their presence and reminded them that "we all have our baggage." Some is good, others need discussion. He urged that differences be honestly discussed and noted that God is very fussy about the church. It would be wonderful if within five years there could be a United Reformed Church, – however, not just a large church for its own sake. That could be our downfall.

### **Fraternal delegates**

Wednesday morning was spent in committee (observers were welcome to attend the committee of their choice) and in the afternoon plenary sessions were held. Fraternal delegates were given the floor to give greetings from their respective churches. Rev. N. Rif-ferts spoke on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) and noted among other things their work in Zaire and their sister relationship with the OPC and the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands. Rev. Rif-ferts also noted that two graduates from Mid-America Reformed Seminary serve in the RCUS. Rev. R. Aasman spoke on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (see his speech elsewhere in this issue) and Rev. M. MacDonald spoke on behalf of the Bible Presbyterian Church. He noted that their General Assembly had adopted "Hermeneutical Guidelines for Reformed Unity" at their 58th General Assembly. Finally, Rev. P. Vander Meyden spoke on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches. He explained their historical roots and observed that the Free Reformed Churches now number 15 congregations and 3,500 members. He noted that the Free Reformed Churches are now members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches and in his view North America could have an ecumenical organization of its own.

Conspicuously absent were any delegates from the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). Their 1994 Synod had decided that only if there would be time to discuss "the real issues" between the ARC and the PRC would observers be sent. When this issue was later discussed, it was clear that the ARC was not interested at this time to start a discussion on Protestant Reformed distinc-

tives. Later this matter was referred to the contact committee. (See below.)

It was decided not to grant special causes the privilege of the floor since there was not sufficient time to do justice to them all.

### **Church order**

Two churches (Trinity Reformed in Lethbridge and Aylmer Independent CRC in Aylmer) had overtured the ARC to take steps toward federation; one (Dutton Independent Reformed Church in Dutton) advised against it for the time being. Also, the Church Order Committee (appointed last year with Rev. J. S. Gangar as convener) reported to the meeting by submitting a draft proposal of a Church Order to which the churches could respond so that a more definitive proposal could be submitted, presumably next year. In agreement with their mandate, this committee took as their point of departure the Church Order of Dordt, but also considered other Church Orders.

When the above materials were open for discussion on the basis of an advisory committee's report, it became clear that there were some in the ARC which conceived of the ARC as mainly a vehicle for Presbyterian and Reformed ecumenicity. It was also obvious that the vast majority wanted to work towards federation and warnings against independentism were heard.

In the end, the ARC decided to respond to the various overtures as follows. The Church Order Committee was to deal with the matter of formulating Biblical principles undergirding the Church Order and to make recommendations to the 1995 meeting of ARC. This Committee also had to take into consideration responses from the congregations to the draft Church Order (to be in by March 1, 1995) and submit a proposed Church Order by August 1, 1995 if at all possible. Churches were also asked to submit suggestions for a common name for the churches presently independent or unaffiliated.

It was also decided to add Dr. N. D. Kloosterman to the Church Order Committee in view of his qualifications (he teaches Church Order at Mid-America) and in view of the increased workload of this Committee.

Although some were clearly disappointed that the ARC could not at this time adopt a Church Order and the Independent churches federate, it is better to proceed carefully and more slowly than to quickly adopt something that may give difficulties later. As observers, your Deputies were encouraged by the

excellent brotherly atmosphere and by the clear desire of many to move towards a federation of the Independent CRC churches.

### **The worship services**

On Wednesday evening a variety of matters were dealt with. Of special interest is that the ARC voted down a proposal to appoint a Committee for Reading Services. The task of such a committee would have been to secure, edit, and provide the churches with sermons for the "reading services." Among reasons for the defeat of this proposal was the existence of many tapes with sermons that could be used, as well as the availability of trustworthy printed sermons, like the Canadian Reformed "Preach the Word" series.

It was also decided to appoint a committee with a mandate "to recommend specific Liturgical Forms (Baptism, Lord's Supper, Profession of Faith, discipline, ordination and installation, and marriage) and a specific Form of Subscription for use in the churches." Appointed to this Committee were Dr. P. Y. De Jong, Rev. J. Julien, Rev. R. B. Lanning, and elder C. Wierenga.

### **Travel expense equalization**

On Thursday morning discussion continued on overtures from Calgary (Bethel Independent CRC, Rev. D. Wynia) and Telkwa (Reformed Church, Rev. J. Klazinga). These overtures argued for some sort of mechanism to share travel cost more equitably among the ARC and they sparked some interesting discussion. There was vigorous opposition to these proposals. Some reasons given for being opposed included: it looked like a tax on the churches; support for the ARC was soft in some churches and if it would cost more they may leave; it smacks of hierarchy. The churches represented were clearly very skittish on this point. It was finally decided that:

The ARC urges those churches who need assistance in sending delegates to the annual ARC meeting to request such help from other churches.

### **The Westminster Standards**

By a two-thirds vote in favour (as required by the constitution), it was decided to revise the Purpose of the Alliance and the Basic Confessional Statement so that besides the Three Forms of Unity, also the Westminster Standards are included. Thus the revised statement of purpose reads as follows:

The Alliance of Reformed Churches is an association of churches that

are united in an effort to give effective testimony to the truth of the Word of God as it is set forth in either the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards, and to assist the member churches in promoting ecclesiastical unity and Biblical obedience among the people of God.

Within the adopted motion it was also noted that "this decision does not intend to prejudice the Alliance's decision of last year which recognized the "need of Independent Churches within its midst to federate while continuing their relationship with the Alliance for mutual benefit and support."

It was also decided to appoint a committee "to study the differences between these legitimate and Reformed Confessions." As ground was given that "such a study is necessary to demonstrate to the churches the unity between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards and to identify any differences which may exist between them."

Appointed to this Committee were Rev. J. Dodds, Dr. N. D. Kloosterman, Mr. D. A. Kloosterman, Rev. R. B. Lanning, Rev. D. Royall, Dr. R. Venema, Rev. G. I. Williamson and Mr. P. Yonker. This committee is to report next year.

### The ARC and ecumenicity

The previous meeting of the ARC had mandated a committee to contact the ICRC and the International Reformed Fellowship with a view to whether closer fellowship with these organizations would be feasible or desirable. A report

with information and recommendations was to be submitted. This committee had also been charged to contact other Reformed churches with the questions: Are you interested in working towards a federative unity and if so, what procedure would you suggest?

This committee composed of Independent CRC churches in Edmonton, Lethbridge and Calgary reported that they had contacted the different organizations and churches. With respect to the latter, they had received responses only from the Canadian Reformed Churches (from the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity) and from three Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. The responses were all positive.

In view of the above mandate and response, the Committee's report was disappointingly brief and incomplete since it contained no recommendations for further action. It was also disappointing that it had not been placed by them on the provisional agenda of the ARC and was only distributed near the end of the meetings. No consistory had an opportunity to study it before hand and the delegates hardly had time to read it properly. Also, the (brief) report simply passed on the correspondence and drew no implications from it.

In the discussion that followed, appreciation was expressed for the correspondence received and regret was voiced for the late arrival of the materials. The ARC decided to dismiss the committee since its mandate was done and a new committee for contact would be appointed. Its mandate would be to study the letters received and to take

such action as it deems necessary. Also they would be in touch with the Protestant Reformed Churches respecting their concerns.

### Confessional conference

Rev. P. Murphy reported that the response to the Confessional Conferences had been poor and that they recommended that no further meetings be held. (A final meeting on ecclesiology had been planned.) They would maintain their organizational structure, but would not organize any further meeting unless asked to do so.

### Conclusion

After the close of the meeting of the ARC, churches which were interested in federating met briefly. Many churches stayed for this meeting and there is clearly much support for federating, especially it seems among the Canadian churches. We can expect action on this, probably as early as next spring.

Although we were only there as observers, it was good that the Canadian Reformed Churches again had representatives at these meetings. Our presence is appreciated and we were able to meet and speak to many brothers about the issues that were being discussed. May the federating of these churches take place soon and may contacts intensify both on the local level as well as with the new federation that will hopefully come about. May the Lord bring together those who confess the same precious Reformed faith!

R. Aasman and C. Van Dam,  
with the assistance of P. Feenstra **C**

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## Text of observer's speech at ARC 1994

### Esteemed brothers:

Thank you for the invitation to this Alliance meeting. We consider it a privilege to be present as observers of the Canadian Reformed Churches and we pass on the greetings of these churches. Since we have a General Synod only once every three years, the next being 1995, there is no official communication from a Synod. However, Dr. C. VanDam and I are officially here as deputies who were appointed by Synod Lincoln 1992 for the purpose of promoting ecclesiastical unity.

The Canadian Reformed Churches are very interested in and appreciative of what is happening in the ARC. Most

importantly, we give thanks to our God for the fact that the churches in the Alliance desire to be faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions. There is also appreciation for the fact that you are resisting the spirit of independentism, as witnessed by some of the decisions you took at the previous Alliance meeting. With thanksgiving to the Lord we note that in several local settings there is good communication and fellowship between Canadian Reformed and Independent Reformed Churches. May the Lord continue to bless you in the laudable endeavour of true ecumenical unity.

Our committee of Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity has


drafted and published a discussion paper on pursuing ecclesiastical unity. This was published in *Clarion* of Feb. 11, 1994 and *Christian Renewal* of Mar. 7, 1994, and I understand it is being distributed to the Alliance delegates. You will see that the Canadian Reformed Churches do desire a Biblical ecclesiastical unity not just in word but also in deed. Indeed this has always been our desire. You are probably aware that the Canadian Reformed Churches have celebrated this year their 50th anniversary of the Liberation from the synodical churches in the Netherlands. In the **Act of Liberation or Return**, this statement was made: *Further we are willing to maintain fellowship*

as quickly as possible with all believers, wheresoever the Son of God has gathered them or ever will again gather them. This includes all those who avoid the ungodly path of sectarian and uncatholic independence and isolation on which these (synodical) churches have now set out, and who will be prepared with us to stand on or come to stand on the foundation of the adopted Forms of Unity alone. In keeping with this spirit of the Liberation, we desire, by God's grace, to fulfil our ecumenical task. It is

only natural that we should speak about ecumenical unity with the churches of the Alliance who have experienced or are experiencing the same things that we did half a century ago.

Brothers, we wish you the Lord's blessings at these Alliance meetings, and in your continual struggle to remain faithful to the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. Rest assured that you are often in the prayers which are offered from the pulpits and homes within the Canadi-

an Reformed Churches. It is our hope and prayer that along the glorious road of Jesus Christ's church-gathering work, we as reformed churches may also seek a unity where we stand together, able to assist each other in these times of terrible apostasy in our society, and able to present a clear witness to the world of the light which shines in darkness, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

R. Aasman 

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Dear Editor:

Re: the letter to the editor (Volume 43, No. 20) by Dr. P. Janson: of communal cup vs. individual cups.

When this subject of communal cup vs. individual cups is discussed we should not become involved in subjectivistic relativism but rather remain Christocentric in focus. I quote from the Belgic Confession, Article 35, paragraph 4, "To represent to us the spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ has instituted earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body and wine as a sacrament of his blood." and "... so certainly do we receive by faith, as the hand and mouth of our soul, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Saviour, in our souls for our spiritual life." The focus is the redeeming work of Christ and how we share in that redemption, and not on the delivery system of the wine or bread.

In Orangeville we have used individual cups for a number of years. This came about through the advisement of some brothers and sisters, myself included.

The author of the letter wishes to discuss public health issues. I agree when the author states that "one does not get AIDS from the common cup." The rest of his arguments on cleanliness are, however, very weak. I can only trust that the caretaker or whoever prepares the individual cups washes his or her hands diligently before handling them. Having practiced emergency medicine for a number of years, I have noted, and this is also documented, that dog bites to humans occasionally become infected, cat bites to humans usually become infected and human bites to humans always become infected. The human mouth is a sewer of bacteria, viruses, etc. Superimposed on this,

lipstick on the common cup and bread crumbs floating in the wine of the common cup make the use of this less than appealing.

One of the most common means of spreading communicable disease is via saliva and droplet spray from the respiratory tract. Unwashed hands can also spread disease but this occurs more frequently in pediatric and geriatric age groups. The author states that "moreover, the common cup is, from a hygienic point of view of disease control the cleanest means for Holy Communion – more sanitary, indeed than individual cups." This, I think, has been shown to be unsubstantiated and plainly not true.

The author's argument is further weakened by the fact that the practice in our Reformed churches, both in the Netherlands and North America, has not used a common cup in decades. Any churches I have visited have used common cups or individual cups.

In that respect we as reformed people should not become "hung up" on the delivery system of the wine. Let us rather focus on the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ in His sacrifice on the cross as the only way of our salvation.

Yours in Christ,  
G. Veenman, M.D.

### Dear Editor:

I am writing in connection with a letter to the editor by Rev. B.R. Hofford, which was published in the October 21, 1994 issue of *Clarion* and responded to by Prof. C. Van Dam.

I am in agreement with Prof. Van Dam when he states that it would be unfair to judge either the Canadian Reformed Churches or the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on the basis of syllogisms which may be found with individual members.

However it must be stated that Rev. Hofford in his letter deals with syllogisms which are found *within the decisions* of the major ecclesiastical assemblies of the OPC, specifically concerning the fencing of the Lord's Supper. There is a *significant difference* between a syllogism that is found with an individual member and a syllogism that is wrapped into a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly. This difference may be compared to a scriptural tolerance on the basis of a lack of understanding and an unscriptural tolerance of false doctrine (cf. Prof. J. Kamphuis "The Schism Unmasked" in *Lux Mundi*, December 1988).

Rev. Hofford has shown in his letter the consequence of having syllogisms underlie decisions of the OPC. With the syllogism as a basis, guests from non-sister churches may, without an examination, participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

In his response I believe Prof. Van Dam has unfairly characterized the syllogisms identified by Rev. Hofford as only syllogisms found with individual members in the OPC. Except for implicitly admitting that they exist among the individual members, Prof. Van Dam has not dealt with the assertion that these syllogisms have *affected ecclesiastical decisions* made by the OPC.

One of the items on the agenda of the forthcoming General Synod is certain to be the adoption of a sister church relationship with the OPC. If we fail to properly address the "fencing" issue, together with the underlying syllogisms, we may find that at our 1995 Synod we *accept* exactly what we have *rejected* at previous synods (cf. Acts of Synod 1986 - Article 184).

With brotherly greetings,  
John Vantil



## Dear Editor:

It is with some reservation that I write to you, yet I feel a few thoughts must be forwarded after reading our "News Medley" of November 18, 1994. If I read between the lines, I receive the distinct impression that the "East" seems to be lagging behind in its support of the Teachers' College and also the "Women's Saving Action for the Theological College." A "discrepancy" is talked about and the question is asked, "Are we taking things for granted?" Although I do not speak on behalf of the "East" permit me some remarks. The matter of "local society support" for the Teachers' College has in the past been a consideration for various school boards. In some cases the membership has decided that this support should be handled by the members individually and boards have encouraged their members to do so. Was this a selfish decision and did it reflect negative feelings towards the Teachers' College? I think not. What it reflected in some cases was a very realistic approach as to what a school society should be involved in, namely, the education of its students, our children. This certainly included on a broader scale teacher training, a very important and worthwhile endeavour, yet to tie the cost of this training to the local school budget was deemed by the majority not to be the desired method. When we assessed what a family with children in Guido de Brès and an elementary school was obligated to pay (presently approx. \$800/month) any additional amounts outside of this direct cost had to be considered very carefully. When we compare this cost to the cost borne by our western brothers and sisters particularly in the valley, because of the level of sup-

port received from the provincial government, maybe we can begin to understand why their decision to support the Teachers' College as societies was somewhat easier to make. My understanding is that this cost is presently approximately \$490 for a family with children in elementary and high school, a fee which includes Teachers' College support. I realize that this is but one cost we bear as reformed families and that there are church budgets and various other causes which will vary from locality to locality. The societies in the "East" are also undergoing expansion and thus have capital requirements that will impact on each family. Guido de Brès alone has a need to expand that will require approximately \$2,000,000 in the next few years. It is presently also addressing a \$160,000 budget shortfall and is appealing to all who may be able to help alleviate this. If I compare the Teachers' College revenue 1993-1994 (contained in the same issue) 54% of the amount was collected in the West and 46% in the East.

As to the matter of the Women's Saving Action I can offer no comment.

I hope this in some ways help our understanding of these matters and that we all continue to faithfully support the schools and the colleges which the Lord has given us both prayerfully and financially.

Lammert Jagt  
Waterdown, ON

## Dear Editor:


My letter is prompted by what I have been reading lately in "Clarion" and in Classis reports about the acceptance of the Church at Denver in the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The gnawing question that troubles me

is: has Classis Alberta/Manitoba been sufficiently on guard to prevent a violation of Article 74 or our Church Order? Many of our church members still remember the devastating results when in the Reformed Churches before 1942 the major assemblies began lording it over the churches. It became one of the reasons for the Liberation.

The request of the Church at Denver to be admitted to the federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches was rightly directed to a classis of the federation, namely, Classis Alberta/Manitoba. That Classis became convinced that the Church at Denver has the three marks of the true church (the pure preaching of the gospel, pure administration of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline to bring the sinner to repentance). Since the Church at Denver had declared itself willing to subscribe to the confessions and the Church Order adopted in the Canadian Reformed churches, it should have been a great joy for every true church to receive the Church at Denver into the federation.

However, I am perplexed that after the Church at Denver has been received into the federation, three churches of Classis Alberta/Manitoba lord it over the churches of the classical resort by their declaration that they do not recognize the Church at Denver as a church in the federation. The ministers of those three churches have even refused to participate in the examination of Denver's minister.

My prayer is that the Lord may prevent that this attitude will do harm to the peace and good order in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

P. Van Assen  
Edmonton, AB 

## PRESS RELEASE



### Regional Synod West of December 6,7, 1994 at the Providence Canadian Reformed Church building in Edmonton.

1. On behalf of the convening church, the Church at Edmonton-Providence, Rev. R. Aasman calls the meeting to order, he asks that Ps. 133:1,2 be sung, he reads Deut. 18:9-22 and leads in prayer. He welcomes the brothers and remembers that Rev.

P.K.A. DeBoer received and declined a call from the Church at Byford, WA, and Rev. R. Aasman received and declined a call from the Church at West Albany, WA.

2. The credentials are examined and found to be in good order with all primary delegates present.

3. The following brothers are elected to serve Regional Synod as executive officers: chairman, Rev. J. Visscher;

vice-chairman, Rev. R. Aasman; clerk, Rev. E. Kampen. Regional Synod is declared constituted and these brothers take their place. The chairman thanks Synod for the confidence expressed in the choice of officers. He also thanks the Providence Church for the preparations made for this Synod. The agenda is adopted.

4. Several rounds are given on three appeals from the Church at Coaldale.



In closed session there is also a discussion on an appeal from three members of the Church at Denver. It is decided to form four committees to prepare advisory reports regarding these appeals. The committees take the afternoon to prepare their reports and present them to Synod.

a) The Church at Coaldale appeals a decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of May 17, 18, 1994; this Classis stated that Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 8, 9, 1994 made a mistake in receiving the concurring advice of Regional Synod West of December 8, 9, 1993 to admit the Church at Denver into the federation but it could not rescind this decision. Synod decides that Classis Alberta/Manitoba of May, 1994 erred in that the grounds for this decision were insufficient.

5. The chairman closes the meeting by asking that Hymn 58:1,2 be sung and leads in prayer. The next morning, the chairman opens the meeting by asking that Ps. 119:34, 35 be sung, he reads Ps. 46 and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

6. a) The Church at Coaldale appeals a decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 8, 9, 1994 which received the concurring advice of Regional Synod West of December 8, 9, 1993 to admit the Church at Denver into the federation. The Church at Coaldale's grounds are that Classis did not do justice to letters from the Churches at Coaldale and Taber, to serious questions raised by Regional Synod West 1993, and to Scripture. This appeal is not upheld.

b) Three members of the Church at Denver appeal a decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of Oct.11, 12, 1994 regarding their appeals to that Classis. This matter is dealt with in closed session.

c) The Church at Coaldale appeals a decision of Classis Alberta/Manitoba of March 8, 9, 1994 which states that Rev. M. Pollock's vows in the OPC did not oblige him to follow the process of appeal in the OPC. Synod decides that the Church at Coaldale has a legitimate concern that the matter of the vows was not properly resolved by Classis.

#### 7. Reports.

a) Favourable reports from the deputies ad art. 48 C.O. re peremptory examinations of candidate Dr. J. Boersma, candidate J. Louwerse and Rev. M. Pollock are gratefully received.

b) An auditor's report on the books of the Regional Synod treasurer from the time period of Nov. 1, 1993 to Oct. 31, 1994 is gratefully received and the treasurer is released of his responsibility for this time period.

#### 8. Appointments.

a) Delegates for General Synod: ministers delegated are Revs. R. Aasman, E. Kampen, J. Visscher and J.D. Wielenga; alternates are (in order) Revs. R.A. Schouten, J. Moesker, G. Ph. VanPopta and C. VanSpronsen. Elders delegated are Brs. H.A. Berends, L. Stam, T. VanPopta and I. Veurink; alternates are (in order) Brs. J. Kuik, C. Hoogerdijk, P. DeBoer and R. Koat.

b) Nominations for the Board of Governors for the Theological College are Revs. R. Aasman, C. VanSpronsen and J. Visscher; alternates are (in order)

Revs. J. Moesker, P.K.A. DeBoer and R.A. Schouten.

c) Br. H. Lubbers is reappointed as treasurer of Regional Synod. It is decided to reimburse delegate's wage claims to a maximum of \$150.00 per day or a maximum of \$750.00 per week. This is for those delegated to General Synod.

d) Church for Keeping of the Archives: the Church at Edmonton-Providence is reappointed.

e) Church for Inspection of the Archives: the Church at Edmonton-Immanuel is reappointed.

f) Deputies ad art. 48 C.O. For Classis Alberta/Manitoba: Revs. P.K.A. DeBoer and J.D. Wielenga; alternates (in order): Revs. E.J. Tiggelaar and R. Aasman. For Classis Pacific: Revs. C. VanSpronsen and J. Visscher; alternates (in order): Revs. E. Kampen and J. Moesker.

9. Arrangements for next Regional Synod. Convening church: Church at Langley; place: Langley, BC; date: Dec. 5, 1995 at 9 am.

10. Personal Question Period is held.

11. The chairman notes that there is no reason for brotherly censure according to art. 44 C.O. The chairman gives thanks that there was a good brotherly spirit at this meeting.

12. The Acts are adopted and the Press Release is approved.

13. The chairman again thanks for the cooperation among the brothers. Hymn 40:1,2 is sung and the vice-chairman closes in prayer.

R. Aasman **C**

## OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty

### Dear Busy Beavers,

Well, here we are at the beginning of another new year. The Christmas holidays are past again, and we're back at work or school. So what really is new?

We have a new calendar on the wall, and when we write the date we have to remember to write the year 1995, and life goes on as always.

But here is something to think about.

A long time ago a prophet of the LORD was thinking about all the things that happened in his life. His name was Jeremiah. He had a difficult job preaching to the people of Israel because they didn't want to listen to the LORD's words. Sometimes it even seemed to Jeremiah that the LORD was against him. Then he remembered this,

*"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,  
His mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is Thy faithfulness.  
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,  
"therefore I will hope in Him."*

So when we read God's Word, we see that the LORD's care and love for us is new every day. Maybe we get so used to the way He cares for us that we don't think about it every day. But as we can see in the Bible, it is wonderful the way the LORD cares for us. So let's think about it when we wake up in the morning, "God's mercies are new today, too!"



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

To all the Busy Beavers that are celebrating their birthdays in this, the first month of the year, Happy Birthday! May the LORD guide you through another year of your life. Hope you have a wonderful day celebrating with your family and friends.

Brenda Dalhuisen	4	Jennifer Postma	18
Jessica Linde	5	Tracy Breukelman	20
Karina VanLaar	7	Earle Veenendaal	20
Sharalee VandenBos	9	Karen DeBoer	20
Jodi Wemekamp	10	Tanya Strating	20
Brenda Grim	12	Marian VanderVeen	23
Cindy Beijes	13	Alisha Hummel	24
Robin Bosscher	13	Corrine Heemsker	25
Marian Wierenga	15	Brian DeGelder	30
Jennifer Bisschop	16		

## ON THE SLOPES

By Busy Beaver *Francine VanWoudenberg*

*Swoosh! Swoosh!  
Down the slopes.  
Dodging, turning,  
With soaring hopes,  
That we'll get to the bottom alive,  
One wrong move,  
And into the snowbank you'll dive.  
The wind in the air,  
Whipping back your hair,  
As you fly at breakneck speed,  
Fast as a mighty steed.  
But just as you start,  
To really enjoy it,  
Soon you reach the bottom.  
But up you go,  
Higher and higher as on the chair,  
Finally, you reach the top  
And you take off again, unable to stop!  
What danger and excitement  
You fell as you go,  
This kind of excitement, only skiers know.*

# Quiz Time!

## MUSIC WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Dorothy Gunnink*

L	O	U	D	M	T	U	F	L	E	P		<b>Words to look for:</b> Organ Cello Recorder Notes Flute Trumpet Drum Staff Loud Soft Piano
Q	R	N	C	L	A	L	V	T	R	Y	Z	
E	G	I	O	K	M	Q	S					
U	W	Y	Z	R	F	O	M	T	U	C	Q	
C	M	U	S	P	G	O	M	S	C	U	N	
Z	P	Z	Y	S	U	V	E	R	U	E	P	
G	I	D	D	U	N	I	K	T	J	J	N	
W	A	O	R	D	P	Z	L	A	U	U	Q	
M	N	T	U	F	Q	D	D	L	M	D	G	
F	O	T	M	M	I	S	F	S	I	S	S	
P	I	M	S	Z	Q	P	T	N	O	E	S	
N	P	G	J	G	I	P	R	O	N	Q	P	
S	U	I										
G	D	R	O	H	Y	T	F	T	W	G	W	
G	R	J	A	F	S	A	I	H	Q	K	S	
T	T	F										

## BIBLE PUZZLE

Here's a Bible puzzle about sight. Sometimes we forget how very important our sight is. Fill in the blanks with the name of the person who saw something.

- \_\_\_\_\_ saw a man in a chariot on a desert road, Acts 8:26-27.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw a bright light on the Damascus road, Acts 9:1-3;26:13.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw a sheet descending with four-footed beasts, creeping things and fowl, Acts 10: 9-12.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw the LORD "high and lifted up," Isaiah 6:1.
- \_\_\_\_\_ was old when he saw "the LORD's Christ," Luke 2:25-26.
- \_\_\_\_\_ when he was being stoned to death, saw Jesus in the heavens, Acts 7: 55,59.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw a woman bathing and later sinned because of it, 2 Samuel 11:2-4.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw Elijah go up in a chariot of fire, 2 Kings 2:11-12.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw an angel in a vision who told him to send to Joppa for Peter, Acts 10: 3-5.
- \_\_\_\_\_ saw the fingers of a man's hand write on the wall, Daniel 5:15.

## BOOK OF PRAISE PUZZLE

By Busy Beaver *Nicolas Koolsbergen*

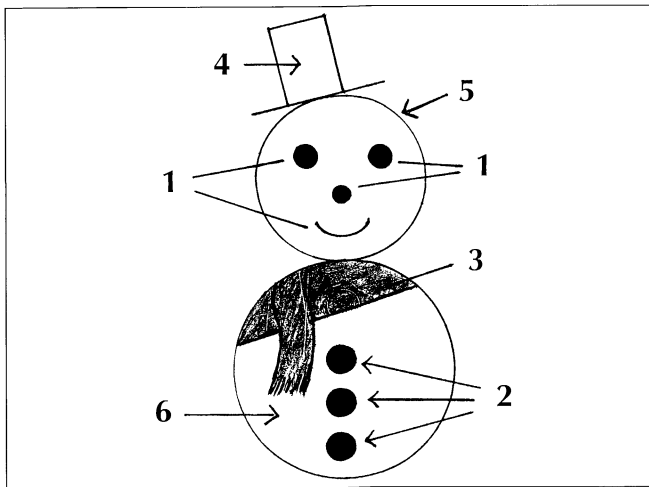
This is the "Book of Praise" puzzle. Take you *Book of Praise* and first look for the page number. ("P"). Then count down to the number of lines, marked "L". After that, find the number of the word on that line, marked "W". This will give you each clue: Have fun finding the text each set of letters makes.

Puzzle No. 1			Puzzle No. 2.		
P. 378	L. 3	W. 1	P. 15	L. 2	W. 3
P. 294	L. 8	W. 5	P. 393	L. 4	W. 1
P. 342	L. 8	W. 2	P. 39	L. 13	W. 2
P. 3	L. 7	W. 7	P. 321	L. 10	W. 7
P. 452	L. 24	W. 5	P. 633	L. 23	W. 2
P. 529	L. 2	W. 1	P. 203	L. 2	W. 3
P. 68	L. 17	W. 2	P. 308	L. 2	W. 3
P. 324	L. 2	W. 2	P. 629	L. 8	W. 11
P. 401	L. 4	W. 2	P. 536	L. 6	W. 6
P. 245	L. 5	W. 7	P. 320	L. 4	W. 3
P. 279	L. 12	W. 7	P. 505	L. 2	W. 1
P. 447	L. 2	W. 1	P. 40	L. 10	W. 4
P. 372	L. 5	W. 1	P. 277	L. 18	W. 3
P. 49	L. 9	W. 1	P. 389	L. 13	W. 4
P. 122	L. 7	W. 2	P. 138	L. 23	W. 6
P. 410	L. 17	W. 8	P. 64	L. 19	W. 2
P. 69	L. 16	W. 3	P. 404	L. 8	W. 3
P. 342	L. 1	W. 2	P. 153	L. 6	W. 5
P. 295	L. 21	W. 1	P. 342	L. 16	W. 4
P. 660	L. 8	W. 7			
P. 315	L. 5	W. 4			

Look for the answers in the next *Clarion* !!

## BUILD A SNOWMAN

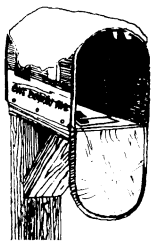
Want to Build a Snowman? And keep warm and dry at the same time? Try this game!!



The object of this game is to be the FIRST person to finish a drawing of a snowman by throwing a die.

The correct number must be thrown before each part of the snowman can be drawn in this order:

body (6); head (5); hat (4); scarf (3); three buttons (2 for each); eyes, then nose, and mouth (1 for each).



## FROM THE MAILBOX

### Lots and lots of letters today!

Hello, *Nelena Bergsma*. It was good to hear from you again. Did you find it interesting to study Australia? I hope your neck and back are feeling better after your fall.

Do you know yet if you are going for that trail ride? Bye, *Nelena*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Karina VanLaar*! I hope you enjoy being a member of the Club. Do you have any hobbies, *Karina*? Write and tell me about them. Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, too, *Byron Tuininga*! It's a good thing that you share the puzzles with your sisters! Do you help your dad with the cows? How did that honey taste? Bye, *Byron*.

Welcome to the Club, *Melissa Tuininga*. How many students are in your Grade 1 and 2 class? Thank you for an interesting and neat letter. It is good to hear that you like going to church. You're right, we can sure learn a lot there! Are you skiing down the hill with your brother these winter days? Bye, *Melissa*.

Hi, *Erin Buitenwerf*. How are you doing? Do you have music lessons of any kind? Thanks for the interesting puzzle. Bye, *Erin*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Margriet Snip*. Please put your address on your next letter so I can send you a membership card. What kind of books do you like to read? It sounds like you are pretty busy, too, selling things. What do you sell? Bye, *Margriet*.

Hi, *Katherine Wiersema*. I hope you get a penpal! Thanks for making a puzzle. Were your Christmas holidays fun? Bye, *Katherine*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Charlene Tuininga*. I guess you have to help out a lot, seeing as you have a big family! Besides writing letters and poems, do you also like reading? Hope to hear from you soon! Bye, *Charlene*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, too, *Kimberly Tuininga*. What do you enjoy most about school? I think it would be fun to live on a farm. There is always lots to do. I hope you get a penpal soon. Bye, *Kimberly*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Nicholas Koolsbergen*. I hope you do enjoy being a member of this Club. Thanks for the different and challenging puzzle that you and your parents thought up. I think the other Busy Beavers will like it! Bye, *Nicholas*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Caitlin Meints*. What kinds of things do you like doing besides rollerblading, skating and swimming? How many brothers do you have? Thanks for the puzzle you sent in, *Caitlin*. Bye.

Hi, *Alicia Janssens*. How are you doing? Did you have a good Christmas holiday? How is your family doing? Bye, *Alicia*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Michael Janssens*. What kind of games do you like to play on the computer? Do you also enjoy sports, *Michael*? Hope to hear from you soon. Bye.

Hi, *Eritia Smit*. It was good to hear from you already. Is your dog fierce, or tame? You probably help out a lot, since you are the oldest girl! Thanks for the picture and the puzzle. Bye, *Eritia*.

Hi, *Rianne Lodder*. What is your new address out in BC? Are you used to living there yet? Thanks for the picture you sent, too. Bye, *Rianne*.

Hello, *Laura Kanis*. It was good to hear from you again. Thanks for the Christmas puzzle. Hope to hear from you again. Bye, *Laura*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Laurence Kingma*. Thanks for your letter and the picture of the windmill. How were your Christmas holidays, *Laurence*? Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jonathan Kingma*. Do you like making puzzles as well as doing them? Send some in if you like. Bye, *Jonathan*.

Hi, *Candace Schuurman*. It was good to hear from you again. Thanks for the nice picture and the puzzle. Sounds like you sure had an exciting birthday party with your friend *Nadine*! Bye, *Candace*.

Some Busy Beavers would also like to have a penpal. Here are their names and addresses.

Erin Buitenwerf (age 8) RR3 Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0	Katherine Wiersema (age 11) Box 69 Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0
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Byron Tuininga (age 11)	Charlene Tuininga (age 9)
Kimberly Tuininga (age 8)	
All these three have this address:	
Box 59 Neerlandia AB T0G 1R0	

### Aunt Betty

c/o the Busy Beaver Club  
Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

Love to you all,  
Aunt Betty 