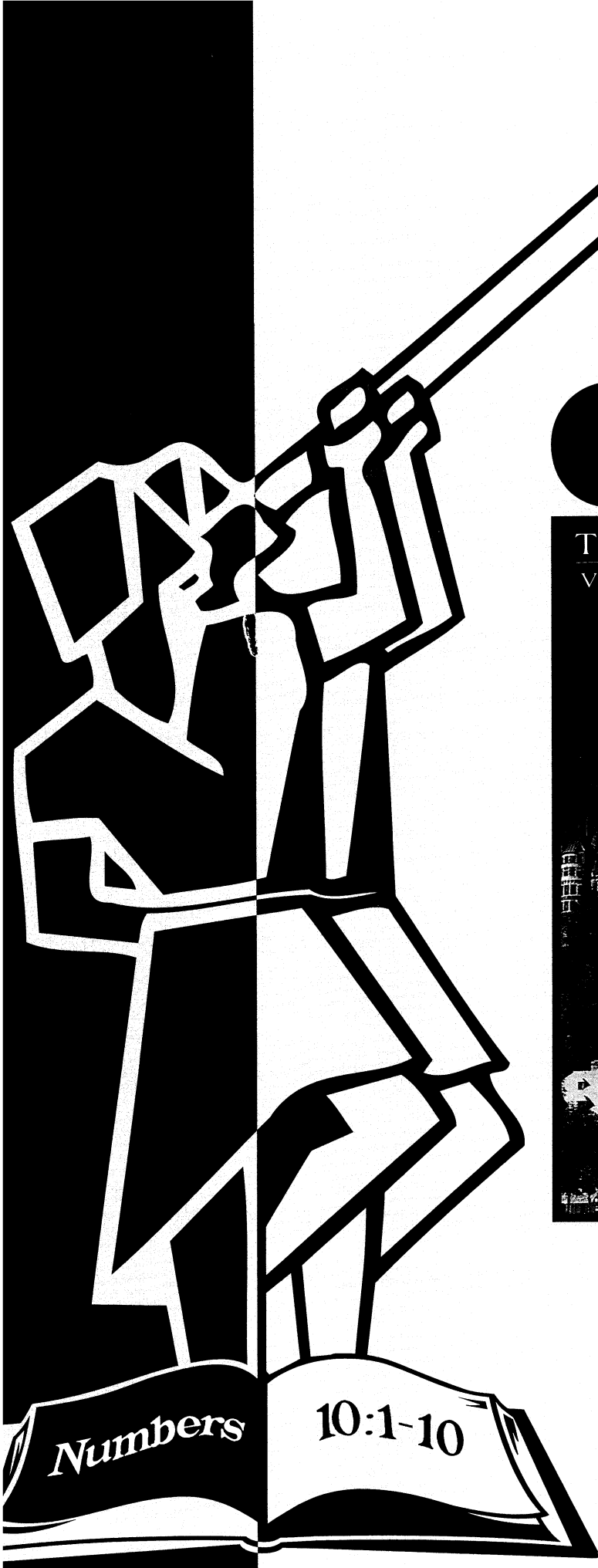
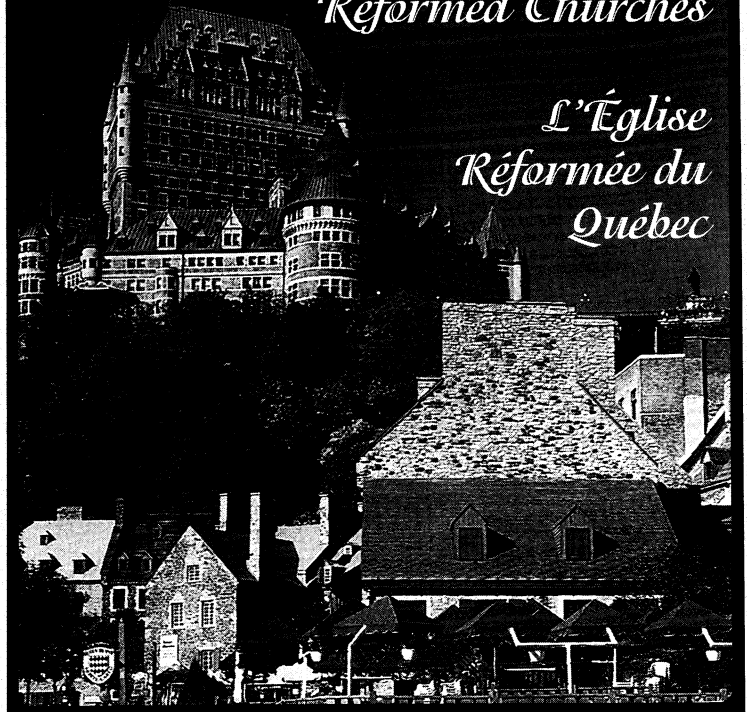


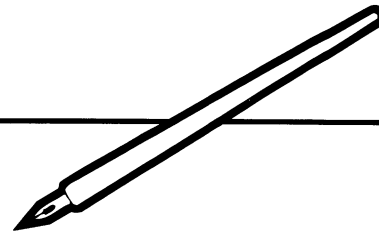
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 44, NO.2 JANUARY 27, 1995

*A Federation of French
Reformed Churches*

*L'Église
Réformée du
Québec*





The only thing that works

How does a church hold on to its members? There are churches in Canada which are losing members by droves. Why are they leaving? Why are church leaders predicting that in a generation or so their congregations will be gone? Protestant churches whose histories are woven into the warp and woof of Canadian history are on the verge of extinction. Where are the saints? Why is it that in many mainline Protestant churches, one will find no more than a few old ladies worshipping on a Sunday morning?

The answer is that these churches have let go of the only thing that works. The only way for a church to hold on to its members is to give the members something to hold on to. The only way for a church to keep its members is to proclaim without any embarrassment the only thing which takes hold of people and keeps hold of them – **the gospel of the free and sovereign grace of God**. When a church lets go of the good news of God's free and sovereign grace, it will lose its members.

The church must proclaim its distinctive message year in and year out. The message is that God sent his only begotten Son to save sinners. The church calls sinners to repentance and commands them to believe. It announces that salvation is by grace alone to be received by faith – faith which is the gift of God kindled in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. It calls sinners to turn their faith inside out into a life of obedience – obedience worked in them by the power of the Holy Spirit. Once the church quits preaching this distinctive message and begins saying the same things the world has already said, it will lose members.

The church must define sin, call sinners to repentance, and proclaim the only answer for sinners. A church which does not oppose the values of the world with the Christian message of salvation but, rather, follows the world will vanish. There is the problem in the mainline churches. Their moral teachings are increasingly derived from contemporary fashion rather than the Word of God. It has become fashionable for church leaders to declare their doubts about Christian doctrine.

For example, in 1988, the United Church of Canada (UCC) published *Membership, Ministry and Human Sexuality: A New Statement*. This is what it said about homosexuality:

We confess our continued confusion and . . . our inability at this time, given our diversity in our understanding of the authority and interpretation of Scripture, to find consensus regarding a Christian understanding of human sexuality, including homosexuality.

Here is one example of a church proclaiming its indecision. Let other churches flaunt their doctrines! Not to know what to believe is acceptable! Agnosticism is now in vogue! The newly elected moderator of the UCC, the Reverend Ms. Marion Best, encourages this agnosticism and doubt. Shortly after her election she said: *"I would like to see doubters' groups and inquirers' groups, where you can come and ask any outrageous question you want, where you can ask, 'Why do I believe this?'"*


It is all right for people to ask outrageous questions, but then the church must provide Biblical answers. The mainline churches seem increasingly uninterested in giving these answers – "in shoving doctrine down peoples' throats."

Thirty years ago, the Anglican Church of Canada commissioned Pierre Berton, an atheist, to write a critique of their church. The goal was to encourage the members to question and explore their faith. Mr. Berton savaged the Anglican Church and the Christian faith in *The Comfortable Pew*. To date, no Anglican apologist has responded. The goal of getting people to question and explore their faith was met but the church did not provide answers to the questions. Either the Anglican Church did not know how to defend itself or it thought a rebuttal would somehow be inappropriate.

But if there are no answers, why have a church? If the church goes no farther than saying that your doubts and questions are valid, why say anything at all? If the church is going to say what the world has already said, why bother make solemn pronouncements?

The comfortable pews in the mainline churches have become empty pews. Membership is dropping steadily and only about 10% of those who declare membership actually attend services.

Let us not attempt to adjust our faith to concur with the world. It is as we begin to say the same thing as the world that we render ourselves redundant. The church which continues to speak with authority and proclaim the ancient Gospel will hold on to its members and win new converts for Christ. People recognize the truth when they hear it. They may not like the truth they hear but they want to hear the truth.

It is a wonderful thing to be able to confess that we receive the Holy Scriptures as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith. *We believe without any doubt all things contained in them . . . because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God (Belgic Confession article 5)*. We believe that. Let us continue to speak accordingly. It's the only thing that works. 

Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 3:17-26

"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out. . . ."

REPENT AND TURN AGAIN

Peter told his audience to repent and turn again. They had delivered up and denied Jesus Christ in the presence of Pilate after he had decided to release him. They had crucified the Holy and Righteous One. They were guilty. But they had acted in ignorance. They had not committed intentional sin with uplifted hand (Num. 15:30-31). They had not committed the sin against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31-32). For those who commit such sin there is no longer an opportunity to repent. Peter knew that they had acted in ignorance.

However, even though they had acted in ignorance, they were nonetheless guilty. And so Peter told them to repent and turn again. He used two words here to describe what his audience needed to do: Repent and return.

They needed to repent. Repent means to change your mind. To repent is to change the way you think about something. First you thought that a certain action was acceptable, but now you have changed your thinking about it. You realize that it is not in accord with the law of God. You feel sorry for what you have done. You feel like your heart has broken. You tell the Lord about it. You confess your sin.

This new way of thinking and your broken heart makes you turn again. You return to the Lord. You change the way you act. Your new way of thinking leads to new behaviour. You make a big U-turn. If you are traveling down a highway and realize that you are headed in the wrong direction, you turn around. You head back. You return.

The Lord calls for both repentance and return. He calls for a change of mind and a change of behaviour. There is little use in repenting without returning. If you receive new insight and realize that a certain action or behaviour is sinful but steadfastly continue in it, your repentance has no value. In fact, you will be running the danger of no longer sinning in ignorance but, instead, with a high hand. Little

opportunity for repentance remains for those who sin intentionally and aggressively.

In Numbers 15:27-29, the LORD said that there was atonement for someone who sinned unwittingly. But this is what the LORD had to say about someone who sinned purposefully, intentionally, against his own better knowledge and judgment:

But the person who does anything with a high hand . . . reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among His people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

On the other hand, going through the right motions without thinking about why you are living as you are has little use as well. If a person does the right things, but not out of faith in God and love for God, his religion has become very formalistic and external. It is an empty ritual, one with the heart and soul ripped out of it. The Pharisees were guilty of this. They had the law of God down pat but no remorse for sin. The Lord Jesus called them white-washed tombs. They looked nice on the outside but were full of rot on the inside.

It is when we repent of sin and return to the Lord that God blots out our sins. For the sake of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God the Father gives us a clean slate. Then we are refreshed. We feel fresh again. We have repented. We have laid our sins at the foot of the cross. We have returned. We begin to live in obedience to the law of God out of thankfulness.

The tiredness is gone. The misery of living in sin is gone. We feel fresh, renewed by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. For He has come to bless us in turning every one of us from our wickedness.

What's inside?

Quebec's place in confederation remains a point of contention. Will it stay in or secede? Quebec and the rest of Canada seem to be inexorably drifting apart. That makes a true blue Canuck sad. All the more reason to note with joy and thanks what happened at the last Classis Ontario North. As you will read in its Press Release, it has recognized a small group of churches in Quebec as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. While the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals fight it out in the Nation's Capital, the church in the Nation's Capital has had very fruitful contact with l'Église Réformée du Québec. In this issue you will find an article, the first of two co-authored by the Rev. P. Bedard of Trois-Rivières and the Rev. J.L. Van Popta of Ottawa, telling of the birth of a federation of French-speaking Reformed churches in Quebec. (The next issue of *Clarion* will contain the concluding article introducing these churches.)

In "Remember your Creator," the youth column, Rev. Schouten responds to 56 pieces of mail he recently received. Is this some new fan club?

This issue also contains the Rev. VanOene's final News Medley. We thank "VO" for his many contributions and look forward to more. Finally, a number of readers express opinions on diverse subjects in letters to the editor.

Happy reading.

GvP

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By R. Schouten

Gender Blending

Some time ago, an article appeared in this section of *Clarion* entitled "Dressed Like Women."¹ In this article, I stated my view that it is inappropriate for males to wear earrings. The grounds for this position were basically twofold.

In the first place, Scripture teaches us that the distinct, created glory of male and female ought to be honoured instead of diminished. In both OT and NT passages, evidence was presented to the effect that God does not approve of modern gender-blending culture. This disapproval also relates to clothing and adornment.

Secondly, it was argued that we ought to resist the trend for men to wear earrings because this fad arises from a corrupt subculture influenced by transvestism, homosexuality and feminism.

In the same article, I asked for response, especially from young people. To my delight, I did receive 56 letters from a Grade eleven Bible class at Credo Christian High School in Langley B.C.² I want to thank all of you and your teacher for taking the time to read, discuss and respond.

Classification of these letters showed only 23% agreement with the views of this writer. In this follow-up article, I want to respond to some of the questions and viewpoints brought forward by the mail.

Although many respondents disagreed with the particular point of the article, it was good to notice nearly universal resistance to modern gender-blending culture. Many of those who had no problem with male earrings nonetheless insisted that clear distinctions between male and female in appearance, dress and societal function should be maintained.

In the Bible

One of the most common objections to the negative view of earrings on a male earlobe was that "in the Bible men wore earrings." Exodus 32:2 and 35:22 were cited as evidence. Evidence suggests that the wearing of earrings by Jewish men was confined to the very

early period of Israelite history, perhaps due to Egyptian influence. However, even in Egypt the general practice was for only females to wear earrings. As a rule, earrings have been considered exclusively feminine in both Israel and Egypt, as well as in Greece, Rome and the western world.³ Only in Middle East cultures were earrings customarily worn by both men and women. Think for example of the Ishmaelites (Judges 8:25).

However, the point of my article was that men and women should dress and adorn themselves in the male or female styles of their own cultures. My argument was that while styles do indeed change, every culture still does maintain a characteristic male or female style and that we do well as Christians to protect such distinctions. This is also the point of the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 11, as explained in the first article.

Molehills into mountains

Some of the respondents expressed the view that the earring issue was trivial. To write an article about it is to make a mountain out of molehills. According to them, we have far more important problems to worry about within the Christian community. Combined with this judgment came also the opinion that God looks upon the heart of man and is not too concerned about how many holes there may or may not be in an earlobe. What counts is that we love the Lord and desire to serve Him in all of life.

It is plain that a young man who wears an earring may nonetheless be on fire with love for Christ. We hope that this is always the case! However, that same young man may yet be making a wrong choice in this particular part of his life. Without full awareness, he participates in something rotten.

In my opinion, we need to resist false dilemmas between "what lives in the heart" and "what appears on the outside." Usually, we would hope that what lives inside also comes to outward expression in lifestyle, dress, attitudes

and so forth. To claim love for God does not exempt a person from self-examination in matters of taste and fashion. Self-examination may show small or great inconsistencies between confessed love for God and actual conduct.

Some of the letters stated: "To me, it doesn't mean anything like what you wrote." My response is that meaning is not purely subjective. Some behaviours can mean more than you think because they carry cultural baggage. The meaning of an event or a certain action or type of dress is determined not just by what a single person might feel. Even if wearing earrings doesn't mean anything to you, it does mean a lot within our culture. To take one other example, consider the wearing of a cross. Someone may say, "To me it's just decoration." Given our cultural history, however, a cross can never be "just fashion."

Seemingly small matters can sometimes serve as windows into broader cultural issues. A question which always leads to helpful insights is "Why?" Why do some young men today feel free to wear earrings while 15 years ago this adornment was never seen? I do believe that the appearance of male earrings in our western culture can be clearly traced to the impact of what I earlier called a "decadent subculture influenced by unisexism, transvestism and feminism."

Maybe there is a mountain out there after all, a large mountain of secular values and styles impacting on the Church of Christ. Think about it. Moles have very poor eyesight. They might easily miss a mountain.

Just fashion

Many of the letters showed strong awareness of the need to study the context of, for example, Paul's remarks about dress in 1 Cor. 11. Concern for context is an essential part of all Bible study. I would only like to express my regret that some young people sometimes fail to study the context of their own rapidly changing culture as intently as they do the context of Scripture.

It seems that there can be a certain eagerness to diminish the impact of some Biblical instruction by pointing to the alleged context. On the other hand, in making cultural choices, there can emerge a closed-minded unwillingness to think about context.

What I mean is that Christian people should habitually ask questions about some new development within the world of music, art, dress and so forth. Specifically, they should ask contextual questions. From where does this trend arise? Who is pushing it? Who's excited about it? What values does it reflect? What's good about it? Does it glorify God? Is it consistent with a Christian image?

Good Bible study with an eye to context needs to be applied with a critical eye cast toward your own culture and its values.

What I'm saying is that not everything is "just fashion." Quite a number of the letters stated that male wearing of earrings was a "fashion statement." Thus, there is an admission here that these earrings do, indeed, form a *statement!* My question is: what kind of a statement? Another question is: are the wearers stating even more than they realize and would like to state? Are they not sending contradictory signals about their place within the overall structure of our culture? On the one hand, they want to be part of the body of Christ, while on the other hand, they are not quite ready to recognize that they are strangers in secular culture.

Girls and jeans

Quite a number of female respondents stated that if men should not wear earrings, then inescapably women should not wear, for example, jeans. Since as a matter of fact, a great many Christian women do wear jeans without any questions asked, why should we now get on the case of men wearing earrings?

It was interesting to notice from my mail that even now, long after the 60's and early 70's when women began to wear jeans, there is still alive a memory of a time when things were different, when women wore dresses and men wore pants. Even modern grade eleven girls know about these prehistoric days.

Because of this memory of a different day, the reference in my previous article to Deut. 22, verse 5 made some of these girls feel uneasy. They were comfortable in their jeans and sweatshirts,

but now feel fidgety because of the Biblical norm against gender-blending.

I think we should let Deut. 22:5 and other Scriptures speak to us in their plain sense, regardless of whether or not they make us feel ill at ease. Otherwise we run the risk of Scripture bending to justify our gender-blending. It may well be that some accepted "fashion statements" of the ladies as well as of the men need a close second look. For example, if for reasons of utility and practicality some women prefer to wear pants on some occasions, should they not strive to wear feminine pants?

As in the previous article, I want to avoid making rules. There is certainly a large element of personal choice when it comes to clothing – as in all areas of culture and taste. Surely, however, it's clear that gender should be obvious no matter what we are wearing. There ought to be a recognizable male and female style.


Critical thinking

I want to end with another appeal for critical thinking among the youth. Critical thinking means showing a large measure of doubt and hesitation and skepticism toward the developments of secular culture. It means putting some distance between yourself and worldly

ideas and lifestyles and dress. Let's learn to discern in all facets of life. Once again, thanks to my respondents. I did appreciate your thoughts and learned a lot from them. I hope to hear from you again!

¹R. Schouten, "Dressed Like Women," *Clarion*, Vol. 43, #7, Aug. 26th, 1994.

²The names of the students are as follows: Susan Adams; Suzanne Aikema; Jennifer Anema; Terence Berends; Christine Bergsma; Juanite Bergsma; Leanne Beukema; Jackie Bikker; Chris Bisschop; Robbie Blanken; Jason Bos; Christina Bredenhof; Reuben Bredenhof; Nicole Broersma; Crystal Buyze; Wenda DeGlint; Lisa Dehaas; Teresa Dehaas; Anna DeVries; Mandy DeWit; Carrie Driegen; Randy Dykstra; Cindy Emmens; Kyra Faber; Sharon Flokstra; Jan Gansekoole; Yvonne Geurts; Becky Hovius; John-Marten Jagersma; Rosanne Kippers; Heather Krabbendam; Pamela Kuntz; Leanne Leyenhorst; Jon Luiten; Melissa Rolleman; Alisa Schouten; Amy Schouten; Joey Schouten; Marnie Stam; Marcel Stam; Maria Stel; Verne Stel; Jack Thalen; Jeremy Trommel; Matt Vandenberg; Mike Vanderugten; Dana Vanderhorst; Liz Vanderpol; Tamara Vandyke; Reuben vanlaar; Will Vanoene; Greg Vanpopta. Last, but surely not least, the name of their teacher is Mrs. Sarah Vanderugten. Thanks!

³See the article entitled "Earring" in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, Vol. 4, page 320 (Chicago: 1991). 



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

SUBSCRIPTION RATES		Regular	Air
FOR 1995		Mail	Mail
Canada*		\$33.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds		\$37.00	\$50.00
International		\$50.00	\$80.00

* Including 7% GST – No. R104293055
Advertisements: \$7.00 per column inch

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Publications Mail Registration No. 1025

ISSN 0383-0438

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L'Église Réformée du Québec

A Federation of French Reformed Churches¹

By P. Bedard*
J. Van Popta

Introduction

The Church of Ottawa has been in contact with a federation of Reformed churches in the Province of Québec: l'Église Réformée du Québec (l'ERQ). The consistory of Ottawa has on going communication with these churches and their assemblies. On Dec. 9, 1994 Ottawa presented an overture to Classis Ontario North asking that Synod 1995 decide that the CndRC's enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with these churches. Classis decided that the information provided by the church of Ottawa demonstrates that l'ERQ can be recognized as a true church of Jesus Christ. Classis, therefore, deemed it warranted that Synod 1995 respond to the ERQ by mandating the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad to intensify and confirm the contact initiated by Ottawa with a view to entering a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This overture will now be presented by the churches of Classis Ontario North to General Synod Abbotsford. In the interest of informing the church members as much as possible, it seems wise to present some facts about this church in Quebec.

Three Mission Projects

L'Église Réformée du Québec was officially established as a federation of Churches on Nov. 6, 1988, after six years of preparation. On that day nine founding local Churches joined together under a draft common church order. These Churches are primarily made up of French speaking Canadians. These Churches had been established by three different and independent mission projects: the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), or the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). As Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, they had rec-



Institut Farel, Charny, Québec

ognized the need for a truly Biblical and Reformed witness in Quebec.

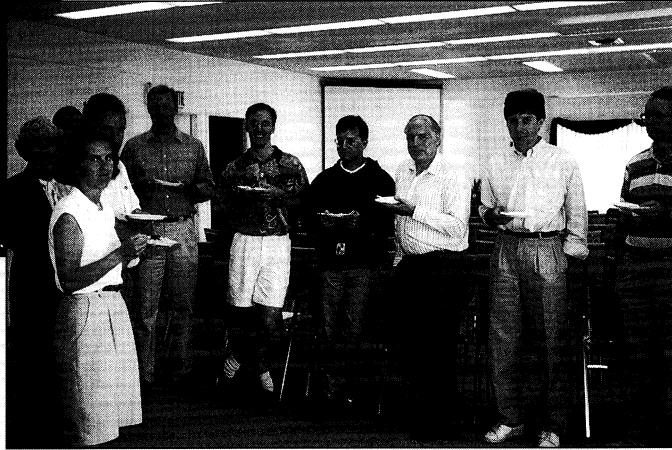
L'ERQ is only six years old in its present structure but its roots are as old as New France. The first Reformed believers arrived in Canada with Champlain in 1603, nearly 400 years ago when the colony of New France was established. Several of the first governors of New France were Huguenots (French Reformed) and until the arrival of the Jesuits in 1625 Reformed believers were influential in the colony's daily life. It was the Jesuits who began systematic and persistent persecution of the Reformed believers. By the time the English gained control of the lower St. Lawrence and of New France in 1759 the Reformed witness had nearly been removed from the Francophone culture. The few remaining Reformed believers then began attending worship services with the English Protestants who traditionally permitted religious freedom. This, however, precipitated the complete loss of a French Reformed church in Quebec.

In 1835 Swiss missionaries arrived to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the natives of Canada. Soon they also came with the hope that they could also proclaim the gospel to Roman Catholic Canadians who were all French speaking. This missionary work successfully established a parish in 1837. Some time later the Swiss missionary society concluded its work and the PCC took up the challenge. It also had the goal to establish indigenous French speaking Reformed Churches, not French congregations in an English language Church. By 1880, 25 parishes along with as many schools had been established. Many of these Reformed believers, none the less, were Anglicized and most of the French Reformed witness was lost.

Alliance Reformee Evangelique du Quebec [AREQ]

The PCC began to lose interest in sustaining its mission work in Quebec and turned its attention to the rapidly developing west. By 1922 there were

Conference participants at Institut Farel



but nine Presbyterian Churches remaining. After the Canadian Church Union of 1925 even less effort was given by the Presbyterian Church to its work in Quebec. By 1975 only three parishes remained. The CRC began its mission work in 1978 and the PCA, via its "Missions to North America" also began an active mission and evangelization project in Quebec. Both the PCA and the CRC believed the goal of missions in this French context was the establishment of independent French speaking Reformed Churches. With the establishment of more local Churches the three mission projects saw a need to work in close cooperation. In 1978 the Alliance Reformée Evangelique was founded with the mandate:

- a) to assist in establishing a theological school;
- b) to publish a French language magazine of Biblical and theological reflection;
- c) to revise and publish French Reformed works.

These efforts were blessed with the opening of the Institut Farel and in the successful launch of the magazine *Parole* as well as the publishing of some theological works in French.

Conseil des Églises Réformées du Québec [CERQ]

By 1984 it became apparent that a more formal structure was needed for the Churches. On Jan. 5, 1984, a resolu-

tion was passed. It stated, "Be it resolved that the Conseil des Églises Réformées du Québec (CERQ) be established and that it include representatives of the Churches and Christian communities who are cooperating in the Reformed mission in Quebec." The stated goals of the CERQ were:

- a) to establish and maintain an official liaison with the PCC, the PCA and the CRC;
- b) to coordinate strategy and activities of the Reformed mission in Quebec;
- c) to assemble the parishes, which result from the Reformed mission, into a visible organized French language Church federation.

Then on Feb. 11 of that year the "mother Churches" were asked:

- a) to agree that the CERQ was spokesman for the Reformed Churches of Quebec;
- b) to accept the creation of a French speaking Reformed Church;
- c) to recognize that the mission of the CERQ is a cooperative mission of PCC, the PCA and the CRC.

The PCA and the CRC agreed. The PCC, however, declined to endorse the concept of an independent French speaking Reformed Church. On the other hand the theology and missionary strategy of the PCC was no longer satisfactory to the CERQ. The PCC magazine *Channels* (Spring/Fall 1988) reported about the decision of the 114th General Assembly of the PCC which cut off-

cial ties to l'ERQ. This news report says in part:

... the real concern of the Presbyterian Church was the evangelical nature of this new Church and, in particular, one suspects, their position on the leadership of women. At present, the Reformed Church of Quebec has no plans to ordain women to the eldership and/or ministry.

L'Église Réformée du Québec [l'ERQ]

Despite the lack of support of one of the "mother Churches," governing principles and ecclesiastical structure were studied and a draft document prepared. On July 8, 1985, representatives of the various parishes put this preliminary document into effect and the l'ERQ was established in principle. On Nov. 6, 1987, the CERQ adopted the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) and on Aug. 19, 1988, it adopted the Westminster Confession (WCF). This was judged as providing the new Church federation with an adequate confessional basis. The CERQ wrestled with the need to adopt the Confession of La Rochelle (The Gallican or French Confession) but since unanimity could not be attained in the CERQ it was not adopted.

At this point it should be noted that in present day Quebec, Francophones are considered to be Roman Catholic and Anglophones are considered to be

Protestant. Language is the great divider. The mission and evangelism projects of the PCC, the PCA and the CRC were all focused on the Francophone population. It is important for us to understand that L'ERQ needs to maintain its independent "Francophone" identity, all the while recognizing that in their church order they do say in Art 1.5:


All Churches which share the Biblical principles of l'ERQ, accept its confessions of faith as well as its ecclesiastical order and discipline, without taking into account historical, social, cultural, or administrative differences, may become members of l'ERQ.

L'ERQ recognize the universal character of the Church of Jesus Christ and

yet need to maintain a French voice in Quebec as it proclaims the gospel.

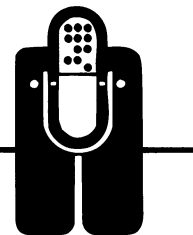
L'ERQ presents a French Church with its roots in the great Reformation of the 16th Century to French-Canadians. In this Church it is possible to be both Francophone and Reformed. This reality was and is one of the driving forces to maintaining an independent French speaking Reformed Church. It will not do to insist that since we are in the same country we must organize and federate under the same ecclesiastical roof. Both l'ERQ and the CndRCs recognize that the Church of Jesus Christ is not "... confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world" (Belgic Confession 27). But we also need to

be sensitive to the fact that language, culture, history, confession, and church order as well as ecclesiastical practice can make complete federative unity impractical. Language in itself is a barrier so large that church union is rendered impossible. This is not advocating Kuyperian pluriformity nor is it a concession to a doctrine of more or less true Churches. Rather, this is a recognition that Christ Jesus gathers his Church by His Spirit and Word throughout the world and in various ways. Let us rejoice that the Lord of the Church is gathering his own into a French speaking Church in Quebec.

**Rev. P. Bedard is the minister of Église Réformée de Trois-Rivières, PQ.* 

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



This, then, will be the last newsmedley that ever appears from my hand. It is now the week between "Christmas" and New Year, and I have waited as long as possible so that I could "digest" the bulletins that would still reach me. But I do not expect any more to arrive before the official "retirement date" is there.

From the various bulletins I learned that the "takeover" has been well advertised, and I am certain that those who were so faithful in supplying me with the necessary sources will do so also towards my brother Van Spronsen. I wish him well.

Once again I wish to thank all who for more than twenty years have been sending me the local or regional bulletins. I shall be most grateful if they continue doing so also after my "retirement" from this position. And I also want to thank all who in one way or another expressed their regret that my involvement in this field will cease. I knew that the work was being appreciated, and this from many unsolicited communications to that effect.

There are others who will be happy with the demise of the news medley. Some called it "arrogant, pompous, unchristian, and embarrassing," as a private, non-scientific poll had it. Let it be so. Only the Lord will judge whether it was edifying what I did and whether in a small way I have been useful in keeping the churches in the Reformed path, for that has been my striving. It is of no concern to me what people think about me. It is for the churches of the Lord that I did this work.

This desire did necessitate the evaluation of information contained in bulletins. Just passing on news items without pointing out their importance or any dangerous trends coming to the fore does not do the churches any service.

It is also for this reason that I do not understand how the consistory of Abbotsford can write in response to the request

to send the bulletins to the Rev. VanSpronsen: "A reply will be sent indicating council's opinion that such a column need not be compiled by an (active) minister and that such a column could lead to editorializing on church events."

In the first place: what is wrong with "editorializing on church events?"

And in the second place: why are ministers singled out here? Would it be different if a non-minister took care of this column? I know a few non-minister members of the churches that would love to have such a column and would certainly use the opportunity to "editorialize on church matters."

Better news comes from Chilliwack, where a sister "was granted an exemption from the nurses' union. She was granted an exemption without having to go to a hearing." It is a reason for gratitude that these possibilities still exist for our members, even in provinces with an NDP government.

Port Kells was still waiting for the rezoning of their property. First and second readings were scheduled for December 19, but I have not read anything about the outcome. After that a public hearing will have to be held. Patience is a beautiful virtue, even though at times it is sorely taxed.

In nearby Aldergrove it was decided that "we will no longer publish short reports." Instead, "from now on we would incorporate any worthwhile information about these meetings in the 'Life in the Congregation' section."

This decision is to be applauded. The short reports on consistory meetings frequently contain non-sensical information that could as well or even better be omitted, such as: "Letter received from a brother. Will be answered," or "Invoice for photocopier repairs. Will be passed on to the treasurer," etc.

For more than thirty years I typed bulletins, and the consistories appeared to trust that I would not put my own thoughts into the reports I gave on the consistory meetings.

I tried to make a little story of it, containing all the important information, so that the congregation had a fair idea of what the brothers had been doing at their meeting.

Something I was not all that happy with was the following. "We discussed questions (in connection with contact with the Free Reformed Church at Aldergrove, VO) such as at what point in time we should have pulpit exchange and how we should proceed with official contact with the FRC."

Added to this is what Langley wrote: "The matter of pulpit exchange under certain conditions with the FRC was discussed and will be further discussed with the congregation and at the next Classis Pacific."

For a good understanding I stress that I am happy with contact and with discussions, as also with definite steps to come to a merger. But what I am not happy with is the tendency to proceed to actions that should wait till general-synodical decisions have been taken regarding the matter of a merger. It also confuses our young people who, in their youthful zeal and, perhaps, inability to oversee all the consequences, often tend to go much farther than is permitted.

Pulpit exchange, acceptance of attestations, admission to one another's Lord's Supper celebrations before a "marriage" amounts in my opinion to "pre-marital sex." Pardon the comparison, but it is clear, I trust.

I realize that in a Discussion Paper, published by the Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (you can find it in the *Clarion* issue of February 11, 1994) these deputies also suggested this possibility.

The warning that they issued should well be remembered: "To prevent possible misunderstanding, it should be noted that this discussion paper is only that. It lacks official status and does not contain directives backed by the authority of a Synod."

Much to my regret, I have not seen an extensive discussion of this "discussion paper," and this is to be regretted the more since it seems that here and there some of their suggestions are considered to show a legitimate way of dealing with the question of unity, witness the above quotations.

Deputies wrote, among other things, "Both churches may then consider drawing up an accord which provides for pulpit exchanges and admission of their members to one another's Holy Supper and recognizing one another's attestations (discipline). Such an accord should be subject to regular renewal by both churches involved. It shall not be implemented without the advice of Classis."

I honestly cannot understand how such a suggestion could be made. This is something that is alien to Reformed church polity and belongs more in the realm of independent groups.

Certainly, the church federation starts at the classical level, but pulpit exchange, admission of one another's members to the Lord's Supper celebrations, acceptance of one another's attestations is a *federative* matter and has to be decided upon by the *federation*. Decisions regarding these points are not made by a local church or a classis or even a regional synod.

To return to the metaphor used above, what is suggested here by the deputies amounts to this: "We shall live together and from time to time renew our decision to live together, until we are legally married. It is possible that it doesn't work out, and then we do not renew our decision."

The same "jumping the gun" I noted when at the Classis Ontario North of March 12, 1993, during the *Question Period* (!) "The convening church for the next classis is encouraged to invite observers from the Free Church of Scotland in Toronto and Prince Edward Island." This suggestion was made while, at least to my knowledge, the churches had not

yet been informed officially whether the offer of our latest general synod was accepted by the Free Church of Scotland.

And the Regional Synod East of November 16, 17, 1994, missed the point when it denied an appeal by the church at Fergus against the above. If I understand it well, the church at Fergus did not so much appeal the invitation as such, but more the decision of the Classis of June 11, 1993, by which the *unauthorized* invitation issued by the convening church was approved.

Although it is correct that a classis is allowed to invite as observer anyone it wants (but this has then to be done by the classis itself!) the point was that these specific observers had been invited without a classical decision and that the approval of this action was done without any word that a relation as envisaged by the Synod Lincoln had been established indeed.

I am very concerned about the haste with which some seem to be eager to proceed. As I am concerned about the, in my opinion, too ample attention that is paid to various groups outside the churches. And I cannot conclude my work in the present capacity without uttering my concern and urging all to remain in the old and proven paths.

More than once we mentioned the size of the Burlington West congregation. To my joy I read "After discussion about the need for a second minister for this congregation, it was decided to wait until the end of the year to see if anything will come of border adjustments with Burlington South. If we do not receive a significant indication by then, we will begin the necessary preparations for calling a second minister."

Burlington East again discussed the question of youth elder. "This issue is again discussed at length. After discussing the pros and cons Consistory does not endorse the proposal to have a youth elder as it would undermine parental responsibility. The Consistory will actively pursue ways to continue dialogue with the youth to mutually discuss and share concerns."

In Fergus there was a "Suggestion to put minutes of consistory meetings on computer instead of recording them by written means: suggestion will be acted upon." I hope that a print-out will be preserved as well. Computers are marvellous tools, but during the typing of this medley the power went off three times!

No new information was available at the time of this writing about the plans and possibilities of the Watford Church. They are strapped for space during the services. I am sure that the whole congregation is actively involved in the planning and searching activities.

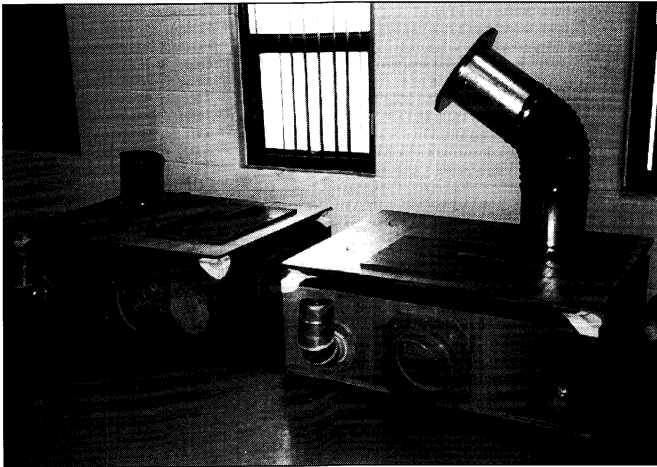
Before we leave Ontario and Canada altogether, I should like to pass on some particulars about the Toronto organ. Although, according to the above-mentioned poll, many "are tired of hearing about pipe organs," yet I venture one last push into that direction.

Brother H. Pilon, the organist and organ-builder (!) sent me a description and also some photographs. Various sections have been set up in the church annex, and I'll send a few of the photographs along with the medley. Perhaps they can find a place in the same issue of *Clarion*.

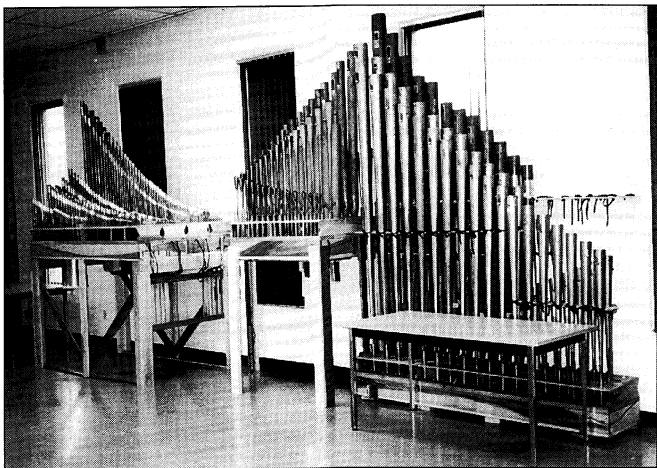
As our readers may know, a two-manual-plus-pedal pipe organ actually is three organs in one, each with its own keyboard and wind-supply. These keyboards can be coupled too.

The one picture shows the reservoirs for the great organ and for the swell organ. I do not have to say which is which, for the picture speaks for itself as far as this goes. The other picture shows the complete swell organ. A third picture is that of the console, at the moment when the picture was taken still standing in the basement of brother Pilon's home. All in all, quite a job.

Perhaps in due time we could publish a more technical description of the instrument. I am only a "layman" in this respect. It will be a pleasure to listen to this organ once it is ready, and also a joy to play it, I'm sure.



Reservoirs for swell and great



Complete swell



Church console completed in basement at home

We shall leave Ontario now and even Canada, and visit some churches in Australia.

The membership of the Kelmscott church hovers around the five hundred. It will not take too long, I think, before another church will have to be instituted in the Perth Metropolitan area. At the consistory meeting "A proposal is again tabled to adopt a form for re-admission to be used for those returning after an earlier withdrawal of their membership, particularly those who were under church discipline at the time of their withdrawal."

It would be good indeed to have such a form, but at the same time it would be necessary to have a form by means of which the congregation is informed of it when someone breaks with the church. Frequently the latter is announced in rather flat terms that are not in accordance with the seriousness of the act of breaking with the church.

As far as I recall, I mentioned it before, but when I was serving the church at Schiedam in the Netherlands, we did have such a form that was used when someone broke with the church. It was patterned after the Form for the Excommunication. I think that it is necessary to have such a form before adopting one to be used when someone returns. The congregation should be shown how serious it is to break with the church and what a joy it is when someone returns repenting of his deed.

The members living in the Bunbury area did make an offer on a hall that would be very suitable for them, but the offer was not accepted. It was suggested to increase the offer, but I have not heard any results as yet.

A very interesting discussion took place at the Armadale consistory meeting. "Discussion is continued on a submission regarding the correctness of placing the text of Galatians 6:10 in the form for the ordination as a charge to the deacons." This point will be further investigated.

Some years ago, when we were revising the liturgical forms, I tried to have this text removed from the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, as I am convinced that the apostle does not refer to "charity" when saying that we are to do good to all men but especially to those of the household of faith. I think that these words are used incorrectly in this Form. But, as everyone can see, I tried in vain.

The apostle uses the definite article, and does not say that we are to "do good" to all men, but that we are to do "the good" to all men. In other words, we must do "that which is good" and do this to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. This does not refer to "charity," but to a general, positive attitude and behaviour towards the neighbour. It applies to all church members and is not a specific charge given to the deacons.

We shall await with interest the result of Armadale's investigations.

Herewith, dear readers, we have come to the end of this medley and to the end of an era.

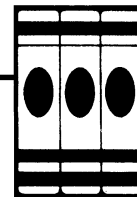
When it was decided that Rev. VanSpronsen was to take over the news medley, it was also made clear to me that articles from my hand or computer would be welcomed. I made no promises, but we'll see, although a special article about things always tends to give more emphasis and to cause matters to be considered more serious and weighty than remarks made in a news medley do.

Thus I say: Farewell.

Et: A Dieu!

BOOK REVIEW

By C. Van Dam



Euthanasia?

Dr. N.H. Gootjes, *Both in Life and Death. Biblical Notions in Connection with Today's Tendency Towards Euthanasia*

(ILPB, Box 783, London, ON N6A 4Y8; 39 pages; \$5.75).

Professor Gootjes (who besides dogmatics also teaches ethics at our Theological College) has provided us with an excellent brief overview of a subject that is more and more talked about today, euthanasia. This is not a difficult scholarly treatise that only theological students and ministers can understand. No, it is most practical in its orientation and approach and it discusses the Biblical material in a manner which also young people will find very easy to follow.

Dr. Gootjes starts with describing some very life-like situations and the

questions they raise. Is it justified to stop treatments which a seriously ill person is undergoing when he appears to be near the end of his life anyway? Another example – if someone is completely paralyzed, can do nothing, and is kept alive only by a respirator, should such a person be allowed to end his or her life? And finally, what about a mentally handicapped adult who is a threat to the community, cannot hold a job, and sometimes ends up in jail and costs society hundreds of thousands of dollars. Is there not a better way to spend the money that is now dedicated to him? In giving these examples, Dr. Gootjes is careful to note exactly which specific questions are raised in each case. This is helpful for seeing clearly where the difficulties are.

After a short historical overview of the problem of euthanasia, the author

analyzes the influences on our present society. His major chapter is on discussing what the Bible says about all the aspects of this problem. This is most rewarding reading. He addresses the nature of man, death and the struggle against death. He also spends some time in dealing with the question of suffering and what the purpose of suffering is. The length of one's life also receives attention. After carefully examining the main Biblical data, Dr. Gootjes returns to the examples he started with and gives clear practical guidance about how we as Christians should approach the many questions raised today. And it is important that we be armed with the Scriptures so that also in this matter we can test and combat the spirits of the day.

This booklet is heartily recommended for study societies and personal reading. **C**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Editor's note: Several of the letters published below exceed the 300 word limit. We publish them because they were received before the new policy had been announced.

To the Editor:

Re: C, CC OR TRIPLE C?

In the same week two different magazines wrote out the same topic, *Christian Courier* and *Clarion*, or CC and C.

The topics "The Information Highway."

The "sound" of both is quite different.

CC claims this awesome communications-power for the glory of God and

His Christ that will be revealed to all the nations. K. SCHILDER in his day would have shouted from the rooftops: "de schuilkelder uit"! (out of the underground shelter and put on your spiritual armour!)

C wrote about the same "highway" as an inroad of the devil into our lives, thus to be avoided as much as possible. That was the trend of C and thus would boil down to the opposite call, "de schuilkelder in!" (hide underground, your "rabbit hole").

Is not double CC in this respect better than C? Or should they be combined?

That would, then, become *Triple CCC!*

Victor Atallah would say, "think about it. . . ."

G. VanDooren
Burlington

Dear Editor:

In all of the discussions about the relationship between the CanAmRC and the OPC we have struggled with the similarities and divergencies between the two. I suggest that the struggle will always be difficult because the divergences are not solely about a lot of the *content* but about its *structure*. It is about the covenant and the covenantal union of our (Three Forms) confessional documents.

Three comments keep buzzing around in my head. One comes from one of my professors at Westminster Seminary, the others are from close friends who are an elder and a minister in the OPC. The professor used to say that he could teach and prove reformed doctrine from either set of documents, it was just easier from the Three Forms. The OPC minister is always ask-

ing me why a federation (he means the CanAmRC) so committed to 'Reformed and always reforming' has no specific confessional article about the covenant. These two comments point to the single solution and the diversity between the two communions.

As I see it the Westminster documents are structured on a scholastic, logic model that uses a building block method to build a confession. One doctrine is laid upon another as so many bricks laid upon each other to build a house. Each brick can be singled out, examined in isolation from the others. Hence the third buzzing comment (from the OPC elder), "The dearest doctrine of the Bible to me is. . . ." I've heard this remark often with regard to a hymn or passage of Scripture. Yet to me it seems an awkward statement at best.

Is Scripture not a unity, a whole? How can you isolate one passage or doctrine and say it is more or less to you than any other? To isolate any from the rest is like cutting out a piece from a tapestry, hanging it alone and saying, "This is my favorite piece, so I'll hang it here."

This also begins to explain why my OPC friend/pastor wants to see a confessional article about the covenant. Both men (most capable too) are trained to think in that systematic, brick by brick model. They know about historical-redemptive preaching and have read Schilder, et. al. But the systematic style is an infection which is systemic. It is as integrated into their thinking as the covenant is for us.

For most of them the covenant is one more doctrine to be added to the list. How it affects other doctrines can be set aside if necessary.

This is why the OPC can organize a summertime chapel with Baptists, Episcopalians, and Methodists (check the preaching schedule for the last few years of the Chapel, Ocean City, NJ) most of whom are former WTS students or associated in some adjunct way with WTS. It is also why they can continue relations with the PCA despite its views on baptism and the children of believers à la Charles Hodge and the Southern Presbyterian preachers Thornwell and Dabney of the last century (the one liner at WTS when I was there was 'little bitty vipers in covenant diapers').

But our Christian faith is not a brick house, but rather a tapestry. The reason we CanAmRC people do not require a "covenant" confessional article is be-

cause it is already woven into every article of our confession. Just as our preaching strives at every point to be redemptive-historical, our confession was written in the same manner. The confessional weave of our documents (even our Church Order forms) is essential to the warp and woof of our churches. It is the defining difference between our churches and their denomination.

Hence the reason why some so quickly point to the activities of the OPC and WTS which are a rejection of our understanding of the covenant, i.e., the trial and dismissal of the Rev. Norman Shepherd, the debacles at Blue Bell and Laurel. Each instance is inextricably connected to an incipient reformation that was founded on a Biblical understanding of the covenant. Were the reformers in each of those situations perfectly clear on this? Not always. But a careful examination of the facts will bear out the conclusion. (For a fuller study, consider the history of Princeton Seminary and the discussion about "Biblical theology," Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, and Geerhardus Vos; consider the vast number of times that Presbyterian and Reformed have tried to come to unity and could not. If you are perplexed why we cannot simply unify or work with the OPC, understand that the problem has been addressed for over three hundred years by each succeeding generation. (It has intensified for our churches because of 20th century advances in travel and communication technology.)

Now before anyone says I have a Dutch-honoring traditionalism, let me say this: I was born and baptized Presbyterian. I have been a member of four different Presbyterian denominations in both the North and South; I studied history under a Van Tillian, PCA professor; and attended WTS. This is no proof of my "great learning" but of my historical bias.

Logically I should prefer the Westminster Standards. But I have been persuaded by Scripture, Confession and other studies that without a proper grasp of the covenant you cannot come to a healthy future. And the future is what this is all about.

Does this mean that there is not a lot within the WCF and OPC that is worthwhile? No. It means that we are, historically, cousins. But our relationship is not a historical accident. It is the clear

historical choice of the Scots, British, et. al., and their heirs to choose the WCF and reject the Three Forms, even as the Anglo-American Pilgrims rejected them. Just as we would write to the CRC for decades and ask them about 1944, so we must ask the Presbyterians, in a current way, What about the WCF? Both historical situations are questions about the covenant.

Brethren, our seventeen years of contact have not born the fruit of unity. It is not a lack of faithfulness on our part to follow Christ's call to unity. The structural integrity of the WCF as well as some of its "facts" are the stumbling block. Discussion about these are continually thwarted by the OPC in favor of discussions about church political and territorial questions. Until this is recognized and confessed, there can be no unity.

In this anniversary year of the Liberation let each household and each church decide how precious a Biblical understanding of the covenant is. Let each Consistory discuss its centrality to our faith. If you find you can occasionally put it aside and live Biblically, then unity with the OPC is not far off. But at what cost?

Your servant,
Sutton Bogedain

Dear Editor,

The last issue of *Clarion*, had a "report" of one of your delegates at the May 1994 Synod of R.C.U.S. in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

The impression one gets from reading this report about the "Zairian" mission, is that, although the Back to God Hour (not the slightest mention of the French department, nor it's minister, whose exceptional tenacity and obstinate perseverance against, and despite, all human hindrances), was providential of bringing Kishimba Nyombo to France for his theological training, it is the outcome of the ministry of this person that gave rise to more than 250 Reformed churches in Zaire!

Kishimba ordained by myself to the ministry has been the minister of one of those 250 congregations, which through the grace of God, the efficient operation of the Spirit and the faithful proclamation, teaching and pastoral work of the French minister of PERSPECTIVES RÉFORMÉES, have been brought to existence.

I mention this because, for some reasons that would be too long to explain, my overall impression, not to say the conviction, is that some “churches” after all the preliminary and post-preliminary work was done on the ground, are now involved in the field, – is it deliberately? – tend to cut off from view the ministry of the French department of this Broadcast mission of the C.R.C.

In a recent Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting in Lynwood, Illinois, it was the case with the delegate of the RCUS. No mention whatsoever of the origins of the Eglise Réformée Confessante au Zaire, only the fact that RCUS and other Reformed churches are cooperating on the field. Would it be the case were there not a mission field offered to them?

It is well known from a long experience how much, mostly North Americans – specially ministers – would do anything to hide realities, in order to highlight their own contributions, when they can benefit from a nice publicity for themselves.

For the sake of history, if not for the sake of mere justice and moral integrity, it would be proper that credit be given to whom credit is due, and “give to (editorial) scissors what is due to (editorial) scissors.

Thank you for the attention you may bring to this matter,

Sincerely
A.R. Kayayan, Pasteur

Dear Editor,

Reply to News Report: Florida/*Clarion*: December 2, 1994

There has been a trend in recent years among our people to travel south for the winter for 4-6 month sojourns, annually. This trend concerns me . . . after having read the December 2, 1994 issue of *Clarion*, I have even greater concerns.

What has happened to the command to worship and to celebrate the communion of saints with our brothers and sisters in the congregation where the Lord has placed us, when we spend so much time in a different place?

I have no problem with a southern holiday but when we voluntarily withdraw ourselves from the communion of saints in our home congregation so that we cannot be a hand and foot to each other, much less be eligible to serve as officer bearer, we deprive the

congregation of our collective wisdom so that, as Rev. Geertsema has written awhile ago, the church council cannot find enough brothers willing and or able to serve as office bearers?

Are we not hereby forsaking, neglecting the task that God has given us in our own congregation? Is our “mass” migration, (para. 2, page 2, News Report Florida M.V.D.V.) not the main cause for the above problem and a reason why we end up with younger and younger elders and deacons, who are often almost afraid to tackle the responsibility because they do not feel they have the life experience, wisdom and insight the “elders” among us have? Are we not therefore also opening the door for our sisters to become office bearers, because our male members are no longer willing???

The fact that, in Palmetto, ministers lead services, doe not legitimize them!!

Let us not grossly exaggerate our winters as an excuse for a 4-6 month stay in the warmer climates.

Can you really not find a “real” church service in Florida? To say so is not a bare fact, but an *outright untruth!*

You who go to Florida do not consider yourselves a church (your words), but yet *you* can have a *real* church service. That is your implication. An elder can now suddenly celebrate Holy Supper in what is not a church, but you must have a travel attestation. How contradictory can you get?

Also, brothers and sisters can report back to home consistories in case of hardening in sin (of brothers and sisters of other congregations) . . . says who?

We are very conservative (reformed?) on one hand and very liberal where convenient. Brothers and sisters, let us examine ourselves.

I believe that our first responsibility is and must always remain the congregation of which we are a member and we must do out utmost to build up that congregation first of all. We do not do that by extended *yearly* holidays in a warmer climate. That is not celebrating the communion of saints, where our Lord has given us a place . . . a responsibility.

Let us not neglect that responsibility for selfish reasons by becoming as the world, also in this.

We may be in danger of leading God’s people astray. Do we really want to be responsible for that?

There is much more that can be said . . . i.e. for financial reasons. Is this money well spent?

We deserve nothing . . . all we have is out of the grace of God!

Let us then remember the summary of the law, also “the second like unto the first.”

I have no problem with a legitimate congregation in Palmetto or wherever but then be full-time members, not 1/2 time.

Thank-you
Douwe Postma

Dear Editor:

It is obvious from Rev. VanPopta’s reply to my letter (as it appeared in the Nov. 4, 1994 issue of *Clarion*) that we are not on the same wave-length. Perhaps a further elaboration might erase doubts or misunderstandings.

When Rev. VanPopta states that God will put enmity, etc . . . then we should not imply this is the same as antithesis. Rather, the one follows the other. When we read that God placed enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman we should not construe this to mean that this is where enmity started. It was Satan, the fallen angel in heaven, who had already challenged God’s authority from the beginning. He put himself in antithesis (opposition) to God’s thesis. The Greek meaning of “thesis” is that which was *originally* laid down. For us that means His WORD (John 1:1-5).

Let me use an analogy here. During World War II there were two opposing forces: The Allied powers and the Axis powers. The Allied powers (England, France, U.S.A., Canada) fought for democratic freedom: the Axis powers (Germany, Japan, Italy) fought for tyrannical rule. There was enmity (hatred, strife, dissension) between the two powers. And, from our point of view, the Axis powers stood in opposition to the Allied powers: the Axis powers had challenged the sovereignty and right of national states of that time. The Axis powers represented an opposing (or antithetical) view to the Allied view. The result of these two conflicting, opposing views was enmity, bringing about a struggle. Enmity is there *because* of the antithesis.

Rev. VanPopta resorted to a, howbeit reputable but nevertheless, secular dictionary to determine for him the

(religious) definition of “antithesis.” A secular dictionary is not always the helpful tool it usually is, especially when we debate principal matters. The “antithesis” definition we get from this dictionary is one that neglects to include anything principal; it’s only a matter of contrasting, opposing. It is my contention, though, that this definition not only neglects but pointedly rejects the principal connotation of our word “antithesis.” I get really concerned when we rely on a secular frame of mind to direct our thinking and acting.

As I tried to explain in my Nov. 4 issue letter to the editor, the prefix “anti” has a principal, religious meaning. That is, “anti” means to be opposed to “*in principle*;” it’s non-negotiable. There are many occasions when we oppose things or ideas which can be negotiable. In such cases we would be “contra.” Groen van Prinsterer, for example, called the political party he founded Anti-Revolutionary Party, not Contra-Revolutionary. Doing so he wanted to convey the message that this political party was against revolution not just because it didn’t like revolutions and uprisings, but because it was opposed, *in principle*, to the Revolution, the Lie; it was a non-negotiable belief, founded on the Word of God. Little words (or prefixes) can have big meanings! This is not a matter of semantics.


Therefore, to get back to that dictionary definition, it is my contention that this definition reflects a Hegelian-biased method of viewing life. Hegelian dialectics (Hegel was a German philosopher in

the 1800s) is a method of logic, borrowed from the Greeks of antiquity, based on the resolution of contradictory opposites – thesis and antithesis – leading to synthesis. One posits an idea, belief, or thesis over against which someone else posits an opposing idea, an anti-thesis. Yet there is, supposedly, truth in both thesis and antithesis. The resulting conflicting process will produce a synthesis, a nobler, higher coming together of opposing ideas. This synthesis, in turn, becomes a thesis and the whole thesis-antithesis-synthesis cycle starts all over again. Life goes through stages of conflict to be resolved or “compromised.” The assumption behind this is that the opposites are relative, not absolute; they are negotiable.

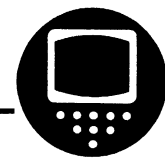
Clearly, the thesis and antithesis concepts I was using in the above-mentioned letter have nothing to do with this Hegelian model. The thesis I referred to is God’s Truth as it is revealed to us in His Word. This Truth, this thesis, is absolute and, therefore, non-negotiable. Likewise, the antithesis is absolute. The two are not subject to this Hegelian “pendulum-swinging” and “conflict resolution.” They do not permit Christian and non-Christian starting points to be theoretically synthesized. Thesis is that which was at first laid down. And what was laid down first was God’s good Creation order. Through the fall into sin this was spoiled, but Jesus Christ *reclaimed* it all. The whole question of living today is man’s response to that which has been laid down, to the thesis. We are called to thetical living.

When ministers of the Word are ordained, the congregation is charged to receive them with all joy, for “how beautiful are the feet of him who brings good tidings!” These good tidings are the good news that Jesus is Lord of all things. The very text Rev. VanPopta quotes (Gen. 3:15) tells us also that Satan’s Kingdom will one day be destroyed. Christ has won the battle and in Him we are more than conquerors. All that was lost in Creation through the first Adam has been regained by the victory over the Evil One (the Antithesis), the Kingdom of Darkness, by the second Adam, the Light. And the Darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5). That’s not just a piece of pie in the sky; that’s for real! That’s the thesis. The devil opposes that reality ferociously. He knows the outcome and he trembles with fear.

Yes, as Rev. VanPopta wrote himself, we courageously and proactively expose Satan’s empire for what it is. But we do more than exposing; we keep proclaiming the Light. That means that we may not simply write off aspects of human culture as if Christ wants nothing to do with them (the Christ-against-culture syndrome), nor may we accept any aspects of human culture at face value (conforming to this culture). Rather, proclaiming the Light means that we must bring every area of life under the lordship of Christ Who has redeemed that which was at first laid down. That’s thetical living.

J.A. Roukema 

PRESS RELEASES



Press Release of Classis AB/MB, December 13, 14, 1994 at Edmonton-Providence

1. On behalf of the convening church of Coaldale, Rev. J.D. Wielenga called the meeting to order. He requested the singing of Ps. 72:4 and 10, read Matthew 5:1-11; 33-37; 7:1-5; 24-29, and lead in prayer.

He mentioned a.o. that Rev. P.K.A. De Boer declined a call to Byford, WA,

and Rev. R. Aasman a call to Albany-West, WA., and expressed the wish that their decisions may be blessed.

2. The credentials were examined by the delegates of the convening church and were found by the meeting to be in good order. Classis was declared constituted, and the offers suggested by the previous classis took their seats: Rev. W. Slomp Chairman, Rev. J.D. Wielenga Vice-Chairman, R. Aasman Clerk.

3. The agenda was adopted, with addition of instructions from the churches at Denver and Winnipeg. The church visitors informed classis that they will submit their reports at the Spring Classis.

4. The church at Winnipeg requested classis, per instruction, to consider if this December Classis had been convened in a decent and orderly manner. Classis decided, on motion, that classis had been convened in a decent and or-

derly manner according to the agreed upon rules.

5. The admissibility of a letter of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC was discussed, initially inconclusively. The chairman requested the singing of Hymn 48: 1,4 and lead in prayer. The meeting was adjourned until Wednesday morning 9:00 a.m.

6. At reopening of classis, the chairman requested the singing of Ps. 25:2,4. He read 1 John 3:1-11 and lead in prayer.

7. Classis declared the letter of the POD admissible on the ground that classis has ecclesiastical contact with the POD. Scripture demands to seek reconciliation in case conflict arises among brothers (Acts Synod Lincoln, art. 72. IV.a.2b).

In its letter the POD "calls upon classis Alberta-Manitoba of the Canadian Reformed Churches to repent and apologize, in writing (as well as by personal representation), for its sin of encouraging Mike Pollock to evade the corporate responsibility that he took upon himself when he took the Orthodox Presbyterian Church vows (POD Minutes, March 7, 1991, [91:20, Article 109]) that he has now broken."

8. A motion was discussed to respond to the request of the POD by :

1) admitting that the decision of Classis March 1993 that "... On Rev. Pollock's request the Presbytery of the Dakotas released him from his vows..." was based on insufficient grounds;

2) admitting that Classis should not have admitted him to the examination and to the ministry in the CaRC without documentation from the POD itself of his proper release;

3) requesting to meet with the POD to deal with this matter in order to achieve reconciliation.

This motion was defeated.

9. A motion with the following judgments was discussed and adopted:

1. Not to accede to the call of the POD "to repent and apologize in writing as well as by personal representation for the sin of encouraging Mike Pollock to evade the corporate responsibility that he took upon himself when he took the OPC vows that he has now broken."

2. To assure the POD of the OPC that had Rev. Pollock been not merely a candidate for a call in the OPC, but the minister of an OPC congregation, Classis AB/MB would have dealt with the question of his vows and with the admission of the ARCD quite differently,

namely by insisting that the minister and congregation follow due process according to the OPC Form of Government.

3. To send to the stated clerk of the POD this decision with observations and considerations as our understanding of the question of Rev. Pollock's vows.

10. Question Period per Art. 44 C.O. was held and classis went into closed session for advice in a discipline matter.

11. The Church at Denver, Co., was appointed as convening church for next classis to be held at Edmonton-Immanuel, on April 25, 1995, with as alternate date June 20, 1995.

12. Personal Question Period was held; brotherly censure was ruled to be not needed; the Acts were read and adopted and the Press Release was read and approved.

13. The chairman requested the singing of Hymn 5:1,3, Rev. R. Aasman lead in prayer and classis was declared closed.

Press Release of Classis Ontario North, December 9, 1994

1. On behalf of the convening church at Guelph the Rev. A.J. Pol calls the meeting to order. He requests the brothers to sing Hymn 40:1,2, and leads in prayer.

2. The credentials are examined by the delegates of Grand Valley. The churches of Burlington East and Elora have an instruction.

3. Classis is constituted. The appointed officers are: Rev. J.L. Van Popta, chairman; Rev. G. Nederveen, vice-chairman; Rev. J.G. Slaa, clerk.

4. Memorabilia: The chairman remembers the fact that the church at Toronto extended a call to Rev. Cl. Stam, and that Rev. A.J. Pol is present for the first time as delegate of the church of Guelph.

He extends a special welcome to the Revs. P. Bedard and J.G. Deblois from l'Église Réformée du Québec. A motion to have them seated at the table during the open sessions of Classis is adopted.

5. The agenda is adopted.

6. The report on a church visitation to the church at Burlington West is read and received with gratitude.

7. Question Period according to art. 44 C.O.: All the churches, via their representatives, answer the first two

questions in the affirmative, while the churches at Burlington East, Elora and Fergus seek and receive advice in matters of discipline.

8. Rev. G. Nederveen was called away due to unforeseen circumstances. Rev. B.J. Berends is appointed as vice-chairman in his place.

9. An overture from the church at Ottawa is presented, requesting Classis North, December 9, 1994, to support its overture to General Synod Abbotsford, 1995, to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with l'Église Réformée du Québec. (Since this overture was presented by the church at Ottawa, the chairmanship duties of Rev. Van Popta are assumed by the vice-chairman.)

Classis decide

The information provided by the church of Ottawa demonstrates that the l'Église Réformée du Québec can be recognized as a true Church of Christ. Therefore, Classis requests Synod 1995 to respond to the request of the l'Église Réformée du Québec by mandating the Committee for Relations Churches Abroad to intensify and confirm the contact initiated by the church of Ottawa with a view to enter a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

10. Convening church for the next Classis: Orangeville. Date: March 10, 1994, at the Burlington-East church building. Suggested officers for the next Classis: Rev. G.H. Visscher, chairman; Rev. J.L. Van Popta, clerk; J.G. Slaa, vice-chairman.

11. In the question period it was asked whether an elder can be appointed to attend classical meetings for a period of two years. It was suggested that this should be left to the freedom of the local churches.


It was asked whether a response was received to a letter sent by the clerk of the previous Classis to the church at Lower Sackville regarding its decision to withdraw from the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches. It is noted with sadness that the convening church of this present classis did not receive a response to this letter.

12. Censure according to art. 34 C.O. is not necessary.

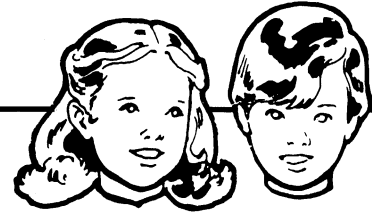
13. The Acts are adopted and the Press Release is approved.

14. The chairman requests the brothers to sing Psalm 87:1,4,5 and leads in thanksgiving and prayer, and closes the meeting.

For Classis Ontario North
December 9, 1994

B.J. Berends 

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Many of you have told me in your letters that you love reading, that you enjoy books. Well, now's your chance to tell more people about your favourite book.

Just write me a letter, and in your letter give the title of the book, the name of the person who wrote it, and tell, in a few lines, what happened in the story.

Then I will put as many as I can into the *Clarion*, so others can read about the books, and hopefully, go to the library and find the book, and enjoy it, too.

And, everyone who sends in a letter about a book, will get something to use when they read – a bookmark!

I hope to hear from lots of reading Busy Beavers!

Quiz Time!

SLAVES

Slaves were common in Bible days. Name the person who was in the story.

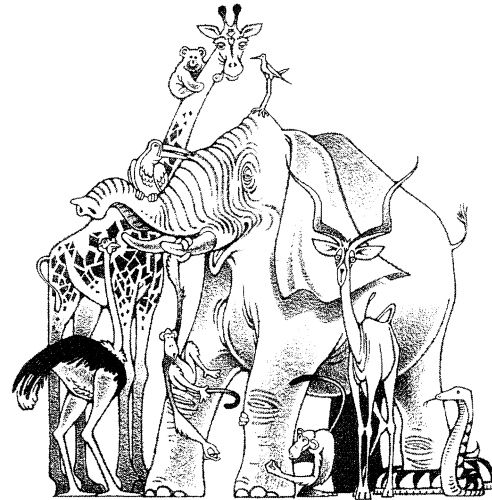
- _____ 1. Who was the slave Paul wrote his friend Philemon about, Philemon 10?
- _____ 2. Who was told of a way to be cured from leprosy by a slave girl, 2 Kings 5:1-3?
- _____ 3. Who made slaves of the Israelites, Exodus 1:7-11?
- _____ 4. Who was sold into slavery by his brothers, Genesis 37:26-28?
- _____ 5. Who killed an Egyptian for hitting a Hebrew slave and then had to run to save his life, Exodus 2:11-13?
- _____ 6. Who sent a slave to find his son a wife, Genesis 24:1-4?
- _____ 7. Who was the slave who told David where Jonathan's son was, 2 Samuel 9:1-3?
- _____ 8. Who was Elisha's slave, 2 Kings 4:12?
- _____ 9. Who cut off the ear of a slave, John 18:10-11?
- _____ 10. Which prophet left his slave and went a day's journey, sat under a juniper tree, and wished to die because Jezebel was trying to kill him, 1 Kings 19:1-4?
- _____ 11. Who had a slave inform him that his sons and daughters had all been killed by a great wind, Job 1:18-20?

BIBLE NAMES WORD SEARCH

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

Find these names

John ✓ Mark ✓ Timothy ✓ Paul ✓
 Ruth ✓ Saul ✓ Peter ✓ Joseph ✓
 Esther ✓ David ✓



Here's a poem written by one of the Busy Beavers, Yvonne Bysterveld. It's called

THE ZOO

*I went to the zoo.
 I saw a lizard.
 After that there was a blizzard.
 I went to see the snake
 and I got a bellyache.
 I saw an eel
 after that a seal.
 I saw a bear
 It was flying in the air.
 At the zoo it's so much fun,
 all these animals under the sun.
 What Fun!*

SCRAMBLED SENTENCE

Instructions: Look at the number in the box. Then look for that number and the letter beside it. Then make the word. Put the words into a sentence that makes sense.

A-1	F-4	I-7	O-10	U-13
C-2	G-5	L-8	S-11	Y-14
E-3	H-6	N-9	T-12	

14-10-13	-----
10-4	---
11-3-3	-----
12-6-7-9-5-11	-----
8-10-12-11	-----
2-1-9	-----



JOKES

from Busy Beaver *Kristina Fennema*

How do you keep a skunk from smelling?
 How do you say hello to a three headed monster?
 Where's the best place to hide a chocolate?
 What has 99 legs and goes thump?
 What furniture polish do schools use?



How did you do on the Book of Praise Puzzle sent in by Busy Beaver *Nicholas Koolsbergen* last time?
 Now you can check, because here are the answers:
 Puzzle # 1
 She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Puzzle #2
 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end. Luke 1:33.



FROM THE MAILBOX

Hi, *Danielle Ostermeier*. Thanks for the two puzzles you sent in. You have been busy with them, I think. How is your family doing? How is school going? Hope to hear from you again. Bye, Danielle.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Thomas Aasman*. It must have been very exciting to camp on an island! I am not surprised to hear that you would like to go back there. How old are you, and when is your birthday, Thomas? Bye.

Hello, *Lydia Penninga*. Do you have more snow now, than when you wrote your letter? Probably. I guess you enjoy playing in it every once in a while. Has your kitten tamed down a bit yet?

Bye, Lydia.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *Nadine Barendregt*. How are you doing? Since you are learning to read and write, you will be able to write letters. Maybe you can even write me about one of your books. Hope to hear from you soon, Nadine.

Hi, *Michelle Linde*. Thanks for the neat letter! The scrambled mammal word was horse – but an extra letter was added on by mistake! That's probably why you couldn't figure it out. So do you know how to knit yet? Maybe you're wearing a hat you made already! Bye, Michelle.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Amanda Jager*. How do you like living in the United States? Where do you go to school? I hope you enjoy being a member of the Busy Beaver Club. Bye, Amanda.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Stacey Termeer*. How is your baby brother Darren doing? I guess you help your mom out quite a bit when she is looking after him, right? I hope your little school keeps going well. Keep up the good work! Bye, Stacey.

Hi, *Francine VanWoudenberg*. I was glad to hear from you again, but I can understand why you don't write more often. It's good to keep busy like you are. All the best in all your work. Bye, Francine.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Amanda Feenstra*. Do you enjoy doing the puzzles with your sister? Now you can write letters together, too. Hope to hear from you soon! Bye, Amanda.

Hi, *Luanne Feenstra*. Thanks for the interesting letter. How did your singing at the assembly go? Are you having fun in the snow again this winter? Bye, Luanne.

Answers to the Jokes.

1. Hold it's nose.
2. Hello, Hello, Hello.
3. In your mouth.
4. A Centipede with a wooden leg.
5. Pledge of allegiance.

That's all for this time, everyone. Enjoy the winter weather!
 Love to you all,

Aunt Betty 