

Clarion

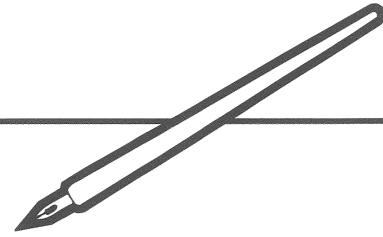
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 44, NO. 17 AUGUST 25, 1995



*The entertainment
of young children*

Numbers

10:1-10



Labor Day

Upcoming September 4th is Labor Day.¹ The roots of this celebration in honour of the working class lie in a large parade held by the Knights of Labor in 1882. Two years later, the Knights held another parade on the first Monday of September. They passed a resolution to hold all future parades on that day and to call it "Labor Day."

The Knights of Labor was established in 1869 as a secret fraternal order which used an elaborate, mystic ritual. In 1881 it began to function as a labor union. It adopted a policy of militant action against employers. It was formally dissolved in 1917 giving way to the American Federation of Labor.

In 1894 the US Congress, yielding to pressure from the Knights and other organizations, designated the first Monday of September as Labor Day.² The Canadian Parliament did the same wanting to honour organized labor.³

The background of this holiday is the union movement of the 19th century. We object to the adversarial model for "negotiating" sponsored by most unions. The Scriptures teach a harmony model (Eph. 6:5-9). The violence erupting on picket lines from time to time is disturbing. We look askance at secret oath societies such as the Knights of Labor. It makes us wonder how we ought to commemorate Labor Day.

On Labor Day we can remember, with thanks, that it is God who gives us our work. We work because God made us in His image (Gen. 1:26-28). The Bible opens with a picture of a working God. God worked in creating a universe. He has been at the job of sustaining creation since He fashioned it. He created man to tend creation in His name. The idea that labor came into being as a result of humanity's fall is wrong. Paradise had its chores. Sin, however, made the work much more difficult. Adam and Eve would have to labor hard to carve out a living. Sin hinders man's efforts. Nature would not cooperate like it did without the curse. God told Adam: "[C]ursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. . . ." (Gen. 3:17-19). Further, our physical and mental abilities have been very seriously impaired by sin.

However, the original commission to work remains in force. In the garden of Eden, man and woman were to cultivate the soil. Today the range of work includes every pursuit – cultural, physical, social, and spiritual. The Bible teaches that work is still something for which to give God highest praise.

In Psalm 104 the psalmist praised God with these words: "Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen man's heart. . . . Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening."

In several places God commands us to work. Every Sunday morning we hear these words: *Six days you shall labor, and do all your work* (Ex. 20:9). Paul told the Eph-

esians to "[l]et the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need" (Eph. 4:28). Paul was very clear to the church at Thessalonica when he, in his second letter to them, 3:10-12, said: "For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living."

There is no question about it – ever since God told Adam and Eve to cultivate the earth, man has been under divine obligation to work. And so, let us work faithfully, wherever God has placed us – in the home, at school, in the marketplace. And let us thank God for the work He gives us to do. If you suffer unemployment, ask God to provide you with work. Pray about it, keep trusting in the providential care of your heavenly Father, and don't give up looking for work.

Around Labor Day, it's also good to think about the other toil we do. For we labor not only for the food which perishes, but also, in obedience to the Lord's command, ". . . for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you. . ." (John 6:27).

At the beginning of a new season, marked by Labor Day, we remember the other work the Lord calls us to do. There is the work of preparing sermons and preaching by the ministers of the Word. May the LORD give them strength and enable them. There is the work of catechism instruction, home visitations, and evangelism. May those who fill special offices and the general office of all believers be faithful in this work. There is the work of Bible study societies. Work hard at it. Attend regularly. Contribute by being well prepared, and you will be blessed. Work hard for this food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man gives us.

We have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We belong to Him body and soul. Let us show that by working faithfully for Him in all our labours – on the job, in the home, at school, as well as in all the work related to the life of the church. Whether we work as boss or employees, as students or teacher, as parents or children, as office bearers or parishioners, let us work as images of Christ, as letters from Christ written with the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor. 3:3), honouring Christ in all that we do.

The promise is that if we are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, none of our labor will be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

¹Somewhat against my will, but for the sake of consistency, I followed the American spelling for labour.

²*Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, 1983 ed., s.v. "Knights of Labor," 278; "Labor Day," 341.

³John Robert Colombo, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Labour Day," 1154.



Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 14:8-28

"The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

FICKLE MAN, FAITHFUL GOD

Paul and Barnabas went on to Lystra. Paul preached the gospel there. A man crippled from birth was listening to Paul. Seeing that the man believed and had faith to be made well, Paul commanded him to stand up. The man jumped up and walked.

The crowds were impressed. They began to shout in their native language, Lycaonian: "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" Paul had been telling them about the Lord Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, he would have told them that Jesus Christ was the eternal Son of God who had come down to earth in the likeness of man. The people of Lystra misunderstood. They thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods who had come down to them in human form.

They thought Barnabas was Zeus. Zeus happened to be the special protector god of the city of Lystra. Paul they called Hermes. Hermes was the son of Zeus. He was the messenger god. He brought messages from the gods to men. Because Paul was the main speaker, they thought he must be Hermes.

Because the Lystrans were yelling in their native language, Paul and Barnabas did not understand them at first. But when the priest of Zeus, thinking that his greatest moment had come with the appearance of his god, brought oxen in order to offer a sacrifice to them, Paul and Barnabas knew what was going on. They tore their clothes and said that they were not gods but men like them.

They spoke about the living God who created all things and who, for ages past, had given the Lystrans good things – rain and fruitful seasons – to satisfy them with food and gladness. In the name of this God they were

bringing them good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and calling them to turn from vain things to the only true God. With that they just barely managed to get the people not to offer sacrifice to them.

A short while later, Jews from Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium came to stir up the local people against Paul and Barnabas. These Jews had hounded the missionaries out of their cities; however, they wanted them out of Asia minor. The Lystrans stoned Paul, dragged him out of the city, and left him for dead. One day the people want to offer sacrifices to the apostles. The next day they stone Paul to within an inch of his life. *Fickle man*. But Paul was not dead. He got up and went back into the city. *Faithful God*. The apostles' preaching won converts in Lystra. They even appointed elders. A church was established in Lystra and the other cities in that region.

Paul and Barnabas made their way back to Antioch in Syria, the sending church. Just like missionaries do today, they gathered the church together and gave a report on the work they had done. They could tell the church about how God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

The faithfulness of God is more powerful than the fickleness of man. Man worships gods of his own invention. Those whom he worships as gods one day he rejects, and even tries to stone to death, the next. Those who shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David" one day shouted "Crucify him" days later. But faithful God cuts through that nonsense with the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ. He brings His elect people of every city to faith. They *will* come. Faithful God *cannot* be stopped.

What's Inside

The lead editorial in this issue pays some attention to Labour Day. The feature article, on the other hand, has to do with entertainment – specifically, of young children. Rev. C. Bosch gives some instruction on that topic. Work and play, labour and entertainment – they seem to be miles apart; however, there are several points of contact between work and play. Playing in a Christian way can be hard work. It requires careful thought, reflection, and effort to play or be entertained in a godly way. And then, playing ought to be seen as a way to be refreshed for working. Further, it's often "quite a job" for parents to give guidance on what types of entertainment are appropriate for their children. This is a topic that parents often discuss with other moms and dads. Here's a suggestion. This month our study clubs will reconvene after summer recess. Everyone likes a "free topic" once in awhile. Take an evening to discuss Rev. Bosch's article.

I can also alert you to two other articles which have been written on this point in the last while: In the 1982 Year End issue, p. 503, you'll find an article by Rev. Cl. Stam called "Christian freedom and Entertainment," and undersigned published "Our Children and Entertainment" in 1994, p. 39.

GvP

The entertainment of young children

By C. Bosch



This article was originally a speech delivered to parents in Burlington, ON.

I've been asked to say something about the entertainment of young children. I would like to make it clear that I can only offer you a few suggestions. Although some might beg to differ, I am not engaged in the entertainment industry. While the Lord gave us seven children, all of whom were young at one time, they are not so young any more today. Consequently, you might say I have been somewhat out of touch as to what are the specific problems and challenges of training children in an entertainment-filled, and leisure-driven world of today. Be that as it may I shall give it a try. With your help I hope we can come to some constructive pointers this evening.

Entertainment or recreation?

It is always worthwhile to define our terms so that we know what we are talking about. If we do this, we may well come to asking whether we may

rightly speak of the entertainment of our children. Is entertainment as such a legitimate part of the lives of those for whom we pray (at baptism) that they "may be nurtured in the Christian faith and in godliness. . . to live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King and High Priest Jesus Christ."

Although the word entertainment originally meant "to receive and to provide for," it has come to be synonymous with "amusing someone." This meaning suggests passivity and idleness which not a few have seen to be in conflict with what the Lord demands of His living members.

Some twelve years ago when Rev. Cl. Stam spoke about "Christian freedom and Entertainment" he suggested that perhaps the word recreation is better than the word entertainment, for one simple reason: our free or leisure time does not exist as a goal or means in itself, for it is intended to give new vigor for our work. . . . We need to be replenished, invigorated, strengthened

and in that sense: recreated. It is temporary relief from the work for the work (*Clarion*, Year end issue, 1982, p. 503).

His point is valid. We live in a society in which entertainment/leisure is an end in itself. Ours is a society which has abandoned all absolutes except that man is king, hedonism queen, and amusement the lady in waiting. It is in this kind of world that we are to train our children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6).

To God's glory and man's refreshment

What then are the norms which bind us as we think about entertainment and our young children?

With the first question and answer of The Larger Catechism we too may confess that the "chief and highest end of man" is "to glorify God and to fully enjoy Him for ever."

For "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). So that "whether you eat or drink, or

whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:31).

We know that our risen and exalted Lord is "... before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). The Lord has made it clear that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4).

On the basis of Scripture, then, we may not have a cramped, a narrow, or uncomfortable attitude towards rest, leisure, laughter and entertainment. Although it is true that man was created to work, industriously, six days per week, nowhere is it stated or implied that it must be slavish, uninterrupted work.

The God whom we serve is very much the Lord of rest and joy. Although we forfeited the right to joyful rest by our fall into sin, we may rest in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Lord of re-creation. We are comforted for we are on the road to a new paradise where the full restoration and culmination of service will take place.

In granting man abundant sabbaths and feast days in the time of the Old Testament, the Lord fully reckoned with man's need to rest from his labours and to be refreshed. If you take a look at the calendar of the Jews you are struck by the attention the Lord gave to a built-in cycle of joyful rest. The Lord was on the way to turn our mourning into dancing (Ps. 30:11). Far from being a spoil-sport who doesn't allow His children opportunities to play, He is hastening towards the day when the "sucking child shall play over the hole of an asp" and generations will rejoice in Him, always (Phil. 4:4).

Historians and archeologists have found evidence of leisure activities, of crafts and toys, dolls and games, among God's people of long ago. It is also true that as often as God's people went into deformation, those activities reflected a mind-set which was alien to the Lord.

A millstone around his neck

We may also not forget that our young children are precious to the Lord. He has put His mark on them and He goes to battle for them. Even a secular world recognizes that they are vulnerable needing direction and a great deal of love and care. Those who know God's covenant promises and demands know the needs and vulnerabilities of children in a different context. They know the words of Christ that "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me (i.e., Christ) to sin it would be better for him to have a great mill-

stone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:6).

I'm not in favour of decorating our walls with all kinds of texts, but I think this last one could very well be placed in some prominent place in our homes today. All too easily and subtly and perhaps even unconsciously we are prone to fall prey to those forces which would rob the parents of their children and rob the children of their minds.

Television and video culture

We would do well to be on our guard here for although we need not find an ogre behind every T.V. program or a witch before every new toy or fad, yet, it is a fact that:

a. We are in a state of war, against "the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6: 12).

b. The secular world of leisure/entertainment is on a different "wave length" than that of Christians. Although there are those who would still maintain and promote what are called "traditional family values," they are rapidly becoming the exception. The very definition of what constitutes a traditional family is changing. I under-

stand that even Sesame Street says it's O.K. to be gay. The situation comedies which cater to the young and to adolescents incessantly promote the right to freedom of expression with little or no concern for the fifth commandment. It is cool to lip off your parents, teachers and others in authority. The message is that we can eat, play, dress, and do what we want and when we want it. Parents (especially dads) are often portrayed as boorish fools (The Simpsons) and Christian values invariably receive a beating. Commercials incessantly drive home the message that you "must have the latest for it is the greatest," and if you don't have, wear, or watch what is "in," you are a nobody and your parents obviously hate you and live in the stone age.

c. The callous, competitive spirit of "we've got to have it too" affects our young children. Teachers are confronted with it at school. Although children are often accepting of one another, peer pressure to conform to the group standard of what is "in" is prevalent.

d. Our children are not immune to the spirits making the rounds. Their sinful nature is open to the suggestion that you ought to be able to do what you like, to have what you want when you want. It is for good reason that the



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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial - Labor Day	
- G.Ph. van Popta	374
Meditation -	
- G.Ph. van Popta	375
The Entertainment of Young Children	
- C. Bosch	376
Farewell evening of Rev. G.A. Snip	
- A. Stulp	380
Looking Forward to Looking Back	
Credo Christian High School, Graduation, June 29, 1995	
- Sarah Vandergugten	381
Reader's Forum	
- C.M. Loopstra	384
Letters to the Editor	385
Church News	386
Book Reviews	
- E. Kampen, C. Van Dam, Wes Bredenhof	387-389
Our Little Magazine - Aunt Betty	390

Lord warned us not to be conformed to the world, (of greed and violence, licentiousness, pride and vanity) but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds and to prove, (that is to work out) what is the will of God in all good works (Rom. 12).

What to do

1. It should be obvious that our children need Christian parents and teachers who desire to honour the Lord in all things. Such parents will realize that they are "in the world" although they are not of the world. They may not so train their children as if those children did not have to grow up to be discerning, able to make right choices, and to test the spirits. We are Reformed and not Anabaptist. We should make no false distinctions between the sacred and the secular. The whole earth is the Lord's and its fullness (Ps. 24).

2. Yet we are called to protect our young children from those influences which will surely be harmful for them. Lives, minds, attitudes "in formation" need careful, loving, nurture-with-perspective, so that by God's grace, our youngsters will grow up to see their calling as "children of light."

3. Furthermore we need to parent and teach not in a resigned and apathetic way, but as proactive agents of good, remembering this good rule which the Holy Spirit has taught us: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). We are to go "from strength to strength," and not from "sighing to resignation with weakness." "Rejoice always," says the Spirit and "let your moderation be known unto all men" (Phil. 4:4).

Despite commercialism's Epicurean attitude towards life, there is a tremendous amount of negativism around us. Many children appear to grow up without any hope. The suicide rate amongst young people is staggering. Parents and teachers are probably the most influential agents in the lives of our children.

4. We must all be aware that the times "they are a-changing." We are into the interactive, electronic age of computerized wizardry. More and more this will affect learning and recreational behavior. We are witnessing a fundamental shift away from the importance of the group to the realm of the individual. This shift involves a re-definition of what constitutes play. Today, children can get totally absorbed in interacting with a machine.

This interactive element is a positive feature and is far better than pas-

sive and sedentary television watching. Although some had surmised it all along, people such as Neil Postman have detailed the damage T.V. has done to our minds. In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (Penguin, 1986) he warns us about this "peek-a-boo world," which effectively squelches our responsibility to think, to discuss, and to reply: "A world without much coherence or sense; a world that does not ask us, indeed, does not permit us to do anything . . . a world that is, like the child's game of peek-a-boo, entirely self-contained."

As media, television knows no rest. The average length of a shot on network television is only 3.5 seconds. Consequently the eye never rests but always must see something new. The mind has no chance to absorb or interact.



What it absorbs are images and metaphors. With some exceptions, T.V. rarely shows people in the act of thinking, listening, discussing. There is no time for it. We have to move on, or we'll be left behind . . . in the ratings!

Though T.V. and video has become widely accepted in our community, parents cannot resign their responsibility. That responsibility must focus on making wise choices, setting high standards, in the ongoing nurture of young minds.

We should apply what we confess concerning the daily renewal of our lives more consistently to this area of entertainment. Allowing our children's minds to be adversely conditioned by the forces of secularism is sin.

God's Word commands us to involve ourselves with things that are honourable, just, pure, lovely, gracious and excellent. That command implies that we simply may not be satisfied with all that is sinful, dishonourable, unjust, morose, vain.

We constantly need to get back to the norms, the big picture, the highway, if you like, for us sojourners. We need to ask the Lord for an honest ability to examine our hearts, minds, our conduct, our lifestyle, our motivation, to see where we are going. This self-examination must take place on the basis of God's Word. It is the only norm for our lives and provides the only effective way to make changes. For though there are those who, like W. Gairdner in his book, *The War Against the Family* (Stoddart, 1992), accurately identify the malaise of our permissive society, only Jesus Christ can change lives for lasting good.

In an age of individualism we also need to realize what it means to be communion of saints with responsibilities to one another. On the one hand it is quite clear that the Lord does not expect us to clone our attitudes towards entertainment. There are those whom Paul calls the "strong and the weak," with differing attitudes, appetites, interests. Though Paul himself was persuaded that "in the Lord Jesus nothing is unclean in itself" (Rom. 14:14), there were those who were convinced that you could not eat meat or drink wine. Paul did not say that everyone was compelled to stick to water and lentils. There is indeed a Christian freedom which allows families to make choices without compulsion.

Yet this is not an unbridled freedom, as Paul makes clear in Gal. 5. The norms are

- "In love be servants of one another." (Gal. 5:13)
- "pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building." (Rom. 14:19)
- "For we are one body and individually members of one another!" (1 Cor. 12)
- "Beloved, do not believe every spirit. but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." (1 John 4:4)
- "Present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. . . ." (Rom. 12:1)
- "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom. 12:2)
- "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6)

Let us try to apply this to our (and thus our children's) involvement in entertainment.

1. Let parents take time, *make time*, for their children, setting high standards for worthwhile recreational activities when the children are still very young, doing so by way of example! Mothers, if at all possible don't send your children off to play-school or to soccer practice at the age of three. Keep them at home and do worthwhile and enjoyable things with them. Read to them, listen to them, talk to them, and let them play with and explore those things which are God's good gifts. Allow them to watch (or watch) with them those programs (if any) that are worthwhile.

2. Sports is very much "in" in our community. But let us keep in mind that according to the Holy Spirit (but not Jane Fonda or some other fitness guru) "while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way." As individuals and as a community we can go overboard on the "sports thing." We should remember that in the world sports is a religion and we should have no part of that idolatry. While there are things to be said for a good game and healthy competition, parents and coaches should not overdo it. If sports becomes a priority, it is likely that other, more important things, will be forgotten. There is a danger that the home becomes no more than a stop-over, sleep-over place while we live at the gym or on the rink.

If parents involve their children in community organized activities then they should know what's going on, ask pertinent questions and have input regarding the environment, acceptable language, etc.

3. Regarding the use of television and video it is clear that a rousing call to discernment is in place. I understand that with the advent of the TLC and A & E channels, there are some excellent programs available. For young children there is still Mr. Dressup and I've heard some parents say good things about Barney. Sesame Street was an assault on young minds twenty years ago and I understand it has only changed for the worse. Power Rangers has been in the news lately, and from what I've read we can be happy it is off the screen. I'm not familiar with "My So Called Life" and "Melrose Place." I understand they are but two programs that are popular with older children and teenagers. Per-



haps someone in the know can enlighten us later on, whether these or other programs are desirable.

In the use of videos we must also be discriminating. There is an enormous amount of sheer garbage that is available. Don't leave the choice of what to see up to your children! Here you can make use of the public library in order to make some wise choices, on those (rare?) occasions that you decide to add videos to the books you are helping your children choose. I would love to see us establish a library of stimulating Christian videos.

4. Computer games are now well into our homes, and before long CD Rom will have made an impact. The choice is quite wide and no doubt there are a lot of excellent games on the market. They do not always have to be educational. Yet I think that giving your children "Doom" or "Mortal Combat" as a birthday gift for is a mistake. I cannot see how endless hours spent in knocking, shooting and garroting weird characters on a screen can have a salutary effect on our children.

5. "Overcoming evil with good" means that we have a lot of work today. We must do what we can to get children interested in the world around them. Take them for walks. Give them good books to read. Take them to the library. Books have lasting value. They make for conversation and enjoyment. Involve them in music lessons. We are called to use our gifts and talents. Give them an opportunity to find out what the Lord has given them. Teachers can

be helpful in this and can do so much to interest children in worthwhile hobbies and pursuits.

6. Please do plan those birthday parties with a view to what makes for a happy, fun-filled time for which you and the children can give thanks. I doubt whether four hours of video watching fills that requirement. Take them bowling, swimming, or play some games. Encourage participation and allow some choices, but, Be IN Charge!

In summing up, I agree with Rev. Stam that with respect to entertainment, or better, recreation, we are free to engage in any activity which does not conflict with the Word of God and which is edifying and stimulating for all involved ("Christian Freedom and Entertainment," *Clarion*, Dec. 1982, p. 504).

We should be careful, however, not to join those who would say, "All things are lawful." We live in a time when individualism, hedonism, and escapism are rampant. The world of entertainment is riddled by an ungodly spirit which defies God's law.

We have an obligation to each other, to help, encourage and correct each other. We have to fight the powers of individualism and self-centeredness in the strength of the Holy Spirit who fosters and builds communion.

We can learn from Rev. Stam's article. He too does not want to see us go in the direction of a sectarian moralism which would only advocate a do not taste and touch mentality. Neither do I.

He sums up our collective responsibility in this way:

Whenever something is organized for the recreation of many, we shall take into account also the viewpoint of others and arrive at those activities which are mutually considered edifying. Then we shall "try to please all men" in everything we do (1 Cor. 10:32). While no one need dictate to me how I shall live my personal life (except the Lord), we shall all decide together with respect to our communal recreative activities.

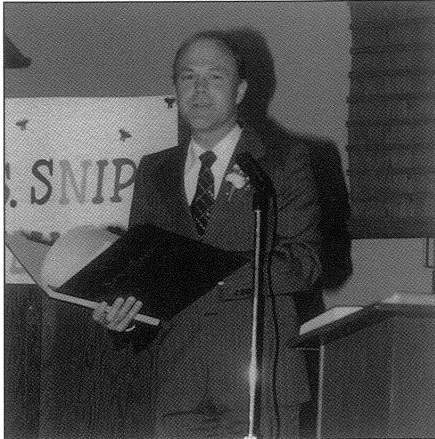
Let us in this way strive to build each other up, and so direct our children on the safe and blessed way.

Rev. C. Bosch is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-South.



Farewell evening of Rev. G.A. Snip and family

By Anky Stulp



Rev. G.A. Snip

On Sunday afternoon June 25th Rev. Snip held his farewell sermon, after being Minister of the Word in Lincoln for three years and eight months. He chose as text for this farewell sermon 2 Cor. 13:14 "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

The *theme*: At the end of his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul blesses them.

He makes mention of:

1. The grace of Christ.
2. The love of God.
3. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

On Tuesday evening June 27th, the congregation of Lincoln said farewell to their minister. Brother F. VanderVelde was the appointed M.C. for the evening and presented corsages to our pastor and his wife.

After that, he opened the evening with the singing of Ps. 145:1, 4.

We read from 2 Cor. 5:1-15 an apt piece of Holy Writ, dealing with the ministry of reconciliation. Our M.C. then in his opening word, reflected on the past, when our minister was preaching in humbleness, continually reminding us to serve the Lord.

Marjorie and Jane Stulp on behalf of our youngest members of the Societies "the Teens Club," started the program rolling, by presenting a photo-album of

all babies, born and baptized during the time of our pastor's stay in Lincoln.

On behalf of the "Preconfession Class" and the "Young People Society," Henry VanIperen presented Rev. Snip with a picture of the 1995 Preconfession class stressing the importance of the clear instruction they had received.

A musical interlude followed. John VanIperen performed on the organ "Fan Fair" by Lemmens. Sibrand Stulp on behalf of the "Adult Bible Study Group" presented the book "Studies and Sermons on the Mount" by D.M. Lloyd-Jones. While meeting with this group Rev. Snip had shown interest in this book and was pleasantly surprised with the gift.

Mrs. Snip received a Study Bible from the "Wednesday morning Bible Study Club." Mrs. Marg Feenstra and Mrs. Cathy Van Anandel recited a poem thanking her for the effort and dedication in searching the Scriptures with them.

Stya Hofsink, the representative of the "Women Society Hannah" expressed the thankfulness of this study group by reciting another poem and reminiscing about the past years. The present that was made by all the ladies of the Society showed to be a beautiful

tablecloth with the embroidered signatures of all members.

We all had a good laugh when our ministered opened up the gift presented to him by br. B. Mans on behalf of the "Committee of Administration." The plaque with the name of Rev. Snip in front of the church building had been "stolen" a few days before and now it showed up as a present.

An organ solo of the "Toccata" by Eugene Gigout followed. Our soloist was Jennifer Vande Vegte. The "Men's Society" was going to please us all with a slide presentation of scenic pictures of the Niagara Peninsula. They stated that our pastor had been too often in his study and had not seen a lot of this beautiful area. But to their and our dismay the lightbulb of the projector refused to cooperate. A photobook with the pictures was then presented by br. R. Heemskerck. He mentioned that the minister will now be able to view what he is leaving behind.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the "Anchor Band" under the directing hand of Mr. R. Heemskerck.

The members, as usual, were eager to perform and showed a lot of enthu-



The Anchor Band



Mr. G. Mechelse presents the print of the church building

siasm. Rev. Snip played a solo piece of Ps. 116 on the organ.

Then we all sang together accompanied by the band and the minister on the organ Ps. 150:1-3, bringing the words of this psalm to life "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

The congregational gift was presented by our aged brother G. Mechelse. A beautiful and unique print in pointillism of the church building of Lincoln is to be hung on the wall of the study in Edmonton.

Rev. Snip spoke words of thanks for all presents, the love and fellowship

that was given to him and his family during this evening also in the past.

He pointed out that for both sides it had been a learning experience. We also were taught that we have to live in total dependence on our God. We went together through happiness and sorrow. But we have to go on in faith and trust for we are safe in His hand.

In closing br. H. VanIperen, the vice-chairman of the Consistory, spoke words of thankfulness for the diligent and dedicated work done amongst us.

He also said to know that Rev. Snip will love to take up his task in Edmonton of teaching, praying and working in the Federation of Churches.

We sang together Hymn 5:1-4 and br. VanIperen closed with the thanksgiving prayer. Afterward a social time was enjoyed by all, with an abundance of refreshments and everyone had an opportunity to speak to Rev. Snip and his family to express personal goodbye wishes.

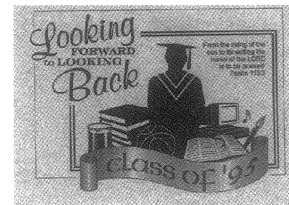
We wish the Snip family much joy and happiness in Edmonton. May our Lord bless your work there. May His Name be glorified. **C**

Looking Forward to Looking Back

Credo Christian High School

Graduation – June 29, 1995

By Sarah Vandergugten



School's over! The Geography 12 exam is history. The last textbooks have been dropped off at the office. A final check to see if the locker is really empty. Tonight is Grad – finally! A scant six and half hours later, fifty-nine grads gather on the parking lot of Northview Community Church in Abbotsford. (No local Canadian Reformed Church building has the seating capacity to host Grad night.) Mr. Sixten Koat has the challenging task of assembling this group together for a final formal photograph. The shutter clicks one last time as cars and vans loaded with family and friends turn off Downes Road into the spacious parking lot. It's time to start. *From the rising of the sun. . .*

The grads entered the auditorium to the familiar strains of *Pomp and Cir-*

cumstance and took their places on the stage facing the audience. On behalf of her classmates, Andrea VanVliet spoke cordial words of welcome to everyone present. The grads had chosen as their theme Psalm 113:3, "From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised!"

The first congratulatory words were spoken by Credo's principal, Mr. Ed Vanderboom. He reminisced how the road to this grand occasion had not always been a smooth one. Tears have flowed; frustrations have surfaced; and friendships have been forged. In all this, the grads have learned the importance of walking with God, every day of their life. That will be important as they stand on the threshold of greater independence. As we have just sung and

read in Psalm 119, "Your word O Lord is eternal . . . your faithfulness continues through all generations." On the basis of this solid foundation for our hope, the staff extends heartfelt congratulations to the students. That's Amazing!

In the "Valley" there is the unwritten tradition that fathers whose youngest child is graduating play a special role in the annual graduation celebrations. It was in this capacity that Mr. H.A. Berends, father of Janice, the youngest of six Berends Credo grads, took centre stage to deliver his address on behalf of the parents. He began by relating the sound advice he had received concerning his message this evening. His daughter had urged him, "don't be preachy." His wife, Joanne, had suggested, "don't be intellectual, sophisti-



The Class of '95 on centre stage

cated or charming. . . just be yourself." Someone else had advised, "Be accurate, be brief, and be seated."

Mr. Berends reminded the grads how it had been twelve short years ago that they had anxiously and hesitantly entered elementary school. It is amazing how quickly the time has gone. This brings to mind the story of a man whose parents gave him a unique name. They called him "Amazing." They hoped he would live up to his name, and achieve great things. In fact, this man lived a rather mundane life never moving off the family farm and remaining married to the same woman for sixty years. Not surprisingly, Amazing was the butt of countless jokes throughout his life. As a result, he requested that his wife not inscribe his name on his gravestone when he died. His wife complied. Instead she wrote this simple inscription: "Here lies a man who for sixty years was faithful to his wife." And now when people walk by and read that, they point and say, "That's Amazing!" In a sense – not of surprise but of wonder – this Graduation Day is also amazing. The Lord has given the grads all they needed in order to graduate. But *why* Credo?

Mr. Berends went on to reflect on the reasons the grads attended Credo. Why did parents send them here? Facilities in the public school are more sophisticated; public school teachers are more numerous and more specialized in their field. Yet there is a lack, something which Credo strives to achieve: the promotion of the glory and honour of the Lord in all activities – in content, methods, curriculum and extra-curricular activities. It has not been done flawlessly, but the focus and desire is real.

This truth is expressed in the open question and answer of the West-

minster Catechism, "What is the chief end of man?" ". . . to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." The same thought is expressed in the Belgic Confession, Article 12, "God sustains us. . . to the end that man may serve His Lord." This is no less true for the grads than for their parents. The task is the same for all. Therefore covenant parents chose to send covenant children to an undeniably expensive school that desires to help its graduates prepare for a life of service.

For some Grads this life of service will occur within the work force; for others it will involve enrollment in a college or university. This is, of course, only the "end of the beginning" of education. The Grads must pursue the blessings of the Lord and respond to what the Lord has given them. They continue on their way as Christians, as prophets, priests and kings. Yes, Lord's Day 12 summarizes life's vision for each of us – for today and for the future. Yes, Amazing!

As parents we are sometimes perplexed how someone who has attended a Christian School for 12 years can still act in such a worldly, secular way. And then we look in the mirror. . . . Covenant membership does not automatically lead to a God-fearing life. Partaking of the covenant privileges holds the potential for greater condemnation. Yet the same Christ who has redeemed us by His blood also renews us by His Spirit to be His image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves thankful to God, that He may be praised by us.

This gratitude includes thanks for a school with enthusiastic teachers, patient administrators, and dedicated, though sometimes unappreciated, board members. Above all thanks to

our heavenly Father who has given parents this tool. What a gift! Amazing! And for the future? May the faith of the grads increase. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 John 5: 4). May the Lord uphold them by the power of His Holy Spirit. He is both willing and able to give us all that is good. Such grace. Amazing!

An enthusiastic round of applause greeted the close of this heart-warming address. Mr. Berends had indeed successfully followed the advice of his trio of wise advisors.

Centre stage

The time had come. Every grad was introduced with a text they themselves had chosen. A short walk across the stage and each returned to the designated spot, with diploma and gift book in hand. Once reassembled, they sang their grad song, "Hand in hand," ably accompanied by Anne VanLaar. "Love one another and love the Lord with all our heart, 'cause that's the way friendships last and the place that we should start. Hand in hand we walk together. Hand in hand we'll serve the Lord forever."

As valedictorian, Jacoba Harlaar spoke on behalf of the students. She began by quoting Robert Frost: "Education is . . . simply hanging around until you've caught on." She presumed that the grads must have caught on to something, since they were now leaving – leaving to become independent. That had been the theme for one essay on the recent English government exam. "Independence can be. . . ." Apparently no two students had come up with the same answer. It means something different for each. They will all learn in their own way. Independence cannot be taught, but must be practiced in order to be achieved.

After expressing appropriate thanks to all who had helped the grads to come this far, Jacoba noted that this class had not followed a predictable pattern. It might be true that "in similar water, similar fish are found," but this truism does not apply to the Class of 95. They have been a diverse group who, nevertheless, formed close bonds. Jacoba remembered those students who for various reasons did not graduate from Credo, thanking the Lord for allowing most of them to be present this evening. A final remark – life is not a circle, but a linear sequence that goes steadily forward and does not repeat; therefore, live all the days of your life in faith and praise to God.



Nervous excitement fills the air as the girls wait to enter the auditorium



An exuberant Sharon Nienhuis and Andrea VanVliet share a hug of congratulations

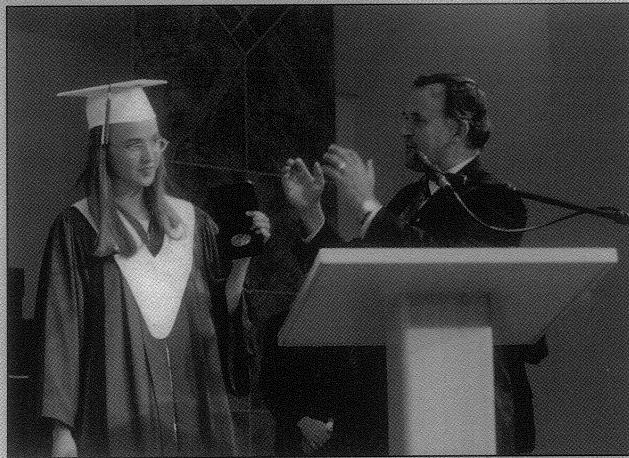
As is customary, the receiving line quickly formed outside. Grandmas and Grandpas, Moms and Dads, brothers and sisters, friends and relatives patiently waited their turn to congratulate their special grad. A wonderful evening, and many reasons to give thanks to God for His manifold blessings on this graduating class.

Some families may have given a special prayer of thanks this evening. One grad, Chris Schouten, has made a full recovery from a serious car accident two years previous. It was a poignant evening for another family. On this very evening Marsha Moesker's parents were interviewing a young couple in the hope that they can help take care of Marsha during the summer months. Marsha is severely autistic. This would have been her graduating class. But even here there is reason for great thankfulness. The interview came to a happy conclusion. In all circumstances the Lord provides. He will do so for all of us, until that final graduation day, The Day of the Lord. *"From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised."* **C**

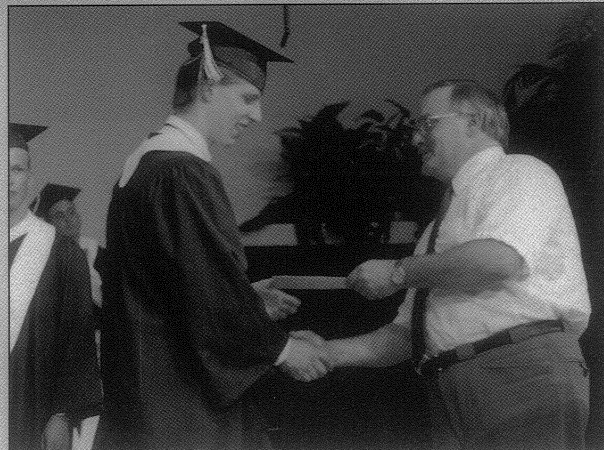
Special awards

Various representative from community business firms, financial institutions, colleges and universities, as well as those representing the Fraser Valley Scholarship Foundation now had the pleasure of handing out approximately \$60,000 in scholarships and bursaries. Tanya Hendricks has the unique honour of going to Princeton (New Jersey) on a \$24,000 scholarship. The most prestigious award, the Governor General's Bronze Medal, went to Jacoba Harlaar, Credo's top academic student.

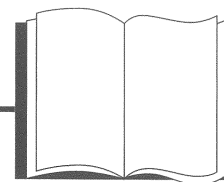
The closing words of the evening belonged to Martin Leyenhorst, chairman of the school board. He encouraged the grads to be lights in the world. Pointing to the well-lit facilities we were enjoying this evening, he noted that a shining candle would not make much impact here. In fact, it might even go unnoticed. Perhaps it has been so for the grads as well. Glimmering candles in a place where the Word of God has provided light – in school and at home. But, now the grads will venture out into an often dark and somber world. There even a small candle will provide a clear, steady light. May Credo grads be shining lights in whatever place they take up their new roles.



Langley Township Mayor, John Scholtens applauds Jacoba Harlaar, winner of the Governor General's Bronze Medal



Dennis Werkman receives a well-deserved Fraser Valley Foundation Scholarship from Mr. Steve VanderMolen



The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Re: "Which Version Now"

I read Dr. J. De Jong's editorial entitled *Which Version Now?* with some dismay. The article promotes the retention of the RSV as opposed to adopting the NIV in the pulpit and pew. Let us examine some of the arguments.

Dr. De Jong says that Synod's choice in favour of the NIV was an "understandable choice, since . . . (it) is considerably superior to the others suggested." Yet he argues in favour of retaining the RSV since the NIV no longer uses the "classical English of the Reformation" and "the idiom is generally *familiar* rather than *dignified*. . . . The pulpit should retain the dignity of language as much as possible."

We should not be persuaded by arguments that are not based on Scriptural grounds and essentially promote traditionalism for the wrong reasons. There is no Biblical warrant for a special Bible, prayer or pulpit language. Prior to the Reformation, the Bible was only available in Latin, the ecclesiastical language of the day. The "King James" Bible was published in 1611 and was referred to as the "Authorized Version." At that time, the use of "Thee" and "Thou" represented the contemporary language of the day. It used the same form in man addressing God, God addressing man, and man addressing man. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" is God addressing man as "Thou." There is no distinction as so many have erroneously assumed. In the Old Testament, God spoke to His people in contemporary language, and Jesus spoke to His listeners in contemporary language. Yet Dr. De Jong and others now advocate the use of "dignified" language as much as possible. In other words, he effectively argues that abolishing the use of archaic language in favour of contemporary language is undignified.

It is an argument that just doesn't stand up to scrutiny. I am not against dignified worship. I am against worship that relies on traditions that have no Biblical basis, and produce a stilted

form of worship and prayer language that is not easy to use, and in some cases not easy to understand. The pronouns "Thee," "Thou" and "Thine" as well as the endings "eth" and "est" (e.g. sayeth), are no longer part of our language. Moreover, the use of the traditional language by our pastors is full of contradictions. If the argument is to be dignified, then why did we drop the use of "shalt," "art," etc. but retained the "Thee" and "Thou." Many people born and raised in this country have no experience with a distinction between a familiar and formal way of addressing a third person. This leads to the awkward use of special prayer language.

The Reformation brought the Bible to all members of the church in their ordinary language and broke the tradition of the Roman Catholic church to make it only available in Latin. In England, Tyndale was one of the persons who translated the Bible into English with substantial opposition. He was burned at the stake. Preaching and praying in the contemporary language of the day is also Scriptural. On Pentecost, the Gospel message was preached to those present "each in our own language in which we were born" (Acts 2:8).

Prayer language should not be based on cultural tradition, but rather on a meaningful dialogue with God. Since God does not prescribe any special prayer language, no such requirement should be imposed on our worship services. Let us not try to renew the debate through the back door by resisting a Synod decision which adopts the use of contemporary language by suggesting this is not sufficiently dignified for the use of pulpit and pew. As Canadian Reformed people we have a mission to witness to the world around us with the real message of Christ. The dignity in our worship services is not dependent on the use of archaic language forms, but on the bold proclamation of His Word, and the true communion of saints where the Spirit is clearly visible.

Let's seize the opportunity and get rid of the barriers that seem to con-

stantly set the Canadian Reformed Church apart on non-fundamental issues of the faith. Dr. De Jong is concerned that the use of the NIV will create an inconsistency of language in the worship services. He is, of course, referring to the Psalms and Hymns in our *Book of Praise* and the liturgical forms. Perhaps it is an appropriate time to revise this issue. Of course, amending the liturgical is easy enough. But we should also be prepared to look at our Psalms and Hymns. They should not be etched in stone and in Genevan tunes. After all, the Psalms are paraphrases and not direct translations and therefore should always be subject to scrutiny and revision. We also need to add some of the classic hymns, which are so sadly lacking, such as "Amazing Grace."

I am not advocating change for the sake of change. I am also not advocating getting rid of an Anglo-Genevan Psalter altogether. But, to suggest that the singing of the Psalms should be exclusively tied to authentic Genevan melodies of the sixteenth century and use paraphrases authored in the twentieth century, but in language of the seventeenth century is too much of a contradiction for me. Let us preserve and hold on to the things that should set us apart: our doctrine, our faith, and our personal relationship with Christ, with real Christian dignity. But let's not create further non-essential barriers which prevent us from being relevant and appealing to the contemporary world around us.

C.M. Loopstra,
Toronto, ON



CORRECTION:

The book review of G. Holden Pike's *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* published in the July 28 issue of *Clarion* was not written by C. Van Dam but by (Mrs.) J. Van Dam.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-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.

Dear Editor:

I would like to comment on the editorial written by the Rev. J. De Jong titled "Which Version Now?" (14 July 1995, p. 322). His purpose was to "offer reasons why for now consistories should strive to maintain the current version, the second edition of the RSV, as long as possible." His argument draws heavily on the majority report to Synod 1980 on Bible translations and is largely based upon two seemingly interrelated claims. First, the RSV is to be favoured over the NIV because the former preserves the "dignity of the English language" and hence is more suitable for the worship services, while the latter is "modern," "too free" and "too interpretive." Second, a switch to the NIV could "damage the uniformity of liturgy and worship, and create increased barriers in appropriating the language of the church and the confessions."

I must confess that I found this argument confusing. To support it, Rev. De Jong juxtaposes the "dignified" RSV with the "too free" and "too interpretive" NIV. It seems to me, however, that Rev. De Jong conflates linguistic character and style with methods of translation. The majority report also stated that the NIV is "the most appealing translation" (Acts 230) and has a "beauty of its own because of its clarity and freshness of expression" (Acts 231). In my opinion, when the majority report stated "Although the New International Version uses clear and contemporary English, the so-called dynamic equivalent manner of translation makes the version too free for use in the pulpit" (Acts 232), it found the NIV's linguistic character and style acceptable, even desirable, but had grave concerns about the method used to translate it from the original languages. However, Rev. De Jong's focus in rejecting the NIV as a suitable translation for the pulpit is precisely because of the linguistic character and style. He writes, "In this version the link to the Authorized Version and the classical English of the Reformation is severed . . . this makes the NIV a poorer choice than the current version. . . ." (*Clarion* 322).

As a result of his focus on linguistic character and style, Rev. De Jong becomes greatly concerned about the "appropriation of the language of the church" and warns against the potential creation of a language barrier. It is my contention, however, that it is precisely his line of argument which has the potential to create language barriers. At its extreme, the Bible becomes merely a book which lies on the shelf until Sunday to be used in appropriating a particular religious language. The Bible is God's living and dynamic word (Heb. 4:12). As Paul put it, "it is the power of God for everybody who believes (Rom. 1:16). Thus, it is imperative that the language of the Bible speaks to everybody – especially the young people. If, as Rev. De Jong suggests, the aim of catechism preaching is to help appropriate the language of the church (*Clarion* 323), a barrier is created between the language of the church and the language of the people. Classical English is beautiful and dignified, without a doubt; but if God's Word ceases to speak to our children and young people because of it, it should be changed.

Respectfully,

Rob van Spronson
Carman, MB

Dear Editor:

Permit me the pleasure of commending your magazine for its excellent issue on Christian education (June 3, 1995), and particularly for the insightful and thorough analysis by J.L. Van Popta in "The Need for a Confessional Basis for Our Children's Education." In an era when "toleration" seems to be the order of the day, it is refreshing to hear that the confessions are "for all of life" and not merely for one aspect or sphere of it. Properly understood and faithfully taught, our Reformed creeds can be a tremendous framework around which to build our Christian school curricula. As instruments of unity, they can be the glue that binds us to our children and grandchildren down through the centuries.

I was also gratified to read the Editorial by C. Van Dam ("Questions About a Decision") and the insistence that we "deal biblically with a matter put before us fairly by a church which is recognized by us." As a newly ordained pastor in the OPC and one somewhat conversant with the Canadian Reformed tradition, I see so much ecclesiastical commonality that we should not allow incidents like this to separate us or damage the fellowship we could share as Christian brothers. May incidents like this bring us closer together rather than farther apart.

A co-worker in Christ,
Norman De Jong, Ph.D., pastor
Palos Heights, IL

Dear Editor:

In early July you wrote about the Christian Reformed Synod, taking your information from press-releases from the synod itself. I have not read all the press releases. It strikes me, though, that due to incomplete information you leave a wrong impression. As a delegate to that synod I would like to complete the picture. It is true, that the fraternal relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland are not completely cut off. We will keep on talking. However, already for some time preachers from the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland are not allowed to preach in the Christian Reformed Church, nor are papers from members from these churches automatically accepted. They cannot participate in the Lord's Supper before the local consistory has talked with them. The reasons are the same reason you mention: there are serious objections against their stand about homosexuality and euthanasia, among other subjects.

In effect, the most visible forms of fraternal relationship are not operative. We would like to have the opportunity to talk. Personally, I believe, that we should never cut off opportunities to talk. With our Lord nothing is impossible. Ever since 1944 in the Netherlands

I am afraid for synodical decisions which take away possibilities of talking together, and listening to each other. In 1944 I found myself suddenly cut out of the church by a synodical decision. (We were "Vrijgemaakt.") When we start listening to ourselves only, we are in great danger. Certain traditions and teachings become canonized. We should always be willing to listen others, who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Labels like, liberal, orthodox, conservative, etc. do not help at all. We are then, often unwillingly, having a bias.

It is my hope, that we will as Christians of diverse stripes, go to church together, before our Lord comes back. Especially, as Reformed Christians we have more in common that we often like to admit.

Your brother
Jan de Koning
Willowdale, ON

Dear Editor:

Re: Confessional membership: a new terminology? (*Clarion*, July 14, 1995)

The Committee on Translation and Revision of the Confessional and Liturgical Forms – of which I was a member – proposed in its report to Synod 1980 to change in the liturgical forms the expression "the articles of the Christian faith" into "the Apostles' Creed." This would have been only a linguistic revision (see Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 7).

Synod 1980, however, changed the expression into "the Creeds" and Synod 1983 into "the confessions."

These were wrong decisions: they did not take into consideration the history of our liturgical forms. (especially the Form for baptism) and they diminished their catholic character. The change was also not a linguistic revision only, as later synods asserted. The rather vague expression "the confessions" entails another concept and conveys another idea than "the Apostle' Creed."

In a similar vein I regret the change in Art. 53 (now Art. 26) of the Church Order. The very concrete expression "the Three Forms of Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches" has been transformed into the vague expression "the Confessions." Moreover, the heading speaks of "Subscription to the Confession" (in singular).

An outsider who scans our Book of Praise could ask: Is this the Belgic Confession only? Or do you also mean the prayers that on p. 641 and p. 635 are

called "A general confession" or "A public confession?" What do you mean by "the confessions?" The expression can be taken in a broad sense. To mention only three other Reformed confessions, there is the French Confession, the Second Helvetic Confession and the Westminster Confession.

Why did we in the liturgical forms not retain the expression "the Articles of the Christian faith" or "the Apostles Creed?" Why did we replace it with the vague expression "the confessions?"

Why did we in Art. 26 of the Church Order not stick to the concrete expression "The Three Forms of Unity" which heads p. 440? This page also makes clear that the Belgic Confession is one of the Three Forms of Unity or "doctrinal standards to which all office-bearers of the churches were required to subscribe."

These Three Forms of Unity express the doctrine "taught here in this Christian Church." These Three Forms are an expression of the Reformed Religion or the Reformed faith of which Art. 61 or the Church Order speaks. Only those who have made a profession of the Reformed religion and lead a godly life are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. This rule is now indicated by the new and debatable words "confessional membership."

Not all changes and new expressions are improvement. Less is beautiful. "The Apostles' Creed," "the Three Forms of Unity," "those who have made a profession of the Reformed Religion" is catholic and clearer than what seems to be more ("the confessions," "confessional membership"). The old was better.

J. Faber
Hamilton, ON

Dear Editor:

It was good to hear the message of the Dutch delegates at Synod Abbotsford resound in the *Clarion* Vol. 44, No. 11.

However, I must take issue with the review about church life in the Netherlands, the passage about life and doctrine, as if these were my own opinions and insights.

In fact I stated: *Instead of touching on all the details, it seems better to me, to give you a more in depth overall view. I will make use of the themes of discussion, as we find them in the ecclesiastical press.*

The whole discussions take place in the framework of a reflection on church,



CALLED by Burlington West as
second minister

Candidate J. Plug
of Hamilton, ON

tradition and culture, which is quite fundamental and leads to some more or less radical changes, here and there.

The underlying thoughts are the following . . . and then: people find . . . people plea. . . .

As far as my personal opinions are concerned, this is quite a different story.

A. de Jager
Zwolle, the Netherlands

Dear Editor:

The undersigned wants to respond to the article of Dr. J. De Jong and a letter to the Editor by Rev. G. VanDooren.

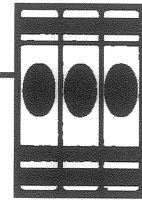
First of all, I thank Dr. De Jong for the way he brought this very important issue to our attention. Many of our leaders are jumping the bandwagon and are telling us this is the way it will be, and, talking to brothers and sisters, all we hear is "face it brother, there is nothing we can do." Is that really true? If we read "Which Version Now" then we have a reason to be very careful and especially of using "Thee" and "Thou" for the three persons of the Trinity. Let us be thankful that we have a special way to address our Heavenly Father in this unique way, and stop trying to cater to other denominations to be on their level. Let us keep our Reformed life style. Let us not forget that Satan laughs when he is able to drive a wedge of confusion into Christ's Church.

If we go on to the letter from Rev. VanDooren, then we have to go one step further and we come to the conclusion that indeed we go off track and get confused if we do not read and study the proper material.

I thank the Lord that we still find Brothers who are able to guide us on our way.

Respectfully,

B.J. VanDerBruggen
Waterdown, ON 



The Subscription Debate

The Subscription Debate: Studies in Presbyterian Polity, by Morton H. Smith. Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. (82 pages; \$5.20 US.) No date. (Can be obtained from Great Christian Books)

One of the issues that has arisen in our discussion with the OPC is the matter of the subscription to the confessional standards. The perception has arisen that not just the OPC but Presbyterians throughout the centuries have never required even the officers to subscribe to the confessions, but only to the system of doctrine contained in those confessions. This "system" is then considered something undefined, hidden within the confessional documents. Further, the impression is there that it is typically Presbyterian that any minister or candidate for the ministry can register his scruples concerning any part of the confession. The conclusion that suggests itself is that no Presbyterian Church can truly be called a confessional church.

In the booklet, *The Subscription Debate: Studies in Presbyterian Polity*, quite a different picture is presented, namely, that the historic Presbyterian position is one of full, or strict subscription, that is, that the confessions are adopted because they contain the system of doctrine taught in Scripture (p. 5).

The booklet is valuable not only in its review of various decisions made by Presbyterian Synods about the matter of subscription, but also in giving a compact overview of Presbyterian Church History in the U.S. Put very briefly, there was a separation in the Presbyterian Church in connection with the civil war. After the civil war the southern church did not want to rejoin with the northern church because it felt the northern church had compromised its position on subscription. Due to the increasing neglect of the confessions in the northern church, liberalization took place, which eventually led to the formation of the OPC in 1936. Over time also in the southern church subscription became looser, leading to liberalization, which in time led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) in 1973.

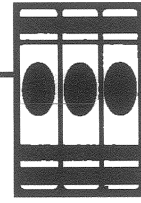
The author is a minister in the PCA. It becomes clear from the essays collected in this booklet that he sees the PCA in danger of letting go of a strict subscription to the confessions. He argues that the PCA was founded on the principle of strict subscription, as has been the practice of faithful Presbyterians throughout history. Particularly worth mentioning is his careful review of what is called the "Adopting Act" of 1729. In response to the argument that this Act set the pace for subscribing

only to some undefined system within the confessions, and leaving room for people to have all sorts of scruples (reservations) he shows that the opposite was the case, namely, that all those present subscribed fully to the confessional documents as containing a faithful, accurate summary of the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. It was indeed true that certain members had some reservations about certain phrases in the confession about the power of the civil government over Synods, but these matters were resolved (p. 21). In 1736, because some confusion had arisen about the decision of 1729, it was reinforced that there was wholehearted acceptance of the confessional standards.

In light of my study published in a previous issue of *Clarion* about the relationship between Presbyterian and Reformed churches in history, I was quite intrigued by a reference to contacts between Presbyterian and Dutch churches. He recounts how there were "certain misrepresentations concerning the constitution, order and discipline of the (Presbyterian) churches industriously spread by some of the members of the Dutch congregations, interspersed among or bordering upon us, with design to prevent occasional or constant communion of their members with our churches." I should hasten to add, to avoid misunderstanding, that the year was 1751! The Synod tried "to obviate all such misrepresentations, and to cultivate a good understanding between (them) and the Dutch churches" by declaring that its constitution, order and discipline was in harmony with that of the church of Scotland. In other words, they pointed to their adherence to the Presbyterian Standards! (p. 26).

A booklet like this indeed serves to obviate misrepresentations and cultivates a good understanding of what Presbyterianism is all about. All in all, it is a worthwhile little booklet to read. **C**





Princeton Seminary

Princeton Seminary, David B. Calhoun. Volume 1. Faith and Learning 1812-1868. with a foreword by Iain Murray. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994. (495 pages, with illustrations; \$ 35.95 US.)

Why review a book on the history of Princeton Theological Seminary in *Clarion* and bring it to the attention of its readers? There are at least two good reasons. Firstly, it allows us to rejoice in the Lord's great works on this continent in times past. Princeton was a key bulwark of Calvinist orthodoxy. Secondly, it helps us to understand the Presbyterian world.

This book is the first of a projected two volume work. David B. Calhoun, Professor of Church History at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, is sympathetic to the aims of orthodox Princeton and provides us with a treasure trove of information, both historical and theological. With the history of Princeton Seminary is interwoven a good part of the story of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as well as numerous para-church organizations. Prof. Calhoun's account is firmly and aptly placed within that context. There is not much on the history of the Princeton Seminary. The only other book (by William K. Selden, published in 1992) is far too brief. (Selden covers in about 50 pages what Calhoun takes almost 500 pages for). We can therefore be thankful for this thorough and sensitive work which offers much on God's work in America and which shows that those who taught at old Princeton sincerely desired to teach and pass on to the next generation the Biblical teachings as understood by Augustine, Calvin and the Westminster Standards. They also wanted to pass on this heritage by being themselves living examples of true Christian piety. In spite of inevitable shortcomings, the Lord enabled them to accomplish both desires.

A book so full and rich is difficult to present and do justice to in a review for our magazine. Calhoun tells us about the agonizing early years. When Princeton College (now Princeton University) was no longer adequate and suitable for training ministers, nineteenth century Presbyterians made a conscious decision that theological education should be given by the church and controlled by the church. The Seminary's beginnings were humble. One professor, Archibald Alexander, was the sum total of the teaching staff when the official training started and there was no building. The first classes were held in Alexander's home. There were three students. The following year, 1813, the General Assembly elected Samuel Miller as Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government and he joined the seminary. It was not until 1822 that a third professor was elected. That was Charles Hodge as Professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature. (In 1840 he became Professor of Exegetical and Didactic Theology.) A separate Old Testament department was created in 1835 with the election of Joseph Addison Alexander to the Princeton faculty. Except for a brief tenure of John Breckinridge as Professor of Pastoral Theology and Missionary Instruction (1836-1838), Princeton had four professors until 1861.

The seminary immediately attracted much attention and the student body grew quickly. Three years after the seminary started there were 39 students and by 1822 over 100 students had graduated. Right from the beginning, Princeton also welcomed students from a variety of church backgrounds and so its instruction had influence far outside the Presbyterian Church. By the time it had celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1862, 2,422 students had graduated.

In the course of his account Calhoun shows how the paramount aim of the seminary was to provide good preachers for the church and the mis-

sion fields, both in America and abroad. The gospel deserves the best and thus Princeton became famous for its thorough scholarship. He also details, from the vantage point of Princeton, the controversies that rocked the Presbyterian world, including the Old School and New School struggle, the Unitarian attack on the doctrine of the trinity, the debate concerning the nature of the office of elder (Miller and Hodge versus Thornwell), the question about the validity of a Roman Catholic Baptism (interesting also for us since this question has been raised in the Brazil mission field), and the schism brought about by the civil war. Calhoun also provides much interesting information on prominent Americans whom Princeton opposed or debated, such as Charles Finney and Philip Schaff.

Reformed readers will sympathize with the Princeton theologians throughout most of this book. Indeed, as our Theological College Handbook notes, we count orthodox Princeton as represented in such as Charles Hodge as part of the same Reformed tradition in which we stand. Anyone who wishes to know more about the work of the Lord in this continent in the last century should read and study this book. Especially ministers, but also elders, would benefit from the wealth of information given. (Even the Free Church of Scotland has a place in the history of Princeton, pp. 272ff.)

Calhoun's study is good reading and an excellent resource book. The value of this first volume is enhanced with the inclusion in the form of appendices of The Plan of a Theological Seminary (1810) which became Princeton's charter, a bibliographic essay on the history of Princeton, and biographical summaries of faculty. The index for both volumes of this work will be found at the end of Volume 2 which is scheduled for release in the spring of next year. We look forward to its publication. **C**

The Value of a Good Concordance

By Wes Bredenhof

I'm sure that it's happened to everyone: you have this Bible verse or saying in your head and you just can't remember where it came from. You may know a few words but you can't get the complete text. You scramble furiously through your Bible trying to find that place where it says what you're thinking of. You still can't find it! You may end up looking at the back of your Bible at the so-called "concordance" in the hope that among the several hundred words listed one of yours will be found along with the text you're looking for. Still can't find it. Let's face it: you've been stumped again.

This need not happen. The purchase of a fully comprehensive concordance could have saved you all this trouble. Your elusive text could have been found and you could have gone on your way rejoicing. Surely this is one of the great values of a true concordance. Being able to find those evasive Scripture verses is not always an easy accomplishment.

But there are other reasons why a concordance can be of immense value. Consider the well-known "Strong's" comprehensive concordance. Not only is every word in the Bible mentioned with chapter and verse, but there is also a numbering system which is linked to the Hebrew and Greek dictionaries usually included. This can be a valuable aid for lay people who do not know the Greek or Hebrew languages.

Let's take an example. You're studying the first epistle of Peter. Say you'd like to know what exactly Peter meant when he said in 1 Peter 3:15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. . . ." You're really curious as to what Peter intended to say with "an answer." It's a simple matter of looking up the word "answer" in the Strong's concordance. You then look for the entry of 1 Peter 3:15. Looking beside this entry you'll see the number 627. This is the "Strong's Number."




Turn to the back of the concordance to the Greek dictionary and look up word #627 – you'll find that the word in Greek is "apologia," and you'll be given a short definition, in this case, "a clearing of self," "a defence." Now if you'd like to see how this word is used elsewhere in the New Testament, you can turn back to the entry in the concordance for "answer" and look at all the other instances of the number 627. You will find such passages as 2 Timothy 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 9:3. So by using a concordance, a person who has absolutely no knowledge of the original languages can begin to have at least an elementary understanding of what the original text says. By the way, this is also an excellent help for students who are studying the original languages and get stuck while translating, especially if they're working on their own.

A couple of notes in conclusion: there are also many computer programs available now which will do exactly the same thing as the regular printed concordance. These are usually faster but

the more sophisticated versions tend to be very expensive. However, there are free versions available on the Internet. Anyone who is interested is welcome to contact me for more information.

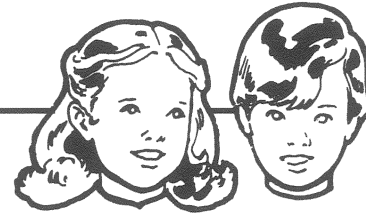
The printed concordances are very valuable tools, yet they still have some minor shortcomings. For example, most concordances are referenced to the King James Version. This should not be a major problem, as most people still have KJVs floating around the house. There is an exhaustive concordance available for the NIV, but most other versions do not have that luxury. The most popular concordances, Strong's and Young's, still work with the KJV.

A concordance can help everyone of us. No household should be without one. Whether it is being used for finding obscure verses or trying to rightly divide the meaning of a text, a concordance could very well become one of your most used and well-beloved books.

(The author can be reached on the Internet: wbredenh@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca) 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

*"Each little flower that opens
Each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings.
Yes, all things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
And all things wise and wonderful,
The LORD God made them all!"*

Do you know how many different plants and animals there are?

I don't, because there are so many!

Each one is beautiful in its own way.

Go outside.

Take a close look at that plant you call a weed beside the road.

And the vegetables and flowers in the garden.

Each one flowers at the right time and makes seeds for next year.

The LORD has made so many wonderful plants.

And all the animals! So many different kinds.

Many are helpful.

Others are dangerous.

Some are such a bother!

But the LORD God made them all!

He made them, and He takes care of them.

Remember what Jesus said about those little sparrows?

"Not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will." Mt. 10:29

Then Jesus tells us something wonderful. He says "The hairs of your head are numbered!" Mt. 10:30

God cares for us so well!

He even knows how many hairs are on your head.

You, God's child, are important to Him!

Jesus teaches us another thing right after this.

He says that we must tell others about God.

How Jesus has saved us.

How glad we are that we belong to Him!



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS



A very happy Birthday to these Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in September. We hope you have an exciting day with your friends and family. May our Father in heaven bless you in the coming year.

Lydia Penninga	1	Alisa Krabbendam	12
Kyle Lodder	4	Marcia Rook	16
Anthony Nijenhuis	4	Gerald Bartels	20
Jonathan Janssens	8	Chelsea Kampen	20
Adena Feenstra	9	Christa Raap	23
Danyse Buitenwerf	10	Danielle DeJong	26
Joanne Jans	11	Breanne Meyer	28
Tineke Bouma	11	Cheryl Van Anandel	30
Nicole Alderliesten	11		

Quiz Time!

SAILING

Sailing was one of the main ways of getting around in Bible days. Fill in each blank with the person who sailed.

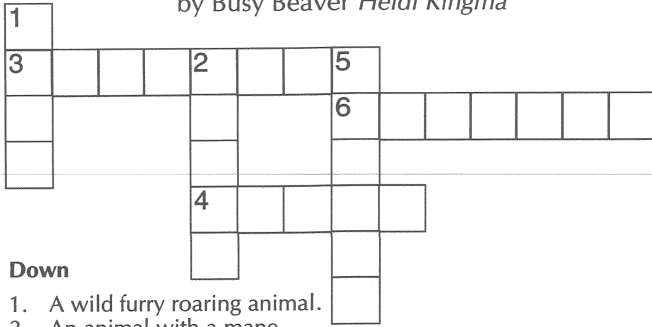
1. During a storm, _____ said that no life would be lost but the ship would be destroyed, Acts 27:22-26.
2. _____ took a ship to Tarshish to run away from God, Jonah 1:3.
3. Jesus found _____ and _____ with their father in a ship mending nets, Matthew 4:21.
4. Jesus was asleep in a boat when _____ woke Him up because of a storm, Matthew 8:24-25.
5. _____ left a ship to walk on the water to Jesus, Matthew 14:24-29.
6. _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and two other disciples fished all night but caught no fish, John 21: 2-5.
7. _____ was told by God to build a ship to save himself and his family from a flood, Genesis 6:13-14.
8. _____ was shipwrecked three times, 2 Corinthians 11:25.
9. _____ sent ships to Tarshish to bring back gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks, 2 Chronicles 9:21.



THOROUGHBRED HORSE

sent in by Busy Beaver
Deanna Wierenga

ANIMAL CROSSWORD
by Busy Beaver Heidi Kingma



Down

- 1. A wild furry roaring animal.
- 2. An animal with a mane.
- 5. A big bird that goes "gobble."

Across

- 3. A large animal with a long trunk.
- 4. A long, slithering animal.
- 6. A fairytale animal that is a horse with a horn on its head.

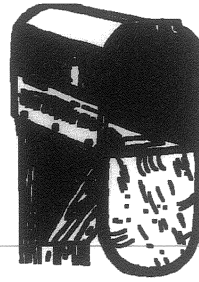
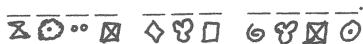
WHO IS IT?

From the three names given, pick the right one to finish the sentence.

- 1. The father of John the Baptist was (Luke 1:13)
a. Zechariah b. Zacchaeus c. Zephaniah
- 2. Moses' sister was (Numbers 26:59)
a. Mary b. Miriam c. Milcah
- 3. Jesus' mother was (Luke 2:4-5)
a. Elisabeth b. Joanna c. Mary
- 4. The woman who was eaten by dogs was (2 Kings 9:36-37)
a. Jochebed b. Jezebel c. Joanna
- 5. A woman who served as a judge was (Judges 4:4)
a. Delilah b. Deborah c. Dinah
- 6. A woman who lied to the Holy Spirit was (Acts 5:1-3, 9)
a. Sapphira b. Salome c. Serah
- 7. A man who had a vineyard Ahab wanted was (1 Kings 21:1)
a. Noah b. Naboth c. Nicodemus
- 8. A woman who left her family to live with her mother-in-law was (Ruth 1:16)
a. Rachel b. Rebekah c. Ruth
- 9. A young man whose mother and grandmother taught him about God (2 Timothy 1:5)
a. Titus b. Troas c. Timothy
- 10. The family of this priest was rejected by God. (1 Samuel 3:14)
a. Elimelech b. Eli c. Eliphaz

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

By Busy Beaver Rebecca Kelly



FROM THE MAILBOX:

Hello, *Jocelyn Schoon*. I was glad to hear that your holidays began so well. How was the rest of your vacation? Thank you for the puzzle, too. Bye, Jocelyn!

Hi, *Deanna Wierenga*. It sounds like you had a really fun church picnic on July 1. How is your Mom's hand? And I hope your baking went better for the rest of the holidays. Now that school is almost started again, you will be glad to see your friends again. What grade are you starting? Hope to hear from you soon, Deanna. Bye!

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Andrea Meliefste*. Thank you for your letter. It is really pretty! What kinds of things do you like to do in the spring? Bye Andrea.

Hi, *Amanda Feenstra*. What a pretty booklet you sent me! And such neat printing! Tell me more about your new school! Have fun there! Bye, Amanda.

Hi, *Luanne Feenstra*. How are the baby rabbits doing? And do you like your new school? How many students are in the new school, A.C.R.E.S.? Bye, Luanne.

Hello, *Tamara Van Leeuwen*. Thanks for sending in your story about the monkey. Did you write it all by yourself? What kinds of things did you do during your summer holidays?

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Gregory Spriensma*. We're glad to have you join us. Are you good at doing those computer games? I hope you enjoy the puzzles and reading the stories in *Our Little Magazine!*

Hi, *Danielle DeJong*. You've been very busy drawing and writing! Have you done more of those things during the summer? Hope you've had lots of fun! Bye, Danielle.

Hi, *Deborah Voorhorst*. It was good to hear from you again. Thanks for the puzzle. Hope you had a wonderful summer. Bye, Deborah.

Hi, *Laura Kanis*. Wow! You did do a lot of travelling. It sounds like fun, though, to see so many people and friends. That's what summertime is for! Bye, Laura.

Hi, *Arnold Kanis*. You've been busy this summer. Did you have good holidays? All the best in your new school year. Bye, Arnold.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Mary Ellen Van Doornik*. We're glad to have you join us. I hope you enjoy the puzzles and activities. How was your summer? Bye, Mary Ellen.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jocelin VanDoornik*. Of course you can join, too. Where is Beachville, Ontario? What kind of books do you like to read? Bye, Jocelin.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Denise Vis*. Would you like to share some of your drawings with us? Send them to me and I'll put them in *Our Little Magazine*. Bye, Denise.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Daniel Vis*. How was your summer vacation? Did you go away with your family for a while? Thanks for sending us a puzzle. Bye, Daniel.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver club, too, *Jessica Vis*. Of course you can join the Club. I hope you enjoy being a member; sending letters, doing puzzles and lots of fun things! Bye Jessica.

Well, that's all for now.
Bye everyone!

Love, Aunt Betty

