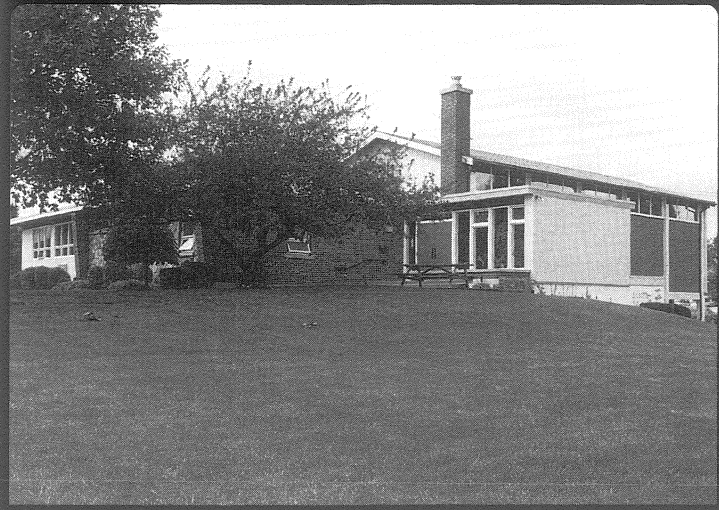


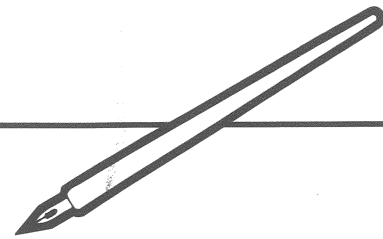


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*Theological College
of the Canadian
Reformed Churches*



A Look at our Church Book

Introduction

The year 1995 marks the end of my association with the Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise. I was privileged to be a part of this work for the last fifteen years, and I am thankful for the good cooperation which we enjoyed in the Committee throughout the years. Only when I joined the Committee did I begin to realize the tremendous work that had been done by translators, versifiers and language experts in order to come to the first complete edition of the *Book of Praise*. Some of the first Committee members as, for instance, Mr. M.M. De Groot and Rev G. VanDooren, can tell us quite a story!¹

As stated in the Report to Synod 1995, the work is not perfect. A church book is one of those little treasures of the church that needs continued attention and correction in order to improve its quality. Over the years the book will need some (slight) changes in the versification of the psalms and hymns. Perhaps a few more hymns may be added. In addition, there are elements in the prose sections which may also be amended and improved. Hopefully, in all this the general character of the book will be retained as a church book in which the heritage of the Reformation is made available to the worshipper of today in a clear, understandable and usable form.

A Positive Review

There are a number of reasons why the churches should be careful to retain the unique character of the our *Book of Praise*. The book is becoming increasingly known beyond our borders. Let me mention one review in particular, that of Dr. Allan C. Clifford, pastor of the Norwich Reformed Church in Great Ellingham, England. Dr. Clifford is an astute student of the Reformation, and a member of the editorial advisory board of *The Evangelical Quarterly*, an international review of Bible and Theology published in Carlisle, England. Dr. Clifford gave a review of our *Book of Praise* in *The Waldensian Review*, an English journal published in Cambridge, and devoted to uncovering the cultural and religious heritage of the Waldensians. Among his many introductory words he says:

For those who feel that after nearly three centuries of rich English hymnody dating from the Watts-Wesley era, too much modern chorus-based worship is spiritually, aesthetically and emotionally banal, the *Book of Praise*, – because it is largely unknown – is a refreshing and powerful antidote despite its antiquity. In historical terms it introduces us to the rich, heroic tradition of Continental Protestantism.

Dr. Clifford refers to the eminent musicologist Sir Richard Terry, who commended “the dignity and the beauty” of the

melodies. He quotes the Scottish church historian Sir Millar Patrick who said of the Genevan psalter: “We may justly say of this psalter: ‘Here is richness’: no other comes near it in either poetic or musical accomplishment or interest.”

The Rich Heritage

The material that Rev. Clifford brings forward is another small indication of the rich heritage that we have received, and of the specific contribution our churches have made in the field of church music and psalmody in the production and publication of an Anglo-Genevan psalter. The book has its own unique place among the many psalters and hymnals that make up our contemporary world of worship. That unique place is clear: this is the embodiment of the Calvinist tradition of worship. In Calvin’s view, there was no room for sentiment and emotionalism in church music. Rather, it had to be characterised by weight and majesty. Yet there had to be a true stirring of the hearts! The French psalter brought these qualities to the Calvinists, not only in France but all over the continent. The reason? The psalms were born out of the struggle of the church under the cross, the church in persecution.²

Our book is not the first Anglo-Genevan psalter in existence. During the reign of Queen Mary (1551-1558) the English refugee congregation in Geneva also produced a book of English psalms, but it soon fell into disuse when religious freedom was restored in England. Most of the melodies were not those of the French psalter. Yet, where French tunes were used, the later English psalter kept many of the words, and in the case of the most popular, these have come down to our psalter.³ Some of the changes made only concern either a closer rendition of the original Hebrew text, or a more modern form of expression.

All this puts the character of our psalter in a special light. The qualities of the music clearly embody the vision Calvin had for church music. Not only the psalms but also the hymns and the liturgical section (Forms and Prayers) reflect a distinct period in the life of God’s church, and should exude in every way the rich gains given by God to His church during the Reformation. Just as the music has in the words of Clifford “enduring attractions” so the words must reflect the enduring Word of God as given to the church of all ages for the creation, preservation and confirmation of the faith. We should aim to preserve and solidify this character of our church book as much as possible.

The Hymns

Hymns have always been a part of the Reformed Church book. The oldest psalter had only a few hymns: the Song of Simeon, the Song of Mary, the Credo, and so on. Yet it was

Calvin's intention to have a hymnal which recounted the wonderful deeds of God in the new dispensation. This principle also stamps the character of the hymns included in our book. They focus on the glorious deeds of God's redemption in Christ covering all the points of His humiliation and exaltation for the sake of the church.

During my last years as a member of the Committee we received more requests to consider adding more hymns to the *Book of Praise*. Most often this concerned hymns from the broader Christian tradition, whether of Wesleyan or American background. No doubt there are some hymns which should be considered for inclusion in the book. However, the character of the hymns to be added must be in line with the character of the whole book. It is and should remain a Reformed psalter, that is, a contemporary Anglo-Genevan psalter which carries on the tradition of the first Anglo-Genevan psalter of 1561. We can each in our own way contribute to the preservation of our rich heritage. As the early Protestant minister Rev. John Quick said, the singing of these French psalms requires "sound lungs and a clear strong voice."⁴ May God give this to us and our children so that these powerful melodies may continue to fill our churches, our homes and our hearts.

¹I wrote this article before the sudden passing of Rev. Van Dooren on September 5, 1995. However, I decided to leave it as it stands, and in gratitude dedicate this article to his memory. Rev. Van Dooren meant much to us, and not the least for our church book!

²Of the Huguenots, Clifford says: "Psalm 68 in particular has been called the 'Huguenot Marseillaise'. It was their comfort and inspiration through centuries of persecution." See also his article "Reformed Pastoral Theology under the Cross: John Quick and Claude Brousson" in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol 66, no. 4, (October, 1994), 291-306

³The most noted examples here are the Old Hundredth, and the old One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth. The words of the latter were crafted by William Whittingham, who was married to Catherine, a sister to John Calvin. The old 100th was versified by William Kethe, who was responsible for many of the other metrical psalm versions in the first Anglo-Genevan psalter.

⁴Clifford, *op. cit.* 297



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,
C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
5621 - 51 Street
Taber, AB T1G 1K6
Fax: (403) 223-0149
E-Mail: 74124.1377@CompuServe.COM

**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:
(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):**

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

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What's Inside

As a church community, we have much for which to be thankful. This issue of *Clarion* reflects this.

In the lead editorial, Dr. De Jong writes about the rich character of the *Book of Praise*. Fittingly, he has dedicated his editorial to the memory of the late Rev. G. Van Dooren who laboured long and hard for the production of an English Psalter which stands in the Reformation tradition of Geneva. The Lord has taken Rev. Van Dooren from our midst, but the work He did through this faithful and hard working servant abides. Reason for thanks.

This issue also contains four College Evening contributions. Our Theological College continues to be a rich source of blessing to the churches. Cause for gratitude.

Instead of the regular meditation, we have included a longer one written by the Rev. A.J. Pol on the theme of Thanksgiving entitled "Sowing and Reaping in 1995."

Let us as individuals and churches continue to sow to the Spirit in thankfulness knowing that God will allow us to continue reaping with gratitude.

GvP

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By A.J. Pol

Sowing and Reaping in 1995

Thanksgiving: What for?

We may look back on another season of planting and harvesting. There is much for which to be thankful. Every year there are concerns about the weather. Will there be enough rainfall and sunshine? What is ideal for one is perhaps less than ideal for another. Crops differ and the type of land some farms will also play a role here. In general, though, we may once more see that the LORD has blessed us richly. No major catastrophes have occurred. We can look forward to a continuing supply of food for our daily needs. This is not something we have deserved.

Concerns

There are brothers and sisters among us who may face Thanksgiving Day with mixed feelings. Their efforts in business have not led to the success for which they had hoped. Some have had to face bankruptcy. Others continue their businesses in hope and fear, wondering what the future will bring. Our economy is not in great shape. The legions of the unemployed testify to this. They are not only outside the Canadian Reformed Churches.

What does Thanksgiving Day mean if you have lost your job, or if your economic prospects are grim? No one within our churches should have to face such a question alone. We are brothers and sisters in the Lord, bound together by a common bond. True thanksgiving should involve sharing, so that whoever does not have enough may still have reason to give thanks to God. In the world there are testimonies of God's goodness, as He gives "rains and fruitful seasons" (cf. Acts 14:17). In the church there must also be the testimony of God's grace. Thank the LORD for all the spontaneous expressions of love and care from brothers and sisters. Thank Him for the work of deacons, who have a special calling to channel care for the needy. Such care is given in the name of Jesus Christ.

Compare and reflect

Our thoughts should also be with those in other countries, specifically where there is hunger. This can be caused by catastrophic events like floods, plagues of insects or drought. Often, man-made causes play a large role. Wars uproot people from their homes and make it impossible for many to till the ground or look for other forms of work. What could be a time of thanksgiving then becomes a time of horror and devastation. Compared to such scenes, even the poorest in our midst are relatively wealthy. While an economic recession can limit our possibilities to buy things or go to various places, it has not yet endangered our very lives.

We still have much for which to be thankful. There is peace in our country. Crops have been harvested. We have food and drink. Under God's blessing, the life of the churches can go on.

Sowing and reaping

Thanksgiving should mean giving thanks to God. It should also mean giving something of our material abundance to the service of the Lord, to the church, needy brothers and sisters, Reformed schools, and causes outside of our local congregation. Such giving is all part of another process of sowing and reaping spoken of in Scripture. This sowing and reaping is an ongoing process that is not dependent on seasons. Nonetheless, the seasonal activities as we experience them do form a living illustration of a spiritual reality. The apostle Paul speaks of this in Galatians 6:7-8. "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

"Sowing" distinguishes man from the beasts. Paul uses it here as a picture for all of our activities. It embraces

the whole course of your life. You make decisions from day to day and act upon them. By means of this word-picture, the apostle points out your responsibility. Realize that whatever you do has consequences. Each day of your life you are sowing something. Remember that what you sow, you will also one day reap. That is something farmers must keep in mind. As Christians, we must learn to apply the same principle in a spiritual way.

Paul contrasts sowing to your own flesh and sowing to the Spirit. The New International Version speaks in this context of one man sowing "to please his sinful nature" and "one who sows to please the Spirit." It is more a paraphrase than a translation of Paul's words at this point. But it does make the intent transparent. There is a choice to be made here between two differing lifestyles. What you sow will also lead to a harvest.

Reaping corruption

Paul's warning was directed in the first place to the Galatians. They were tempted to try to save themselves by keeping Old Testament (ceremonial) laws. The thought of saving yourself by keeping God's laws appeals to our sinful nature. Wouldn't it be something to be able to earn your way to heaven? The problem is that it can't be done. Trying to do so would amount to setting aside the good news of salvation by grace alone. Only Jesus Christ can save us.

Sowing to your own flesh can take other forms too. It refers to a lifestyle directed toward satisfying sinful desires. It is activity that leads to "works of the flesh," a catalogue of sins described in Galatians 5:19-21.

There is a harvest for that kind of a lifestyle. In the text quoted above, it is called "*corruption*." The word means destruction, ruin, death. At times you can see people reaping such a harvest during their lifetime. A sinful lifestyle can ruin someone's health. It can wreak havoc in his relationships with other

people. These consequences, however, are only part of the harvest. There is more to come. The harvest culminates in the punishment of hell. This harvest forms a contrast with the harvest you receive by “sowing to the Spirit.” Whoever “sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap *eternal life*.”

Reaping eternal life

Sowing to the Spirit presumes a life in God’s fellowship. That fellowship is a covenant privilege. The gift of the Spirit is promised to us within that covenant (cf. Acts 2:39). To understand what “sowing to the Spirit” means, we must remember that the Spirit works through the Word of God in our lives. We must not separate Him from the Word. Sowing to the Spirit means living in the light of God’s Word, and so letting the Spirit govern you. Through obedience to that Word, you learn to devote your life, your strength and all that you have to serve God, His Kingdom and His people.

Is Paul teaching that our salvation depends on our efforts? Not at all. The promise of the Spirit is a promise of grace for sinners who believe in Jesus Christ. You can’t earn that. You can only receive it in faith. Your sins may be very many. But when you plead for forgiveness, on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, your prayer will be heard. Your guilt is taken away. Then the Spirit can work, purifying your life, dealing with the destructive effects of sin.

Don’t obstruct the work of the Spirit! Live in agreement with His purpose. He wants to make you more holy. Submit to His purifying work, as He speaks to your heart through the Word of God. He convicts you of sin and teaches you how to live for God.

There is a promise connected with this sowing to the Spirit. Instead of reaping corruption, we reap its opposite: eternal life. We receive that from the Holy Spirit. Eternal life consists of knowing God and living in His fellowship (cf. John 17:3). While this eternal life is something that begins in this life, there is more to come. It involves no less that complete and unbroken fellowship with God in heavenly glory. This is described as the direct result of the activity of the Holy Spirit. His work will yield that glorious harvest. If you want that harvest, then you must follow Him along the path of faith and repentance.

The renewal of our lives is a gift of the Spirit of Christ. It is a miracle of divine grace. Paul, however, teaches us that we should not wait passively for the Spirit to work. We are called to be

active as Christians. Sowing is something you do. You are called to “sow to the Spirit.”

Doing good

In Galatians 6:9 Paul develops this thought in a specific direction. He says: “And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.” Note that he no longer speaks about “sowing” in general, but about “well-doing,” “doing good.” That term takes the place of “sowing,” and he promises us once again that if we do this, we will “reap.”

What does Paul mean by “well-doing,” or “doing good”? We can illustrate that from Galatians 5. There, Paul summarizes the duty of all believers with the rule: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:14). That is what “doing good” is all about. It is more than doing some deeds of mercy. It involves your whole life. It means showing love to the people around you. “Doing good” is something you should be working on all the time. It must determine your way of dealing with family members and friends, but also your business relations. God wants you to deal in a loving way with everyone you meet.

When you see how great God’s grace is in dealing with you, you will have more patience with others. Then you will not look down on someone who is caught in the act of sinning, for example. It would be arrogance and a sign of an unspiritual attitude. Would we really be any different if God in His grace would not restrain us? Would there be anything good to reap if we would sow to our own flesh?

Remember what Paul says in Galatians 6:1: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should *restore him in a spirit of gentleness*. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted.” This is an example of “doing good.” God wants you to correct others in a mild and gentle way, not harshly. Wouldn’t that make a difference in your way of communicating with people at home or elsewhere?

“Doing good” is a broad concept. Take time to be friendly. Encourage other people. Give them a hand when you can. Do it not because you want them to like you, but because God has shown you what love is. He wants you to respond to His love by sowing to the Spirit, “doing good.”

Opportunities

It requires effort to see and make use of opportunities to lovingly serve people within and outside the church.

You can’t help everyone, either. That is why Paul also makes a very practical remark: “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

“Doing good to all men” is our calling as Christians. You could say it is the horizontal expression of “thanksgiving.” It is a task God gives each one of us. How we go about it will depend to a large extent on the opportunities each one of us has. This is related to matters of time, place and the gifts we have. These differ from person to person. You must be the right person in the right place at the right time. These are aspects that can play a role in the concept of “opportunity.” Do note, however, that the apostle assumes we all have opportunities in one way or another. The important thing is, if such an opportunity is there, do the right thing too: do good!

We cannot take the whole world on our shoulders. Paul isn’t trying to tell us to do this when he says “Do good to *all men*.” This is not a command to be actively involved in the lives of everyone around us. It does direct our attention to everyone in a general sense. Christians should not be focusing on one particular category of people to the exclusion of others. Doing good to all kinds of people is part of our task as Christians as long as we have the opportunity to do so. It often requires thought and planning. But it is worth the effort. God is glorified. It can also become a powerful Christian testimony to unbelievers.

Priorities

The apostle Paul also indicates that there are priorities. Special attention must be given to “the household of faith.” Within the fellowship of the church, we experience the love of God through Jesus Christ. Let this love be reflected in the way we treat one another as brothers and sisters. Let the bond we have be felt!

The Spirit works in particular through the preaching of the Word. You need that Word to walk by the Spirit, to be sensitive to God’s will in your life (cf. Gal 3:5; 5:25). In this way, the saving work of Jesus Christ becomes visible in your life. For this reason, Paul says in Galatians 6:6, “Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.” There is a financial aspect to this. To say it in other words: Make sure that you contribute to the church, so that the ministry of the Word can continue. We could add: Make sure you also

contribute to the Theological College, where future ministers are trained. Supporting the church financially is part of what Paul means by sowing to the Spirit. It is also proof that you know what "thanksgiving" is all about.

Tired of sowing?

Obedying the command to sow to the Spirit can be tiring. "Doing good" is not necessarily easy. But there is another factor. What if you help someone and they don't thank you for it, or you hardly notice that they are thankful? It is easy to get fed up with exerting yourself in such circumstances. Maybe you don't feel like helping anyone anymore if this has happened to you more often. But take a moment to think about this. Are you doing good to reap apprecia-

tion and praise from others? You won't keep it up for long if you don't harvest what you expect. That is why you need to think about your motives. Your goal should be to serve God; to seek His honour. Don't get tired of that!

The harvest

The LORD promises eternal life to those who sow to the Spirit. This is not a payment in balance with our efforts. It is the crown we receive for the service of love, done in dependence on His Spirit. We need to ask the LORD to help us. That means pleading on the basis of His promises. We need Him to change us. On the other hand, we must be ready to submit to His Word, since that is the instrument the Spirit uses in our lives.

Sow to the Spirit. That is how the power of "the flesh" will be broken down in your life. The Spirit resists the flesh, the wrong inclinations of your sinful nature. Thank God for that. Spiritual life takes the place of death. Instead of living for yourself, you learn to live for God.

Let your life be fruitful in His service. Such a life has a beautiful future. Don't "grow weary in well-doing." Keep at it! In God's good time, you will reap the fruit He promises you: eternal life in heavenly glory, through the Holy Spirit.

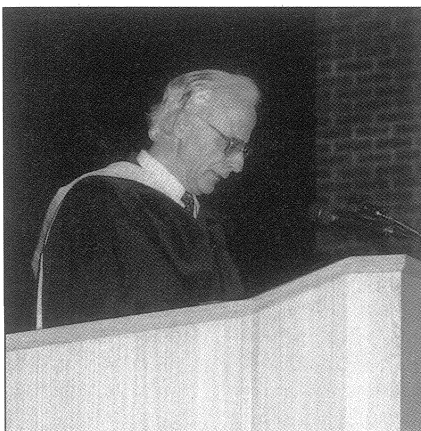
The Rev. A.J. Pol is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph, ON.



Principal's Report 1995

By J. Geertsema

With great gratitude for the grace of God, I present this report to you regarding the activities at the College during the academic year 1994-1995. The labours of teachers, students, and others involved in the work of the College, could continue without hindrance. Thankful for God's blessings, we mention the following points.



Rev. J. Geertsema

College Evening 1994

To begin, we remember that on September 9, 1994, at the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Meeting and the Twenti-

eth Convocation, we celebrated the Lord's gift of twenty-five years during which He enabled the College to serve His church through the training of young men for the ministry of the Word. During this period, the churches, including the sister churches in Australia, have received some thirty-five ministers through the College.

Dr. J. Faber, principal for the first twenty-one years, was the featured speaker. His speech bore the title "Past and Place of the Theological College." He mentioned that already at the first national synod in 1954, the Synod of Carman, the churches had visualized the creation of their own seminary which was opened fifteen years later. He further traced the beginning and the development of life and work at the College, and spoke about the function of the College in the midst of the churches during this first quarter of a century.

At last year's College Evening, the College and the churches were honoured by the presence of Dr. J. van Bruggen, representing the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands at Kampen. On its behalf, he congratulated our College with its twenty-fifth anniversary. He remarked that our two institutions have

developed their own form and system. He also expressed the hope that we might together develop a plan to make our institutions more compatible for students who would like to make use of both, and that we might cooperate in developing a common approach to fill the need for Reformed theological training and publication.

At last year's Convocation, the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred on Mr. John Challies and Mr. John Louw-erse. The latter serves the Canadian Reformed church at Houston.

Commemoration of the Liberation

In October 1994, three meetings were held in connection with the commemoration of the Liberation that took place in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, fifty years ago. These meetings took place on three consecutive Thursday evenings in the month of October. On the first evening, Dr. J. Faber spoke on the topic, "The Liberation: the doctrinal aspect." On the second evening, Dr. J. De Jong addressed the audience on "The Liberation: the church-political aspects." On the last evening, Dr. N.H. Gootjes delivered a speech on "The church in the Act of Liberation." The address of the last

evening was followed by a panel discussion in which Dr. C. Van Dam and Prof J. Geertsema participated.

Through the editing work of Dr. Van Dam, these speeches, together with the discussions that followed, have been published in a book entitled, *The Liberation: Causes and Consequences. The struggle in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the 1940s*. The College is thankful that it could present this publication to the English speaking world.

Students

At the beginning of the past school year three new students were admitted to study at the College: Mr. Mark Jagt from Burlington, Mr. John Smith from Fergus, and Mr. Doug Vandeburgt from Langley.

This year's new students are Mr. Richard Bultje from the Church at Chatham, Mr. Peter Holtvluwer from the Church at Ottawa, Mr. Ted Van Raalte from the Church at Grand Valley, Mr. Ken Wieske from the Church at Ancaster, Mr. John Koopman from the Free Reformed Church at Chatham. As the sixth new student, we may welcome Mr. Li-Jun (Frank) Dong, originally from the People's Republic of China, and now from the Australian sister church at Kelmscott. Of the six, he was the first one to apply and to be admitted. However, since the visa for him and his family was not forthcoming, we did not expect him anymore. To our surprise, we received a fax two weeks ago informing us that the visa were issued. Yesterday (Sept.7), Mr. Dong and his family arrived safely in our midst. The Lord made them prosper in their coming to us.

During the past year, three students completed their studies at the College for the Master of Divinity degree to be conferred on them this evening. They are Mr. Mark Hoogerdyk, Mr. Johan Plug, and Mr. Joe Poppe. One student completed the two year program for the Diploma of Theological Studies, set up specifically for Mission Aid workers and teachers, namely Mr. Hilco de Haan. Mr. De Haan is already involved in the Mission Work among the natives in the area of Smithers, British Columbia. Mr. Hoogerdyk has an appointment with the school in Carman, Manitoba. Mr. Plug accepted the call to the church at Lutten, the Netherlands, while Mr. Poppe looks forward to the moment he will enter into the ministry in the Free Reformed sister church of West-Albany, Western Australia.

It should be mentioned that some of the students used part of their time to prepare for the ministry through practical training. Some gave catechetical instruction. In addition, those students who had completed their third year of study requested and received consent from a Classis to speak an edifying word in the midst of the churches. Last year, these students were the brothers Hoogerdyk, Plug, and Poppe; this past summer such consent was received by the brothers Richard Eikelboom, Theo Lodder, and Jason VanVliet.

At the moment, the Senate and the Board of Governors are investigating ways in which a practical component can be added to the academic program.

Another point to be mentioned is that during this past year the students again received some welcome support from the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund and from the Christian Disciples Fund. With great appreciation we mention that the children of Professor and Mrs. L. Selles gave an amount of \$1500.00 out of the Selles estate to the College. This amount is placed into the Selles Bookprize Fund to reward students who excel in New Testament studies.

The Program of Study

During the past school year, the Senate has adopted some minor changes in the curriculum. The course entitled "Biblical Geography" was replaced by a new course, namely, "Introduction to Old Testament Exegesis," while the contents of Biblical Geography will be incorporated into other courses. The course on Contemporary Theology was replaced by an additional Ethics course, while the material of the former course will be taken up in Dogmatics as much as possible. Other changes are more a matter of arrangement. For instance, courses formerly taught once a week during the whole year are now given two hours per week in one semester. In this way courses are taught in a more compact way, facilitating study.

When Dr. Van Bruggen was present, the Senate discussed with him the possibility of a closer cooperation between the two institutions, specifically in connection with further study of students from Hamilton in Kampen. The Senate promotes and encourages such continued formal study.

Instructors and Special events in the life of the College

We mention first that this very week, on Tuesday September 5, the College and the church federation as a

whole, received the sad news of the sudden passing away of our brother and colleague, the Rev. Gilbert Van Dooren. He was buried this morning, September 8. As lecturer in the Diaconological Department he served the College from its beginning in 1969 until 1984, when he was seventy-three. Diaconology means the knowledge of the services or offices in the church. It includes the office of minister of God's Word, that is, the office of preacher and pastor, or teacher and shepherd. With all his energy, Rev. Van Dooren served the churches in Canada as minister of God's Word and pastor of the flock since 1954, until he retired in 1977. Even when retired, he kept administering God's Word until even the last Sunday of his life. Until the very last weeks before his death, he also continued to serve the sheep with his pastoral care. With this same love for preaching and pastoral care, Rev. Van Dooren served as lecturer in the diaconological department of the College for fifteen years. He taught the students how to preach the Word and instructed them how to give pastoral care with the same Word to the flock of the Lord, for which the great Shepherd gave His life. He showed that office bearers are called to give their life to the Lord and His flock in dedicated love.

This week the Great Shepherd called Home his under-shepherd Gilbert Van Dooren. His earthly task came to an end. Both those who heard him preach and received his pastoral care and those who received his teaching at the College will not forget his instruction and guidance. In this we may see a remaining fruit of Van Dooren's labours for the Lord and his church. We thank God for what He gave to the College and the churches in general in Rev. Van Dooren.

This past summer, another retired teacher of the College, Dr. K. Deddens, suffered a stroke while he and his wife were visiting their children in British Columbia. He is back in the Netherlands but still in the hospital. May God grant him further recuperation.

Turning now to special activities at the College, we mention that in the first week of lectures after last year's College evening, Dr. Van Bruggen presented two lectures, one on the topic, 'The Son of Man' - *More than an Idiom?*, and another on a contemporary discussion on the Person and work of Christ in the Dutch Reformed Church in The Netherlands. In the last week of November, Dr. H.F. van Rooy, professor of Semitics in the Department of

the Old Testament at the University at Potchefstroom, South Africa, presented a guest lecture on the exegesis of a prophetic passage in 1 Samuel 2 (:27-36). In the beginning of December, Rev. Victor Atallah spoke to staff and students about the history and work of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship.

In April 1995, Dr. F. Oosterhoff gave a number of lectures in contemporary North American Church History. Further, within the course Poimenics, a two hour inter-disciplinary seminar on the matter of abuse in its various forms was held on the afternoon of April 13. From their own professional angle, various speakers gave a presentation on this topic, H. Faber as lawyer, H. Scholtens as medical doctor, A. Smouter as police officer, and H. Van Dooren as professional social worker and counsellor.

Extra-curricular Activities of the Professors

Sometimes the professors accept a task outside their curricular duties at the College. These extra-curricular activities have much to do with speaking arrangements and with attending meetings and conferences.

In September 1994, Dr. J. Faber took part in the Sixth International Conference on Calvin Research, held in Edinburgh, in Scotland.

Together with Rev. R. Aasman, Dr. Van Dam attended the November 1994 meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. At this occasion he also attended a number of meetings of the Conferences of the Evangelical Theological Society and of the Society of Biblical Literature, both in Chicago.

In December of 1994, at the occasion of the one-hundred-and-fortieth *Dies Natalis* (anniversary) of our sister institution, the Theological University, in Kampen, the Netherlands, Dr. J. Faber spoke about "Amerikaanse Afscheidings-theologen over verbond en doop" (American Secession Theologians about Covenant and Baptism). At the Ministers' workshop, held in January of this year, Dr. Faber presented an expanded English version. Dr. C. Van Dam addressed the Office-bearers Conference in March with his study about "Divorce and Remarriage in the Light of Old Testament Principles and their Application in the New Testament." At the June Ministers' Workshop, Dr. J. De Jong spoke about "Homiletics from the point of view of the hearer: the experiential aspect in the preaching."

In May 1995, Dr. J. Faber and Dr. N.H. Gootjes went to Grand Rapids to

take part in the Tenth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies.

In June, Prof. J. Geertsema visited the churches in the Classis Alberta-Manitoba on behalf of the College. He presented some recent information about developments at the College and in his speech on the "The Unifying Theme of the Letter of James," he tried to show by the example of James that each text of Scripture has its own message and that this message must be proclaimed.

We mention further that during the past year the plans for a first sabbatical have become concrete. Rev. Drs. G. Hagens, minister of the church at Bilthoven, the Netherlands, has been found willing and has received permission from his consistory to give the lectures in the Old Testament department during the months of September to December of 1996, so that Dr. C. Van Dam can have, Lord willing, a sabbatical leave of absence.

Publications

Two publications were produced by the College community. In the first place, as already mentioned, there is the book, edited by Dr. Van Dam, *The Liberation: Causes and Consequences*. In the second place, Dr. J. Faber's study, also mentioned above, about "Amerikaanse Afscheidings-Theologen over verbond en doop" was published under that same title in *Kamper Bijdragen*, a series of studies published by the professors of the Theological University in Kampen. Two other books are close to publication. Further, an article of Dr. N.H. Gootjes entitled "General Revelation and Science: Reflections on a Remark in Report 28," appeared in *Calvin Theological Journal* (vol.30, no.1, 1995).

Synod Abbotsford

Because the College is the school of the churches and for the churches, their general synods receive reports and deal with matters concerning the College. General Synod of Abbotsford 1995 appointed the Rev. R. Aasman of Edmonton as governor for the Regional Synod of the West. He takes the place of Rev. B.J. Berends who moved from Smithers to Brampton, in the area of the Regional Synod East. Since members of the Board of Governors can only serve for nine years in a row, this Synod further appointed as new governors the brs. M. Kampen of Burlington and J. VanderWoude of Hamilton. They take the place of the brs. H. Buist and C. Heeringa. As members of the Finance and Property

Committee, these two men have given much time and energy to the College, br. Buist especially in looking after the building and br. Heeringa in his function as Treasurer. We thank these departing brothers and the whole Board of Governors for all the work that is done for the College. We wish the newly appointed brothers, together with those re-appointed, much wisdom and strength together with continued commitment to the College and its work for the churches of the Lord.

The Library

The Synod of Abbotsford also had to deal with the library. The present library is reaching its capacity in regard to space. Therefore, the Board of Governors brought the matter of library expansion to the Synod. A definite decision was not made. Further investigation and work needs to be done in the coming years.

In the library, the conversion of the books from the Dewey cataloguing system to the Library of Congress system is entering a new phase, which means this process is a step closer to completion. The integration of the large VanderWaal collection in the computer catalogue of the College is almost complete. Through the expertise of our Librarian, Miss Margaret Van der Velde, this work has progressed very well.

In November 1994, the Senate decided to make a change in the administration of the library. It appointed Miss Margaret Van der Velde (M.L.I.S) as the Librarian of the College. With her degree in Library science, she is the proper person to hold the position of Librarian at the College. Dr. N. H. Gootjes was appointed as Associate Librarian, while Miss C. Mechelse remains the Library Technician.

Further, a year ago the Women's Saving Action surprised the College with the great gift of \$ 25,000, one thousand for each of the twenty-five years. During this year we also received books and other material for the library. One brother donated a computer which is now used in the Library. For all these gifts we express again our heartfelt gratitude. Together they greatly improve the library.

Speaking of the library, we do not want to forget the work of our volunteers. Even though names are not mentioned here, the labours of these faithful helpers are very much needed and no less appreciated. Since volunteers come and go again, we hope that others will take the place of those who have to leave so that the work can continue.

The Building

We mention with appreciation that the building is well taken care of by the Finance and Property Committee and by the janitorial service of br. and sr. K. Post of Hamilton. With the increasing numbers of students some changes have been made with regards to the rooms where the lectures are held. The chapel room is now used as lecture room. This will continue for the coming years. For the first time in the history of the College we have eighteen students.

Finally: the College and the Churches

The College is established and maintained by the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, in full cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. All these churches commonly refer to our institution as "our College." We exist for them and to serve them. However, we all realize that the churches are not the final goal. The churches do not live for them-

selves. They are there for the Lord of the church, for the upbuilding of His work in this world, and for the coming of His kingdom. It is therefore a joy to see that we can serve the church gathering work of Christ also elsewhere in the world. Thus, it is a cause for joy in the Lord that we not only continue to have a student at the College who has come from Timor in Indonesia, but now also may welcome in our midst a student and his family from the People's Republic of China. We also express our great appreciation for the fact that both these students are fully sponsored by the Australian sister churches which also support their own Australian sons, all this over and above the regular support for the College. We see, therefore, with gladness that candidate Poppe, together with his wife, was led to the decision to accept a call to the church of Albany-West. In this way our sister churches receive a direct fruit from the College. It is noteworthy that the second candidate of this year, Mr. Plug, saw his way led to the congregation of Lutten, in the Netherlands. While up to

the present the churches in North America and Australia received their ministers and candidates from the Netherlands, now a candidate comes from Australia-Canada and goes to the sister churches in the old country.

In this context of serving the work of the Lord on a wider scale, we are thankful too that we may serve the Free Reformed Churches in North-America by once again admitting one of their students. It shows that as churches with the same basis we belong together. May the day come that we, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in North America form one federation, so that we can fully say together about the College: this is our seminary.

Let me close with the prayer that this College may be an instrument in the Lord's hand for the gathering, the defense, and the preservation of His church, far and near. May He find us working for the coming of His glorious kingdom in faithfulness to His Word as we proclaim its truth in the Reformed Confessions. C



Report on the 1995 Convocation and College Evening

By J. Geertsema

The 1995-1996 year of study at the College was opened with the twenty-sixth anniversary meeting and the twenty-first convocation on September 8, 1995. This meeting was again preceded by meetings of the Academic Committee, the Finance and Property Committee, and the full Board of Governors, on Wednesday and Thursday. A Press Release of the latter will be published.

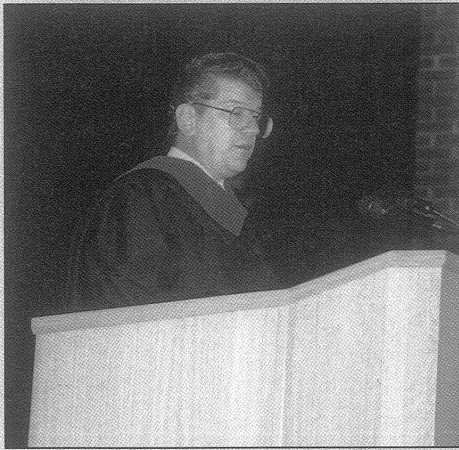
The evening itself was opened with the singing of Ps. 103:1,3 and 7, prayer and the reading of two passages of God's Word (Gen. 17:1-7 and Mark 10:13-16) which were directly related to the topic of the address of Dr. N.H. Gootjes. In his opening words, the chairman of the Board, Dr. J. Visscher, welcomed all present. He mentioned the passing away of the Rev. Gilbert VanDooren and the illness of Dr. K. Deddens. Letters with congratulatory messages and best wishes were re-

ceived with appreciation from the churches at Barrhead in Canada, Albany, Kelmscott, Launceston, and West Albany in Australia, as well as from the Australian deputies for the training of students for the ministry.

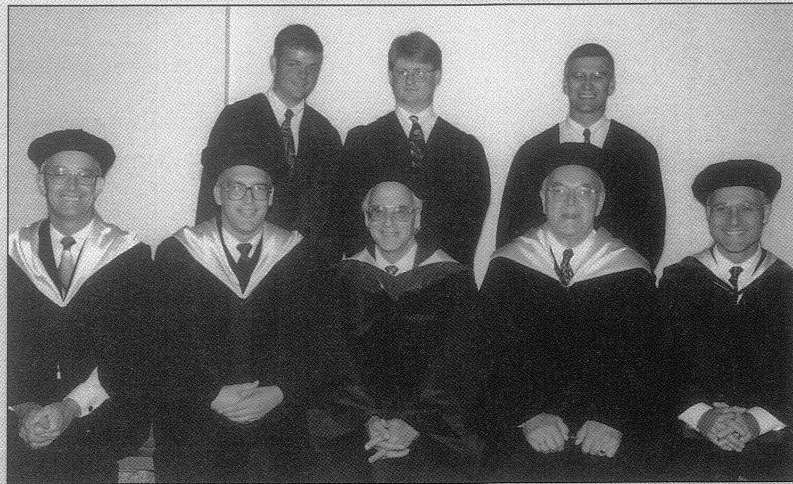
After the principal had read an abbreviated version of his report (found in this issue) and following the singing of Hy. 62:1 and 2, Dr. N.H. Gootjes presented his address on "Can Parents be Sure? The Meaning of Canons of Dort I/17." This well-researched paper gave a clear, positive answer to the question in the title (this paper is also found in this issue). Hopefully, this presentation will help readers who do have some doubts on this point to deal with their uncertainty on the basis of the sure covenant promises of the LORD. Following the address of Dr. Gootjes, we sang about the certainty of God's promises for the

children in the covenant as expressed in Psalm 105:3 and 4.

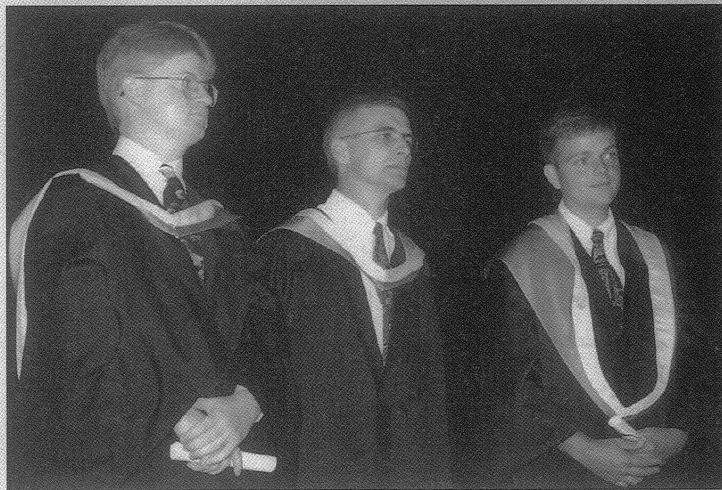
The address was followed by the highlight of the convocation, the conferral of degrees. First, Mr. Hilco De Haan was mentioned. He is the first one in the history of the College to earn the *Diploma of Theological Studies*. This program of two years is set up for all who are interested in the study of theology but do not know the biblical languages; it is designed in particular for mission aid workers and teachers. It would have been nice if this diploma could have been presented to Mr. De Haan in person. However, he was unable to be present because he is already very busy with the work among the natives in the Smithers area. May the Lord bless him in this important work of love that we owe our aboriginal fellow Canadians.



President, Board of Governors
opening evening



Student grads and Faculty



Students after they
received their degree.
l-r: Mark Hoogerdijk
Johan Plug
Joe Poppe

Theological College
photos courtesy
Marieke Geertsema.

The degree of *Master of Divinity* was conferred on Mr. Mark Hoogerdijk, Mr. Johan Plug, and Mr. Joe Poppe. More about these men can be read in the *Principal's Report*. With the words of Psalm 134:1 and 3, the audience sang God's praise and offered their prayer for God's blessing on these brothers who have completed their studies at the College.

When the brothers had received their degree, our attention was requested for the work of the Women's Savings Action. As in other years, the three members of the committee, Mrs. E. Mulder, president, Mrs. J. Van Dam, secretary, and Mrs. C. Zietsma, treasurer, presented to us, in poetic words, the aim of the Women's Savings Action as well as the result of its work, not only in Canada and the United States but also in Australia. The words were accompanied by a card that read as follows:

On behalf of the Women's Savings Action, we hereby pledge to the Theological Book Centre the Sum of

\$ 25,000. It is our prayer that this money will be spent to the honour and glory of God's Holy Name.

It was signed by the treasurer. The principal expressed the deep gratitude of the College community for this very large gift. We are very thankful for the continuous and generous support of the library through the sisters in the churches. Not only the cost of books and journals increases all the time, but also the cost of getting them. Not only packing and handling but also the government's taxation and the costs of custom brokers add to the price. Therefore, it makes us so very thankful that love for the College moved (brothers and) sisters to give so generously that the same amount was received as last year. The committee told us that the total amount gathered in the past year was more than \$34,000. Part of this amount is set aside as a saving for other future costs. As the readers know, our growing library needs expansion in the future. An academic library

needs to remain up to date and in good shape. I hope to write more about the library in a different context.

We sang Ps. 139:8 and 9, after which Rev. P. Feenstra gave thanks to God for the evening and prayed to the Lord for His blessing upon the coming year. The official part of the evening was concluded with the singing of Hy. 65:1 and 3 and two stanzas of our national anthem. The social part of the evening, with opportunity to congratulate the graduands and meet with each other, lasted for some almost as long as the official part. Time flies when things are pleasant. With this word "pleasant" the whole evening can be characterized. As College community we heard that those who came to attend the meeting found it a pleasant evening. And as College community, we found it pleasant to see a crowd that filled the auditorium and to hear that the evening was "very much" enjoyed. We thank our God for this gift. **C**



Presentation of the Women's Savings Action at the College Evening

September 8, 1995

*From far and near we have assembled
At the beginning of another school year.
We thank the Lord for His gracious blessing
Enabling us all to be present here.*

*This past year as Women's Savings Action
In congregations both large and small
We have been faithfully working
To gather the annual donation from us all.*

*Our yearly contribution for the library
Is welcomed by professors and students alike.
Each month book catalogues are carefully looked thro'
To see where they the best deal can strike.*

*Each professor looks for books to keep up to date.
Book catalogues are checked by each in turn.
In order to stay faithful to God's Word
The spirit of the times they must discern.*

*Each different department makes its requests.
On cards they are all neatly organized.
Each subject area must get its due share,
Then approval by the librarians is authorized.*

*According to publisher the orders are sorted.
Via mail and fax all over the world they are sent.
Being of thrifty Dutch stock, you can be sure
That the dollars are carefully spent.*

*Almost every week sees boxes at the door
New books, secondhand books and sometimes even a rare book
Dictionaries, encyclopedias and commentaries
Everyone is eager to have the first look.*

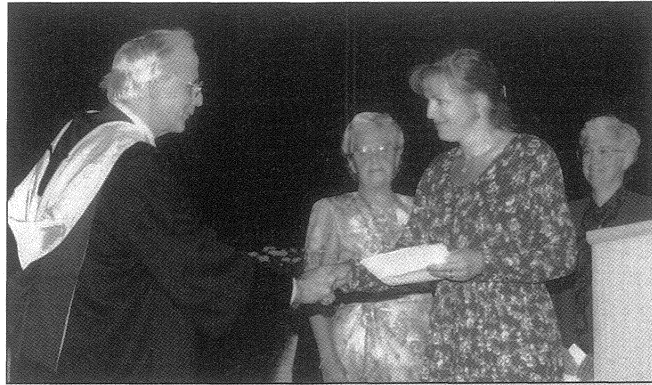
*The bills then have to be paid
And custom duties and GST not to forget
Thanks to the generous support from all of you
The financial obligations can always be met.*

*Each and every book must be catalogued
Its own Library of Congress Number it is assigned.
As volunteers accession, label and shelve each one
Each title in the computer you can now also find.*

*Every day the library is put to good use
As professors and students do their research
With up to date computers at hand
They easily for the titles can search.*

*Professors lectures must prepare, update and revise
And articles and speeches on many topics write.
Students keep busy with Scripture exegesis and sermons
And numerous essays, sometimes deep into the night.*

*Every project involves many hours of work
There are indexes to check, reference works to consult
Journals to go through, photocopies to make
Many books to read before you see the final result.*



Women's Savings Action presents a cheque for the library
to the Principal.

L-R: Mrs. Mulder, Mrs. Zietsma, Mrs. Van Dam

*Training for the ministry involves instruction
In Hebrew, Greek, Exegesis, Dogmatics
Church History, Church Polity, Symbolics
Ethics, Liturgics, Homiletics, Canonics.*

*There really are too many to mention here
Before you get a Master of Divinity degree
You must be well-trained academically
For to preach God's Word is a great responsibility.*

*This is what makes our work so worthwhile
We may be involved in the training for the ministry
Preachers of the Word, the Word we all need
And faithful shepherds of the flock they must be.*

*What a privilege to be able to support
Our Theological College here in Hamilton
So that with the latest resources and technology at hand
Their work efficiently and with pleasure can be done.*

*During this past year we did collect
Across this beautiful land and south of the border
A total of 34,300 dollars
Including \$3,300 from "down under".
We thank you for giving so generously
We thank the representatives and their teams for their
dedicated efforts
Above all, we thank our heavenly Father for blessing
us so richly.*

*Mr. Principal, on behalf of the Women's Savings Action
here and in Australia,
We pledge you a total of 25,000 dollars for the coming year.
We wish faculty, students and graduates the Lord's blessing.
May His love and guidance always all of you be near.*

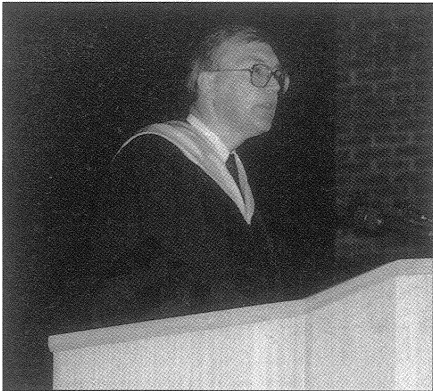




Can parents be sure?

Background and meaning of Canons of Dort I,17

By N.H. Gootjes



Dr. N.H. Gootjes – main speaker

My speech at the College Evening of September 8, 1995 dealt with Canons of Dort I, 17. The full text of this speech will be printed in two instalments.

The question

Within the first chapter of the Canons of Dort, dealing with divine election and reprobation, the 17th article comes with a comforting message. This article speaks very specifically about the infants of believers and confesses

We must judge concerning the will of God from His Word, which declares that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they are included with their parents. Therefore, God-fearing parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in their infancy.¹

This article underlines the truth that the doctrine of election is not a theoretical issue, far removed from the daily faith life of believers. As a matter of fact, the whole first chapter of the Canons of Dort is very practical, directly addressing man in his situation.² This lively approach of the Canons, however, comes to a climax when God-fearing parents are comforted in their grief over the death of an infant. The Canons point out that the election and salvation of their child ought not to be doubted.

At first glance, Article 17 clearly teaches that the election and salvation of such children is certain. This is a well established interpretation. Already in 1818, Thomas Scott wrote: "The salvation of the offspring of believers, dying in infancy, is here scripturally stated, and not limited to such as are baptized."³ The general reformed commentaries on this article agree with Scott in maintaining that the church confesses that children of believers are saved when they die in infancy.⁴ Some even take the old fashioned expression 'ought not to doubt' as a very strong statement of the opposite: The parents may be convinced that such children are saved.⁵

Others, however, do not take the article as a declaration of certainty. They give different reasons for their interpretation. One reason is that the expression "ought not to doubt" itself falls short of full certainty because it does not determine explicitly the fate of such children. The article merely states that the parents ought not to be filled with anxious doubt concerning the salvation and election of their child. They should rest in God who in His good pleasure saves His children out of our children.⁶ In other words, the Canons do not determine the salvation of these infants; they only determine the attitude of the parents.

This interpretation is not very probable. The article says more than simply that the parents ought not to doubt. It begins by saying something about the children themselves, emphasizing that they are holy and included in the covenant. Believing parents are exhorted not to doubt because God has revealed that their children are holy.

Another reason given in support of the view that full certainty is not taught, is that the article does not state anything concerning God's hidden judgment. The article merely refers to our knowledge which is limited, by declaring: "We must judge. . . ." It is still possible that some deceased children of believers are reprobated in God's hidden judgment.⁷

Again, this is an improbable interpretation. It is true, of course, that God knows more than He has revealed in Scripture. But how can a reference to God's comprehensive knowledge be used to undermine what He has revealed in Scripture? Would this not amount to a confessional admission of duplicity on the side of God? Rather, when God has revealed His will, we may hold fast to that.

It is not sufficient, however, to state that such interpretations are improbable. The seed of confusion has been sown and the certainty weakened. Our confessions are not meant to confuse us, but to summarize for us the scriptural teaching on the important issues of our faith. We should not be left with a lingering doubt as to the meaning of Canons of Dort I,17. For that reason, it is important to delve somewhat into the history of this confession. Why was the issue of the salvation of infants included in this chapter on election? Can history shed light on the meaning of this confessional statement?

Background

The statement on the election and salvation of children of believers dying in infancy has its origin in the debates between the Reformed and the Arminians concerning election. The Reformed churches in the Netherlands confessed the doctrine of election. It was briefly mentioned in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, and briefly discussed in the Belgic Confession, art. 16. The Reformed churches, obviously, did not overemphasize election, but they included it in their confessions as something clearly taught in Scripture.

Some, however, developed reservations concerning this doctrine. When Arminius taught theology at Leiden University, he questioned and undermined this doctrine before his students. During the beginning of the 17th Century, the opposition against the doctrine of election grew, until it came into the open when forty ministers held a meeting to formulate their objections to

Calvinist theology. It was at this meeting that the issue of the salvation of children of believers was broached. In fact, this issue was used to object to the doctrine of election. These ministers wrote in a statement that they rejected the idea that God . . . has decided to deliver some from this fall and corruption to declare his mercy, and to leave in damnation others, young as well as old, and even some children of covenant people, who are baptized in the name of Christ, when they die in infancy, to declare his righteousness.⁸

This objection takes its starting point in art. 16 of the Belgic confession where God's mercy is connected with election, and God's justice with reprobation. It contains an element, however, that is not in art. 16, namely, that even some children of covenant people, when they die in infancy, are reprobated.

What Reformed professor or minister had ever said this? The source for this objection has never been given. The Reformed have consistently denied the charge. It is possible that an expression used by Calvin in his debate with Castelli is the origin.⁹ If that is the case it rests on a misunderstanding, for Calvin did not deal with the children of believers in that debate. Whatever the source, throughout the following debates the charge continued to be levelled against the Reformed that their doctrine of election means that some children of believers would be eternally condemned when they died in infancy.

The issue of infant salvation was, therefore, used as an emotional argument against the reformed doctrine of election. It is clear that the Remonstrants here touched on a sensitive issue. It deeply affects parents when one of their children dies in infancy. At the time the Canons of Dort were written, this was a sorrow more parents had to suffer than today. The average recorded mortality rate in France around this time was between fifteen and thirty percent for babies born alive. Between the ages of one and five, about eighteen percent of the children died. To give one specific example, this time from England, a Mary Verney, who married in 1634, had six children. Two died in infancy, and two when aged four and eight, respectively. Only two of her children lived to reach adulthood.¹⁰

In the situation where many parents had lost children in infancy, the Remonstrants charged the Reformed that their doctrine of election implies that God arbitrarily would elect some and reprobate some.

Here we find the first answer to our question concerning the meaning of Canons of Dort I, 17. If the answer had fallen short of full certainty, then Synod would have said in effect that the Remonstrants had been correct in their charge that the Reformed doctrine implied reprobation of some deceased covenant children. The whole first chapter of the Canons would show that the Remonstrants had been misrepresenting the Reformed doctrine on all scores, but the 17th canon would admit implicitly that the Remonstrants had been correct on this issue. If that were the case, the Canons would not have touched upon the issue at all. The inclusion of this issue in ch. 1 of the Canons of Dort implies that the Remonstrant objection was based on a misrepresentation. The Reformed did not think that God would leave in damnation children of covenant people when these die in infancy.

¹The translation is taken from the *Book of Praise* (rev. ed.; Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1993) 539. The original Latin and Dutch texts are published in J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften* (2. ed.; Amsterdam: Bolland, 1976) 236f. This shows that the article consisted originally of one long sentence, as can be seen in the earlier English version: "Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy..., godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy."

²The practical, non academic character of the Canons is intentional, see H. Kaajan, *De groote Synode van Dordrecht in 1618-1619* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, n.d.) 175.

³Th. Scott, *The Articles of the Synod of Dort, Translated from the Latin, with Notes*, with Introductory Essay by S. Miller (repr. Harrisburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1993) 270.

⁴To give an older example, M. Meijering concludes his discussion with the following words: "When God-fearing parents cry over their precious gifts they could only briefly enjoy having, they may look up together and remind one another: Our children were fruits early ripe for heaven. And with this they can comfort one another, *De Dordtsche Leerregels* (Groningen: Jan Haan, 1924) 82. C. Trimp writes: "It began with separation in the covenant of God's love and ended with that death which only for covenant breakers is not an entering into eternal life, no means of regeneration. The death of our children who are called God's children, may become a confirmation of baptism for us, a definitive separation from the world of sin", in J. Faber (and others), *The Bride's Treasure: Introduction to the Canons of Dort* (Launceston: Publication Organization of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, 1979) 55.

⁵J.G. Feenstra writes: "This, too, is a very strong expression.... But looking at the covenant of grace, they now have comfort,

for God is faithful, He who promised this and will fulfil it.", *De Dordtse Leerregels* (3.ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1968) 71. Joh. Francke wrote: "We have to take the words 'ought not to doubt' as a litotes. That is a figure of speech seemingly diminishing the meaning but in fact used to strengthen it. 'He is not a fool' means in fact: 'He is very smart'. We must therefore take 'ought not to doubt' as 'must be firmly assured'. Believing parents must be firmly assured over the election and salvation of their children who died in infancy" in 'Zijn de kinderen der gelovigen, die God in hun kindsheid uit dit leven wegneemt, wedergeboren?', in *De Reformatie* 44, nr. 42 (1969) 330.

⁶H. Hoeksema, *Believers and Their Seed* (tr. H.C. Hoeksema; Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1971) devotes a whole chapter to this issue, ch. 11: 'Covenant children who die in infancy'. See for example p. 158: "With objective certainty, therefore, there is nothing more to be said of children who die in their infancy than that the Lord saves His seed out of our seed". The chapter proves that Hoeksema has great difficulty with Canons of Dort I, 17. To give an example, Hoeksema writes: "This article leaves much to be desired as far as clarity and sharpness of definition are concerned; and it cannot be denied that in the form in which it is here cast it really cannot be considered an item for a confession."

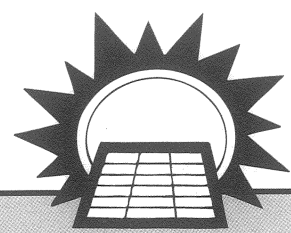
⁷D.W. Sinnema, *The Issue of Reprobation at the Synod of Dort in Light of the history of this Doctrine* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of St. Michael's College, 1985) 413-415. Sinnema's approach to this article is too negative, in my view. He refers to the fact that the draft for this article began with a reference to 2 Tim. 2:19: "Although God properly knows who are His . . ." and concludes that the article first allowed for a reprobation of deceased children of believers, 413. When this section was removed and thus the basis for his statement was taken away Sinnema says that this view was not excluded, 415. This interpretation of the draft is not convincing. In my opinion, the reference to 2 Tim. 2:19 was not intended to express reservation concerning the following statement. However that may be, when this reference was removed the only acceptable conclusion is that the present article gives no ground for reservation.

⁸See the text in J. Trigland, *Kerckelycke Geschiedenissen*, (Leiden: Adriaen Wyn-gaerden, 1650) 525.

⁹See for this, B.B. Warfield, 'The Doctrine of Infant Salvation', in *Studies in Theology* (Repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 435f. (footnote 78).

¹⁰These data have been taken from L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (or. ed. 1977, abridged and revised ed. Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 54-58. Another author, L. Clarkson, writes about the infant mortality rate in England before the 19th Century that "they were possibly in the general region of 150-200 per thousand, and considerably greater in overcrowded urban communities and during the sickly years of epidemics or food shortages", in *Death, Disease and Famine in Pre-industrial England* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975) 5. C

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." Genesis 8:22

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We were allowed to enjoy a beautiful summer. Now that is all over again, and the fall weather has started, we are preparing for another winter again. The Lord has created the seasons. He put order and regularity in His whole creation. He did not want His children to live in a chaotic, unpredictable world, but He created order and structure. This enables us to do our work, look after the families, and serve the Lord in an orderly manner.

The change of the seasons is one of the most domineering "routines" in God's creation. It is domineering, for the weather very much rules our lives. It is not only important for the farmers during the growing season, but it is a major topic of conversation all through the year. In most situations we look at the weather first when we decide what to wear or sometimes even what to do.

When we pay close attention to the different seasons, we become more aware of God's perfect wisdom and His almighty power. Most of us live in the area where the year is divided into four seasons, even though some of us may experience them "upside down". (Yes, because for us in Canada it is hard to believe that you could meet Santa Claus at the beach, and have your summer holidays in January!) But the four seasons are there for most of us.

First we get the spring. Everything that looked so dead in the winter comes to life again. The buds that were safely protected against the frost pop open, the grass turns green, flowers start blooming, birds lay their eggs, there are lambs, and colts, and ducklings. The whole earth is basking in the warmth of the sun. It seems that the whole nature is thanking the Lord for the new life of spring and that everything is praising His wonderful Name.

Spring is followed by summer. In the summer the trees and the plants come to full maturity. Much harvesting is done in the gardens and the orchards and the fields. People enjoy the beautiful weather by going for picnics, swims, and hikes. Most people take a break from their regular routines and visit places that they have never seen before. At night we sit outside, or work in the gardens to enjoy the long summer evenings. It is the time to pick up as much as you can, for before you know it is all over again, and winter will be upon us.

Next comes the fall. Many people really enjoy the fall because of the beautiful colours on the trees. Often the weather can still be mild and enjoyable, but at the same time we see that everything is dying off. Of our gardens that we planted in the spring not much is left other than dead stalks, and maybe some late fruits like pumpkins. Some late flowers are still blooming, but most of the plants are dead. Everything points to the end of the growing season and to the approaching winter.

And during the winter there is not much life left at all. People stay indoors most of the time. It is too cold to stay outside very long. Even the sun takes a long time waking up in the morning, and leaves us again early in the afternoon. The buds on the trees seem dead, many animals have left for warmer countries. All the life and the fun seems to be gone. But not for long! For we know, that after the winter there will be a new spring again, and then the whole cycle will start all over again. That is what the Lord promised to Noah already, and He also promised it to us. There will never come an end to that rotation of the seasons, until the day of the Lord's return. And so we never have to despair.

When we think of our lives as people created by the Lord, then we can compare our lives with the changing of the seasons. First we were born. That is like the spring. Everything is young and beautiful when you see a little baby. Then the baby grows up. It becomes a grown-up man or woman. The summer is the time that everything produces the most, and the plants are big and strong. So also with God's people. It is the time in our lives that we are allowed to work hard at the task that the Lord has given us. That may be a very nice job where you make a lot of money, but sometimes it is a task for which the Lord requires you to have a lot of patience, because you cannot really do what you would like to do. Yet that is the time to thank the Lord that you may live, it is the strongest time of our lives.

And then comes, for those who may live that long, the time of the fall. The plants die off at that time, but yet often they look very beautiful. Many older people still live a very rich life. Especially when they are blessed with children and grandchildren. They have more time on their hands than younger people, and they can spend that time by reading, and talking and thinking and praying. Many grandchildren love visiting their grandparents because grandpa tells them stories and makes them beautiful toys, and grandma finds all kinds of things to do with them. But at the same time the older people experience the "dying off" of certain functions of their body. They can't hear what people are saying to them, and they need a magnifying glass to read a book. Walking is not that easy and it is hard for them to keep up with the speed of the younger generation. Like the plants in nature, their bodies are breaking down, and preparing to go into the next season.

But the next season for God's children is not a stage of the cycle and then to go on again into the next year's cycle. No, for God's children the dying off of this body only has to happen once. When older people (and for some people that is not even all that old!) feel that their bodies are getting weaker they know that soon the fall of their life will come to an end. That means they are close to the beginning of a new life. That is the life that Jesus Christ has prepared for all His children. It is a new life,

in which there may not be any changes of seasons anymore. It is a life in which all our bodies, no matter how frail or incomplete they are now, will be restored to a perfect condition. And that perfect condition will last. There will be no more weakening of strength, no more pain, or the feeling of being useless. It will be a never-ending, final stage of perfect happiness, in which we will be able to praise God, the Creator, with unfailing energy. As certain as we are of the one season following the other, so certain are we that we will one day be allowed to enter into that final stage. Not all of God's children have to go through all the seasons of this life. Some are called Home already from the spring of their life, others have to wait until most of their body-strength has dwindled, but everyone will reach that final stage. For the Lord has promised it to us; Christ has fulfilled those promises when He died on the cross. Sitting at God's right hand, He sent us the Holy Spirit. With His help we will be able to hold on to that promise in sure faith, even in the darkest of times. And so, even when the going is hard, and when our strength seems to be failing, we may look forward to that last "change of season" in our lives. It will

be perfect, and it is there for all those who put their trust in God the Creator of Life.

*Like an evening shadow, fleeting,
Soon in night its span completing,
So my days do quickly pass,
For I wither as the grass.
But, O Lord, Thou changest never,
For Thou art enthroned forever.
Thy great Name and revelation
Last through every generation.*

Psalm 102:5

Birthdays in November:

3: Wilma Van Drongelen

306-33375 Mayfair Avenue, Abbotsford, BC
V2S 2M7

27: Adrian DeJong

RR 1, Site 6, Box 9, Barrhead, AB T0G 0E0

Happy Birthday to both of you!

Until next month,

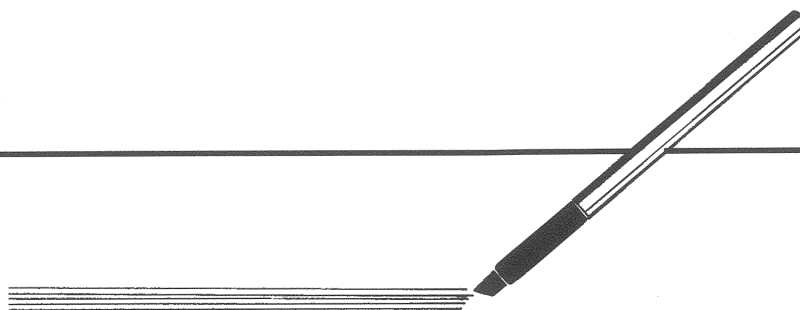
Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

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

THE HI-LITER

News from here and there

By C. Van Spronsen



In Hamilton some "new" features will be added to the liturgy: "We will commence, as decided, with the new features in the liturgy, namely the "responsive AMEN" and singing standing after the offertory. The AMEN is to be repeated right after the minister, at the following occasions: after the salutation, prayer, the sermon, thanksgiving and the benediction. The AMEN will also be used by the congregation whenever it is used officially in the Liturgical Forms."

In the same Bulletin we read that "until further notice, the planned Arabic gatherings have been postponed for the time being. . . . More time is needed for preparation. Hopefully in due time something definite can be organized." (See previous "Hi-Liter.")

In the Burlington area a "Bibles for Mission Thrift Store" was scheduled to open in September. All proceeds will be channeled through the Bible League. Many volunteers are needed!

In London, ON the Council of the Pilgrim Church is involved in joint meetings together with the councils of the Independent CRC's from Woodstock, Aylmer and Clinton, "striving in our talks for the unity that Christ commands."

In Launceston, TAS, the training of the elders takes a practical turn in sermon reading. "A practice round is held in the church, with the officebearers acting as the captive audience. Commentary on the elders' efforts was provided on the spot by the chairman. A video recording was made so that the brothers can study their weak and their not-so-weak points privately."

In the same congregation contact and communication between the young people and the officebearers was intensified by means of a mini-congress with the church youth over 16. "Discussions on the outline 'Sound and Response' gave a welcome opportunity for contact between the young members and the officebearers. All parties were very pleased with the result and further congresses will D.V. be planned for next year. Attendance figures spoke volumes: young members 90 per cent, officebearers 92 per cent."

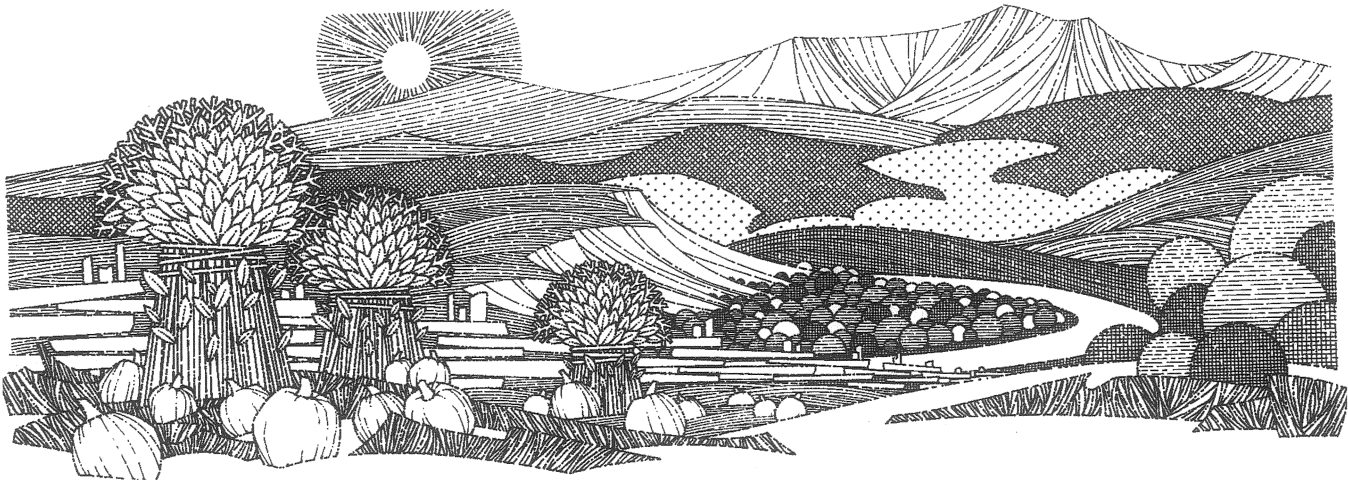
Many bulletins gave very positive reports about the Vacation Bible Schools held throughout the country with encouraging figures of attendance, the majority from outside the congregations. Clearly there is still a great need and opportunity out there!

The idea of a home missionary in the Burlington/Hamilton area is taking on a more concrete form, as we read in the bulletin of Burlington-South. "The report of the Adhoc Committee for a home missionary was read and discussed. Council gave the committee a threefold mandate in investigating a preliminary budget; methods of obtaining funds and agreements from other churches; and establishing parameters for the day-to-day work of a home missionary."

News of the passing away of Rev. G. VanDooren on September 5 dominated the bulletins of that week. The Ebenezer

Canadian Reformed Church was his "home-Church." The local minister, Rev. G. Nederveen, wrote: "We all have our own reasons for remembering Rev. VanDooren. Many of us here were married by him, or had catechism from him. But whatever good memories you have, let this be foremost, that the Lord has blessed his long ministry here in Burlington as well as in the church federation. He was one of the pioneer ministers who helped build and guide the fledgling federation. On October 5th it would have been the 40th anniversary of his ministry in Burlington East. Even on his 84th birthday he still proclaimed the gospel in our midst. For all this we can only give our thanks and praise to God alone."

The William of Orange School in Surrey, BC celebrated its 40th Anniversary on Saturday, September 16, with a formal meeting followed by a barbecue. Much reason for thankfulness to the Lord in the first place! **C**



LETTER 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:

Rev. Bosch's article "The Entertainment of Young Children" forces me to address a concern.

Rev. Bosch writes that "we are witnessing a fundamental shift away from the importance of the group to the realm of the individual. This shift involves a redefinition of what constitutes play. Today, children can get totally absorbed in interacting with a machine." I thought it must be a typing error then when the article continued. "This interactive element is a positive feature"; but it continued "and is far better than passive and sedentary television watching."

For many years, television was warned against, and preached against (and now that it is at its most vile and evil, the furor has died down). It was railed at not only for its content, but also because it wasted time and broke down communication within the family. Well, now we have the computer, but it has come into the home under the disguise of an educational tool and thus avoided the condemnation of entertainment by T.V.

But it has the same effect. Sure, there are educational programs (how many do the kids use as opposed to purely entertainment programs). In many homes, however, it is now the computer that wastes hours of our chil-

dren's time and destroys the interaction in the family that study and group games offer.

Interaction with a machine is a negative feature. Our world has fallen headlong into humanism through focus on the individual. Christ has taught us otherwise – to live for each other.

While I do fully realize and value the education potential of the computer, I only urge you to see also its dangers and pitfalls. Have your children read, sing, play a board game together . . . and may the Lord bless us all as we strive to raise our children to His glory.

Sincerely,

A. VanGrootheest
Elora, ON **C**

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

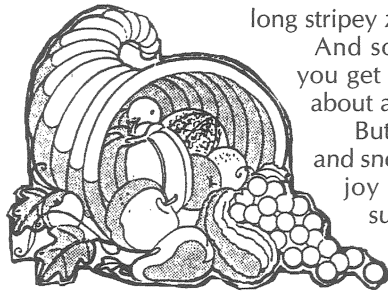
By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Did you have a garden this year?
 Maybe you helped your Mom and Dad harvest vegetables.

Ripe red tomatoes,
 smooth green cucumbers,
 bright yellow beans,
 round heads of cabbage,
 long stripey zucchini!



And so much of it all! Maybe you get tired again just thinking about all the work!

But just think, when it's cold and snowy outside, you can enjoy good hot food from the summer!

Isn't our God good in giving us so much?

He gave good

weather for growing. He made the tiny seeds grow into big plants. Now we can eat what He gave us. Now it's time to say "Thank you, LORD!"

On Thanksgiving Day we remember how much God has given us.

Food, family and friends, but most of all His only Son, Jesus Christ to save us from our sins.

THANK YOU, LORD!

Quiz Time!

ANIMAL WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Jacquie Selles*

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

Can you find these hidden animals?

BIBLE PUZZLE

Rabbit	Dog	Cat	Moose
Cow	Pig	Fox	Bear
Horse	Bird	Wolf	Chicken

Here's a Bible puzzle about animals. Fill in the blanks with the name of the proper animal. If you need help, there are some hints at the end of the column.

1. Jesus warned people not to "throw your pearls before _____, lest they trample them under foot."
2. The writer of Proverbs tells us, "Go to the _____, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise."
3. God used the foolishness of an _____, which lays her eggs on the earth where they may be stepped on, to make Job see God's mighty works.
4. Jesus showed how much God cares for His people by these words, "Are not two _____ sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will."
5. Jesus said His love for Jerusalem was like a _____ who gathered here little ones under her wing.
6. Isaiah said the person who waited on the Lord was like _____ which soar above the earth.
7. The psalmist, Asaph, used the "_____ on a thousand hills" to show that God owns everything.
8. David taught that we should not be "like a _____ or a _____, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle."
9. Luke said Jesus was like a "_____ led to the slaughter."
10. Solomon said, "The righteous are bold as a _____."

HORSE

by Busy Beaver *Eritia Smit*

