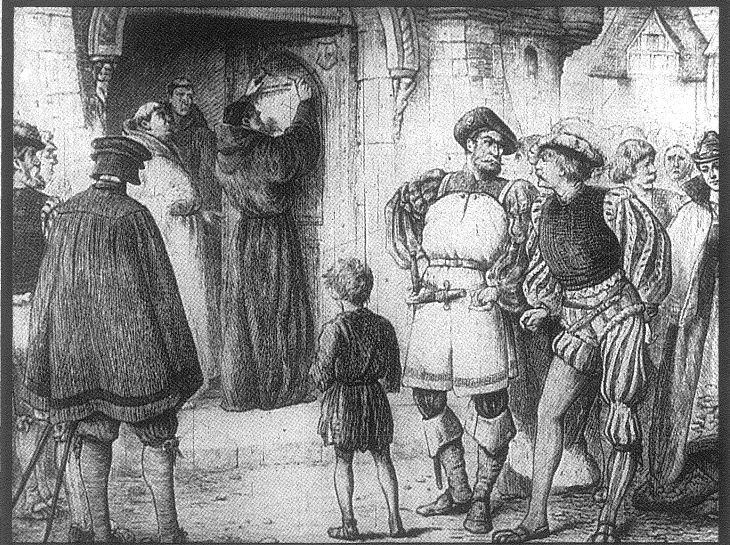


Clarion

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The Reformation

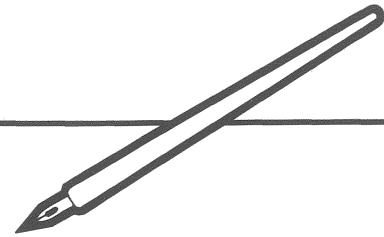


*October 31, 1517 Martin Luther
fastens his 95 theses on the
Wittenberg church door*

Numbers

10:1-10

By C. Van Dam



Suffering in Sudan

Sudan is in the midst of a protracted civil war in which the Islamic North is viciously seeking to islamize the largely Christian South. Ethnically, the north is Arabic and the south is African. The central government resembles an Iranian type theocracy and treats the conflict with the south as a holy war (jihad). Although adherents of other religions such as animism are also the object of Islam's wrath, no other single group suffers as much from this militant Islamic fundamentalism as the Christians. Remarkably, the secular press hardly mentions the persecution and thus there is relatively little pressure on the central government to relent.

Savage oppression

A recent *Banner* article (August 28) summarizes well reports that have appeared in the Christian press by noting the following.

The decade-long war between north and south Sudan has driven several million southern Sudanese Christians from their homes and caused the deaths of at least 2 million more – a calamity experts say is worse than anything the world has seen since Pol Pot's rampages in Cambodia in the 1970s. . . . According to human rights groups and other eyewitnesses, in an attempt to subdue the south, the Muslim government is using a strategy of starvation, bombings, rape, torture, kidnappings, slavery, and even crucifixion. Entire villages and towns have been burned to the ground, and Jubilee Campaign, a Christian humanitarian organization, has noted "mounting evidence of the crucifixion of the male populations of entire villages."

A 1994 U.S. State Department report confirmed that the north is kidnapping women and children and selling or using them as concubines or slaves, and that the present regime allows the crucifixion of children as young as age 7.

The persecution is so bad that Christians are urged to travel always with hoe and spade to help bury the bodies of the martyrs so that the hyenas and vultures do not get them. . . .

Also in northern Sudan Christian children are kidnapped and forcefully subjected to Islamic indoctrination in special camps. Needless to say, it is very difficult to get permission to build a church building. Students who refuse to follow lessons in the Koran have very little chance of graduating. Humanly speaking, the church does not have a chance here. But then the church is not a human enterprise.

Church grows

In spite of the most vicious persecution of Christians since the Turkish massacre of Armenian Christians after World War I, the church is not decreasing, but is actually increasing in size! According to data in *Chalcedon Report* (July 1995), the growth is phenomenal. Twenty years ago only 5% of Su-

dan claimed to be Christian; now the figure is conservatively set at 20%. In the Southern Sudan the figure is close to 80%. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

Of course this growth does not change the horrible suffering, but in all the suffering and destruction, the church is the only institution that is healthy. The Lord works by His Word and Spirit and gathers His own and in the face of death gives the only comfort there is. Indeed, in a "Message from Sudan" published by *Chalcedon Report* (July 1995) we read:

Tell our brothers and sisters that the people here are still full of hope and that there are still smiles on the faces of the children in spite of their suffering, in spite of persecution, in spite of constant fear of attack. Those smiles put us to shame.

Our responsibility

Christians in Sudan are suffering. What should we do? Of course we must pray for them in our homes and in our worship services. Do we pray enough for the persecuted? It is instructive that the Prayer for all the Needs of Christendom found in our *Book of Praise* includes prayer for the oppressed. Prayer must not be underestimated. God listens to the fervent prayers of His people!

Can we also do more? The world does not pay too much attention to Sudan. After all, as an account in *Chalcedon Report* put it, "there is no oil, no strategic ports, no precious mineral deposits, no world-famous football stars on trial for murder, to attract international attention." But there are Christians in that country who endure fierce persecution! For over a thousand years the Sudanese Christians have been a bulwark against the expansion of militant Islam into central Africa. But now a genocide has been unleashed in the name of a holy war especially against the Nuba people. Many have fled the country and live in refugee camps in Kenya, Uganda, and Zaire. Complaints about the violation of human rights are dismissed with the comment that one must be more obedient to the Koran than to the United Nations. What can be done?

In addition to praying for the oppressed, we should also bring the suffering of these Christians to the attention of our elected Members of Parliament. The media should be asked why they do not cover the horror of Sudan. Public opinion and the support of the Western democracies need to be mobilized. Only when the truth of what is happening to Christians in Sudan becomes better known can efforts to alleviate the suffering gather momentum. One such effort could be a United Nations referendum regarding self-rule for South Sudan.

For more information on the plight of Sudanese Christians one can write Frontline Fellowship, P.O. Box 74, Newlands, 7725 South Africa.

(based on reports in *The Banner*, *Chalcedon Report* (July 1995) and *Nederlands Dagblad*.)



MEDITATION

By P.G. Feenstra

"We will . . . tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD."

PSALM 78: A CALL TO REFORMATION THROUGH EDUCATION

Every year, on October 31st, we commemorate the nailing of the 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenburg by Martin Luther. Perhaps you have wondered about the appropriateness of focusing on an event which took place so long ago. Is it fruitful to remember incidents from church history? Isn't our time better spent on present issues and problems? After all, we have our hands full living as Christians in the present.

Nevertheless, the Christian faith demands a concern for past events. We cannot function properly in the present without a basic understanding of the past. We do not turn the pages of time to boast of the efforts of man but to glory in the work of the Lord. History records the glorious deeds of the LORD, His might, and the wonders which He performed. The author of Psalm 78 encourages us to look at history in this manner.

Sometimes Psalm 78 is viewed as a discourse on education. But it is more accurately labelled a call to reformation through education. This psalm is one of 12 composed by Asaph. We do not know exactly when Asaph lived, but from the various passages of Scripture in which his name is mentioned and from the contents of the psalms he wrote, we may assume that he lived in the time after the ten Northern tribes

had split away from the two southern tribes of Judah.

Asaph has every reason to be worried about the future of the church. He addresses a people who no longer understand their own roots and their own heritage! As a result, the people of God have lost sight of how He operates in His covenant. Throughout the history of the church the LORD reveals that He is faithful to His Word of promise and threat. Repeatedly, God warns that He will punish those who do not keep His covenant and who wander away from His precepts and ordinances in doctrine or conduct.

For these reasons, Asaph summons the people of the Lord to reformation. In warning the church of his day of the consequences of not repenting, he refers to the faithfulness of the Lord. To illustrate the faithfulness of the Lord, Asaph draws attention to God's deeds. The faithfulness of the Lord in promise and threat, in mercy and in wrath is shown concretely in what befell Ephraim and Judah. Verse 67 and 68 tell the story: *"He rejected the tent of Ephraim, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves."*

Judah and Ephraim were two leading tribes. The other tribes of Israel were absorbed into them. After the death of King Saul the tribe of Judah (which represented two tribes: Simeon and Judah)

sides with David. They declare him king while the rest of the tribes under the leadership of Ephraim are opposed to David. After the death of Solomon the kingdom is split along those lines: Judah represents the Southern kingdom and Ephraim the Northern kingdom. This is why the prophets single out Ephraim even though they are referring to the whole Northern kingdom.

Deformation

Yet the LORD did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but Judah. At one time the dwelling place of God was in Shiloh (in the territory of Ephraim) but later it was moved to Jerusalem (within the boundaries of Judah). Asaph wants the people of God to note why Ephraim lost God's favour. Ephraim's history gives the answer: they did not keep God's covenant; they refused to walk according to the law of the Lord (v.9). They rebelled against Him in the wilderness (v.17,40) and in the land of Canaan (v.56). They provoked the Lord to anger with their high places; they moved Him to jealousy with their graven images (v.58).

Ephraim came under God's wrath because it forgot what He had done and the miracles He had shown them. When Ephraim lost sight of the Lord's mighty acts of redemption and reformation, His promises and His testimonies didn't mean all that much to them

What's Inside

In the lead editorial, Dr. C. Van Dam writes about the terrible plight of believers in the Sudan and suggests some actions we can undertake on their behalf.

Rev. P. Feenstra contributes a meditation on Psalm 78 and the theme of Reformation.

We publish the second part of Dr. N.H. Gootjes's College Evening address. We hope the publication of this speech will (re)awaken an interest in the study of the Canons of Dort. For some reason, the Canons are often thought to be difficult, abstract and theoretical. Those who think that are far off the mark and demonstrate only that they have probably never taken the time to read through them. In fact, the Canons are very pastoral and comforting. They speak to the believer like few other confessions do. Dr. Gootjes's address on Canon I, 17 and the salvation of the children of believers who die in infancy proves it.

We continue Wes Bredenhof's primer on Apologetics.

You will also come across a few other articles and contributions which we trust you will enjoy.

GVP

either. They were rejected by God because they disobeyed and did not recognize that they owed their existence and their position as covenant people to the goodness and mercy of God.

Ephraim had no excuse. They could have known the glorious deeds of the Lord. God's deeds were written down in a book for them to read. Verse 5 says, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel." The "law" and the "testimony" are terms referring to the first five books. These books recount the wonders which the Lord wrought. They tell of His power and His might in the plagues of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the provision of water and food in the desert. Israel's mighty God brought a rebellious and hardened Pharaoh to his knees and led His people through the wilderness with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Through these works, the Lord revealed to His covenant people that He is the God of their salvation. The deliverance from Egypt and the protection they received on their way to Canaan had to do with the coming redemption and salvation in the promised Messiah. All God's glorious deeds are connected to the redemption of His chosen nation in Christ.

Remembering and reformation

The church of all ages must listen to the appeal of the Holy Spirit as passed on to us in Psalm 78. The glorious deeds of the Lord must be told to the coming generations. Many pages have been added to the book containing the deeds of the Lord, His might and the wonders He has wrought. We read of the mighty deeds of the Lord in the books of the Old and the New Testament. What we read today is even more impressive than what the people had in Asaph's time. God's glorious deeds of might climax in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do we not marvel at what the Lord Jesus Christ did during His earthly ministry? He healed the sick, He raised the dead, He forgave the penitent. The wrath of God for our sins was poured out on Him so that we might have redemption.

The glorious deeds of the Lord do not end at the cross, or even after the last page of the Bible was written. They continue in the heavenly ministry of Christ, where He rules as Head of the church. Repeatedly He brings His people back to the Bible, from deformation to reformation. A man like Luther was used by the Lord to liberate the people from the

bondage of false doctrine. Reformation is not a matter of people – who's right and who's wrong – but it is a matter of God keeping His church and returning it to the source of truth.

The mighty works which the Lord has performed in the past must excite and induce us to giving Him greater praise. The LORD is faithful to His promises. At the same time we must learn the lesson of church history. Those glorious deeds of the Lord open our eyes to both sides of God's covenant: promise and demand; mercy and wrath; acquittal and punishment. A church that does not walk in the ways of the covenant will be rejected by the Lord and will feel His covenant wrath. We may try flattering Him with our mouths, as Ephraim attempted (v.36), but if our heart is not steadfast toward Him and if we are not true to His covenant, the fury of the Lord will rage against us. Once we close our eyes to the mighty wonders and glorious deeds of the Lord as He makes them known through the course of history, we make ourselves Satan's prey.

The role of parents

But who is responsible for passing on the knowledge of the mighty deeds of the Lord? We all know in our hearts what the answer is. Parents shall speak of the glorious deeds of the Lord to their children. Fathers and mothers make a vow to instruct their children in the doctrine of the Word of God and to have them instructed therein to the utmost of their power.

True reformation is worked through the generations. Psalm 78 speaks about "our fathers" and "their children": *"things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children but tell it to the coming generation."* The children shall learn from their parents about the mighty deeds of the Lord in the acts of reformation He performed in the past. Thus the primary responsibility of education lies with fathers and mothers. Parents are to teach their children why they are Reformed and inform them of the meaningful lessons that can be learned from such events as the Reformation, the Secession (1834), the Doleantie (1886) and the Liberation of 1944. They shall show the children how the work of the Lord is not limited to one country. They shall explain how the Lord used certain individuals to bring His church back on track.

Too often the schools become the sole place where children receive any

instruction in the history of the church. Reformed schools play a valuable role but they are to assist and not take over the task that belongs to parents.

But how shall parents teach the works of the Lord? By giving them a book? That's a good idea. Yet Psalm 78 also advises that we ourselves shall tell them the glorious deeds of the Lord. Such "telling" makes them ready for the possibility that some day they could, out of obedience to Christ, have to leave a church because it has become apostate. God forbid that it should happen; but we know from history that it can.

Teaching and learning about church history from the perspective of God's glorious deeds will keep us and our children from thinking the church is a human institution. It will make us more aware of the fact that we must live by faith alone, by grace alone, by the scriptures alone and through Christ alone to be assured of God's continued blessing.

The role of the church

Educational responsibilities are not only tied to the task of parents. Notice Psalm 78 does not say "we will not hide them from our children" but "from their children." The education of the next generation ought to be the concern of every church member. If it were not so, the parents could make their baptismal vows in the privacy of their own homes. If someone expresses concern about the way we are instructing our children we shouldn't retort, "Mind your own business. The education of my children is not your concern." The children are the future of the church. They must carry the torch of the gospel into the next generation. We do not have to be highly intellectual to learn about God's glorious deeds or to teach them to the next generation.


We don't need a diploma but a mouth. Is it too difficult to grasp what was going on in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness? Is it too hard for us to comprehend that the Lord requires faithfulness? Is God asking too much of us when He wants us to pass on to our children the glorious deeds, the might and wonders He wrought in the earthly ministry of the Lord or in what He does throughout the history of the church? Of course not! The Lord is not laying upon us an unfair burden. Our academic capability does not come first, but our faith. Our faith has to come out in the way we speak about the mighty deeds of the Lord. Church history as it began with Adam and Eve and as it continues to be written to the present time is

much more than a colourless record of past events. Telling of God's deeds must end in a doxology, a song of praise, a life of thanksgiving.

To withhold knowledge of God's glorious deeds from our children would be loveless. For the aim of education is complete obedience. The aim is to keep

the recipients thinking, speaking and acting in a truly reformed manner so that they might not be stubborn or rebellious. The goal of educating is to have those who are sinful set their hope in God, that is, to have them learn to trust in Him and to have confidence in His work.

Let us recall the glorious deeds of the Lord, His might and wonders so that we and our children may place our trust in God alone as we glory in His works.

Rev. P.G. Feenstra is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church, Chatsworth, ON. 

Can parents be sure?

Background and meaning of Canons of Dort I, 17

By N.H. Gootjes

The Canons of Dort have usually been taken to say that the children of believers when these die in infancy, are with God. Some, however, have argued that the statement of the Canons do not speak with full certainty. In the previous article we have discussed the origin of the 17th canon: it lies in the accusation of the Remonstrants that the Reformed doctrine of election implies that some children of believers dying in infancy would be reprobated. The statement of the Canons rejects this Remonstrant accusation. Against this background, the expression of Canons of Dort I, 17 can only be taken as a positive statement of assurance. This second article continues the discussion.

During the Synod

We receive more information concerning the meaning of Canons of Dort I, 17 from the events during the Synod of Dort. We need not go into the many events surrounding the appearance of the Remonstrants before Synod, or their being sent away. After their dismissal it was decided that all delegations, of the foreign churches as well as of the Dutch provinces, would come with their own considered opinion concerning the debated issues.

These judgments have been published after Synod was closed. Many of these go into the issue of the children of believers dying in infancy. Because of time restrictions I will give only two quotations, one from a foreign delegation and one from a Dutch delegation.

The Bremen delegation says about the children of believers who die before they can comprehend the doctrine, that "God loves them with the same good pleasure, for Christ's sake,

by Christ, and in Christ, with which He loves the adults." Therefore these, as well, are holy in relation to the covenant.¹ This is a strong, positive statement. It emphasizes God's love for these children. This love is not God's general liking for all of creation, but it is determined by God's good pleasure, that is, by His election. It is God's love as it is determined by our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Bremen delegation was certainly not reticent in speaking of

God's electing love in connection with such children.

The other example is taken from the statement of three Dutch professors. They quote some well-known texts, Gen. 17:7, Mt. 19:14 and Acts 2:39, and conclude on the basis of these texts that the children of believers dying in their infancy, must be counted among the elect, since they are graciously redeemed from this life before they broke the conditions of the covenant.² This



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delegation concludes on the basis of God's Word that these children belong to the elect.

Now imagine that Canons of Dort I, 17 would be a weak proposal, leaving undecided whether these children were elect or not. Would these delegations and these professors not have jumped up to publicly state their disagreement with the proposed statement? Yet, this Canon was adopted unanimously and without discussion. Here we have found the second reason why the article on children dying in infancy must mean certainty concerning their election and salvation. Any proposal on this sensitive issue falling short of certainty undoubtedly would have created an uproar among the delegations. For the advice of the delegations speak of certainty.

After all advice had been read, a committee went to work to compose the Canons. Remarkably, the first proposal for Canons did not contain a statement on the issue of the salvation of children of believing parents. This led to a reaction from several delegations. The Swiss delegation expressed surprise that nothing had been determined about the election and reprobation of infants, in view of the fact that the Remonstrants use this to make the doctrine of election hateful to pregnant women. They agreed with other delegations that "some moderate and sound canon not only to assuage the doubt of believing parents but also to counter the vileness of opponents" should be issued.³

It is improbable that an evasive statement, like, "God may reprobate some of these infants but parents should not doubt," would have satisfied the request of those delegations who pleaded for the Synod to deal with this issue. In the situation, only a statement expressing certainty would do. This is the third reason why the Canons cannot be taken as falling short of certainty.

The committee went to work on a proposal. It is possible to gain some insight into their considerations since their papers have been preserved. For us, it is interesting that at first a longer article was considered. The notes do not end with "God-fearing parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in their infancy" but continue with the sentence "rather, believe that to them belongs the kingdom of heaven."⁴ The proposal, obviously, refers to Mt. 19:14, where Jesus says to bring the children to Him, for to such is the Kingdom of heaven. This final clause is a clear indication that the

committee was positive in its conviction that these children are saved.

It could be objected that this sentence was omitted in the final version. That is, obviously, correct, but the question is what the reason was for this omission. It is not imaginable that it was scratched out because the committee could not agree with it. After all, they wrote the sentence themselves. A better explanation is that it was left out because the sentence as is was seen as sufficiently positive. Several other proposals were also left out from the final version. It appears that everything was left out that was not absolutely necessary. Even without this addition it was sufficiently determined that such children were elected and saved. That is the fourth reason to support the view that Canons of Dort comforts the parents with full certainty.

The fifth and conclusive reason can be found in the text of the Canons themselves. After Canons had been made concerning the five issues debated between the Reformed and the Remonstrants a conclusion was added. In this concluding section some statements were rejected slandering the reformed doctrine. Among these is the allegation that the Reformed teach that many innocent children of believers are torn from their mothers' breasts and tyrannically thrown into hell, so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any help to them.⁵

The Synod of Dort, therefore, said in effect: The rumour that the reformed would teach that some children of believers dying in infancy are reprobated is slander. This conclusion makes it impossible to take the confession of Canons I, 17 as less than certain. Parents can be sure.

This is confirmed by the reformed theology after the Synod of Dort. Concerning the children of believers it is stated that they are saved when they die in infancy.⁶ The conclusion was reached, the matter decided and the doctrine accepted.

Finally

One more question needs yet to be answered. If the Synod of Dort was convinced that these children were saved, why did it not state this explicitly? Why did they not say outrightly that children of believers when God calls them out of this life in infancy would be saved? Why did they not so much focus on the fate of the children but rather on the parents by emphasizing that the

parents need not doubt? Does this not indicate that the framers of the confession, even though personally convinced that these children would be saved, wanted to stay on the safe side in their final rule?

The formulation, however, should be understood against the background of the debate with the Remonstrants. These had alleged that the Reformed doctrine of election implied that some children of believers dying in infancy would be thrown into eternal damnation. This was an argument that spoke to the many families that had experienced loss of an infant. As we saw, one of the delegations stated that the Remonstrant charge was intended to make the doctrine of election hateful, particularly to pregnant women. The Reformed were accused of teaching that children of believers were torn from their mothers' breasts and tyrannically thrown into hell. The Remonstrants mobilized the parents' opinion against the reformed doctrine of election.

Faced with these allegations, the Reformed could not limit themselves to a statement of fact that these children are holy and are saved. They felt they had to go on and address the parents: Believing parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their deceased infants. Canons of Dort I, 17 does not fall short of certainty, rather, it moves beyond a statement of fact by directly addressing the situation of the parents.⁷ It begins by pointing out the certainty that their children are holy in virtue of the covenant of grace. Then it turns to the parents to comfort them on this basis that they ought not to doubt. Rather, they should trust the words of God: 1 Cor. 7:14, Gen. 17:7 and Acts 2:39. It is radically against the intention of this confession to use the practical direction of this statement to undermine the certainty of the doctrine. The parents are comforted on that basis that God Himself promised salvation. Before the certainty of God's promises the doubt of parents melts away.

The Canons are not the best known of our confessions. To some people, they seem aloof and abstract. That impression is not correct, however. They address the life of the believers in a heartwarming, practical way. That is also the case in I, 17 where parents in their sorrow are comforted with the sure promises of God.

⁷*Acta of Handelingen der Nationale Synodi* (ed. J.H. Donner and S.A. Van den Hoorn; repr. Houten: Den Hertog, 1987) 397. This edition will hereafter be referred to as *Acta*.

²Acta 606. The professors were Polyander, Thysius and Walaeus. There were two other Dutch professors, present at the Synod of Dort, Lubbertus and Gomarus, who each submitted his own opinion on the debated issues. This does not mean that the professors had an essential disagreement on these issues. Lubbertus subscribed the statement


of the three, Gomarus orally stated his agreement with them.

³This can be found in D.W. Sinnema, *The Issue of Reprobation* 412f.

⁴See the Hague manuscripts, document 1,5,18, Sinnema, *The Issue of Reprobation* 413. My reconstruction differs slightly from that of Sinnema.

⁵*Book of Praise* 575; see for the original text, J.N. Bakhuizen Van den Brink, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften* 279.

⁶See B.B. Warfield, "The Doctrine of Infant Salvation" 431ff, see esp. 434.

⁷The Canons had already addressed the situation of the believers in the previous section, I, 12-16. 

Reformed Apologetics – Practical Considerations

By Wes Bredenhof

Part Three of the modified text of a speech given at the CRUCS Retreat, Evans Lake, BC, February 24, 1995.

Having dealt with some of the necessary theological material in the previous article, we can now move into the practical side of apologetics. How is apologetics actually done? For most people, this is the first and most important question. Most people seem to want to skip all the theoretical discussion and dive right into the practical. With such an approach, however, there will be little understanding of what you are doing or why you are doing it. Without at least a bare minimum of theoretical background, the practical side of presuppositional apologetics will seem to be almost non-sensical. Therefore, we need the theological background that was discussed earlier.

Gentleness and reverence

The very first thing we should recognize is that apologetics deals with people. When you do apologetics you're dealing with a real, live, living, breathing, feeling person. This person has emotions just as do Christians. Also for this reason, the central passage of 1 Peter 3:15 exhorts us to do apologetics with "gentleness and reverence." We should examine what those words mean.

"Gentleness" is one of the Christian attributes mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. It is a fruit of the Spirit. The word in Greek can better be translated as "meekness," as it is in the KJV. Meekness is the complete opposite of having a violent character and blowing your top all the time at the most insignifi-

cant annoyances.¹ A meek person is not easily excited at every little thing. He is humble and subdued. However, to be meek doesn't mean being a push-over. It implies being both firm and friendly. So "gentleness" in apologetics means that we keep our cool and don't blow up in fits of anger when someone challenges us about our faith or anything else, but it also means that we are to be uncompromising in a friendly manner.

The other word, "reverence," can also be translated as "respect." We are commanded here to respect the dignity of the person who calls us to account for our faith. In practical terms, this means that we are not to belittle someone who challenges us about our beliefs. We are not to degrade or patronize unbelievers. We have to respect and revere them as people. After all, without the grace of God in our lives, we're a lot like these unbelievers. Just like them, we have a rebellious sinful attitude towards God and our neighbour.

Dependence on the Holy Spirit

It is also important to remember that not every situation in which apologetics is used will be with a complete unbeliever. There are very few so-called atheists in the world. I say "so-called" because there are really no atheists in the world.² If non-Christians don't acknowledge the God of the Bible, then they have undoubtedly erected another idol for themselves. To get back to the point, however, apologetics will sometimes involve people who have some Christian beliefs but are nonetheless lost and confused. These people might be involved with cults, sects, or denominations with perverted theologies.

Apologetics can be used to direct these people along the right path.

Of course, this is not to say that apologetics, by itself, will bring about great changes. In our apologetic labours, we need to take account of the all-important work of the Holy Spirit in apologetics. We should never have the impression that apologetics is a big effort on our part to bamboozle and argue people into the kingdom of heaven. Apologetics can only be truly Biblical when it involves the work of the Holy Spirit. The apologist must realize that he is only a tool in God's hands. God uses apologetics and apologists for His glory through the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those whom He has elected. Conversely, He also uses apologetics to harden unbelievers' hearts in order to condemn them in their sin. Because it contains the Gospel, is a two-edged sword, leading some to repentance, belief, and salvation, and others straight to the gates of hell.

While engaged in our apologetical labours, we may also depend upon the Holy Spirit to work in our own hearts. He will provide us with the words that God wants us to speak. In his book, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, John Frame offers further clarification on this point:

Our witness to the unbeliever never comes alone. If God chooses to use us for His purposes, then He always adds a supernatural element to that witness – the Holy Spirit, working in and with the word. If we have doubts about our own ability to communicate, for whatever reason, we need not doubt the ability of the Holy Spirit.³ The Holy Spirit is therefore the most effective

agent in apologetics. It doesn't matter if we are not eloquent speakers or writers – the Holy Spirit will use us. We must never underestimate the work of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we ought to pray deeply and earnestly that God will use our apologetical efforts to His honour and glory.

We also have to pray that our lifestyles not be a contradiction to our message. Easily it happens that what we say and what we do are two different things. If you argue for the sanctity of the Lord's Day at University or College while the next Sunday you are seen strolling into McDonalds, your arguments have all been shot to nothing. Therefore what we do in daily life must be consistent with our beliefs. We must live as Christians everyday and all the day.

In our task of apologetics we also have to know whom we are dealing with. Assuming that you are dealing with a complete unbeliever, there is something you can know for certain about such a person. As VanTil writes:

It is imperative that the Christian apologist be alert to the fact that the average person to whom he must present the Christian religion for acceptance is a quite different sort of being than he himself thinks he is. A good doctor will not prescribe medicines according to the diagnosis that his patient has made of himself. The patient may think that he needs nothing more than a bottle of medicine while the doctor knows that an immediate operation is required.⁴

For these reasons, we must adopt a presuppositional apologetic. We need to demonstrate that the non-Christian cannot justify his assertion or presupposition of independence. In the words of VanTil, the truly biblical approach to apologetics applies nuclear firepower and "flame-throwers to the very presupposition of the natural man's ideas with respect to himself."⁵ The unbeliever has to realize that his presuppositions govern all his thinking.

The Christian apologist has to show the unbeliever that every interpretation of the evidence for Christianity, "presupposes either the truth or the falsity of Christian theism."⁶ The method of arguing used by presuppositional apologetics is called an indirect method. The issues separating the Christian and the non-Christian cannot be solved by pointing to "facts" or "laws" for the simple reason that the reference point for interpreting these things are different on both sides. What are "facts" or "laws?" VanTil asks, "Are they what the non-Christian methodology assumes that they are? Are they what the Christian theistic methodology assumes they are?"⁷

Therefore, any question about what the "facts" are cannot be settled by a direct discussion. The presuppositions get in the way. Consequently, the argument must be settled indirectly, by dealing with the obstructing presuppositions. The Christian apologist must argue from the vantage point of the unbeliever, pointing out that with the unbeliever's presuppositions he cannot be consis-

tent. With the unbeliever's presuppositions, the "facts" are not "facts" and "laws" are not "laws." The Christian must then ask the non-Christian to take the Christian position for argument's sake, so that he might be able to see that only with the Christian's presuppositions do the "facts" and "laws" make any sense.

If this looks like circular reasoning, it certainly is. But as VanTil argues, all reasoning is by its very nature circular. Presuppositions are involved in every step of every argument. VanTil writes that "The starting point, the method, and the conclusion are always involved in one another."⁸ We can therefore see that the unbeliever, by his presuppositions, will not be able to understand the "facts" and "laws" properly.

Wes Bredenhof is a student of history at the University of Alberta and a member of Providence Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton.

(This series of articles will be concluded in the next issue.)

Notes:

¹Galatians, William Hendriksen, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1968, p. 225

²Cf. Calvin's *Institutes*, 1.3.3

³*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 11

⁴*The Defense of the Faith*, p. 68

⁵*Apologetics Syllabus*, p. 58

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 62

⁷*The Defense of the Faith*, p. 100

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 101



Middle East Reformed Fellowship

NEWS from MERF-CANADA

Baghdad's religious conference confirms freedom for Christians in Iraq.

This conference took place in early July and was attended by many church leaders unofficially representing many churches from around the world. This included several leading Evangelical and Reformed Christians from Europe, North America, the Far East, as well as the Arab World. Participants were al-

lowed free movement in the country and were able to visit churches and Iraqi Christians in different parts of the country. Although the conference was held with the approval of the Iraqi government, the findings and the declarations of the conference represented the genuine convictions of all participants that Iraqi Christians belonging to the three main traditions (the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the

Protestant) enjoyed sufficient freedom for gathering and worship as well as full protection under the Iraqi law. Several western and Arab Christian leaders participating commented that Christians in Iraq enjoy more freedom than most other Arab Christians, including those who live in Israel and Israeli occupied areas.

Some MERF supporters and members of some of its regional committees

attended that Baghdad gathering. They were able to visit with the three main Reformed congregations of Baghdad, Kirkuk and Basra. They have expressed concern over the severe economic hardships faced by members of the churches. They confirmed the desperate need of these fellow believers to substantial diaconal aid. Many have had to sell most of their valuables in order to feed their families or meet medical costs. Visiting Christian leaders reported that *"The economic embargo against the country is causing much suffering to all Iraqi Christians, without exception; all Iraqis have become victims to politically motivated punishment inflicted on the country by the international community. . . ."*

MERF continues to seek help for members of the three main congregations in Baghdad, Basra and Kirkuk, as well as for other believers in other parts of the country. Please remember also to pray for the spiritual well-being of these believers in the light of imported harmful literature and other sectarian influences which seek to take advantage of the economic sufferings of the believers in the country.

Muslim young people are seeking alternative answers

Recent mail response to MERF's Gospel radio broadcasts continues to point to a growing quest for non-Islamic solutions to many Muslims' mounting problems. Close to 70% of those listeners who write and openly express disenchantment with Islam and/or interest in the Christian faith are under 30 years old. This coupled with the fact that more than 60% of the Muslim populations belong to that age group is indicative of the tremendous unease experienced by the young people as they discuss social and religious matters. Recently, the leader of a group of eighteen people wrote expressing their desire to seek help as they study the Christian faith. They tape record the broadcasts and listen to them as a group in order to discuss the subject together.

Local outreach opportunities in Larnaca continue to be encouraging

In addition to the growing number of Cypriots showing interest in the study of the Bible, the MERF staff and members of the local congregation have many opportunities to share the Gospel with people from Eastern Europe. Rev.

and Mrs. Byker (short term pastor of the local congregation) have established a regular Bible study for a number of Russian contacts.

Rev. Victor Atallah and visiting Rev. and Mrs. Jeffrey Boer recently met a Serbian young lady with many questions about the issues of life and death. She was excited to receive a copy of the Bible and is now in the care of a mature young lady from the local congregation.

Cyprus has become a meeting place for people from different countries and an important centre for offshore companies. A good number of such companies are owned by Yugoslavs, Russians and other East-European nationals. Others come to seek employment in restaurants, hotels and the booming construction sector of the Cypriot economy. Many seem to be disenchanted with their nominal Christian background and are often surprised to find out that the Gospel stands for a completely different message than the one they identify with the traditional Eastern churches.

The loss of jobs and economic duress have for instance forced two Ukrainian families to seek work in Cyprus. They live together in a tiny apartment. Some members of these families speak English, the others understand some. They have a communistic background but later in their life some of them started to read the Bible but understood little of it. The two couples are now receiving instruction and it is a joy to see their growing interest and insight. They do read the portions of Scripture assigned to them, write down their questions, and then eagerly discuss. We pray that the Spirit will open wide their hearts through the Word so that when they go back to the Ukraine they may share a new found faith with others.

Arab men and women benefit from the summer training sessions at MERF's Evangelical Study Centre

Five summer study terms were held for two groups of Sunday school teachers, one group of lay evangelists and lay leaders, one group of pastors' wives and a group of active Christian ladies from Upper Egypt. Dr. Abdel-Masih Istafanous, MERF's chairman continues to be encouraged by the results and the response of churches and pastors to the effective training of their people. He recently stated, *"What inspires hope in*

the future, as we seek to bear witness to Christ in the Muslim world, is the growing momentum of spiritual awakening among our churches. MERF's biblical training continues to play an important role in bringing about revival in Bible study and zeal for evangelism."

From October 9 - 20, 1995 a group of pastors from the Minya Presbytery will receive instruction from Rev. Victor Atallah and Rev. T.C. Zwarts minister of a Reformed Church (Lib.) , Holland, who is planning to deal with the ten commandments of God's holy law.

The Rev. R. Sikkema from the Independent Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton is preparing himself upon request of MERF-Canada for a teaching session at the Study Centre from Oct. 30 - Nov. 10, 1995. The Rev. D. DeJong, minister emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-East will D.V. be his co-teacher. The students follow the lessons for about two weeks and return to their churches and communities better equipped and more enthused for the Lord's service.

Continuing support

We are grateful that contributions from congregational as well as individuals continue to come in regularly and faithfully. A special thank you to the organizers of the Alm-Song October 6, 1995 in Hamilton, ON. We are happy that you designated the alms collected for the Middle East Reformed Fellowship. At this moment we don't know the result of the offering but we know that it will be good! Thanks to all those who contributed.

If you would like to make a donation please make your cheque payable **to MERF-Canada** and send it to

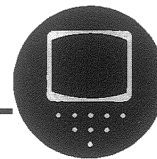
MERF-Canada
1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON L7P 3X4

It might interest you that we can also be reached by Fax (905)332-6253. If you wish to receive more information, please let us know.

On behalf of MERF-Canada,

(Rev.) J. Mulder, chairman
(Mrs.) J. Van Dam, secretary





Press Release of Classis Ontario North, Sept. 15, 1995

Opening

After opening the meeting in the Christian manner with Bible reading and prayer, the chairman of the consistory of the convening Church affirmed that the delegates of Orangeville had found the credentials to be in order and that all the Churches were lawfully represented. He invited the recommended executive to take their places. Classis was constituted with Rev. P. Aasman taking the chair, Rev. G.H. Visscher as clerk and Rev. J.L. Van Popta as vice-chairman. In the *memorabilia* the chairman noted that Burlington - Rehoboth, Fergus and Toronto Churches were still seeking to fill ministerial vacancies in their congregations. These Churches were commended to the Lord's care. He also noted with thankfulness to the Lord, the work of the late Rev. G. VanDooren who passed on earlier this month. He had been Minister of the Lord in this Classis for 41 years.

The provisional agenda was adopted with minor changes.

Reports

The first items on the agenda were the Church Visitation Reports and those reports that regularly are presented at the September Classis. The Church visitors read reports of visits to Brampton, Chatsworth and Ottawa. These reports were received with gratitude to the Lord. The assembly then dealt with the following regular reports. Burlington South reported that the Classis archives were in order. The Treasurer's report concerning the finances of Classis showed that the present arrangements and assessments are sufficient. Burlington West reported that auditors found the books of the Treasurer to be in good order. Guelph reported concerning the Fund For Financial Aid To Students that there was no activity as no students had asked for assistance. Fergus reported that auditors found the books of this fund in good order.

The next item for discussion was the committee report of the Fund for Needy Churches. This committee recommended to Classis that the requests

for funding presented to them by the Churches of Ottawa and Elora be granted. This would mean that the assessment would decrease to \$19.00 per communicant member. Classis accepted this recommendation. The committee also asked Classis to approve that it keep \$4,000.00 in its account as a buffer to cover late payments from the Churches and so allow it to execute its task faithfully. Classis also approved this request. (The report noted that the former Church of Lower Sackville had forwarded \$8,000.00 as repayment of support previously given from this fund. This money came from proceeds of the sale of their Church building.) Fergus reported that it found the books of this committee to be in good order.

The delegates, by turn, reported that the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, and that the decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured. The Church at Toronto asked for advice in matters of discipline. Classis dealt with this in closed session.

Proposals and instructions

Next on the agenda was a proposal from the Church at Grand Valley. This Church asked that Classis acknowledge that the present way of covering "federal expenses" by way of assessment per communicant member is inequitable and that it seek a more equitable formula. This proposal was defeated.

The Churches of Toronto and Fergus requested "pulpit supply." This was granted.

Appointments

The assembly moved on to the regular appointments. Toronto was appointed as the convening Church for the next Classis. The suggested date: December 8, 1995. Classis re-appointed the ministers to their duties as Committee of Examiners as well as the Church visitors. The various Churches also were re-appointed to the management and auditing of the Classis committees. The treasurers, as well, were re-appointed. Br. Westrik was appointed to the Committee for Needy Churches replacing a retiring member.

The assembly then appointed delegates to RS East, to be convened November 15 in London. The following

ministers and elders were appointed: Revs. C. Bosch, G. Nederveen, A.J. Pol, G.H. Visscher with alternates (in this order) B.J. Berends, P. Aasman, P. Feenstra, J. Slaa. Elders B. Ganzekoele, L. Jagt, C. Lindhout, J. Schoon, with alternates (in this order) H. Harsevoort, R. Speijer, K. Knol, L. Lodder. Rev. W. Den Hollander was appointed as observer to the Free Church of Scotland Presbytery, should an invitation be received.

Question Period and Closing

The chairman gave the floor to delegates who might want to ask a personal question. Rev. G.H. Visscher asked if the delegates of the (synod) Committee for Contact with the ERQ could pass on greetings from this assembly to the Synod of the ERQ which was to meet in Montreal on September 22/23. Classis sent its brotherly greetings.

The chairman noted with thankfulness that none of the delegates had done something worthy of reproof or censure. This press release was then approved and the Acts were read and adopted. After singing a Psalm the assembly was closed with prayer and thanksgiving.

For Classis:
J.L. Van Popta 



MY HOUSE

*There's a house that I am building
Won't you come and see it?
I am so proud of this my house
I'll tell you all that's in it!*

*It's gonna have so many rooms
With cats and dogs galore
A wife, a baby and a fire
With cedar logs that roar.*

*With stained glass windows, scarlet walls
Brass knobs on all the doors
Some golden ceilings, mirrored halls
And marble on the floors.*

*My friends will party in my house
All day and all night long
No laws are broken: None are made
So we'll do nothing wrong!*

*My child and I will love our house
And all our lot in life
My heart will sing in joy-filled days
A song to praise my wife.*

*I'll sit and dream in this my house
I have these fancy plans
I will never need to change them
My house securely stands.*

*My youthful vigor, youthful strength
Will build this house of fame
I'll hang a banner on my house
To glorify my name!*

*I've learned enough from Mom and Dad
I'll find my own way now
I know it all, I've seen it all
I thank you, take a bow!*

HALF-BUILT

*Oh – that house that I was building?
It never did get done . . .
It lacked any firm foundation
Inside there lives just one.*

*I am the sad and silly guy
Forgot his God and built
On shifting sands and half-baked plans
To totter and to tilt.*

*A wind came to blow on my house
I'll not forget the sound
Divorce it screamed: Agony seemed
To spring up from the ground.*

*Re-build! God said – Have faith in Me!
Without your cats and dogs
Without your wife, without your child
Without your cedar logs!*

*My youthful vigor, youthful strength
And my dream-filled eye
Lay tattered like my banner on –
My castle in the sky.*

*It's gone and so's my will to sing
I lie here all alone
Remember! Pray to God to bring
Repentance – Heart of stone!*

*I'm sorry for all the things I've done
And all the sadness too
The costs can never be repaid
A quick fix will never do.*

*Thank God for His forgiveness
He made me skin and bone
He'll fix my heart, he'll fix my house
with Christ – The Cornerstone!*

Michael Van,
cm. Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church in Surrey

Suggested reading:

Mt. 13: esp. 22,23; Luke 15: esp. 11-32;
Luke 6:46-49; Haggai 1:4-11;
Habakkuk 3:17-19; Psalm 4;
Proverbs 24:3,4; 1 Cor. 7:8-17; Phil. 4:4-14

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:

Re: "Which version now?"

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. J. De Jong's editorial (July 14, 1995). We should be very careful in trying to do away with our dignified church language. It might be wise to update the Bible once in awhile into contemporary language, but that does not mean we have to get rid of all "old fashioned" words. Poetically, one can do *much* more with "Thee," "Thou," and "Thine" than with "you" and "yours." Even Helen Steiner uses these words in her poems. And is the Holy Word of God not written mostly in poetic language? A lot of hard work has gone into the

rhyiming of the psalms and hymns and translating the confessions – and I hope we will read and sing from them until we are united with the Head of the Church.

Why did C.M. Loopstra choose "Amazing Grace?" Because it has no "Thee's and Thou's"? What about the hymn "Abide with Me" with its many "Thee's" and "Thou's"? To translate it into modern language would mutilate it.

Some songs and tunes, like the Genevan tunes, are timeless. Just like the Dutch songs of A. Valerius written in 1625, these songs written during and after great tribulation are *timeless*. The new Dutch versions of the Bible still has the old fashioned word "Gij"

in it since poets cannot always work with "U." And don't worry (Rob van Spronsen) about the young people. They study Shakespeare in school. They know very well what these words mean. Young people are better in understanding "archaic" language than we older ones.

Why should we as church abolish what the world still upholds? We need to maintain a link with history, and with our brothers and sisters who have gone before us, and who sang these same songs.

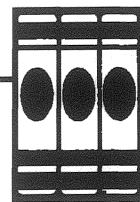
Respectfully,

Mrs. P. Hofsink,
Smithers



BOOK REVIEW

By G.Ph. van Popta



The Liberation: Causes and Consequences, C. Van Dam, ed.

Winnipeg: Premier, 1995. 163 pp. \$7.75 CDN.

Available from Premier, Family Christian Bookstore or Inheritance Publications.

A half century ago, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) were torn in two because a General Synod insisted upon making the sophisticated philosophical speculations of some theologians binding over and above the clear, simple and comforting Revelation of God. The Senate of the Theological College and Premier have done us a great service in publishing *The Liberation: Causes and Consequences* which reminds us again of this sad chapter in church history. Although the cause of the Liberation, the high-handedness of the General Synods, is reason for sadness, the events surrounding 1944 and the resulting Liberation of many faithful churches and

believers is also cause for rejoicing, for in the Liberation, one could see the mighty hand of God at work setting his people free as a bird is released from the fowler's net.

The meat and potatoes of this book are three speeches held in October 1994 in Burlington, ON, in commemoration of the ecclesiastical Liberation in the Netherlands. As dessert, it also includes transcriptions of the discussions which followed the speeches, an afterword by Dr. J. Faber, and five appendices.

In the first essay, "**The Liberation: The Doctrinal Aspect**," Dr. J. Faber, professor of Dogmatics, emeritus, at the Theological College, shows how the binding doctrines of General Synods Sneek-Utrecht, 1939-43, and Utrecht, 1943-45, were informed more by speculative reflection than by the reading of God's Word. In 1942, Synod Sneek-Utrecht made five doctrinal pronouncements, the most important of which was one about the covenant of

grace. Since it was especially this declaration which led to the disruption in the GKN, Dr. Faber focuses on it. He shows how the Synod, by identifying the secret election of God with the revelation of the covenant promises, took away the living comfort which God's people legitimately have and left them to speculate on whether the promises spoken at their baptisms were really for them or not. The certainties of God's promises became unsure. Instead of being called to believe the sure promises of God declared at his baptism, one was led to reflect on whether or not he was an elect. Dr. Faber clearly outlines the doctrinal aspect of the Liberation, and, at the same time, reminds the reader of the reality and certainty of God's covenant promises to us and our children and grandchildren.

In "**The Liberation: Church-Political Aspects**," Dr. J. De Jong, professor of the ecclesiological and diaconological disciplines at the Theological College,

shows how the Liberation was not only an emancipation from a binding to Biblically unfounded doctrines; it was also a deliverance from an authoritarian church government. Dr. De Jong summarizes the main church-political events of that time, considers the different viewpoints on church polity, especially surrounding articles 31, 50 (present 49) and 84 (present 74), evaluates them, and draws some conclusions for today. He shows how the Synods of the 1940s played fast and loose with the agreed upon Church Order. Contrary to the adopted order, Synod Sneek-Utrecht perpetuated itself beyond its established agenda. The next synod, Utrecht, 1943-45, took upon itself the power to depose office-bearers. When the way of appeal was closed, aggrieved churches liberated themselves of the unlawful decisions of the synods. De Jong points out that the intention was not to break with the federation of churches (GKN) but with the sinful decisions of the synod. In this essay, Dr. De Jong tries to be impartial, to listen to both sides of the dispute, and to be both sympathetic and critical at the same time. In my estimation, he is successful.

In the final essay, **"The Church in the Act of Liberation,"** Dr. N.H. Gootjes,

professor of Dogmatics at the College, investigates the view of the church as expressed in the "Act of Liberation or Return" and the significance of this view for today. Dr. Gootjes points out that the Act was not meant as a confessional statement but as a letter which office-bearers and members could send to their consistories. He then explains what was meant by the words "Liberation" and "Return." By the former was meant a liberation not from a church or a church federation, but from the deviant doctrinal decisions and church political actions of the General Synods. Gootjes says: "Liberation was necessary in order to maintain the freedom to teach and preach the doctrine revealed in Scripture. It maintained the standard of the Three Forms of Unity, without change or addition" (p. 80). This has great relevance for today in that we, too, must maintain the doctrine of scripture as confessed in the Reformed confessions. By "Return" was meant a return to the community of the ecumenical church and to the situation of the Reformed churches prior to the bad synodical decisions of 1942-44. It wanted to restore the ecclesiastical fellowship among the Reformed churches which the General Synod had broken.

At the same time, the Act called for unity with all who base themselves only upon the Word of God and the Reformed confessions. This proves that the Liberation was not a schismatic action; in fact, it was the opposite. Church union was the goal. Today, says Dr. Gootjes, we must retain this goal by continuing to seek unity with all who maintain the Reformed confession. We may not let certain emphases and "distinctives" found among us keep us from attaining that goal.

In a delightful afterword, Dr. J. Faber reminds us of the catholic character of the Liberation. The Liberation according to article 31 of the Church Order of Dort was a deliverance from a narrow sectarian binding and a return to the spaciousness of the Word of God and the breadth of the Reformed confession.

Five appendices are included: Doctrinal Pronouncement of Synod 1942 Regarding the Covenant of Grace; Position Statement of Six Concerned Ministers (1943); Short Survey of the Doctrinal Aspect of the Liberation; Two Letters of K. Schilder; and the Act of Liberation or Return, all in English translation.

This is a very worthwhile book. I sincerely hope it finds its way into the homes of many Reformed people. **C**

Farewell Rev. J. Huijgen and Family

In the 24th Issue, Volume 29, November 23, 1990 a short article appeared under the heading: New Minister for the Fergus Congregation. When I was asked to write about the departure of our now former Minister, the first thought that came to mind was, where did the time go? On July 24, 1990 we, the Church of Fergus welcomed our new minister – fresh from Holland – with a great deal of enthusiasm.

At the welcome evening on August 7, 1990 as well as on the farewell evening five years later, on July 2, 1995, Br. J.D. Gansekoele was chairman of the consistory and thus of the farewell

meeting too. He opened the meeting with a word of welcome to all present and requested that the assembly sing Ps. 19: 1, 3. Following the singing, he read from Scripture, Ps. 121 and led in prayer. Br. Gansekoele then addressed Rev. Huijgen, his wife and children, reminiscing about the years so quickly gone by. He mentioned that the minister could look back on much fruitful work accomplished; how he had preached the full Gospel in the church at Fergus, and that there are many pleasant memories for all of us. Further, that the Huijgen family had been blessed with two more children during

their stay and that Sr. Huijgen had been a true "help-meet" for her husband, greatly appreciated in the midst of the congregation. The chairman then gave opportunity to the members to speak to the minister and his family.

Br. Albert Hutten spoke on behalf of the men's society, reminding the men of the speech held by Rev. Huijgen at the annual meeting of the men societies a few years ago, where he spoke on the topic "Fathers where are you?" Appreciation was shown for all the encouragement, the teaching and the preaching provided by Rev. Huijgen. Some verses from the gospel of John, Chapter



Sr. Mary Dewitt, representing the women's society, "In God We Trust," put much effort in poetry, reminiscing about the years that Rev. Huijgen and family were in our midst. We were reminded of both the comfort and the warnings given in the preaching; the birth and the weddings which we rejoiced over together; and also of the shared sadness of losing some of our loved ones. Rev. and Mrs. Huijgen and the children were presented with gifts of farewell. Sr. Dewitt concluded with the words,

"May our Father guide and keep you all,
As in Smithers you will fulfill His call."

Two sisters from the women's society, "Maranatha," combined their efforts in bidding the Huijgen's farewell. A bit of humour was enjoyed as Sr. Emma Hutten set to poetry an expressive review of Rev. Huijgen's pulpit behaviour. Both Sr. Hutten and Sr. Trudy Lodder expressed gratitude once again for the Lord's work through Rev. Huijgen.

"May the Lord bless your work in His service,
Thanks for everything you have done in Fergus!"

7 were quoted, where we acknowledge as God's children that it is not of Rev. Huijgen himself that this work was done, but through Christ, for the glory of the Lord. On behalf of the men's society, Br. Hutten wished Rev. Huijgen and his family the Lord's blessing in their continuing work.

Br. David Van Veen was next to give a few words of farewell. Br. Van Veen spoke words which were echoed in the hearts of many of the listeners. He thanked Rev. Huijgen and family for their precious friendship and hospitality. I'd like to quote directly from Br. Van Veen's speech, "This minister put a smile on my face." Rev. Huijgen was given a farewell with the reminder of the promises and comfort that can be found in Psalms 21 and 23.

Br. Paul Broekema thanked Rev. Huijgen for the positive effect of his work in the school society. The covenantal preaching emphasized the unity of family, school and church. Part of Psalm 48 was quoted where we are encouraged to reveal the great promises of God to the next generation. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end."





Mrs. Huijgen's quiet smile and encouraging words will be missed at our society meetings too.

Twice throughout the evening the congregation enjoyed listening to the children's voices raised in songs of praise. Directed by Sr. Bonnie Bouwman, accompanied on the piano by Sr. Angie Bouwman, the kindergarten to Grade 4 sang some verses from Psalm 134 and 136 and from Hymn 45. Grades 5-10 sang verses from Psalm 121 and Hymn 48. I'm sure it must have felt strange to the Huijgen children to be sitting in the church pew listening to their school friends rather than standing on the stage beside them. They too will be remembered with fondness and missed by all.

A presentation was made by Sr. Sikkema, the oldest member of the Fergus congregation, which consisted of some fine china for Mrs. Huijgen and for Rev. Huijgen, a picture of the "Fergus" rural Ontario countryside.

The congregation sang Ps. 134: 1,2 after which Rev. Huijgen addressed the assembly. Rev. Huijgen, on behalf of his family thanked everyone for the gifts, and for the words and thoughts expressed; but most of all thanks was

given to God who provided by grace everything necessary to perform his tasks. He commented briefly on his life and work over the past five years, emphasizing the many blessings which the Lord showered upon him and his family during their stay in Fergus. While Fergus will not be forgotten in their hearts, it was by faith that they could be united in the Lord with the Fergus congregation; it was faith that prompted the call by Smithers; and it was by faith that the call was responded to. Rev. Huijgen urged the congregation to trust in the Lord, for He alone provides; Seek His Kingdom. By the grace of God, the Fergus congregation will not languish,

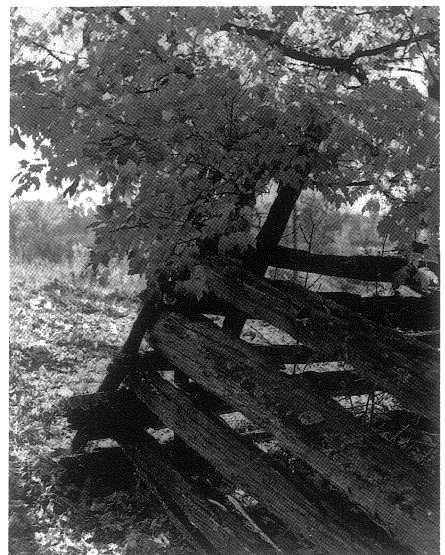
"For God will never those disown,
Who put their trust in Him alone."

Rev. Huijgen closed the formal part of the evening by humbly thanking the Lord in prayer for blessings received and asking for guidance in whatever lies ahead.

Our farewell evening continued with a coffee social. Everyone had the opportunity to shake the hands of the Huijgen family and offer personal words of farewell. The evening carried a few laughs, and yes, a few tears, but

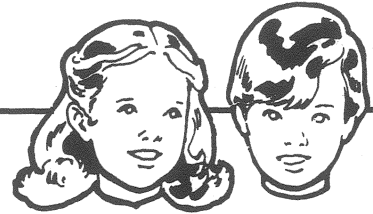
most of all it carried an abiding sense of love and joy, for each other as brothers and sisters in the communion of saints, and for God our Father in heaven who so graciously provides for all of our needs. May all praise, honour and glory be to Him alone!

On behalf of the consistory:
By a friendly anonymous helper **C**



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

A long time ago, a man called the Pope was the leader in the Church.

He said that *only* ministers could read the Bible. Normal people weren't allowed to.

Then came a man who lived in England, called John Wycliffe.

He put the Bible into the people's language, so they could read it. They could find out what God wanted them to do.

The pope didn't like this.

He wanted everyone to ask *him* what God wanted them to do.

Then he could tell them what *he* wanted

The pope hated what Wycliffe was doing.

If people read God's Word, they wouldn't need *him* to tell them what to do!

Martin Luther, and his helper Philip Melancton, John Calvin Ulrich Zwingli were people like Wycliffe.

They read the Bible.

Then they knew what God wanted them to do !

By God's grace, they also saw that many wrong things were happening in the Church.

They told more people about it.

They wrote about it.

And God used these people to make the Church right again.

The Holy Spirit made Luther and Calvin "reform" the Church.

Our Church is called "Canadian (or American) Reformed Church."

Soon, it will be October 31.

We call it "Reformation Day."

We celebrate that God started the Church on the right way again.

Glory be to God – Soli Deo Gloria!

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Here are the Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthdays in November. We wish you a very happy day celebrating! May the Lord bless and keep you in the year ahead.

Carin Meliefste	1	Joshua Sietsma	18
Anna Kampen	2	Jeremy Linde	18
Kay-Leigh Linde	4	Jaclyn Hulst	20
Peter VanderZwaag	8	Richard Oosterhoff	20
Teri Oosterhoff	10	Jerry Van Andel	21
Melissa Bremer	12	James Aasman	28
Cheryl Jelsma	14	Pauline Boeve	29
Ashlea Jagt	15	Joni Schulenberg	30
Heidi deHaan	15	Dorothy Gunnink	30

Quiz Time!

A NEW BIBLE PUZZLE

Carefully read the instructions.

1. You are given a question. Find the answer in the text given. Beside the question is a plus or a minus. This tells you whether the letters in the answer are to be *added* or *subtracted*.
2. If they are to be *added*, write down the answer from the question above it and the answer you are on. This will make the *jumble word*.
3. If they are to be *subtracted*, cross out each letter of your answer from the jumble word above to get a *new jumble word*.
4. Keep going through the whole puzzle until you have only one letter left.

This is the *unknown letter*.

Confusing?

Here's an example:

RESEARCH: A disciple of Jesus. (Matthew 4:18)
ANSWER: A N D R E W

RESEARCH: Son of Noah. (Genesis 10: 1)
ANSWER: J A P H E T H
JUMBLE WORD: A N D R E W J A P H E T H
(The letters from "Andrew" and "Japheth" are added to make a jumble word.)

RESEARCH: An animal that cheweth the cud. (Lev. 11:6)
ANSWER: H A R E
JUMBLE WORD: A N D W J P E T H
(The letters for this answer are removed from the jumble word.)

Hint: Use only neatly printed CAPITAL LETTERS to help you do the puzzle right.

The answers and unknown letter will be in the next *CLARION!*

1. Research: Mother of Zedekiah (Jer. 52:1)
Answer: _____

2. Research: A man of Arimathea (Luke 23: 50,51)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____

3. Research: Son of Ham. (This word starts with P.)(Gen, 10:6)
Answer: P H U T
Jumble Word: _____

4. Research. Son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word _____

- + 5. Research. Name for son of David (Eccl. 1:1)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- 6. Research. Part of the palace. (Matthew 26:71)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- + 7. Research: Synonym for death (2 Kings 15:22)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- 8. Research: One of ten came back to give thanks. (Luke 17: 12-19)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- + 9. Research: Hebrew Month (Nehemiah 2:1)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- 10. Research: City in Galilee (Luke 7:11)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- 11. Research: City of the plains. Hint: The word starts with L. (Gen. 10:19)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- + 12. Research: A sow wallows in the _____. (2 Peter 2:22)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- 13. Research: It watered the ground. (Genesis 2:6)
Answer: _____
Jumble Word: _____
- 14. Research: Ancestor of Christ. (Luke 3:28)
Answer: _____

Unknown letter _____.



REFORMATION WORD SEARCH

Can You find the words that were in the story about Reformation Day?

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

- Find:**
- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Church | Luther | Reformation | Good Works |
| Scripture | Zwingli | Grace | Indulgences |
| Pope | Wycliffe | Sins | Calvin |
| | | | Melanchton |

Have fun!
Love to you all,

Aunt Betty **C**