

# Clarion

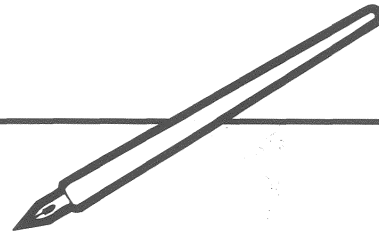
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE  
VOLUME 44, NO.24 DECEMBER 1, 1995



*The Least of These: The Reality  
of Childhood Sexual Abuse*

Numbers

10:1-10



## The End of Uniformity?

Now that the Acts of Synod 1995 have appeared I think we do well to consider more closely the issue of Bible translation as dealt with in Article 72 of the Acts. This Synod is recommending a considerable change in the worship and life of the churches, and therefore this matter most assuredly deserves close attention. Frankly, I do not see the recommendation of Synod as a change for the *better*, and therefore I suggest the churches review this matter critically. There are aspects of the decision of Synod 1995 which I find very weak, and this leads me to have my reservations about the course of action suggested there.

### The decision

The decision on Bible translation itself is very brief. In the first place the NIV is recommended for use in the churches, (recommendation B). A second part of the decision reads: "To leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use another translation," (recommendation C). My first concern lies with this part of the decision. For the apparent *certainty* reflected in the first recommendation is drastically undercut by the actual *uncertainty* reflected in the second. Here for the first time in our history the Synod has opened the door to complete freedom with regard to which translation a church may wish to use.

While there may be some motivations for choosing this course of action, I do not think that an "open field" in Bible translations is a healthy development in our church life. To be sure, the decision concerning which translation is to be used in public worship is a local matter, to be determined by the consistory. But previous Synods have stressed the importance of maintaining the use of the same translation in the churches. Such a *common* use of one translation only enhances the sense of unity and fellowship the churches have as members of one federation. As I see it, the approach of this Synod threatens the demise of the uniformity in the use of a translation as we have known it in the life of our churches up to this time.

### The considerations

One can comment on several of the considerations supporting this decision, but I would like (also for space reasons) to limit myself to the one that I see as the weakest in the group. General Synod states (as consideration D):

General Synod cannot continue to recommend the use of the RSV since there are better translations available according to the judgment of both the Canadian and Australian study committees. Moreover as Synod 1992 pointed out, continued usage (sic) of the RSV would lead to possible isolation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

One can only be surprised that the synod adopted the view of the Canadian study committee so easily and so uncritically. And one can only be surprised that this statement was adopted so uncritically. For what was the approach of the Committee? The Committee came to its view by judging the three translations under discussion with the standards that the synods of the 1970s used to evaluate the RSV. On the basis of these considerations, the NIV, along with the other translations considered, was held to be *better* than the RSV.<sup>1</sup>

This approach incorporates what I see as a methodological fallacy. For the NIV, (to mention only this translation) should not be judged by standards which in the 1970s were used to judge the RSV. Rather, each translation should be judged in the way it presents itself, according to its own principles, and the way it applies them. With regard to the RSV the concern was the influence of liberal scholarship on the translation. While there have always been concerns here, on the whole the RSV has been a translation which has been accepted and used with benefit and with a minimum of unrest and protest in the churches.

### Judging the NIV

If we now consider what are the terms in which the NIV presents itself then we should turn first to the remarks in the preface to this translation. There we read

The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers. They have weighed the significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. At the same time, they have striven for far more than a word for word translation. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers demands frequent modifications in sentence structure and constant regard for contextual meanings of words.

We find in these words a clear indication of the direction we are pursuing in the adoption of this new translation. It is not a translation of the *words* of Scripture, but of "thought of the biblical writers." These "biblical writers" are obviously regarded as people who write in their own "thought patterns and syntax." So the translators focussed not primarily on the words (i.e. what was written) but on "contextual meanings" of words, the thoughts the words are meant to convey. Accuracy here is regarded as a faithful rendering not of what was written, but of the "meaning" of the "writer."

Here a new principle of translation is introduced, one which to my mind threatens our understanding of the way

in which the Scriptures ought to be understood and transmitted. For any reader can immediately see that with the notions of "thoughts" and "meanings" as mentioned above, we are entering into a rather uncertain world. There is an implicit step back from the text to the *thought* of the text. Besides, the Bible should not be transferred to *our* thought patterns and syntax, but *our* thought patterns and syntax should be moulded to those patterns which we find in the Bible!

My belief is that the principles used to translate the Scriptures are questionable, to say the least. There may have been an honest attempt to be faithful to the original texts, and in many cases, the message still comes through. But a careful assessment of this method of translation will make it clear that a move to the NIV is not a move for the *better* but for the *worse*.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, of course, one is forced by circumstances to move in such a direction as well. But we might ask whether we have come to that point.

### A change necessary?

The decision of 1995 reflects a remarkable development. The threat of a lack of availability of the RSV has become the occasion to abandon it altogether in favour of what the Committee (and Synod) felt is a better translation. In one stroke the principle of *consistency* in worship was abandoned, and the principle of *uniformity* in worship was compromised.

In this regard I would raise a question. Did the delegates of Synod 1995 know that in the space of ten or twelve years, the copyright on the RSV will be removed? It was in this context that I suggested in one of my responses to letters submitted on this point that the terms "demise" and "phased out" are overloaded. Given the entrepreneurial spirit of our age, everyone can be sure that once this copyright is lifted there will be plenty of copies of the RSV available for use in the churches. Besides, this translation has been used by scholars for such a significant time period that making it completely unavailable is out of the question.

### Isolated?

For this reason it makes little sense to speak in terms of a position of "isolation" with respect to Bible translation. Synod 1992 said: "To prevent the possible isolation of the Canadian

Reformed Churches with the usage (sic) of the RSV it is desirable to further investigate other translations."<sup>3</sup> While it is well and good to be investigating other translations, there is no need to move away from the RSV because of a fear of "isolation." There is such a multiplicity of translations in the English speaking world today, that a quotation from the RSV would never appear to anyone as an "isolated" gesture. No one need think that there is danger of becoming isolated by holding to this translation.

### Appeal?

Am I suggesting that the decision is so wrong that it needs to be appealed? The churches are free to do so. However, in my view a poor decision is not necessarily a wrong decision. I wonder if the delegates had all the information in front of them! As I see it, one need not appeal. I am also not adverse to using the NIV if it is necessary.<sup>4</sup> I can understand the concerns of those who prefer this translation for family worship. But I would think one is wiser to follow recommendation C of the decision of Synod Abbotsford.

This is one of those little storms that with a little determination and effort,

easily could be weathered by the churches. Where there is a will there is a way! One could also think in terms of temporary measures, without necessarily changing the *Book of Praise*. This strikes me – at this juncture – as the only viable alternative to maintain both *consistency* and *uniformity* in the worship and life of the churches.

<sup>1</sup>I refer here to Appendix 5 of the Report to General Synod Abbotsford 1995, 107-126. This appendix specifically promotes moving away from the RSV; note the sentence: "Over the years the RSV has received an established place in our churches and it is always difficult to let go of something that has been with us for a while and go to something 'new'." 108

<sup>2</sup>My chief concern here is what this method of translation does to our view of the *authority* of Scripture. If we implicitly assert (as is done here) that the Scriptures in their written form are *limited* to a specific cultural context, I cannot but sense that the authority of the text is threatened.

<sup>3</sup>See Acts of Synod Lincoln 1992, p. 21. Note that this is a consideration of the Synod. No church brought the idea of the danger of "isolation" to the Synod.

<sup>4</sup>Given the reservations expressed above, however, in my view other alternatives ought still to be considered. **C**



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# MEDITATION

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By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 18:1-11

*“. . . and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”*

## THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

The gospel continued to spread in Europe. Paul went on from Philippi to plant congregations in Thessalonica, Berea, even Athens. From Athens, Paul arrived at Corinth.

Corinth was a large city. In Paul's day it had a population of about 650,000 people. In many ways it was the most important city of Greece. Several trade routes passed through Corinth. It was a very religious city. It had at least twelve temples. There were temples dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, Asclepius, the god of healing, Appollo, and others. As well, there was a Jewish synagogue. It was an immoral city. Corinth was the world centre for open and unrestrained immorality. Aphrodite's temple employed one thousand temple prostitutes. Even the heathen of the world were impressed by the perverted behaviour considered normal in Corinth. Throughout the world, the expression "to Corinthianize" meant "to practise sexual immorality."

To this city came Paul with the cleansing gospel of Jesus Christ. Like fresh water pouring into a stagnant cesspool flowed the good news of free salvation.

Paul met a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla. They were tent-makers. Tentmaking was Paul's trade as well. They worked together. On the sabbath day, Paul diligently attended the synagogue. He persuaded Jews and Greeks of the truth of the gospel. Most of the Jews, however, rejected his message. Paul shook out his garments at them and withdrew from the synagogue. He established a house congregation in the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile believer who lived next door to the synagogue.

Many joined Paul. One noteworthy convert was Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue. Crispus gave up his prestigious position in society and his high office in the false church to join the true church of Jesus Christ. Crispus believed that the holy congregation meeting in the house of Titius Justus was the assembly of the redeemed and that there was no salvation outside of it. Therefore he had to join it and forego the benefits enjoyed by the ruler of the synagogue.

The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision. He told him not to be scared but to speak the Word boldly. No one

would hurt Paul because the Lord had many people in the city.

A survey of the two letters Paul wrote this church later reveals that the people of the Lord in that city were quite some people. The church was plagued with immorality. The men visited the temple prostitutes. The church was divided into cliques. Members were dragging each other to the secular law courts. The Lord's table was being profaned. Gifts of the Holy Spirit were being abused. The worship services were a little wild. There were marriage difficulties. Wrong ideas of the resurrection were floating around.

It sounds like our churches. Churches today often manifest Corinthian tendencies. Most of the problems faced by the Corinthians confront us as well – problems like spiritual immaturity, instability, cliques, envy, lawsuits, marriage breakdown, immorality, ignorance of true doctrine.

We need to hold on to the fact that we belong to God's people in our city, town or regional district. Otherwise the problems would really scare us. Believe in God's electing love. Be taught by His Word. C

## What's Inside

In the lead editorial, Dr. De Jong comments again on the issue of our recent synod's decision on Bible translations.

Dr. Gootjes continues his instruction on Reformed thought about creation and the providence of God.

In this issue, we return to the sad topic of sexual abuse. With thanks to *In Holy Array* and Mr. Wes Bredenhof, we republish an article on this topic.

Rev. Van Spronsen highlights some activities happening here and there in the federation of churches.

Mrs. Ravensbergen shines a ray of sunshine into our lives in her column.

Mr. Wayne Chase works out his understanding of Matthew 24 in "Reader's Forum."

Enough, we hope, to give you an hour of enjoyment and learning.

GvP

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# Is Creation the Same as Providence? (Part 2)

By N.H. Gootjes

## Continued creation

In the first article it was shown that the Reformed Confessions of the 16th century distinguish creation as God's completed work in the beginning from providence as God's continuing work today. At this point the question can be raised whether this sufficiently represents the opinion of Reformed theology. Several Reformed theologians used the word creation for providence. To give one example, Ursinus, of whom we said that he clearly distinguished creation and providence, spoke of providence as a continuation of creation.<sup>1</sup> Others went even further by calling providence "continued creation."<sup>2</sup> Do these expressions indicate that no borderline between creation and providence was maintained in reformed theology?

## Ursinus and De Moor

Let us look more closely at the examples. Ursinus explains why he spoke of providence as a continuation of the creation: "because the government of the world is the preservation of the things created by God."<sup>3</sup> When Ursinus uses this particular expression he wants to emphasize that the world is dependent on God, not only for its creation, but also for its preservation. Nothing could have existed without the creating power of God. It is just as impossible that anything exists without God's government and preservation. Ursinus uses this expression to oppose several philosophical schools who say that God is not directly upholding and governing the world.<sup>4</sup> God is as much involved in preserving the world as He was in creating it.

De Moor defends the use of the term "continued creation" by pointing to the fact that the same power of God is at work in both creation and providence.<sup>5</sup> This is, to my view, a statement worthy of consideration. We tend to think that creation shows more of God's power, and that the world now exists more or less on its own strength. But

when providence is called "creation" we realize that the same power God used to create is still active in the upholding and steering the world. The term "continued creation" makes us more aware of the greatness of God's involvement in this world.

At the same time, however, De Moor does emphasize that creation and providence should not be confused. Creation speaks about what has not yet been created. Through creation all things received their existence. In providence the creature that has been created receives the continuation of its existence.<sup>6</sup> Neither Ursinus nor De Moor obliterate the distinction between creation and providence by calling providence "continued creation."

## Hodge and Bavinck

This expression, "continued creation," was so remarkable that it led to a debate in the 19th and 20th Century. This discussion began with Ch. Hodge. He agrees with the intention of the term, namely, to show that preservation of the world is as much the result of God's immediate power as creation. His objection is that this expression is confusing. Creation means the production of something out of nothing. Preservation, on the other hand, is the upholding in existence of what already exists. Calling preservation "continued creation" is therefore a wrong use of the term. What is worse, it even leads to error. For these reasons, Hodge considers it a dangerous term.<sup>7</sup>

Bavinck comes to the defense of this traditional terminology. He defends the term "creation" for providence in an interesting way. According to him it is based on a biblical way of speaking. Scripture points out the unity of creation and providence by using the same terms for both! To give an example, Ps. 104:30 says: "When Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the ground." The expression "they are created" obviously refers to what we call providence.<sup>8</sup> Pre-

vious theologians have spoken about continued creation on the basis of this and other texts.<sup>9</sup> This does not lead, however, to neglecting the distinction between creation and providence, as Hodge thought. Bavinck, at this point, refers to several texts to prove that God lets the creature act on his own.<sup>10</sup> Bavinck's conclusion is that creation and providence are the same for God. He works with the same power both in creation and in providence. They are not different in God since God is eternally the same.<sup>11</sup> This does not mean, however, that the distinction between creation and providence is arbitrary. In creation God calls into existence the things that do not exist. In providence God addresses the things which have received their existence. "Creation provides existence, providence the continuation of existence."<sup>12</sup>

## Berkouwer

In our century, Berkouwer came back to this discussion between Hodge and Bavinck. He agrees with Hodge that the expression "continued creation" is dangerous. The term seems to imply that the continuity of the world is denied, and it is open for the danger of pantheism.<sup>13</sup> Against Bavinck who defended the term with scriptural references, Berkouwer adduces several data from Scripture. He acknowledges that God's work of sustaining can be expressed with the verb "to create" but he notes that Scripture in connection with creation speaks about the past: "Of old didst Thou lay the foundation of the earth" (Ps. 102:25).<sup>14</sup>

He continues by listing texts indicating the stability of creation.<sup>15</sup> He also refers to texts in the New Testament that speak of creation as something of the past. To give an example: Mark 10:16: "But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female."<sup>16</sup> On the basis of these texts Berkouwer concludes that the "Scriptures compel us to make the distinction between creation and sustenance."<sup>17</sup>

## Some concluding remarks

This leads to the conclusion that the expression “continued creation” as used by several reformed theologians, does not mean that reformed theology thought there is no difference between creation and providence.<sup>18</sup>

Another question is whether it is a suitable expression. We can make the following remarks.

1. When the Reformed theologians used the term “continued creation,” they did not mean “repeated creation.” The expression does not mean that God created over and over again.<sup>19</sup>

2. The striking expression “continued creation” wants to draw attention to the fact that God does not allow creation to exist on its own after He created it. The phrase emphasizes that the same power by which God created the world is active in providence. Used in this way it is a comforting expression, since it shows that God who guides the world and our lives today is the same God who with His power created everything.

3. The term “continued creation” to describe providence has a Scriptural foundation. The fact cannot be denied that Scripture uses the word “to create” also for an aspect of God’s continuing work of upholding the world.

4. The word, however, could give the mistaken impression that creation is the same as providence. To avoid this misunderstanding continuing, it would be wise not to speak of providence as “continued creation.”

5. In connection with our investigation of the difference between creation

and providence, the most important conclusion is, that Reformed theology, whether accepting or rejecting the term “continued creation,” was unanimous in maintaining that creation is not to be confused with providence.

<sup>1</sup>*The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus*, 147.

<sup>2</sup>B. de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium* (Lugduni Batavorum, J. Hasebroek, 1763) vol. 2, 423. To give some more examples: Walaeus describes providence as the continuation of the existence of the things themselves; Amesius and Coccejus speak of: as it were a continued creation; Heidegger calls providence: continued creation; Van Til says that providence is lasting creation of God; see for these examples, H. Hepppe, E. Bizer, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche* (2. ed.; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1958) 204, 208.

<sup>3</sup>*The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus* 147.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit. Ursinus mentions the following philosophers: the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Peripatetics (= the followers of Aristotle)

<sup>5</sup>B. de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, vol. 2, 423.

<sup>6</sup>B. de Moor, op. cit.: “quod cum per *Creationem* accipit suum esse, in *Providentia* ut *jam Existens* consideratur, & per eandem nanciscitur suae *Existentiae* perduratumem.”

<sup>7</sup>Ch. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (London and Edinburgh: Nelson and Sons, 1883) vol. 1, 579. Hodge discusses this as the second of three opinions that confuse creation and providence (pp. 577ff).

<sup>8</sup>Already before this point, H. Bavinck had mentioned several texts: Ps. 148:5; Is. 45:7; Amos 4:13; see *Gereformeerde dogmatiek* (4th. ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1928) vol. 2, 552.

<sup>9</sup>H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek* vol. 2, 565. Bavinck, after having listed more expressions and texts comes to his

conclusion: “Therefore providence is an act of God equally great, omnipotent and omnipresent as creation; it is a continuous or continued creation; the two are one act and differ only *ratione*” (not in fact but in respect), 566.

<sup>10</sup>H. Bavinck mentions Gen. 2:2, Ex.20:11, 31:17 (to rest); Ps.14:2, Ps. 33:13 (to see); Ps. 33:15 (to observe); Ps. 130:3 (to mark; the text is mistakenly printed as Ps. 103:3) and draws the conclusion that all these expressions presuppose the existence, activity and freedom of the creature, see *Gereformeerde dogmatiek* vol. 2, 566f.

<sup>11</sup>This is a weak argument. It is questionable whether the fact that God is always the same necessarily leads to the conclusion that for God the actions of creation and providence cannot be distinct.

<sup>12</sup>H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, vol. 2, 568.

<sup>13</sup>G.C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* (original Dutch edition, 1950; tr. L.B. Smedes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 64.

<sup>14</sup>G.C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, 65

<sup>15</sup>G.C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, 66. He mentions the following texts: Is. 45:12; 40:22; 51:13; Eccles. 1:4; Ps. 89:11; 65:6; Job 37:18; Ps. 93:1. Not all texts function well in a context that wants to emphasize the distinction between creation and providence.

<sup>16</sup>Other texts are: Heb. 1:10, 2 Pet. 3:4; Mt. 19:4,8, see G.C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, 66.

<sup>17</sup>G.C. Berkouwer, op.cit.

<sup>18</sup>The lecture notes of A. Kuyper show that he, too, emphasized the difference between creation and providence. He developed this in opposition to Deism and Pantheism, see A. Kuyper, *Dictaten dogmatiek* vol. 3 (2. ed.; Kampen: Kok, n.d.) part 1, 19ff.

<sup>19</sup>See B. de Moor, who states this explicitly overagainst Wittichius, *Commentarius perpetuus*, vol. 2, 423.

C



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# The Least of These: The Reality of Childhood Sexual Abuse

By Wes Bredenhof

*In the Fall of 1990 a number of concerned members of the Canadian Reformed Churches in southern Ontario got together to discuss how to assist members of the Canadian Reformed Churches who have been sexually abused. In the Fall of 1991 a support group was set up and this has offered hope and Christian support for a number of women. A support group for men who have been sexually abused as boys was also provided in the Fall of 1994, but this was discontinued because men appear to have greater difficulty to share their hurts about the impact of abuse in their lives.*

*In addition to support groups SAFE has also sponsored a presentation by Dr. David Benner in the Spring of 1993 on the topic "Healing Emotional Wounds" and in the Spring of this year it sponsored a presentation and panel moderated by Rev. Al Dreise of Salem Christian Counselling Services in reaction to the video "Hear Their Cries."*

*SAFE is aware of an ongoing need to understand the effects of sexual abuse. Often there is still an assumption of "not in our community." There is also reluctance to learn from a variety of written material on this subject because these are not written by Canadian Reformed people. For this reason, SAFE was delighted that Mr. Bredenhof has given us permission to reprint this article in Clarion.*

*It is our hope that this article will add to the awareness of the impact of the sin of sexual abuse and what we can do to help.*

*If you want to know more about SAFE you may contact Ben Mulder at (905) 634-4470.*

(A slightly revised version of an article which originally appeared in the February 1995 issue of *In Holy Array*)

## **Introduction: The need to address this issue**

Sexual abuse is not a very pleasant topic to discuss. In fact, it is one of the saddest things that we have to deal with in this broken world of sin. It can be very tough to talk about openly and honestly. Most of us cringe and maybe even cry when we hear about instances of abuse of any kind. Sadly, very few go untouched by the consequences of sexual abuse and we must realize that it goes on in our churches as much as anywhere else.

In the past this was usually simply ignored and covered up; people did not want to talk about such a horrible subject, let alone admit that it happens. This attitude, however, was not exclu-

sive to our churches as it was also the predominant societal view of the matter. But over the last ten or twenty years attitudes have dramatically changed and people in North American society are finally willing to talk and do something about the complex problem of childhood sexual abuse.

Where does that leave us as churches? Do we follow the lead of society and try to deal with this problem or do we bury our heads in the sand and hope it will go away? The answer is hopefully obvious, for if we love Christ and His church we will try and put an end to any abuse which might be going on in our midst. We will also try and help those who have survived the soul-deadening trauma of sexual abuse.

## **Sexual Abuse: A definition**

But what exactly does this term "sexual abuse" really mean? Some

have incorrectly restricted it to mean only intercourse, thinking that anything else is not really that sexual and will not have a very great effect on the victim. Over the past few years the various books written on the subject have sought to provide a complete definition. Essentially what all these books say is that sexual abuse occurs when someone abuses his/her authority or power to gain sexual gratification at a weaker person's expense. This will necessarily extend beyond intercourse and include all inappropriate touching as well as exposure.

Sexual abuse involves someone being forced into an unwanted sexual experience with their feelings and emotions being completely ignored by the offender. The definition of sexual abuse is very broad and necessarily so because while touching, fondling or exposure may seem harmless to some, in fact such acts can and do have tremendous impacts on the lives of whomever the victims may be.

## **What the Bible says**

It may seem somewhat silly at this point to ask why sexual abuse is wrong. The Bible does deal with this horrible sin. Think only of the abuse of Tamar by Amnon her brother in 2 Samuel 13. We could also mention the various laws in the Old and New Testament which clearly show that any kind of sexual activity must only take place between a man and his legitimate wife. Anything else, including sexual abuse, is thereby condemned as sin in the eyes of the LORD. Think also of the laws regarding incest in Leviticus 17. It is clear in God's Word that sexual contact other than that which takes place between a husband and his own wife is a violation of the seventh commandment. Sexual sins, including that of abuse, are rebellion against God and attempts to make a god out of oneself and one's desires.

Incest and indeed, all sexual abuse, are totally and absolutely selfish acts, a seeking to fulfil one's own perverted desires. These are not the only reasons that sexual abuse is an abominable sin in the eyes of the LORD. Abuse also hurts and may even kill (if the victim is led to suicide). There is also the fact that it destroys the innocence of the children who are so precious in the eyes of the Lord.

### **Sexual Abuse: An abuse of power**

How does this destruction of innocence take place, even among those who profess themselves to be Christians? It usually involves an abuse of power; someone who is older or bigger taking advantage of someone who is young. Most sexual abuse happens without the use of violence or physical force. Victims are simply coerced into the act with threats or a lie about what is really going on. Offenders will often slowly lead their prey into the abuse so that it seems quite innocent and harmless at first. Some offenders will also make the abuse into a kind of game which makes it seem not quite as bad to the young child. He might then tell the child that it is their secret game that no one else is allowed to know about or they won't be able to play together any more.

Sometimes sexual abuse also takes place between adolescents and young children; this usually involves teenage boys and young pre-teen girls. This is not a simple case of sexual curiosity, as most boys get over that stage by the time they hit puberty. This is a clear instance of peer pressure whereby the younger children are seeking acceptance into an older group, the older group recognizes that fact and they take advantage of it to sexually abuse the younger ones. This kind of abuse may continue over several years or it may just happen once.

In most cases the perpetrator is known to the victim and is quite often a family member and a male. Females do abuse as well, though not in the same number as males. If it is not a family member then it is usually someone else well-known by the family and this could include doctors, teachers and even officebearers (including ministers).

Any one of these people is in a potential capacity to sexually abuse someone. They are all in positions of authority and trust, not to mention prestige and honour. An allegation of abuse against a teacher or a minister is not

likely to be taken too seriously (usually it will be doubted) and therefore there is a greater chance that it will remain covered up. Victims of abuse by such people usually feel that there is no point in making a fuss seeing how they won't be believed anyway. This gives an offender in such a group somewhat of a protective barrier against any such claims which might destroy his reputation.

The typical abuser can therefore show somewhat of a Jekyll and Hyde personality. He will look like a good Christian to the outsider, but to the victim he could very well be Satan personified. He will have a face, an odour, and a peculiar voice, which will never be forgotten by the survivor. Oftentimes survivors face terrifying flashbacks when faced with people who are similar or when they are in situations which remind them of the abuse. Some survivors find it very difficult to return to places where the abuse happened. Very often this may include the surroundings of the family home.

Usually families which are sexually abusive are excessively legalistic when it comes to certain things. This is one way in which abuse is maintained in some situations. One survivor told how ". . . in my family it was not acceptable to sew on Sundays but it was acceptable to abuse children." Deep, dark secrets are kept within the family and fear of scandal keeps victims from talking making abusive homes and families very difficult for an outsider to detect. The family may look so happy sitting together in church, but no one knows what goes on behind closed doors.

The rank hypocrisy of such a family can have devastating effects on a survivor of sexual abuse. She will often have bitter feelings towards the church and may even end up leaving. She may feel that a church which puts up with hypocrisy is a church in which there is no real Christian love. This, however, is only one of the consequences which many sexual abuse survivors deal with.

### **Wrongful feelings of guilt and impact on faith**

A victim of incest or any other form of childhood sexual abuse will often be scarred with deep wounds of guilt and betrayal. She will feel guilty simply because she "allowed" the abuse to happen and continue. But very often the victim could never have stopped it from happening. Still, the survivor seeks

to find an explanation for what happened to her.

In the process, she will often question why God would let this happen. This is part of the betrayal. The survivor feels betrayed, not only by the offender (especially if it is a family member), but also by her God and Creator. Why God allows abuse to go on is indeed a mystery and there is no simple answer. A survivor may find it very difficult to trust in God after He has seemingly let her down in such a cruel and ruthless fashion. She needs to be comforted with God's Word which makes clear that God works all things for our good, even if this may be so incredibly difficult for her to understand in her particular situation.

Some incest survivors also have a very hard time relating to God as a Father. If your earthly father had been slipping into bed with you and abusing you for ten years, chances are you wouldn't feel very comfortable with that relationship. In the same way, incest survivors must learn to come to terms with a normal Father-daughter, God-child, relationship. Such an understanding can be very difficult and also partially explains why the sin of sexual abuse may drive some victims of incest away from Christianity. This is a sad reality, and it is even sadder still when we consider that Christianity possesses the only hope for mending the terrible destruction and wounds caused by this heinous sin.

### **Other consequences: PTSD, eating disorders, etc.**

Most victims of sexual abuse also suffer from what is called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is similar to what soldiers experience after a particularly terrifying experience in battle, sometimes termed "shell-shock." The comparison to war is useful and can help others understand what a survivor of sexual abuse must deal with.

Just as a soldier goes into battle and often watches his best friends killed in brutal ways, so the sexual abuse victim is traumatized and has her childhood murdered. She must watch her soul being ripped out of her for the sole gratification of the enemy. The trauma of the battle will stay with the survivor and haunt her (often in memory flashbacks, but also in other ways) unless it is dealt with in a constructive fashion. All other consequences of childhood sexual abuse are direct results or symptoms of PTSD.



One of the other important consequences is denial, (also resulting from PTSD) victims will often deny what happened or minimize the abuse. Many victims will often suffer from extreme depression, split personalities, or other illnesses. Some survivors have memory blocks; some cannot remember their childhood, or having a happy childhood.

Another important factor to consider is the ability of the survivor to trust once more. Many victims feel that they can no longer trust anyone ever again. Wouldn't you feel that way if a relative told you he was going to show you how to drive, but part of his definition of driving included some kind of unwanted sexual activity? Victims are often abused by people they thought they could trust and when this trust is betrayed it can take a lot to make a survivor ever trust again.

This also has important implications for the reporting of sexual abuse, for often the reactions of those being told can complicate the feelings of betrayal and mistrust. If a little girl tells her mother that she's being sexually abused and her mother doesn't believe her or do anything about it, that little girl is likely going to feel that her mom doesn't really care about what's happening to her. This will, of course, scar the relationship between mother and daughter and increase the feelings of betrayal in the heart of the survivor.

These feelings of betrayal can also lead to a self-image problem. The survivor feels no one wants her and she is really worth nothing. She will feel as if the whole world is against her and is plotting against her to bring her downfall and destruction. This brings on problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, workaholicism, perfectionism, sexual promiscuity, and eating disorders.

Eating disorders tend to be especially prominent among survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Eating disorders include bulimia, anorexia nervosa, bulimarexia, and compulsive overeating. Bulimia (bingeing and purging) and anorexia (self-starvation) are the most common and the most significant and can be suicidal. When many psychologists (also Christian counsellors) are faced with cases of bulimia or anorexia, they often suspect a background of childhood sexual abuse. And usually they are not off the mark.

As a result of the incredible damage done to the self-image of the survivor, eating disorders are often seen

as a way out. They are either a method of control, the victim feeling that she finally has power over something in her life, or they are a means to make oneself look unattractive and thereby hopefully avoid any future sexual abuse. Sometimes it is a combination of those two motivators which may lead to an eating problem. The consequences of eating disorders are tragic and devastating and are truly representative of how sexual abuse can lead someone to self-destruction.



Sexual abuse also has the potential to destroy marriages. Not only in abusive families, but also in situations where a survivor marries someone who is completely ignorant of her past. This may cause deep rifts in communication which slowly destroy the essence of the marriage from the inside out. For example, one partner may have a normal view of sex and love, but the other will feel that it is a dirty, disgusting thing which brings back sordid memories from a ruined childhood. Many marriages have been ruined by past histories of sexual abuse and it is very sad because often a situation develops where husband and wife are not living to the full praise and glory of their God.

This can also take place when the cycle of abuse continues. If abuse is not dealt with in a survivor's life (research has shown that this is particularly true for males), often times the victim will abuse as well. This starts an endless cycle where many people are

needlessly scarred for life. The victim of abuse starts to believe that what happened to him was normal, and therefore as he grows older, he starts to sexually abuse others himself.

### **Taking action against sexual abuse**

So what can be done to stop and heal the effects of the horrifying sin of childhood sexual abuse? Several things can be done within our churches which will greatly restrain this attack of the evil one. The first one is something that is not mentioned too often in regards to this issue but it must not be overlooked: We must pray! Pray for the survivors of childhood sexual abuse and those who are still being sexually abused. Pray for the men and women who have undergone this terrible trauma and for the little children who are being abused in the most horrific ways. Ask the LORD to grant them the strength and the courage that they so desperately need to face what happened to them.

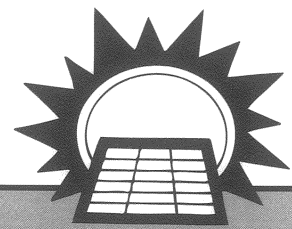
We also have to pray for the offenders. They may seem to be the most vile sinful creatures on earth but yet we must try to love them and hope for their repentance. Pray that they will confess their sins and make amends to those whom they have wounded. Pray that they may be properly restored that they too may live their lives to God's honour and glory.

But we also have to remember that action goes hand in hand with prayer. We all know the saying: Pray and work. And working includes being active and doing something. The first thing that we should do is believe that children have been abused and are being abused, even in our churches. When a child reports sexual abuse we must not write him/her off as an imaginative little pervert; we must believe. Research has shown that children very rarely lie about something as serious as sexual abuse.

Children also have to be taught about boundaries. They have to be taught that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and not even Mom or Dad is allowed to touch them in a way which makes them feel uncomfortable sexually. They have to be taught that a man's authority does not include a female's submission to every sexual whim. We must show proper Biblical examples of headship. We are also responsible under law to report cases of current and ongoing abuse to the proper authorities (Child Protection

*continued on page 559*

# RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*"There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads."*

*(Revelation 22:3,4)*

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This is the last month of the year 1995. A few more weeks and we will have 1996, the Lord willing. It does not seem very far away, or we will be in the year 2000. That means that it is approximately 2000 years ago that the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.

Many, many changes have taken place in those 2000 years. Life in the Bible times was totally different from what it is now. So many inventions have been made, that in many ways our life is a lot easier than it was in the days when there was not running water and electricity, to name only a few things. Yet our life now is a lot busier as a result of all the inventions. Everything goes very fast, and when you cannot keep up with that fast speed, then you do not really count for full anymore. In the olden days old people played an important role in society. They were the ones who knew everything, and so everyone went to them with their questions and for advice. Today that does not happen very often anymore. Old people are now considered to be old-fashioned and slow. There is no time to listen to them and many old people feel that painfully. It is true that there are so many changes and so many new things to learn that it is hard to keep up with them when you are not regularly exposed to them. So the result is that in spite of many inventions that make the daily routines easier, life itself has become much more complicated and difficult, especially for those who have a hard time to keep up with the fast pace of modern life.

In this demanding world of the year 1995 we hope to be able to celebrate Christmas again. It is the time of the year that we place more emphasis on the birth of our Saviour. Even though we remember that all through the year, around Christmas we hear more sermons about it, we sing Christmas carols, and at home and in church we thank the Lord that He humiliated Himself and was willing to come down to earth as a baby. And that while He knew that He had to suffer much and be crucified and be deserted by His Father. He did all that for us, sinners. So that all who believe in Him, through His sacrifice on the cross, could obtain eternal life.

Yes, since the day of Jesus' birth many things have changed. But there are also things that are still the same. When Jesus was born and lived on earth, there were not many people who really believed Him to be the Son of God. The Lord had many enemies, they tried to kill Him. But they could not do that until He gave them permission for it. It happened exactly at the time and in the way that He wanted it to happen. The Lord Himself was completely in control and nobody could interfere with His plan. Today there are still many people who really do not believe that Jesus, God's Son, came down to earth to give His life for His people. Many people, almost

everyone, celebrate Christmas. They sing Christmas carols about the sweet baby Jesus. But when Christmas is over they forget it again. They may still talk about the nice presents which they received, but they deny God's existence, they swear and lead a godless life. And so also today there are still people who are His enemies because they serve Christ's greatest enemy: satan. Yet also today the Lord Himself is in control and nobody can interfere with His plan of salvation. Those who live a life without the Lord forget or deny that there will come a day that the Lord will come again on the clouds of heaven.

That last fact is for us, God's children, the nicest part of the Christmas celebrations. We do not have to linger on the past when Jesus was born. We do not have to compare the life of those days with that of today. We do not have to feel left out when we do not count much in the eyes of many people because of our age or our physical and/or mental challenges. We do not even have to worry about our future. All we have to do is to thank the Lord for what He did for us. We thank Him that He chose us to be His children and that with His Holy Spirit He worked faith into our hearts. He, Who has been in control of the world for more than 2000 years is taking care of us. And when maybe not many people take the time to listen to us, He will!

So let us take time to talk to Him, to thank Him for so many blessings that we can hardly remember them all. We can also ask Him to take care of us and of His church with all its believers. And most important of all we can ask Him to come soon, on the day of His glory, when He will return on the clouds of heaven, surrounded by a host of angels. Then He will make an end to all sin and its consequences: misery, sickness, handicaps. Everyone will be the same to Him. Then we will experience something so wonderful that no ear has heard it, nor an eye seen, nor even a mind has imagined it! We do not even have to count our years anymore, for in God's eternity a day will be as a million years, and a million years as a day. We cannot even try to understand it for our minds are too boggled with all the results of sin.

So, if we are frustrated sometimes with things that are going on nowadays, let's not fret or become discouraged. We may pray and look forward to that day when the Lord will bring a permanent end to anything that is not pleasing to Him. When you have something so great to look forward to, then you can hardly think of anything else!

*Lo, round the throne, a glorious band,  
The saints in countless myriads stand,  
Of every tongue, redeemed to God,  
Arrayed in garments washed in blood.  
Through tribulation great they came;  
They bore their cross, despised the shame.*

*Hymn 52:1*

### From the Mailbox:

I was asked to quote the following letter:

"Like to thank everyone for sending birthday card, I received 45 birthday cards and the gifts too. Every year I get more and more cards. Hope to get more next year. And I know it's nice, Thanks a lot from Mary Vande Burgt" (Thank you, Mary, for your letter!)

There was also a request to pass on the name of Keith Ypma. Keith is 15 years old and this summer he was involved in a motorbike accident with the result that he lost one of his legs. Healing and adjustment to his new way of life is a long and difficult process. Maybe we as readers could support him by sending him cards and/or notes of encouragement. His birthday is on February 2nd, but probably it will be appreciated if he can get some mail sooner than that. He helped out on the farm of his parents and so for the whole family this is a difficult time. His address is:

Keith Ypma,  
P.O. Box 4583  
Taber, AB T1G 2C9

### Birthdays in January:

- 2: Liz Koning**  
Dicken's Field Extended Care Centre, Room 210  
14225-94th Street, Edmonton, AB T8E 6C6
- 7: Christine Breukelman**  
2225-19 St. Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 10: Robert Wierenga**  
Box 115, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0
- 17: Henry Driegen**  
72 Ross Rd. RR #1, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1M3
- 17: Grace Homan**  
"ANCHOR HOME", 361- 30 RD. RR #2,  
Beamsville, ON LOR 1B0
- 19: Janine Smid**  
RR #1, Arkona, ON N0M 1B0
- 27: Hank Orsel**  
705 Surrey Lane, Apt. 1201, Burlington, ON  
L7T 3Z4

I wish you all a very happy Birthday!

Until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

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

*continued on page 557*

Agencies or local police). We must also report instances where we suspect abuse is taking place. It is a criminal offence not to do so. It also furthers the pain of the child who may be suffering sexual abuse. He or she will continue to suffer until you fulfil your Scriptural duty to report the crime.

But someone will ask, "What if the perpetrator is a member of my church?" That is a common question and many people have struggled with the implications of reporting a church member. The facts are however, that sexual abuse is a criminal offence, no different than armed robbery or murder, and it must be reported first to the civil authorities. They will deal with the charges or allegations in a completely confidential manner, making every effort to protect the reputations of those who are involved.

Church members must not receive immunity when it comes to the execution of justice by God's appointed ministers. That is not to say that it will not be dealt with as a church matter; sexual abuse is after all a transgression of the seventh commandment. Church discipline also has its place in dealing with sexual abuse. The church must take this sin very seriously and deal with it in a decisive way.

Part of dealing with the reality of childhood sexual abuse is talking about

it and being open about it. We must not deny that it exists, but we must also take care not to overreact. We have to remember though that a warning against overreaction can also be misused and misapplied to justify or explain away a legitimate case of abuse. That is part of the reason why we are required by law to report even suspicions of childhood sexual abuse. It must be stressed that those reports are looked into confidentially and reputations are preserved if the suspicions prove to be wrong.

### Conclusion

Childhood sexual abuse ruins so many lives that it is vitally necessary for us to take it seriously and try to do something about it. Sin is a dreadful reality and it affects us all, but the sin of sexual abuse is especially destructive, especially for one's relationship with God. This should give us reason to have a great deal of respect and admiration for survivors of sexual abuse. For they are truly "survivors;" they have endured some of the worst torture that one human can inflict on another.

Much more can and must be said about this important topic. This article has not addressed every aspect of childhood sexual abuse. It is a complex problem which needs to be discussed, researched, and written about. Let us hope and pray that we in the Canadian

Reformed Churches will rise to the task of dealing with it in a manner which becomes those who are children of God adopted by grace alone.

### Recommended Reading

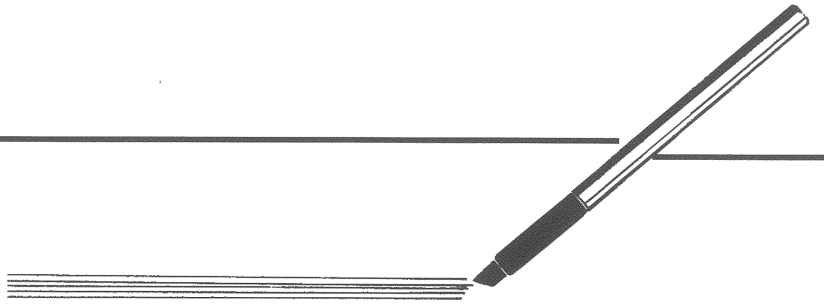
*The Wounded Heart, Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse*, Dr. Dan B. Allender, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO, 1990. This book is highly recommended for its very Biblical treatment of the issue. It would be highly useful for both survivors of abuse and those who wish to understand more about the topic. The latest edition of this popular book also deals with the controversial issue of False Memory Syndrome. There is also an excellent accompanying workbook available from NavPress.

*Child Sexual Abuse: A Hope for Healing*, Maxine Hancock and Karen Burton Mains, Harold Shaw Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 1987. Dwelling more on anecdotal situations than Allender, Hancock and Mains take a much more Evangelical approach to sexual abuse. Their work could still be classified as "Christian" yet the Scriptural foundations found in Allender seem to be lacking. However, after Allender's fine work, this book may also be of great assistance to Christians struggling with sexual abuse as it provides concrete assurance that the way out of the sexual abuse labyrinth is only in Christ. **C**

# THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



The Church at Lincoln remembered the 25th anniversary of its institution on September 15. An appropriate program of thanksgiving to the Lord was arranged.

\*\*\*

A brand new bulletin has appeared on the scene: "The Harvester," Church bulletin of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Barrhead and Neerlandia, with an attractive front cover with photographs of the buildings and waving grain. This is the first edition of a combined bulletin for these two neighbouring churches.

\*\*\*

The congregation of Barrhead could start using its new facilities, the previous St. Paul's Lutheran Church, a 20 year old building. Congratulations! Undoubtedly we will see more of it on the pages of *Clarion* in the near future!

\*\*\*

Also in Barrhead it was decided to discontinue the collection for the Building Fund. "The Consistory has decided that, in light of Lord's Day 38 (and its biblical basis), the collection of Christian offerings for the poor must be honoured in every worship service." Following this conclusion from Lord's Day 38 would that not mean that the sacraments are also to be used in every worship service?

\*\*\*

In Neerlandia "it was decided that from now on the leading elder and the minister will enter the sanctuary (sic!) first so the minister has time to catch his breath." A long hike, hey?

\*\*\*

Bibles For Mission thrift stores appear to be a success. In Edmonton's news praise and thanksgiving is expressed that the BFM thrift store is thrilled to report that \$100,000.00 was sent to Russia for Bibles!

\*\*\*

Borderlines of neighbouring Churches continue to be in discussion. In the Burlington area letters have been going back and forth among the three Churches. The Ebenezer Church came to a conclusion concerning the borderlines: "The letters from Burlington South and West are read again and discussed." Council decided to uphold a previous decision "that Burlington East no longer recognizes borderlines."

\*\*\*

The same matter of boundaries was on the agenda of a combined meeting of the two neighbouring Churches of Coaldale and Taber, AB. A definite borderline was established. Taber's minister, the Rev. G. Ph. VanPopta, went to quite some length to defend that "this decision was not made just for some practical purposes but on the ground of an important principle taught in the Scriptures and confessed in the Reformed confession." It is safe to conclude that we do not all deduce the same principles when it comes to borderlines!

\*\*\*

Plans and blueprints for a churchbuilding in Taber are reaching their final stages. Exciting times for this relatively new congregation!

\*\*\*

In Coaldale, AB, the consistory dealt with the trend of young teenagers congregating together for worship as a separate group in the same pew. The Rev. J.D. Wielenga makes the following interesting comments in connection with this trend: "The congregation is built up of families, not of different groups of people like old people, young people, men, women, rich people, poor people etc., all sitting together in different groups separately. Sitting together as subgroup places a wrong accent. It distracts from the nature of worship as meeting together as congregation with the Lord. As a result of that distraction, it will not help the young people to give undivided attention to the worship (hearing the Word, responding in prayer and praise). It will also show up in the tendency to forget that the collection time is part of the worship service, and not an intermission, with the freedom to do one's own thing. The parents would do their children a favour by insisting they sit with them. They would also do a favour to other parents and their children by drawing one line in this respect." I think more congregations can take note of these worthwhile remarks!

\*\*\*

In Toronto a number of men meet together for Bible Study early in the morning: "The Men's Breakfast Bible study." "Breakfast will be served at 7 a.m. sharp. At about 7:20 we will start with a short devotion and then view a 30 minute Ligonier video. This will be followed by a 30 minute discussion. We will adjourn no later than 8:30."

\*\*\*

Rev. & Mrs. H. Versteeg and family were welcomed back in Toronto at a Church Picnic. He has served this Church as missionary minister in Irian Jaya for 18 years and was allowed to see many results to his work.

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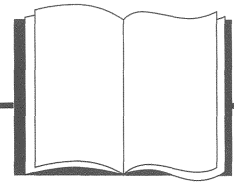
In a Consistory meeting report of the Church at Byford (W.A.) we read that "church visitors expressed a wish for a different method to conduct the next Church visitation. They request to have written answers from the prepared questionnaire to be in the hands of the Church Visitors prior to Church visitation. Church visitors will then focus on areas of concern raised by them or ourselves." Will be on a next agenda.

\*\*\*

Sometimes the jargon of our various specialized groups escapes me. The following announcement of the "Credo Aid" of Langley, BC really had me puzzled: "Mom's Panty forms will be available at the meeting. They will not be sent home with the students this year." I suppose insiders understand!

\*\*\*

Burlington-South reports that it has accepted the recommendations found in Article 72 of the Acts of General Synod 1995 as to using the NIV Bible translation in church services. A target date will not be implemented until the congregation has had an opportunity to give their input at the congregational meeting. C



By W.H. Chase

## Images of Covenant Judgment in Matthew 24

In Matthew 24, Christ speaks to His disciples about the sun, moon, and stars being darkened or extinguished. This is often explained as an event that will take place in the physical cosmos on the Last Day. Does this explanation do justice to the witness of Scripture?

In order to understand a text such as this, it becomes necessary to examine other passages in Scripture which speak in similar prophetic language. In the Old Testament, language describing the fall and extinguishing of the sun, moon, and stars occurs frequently. Isaiah 13:9,10 is a typical passage. With reference to its historical context, we understand that Isaiah describes the historic fall of Babylon to the Medes in 539 B.C. Thus, "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming. . . . The sun will be dark when it rises, etc." The fall of Edom is similarly described in Isaiah 34:4. Amos foretells the doom of Samaria (722 B.C.) in this language. Regarding the fall and judgment of Egypt, the prophet Ezekiel writes, "And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens, and darken the stars." (Ezekiel 32:7f) In view of the historic diversity of these several passages, are we to believe that the physical cosmos, the literal sun, moon, and stars, have collapsed and fallen to earth several separate times in history? This seems an inappropriate explanation.

Rather, as far as these nations were concerned, we ought to understand by this "cosmological" language simply, as one writer has put it, "Their lights went out." God announced their day of judgment, and proceeded to complete the destruction of their power and authority. Thus, we see that in this style of poetical language, a collapse of a nation or power is envisioned. The sun, moon, and stars, symbols of powers and authorities, are consequently thrown down. Likewise, in Joseph's dream, the sun, moon, and stars "bow" as they pay their respects to Joseph's star. Clearly, Jacob believed that Joseph had become more than a little carried away with

himself, and his brothers were filled with hatred for their arrogant younger brother. Most certainly, they made the connection between the cosmological symbols and themselves. Clearly, no literal, physical falling of the stars in the sky was envisioned!

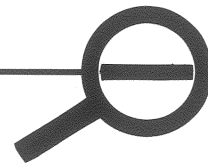
Christ, our Chief Prophet, speaks the same language. Most sobering however is His use of this cosmological language to describe the fall of Jerusalem, the City of the Great King. Certainly this is the context of the passage in Matthew 24. In the previous chapter, He had lamented over His city, and announced her judgment: "Your house will be left desolate." In chapter 24, His disciples remark on the beauty, glory, and seeming permanence of the temple and its foundation. But when Christ assures them that not one stone will be left upon another in the coming day of desolation, they wish to know when such destruction and judgment would take place.

As Christ, in answer, speaks in that prophetic, cosmological language which was surely familiar to them from their knowledge of the Torah and the Prophets, they would have recognized that the light of Israel was going to be extinguished. The apostle Peter quotes the prophet Joel (see Acts 2) to underline the fact that the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost signals the long-awaited day of judgment upon the house of Israel. Just as Christ announced that all these things (everything preceding Matthew 24.34) would come upon that generation, so the apostle Peter exhorts the Jews gathered at the temple to "save themselves from this generation." Clearly, Matthew 24 and Acts 2 do not describe a physical, cosmic cataclysm which shall finalize human history. These "last days" of Matthew 24 and Acts 2 however do describe the judgment of the Jewish covenantal world. Indeed, "world" in the New Testament very often refers to the nation of Israel. As Brother De Jong noted in a previous issue of *Clarion*, the unbelieving Jewish world, national Israel, were ripe for judg-

ment precisely because they remained opposed to God's revelation of Himself in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. They were the many anti-Christ's of the last time who had rejected their Messiah, and had taken for granted their covenant status. (1 John 2.18)

The last days brought tremendous judgment upon unbelieving Israel, judgment cosmologically and graphically described in Matthew 24. Nevertheless, it is precisely this rejection of Christ and subsequent judgment which paves the way for the transformation and renewal of the covenant with a remnant of Israel, Jews who, upon hearing the preaching of the apostles, repent by the thousands. (see Acts 2-5) From this remnant of Israel, apostles and missionaries were sent to preach the gospel of Christ to all nations. This gospel also is our inheritance as we are gathered in Christ's Church. Nevertheless, we are not left to take our covenant status lightly. The seven churches (Revelation 1-3) are warned that failure to maintain the truth, and toleration of the Lie will necessarily bring about the removal of their lampstands, even as they see that lampstand removed in their day from national Israel. As people of the Light, of the Sun of Righteousness who has arisen with healing in His wings, we may rejoice in our covenant standing with our Gracious God. Yet, never must we lose sight of our covenant obligations, for God will also be our Judge on that Last Day, at His Coming.

Matthew 24 does not deal with mysterious events to take place far in the future at the end of all history; it speaks of covenant judgment, and that period of time of transition from an unbelieving covenant people to the time of God's regathering of His renewed people, the New Testament church. Thus, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, for God has again created for Himself a people that will confess, "The Lord is our Light and our Salvation." C



## Christelijke Gereformeerde Synod Meets in Holland (part 1)

The Dutch sister churches of the Free Reformed Churches in Canada and the United States have been meeting in Synod this fall in the city of Zierikzee. Since our Dutch sister churches have had ongoing discussions with them and because several churches in our midst have ongoing dialogue with neighbouring Free Reformed Churches, it may be good to take note of developments in the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands (CGKN). What follows are some decisions which may be of interest to us and which have been made as reported on in *Nederlands Dagblad*.

### The ICRC

The Synod of the CGKN decided unanimously to request membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). It was noted that the churches who participate in the ICRC are those "who take the Reformed confessions seriously." Other positive points that were mentioned was the way in which the ICRC conducted itself in the Zwolle meetings of 1993. There was good cooperation among the various Reformed churches and a willingness to help the churches in the Third World. By applying for membership, the CGKN follow the example of their Canadian sister churches, the Free Reformed Churches, who joined in 1993.

### The Christian Reformed Church

For the past fifteen years, the CGKN had a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). However, prior to that less formal but nevertheless close ties date back to the nineteenth century. All that came to an end at this year's synod of CGKN. With a vote of 42 to 10 the tie between the two churches was broken.

CRC observer, Rev. G. Ringnald had pleaded with the synod not to break the bond for the CRC was striving to live according to God's Word. Speaking for the CGKN synod, Rev. J. Westerink responded that they would gladly accept that the CRC wanted to live according to God's Word but that this was not the official message coming from the CRC synod. A vigorous debate followed on this issue. Great concern was voiced by speakers from the CGKN about CRC views on the authority of Scripture, women in the office of minister, and the close relationship that still existed with the "Synodical" Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). Over against the CRC suggestion that the CGKN was now breaking the bond, it was noted that the CRC had broken the bond by departing from the Reformed way.


### CGKN and the Reformed Churches Liberated

The Synod of Zierikzee decided unanimously to ask the Reformed Churches Liberated to appoint deputies so that the discussions between the two churches could continue. It was noted that the discussions in the past three years have made significant progress. The two churches have come very close on the matter of the appropriation of salvation and the confession about the church. Indeed, never has there been so much agreement between the two churches. The result of the work of deputies in the past three years was such that Synod could state that the differences are less serious than has been perceived to have been the case in the past. Synod decided it was good to talk further about outstanding differences that were still there because such differences are due partly to different ways of expressing oneself in the two church communities and

partly to a different spiritual climate in the churches. The observers from the Reformed Churches Liberated were not too enthusiastic about continuing discussions on such matters for fear that it would lead to a dead end. However, these observers were pleased that on the agenda for discussion would be (for the first time) the relationship of the CGKN with the Netherlands Reformed Churches ("buitenverband"). There is considerable concern about this relationship because the Netherlands Reformed Churches give room for deviating from the confessions, have women in office and children at the Lord's Supper. Judging from press reports and the controversy that has been generated, the book of a CGKN minister, Rev. B. Loonstra, about the credibility of the Bible will also be on the agenda of deputies. This book has raised many questions about the adherence to the authority of Scripture in the CGKN.

### Mission

The CGKN also decided to expand mission to Mozambique and Brazil. In Mozambique they will be working with radio minister Avelino Mutilima. Other mission work will also be started in the province of Zambezia.

In Brazil they will work in the large cities of Curitiba and Sao Paulo. This outreach will be in partnership with the Igrejas Evangelicas Reformandas do Brazil (IER) with whom the CGKN have a full correspondence relationship. 



**NEWS REPORT**

**American Reformed Fellowship – Palmetto, Florida**

Already on November 12, 1995, a small group was meeting in Palmetto on the Sunday in worship and using video taped sermons by Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. C. Stam, Rev. G. Nederveen and others.

The committee which volunteers in making the arrangements met twice this year; once in Florida where Rev. VanRietschoten was also present and once in Ontario where Prof. Faber and Rev. Stam served us with advice and encouragement. We appreciate the input we received from these ministers.

Thankfully we can report that it would appear that from January 07, 1996 through March 1996 we will have a minister every Sunday. Thank you Rev. VanRietschoten and Rev. Stam.

Indeed we hope that next year we will be able to add the month of December. We urge our ministers to consider this project when they receive an invitation sometime in June 1996 for the following winter season.

Again this winter, we will take up contact with the concerned brothers and sisters whom we have met before, and explore together ways and means to eventually institute a church in Florida. May the Lord bless these efforts and so bring together in worship those who are true believers.

It was decided this year to pay guest ministers \$ 80.00 per Sunday and use of the "parsonage" in Bradenton at no charge. We are even investigating the possibility of having a car available. This is especially

needed in the event a minister would come from western Canada, and because of the distance, would fly in. Hence, you can see we try to accommodate. As our contacts grow in number, we hope that our guest ministers will also actively participate in visiting these contacts.

Our incurred expenses and budget for 1995/1996 are increasing. Because of the special arrangements, we heartily recommend the collections held every Sunday. Please be generous! As you can see from our financial report, we do not have all that much in reserve funds. Our regular visitors to Florida, either short term or long term, are reminded to contribute for the 1995/1996 season \$150.00 (U.S.). Cheques should be made payable to J. Oostdyk and A. Vandergaag, and mailed to:

Mr. A. Vandergaag  
3301 Cortez Ave. West  
Windmill Village L16  
Bradenton, Florida 34207

Again this winter season we will be meeting in the Welcome Centre of the Palmview Baptist Church at U.S. #41 and 49th Street in Palmetto, Florida. The times are set for 11:15 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. Bring your lunch and enjoy the fellowship.

Rev. VanRietschoten will lead the weekly Bible study. Please call him at (941) 758-5723 for details. He hopes to arrive on January 5, 1996.

For all information in Florida, please call Br. J. Oostdyk at (941) 729-4863 or Br. A.

Vandergaag at (941) 739-1306. The gatherings on Sunday are being advertised in a number of church papers in Canada and in the greater Sarasota area. A noticeable increase in attendance has been the result.

For the Committee,  
A.L. 'Tony' Vanderhout **C**

**The Treasurer Reports:**

**October 1, 1994 - September 30, 1995**

**Receipts**

\$3,101.13	collections
2,807.12	voluntary contributions
76.58	miscellaneous
<u>96.08</u>	interest

\$6,080.91 TOTAL

**Expenses**

\$ 700.00	rent church hall
3,600.00	rent parsonage
550.00	guest ministers travel expenses
855.20	advertising
335.86	sound system for church hall
<u>112.00</u>	miscellaneous

\$6,153.06 TOTAL

**Balance Sheet**

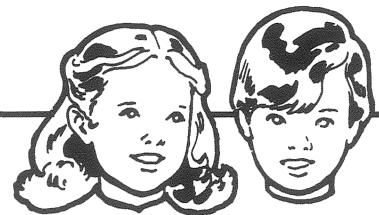
\$4,600.62	October 1, 1994
<u>72.15</u>	deficit September 30, 1995

\$4,528.47 October 1, 1995

J. Oostdyk & A. Vandergaag

**OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE**

By Aunt Betty



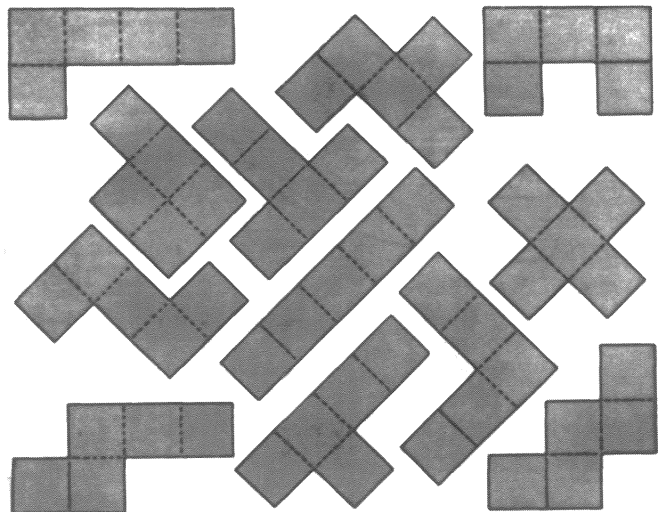
**Dear Busy Beavers,**

Here are a couple of puzzles to keep you busy for a couple of weeks!

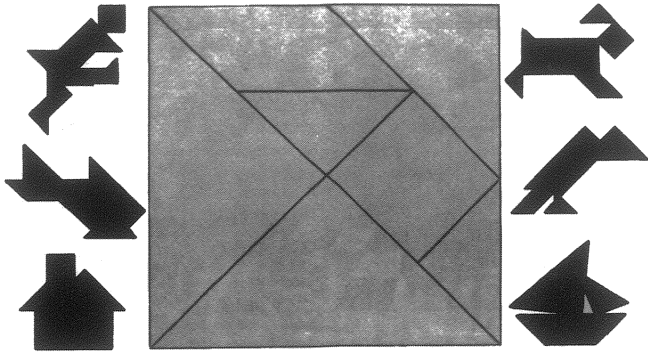
You only need 3 things: paper, a pencil and scissors.

*Puzzle Time*

1. This puzzle is a match for the Rubic's Cube.
  - a. The twelve shapes on this page are all the possible arrangements for 5 squares. Trace them onto a piece of paper. Then cut them out.
  - b. Try to fit these squares into a rectangle six squares high by 10 squares long. Use all 12 shapes.



2. Tangram Puzzle.  
The tangram is a challenging geometrical puzzle.
- Trace the square below on a piece of paper and cut out the seven pieces along the black lines.
  - Choose one of the drawings and try to make it using all seven pieces.



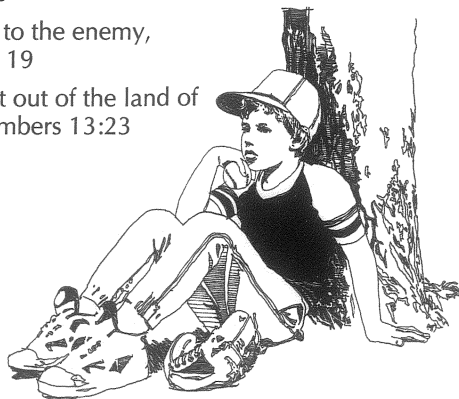
Have fun puzzling! I will put the solutions in the next *Clarion*!

## Quiz Time!

### FOOD IN THE BIBLE

Match the food with the person who ate it.

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Samson found this in a carcass,<br>Judges 14:8                   | a. Raisins    |
| 2. Gideon brought to an angel,<br>Judges 6:19, 20                   | b. Butter     |
| 3. Jesus ate after He arose, Luke 24:42                             | c. Honey      |
| 4. Esau sold birthright for,<br>Genesis 25:34                       | d. Pottage    |
| 5. The Israelites remembered,<br>Numbers 11:5                       | e. Milk       |
| 6. Pharaoh's baker dreamed he carried<br>in a basket, Genesis 40:17 | f. Baked food |
| 7. David gave an Egyptian,<br>1 Samuel 30:11, 12                    | g. Broth      |
| 8. Abraham brought to heavenly visitors,<br>Genesis 18:8            | h. Grapes     |
| 9. Jael brought to the enemy,<br>Judges 4:18, 19                    | i. Fish       |
| 10. Fruit brought out of the land of<br>Canaan, Numbers 13:23       | j. Melons     |



### BIBLE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Caitlin Meints*

A	✦	F	△	K	✧	P	⊙	U	—
B	◇	G	▽	L	↑	Q	□	V	∧
C	○	H	*	M	⊕	R	✱	W	■
D	☺	I	└	N	—	S	×	X	⋯
E	∩	J	┌	O	+	T	⊔	Y	<
								Z	◊

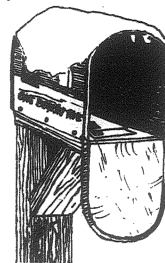
⊔ ✱ — × ⊔    ⊔ —    ⊔ \* ∩

↑ + \* ☺    ✦ ↑ ■ ✦ < ×

### WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Emily Boot*

C	T	A	C	D	O	G	C	<b>Word List</b>
C	A	C	F	A	R	M	O	Cat
A	D	B	C	D	E	F	W	Dog
T	D	H	I	G	U	L	S	Cow
J	O	K	L	O	M	N	N	Snail
O	L	P	Q	A	R	S	A	Goat
T	E	U	V	T	X	Y	I	Frog
Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	L	Fish
H	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	Duck
S	N	O	B	I	R	D	P	Bird
I	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	Farm
F	R	O	G	D	U	C	K	



### From the mailbox!

Hello, *Richelle Krusselbrink*. Thanks for sending in your lighthouse picture. I hope you and your family are well. Bye, Richelle.

Hi, *Twyla VanLeeuwen*. Thanks for the picture and jokes you sent in. How are you doing in school? Hope to hear from you again! Bye, Twyla.

That's all for now!  
Have fun with the puzzles!

### Aunt Betty

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

Love to you all,  
Aunt Betty

