

Clarion

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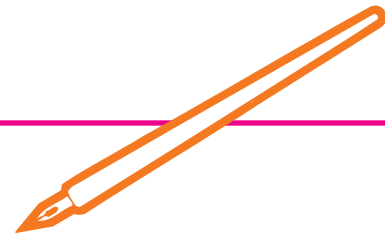


*Golden Age Art
- Calvinist Restrictions*

Numbers

10:1-10

By N.H. Gootjes



Christians and Art

As Christians, we cannot ignore art. It exists, and we are confronted with it. Painters, authors, and other artists want to show us something about the world in which we live. They use the techniques of their art to confront people with their world, with themselves, and with (their view of) God.

In Scripture, art is present in two different ways: it contains artistic work and it refers to artistic work. Scripture is not all written in an artistic way. A good example of very plain style can be found in the beginning chapters of Chronicles, where many lists of names are given. This does not mean that this part of the Bible is unimportant; it told Israel after the Babylonian captivity who belonged to what tribe, something they had to know when they had to build up life in Canaan again. It does, however, not cause literary enjoyment; in fact, it is rather “dry.” The Psalms, on the other hand, are artful productions. Literary devices are used, such as metre (cadence) and alliteration. And the book of Esther, telling the story of God rescuing Israel from total destruction, is a very well constructed tale. The story line is used to bring out the tense situation from which God rescued his people.

The same applies to the New Testament. For example, Paul usually wrote in a rather straightforward style, though sometimes in long sentences. From time to time, however, he used literary techniques. In 1 Corinthians 13, he used repetition, and in Philippians 2 he wrote a poetic section. Such artistry is added to highlight the meaning.¹ God inspired authors to use art in writing the Bible.

In the second place, art is used in the tabernacle and in the temple. To give an early example, the description of the candlestick (Exod 25:31ff) shows that it is intended as a meaningful and at the same time beautiful piece of furniture in the tabernacle. The same applies to the curtain in the tabernacle, “with cherubim worked into them by skilled craftsmen” (Exod 26:1). In the later temple of Solomon, considerable artistry is present in the pillars of bronze, with their hundred pomegranates (1 Kgs 7:15ff) and the molten sea, standing on twelve oxen (1 Kgs 7:23ff). God showed that serving Him does not mean we have to reject all art. The worship of God can be combined with works of art.

Calvin on art

Calvin discussed the question how art can be produced in a world corrupted by sin. Since man is evil, how can he make artistic objects that are good and pleasing? His solution is to attribute the existence of art in this sinful world to a special work of the Holy Spirit. He wrote:

Meanwhile, we ought not to forget those most excellent benefits of the divine Spirit, which He distributes to whomever He wills, for the common good of mankind. The understanding and knowledge of Bezalel and Oholiab, needed to construct the tabernacle, had to be in-

stilled in them by the Spirit of God. It is no wonder, then, that the knowledge of all that is most excellent in human life is said to be communicated to us through the Spirit of God.²

The Holy Spirit, according to Calvin, does more than renewing people so that they may believe the gospel; He also works in scientists and artists. As a result of this assistance of the Spirit, scientists are able to produce studies that contribute to the development of the world. Something similar applies to artists. Since the Spirit works in them counteracting sin, they are able to produce artwork that is good. Calvin attributes every valuable work of art to a special activity of the Holy Spirit.

What is the basis of this far-reaching statement? When we look carefully at Calvin’s argumentation, we are disappointed. Only one text is given in support: the well-known fact that Bezalel and Oholiab worked on the tabernacle under the guidance of the Spirit. This proof does not appear very convincing.

A careful look at what Scripture says confirms our first impression. To mention a few problems: in the first place, the Bible says that Bezalel was filled with the Spirit (Exod 31:2; 35:31) but it does not say that Oholiab and the other skilled workers, as well, were filled with the Spirit. Rather, it says that God gave them skill (31:6). Secondly, the text says that God gave the Spirit for the making of the tabernacle, not for the making of artwork in general (Exod 31:7f). Thirdly, the texts do not emphasize that the resulting work should be artistic, but that they should faithfully reflect God’s intention (Exod 31:11; 36:1).³

There is no biblical basis for attributing the good use of art to the Holy Spirit.

Art in creation and sin

What, then, is the scriptural background of art? In my opinion, art has a much broader basis in God’s work than Calvin indicated. Art makes use of possibilities given in creation itself. God gave people the ability to speak. They discovered that alliteration of sounds is pleasant to the ear and helps remember what was said. They noticed that sounds have a different height, different tones. They discovered that these tones follow certain patterns; octaves, for example, match exactly. They could distinguish different colours, and they found that certain colours matched well, and others clashed and looked ugly if used together. In short, God created the world with artistic possibilities, and He created man with the intelligence and ability to make use of these possibilities.

Disobedience, sin and their consequences have caused upheaval in this world. It has also touched the world of art. Actually, artists are often people, who in their urge for self-expression, live a godless life. They can also express

their rejection of God and his world in their work. That should not make Christians turn away from art, however, for art is no more than applying aspects of God's created world. Paul warned against this kind of asceticism when he wrote: "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim 4:4).

How, then, do we look at art? Artistic products can be evaluated from the perspective of creation. Are the possibilities God created in the world of sound, colour, material, etc. used properly in a particular work of art? J.M. Batteau distinguished several aspects:

1. Is a high degree of skill displayed or is a technique well expressed? (The norm of technique.)
2. Is imagination or depth of perception present? (The norm of feeling.)
3. Is there vividness in communication or in transfer of emotion? (The norm of eloquence.)
4. Is innovation or a unique sense present? (The norm of uniqueness.)⁴

Depending on this, a product of the artist has succeeded or not as an artwork. This is a technical approach to works of art.

We should also evaluate artistic products from the perspective of obedience. Two sides can be distinguished, here: the message and the medium. It can be asked what the message of a book is or of a painting, of instrumental or vocal music? Does it want me to be obedient to God, does it make me thank God for his good creation, or does it want me to live for my own desires? That applies to the final section of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as well as to the lyrics of a popular rock group.

Moreover, the means which are used should be considered. The biblical scene of God expelling Adam and Eve out of paradise can be portrayed in such a way that the painting entices to sin against the seventh commandment. And the beat of a drum can call up a rebellious attitude, leading one to unwillingness to follow God's will. Interest in art can become a stumblingblock, causing people to sin. Then the rule of Mark 9:43ff applies.

In all this, however, art should be seen as a gift from God. God has created a world full of artistic possibilities. We should be interested in the variety of God's creation and thank Him for these possibilities. We should develop them and enjoy them as God gives abil-

ity and opportunity to do this. In obedience to God, we may look at and work with a world that reflects the power and divinity of its Maker (Rom 1:20).

Notes:

¹This aspect of the Bible is discussed by B. Wielenga, *De bijbel als boek van schoonheid* (3. ed; Kampen: Kok, 1931).

²Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, ii, 16. I used the translation of F.L. Battles, in the edition of J.T. McNeill.

³More on this issue in my article 'De Geest in Bezaleel' in F.H. Folkerts (ed.) *Ambt en Aktualiteit* (Festschrift C. Trimp; Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1992) 25ff.

⁴J.M. Batteau, 'Christianity and Art' in *Reformed Perspective* 2, 10 (Aug. 1983), 22.



Correction

The following footnote was omitted from Rev. G. Ph. van Popta's editorial (47:12).

J. Kamphuis, *Kerkelijke Besluitvaardigheid*, Groningen, 1970, p. 55: "Indien kerkelijke besluiten bevonnen worden te strijden tegen het Woord Gods, dan is, zegt Voetius, reformatie, *niet*, executie van die besluiten eis."

What's inside?

Artists think that a picture speaks a thousand words. Writers do not believe a word of it. Well, we will let the artists and the writers argue out that one. In this issue we address both art and literature, those two wonderful media which give much beauty to life and make it very pleasant. Mr. David De Witt contributes a fascinating article about the Dutch Artists in the Golden Age. Of course, he illustrates his writing with pictures. Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff writes an article commemorating the hundredth birthday of a literary giant, C. S. Lewis.

One of our senior ministers, the Rev. J. Mulder, reflects on the "OPC decision" of General Synod Fergus, 1998.

Additionally, you will find some letters, reports, reviews, and a Ray of Sunshine.

GvP



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By D. Moes

The Counseling Ministry of the Holy Spirit

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

As a pastor, every now and then, I have to make a visit to the hospital. Sometimes when I do this, I just cannot help but let my mind wander a little bit. As I leave my car parked on the parking lot and walk towards the entrance of the hospital, the brokenness of life stares me straight in my face. Already outside the hospital, I see patients sitting on a bench, enjoying some of the outside air or just sitting there smoking a cigarette. When I enter the hospital, the scene does not really change all that much. Wherever I look, I see nurses and doctors, or patients sitting in wheelchairs or lying in their beds. Some have broken bones; others have some external injury; still others are suffering from all sorts of internal problems.

The brokenness of life

As I see all of this brokenness and more, I think to myself that this is what life is like, now that we live outside the Garden of Eden. Wherever you look you see the brokenness of life. Relationships become strained and often break down. Husbands do not get along with their wives and wives do not get along with their husbands. Parents do not get along with their children and children do not get along with their parents. Employers do not get along with their employees and employees do not get along with their employers. People who once were close friends now live their lives separated because of dishonesty and hurt. There just is no end to all the aches and pains that are felt in this world. Some are aching because of grief; others are burdened because of sorrow. Some are oppressed because of troubles; others are unsettled because of worries. Some are distressed because of affliction; others are hurting because of heartaches.

In the light of all of this it should not surprise us that there are a lot of cries for help. People want relief from their heartaches and affliction! People want to be freed from their worries and troubles! People want to live without their sorrow and grief! In short, people yearn, long, crave for lives that are whole and sound again! For lives that are filled with peace and contentment and that have some sense of meaning, purpose and direction!

In order to attain some of this peace and contentment, this wholesomeness and soundness, many people make their regular trips to counselors. Some go to marriage and parenting counselors; others go to grief and sorrow counselors; still others make their weekly trip to their drug and alcohol counselors. All sorts of counselors abound and they all offer their services, their expertise, their help in trying to get your life whole and sound again and in enabling you to experience some measure of peace and enjoyment.

Another Counselor

The text of our meditation also deals with counseling. It is a text that forms part of a conversation Jesus Christ is having with his disciples just before He is about to die and, once He has arisen from the dead, return home to his Father. In this conversation, Jesus has already spoken about this Counselor. When he did, he referred to Him as *another* Counselor (John 14:16). By designating the Holy Spirit as *another* Counselor, Jesus is in essence saying that He himself had been a Counselor when He was with them here on this earth. He would continue to be their Counselor once He had ascended into heaven and returned to his Father, but now alongside his own counseling ministry

Jesus would send *another* Counselor. As the Father had once sent Him to earth to counsel a people lost and forlorn in sin, and to help this people in many and varied ways, so the Father would again send Someone to earth once Jesus had returned to heaven. This time, He would send the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit would be sent, He would teach Jesus' disciples all things and would remind them of everything He had said. This clearly means that once Jesus had ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit would come and take Jesus' place on this earth. And once He did, He would tutor the disciples, give them private instruction and review with them what Jesus had already told them. I'm sure you know what a tutor does. Sometimes a student does not do so well in a certain subject at school. For some reason, he has difficulty in understanding the concepts. The teacher arranges for someone else to come in and give extra help. This *other* person, also known as a tutor, will review the material the teacher has already taught the student. She will do her best to explain it to him in simple and easy to understand words. She will try to give the student further insight into the material that has been taught. And she will do her best to train his memory. In a somewhat similar manner, the Holy Spirit, the *other* Counselor is also the tutor of Jesus' followers. He is called in alongside of them to enable them to remember what Jesus said and give them further insight into these things. In doing so Jesus' disciples will be able to fulfill the task to which Jesus Christ had called them.

For what was this task again? Was it not to witness to the ends of the earth to what Jesus had said and done? In order to do this, they would have to

preach about what Jesus had told them. They would also have to write letters to churches instructing these churches in this teaching of their Saviour. How in the world would they ever be able to do this? Their memories were broken so that they could not always remember what Jesus had told them. Their insight was limited so that they could not always understand the truth of the gospel. Their courage was sometimes waning so that they did not always dare to speak up when they had to speak up. "Well," says Jesus, "do not worry about all of this and more. As I have counseled and helped you while I was with you during my ministry on earth, so I will continue to counsel you and help you when I continue my ministry from heaven. I will send you *another* Helper, *another* Counselor, the Holy Spirit himself. He will teach you all things and He will remind you of everything I have said to you." What an encouragement this must have been for those disciples gathered together with Jesus! Living outside the Garden of Eden as they did! Living in a broken world! Not being those perfect people their first parents has once been! And yet, not having to worry! There was help! There was counsel! There was assistance!

Counsel for you and me

A similar counsel is also there for you and me. For also you and I live in a broken world. Whether we like it or not, there is not one of us who escapes this brokenness of life. A visit to a hospital will remind you of this. A visit to a prison will do the same. So does our own daily experience. How are we go-

ing to deal with this brokenness? How are we going to deal with the strains and challenges in our homes and outside our homes? The answer to this question is really quite simple. The only way to deal with our strains and challenges, the only way to deal with our pains and aches, is to go to the Word of our heavenly Counselor. We must allow Him to do his tutoring work in our lives, reviewing with us what it is that our God wants us to do and giving us further insight into this will of our God.

Reading and studying your Bible

In order for us to undergo the influence of this Counselor, we have to take time to read our Bibles. Furthermore, we have to study these Bibles and meditate on what we have read and studied. When we do this in faith, the Holy Spirit will truly counsel us with this Word. He will give us guidance and direction in the midst of our darkness and confusion. He will show us what is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to Him. He will show us what will truly lead to peace and contentment and what will not. Simply asserting yourself and standing up for your rights will, for instance, not do this. Denying yourself and looking out for the interests of others will. Simply focusing on your own dignity and value will also not give you this peace and contentment, at least, not in a lasting and enduring way. Focusing on the dignity and value you have because you have been created by God, will. Then you will learn to see your life in the light of God's authority over you and you will learn to do things his way,



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and not your own. Doing things God's way always leads to true peace and contentment.

Faithfully attending church

Besides reading and studying your Bible on your own, you should also faithfully attend church. For it is here that you will also undergo the counseling ministry of the Holy Spirit as you place yourself under the faithful proclamation of the Word of God. At the same time, you will undergo the counseling ministry of the Holy Spirit as you fellowship with your fellow believers. Christians who are filled with the Spirit want to be a hand and a foot to each other, helping each other in any way they can.

If you are in need of counsel – and we are ALL in need of counsel – then I urge you to make it your custom to spend some time with your God as you daily read the Scriptures on your own and with your family. At the same time, I urge you to faithfully attend the worship services and listen to the proclamation of God's Word with an open mind and a receptive heart. There may be a lot of brokenness in this life. There is no need to neglect and refuse the help and counsel that is offered.

Rev. D. Moes is pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Vernon, British Columbia.



Calvinist Restrictions

The Creative Response of Dutch Artists in the Golden Age

By David A. De Witt

The destruction of paintings and statues

In the eyes of the world, the Reformed faith seems to have little room “on its walls” for pictures. Its foundation is the Word. Great emphasis is laid on divinely-inspired Scripture, doctrine and preaching. The Protestant Reformers quickly gained their reputation, for distrusting the image, already in the decades following the publication of Luther’s Ninety-five Theses, in 1517. Zealots in the Reformed camp provoked the established Church of Rome greatly through *iconoclasm*. They went about destroying paintings and statues in churches, usually with some chaos and clamour. The great monetary loss grieved Rome, of course. At the same time the people felt deprived of the refinement and beauty of the art which had been violently eliminated. The most important issue was the threat to the traditional, devotional, use of pictures.

The Reformers however did not reject all visual art, but only the kinds of painting and sculpture commonly found in churches. These objects were being worshipped in contradiction of the second commandment. Altarpiece paintings became, for all practical purposes, disallowed in the Seven Provinces (today the Netherlands) after this time; they continued to be made only for secret domestic use. The country came to be dominated by the followers of Jean Calvin. Especially here, Calvin’s powerful influence put an end to what had formerly been a busy production of religious images. Lutherans, by contrast, were less severe. Luther himself reined in the rioting iconoclasts, in the early years of the Reformation. His followers would permit a limited use of paintings inside churches.

The iconoclastic controversy centred on the content of works of art. Those altarpieces were attracting idolatrous worship, and later iconoclastic de-



Illustration 1
Esaias van de Velde, Dune Landscape, 1629, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

struction, because they depicted certain persons. Most prominent were Mary and Christ, and then came Mary Magdalene, the apostles and evangelists, and lastly the more interesting and popular early Christian and medieval saints in the Canon. The heroic and miraculous deeds of the saints, mostly as they were recorded by Jacopo D’Avoragine in *The Golden Legend*, provided the subject material for countless altarpieces in churches and homes before the Reformation.

Calvin on images

For centuries, it had become common practice to pray before, and to worship, such images. Rome developed a doctrine to justify this behaviour, claiming that it was not the image that was being venerated, but rather the original person whom the image depicted. This “reality behind the image” was called the *prototype*. A prototype,

for example a saint, was being worshipped (this act was termed “*latría*”). The image itself was only being adored (“*dulia*”). This distinction was rejected by Calvin. In his *Institutes* he accused those who “adored” images, of worshipping them, idolatrously.

It is remarkable that Calvin then qualified his statements about images. He immediately went on to explain that other kinds of images, that were not typically worshipped, were acceptable and even desirable. It is but a short passage, in the enormous text of the *Institutes*:

I am not gripped by the superstition of thinking absolutely no images permissible. But because sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I seek a pure and legitimate use of each, lest those things which the Lord has conferred upon us for his glory and our good be not only polluted by perverse misuse but also turned to our destruction. . . . Let not God’s



Illustration 2

Jan Porcellis, Marine, London, Leonard Koetser Gallery

majesty, which is far above the perception of the eyes, be debased through unseemly representations. Within this class some are histories and events, some are images and forms of bodies without any depicting of past events. The former have no use in teaching or admonition; as for the latter, I do not see what they can afford other than pleasure.¹

Of course pictures can delight the eye. How were they supposed to teach and admonish? Calvin cites the long-established type known as “history painting.” For such paintings an event, that contained a significant act, would be chosen. The possible choices were to be found in the texts of the Bible, ancient history, or even classical mythology (all of which fell under the category of “history” at this time). The moment would be shown in the picture, thus emphasizing the important deed. The painting would thus recommend this action, or warn against it. The most famous painting in this category is perhaps Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel ceiling in Rome which shows scenes from the Old Testament. Roman Catholic artists were also used to painting history paintings of the martyrdoms of saints, but these were precisely what Calvin did not have in mind.

Such history paintings were not for everyone. The commissioners were often elite, being educated enough to know the texts well (Greek and Roman history was still mainly available only in Latin). Calvin’s knowledge of this art also arose out of his own activity as a scholar. History painting was at the

same time very expensive, because it demanded an educated artist who could also paint all things including gestures and the expressions on people’s faces. A modest number of history paintings appeared in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. The City Hall of Amsterdam (now the Royal Palace on the Dam) was decorated with such paintings, whose themes emphasized morality in civic government.

Alongside history paintings, there were also many more representations of other subjects. These more popular works were usually cheaper to buy as

well. They were less demanding of the artist’s abilities, and the viewer’s knowledge. They were typically less “edifying” (teaching), sometimes not at all. With few exceptions, they still adhered to Calvin’s restrictions on art.

Art in Calvinist Netherlands

The question has already been posed by Volker Manuth, whether there were Calvinist artists who explicitly expressed their beliefs in their art.² Jan Victors, a student of Rembrandt, seems to be an example: he refused to paint any pictures of New Testament subjects, because he would then have to depict Christ, in contravention of the second commandment. He was even mocked for his decision in a poem by the Roman Catholic Jan Vos. Victors’ guidelines were perhaps too extreme; they would have excluded his own teacher Rembrandt, and many others. In painting the events of the Old Testament he was actually taking part in a new trend in this country at this time. The first artists to do so had been Pieter Lastman (Rembrandt’s teacher) in Amsterdam, and the Leeuwarden-based Lambert Jacobsz. Neither of these two artists was Reformed (Lastman was Roman Catholic, Lambert Jacobsz. Mennonite). Rather than reflecting specific beliefs, these paintings simply appealed to Anabaptists, Mennonites and especially Calvinists who read the Old Testament on a regular basis. The Old Testament had become fashionable (people gave their children names such as Jacob,



Illustration 3

Gerrit Berckheyde,

The Flower Market of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



Illustration 4
Johannes Vermeer, Woman Sleeping,
Washington, The National Gallery of Art

Abraham, Sarah, etc., for example) and these paintings filled the demand.

No new, single, definitive Calvinist art arose, at either the elite or the popular level. There was no call from the Reformers for painting to articulate their doctrine. Indeed, Calvin and his followers did not convey a great deal of artistic flair. They adopted a sober personal style. Their portraits show that they favoured plain black clothing (the dress of the American Pilgrim Fathers is a familiar example; it was the current fashion in Leiden, where they had been staying around 1620, before their departure for the New World). Depictions of church interiors show that the old decorations were covered in whitewash.

Such preferences did not agree very much with the luxury and beauty of fine paintings, but artists were able to adapt. They created sober paintings to sell to this public. It is the most obvious explanation for the shift from the colourful and rich paintings of before 1615 to a simple, monochromatic style in Dutch art in the decades following the Synod of Dordrecht of 1617-1618. Only after around 1650, in a climate of unprece-

dent prosperity, did Dutch taste in art favour the rich and lively again.

Rembrandt cannot be avoided, it seems, in a discussion of the Dutch Golden Age. His religious convictions have never been well-defined. He apparently did not join the Reformed Church, and associated with Mennonites as well as the Reformed. He was intensely interested in the Bible. He remains well-known for making history paintings, of stories from the Old Testament, and for steering his students in this direction. The tradition was carried through for about a hundred years, into the 1700s. It must be kept in mind that, even when it was most fashionable, Old Testament subjects only attracted the interest of a small and elite group; it was history painting, after all. The real explosion in new kinds of painting occurred on a more popular level, outside of this category.

Landscapes, seascapes and cityscapes

At about the same time as the conservative Calvinists gained effective control of the Reformed Church in the

Seven Provinces, a painting mania began in this country. For about fifty years, paintings were produced and sold in incredible quantities. A great artistic heritage emerged, which survives to the present day.

In this very favourable market, artists developed many new possibilities for pictures, by taking up many new kinds of subject material. Landscape and still-life especially flourished. Artists also introduced the seascape, the street scene, domestic interiors, church interiors, merry companies, the military company, the flower piece and the professions and trades, as themes for paintings. This variety replaced the narrowness of the spurned artistic tradition of the Church of Rome. The change reflected new restrictions, and new freedoms as well. Artists were freed to take up things previously considered too insignificant for a painting.

It surprises many people to learn that landscape painting as we know it only began in the early 1600s. It had been practised by the ancients, but abandoned in the Middle Ages. It was not considered worthy enough to be the subject of a painting. Artists would only use landscape as background to scenes of history. Curiously, in the 1500s these landscapes in Flemish painting were fanciful, usually consisting of wild and dramatic forests, and mountains. To the viewer it suggested that the story was taking place somewhere far away and unfamiliar.

Haarlem artists such as Esaias van der Velde became the first to make paintings of local landscape again, in a realistic manner. They typically first made drawings from life, of views of the territory around Haarlem, where they lived (ill.1). The final painting was made in the studio. The artist would sometimes then deviate from the drawing, or even concoct a total fiction by assembling features from several drawings. It was still realism: convincing and taken from the real. Previously such "observed" landscape was only shown in drawings and prints. It became incredibly popular. Virtually every inventory of possessions in seventeenth century Amsterdam includes at least one landscape painting. Artists had found one good way to celebrate Creation and the rustic charm of the countryside, and even supply aesthetic enjoyment, while remaining completely clear before the second commandment.

The seascape started out quite differently than its cousin the landscape.



Illustration 5

*Quiringh van Brekelenkam,
The Cobbler,
Schwerin, Staatliches
Museum Schwerin*



Originally, artists were employed to make “portraits” of ships, at harbour or in battle. Merchants or naval commanders typically commissioned them. Beginning in the early 1620s, a much broader market was reached by artists such as Jan Porcellis. He painted marine views in which the sea and sky dominated, and the ships were mere accents (ill. 2). The “content” of such a picture was actually the weather: calm, troubled, or even violent. Viewers could then also reflect on God’s mercy in providing favourable weather for seafarers, and His sovereignty over their own lives as well.

The streets and canals of their cities and towns also attracted the attention of a number of Dutch artists. They typically did not favour picturesque older houses in their paintings, but rather chose newly-constructed canals, houses, and public buildings. These projects reflected the recent prosperity of the Netherlands. Many of the residents of this country at the time, especially in Amsterdam, were recent immigrants, refugees who had fled persecution in countries such as the Southern Netherlands (Belgium today) and France. Especially thousands of Reformed believers from Antwerp left their homeland bitterly, in the wake of a massacre in 1585 at the hands of the Spanish. Antwerp declined in wealth, its splendour decaying. At the same time Amsterdam became the new home for many

of them, and its population multiplied several times as a result. Their capital, talent, experience, and hard work contributed heavily to the spectacular economic rise of this city. The crisp and detailed views taken in Amsterdam and Haarlem by the brothers Berckheyde, Job and Gerrit, reassured Netherlanders that God had blessed their steadfastness in faith, by giving fruit to their labour, and even affording them luxury (ill. 3). It was a materialistic idea about God’s favour that we would perhaps hesitate to take today, but one that was common in the seventeenth century.

Interior views

Interior views usually had a very different emphasis: less on social status, and more on daily life. They often made some comment on lifestyle and morals. Such everyday scenes could thus have a serious symbolic meaning. Johannes Vermeer’s painting of a *Woman Sleeping* would have reminded the viewer of the vice of sloth, or laziness (ill. 4). It is not a shrill, severe sermon; there are no dire warnings that poverty or condemnation waits at the door. Instead this woman naps in affluence. There is perhaps a gentle reflection on the irony that material rewards sometimes lull a person into comfortable inactivity rather than spurring them into action. Vermeer’s extremely beautiful and calm arrangements often promoted some kind

of moral message, though not always. Of the many painters who specialized in such interior scenes, he is by far the most famous. Even though he was Roman Catholic, Vermeer painted no altarpieces (that we know of), and his messages were almost always compatible with the Calvinism of his surrounding society, and of many of his buyers.

The daily activities in the paintings of Quiringh van Brekelenkam are even less pretentious. This artist made a number of pictures showing tradespeople at work. They are usually inside their own homes, where many trades were carried out at this time. The atmosphere created by Brekelenkam in *The Cobbler* is quiet, and evocative (ill. 5). His style was sober, and lent dignity to his subject. Brekelenkam’s specialty was rare among painters. It appeared more commonly in prints. A little later in the century, Jan Luyken created a large series of prints of the vocations for a now-famous book devoted to the topic of work. Luyken was a strict Calvinist, and a poet, and the verses that he composed to these images frequently emphasize the Christian virtue of honest labour. This meaning likely also applied to Brekelenkam’s paintings.

The paintings of flower-pictures occupied a great many women painters, as well as men. The pinnacle of achievement was perhaps the work of Rachel Ruysch, who developed very



Illustration 6
Rachel Ruysch, Still Life with Flowers,
 1739, London, Art Market (in 1990)

complicated, lavish and spectacular arrangements of colour and texture (ill. 6). She also kept up the tradition of scientific accuracy in clearly representing many various species. She is a late representative of this type of painting. The flower piece is yet another product of the Dutch Golden Age; it perhaps had its origin in Flemish paintings of "Madonna in the Wreath." Around 1610 Ambrosius Bosschaert began to paint simple bouquets against plain backgrounds. Such pictures began as (pleasant) reminders that the life of man is as frail and passing as the blooming of a flower. As the tradition developed, this message became nearly lost in the display of beauty.

Painting flourished but not other art forms

These and many other kinds of paintings arose in the Netherlands during its economic boom in the seventeenth century. Painting flourished in variety and quality. The country was very Calvinist, especially in its government, which excluded Roman Catholics and Mennonites. With a few well-known exceptions, artists did not risk provoking the authorities by painting

pornographic paintings. Artists were not generally hampered by the Reformed restriction, that there would be no open public worship of images. Instead they turned to other kinds of subject matter. In some cases, the result was entirely new for art, in other instances it was something taken over from another art form, often prints. As shown above, serious moral reminders were incorporated into some works, but not others. This world of art was complex, even a little chaotic. Artists were freed from a fixed tradition and its burden of a narrow range of commissions.

While painting prospered, the same could not be said of poetry, music and theatre. These other arts fared much better in England, France, Germany, and Italy, during the same period. For example, the last internationally-famous Dutch composer for the organ was Jan Pietersz. Sweelinck (who was Roman Catholic). Organ music was attacked by many Reformed preachers, who for a time banned its playing during church services, and stirred up a great controversy. After Sweelinck's death in 1621, his important followers were mostly German (Buxtehude, Bach), and the Dutch tradition faltered. With respect to theatre, it thrived in London (think of

Shakespeare), but the Amsterdam *Schouburgh* (the poetic name given to the City Theatre) was repeatedly closed by the civil authorities, and even the great playwright Joost van den Vondel faced censure. Relatively few plays were written. In the case of both music and theatre, Calvin's criticisms resulted in a general atmosphere of disfavour, which could be enforced through the public institutions of the church and the City Theatre. In contrast, painting took place in thousands of Dutch workshops and rooms. Painters who adapted to prevailing standards of a Reformed society simply outsold the dissidents.


Epilogue

After the "disaster year" of 1672, prosperity started to run out for the Dutch, and painting went downhill as well. Surprisingly, many of the new types of subject matter disappeared. This smaller market became dominated by a unified style, and a preference for elite subject matter. The new fashion was for an idealizing "classicism" (imitating the "classical" art from ancient Greece and Rome). It is discouraging to note the rise of the "rules of art," which dictated this form of art as perfect, and denigrated all others. The great influence this time was not the Roman Catholic Church, but instead the Enlightenment in France, with its fascination for system, order and method. It was a situation similar to the previous dominance of religious images, in contempt of other subjects, which were not seen as "worthy" enough to be painted by artists. From our historical viewpoint, Calvin's few simple restrictions seem to have provided Dutch culture with a liberating impulse to artistic creativity.

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Notes:

¹J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Battles edition) 1.XI.11. Calvin originally published the *Institutes* in Latin, the final version appearing in 1559. The text was very quickly translated into many languages, and in this way made a great impact on a popular level.

²Volker Manuth, "Denomination and Iconography: the Choice of Subject Matter in the Biblical Painting of the Rembrandt Circle," *Simiolus* 22 (1993-1994), 235-252. 

C. S. Lewis Centennial

By F.G. Oosterhoff

In November of this year it will be a hundred years since C. S. Lewis was born. A teacher of English literature at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Lewis was also a writer of literary criticism, poetry, novels, science fiction, children's books, and works of Christian apologetics. In our circles he is perhaps best known as the author of the *Narnia* series of children's fiction, but many among us will also be acquainted with at least some of the works he wrote in defence of the faith. Although practically all his books became best-sellers, it was his work as a religious writer that gained him a world-wide readership. (Admittedly, it is not possible to distinguish too sharply between his religious and his fictional writings, for most of the latter were also inspired by his Christian faith.) Joining the rest of the Christian world in celebrating the Lewis centennial, this magazine will devote a brief series of articles to his life and work.

Conversion

Clive Staples Lewis (or Jack, as he came to be called), was born in Ulster (Northern Ireland) on November 29, 1898, the younger of two sons in an Anglican family. He served and was wounded in the first world war. Upon the war's conclusion he returned to his studies at Oxford, and in 1925 he became a Fellow and Tutor at that university. He remained at Oxford until 1954, when Cambridge created a chair in Medieval and Renaissance literature for him. Lewis filled that chair until shortly before his death in November of 1963, a week before his 65th birthday.

Well before he entered university, Lewis had abandoned his Christian faith and become an agnostic. But as appears from his autobiography (*Surprised by Joy*), the conviction that there was more to the world than mere matter, refused to leave him. After an intense intellectual struggle, and helped by Christian colleagues at Oxford (including J.R.R.



C.S. Lewis

Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*), he regained his faith and returned to the church in which he had been baptized. As he himself describes it: "In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God. . . ." In the estimation of his older brother, W.H. Lewis, this conversion was "no sudden plunge into a new life, but rather a slow steady convalescence from a deep-seated spiritual illness of long standing – an illness that had its origins . . . in the dry husks of religion offered by the semi-political church-going of Ulster. . . ."

*It is a pity that the
Shadowlands
picture of Lewis
has been accepted
in Christian circles.*

Religious writing

Lewis's commitment to Christianity implied a new beginning in his life as an

author. The conversion (to borrow again from his brother's description) "was the occasion of a notable literary development, of wide popularity coupled with hostility in some quarters, and of certain war-time lecturing engagements with the RAF and the BBC. It was in connection with his religious rather than his scholarly writing that his name became a household word in the 'forties and 'fifties. . . ."

Among the works he published since his conversion are such classics as the *The Problem of Pain*, the *Screw-tape Letters*, the *Narnia* series, *The Abolition of Man*, *The Four Loves*, *Miracles*, and *Mere Christianity*, as well as his science-fiction trilogy, and the autobiography *Surprised by Joy*. In addition he wrote scholarly books, contributed articles to various periodicals, presented numerous papers, wrote and preached sermons, and gave his series of radio lectures. These lectures were subsequently published as *Broadcast Talks*, *Christian Behaviour*, and *Beyond Personality*. *Mere Christianity* (1952), one of his most popular works, is a revised and expanded edition of these three books.

Shadowlands

Some time ago (I think it was in the 1980s) a movie was made of Lewis's life, entitled *Shadowlands*. Distributed in video format, it introduced Lewis and his family to a large viewing public. The movie was made by people who appear to have had trouble with Lewis's reputation as a defender of Christianity and portrays him as a man whose conversion and faith were more apparent than real. When his affairs prospered, he came across as a triumphant Christian, but when with the death of his wife disaster struck, he abandoned his faith, or so the movie suggests. The conclusion the viewer can hardly help drawing is that this man, who allegedly was instrumental in leading untold numbers to faith in Christ, was in fact little more than a fake.



It is a pity that the Shadowlands picture of Lewis has been accepted in Christian circles, including parts of our own community, for it does Lewis an injustice. The interpretation was based in part on the booklet *A Grief Observed*, which Lewis wrote in the weeks immediately following his wife's death, and which was published shortly after his own death three years later. Herein he describes his grief and struggles in a manner that, especially if statements are quoted out of context, indeed supports the picture of a man who is beset by doubts about God's benevolence and justice. But if one takes the trouble to read the booklet for oneself and in its entirety (and also if one takes account of other work he wrote after his wife's death), one cannot possibly reach the conclusion that Lewis abandoned faith in his God.

The question of orthodoxy


I wrote a few paragraphs ago that Lewis regained his faith after an intense intellectual struggle. Lewis was, also as a Christian, very much the thinker. He was gifted with great intelligence and a very logical mind, and delighted in proving the truth of the Christian doctrine (and the foolishness of atheistic reasonings) with rational arguments. That approach has advantages. Especially for those who are troubled by intellectual doubts, this aspect of Lewis's work can be very helpful, as many a Lewis-reader will testify.

*I tend to see two
C.S. Lewises.
One is a
Christian rationalist;
the other
is the humble
Christian believer.*

But the rational approach is not without dangers, and this is evident in parts of Lewis's work. Generally speaking, Lewis was an orthodox Christian. "A thorough-going supernaturalist," to quote one of his editors, he believed in "the Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Four Last Things (death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell)." Yet at times he did not hesitate to criticize aspects of the Bible (see, for example, the first chapters of his *Reflections on the Psalms*). Also, although he obviously disliked evolutionism and went to some lengths to show that scientists had altogether failed to prove it, he occasionally adopted a developmentalist approach himself, and he made it clear that he had no religious (only intellectual) objections to the theory of evolution.

The more I think about his work, the more I tend to see two C. S. Lewises, who often appear together in the same

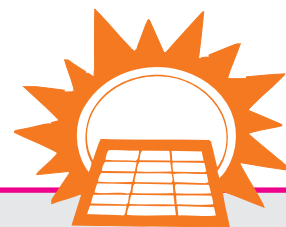
book and article. One is the Christian rationalist whose arguments are frequently valuable, and who has helped many fellow-Christians and many agnostics to overcome intellectual doubts, but who has to be read critically. The other is the humble Christian believer who subjected his own insights to the authority of the Scriptures, realizing that unless we become like children we cannot enter the Kingdom. But also in his rationalist guise Lewis confessed Christ as his Saviour, and throughout his life he struggled to fulfil the commandment to love God and the neighbour, and to promote the gospel by whatever means he had at his disposal. Foremost among these means were his religious writings. In a following article I hope to provide some samples of these writings.

Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff is a retired teacher of history living in Hamilton, Ontario. 

"THERE ARE NO ORDINARY PEOPLE"

... It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the back of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all plays, all politics. There are no ordinary people . . .

From C. S. Lewis,
The Weight of Glory, a Sermon.



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“Happy the people whose God is the Lord.”
Psalm 144:15b*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I woke up to our radio alarm a few weeks ago, I heard a song. It was a bit of a funny song. I do not remember much of it except for the refrain, which kept coming back over and over again: “Don’t worry, be happy.” All kinds of silly things happen to this guy, and his solution to all his problems is, “Don’t worry! be happy!”

Of course, the whole song was a bit ridiculous. For who can live like that? Terrible things happen to you, and you just turn around and say, “Don’t worry! Be happy!” How can you be happy when you know that you are in trouble? Maybe people of the world try to live like that. To them this life is the only thing. The future? They do not really want to think about that. They try to believe that nothing really matters, except to be happy. And that is why they try to believe that if you forget everything else and do not worry about anything, you can be happy.

Fortunately we know better. We know that happiness is not a matter of an outside smile and a lot of laughing and joking. Real happiness is a matter of the heart. If you don’t have happiness in your heart, then you can laugh and joke all you like, but it is not real, and it does not last. Maybe with a lot of funny talk and much noise you can try not to listen to what you feel inside, but when the fun is over, the reality strikes, and the worries take over.

Real happiness is only there when we trust in the Lord. When we know that the Lord is our God, we can laugh and sing and be happy. For then we know that this life is not all that matters.

This life is only a short little while; what comes after this life is what counts. Therefore we do not just live our life, but we live towards the future. When this life comes to an end, then we will enter a new life, which will never end. That life will be beautiful and perfect. There will not be anything that we could worry about. All the difficulties and anxieties and challenges and sadness and loneliness are then taken away from us. Nothing in that future can make us unhappy.

Yes indeed, we are very fortunate. This knowledge gives us strength to deal with the challenges that we receive in this life. Knowing that the Lord is our God gives us comfort in times of grief and sadness; it gives us strength to endure when we are very sick and suffer much pain; it helps us to face our challenges whatever they may be; it helps us when we are very old, and when we cannot do the things we would like to do. For when we live with the Lord and serve Him with all our hearts, we know that our sins are forgiven through the blood of our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

It also helps us to say “No!” to the “pleasures” of the world. To turn off the radio and the TV when they broadcast and show things that are not pleasing to the Lord. Now we understand why there is this terrible noisy and loud stuff that they call music, and why some people always want to listen to it: they have to, in order to drown out the worries and uncertainties that live inside of them. For when you do not obey the Lord, there is no happiness in your heart and there is no peace with the Lord.

Can we then say, “Don’t worry, be happy?” Yes, all those whose God is the Lord can say that, and live like that. But this saying is backed up with more. We do not have to worry, and we can be happy because we know that the Lord takes care of us. We have to do what is required of us, and then we may know that the Lord is in charge. And when the Lord is in charge of our lives, there is no reason left to worry!

*Unto the hills I lift my eyes.
From where comes all my aid
When troubled or afraid?
The Lord shall to my help arise,
He who made earth and heaven:
His aid is freely given.*

Psalm 121:1

Birthdays in August:

- 5: Philip Schuurman**
11 Wallis Avenue, Apt.B
Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0
- 9: Rose Malda**
Oakland Centre, 53 Bond Street
Oakville ON, L6J 5B4
- 18: Fenny Kuik**
140 Foch Avenue
Winnipeg, MB, R2C 5H7
- 23: Jack Dieleman**
5785 Young Street , Apt 704
Willowdale, ON, M2M 4J2

It will be Phil’s 39th, Rose’s 41st, Fenny’s 46th, and Jack’s 26th birthday.

Congratulations with your birthday to all of you, and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen,
7462 Reg.Rd. 20, RR# 1,
Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0.
e-mail: rwravens@netcom.ca

A Conditional Offer

General Synod Fergus 1998 offered the OPC an Ecclesiastical Fellowship relation, but on a condition!

By J. Mulder

Synod Fergus 1998 has taken an important decision about our relation with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). According to the Acts of Synod, published on the Internet, the Canadian Reformed Churches offer the OPC the Ecclesiastical Fellowship relation on the condition that the General Assembly of the OPC will declare that in admitting guests to the Lord's table "a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required."

I was present when this decision was made and the final vote was taken. It was unanimous, and delegates and most visitors clapped their hands, applauding this decision! I know of one visitor, however, who was more inclined to boo this decision than to applaud it.

More than one question can be raised, but, according to me, one is basic: *How can Synod Fergus 1998 do what Synod Abbotsford 1995 said cannot be done without refuting the judgment made by Synod 1995?*

Our relation with the OPC has been in discussion since Synod Edmonton 1965. The Canadian Reformed Churches initiated the contact. The OPC has willingly and patiently submitted to the scrutiny of our churches. Since 1965 every Synod dealt with it, also Abbotsford 1995. This synod had to respond to a complaint that a remaining difference between the OPC and us, with regard to the question how to admit guests to the Lord's table, is actually a confessional and not just a practical matter.

Synod Abbotsford dealing with this complaint considered that this is in fact a matter which pertains to certain *practices* in the OPC. It does not deal with the OPC's confessional documents. The OPC's practice with respect to the admission of guests to the Lord's table has not been proven to undermine the OPC's confessional integrity as a true church. On the other hand, Synod was of the opinion that this practice gives reason for concern, but it is not proven

to be a matter of the Westminster standards. Therefore, there is reason to continue to discuss this practice, but it "*cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship*" (Acts, Synod Abbotsford, 1995, p 71, Article 106.B.3 – emphasis mine).

But this is exactly what the next synod, Synod Fergus, 1998, did!

Now every synod has, of course, the right to disagree and change judgments made by a previous synod, if there are sound reasons to do so. But Synod '98 does not prove or declare that the previous Synod was wrong in judging that the way guests are admitted to the Lord's table in Orthodox Presbyterian Churches cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This was no oversight. According to the Acts (Art. 129.IV.E.4.d) the Church of Watford specifically asked Synod '98 to make such a declaration. However, Synod '98 did not grant Watford's request; neither did it refute this judgment of Abbotsford '95. Synod Fergus '98 decided to invite the OPC to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches on the condition that the General Assembly of the OPC declares that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient in admitting guests to the Lord's Table.

Synod '95 declared that this cannot be done, but Synod '98 did it anyway!

Someone will perhaps argue that what Synod '95 said was just a statement made in a consideration. In a way that is true. But that does not take away the seriousness of this judgment made by a General Synod, namely, that a certain method to admit guests to the Lord's Table cannot be made a condition for having a sister church relationship.

A Synod, when adducing arguments to arrive at a proper decision in a certain matter, runs the danger of making in its considerations general judgments which may have far reaching consequences, or which conflict with statements made by previous synods. But if they are made and adopted, they stand as pronounce-

ments made by a General Synod. They must be honoured as such, or they must be proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

A case at hand is another decision of Synod Abbotsford '95. In a consideration this synod stated that the suggestion that Art. 61 (dealing with the question who may be admitted to the Lord's Table) is the only possible way to execute what we confess in Lord's Day 30 (QA 81, 82) is not proven from Scripture (Acts, p.73, 2). That was a sound statement. Article 61 C.O. does not arrange how exactly every local church should or should not admit guests from other Churches (non sister-churches) to the Lord's Table. But, in making this statement, Synod '95 actually overruled a judgment made by Synod Burlington 1986 without refuting it. For Synod '86 declared quite emphatically that "Article 61, Church Order, is *the* rule which governs the admission of *all* those who seek to partake in the Lord's Supper" (Acts, Synod Burlington 1986, p 60 – emphasis mine).

These are judgments made by a General Synod, and, therefore, to be taken seriously.

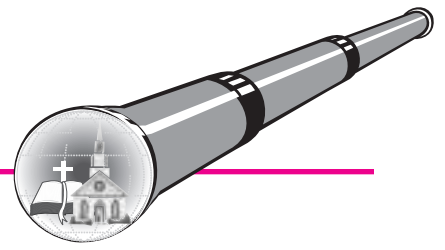
My concern is that Synods are in danger of losing their credibility when they – of course unintentionally – make conflicting judgments in serious matters. The one Synod says: *This cannot be a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship*, and the other says: *It should be such a condition* – without proving the other wrong.

That is not the style of the Church of the Lord.

Also our OPC brothers (especially some of whom have for years dealt with our OPC committee) read the Acts and the considerations of our synods. What impression do they receive?

They will have a very hard time understanding why our Churches are willing and able to discuss remaining *confessional* divergencies within the framework of having Ecclesiastical Fellowship but that the OPC's *practice* of

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Observation Deck

By J. VanRietschoten

A Bible Translator on the NIV

In the January 12 issue of *Christianity Today* several letters to the editor reflected the debate around the proposed *inclusive* version of the NIV. One of these short letters contained many points of importance. Since most of our churches are now using the NIV in the worship services, the points raised will be of interest to the reader of *Clarion*. I contacted the author of the letter via *Christianity Today* and was given permission to quote. Rather than quote the author out of context I pass on the entire letter.

I became a Christian by reading a NIV Bible. I had tried reading the Bible many times but had been mystified by church language and strange idioms. Through the NIV, the Lord became personal and his message understandable. Within a year, I was in Bible college and headed toward a career as a translator overseas.

Now in graduate studies, I rarely use the NIV. Nor do most scholars, for it is not literal enough for the exacting world of academia. Though an excellent translation and model for dynamic equivalence, the NIV is not the Bible of exegetes, but of the masses. Yet by necessity, it is the exegetes who control its contents. This aspect of the current argument I have not heard discussed.

When the scholars tell us we must hold to a specific form of the NIV, or preachers proclaim the KJV is in errant, our leaders are no better than the pre-Reformation church, which said, "We will tell you which version to read, and we will tell you what it means." Through the years, translation arguments have assumed that the form is somehow sacred,

and those who do not understand the form merely need instruction, not a new form. The unbeliever or nominal Christian is left at the mercy of the priest, the preacher, or the scholar, not the Word of God.

[Dr. Bruce] Metzger describes translation as "the art of making the right sacrifice." Are we willing to sacrifice the sacredness of the literal form in order to bring God's Word to a generation? Or will we choose to elevate the form and possibly sacrifice the generation? Let us look to these inclusive versions not as a new standard the church must embrace or reject, but as a legitimate method of reaching the lost.

Donna Williams, Langley, B.C.
Canada in *Christianity Today*,
Jan. 12, 1998, p.10.

Reading this, I am reminded of a statement printed in the Acts of Synod 1980, p 76. The Committee states that the KJV has become obsolete, that the NASB is too literal to be lucid and clear, that the NIV is too free for use in the pulpit. When Donna Williams states that the NIV is not the Bible for the exegetes she actually is saying that the NIV is not the Bible for preaching, or for interpretation. The NIV is the Bible for the masses. It is the Bible that is able to bring the masses to conversion without preaching. But it is not literal enough.

This brings us to a crucial question. Can a Bible translation take the place of preaching? If the NIV is not literal enough, the AV too archaic, and the NASB too literal, does this not underscore the need for preaching? If the NIV, by not being literal enough, has become the Bible for the masses, should we then not be honest and present the NIV as an "Adapted Bible for the masses?"

Another feature which reputedly makes the NIV the Bible for the masses is that it is a "model for dynamic equivalence." The word dynamic means power. In translating the Bible the words must be equal in power to the original words. "Power" of the word translation is contrasted by "meaning" of the word translation. Is it the power of the contemporary word which brings to conversion? Or is it the meaning of the word as originally inspired by the Holy Spirit? It is the meaning. If in translating the Bible we cannot find a contemporary word which truly renders the meaning then we have to settle for a word which is less easily understood. We may not sacrifice meaning. The Holy Spirit uses meaning to bring to conversion. In "power" translation, if an easy word cannot be found, meaning is sacrificed. That is why the author writes that Dr. Metzger describes translation as "the art of making the right sacrifice." The NIV represents both. The NIV aims for meaning. But the NIV has in places also sacrificed meaning. Where the NIV has sacrificed meaning correction is needed.

But is the NIV indeed the Bible for the masses? Does the NIV make preaching unnecessary? Certainly not. Romans 10 is still valid today. Men are sent to preach Christ.

According to the author an inclusive language version of the Bible would not become a new standard the church must embrace or reject. However, where else does the church find her standards but in the Bible? If we present the lost with a Bible which says something different from the biblical standards of the church, trust in the church is lost because of tampering with the Bible. The lost are brought to conversion by the Word of God, purely translated as well as purely preached. C

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admitting guests to the Lord's Table must be changed before such a relation may be established.

Does Holy Scripture not allow us to discuss also this difference with the

brothers of the OPC within the relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship? Must this really be a condition to be met before such a relation can be established? I have a hard time accepting this.

Rev. J. Mulder is minister-emeritus of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-Waterdown. He served as convener of the Committee for Contact with the OPC from 1977-1992. C

Farewell to the family 't Hart

“LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS”

The Toronto congregation again had the privilege of having the gospel preached by our Missionary Rev. Stephen 't Hart, before he and his family left for their mission work in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. It was a day of celebration and of fond farewell to the 't Harts who departed for the mission field on Tuesday, May 5th.

Isaiah 9: 1-2 was the text for the morning service with the theme that we are called out of darkness into God's glorious light. Israel would have perished in outer darkness if God had left them on their own. God had chosen Israel as His covenant people, yet they rejected Him. They were warned by the prophets but did not heed the call to repentance even after numerous admonitions. Israel did not choose for God and so they were placed in the darkness of captivity and oppression. In the text Isaiah calls Israel to trust on the Lord rather than on the strength of other nations. Salvation and deliverance are to be found in “Galilee of the nations,” the land of the Prince of Peace who came as a humble child although He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. He, our Lord and Saviour, was sent by the Father so that we need not perish, so that we could walk in light and be saved from darkness. God remembers his people and his promises, and therefore “God is with us, Emmanuel.”

This assurance of God's continuing presence was further extended in the afternoon service, when Rev. 't Hart chose Genesis 12:1-3 as his text: Abraham called out of his familiar surroundings to go into the unknown. God separated Abraham from family, friends, and familiarity and directed him to a new land and a new life where he was to serve the one and only true God. Abraham was to rely completely on God's promises and on the Father's assured care for him and his family. It was a calling to trust upon the grace of God. In like manner we are to respond to the demands of the gospel in faith



Rev. and Mrs. 't Hart and daughter Miriam receiving farewell gifts.

and obedience, trusting that God will provide for our every need, and sharing this trust and confidence with our friends and neighbours. On this firm and assured foundation the 't Harts can go into the unknown to share the good news of salvation in Christ's blood, to call a people out of darkness into the land of the living and into God's marvelous light.

After the second service the congregation remained together for a farewell evening. First, however, we enjoyed a meal prepared by the Action Committee of the Church. This was followed by an organized sequence of events. After a congratulatory note to Mrs. 't Hart for the celebration of her recent birthday, Rev. den Hollander opened the evening with prayer and the reading of Psalm 96 – Sing to the Lord a new song!

Rev. 't Hart then presented his first self-directed video entitled “Serving God Together,” based on church life in Toronto. From the city of Toronto we saw people of different backgrounds

and how there is a need for sharing the gospel. There are dangers and influences in society which affect us as families and make it difficult to live as a Christian. Therefore we need the prayers and support of one another in order to live righteously before God. To emphasize this, the video showed the children in christian schools where they learn to apply and defend their growing faith, and it showed adults busy with Bible study and sharing that Word with others whom God is bringing to the truth. The video highlighted the life of the Church and its various members as they together seek to grow in the Lord and to serve Him.

During the evening songs were sung in praise to God, accompanied with various musical instruments. The Mission Board added to the festive occasion by presenting to the 'Harts several very useful gifts for the family. The evening was closed in prayer by Rev. H. Versteeg who committed the 't Hart family to the Lord's care as they were now departing to fulfill the mandate of

the great commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28: 19 and 20.

Diane Kampen

A special "farewell and bon voyage" card for Rev. and Mrs. 't Hart



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

Re: Martin Van Bostelen's letter "URCNA and CanRC" (Vol. 47, No. 11, p. 266).

Mr. Van Bostelen may or may not be aware that a large number of URCNA members, many of whom come not from the CRC or any other church background, read *Clarion* regularly, and would not be impressed (as would not many of his fellow CanRC's) by the smugness he shows in his statements. "By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom" (Prov 13:10, NKJV).

I wish that he would speak in love even towards those whom he cannot call his brothers and sisters in Christ. God's grace through Jesus' blood embraces far more than admitting wrongs from past generations. And he should be warned, for when our Lord comes again to claim His own, He will not be reading the names on our church buildings, or studying the colour of our song books, but "on this one I will look: On him who is poor and of contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word" (Isa 66:2). Let's read our Bibles before we rest too comfortably in our interpretation of the confessions.

J. Holtvluwer
Smithers, BC

In his Editorial, "Clarion" May 29, 1998, Rev. Geertsema writes "It is, therefore, a cause for great sadness when one of the ministers says that he can no longer maintain his signature under the Subscription Form. We appreciate his honesty. . . ." Rev. Geertsema is of course writing about Rev. J. Boersma.

The real cause for sadness is, that by withdrawing himself from the Church, Br. Boersma is being unfaithful to the vow he took upon his ordination to the office of minister of the Word: "Do you also promise to submit to the discipline of the church in case you should become delinquent in doctrine or life?" (Form for the Ordination of Ministers of the Word. *Book of Praise* p 622).

The real cause for sadness is that Br. Boersma's actions are characteristic of an attitude that is becoming all too prevalent within our communities. This attitude is independantism, which is typical of the world. More and more we are confronted by brothers and sisters who fail to fully grasp what it means that "in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:5). At the slightest provocation or presumed injustice, they withdraw themselves from the Church or from functioning within our communities.

The real cause for sadness is that because of these actions it becomes difficult for discipline to function within the Body of Christ. If we can no longer be "speaking the truth in love" to each other, we will no longer "in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

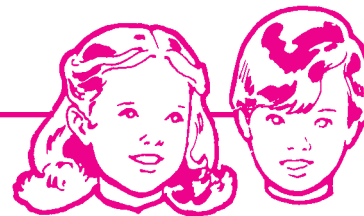
John Calvin writes "But since some have a hatred and aversion to discipline, from the very name of the thing, let such consider that if no society, no, nor even a small family, can be preserved in a proper condition without discipline, then it is much more necessary in the church – which ought to be kept in the most orderly state. For, as the wholesome doctrine of Christ is the life of the church, so discipline in it is the sinews, by which all members of the body adhere together, each in its proper place. Therefore, whoever wishes to take away discipline, or would hinder its restoration (whether this arises from their ignorance, or from their endeavors) they certainly are promoting the utter destruction of the church. For what will be the consequence if every person may act as he pleases?" (Inst. IV Chap. 12 sec. 1).

You be the judge!

M. Bareman
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OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

How are your holidays? I hope you are having lots of fun, together with your family and friends. I also wish you a really enjoyable but safe holiday from school. What are you doing during the holidays – going to visit family or other friends, or just on a touring holiday with Dad and Mom, brothers and sisters? You're always welcome to write to me when you have some time and tell me what you're doing, where you're going or any other information. Bye for this time.

With love, Aunt Betty

BIRTHDAYS FOR JULY

1	Deborah Van Beek	18	Jared Helder
1	Rebecca Kelly	24	Kimberley VanderVelde
3	Amanda Hoeksema	24	Jacque Selles
9	Shaun Smeding	25	Crystal Slaa
11	Andrea Meliefste	27	Luanna Feenstra
12	Tim Hordyk	29	Melville Buist
13	Rebekah Barendregt	30	Becca Brasz
13	Lorelle Barendregt	31	Jacqueline Jager

CODE BREAKER

by Busy Beaver Sophia Brouwer

A ☉	G ;	M *	S X	Y ☒
B §	H □	N //	T ■	Z »)
C ☼	I ◇	O //	U ◆	
D ♥	J ∞	P ~	V ♥	
E ♡	K ♯	Q \	W ☉	
F :	L ⊕	R ≪	X ▲	

◇ ☉ ◇ ⊕ ⊕ X ◇ // } ☉ // ♡ ☉

x // // } ■ // ■ □ ♡ ♡ // } // ♥

SAUL

Saul was the first king of Israel. Match the following facts about his life as found in 1 Samuel.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Anointed by | a. Ahinoam, 14:50 |
| 2. Played for Saul | b. David, 16:23 |
| 3. Frightened by | c. Gibeah, 10:26 |
| 4. Father | d. Gilboa, 31:1,6 |
| 5. Son | e. Goliath, 17:4,11 |
| 6. Daughter | f. Gilgal, 11:15 |
| 7. Home | g. Jonathan, 13:16 |
| 8. Proclaimed king in | h. Kish, 9:3 |
| 9. Wife | i. Michal, 14:49 |
| 10. Place of death | j. Samuel, 10:1 |

WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Jennifer Post

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

- | | | | | |
|---------|----------|--------|---------|------------|
| Horse | Cow | Dog | Cat | Mouse |
| Tractor | Disk | Plower | Silage | Bumpercrop |
| Goats | Chickens | Pigs | Rooster | |



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