

Clarion

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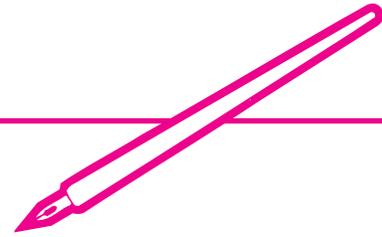


Synod in Brazil - 2000
Founding meeting of Federation of
Reformed Churches in Brazil

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. Visscher



Creedal Controversy

Baptist battles

The December 4, 2000, issue of *Christianity Today* contains a news story that may be of interest to our readers called “Cracks in the Convention.” It has to do with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the United States which finds itself in the throes of controversy over five million dollars worth of funding. That money should be going to the six seminaries in the Convention, but Southern Baptists in Texas have decided to direct the money elsewhere.

Why have they taken this controversial action? It pertains to the fact that earlier in the year 2000, the national convention of the SBC decided that its seminary professors and denominational leaders had to agree with the amended Baptist Faith and Message statement.

For the last 150 years, Baptists haven't believed in creeds.

Now, to some Baptists in Texas and elsewhere, this demand is viewed as an unhealthy shift in the direction of creeds. Says one member who opposes this shift, “For the last 150 years, Baptists haven’t believed in creeds.” He and others also allege that additional issues are at stake, including local church autonomy and the right of individual Baptists to interpret Scripture as they see fit. Further fuelling the flames of controversy is the fact that these complainants, who interestingly call themselves “moderates,” feel that they have been squeezed out of positions of leadership by those whom they call “conservatives” or “fundamentalists.”

For their part, the Conservatives claim that requiring seminary professors to agree with the basic tenets of faith has nothing to do with creedalism. The president of the SBC, James Merritt, insists that professors have always had to sign “an abstract of principles” which spelled out the parameters of their teaching. He says that any professor should be in full support of the Baptist denomination’s confession of faith. At the same he disagrees with the accusation that the SBC is moving in the direction of adopting a creed.

The real issue

Well, is it or isn’t it? From my perspective it appears that the real issue in the SBC has very little to do with creeds but has everything to do with theological liberalism. Elsewhere in this news story, Merritt is quoted as saying, “We have turned our denomination away from theological liberalism – and in fact (we) had theological liberals teaching in our seminaries – to a denomination (that) has returned to its biblical

roots of believing the Bible is the total, inerrant word of God. That’s the real issue.”

For those who have been following developments in the SBC over the years, Merritt’s assessment rings true. As a matter of fact, the shift in the Baptist Convention from theological liberalism to a much more conservative orientation is reminiscent of that other great shift in American church history, namely that which took place in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod under the leadership of J.A.O. Preus and others in the 1970s. In that case too, those who wanted to have greater doctrinal latitude claimed for themselves the mantle of moderation, while trying to cloak their opponents in the garb of extremism and fundamentalism.

Regardless of how they try to dress up Merritt and the SBC, I for one, hope that they stick to their guns. The historical evidence is overwhelming that when seminary professors are not held accountable as far as their teaching is concerned the drift towards liberalism is on and soon it becomes more like a tidal wave. A careful study of any number of leading American theological seminaries gives ample support to this assertion.

As for that other matter of creedalism, both sides of the dispute may have some validity to their arguments. The one side claims that the Baptist Faith and Message statement is a creed. Looking at it technically, however, such a charge may be guilty of over-reaching itself. Nevertheless, if this Statement is not exactly a creed, it has to be admitted that it is certainly meant to function in a creedal fashion. Its purpose is to keep the seminary professors on track and to prevent deviation from what the SBC considers fundamental to the faith.

You can not be a Christian or a Christian church without confessing or without a credo.

Lessons to be learned

So what lessons can be learned from all this? A number come to mind, and the first is this: a church that wants to remain faithful to the Word has to defend its doctrinal integrity. Historically, conservative Christian churches have always done this through their use of creeds and confessions, as well as through their insistence that those in positions of leadership and influence need to adhere to them. The motto, “No creed but Christ” may come across as a neat advertising slogan, but it is and will always remain naive theology.

Indeed, that brings us to the second lesson, which is that creeds and confessions are one of the ways that God uses to keep his church true to the apostolic teaching. One need only reflect on the great Councils of the early church to be reminded that creedal statements were not so much invented by men as led by God. In the midst of confusion and error, He saw fit to give insight, direction and stability to his church.

A third lesson to be learned from all this is the same lesson that I teach my students over and over again, namely this: you can not be a Christian or a Christian church without confessing or without a credo. After all, "to confess" means to say the same as Scripture does. It means to take the words of Holy Writ, to make them your own, to express them personally and to do so before men. When someone in the marketplace of life comes to you and asks, "What do you believe?" and you proceed to give a biblical answer, you are confessing. All Christians who are worthy of the name are in the "confessing business" and the same goes for all churches.

Now perhaps, like the Southern Baptist Convention, they do not dare to say what they are really doing. After all, their history reveals a definite bias against creeds and confessions, but their practice, at least in the case of those churches that want to remain orthodox, tells a different story. Perhaps one day they will realize that the proper use of creeds and confessions is nothing to be ashamed of but is God's way of safeguarding his church. C

What's inside?

The editorial by Dr. J. Visscher deals with a controversy that has arisen among Southern Baptists concerning creedal statements. Historically, Baptists have not made definitive creedal statements. But that is changing. Some like it and some do not. Dr. Visscher points out that confessions are a safeguard to ecclesiastical orthodoxy. We are reminded of the blessings we have as Reformed churches with our three forms of unity. It is also gratifying to see that there are Baptist churches who are starting to recognize the need for confessional statements.

This issue of *Clarion* contains summaries of two reports to Synod Neerlandia. One is the Report of the Board of Governors from our Theological College. The other is the Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad. These reports allow the readers to become acquainted with important matters on the agenda of our upcoming Synod.

Rev. P.G. Feenstra continues his series on tithing. Dr. J. DeJong delves into a seminary statement from the Mid-American Reformed Seminary regarding the days of creation. This is a topic which has been much in discussion during the past year.

We have a report on the work of MERF, some regular columns, a book review, a letter to the editor with a response, and a report of Rev. J. VanWoudenberg's farewell evening before his move to Guelph. Last, but not least, we have a new rhymed version of Psalm 3 by Dr. W. Helder.

RA



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By Clarence J. VanderVelde

And Peter

"But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, and just as He told you.'" Mark 16:7

A few words, spoken almost as if in passing, can have great meaning. So it is with this text. The angel told the women who had found the tomb empty on the day of Christ's resurrection that Christ had risen from the dead. Then the angel said: "But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.'" What may seem as if spoken in passing, and what we may easily read over without much thought, is that the angel said: "Go, tell His disciples *and Peter* . . ." These words have great meaning. Of the four Gospels, Mark is the only one which includes this detail. And, in the Bible, details are always important.

Peter always had been a leader and spokesman among the twelve disciples. When Christ asked his disciples who they thought He was, Peter was the one who made the confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). Peter always had been an impulsive and brave man as well. When Christ explained to his disciples that He would suffer many things in Jerusalem, be killed, and raised to life on the third day, Peter took Christ aside and rebuked Him, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you" (Matt 16:22). Moreover, when Christ told his disciples after the institution of the Lord's Supper that they would all fall away, Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not" (Mark 14:29). When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter was the one who took his sword and hacked off the ear of one of the arresting party (John 18:10). That was how Peter was: a bold and brash man, a leader among the disciples, someone not easily unsettled.

Did the angel make special mention of Peter because he deserved

special recognition due to his prominent position among the disciples? Not at all.

For, what had happened shortly after Christ's arrest? After Peter had boldly declared that he would never fall away, he denied his Lord the very same night! While it was bad enough that all the disciples had deserted Christ after his arrest in Gethsemane (Matt 26:56), Peter fell to the deeper low of actually denying Christ verbally: "I don't know this man" (Mark 14:71). When the rooster crowed, Peter remembered that Christ had foretold his denial. One of the Gospels even says that when the rooster crowed, Christ looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered (Luke 22:61). That glance cut into Peter's heart. And then Peter went outside and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62).

We can well imagine that Peter's sorrow did not disappear instantly. The sadness about his sinful actions undoubtedly lingered in Peter's heart during the three days that Christ was in the grave.

And, therefore, already in the early hours of the day of Christ's resurrection, God had a message for Peter! The message would come to Peter by means of the women to whom the angel spoke. "Go, tell his disciples *and Peter* . . ." The women would undoubtedly say to Peter: "The angel even mentioned your name specifically!" That would be very moving for Peter, and he would know instantly the implicit message: God still wanted him within the circle of disciples! God would not cast him away because of his deep fall. Peter had fallen hard, but God still counted him in! Peter also had to go to Galilee with the other disciples. In this way, God comforted and encouraged Peter in the sorrow over his sin.

The significance of the words "and Peter" is that they encapsulate the gospel of the forgiveness of sins! God had seen Peter's broken heart and his tears, and God received him in grace. His sin was forgiven. And the messenger from heaven – the word "angel" literally means "messenger" – could convey this in these few words. Christ had died on the cross also for this sin of Peter. The angel proclaimed the gospel of forgiveness in these few words!

This has been revealed to us for our comfort. We are sinners. Daily we have to contend with the weakness of our faith and with the evil desires of our flesh. Sometimes we fall hard and are so very disappointed in ourselves. But when there is sorrow over sin and a desire to fight our unbelief and disobedience, we may be assured that God will not cast us away. God counts us in, just as He counted Peter in! C



Declined the call to the church of Albany, Western Australia:

Rev. W. Wielenga

of Lynden, Washington, USA.

Called by the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithers, British Columbia:

Rev. J. Van Vliet

of Lincoln, Ontario.

Worshipping the Lord through our financial gifts (Part 3)

Is tithing still required?

By P.G. Feenstra

Last time we paid attention to what the Lord teaches us in Malachi 3 concerning the practice of tithing. God's people are commanded to bring the tithe to show they are totally dependent on the Lord their God. They must believe that He will bless them with their daily provisions. But is tithing still valid today in the same mandatory manner it was in the Old Covenant? Do we need to give ten percent of our salary to the church or for the work of the deacons? Malachi 3:10 is often referred to as a reason why we should maintain the practice today. Doesn't God command them and us to bring the tithes into his storehouse?

We must be careful not to overlook that God accuses his people of robbing Him of tithe *and* offering. Tithing and offering belong together as a substantial part of the maintenance of the temple staff. The offering is clearly a part of the ceremonial law (cf. Exodus 29:27, 28 where this offering is described).

Is it then correct to lift tithing out of the whole Old Testament system of contributing and apply it to the Christian church? The Old Testament regulation of the tithes has to be kept in its entirety if it is going to be kept at all. Some argue tithing does not belong to the ceremonial laws but to the unchanging moral laws. They base their argument on the fact that Abraham and Jacob also gave tithes. But can this be supported with evidence from the New Testament? This, of course, is the ultimate test.

Tithing in the New Testament

There are two references to tithing in the New Testament: Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:39-44. Both refer to the same incident. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and scribes, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have

neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

Tithing was meant to be a joyful offering of love, but the Pharisees made it a burden to be calculated to the minutest detail. Such detail was not required by the law of God. Christ does not condemn tithing, but He condemns the fact that they neglect weightier matters. The Pharisees concentrate on trivia and overlook what is important. Exactly those things the Lord wished to see present in tithing – mercy, justice and faithfulness –

Is it then correct to lift tithing out of the whole Old Testament system of contributing and apply it to the Christian church?

are missing. Yet, just because Christ does not abolish tithing, this does not mean He wants to see us use such a practice today. Don't forget the Old Testament ceremonies are fulfilled in Christ's death.

We confess in Article 25 of the Belgic Confession that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have been fulfilled in Christ, "so that the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians." But the article continues, "Yet the truth and substance remain for us . . ." Even though tithing is no longer demanded of us, maintaining the ministry of the gospel and caring for the poor certainly is. Our Lord Jesus sets us free from sin but He does not set us free from our commitments. He tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:33). The Lord wants us to give ac-

ording to the measure of our blessings. The principle of tithing provides us with a clear directive as to what we should be giving.

The regulations of tithing cannot be applied in the New Testament as they were in the Old Testament. We do not come to church with cows, sheep or bags of grain.

The truth and the substance of Old Testament giving

Having said that, we do believe the truth and substance of tithing remain with us. The Lord teaches us many valuable principles through tithing. For example we learn:

1. Christian living demands good budgeting in keeping with the Word of God. You are not to "shop until you drop." A distinction needs to be made between needs and luxuries. We live in a time in which many luxuries have been made into necessities. A lifestyle that was once associated with royalty has become a necessity and anyone who is not able to meet this standard is considered living below the poverty line. Taking care of your needs has become a matter of taking care of your wants. Needs are those things that are required to serve the Lord in this life and which promote the well-being of his church and the coming of his kingdom. Knowing the Lord will provide for all our needs and realizing that the Lord has placed restrictions on what we may ask, Agur prays in Proverbs 30:5-9, "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar. Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far

from me; give me neither poverty nor riches – feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

Voluntary contributions ought to be an act of love, faithfulness, justice and mercy.

2. Voluntary contributions ought to be an act of love, faithfulness, justice and mercy. Those who love the Lord shouldn't have to be forced to give. As members of Christ's church we follow the principle of 2 Corinthians 9:7, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." "Voluntary" certainly does not mean that it is our decision whether or not we want to give but we give from a heart devoted to the Lord.
3. Giving towards the church budget and for the work of the deacons is a spiritual matter. Faithfulness to the will of God must be apparent in the way we manage our money and possessions. The Lord owns everything. All our possessions are given to us by Him. Failure to acknowledge God as the owner of all our possessions is

a violation of the eighth commandment (you shall not steal).

4. In our society great stress is placed on investing wisely for a financially secure future. Indeed, the Lord asks of us to use our money responsibly. However, we are misusing our money if it is all invested into our future without having any concern for the responsibilities God lays upon us. We need to be good investors in the kingdom of heaven. The money and possessions the Lord allows us are to be used in his service. They belong to the Lord (Ps 24:1; Lev 27:30) and are to be used for his purpose and work.
5. Providing for the ministry of the gospel, for the training of students for the ministry, and for mission work ought to be one of our top priorities (Lord's Day 38). These are all items included on the church budget.
6. If the Old Testament principle of tithing is used as a guideline we must be careful to avoid the pitfall of legalism which suggests, "As long as we pay our ten percent to the church then we have done our share and we will not have an elder knocking on our door."
7. Contributing to the church does not mean everyone needs to give the same amount. We are to give according to the measure in which the Lord blesses us. For the one Israelite it may have meant giving five cows and for another ten. To pay ab-

solutely nothing when we have an income is a misuse of God's gifts.

8. When our heart is with the Lord and when we truly wish to live according to his Word the giving of voluntary contributions will not be the last item on our budget but the first. Every year (or more often) we will be willing to review whether we are really doing our share.
9. Young people are to be taught financial responsibility. We live in a society that preaches "me first." Our children must be taught that as soon as they start earning money they have an obligation to give. Too often money is put aside for buying a vehicle, for further education, for an upcoming wedding, for a down payment on property but nothing or very little is given toward the church budget. Moreover parents must teach their children to know the difference between voluntary contributions and providing for the needy. Both need to be supported.

Our children must be taught that as soon as they start earning money they have an obligation to give.

Next time we will consider how our giving is to be motivated by the grace of God. 

Psalm 3

1. *How countless are my foes!
O LORD, how many those
Who rise up to accuse me,
Who point at me and shout,
"God will not help him out!"
They with their taunts abuse me.
But You, O LORD, will be
A shield to cover me
When I am faint and weary,
For You will hear my cry
And lift my head up high;
You are my power and glory.*
2. *From Zion's holy height
The LORD will heed my plight;
I'll not be left forsaken.
In Him I put my trust:
I go to sleep, and rest
Until at dawn I waken.
By thousands I'm beset,
But God will not forget
To be my strength and tower.
Though foes in fierce array
Encircle me as prey,
I do not fear their power.*
3. *Arise, O God of might,
And put my foes to flight.
Let all their host be scattered!
For You uphold my cause:
You've struck them on the jaws
And so their teeth were shattered.
You'll set Your people free;
Victorious they shall be
Though many now oppress them.
O LORD, whose love endures,
Preserve all who are Yours
And in Your mercy bless them.*

Rhymed version by William Helder, AD. 2000

A Summary of Report of the Board of Governors to General Synod Neerlandia 2001

By D.G.J. Agema

Senate / Faculty

The Board can report with thankfulness that the professors were able to do their work during the past three years. The Lord granted them health to do their work. The Board expresses thankfulness for the dedication of the professors. In the fall and the spring of each academic year the Board visited the lectures. All reports in the past three years were positive. The professors visited the churches. Dr. C. Van Dam visited the churches in British Columbia (1998), Dr. J. DeJong the churches in Alberta /Manitoba (1999) and Prof. J. Geertsema the churches in British Columbia (2000). In March 2000, the Board approved a change to the scheduling of these lecture tours. The churches in the West are now divided into three territories, instead of two. This means that all the western churches will be visited once every three years. The three territories are Manitoba (with Denver), Alberta, and British Columbia. In terms of time this would make the tours more equitable. In addition the rotation among the professors can now proceed without adjustment.

In September 2000, Dr. J. Faber requested the Board to accept his resignation from the Senate. The Board decided to accept Dr. Faber's resignation and thanked him for his faithful labours as a member of the Senate during the time of his retirement.

In March 2000 the Senate informed the Board by letter that Prof. J. Geertsema would like to retire as Professor New Testament effective at the end of the academic year 2000-2001. By that time Prof. Geertsema will have reached

the age of sixty-six. The Board decided to accede to Prof. Geertsema's request and granted him honourable retirement as Professor of New Testament at the end of the academic year 2000-2001. The Board expresses deep gratitude for the many years of faithful service of Prof. Geertsema. The Board also instructed the Senate to proceed with investigations that would lead to the proposal of a nomination to fill the vacancy of Professor of New Testament. General Synod will receive a confidential proposal in this regard.

Currently nine students are enrolled in the College.

Students

Currently nine students are enrolled in the College. In the past three years eleven have graduated from the College. Eight have entered the ministry of the Word, of which three now serve as missionaries. Two graduated with a Diploma of Theological Studies. With thankfulness the Board reports that the students could continue their work unhindered. We pray that under the blessing of the Lord the churches continue to endeavour that there be students of theology (Art 21 CO)

Facilities

The past three years the Property and Finance Committee has been occupied with the new addition to the College building. In June 1998 the Board appointed a Promotion/Fund Raising Committee. The Fund Raising Committee consisted of the brothers

H. Berends, G. Kuik and P. Lindhout – representing the Western churches, the brothers D. Pot and B. Veenendaal representing the Australian churches, and the brothers M. Kampen and W. Smouter, representing the Eastern churches. In September 1999 this Committee could report that the fund raising had been completed successfully. This also meant that the Building Committee could start its work. This Committee consisted of the brothers W. Oostdijk and J. VanderWoude and the sisters C. Mechelse and M. VanderVelde. With gratitude the Board can report that the work on the addition was completed before the start of the 2000-2001 academic year. On September 8, 2000 there was an official opening and an Open House. The Board appreciates all the work done by many. Above all we give thanks to the Lord for his blessing and we pray that the Lord may use these new and updated facilities for the glory of his name.

In this connection the Board expresses thankfulness for the work of the Women's Savings Action. Each year they donate a substantial amount to the College. Without their faithful labours we would not be able to fill the library with the necessary books. The Board also acknowledges with deep gratitude the continued support by the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

Pastoral Training program

In September 1999 the Board appointed Rev. J. DeGelder of Flamborough as Coordinator of this program. In cooperation with the Senate he has developed guidelines. The Board notes with thankfulness the enthusiasm

expressed by those who have already been involved in this program. The Senate has also taken a closer look at the remuneration of the students involved in this program. Because Synod 1998 decided that the program be introduced on a "trial basis," the Board is of the opinion that due to the short time it cannot come with definite proposals.

With regard to the appointment of a fifth professor (see Acts 1998, Art 107.IV.C.3) the Board is of the opinion that this is not feasible at this point of time. It would mean an increase in assessment of \$11.00 per communi-

cant member. The Board decided upon recommendation by the Senate to increase the weight of the diaconological disciplines. The Senate is looking at using part-time lecturers in those diaconological disciplines that need strengthening.

With regard to the appointment of a fifth professor, the Board is of the opinion that this is not feasible at this point of time.

Master of Theology program

The Board requested the Senate to investigate the possibility of instituting a Master of Theology program at the College. The Senate came to the conclusion that such a program is not viable at this point. The Board is in agreement with this conclusion. This does not mean that the idea should be completely abandoned. The Board wants to make the churches aware of the need for further education of ministers. This will not only benefit the College in connection with future vacancies, but also benefit the churches. 

Overview of the Report to Synod Neerlandia 2001 of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

By E. Kampen

The Report of the *Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad* is a standard feature on the Agenda of Synods. So that everyone may have some idea of the contents of the Report to the forthcoming Synod to be convened on May 1, 2001, what follows is an overview of this Report.

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

A sad development in the FRCA was the controversy concerning the teaching of Rev. F.J. van Hulst. Synod Launceston, 1998, concluded that his "teachings on regeneration and conversion, the church, and the forgiveness of sins are not in accordance with Scripture and confession." Synod decided that Rev. F.J. van

Hulst could not remain seated as a member of Synod. Eventually, he was deposed from office by the Church at Launceston.

The Free Church of Scotland (FCS) has been plagued by internal tensions for a number of years. In January of 2000 a secession took place.

Synod Launceston decided to offer sister relations to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a first step to full unity, if they can agree with

statements made by Synod concerning the fencing of the Lord's Supper table, the supervision of the pulpit and the place of children in the covenant.

The Committee recommends to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA.

The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

The Free Church of Scotland (FCS) has been plagued by internal tensions for a number of years. In January of 2000 a secession took place. Those who seceded claim to be the legitimate continuation of the Free Church and have taken the name "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)." While in the publications of those who seceded, reference is made to various trends in the churches which gave them reason

for concern, at the centre of the concern is the person of Prof. D. Macleod. There continued to be dissatisfaction with the way the accusation of immorality against him was handled. As the Acts and Minutes of the Assemblies show, up until 1999 there was a persistent effort to have the matter dealt with once again. When the matter came to a head in January 2000, it was on the point of ministers refusing to accept the decisions of previous assemblies as settled and binding. They were accused of “contumacy,” that is, “defiance of the Presbyterian courts,” denying their ordination vows in which they promised to submit to the government and discipline of the church. Those who seceded claim that this was an abuse of power on the part of the Commission of the Assembly called to deal with the issue.

While the Committee indicates that there are questions about the discipline process leading to a secession, there is no evidence at this point to conclude that the relationship with the FCS should be discontinued. The Committee feels it best at this point to suspend judgment with the hope that perhaps the two parties are reconciled with each other or that greater clarity will help us come to a responsible conclusion.

The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa have commenced their own theological training for the ministry. There are various contacts with churches of Reformed confession within South Africa. There also continues to be much mission activity. Five churches support three missionaries. Also here, the Committee recommends continuing the present relationship.

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN)

The largest section in the Report concerns the sister churches in the Netherlands. This is understandable because of the historical connections.

There were a number of outstanding issues. First of all, there was the matter of the “blessing elder.” Reviewing previous Acts, it was noted that the concern about removing the distinction between the ministers and elders was addressed and this distinction should not be affected. Further, it was noted that the South African Churches have

the same practice. Finally, it was observed that the Church Order does not regulate this matter. As such the matter should be considered finished.

Second, there was the word “inform” rather than the word “consult” in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Assurance was given by the Dutch deputies that “inform” certainly implied “consult” when it came to relationships with churches in countries where there was already a church with whom they had ecclesiastical fellowship.

... expressing the concern that they seem to be drifting away from the old Reformed paths.

The Committee also touches on a number of developments which give reason for concern. While wishing to be cautious and not to meddle in the affairs of another federation, the Committee comes forward with the recommendation that Synod “instruct the CRCA to address the next Synod of the GKN, expressing the concern that they seem to be drifting away from the old Reformed paths as is evident in the weakening of the Scriptural language in the Form for Marriage, the increasing centralization in church life, the increase in the number of hymns which historically has come at the expense of the singing of the Psalms, the shift of the focus of the Theological University from an institution for the training for the ministry to a “Knowledge Centre,” and an apparent professionalizing of the ministry.”

It should also be noted that at the same time the Committee recommends the continuation of our relationship with the GKN.

Mention is made of the institution of a federation of Reformed Churches in Brazil.

Presbyterian Church in Korea

The contact with The Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) continues to be problematic. The Committee reports that no response has been received

about questions raised by Synod Fergus with respect to the Lord’s Supper and Confessional Membership in the PCK. At the same time, summaries of General Assembly Minutes indicates that there is a busy church life. In 1999, 120 new students were admitted at their Seminary. The Committee recommends continuing the contact.

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

The next Conference is scheduled for the end of June of this year in Philadelphia, PA. The Committee indicates it had difficulty comprehending the concern of Synod Fergus about the change made to the ICRC constitution. Synod Neerlandia will be asked to reconsider this proposal or clarify it.

Other matters

Mention is made of the institution of a federation of Reformed Churches in Brazil (Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil [IRB]). This is the fruit of many years of mission work by missionaries sent by the Maranatha Church in Surrey, the church at Hamilton, as well as by the Dutch sister churches. A member of the Committee, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, was present at the founding meeting. This federation of churches has requested to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with our churches. The Committee recommends that this be done.

As a final item, the Committee points out some of the problems which have come about as a result of Synod Fergus’ restructuring of committees dealing with other churches. There are gaps in terms of which committee has what responsibility. This needs to be addressed. Further, it is pointed out that while twelve people deal with three churches (ERQ, RCUS, OPC), a committee of four is rather small for dealing with churches in the rest of the world.

Conclusion

The CRCA Report always is a reminder of the catholic character of the church of our Lord, “spread and dispersed throughout the entire world” (BC 28). It also reminds us that the church continues to face troubles and turmoil while waiting for our Lord to appear in glory, making all believers all the more eager for that great day to come. 



By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

For this month we have a poem for you. Yes, a poem that may give you as parents, or care givers a different outlook on whom you are caring for. Indeed, every child that is born into this world is unique, and there are no two the same. For some it may seem that when the Lord has given a special child, you may feel as if you cannot carry this tremendous task that you have been given. We all are tainted with sin and have our earthly crosses to carry and therefore turn to the Lord for help and guidance, and He will give us the strength to also carry on. There is no need to feel ashamed, but rather privileged to take care of these special children from the Lord. One day they too will be washed in white garments, and stand around God's throne singing praises and glorifying his great and holy Name. Let us always remember that God surrounds each one of his children with his love and care, when they turn to Him in simple humble obedience.

A Special Child

The Lord did say to the angels in heaven on high
The time again for another birth is nigh.
This special child will need much love
And much help and guidance from heaven above.

His progress may seem very slow
Accomplishments he may not hardly show
He will require lots of extra care
From care givers and parents so fair.

He may not run or laugh or play
His thoughts may seem quite far away.
In many ways he will not adapt
And he'll be known as handicapped.

So with great care he will be sent
To a home where his life will be content.
The Lord in His providence found parents who
Would such a special task have to do.

They will not realize right away
The leading role they're asked to play
But with this child sent from above
Comes stronger faith and richer love.

And soon they'll know the privilege given
In caring for this gift from Heaven
Their precious charge, so meek and mild
Is God's very Special Child!

* * * * *

*Blest is the man who always
Reveres and serves the Lord,
Who, walking in His pathways,
Obeys and keeps His Word.
The fruit of all your labour
As your reward you'll eat
And blest by His great favour,
You'll have what you may need.*

*Your wife a vine resembles,
Fruitful within your house.
Like olive shoots assemble
The children God allows.
Around your table sitting,
They are a rich reward,
A blessing great and fitting
For Him who fears the LORD.*

Psalm 128:1, 2

Birthdays in February:

12th: Connie VanAmerongen will be turning 36
102 - 35 Bredin Parkway
Orangeville, ON L9X 3X1
Tel: 519-941-6195;
e-mail: connie_ev1@hotmail.com

18th: Cora Schoonhoven will be turning 50
24 Jane Speight Road
Markham, ON L3P 3G4

Birthdays in March:

3rd: Trevor Hofsink will turn 23
C106 8920 165 Street
Edmonton, AB T5R 2R9

10th: James Boone will be 5
22 Aberdare Road NE
Calgary, AB T2A 6V9

12th: Gerry Eelhart will turn 39
9713-151 Street
Edmonton, AB T5P 1S6

15th: Jim VanderHeiden will turn 42
1156 Diltz Road, RR 2
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2

18th: Roselyn Kuik will be 27
68 Lynn Lake Drive
Winnipeg, MB R2C 4N7

26th: Courtney Popken will turn 8
9445 Windsor Street
Chilliwack, BC V2P 6C5

Congratulations to you all on your birthday. We hope you all have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends and with the blessing of the Lord in this new year. Till the next time,

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman
Mailing correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2 Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
1-905-563-0380

Middle East Reformed Fellowship

NEWS from MERF-Canada

Newsletter – December 2000

Biblical training programs at the John Calvin Centre

This past summer 141 young men, women, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, deacons, elders, evangelists and pastors participated in five study terms. In June, pastors from the UK taught a two week study term for elders from churches in Syria, Sudan and Egypt and another for ladies representing churches all across Egypt. In July/August Mr. Ewoud Gosker, from the Reformed (Liberated) Churches in the Netherlands, taught a course for Sunday School teachers from Arabic-speaking churches in the Arabian Gulf States, Egypt and Sudan, as well as one for leaders of Middle School Age Youth Groups from churches all across Egypt. Mr. Gosker and his wife were very excited to see the Sunday School teachers and youth leaders growing in the knowledge and understanding of God's Word. These groups were largely made up of young adults and university students who benefited greatly from the in-depth Bible study and teaching. It was encouraging to receive feedback such as "I never knew that there is so much about Christ in the Old Testament!"

Daily Arabic gospel broadcasts

As of October 30, 2000 MERF broadcasts seven days a week on Radio Monte Carlo's medium wave transmitter which blankets the entire Middle East region. Four of the seven weekly broadcasts are now being produced in MERF's new broadcasting facilities in Cairo. The three others continue to be produced at the John Calvin Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus. The broadcast recording facilities in Lebanon are expected to be ready for use during the first half of 2001. About three million Arabic-speaking people listen to each of MERF's broadcasts. Trained Arab Christians are engaged in personalized follow up of the hundreds of listeners expressing in-

terest in the gospel. Several intensive broadcast training programs have taken place in November and will take place again in January. These programs include the training of a group of Iranians for Farsi gospel broadcasts, under the leadership of Bob Fortner, Words of Hope's broadcast training coordinator.

MERF broadcasts seven days a week on Radio Monte Carlo's medium wave transmitter which blankets the entire Middle East region.

MERF Centre in Lokichoggio, Kenya for expanding South Sudan Ministries

The Lord continues to bless MERF's ministries in southern Sudan. MERF's South Sudan Committee has been able to provide much needed diaconal aid via Kenya to believers in the southern Sudanese regions of Malakal, Naser, Juba, Akobo, Juachboor and Mading. The ministry of the Word in the same areas is also expanding through the work of pastors and evangelists.

To more effectively meet the needs of the growing ministries of the MERF South Sudan Committee, the Board of Directors has approved finalizing the registration of MERF with Kenyan authorities as a Non-Government Organization (NGO). NGO status enables MERF to use UN facilities for transporting supplies and staff to remote areas in South Sudan. It also makes it far easier and cheaper to bring diaconal aid materials to southern Sudan via Kenya. The Board also approved the proposal to purchase a piece of land to set up a centre in Lokichoggio, Kenya bordering South Sudan. The new centre will include: a large storage area for Christian literature, food, clothing and med-

ical supplies; radio recording facilities for Nuer and Dinka gospel broadcasts; a study hall and research library for the training of Sudanese leaders and workers; guest rooms for staff, trainees, etc.

This ministry centre is expected to be completed before the middle of the year 2001. Rev. Tut Wan has been appointed to head MERF's training teams in South Sudan working out of the new centre in Lokichoggio. Rev. Wan recently completed his work translating the Nuer Bible with the East Africa Bible Society.

Ministering to the Church in Baghdad, Iraq

Mrs. Sicil Mehanny, wife of the pastor of the Church in Baghdad, Iraq, attended the July study term at the John Calvin Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus for Sunday School teachers. She shared how she ministers alongside her husband in Baghdad. Rev. Ikram Mehanny and his wife left their two eldest daughters on their own in their home country of Egypt to serve the spiritual needs of the large Arabic-speaking congregation. Not only are there great spiritual needs in Iraq, but also the continuing UN sanctions against the country have resulted in widespread physical need as well.

Although resources are limited, the church seeks to provide for the needs of its people and reach out as salt and light into the community in Baghdad. Several hundred people worship together in the Arab congregation on Sundays. The church has six buses to bring those who live far away and cannot afford transportation costs to the worship services. The buses also bring about 300 children and their mothers to the church building on Fridays for "Sunday" School and Bible study. (Friday is the day off from work and school in Iraq and most Moslem countries.) Not only are the children and their mothers nurtured in God's Word, but they also receive something good to eat and a gift of clothes on holidays. Thirty of the

most needy mothers and children in the Friday program receive additional assistance. About 100 other very needy families also receive church assistance. Most of these are widows or orphans or people with severe physical or mental disabilities. The church organizes opportunities for these families to make and sell handicrafts and baked goods to earn their support. However, this only raises a small portion of the funds needed. MERF diaconal aid is much appreciated to span the gap.

Pastor Ikram and Mrs. Sicil's week is full bringing the hope and joy of God's good Word to his people in Baghdad. One day each week is committed to home visitation and another to receiving anyone looking for counsel. In addition to the Friday children and mothers program, Thursdays are set aside for the youth meeting, Wednesdays for the ladies' meeting and Pastor Ikram also leads three weekly Bible study groups. Not only Iraqis are being nurtured by this ministry in Baghdad. The church

also brings the gospel of God's grace to a large group of Sudanese refugees living in Iraq. There are also five other churches throughout Iraq which MERF is aiding both spiritually and physically.

Presbytery has also approved Rev. Atallah's continued missionary service with MERF.

Dropping of charges against Rev. V. Atallah

In February 2000 Rev. Atallah ended his working relationship with the denominational Committee of Foreign Missions (COFM) of the OPC. A month later COFM filed charges against him with his presbytery. The Presbytery of the Midwest then appointed a committee of three ministers and three elders to investigate and report on the COFM's charges. After months of investigation and many hours of delibera-

tions, the Presbytery dismissed those charges. Presbytery has also approved Rev. Atallah's continued missionary service with MERF, commending him and MERF for prayer support to the OPC General Assembly, presbyteries, churches, ministers and all others.

We want to thank you for your continued support. Please continue to remember the work of MERF in your prayers and with your gifts. Recently the Atallah's wrote: *Your prayers and encouragement mean a lot to us . . . We praise our Lord for enabling us, as God's people working together, to serve our Saviour by building up the church in a very needy part of the world.*

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

MERF-Canada,
1225 Dundas Street, R.R. #1,
Burlington ON L7R 3X4

Yours in his service,
Rev. J. Mulder, chairman
Mrs. J. Van Dam, secretary 

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

In *Clarion* no. 22 of October 27, 2000, Rev. P. Aasman wrote the guest editorial concerning "The Sound of War." He points to Matthew 24:6 and in that context he states: "It is well that the sound of war becomes louder in our ears. We should remember because Jesus Christ tells us that this is all we can expect from human history." This statement is Rev. Aasman's opinion about Scripture, but not the meaning of Scripture. For in this passage the Lord Jesus speaks to his disciples, who would witness these things: "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (v. 34).

One paragraph earlier Rev. Aasman writes: "We should not remember by pointing a finger at 'the enemy.' Our remembrance should be marked by an acknowledgment of our own potential for barbarism and savagery . . ." With this broad statement, the children of God, who have been made new creatures in our Lord Jesus and who Scripture calls "the righteous," are tarred with the same brush as Hitler and his Nazis. Surely this is going a few steps too far?

H. de Jong, Edmonton

Reply from the Author:

I would maintain the *opinion* I presented in the editorial since it is unreasonable to say (as br. de Jong appears to say) that the things Jesus foretells in Matthew 24 must happen during the life-time of that generation. That it is unreasonable is most easily demonstrated when one considers verse 30 where Jesus says that among the things that will take place is the following: "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and glory." Nobody holds that the generation who lived at that time saw this. One cannot protest, then, when one takes verse 6 ("You will hear of wars and rumours of wars") and says that it applies to the whole period of history between Christ's ascension and his return.

Furthermore, I would maintain, that I did not go *too far* when I observed that Remembrance Day is an occasion for us to reflect on our own potential for barbarism and savagery. I wrote those words in connection to a commemoration that is nearly global.

Countries all over the world pause on November 11 to remember the horrible wars. That context was clearly alluded to in the article. In that context, to speak of "our potential for barbarism and savagery" is appropriate.

I would add, however, that it is wrong for Christians to exempt themselves from this global responsibility. Even though we are new creatures in Christ, we still do have the *potential* for barbarism and savagery. It is blindness to point a finger at such individuals as Hitler and such movements as Nazism (as br. de Jong does) in order to absolve ourselves of such evil. The church in particular and Christians in general have often committed barbaric and savage deeds against their fellow man in history. If the church confesses that baptism removes the guilt of original sin, but not the pollution of it, who dares to deny that we have the potential to commit the most heinous deeds? What distinguishes a Christian on Remembrance Day is not a self-righteous finger-pointing at the evil-doers in the world, but a humble turning to God to bring about a righteous world, because we cannot.

P. Aasman



A Seminary Statement

A number of (church) papers have published the statement recently released by the faculty of Mid-America Reformed Seminary regarding its teaching on the “days of creation” (Genesis 1). The United Reformed Churches, with whom we have had progressing ecumenical contacts, receive most of their candidates for the ministry from this seminary. As teaching staff in Hamilton, we are also thankful for the good relations we have with Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Here follows the statement:

We are aware that several Reformed churches or denominations have been discussing the issue of the length of the days of creation. Some, such as the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in the United States, have adopted positions on this matter. Other churches have not adopted a formal statement or position, such as the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Within this ecclesiastical situation, it is important to keep in mind that Mid-America Reformed Seminary is not under any direct ecclesiastical control, although its Board and Faculty subscribe wholeheartedly to the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession, and the Seminary professors are under the supervision of church elders. Therefore, members of the Faculty of Mid-America Reformed Seminary do not and cannot serve in the capacity of official spokesmen for any ecclesiastical body, except insofar as they are authorized to do so by such a body.

With these observations in mind, we declare that in our public writings and in our classroom teaching, we hold that the six days of creation are to be understood as consecutive, real (i.e., literal) days of alternating evenings and morn-

ings. In other words, the word day in Genesis 1 should not be understood as a day-age (i.e., some long age of an indefinite number of years). Both the Board and the Faculty of Mid-America Reformed Seminary fully agree that the WCF IV.i. accurately teaches what the Bible states in Exodus 20:11 concerning God’s creation of the world in six days.

We hold that the six days of creation are to be understood as consecutive, real (i.e. literal) days of alternating evenings and mornings.

There is no one on the Faculty at Mid-America Reformed Seminary who teaches or subscribes to the framework hypothesis. Furthermore, the Seminary Board has not hired anyone to teach who does not hold to the above position on the creation days. We hold firmly to the special creation work of God, performed in the space of six consecutive, real days. In addition, we also declare and teach that the confessional (im)permissibility of any particular teaching about the creation days must be determined by the churches responsible for the doctrine and life of Faculty members.

If you have further questions about this matter, please feel free to address them to the Faculty, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 229 Seminary Drive, Dyer, Indiana 46311.

This statement is clear and forthright, and does not need much comment. Few of us would quarrel with the position taken by the faculty. It seems that

they wish to shape some distance between their position and the more tolerant policy defended by the president of Westminster Seminary in Escondido. One also senses some distance being taken from the position adopted by the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) at its General Assembly last summer. The assembly decided that the statement of the Westminster Confession on the days of creation is no longer binding in a literal sense, and freedom of interpretation is permitted on this point.

All this, however, does raise the issue concerning the reach of church discipline in such a non-ecclesiastically affiliated seminary. Ultimately this statement sees the supervision of seminary professors as essentially a local matter. Furthermore, the local church could not make any judgment concerning the professor’s right to teach, since that is strictly a matter determined by the governing body of the seminary. About the only thing a federation of churches can do in this structure, if local discipline has no results, is to delete a seminary from the list of those schools from which it admits graduates to the ecclesiastical examinations. But that seems at best a second rate solution, since, if one professor were teaching views deviating from the confessions, all professors of the seminary would in a sense be “penalized” for the teaching of one.

The system of using non-ecclesiastically affiliated seminaries is workable as long as all professors are bound to maintain the Reformed confessions. It becomes more problematic if a difficulty in the teaching arises. How can discipline be effective when there is no direct ecclesiastical connection? Dangers and pitfalls can surface in any approach, but particularly situations of discipline prove the merit of a federation maintaining a *school of the churches, and for the churches.*

Farewell to Rev. J. VanWoudenberg and family

By L. Dokter



The Kerwood congregation had a special potluck dinner and program to say good-bye to their minister. It was an evening of celebration and of fond farewells. The seven and a half years in Kerwood had come to a close. The VanWoudenbergs now embark on a new venture in the Church of Guelph. But before sending them off under the blessing of God, the congregation at Kerwood organized this evening of farewell.

After consuming a delicious meal prepared by all, Mr. B. Dokter expressed our thankfulness, affection and praise of the VanWoudenberg family as we come to the end of an era. Thanks is given to the Lord for all they have done.

During the evening we could enjoy the talents of the congregation in music, song, skits and poems. Contributions were made by individuals and societies from younger to older members. Everyone took part in trying to

make a lasting impression and giving a demonstration of thankfulness for the VanWoudenbergs' dedicated work among the Kerwood congregation.

As a token of thanks to them, they were given a handsome wooden clock. The minister also received a new en-

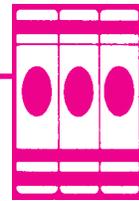
graved thermos from the Young Peoples Society and a toy train spelling VAN WOUDEBERG from the young children. This is to remind them of the train and its whistle that so often! and so near! went by his residence. Throughout the evening we were delighted with a blaring train whistle over the sound system. Yes, Guelph is receiving a well "trained" minister!

The evening ended with words of response by Rev. VanWoudenberg. He thanked everyone for their support. He reflected on the fact that in seven and a half years the roots go very deep and it won't be easy to "uproot" his family. He made special note that God would continue to care for them in their new congregation.

We thank the Lord for giving us Rev. VanWoudenberg and his family. The work he was able to do and the lives he touched will leave a lasting impression. The evening was closed by Mr. M. Smid who committed the VanWoudenberg family to the Lord's care as they depart to Guelph. 



BOOK REVIEW



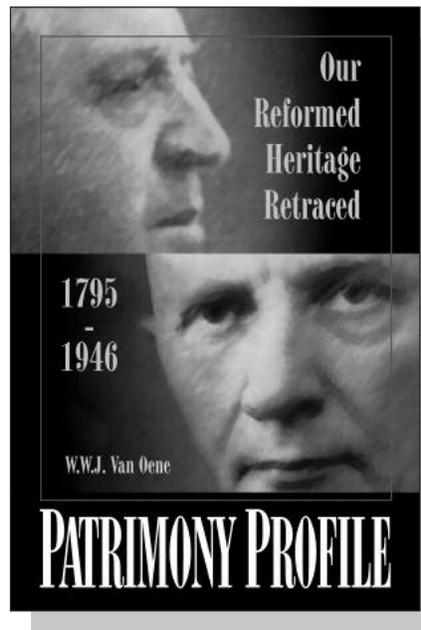
reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

W.W.J. VanOene, *Patrimony Profile: Our Reformed Heritage Retraced, 1795-1946*, Winnipeg: Premier, 1999, hardcover, \$29.00.

To the best of my knowledge, it is a custom in all of our churches that when someone makes profession of faith, a gift is made on behalf of the consistory. This gift is always a book of the edifying variety. Let me begin this review by saying that this new book of Rev. W.W.J. VanOene would be a great book for these presentations. There are many other valuable books, but this is a book sorely needed in our time. For those of us who care about the Reformed character of our church federation, this book should be an essential part of our home library, and not just as a heavy book-end for lighter reading, but as a tome that we treasure and read often.

That may sound like a rather bold statement, so allow me to explain. In this book, based upon a long series of *Clarion* articles and material taught for a teachers' course, Rev. VanOene outlines our Reformed heritage over the period 1795-1946. This is a long period of time and much happens – and this is reflected in the length and detail of this book. However, the vastness of the material is its richness. We see in this book *in detail* in the first place how Satan attempted to destroy our heritage and second how the LORD preserved that same heritage. This is sorely needed in our time when our culture and often we ourselves cannot see past the ends of our noses when it comes to history. We too soon forget the trials and triumphs the church has experienced throughout her history. We too easily lose track of how Satan has brought the church away from the truth – and thereby we also fail to see how he can do it again in our day.

Patrimony Profile is therefore a much-needed book for our time. The lessons that can be learned from our Reformed heritage are endless and we must not ignore them. Throughout this volume, from the Secession of 1834 to



the Liberation of 1944, we are constantly warned by Rev. VanOene of the dangers of hierarchy. We see so clearly how hierarchical tendencies and developments played right into the hands of Satan for the perversion of the truth in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. Not only that, but we also see how God uses the weak and lowly in the churches to bring about Reformation. We read in this book about Klaas Kuipenga who was God's tool for reformation in Hendrik DeCock's life. We read about Pietje Balthus. She was instrumental in bringing Abraham Kuyper "to the source of faith and the firm foundation of the church" (p.124). Further on, we hear about a H. Marinus who noticed something amiss in the preaching of his pastor, Dr. J.G. Geelkerken. It took some time for Marinus to be taken seriously, but before long it was recognized that Dr. Geelkerken was going off the rails of the Reformed faith.

There is so much to be gained from reading and treasuring this book. This is one of the finest books on Reformed church history available in the English language. It is destined to be a classic textbook. There is absolutely nothing that compares with it in terms of de-

tail, breadth, and also countless tidbits of wisdom. It is true that the detail may be somewhat intimidating for the less technical reader. Many times Rev. Van Oene quotes extensively (in translation, of course) from original documents, sometimes reproducing the whole thing (several such documents are in the appendices). However, the charitable reader should take heart since many of these extensive citations can be either skimmed or skipped without great damage to the line of history. These many citations and original texts are most useful and interesting, though quite technical.

I have but one criticism: the lack of footnotes and better indication of Rev. VanOene's sources. It is true that Rev. VanOene provides an extensive bibliography (eight pages!) at the back of *Patrimony Profile*, but this in most cases will be of little help to serious students of church history as they trace and confirm source material. This is a minor shortcoming but one that is rather annoying, though probably more so to students and professors at the Theological College than anyone else. However, do not let that one little criticism take away from the overall positive picture.

The value of this book can easily be seen by perusing its bibliography. As already noted, there are eight pages of sources to be found. Of those, only three sources are in English. Three! Rev. VanOene has therefore done us a great service by writing this book. The Dutch language is becoming more and more inaccessible and thus so are the details of our Reformed heritage. With this book, much of that inheritance has been preserved for future generations. Therefore, we should be greatly indebted to our "beloved patriarch" for this book. I may conclude with the words of Rev. VanOene himself, "May this work be useful and profitable for all who read and consult it, and may it be instrumental in keeping older and younger members on the path of obedience while, at the same time, being an incentive to *come* together for all who *belong* together." Well said, Rev. VanOene. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I am very sorry I have not written for some time. I have been so busy, that I haven't even looked at my computer, much less trying to write to all my friends, near and far.

Did you have a wonderful Christmas and New Year? Was there lots of snow where you live? And have you been doing lots of skiing, skating, cross-country skiing, making snowmen, having snowball fights, etc, etc? That is so much fun to be able to do, isn't it?

Can you imagine that, in other countries of the world, they are having summer? I know that in Australia, for example, the people have a very warm Christmas and New Year. Those who live on the coast go to the beach for those days. Can you imagine a Christmas with hot sunshine and no snow? Can you imagine never having seen snow in your life? That wouldn't be much fun, would it?

I hope you have all been busy with writing me letters. I haven't received many over the last few weeks, even though I haven't been writing to you either. I would really love to hear from you, to find out what your Christmas was like and how you spent your holidays from school.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

Puzzles

Unusual Experiences

Some people experience the unusual. Match the person with his experience:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Moses | a. Stoning mob, Acts 7:59 |
| 2. Paul | b. Parting sea, Exodus 14:21 |
| 3. Jacob | c. Wet and dry fleece, Judges 6:36-40 |
| 4. Stephen | d. Talking donkey, Numbers 2:27-28 |
| 5. Joshua | e. Burning bush, Exodus 3:2 |
| 6. Balaam | f. Reversing sundial, 2 Kings 20:10-11 |
| 7. Elisha | g. Dipping in muddy water, 2 Kings 5:11-14 |
| 8. Hebrews | h. Blinding light, Acts 9:3 |
| 9. Naaman | i. Fighting angel, Genesis 32:24 |
| 10. Hezekiah | j. Sun standing still, Joshua 10:12-13 |
| 11. Gideon | k. Swimming axe head, 2 Kings 6:1-6 |

January Birthdays

5 Shawna Bethlehem 19 Dustin Wielenga

February Birthdays

12 Stephanie Verhelst 21 Nadine Barendregt
20 Jonathan Slaa 27 Rebecca van Dijk

Riddles

by Busy Beaver Rhonda Wiersma

What does the firefly say when he flies into the electric fan?
I'm de-lighted.

Have you ever seen a house fly? Have you ever seen a butter fly?

If you have, I wish I was you.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

by Busy Beaver Rhonda Wiersma

- Who was the Roman Emperor who decreed that "all the world should be taxed" at the time of the birth of Christ?
- Who was the kind of Judea who ordered all the babes of Bethlehem to be killed?
- Who was the ancestor of Jesus (on his mother's side) who also lived in Bethlehem?
- There was a prophecy made by Isaiah about Jesus' coming: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call him. . ."
- Who first heard the glad tidings of Jesus' birth from the angel of the Lord?
- Where did Jesus' mother, Mary, offer a "pair of turtledoves" in gratitude for the birth of her son?
- What is another name for the wise men who brought gifts to the baby Jesus.
- Who was the very old prophetess who lived in the temple and blessed the baby King?

