

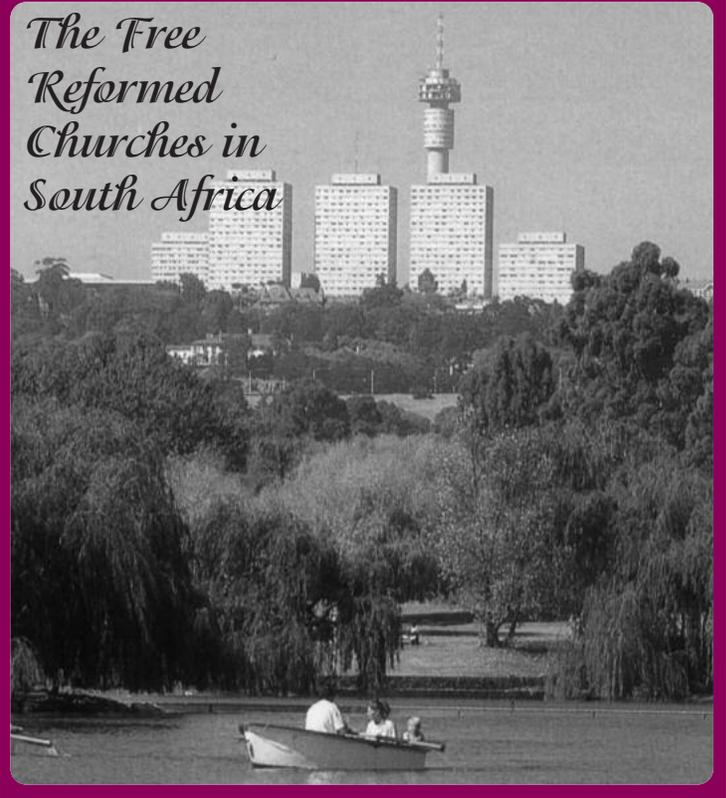


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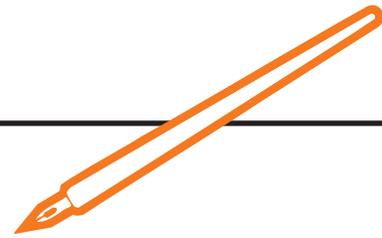
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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MAY 3, 1996

*The Free
Reformed
Churches in
South Africa*



By R. Schouten



Light on the Outer Darkness

In recent weeks, many of us have heard the news reports and commentaries on the official abolition of hell by the Church of England (Anglican Church of Canada). In this mainline denomination, the doctrine of eternal punishment has now been replaced by the teaching of annihilation. Annihilationism is the belief that instead of experiencing conscious suffering after death and after the day of judgment, unbelievers will be exterminated by God. As physical and spiritual creatures, they will be no more.

Many orthodox believers were startled by this theological development. It used to be that annihilationism was confined to cults and sects of Christendom. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses have long heaped scorn on the Christian concept of hell, claiming that it is an error of an apostate church. Seventh Day Adventists believe that while the wicked will indeed suffer, this suffering is limited and is followed by extinction of the whole person.

It goes without saying that also many liberal churches have long ago done away with the biblical idea of hell – just as they have done away with belief in Satan and demons as well as in the miracles of Scripture or a literal creation. What may surprise some, however, is the fact that many well-known *evangelical* leaders have been part of the move to abolish hell in the teaching of the Church of England. In fact, the push to eradicate hell from the teaching of the Church is spreading rapidly among alleged evangelicals. Evangelicals, in contrast to liberals, are known for their commitment to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. Therefore, their capitulation on this issue is nothing short of shocking.

Recently, while preparing a seminar on evangelism, I read the massive volume of Michael Green entitled *Evangelism Through the Local Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson-Oliver Books, 1992). Rev. Green is of Anglican loyalty and holds a chair in evangelism at the increasingly prestigious Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. On page seventy-two of this often very fine book, he shares his view on hell: "What sort of God would He be who could rejoice eternally in heaven with the saved while downstairs the cries of the lost make an agonizing cacophony? Such a God is not the person revealed in Scripture as utterly just and utterly loving" (p. 72). Our first comment might be that it is dangerous to ask speculative questions about how God may or may not be. The truth is that by nature no one is willing to worship and adore the Biblical God. We all have an innate urge to reshape God after our own image. Our concern as believers, therefore, is not what sort of God we can imagine or would prefer but what sort of God has been revealed. Further, Green as-

sumes but does not demonstrate that God's punishing of the non-believer is in conflict with His love and justice. Green's conclusion is that "Christians, therefore, should reject the doctrine of conscious unending torment for those who have never heard the gospel just as firmly as they reject universalism" (p. 73).

Green, however, is not the first evangelical Anglican to take such a position. Some years before him, the well-known and widely-respected Dr. John Stott did the same. Any Christian book-store in North America will carry a wide range of Stott's books – many of them worthwhile! Stott once wrote, "Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain" (David L. Edwards and John R.W. Stott, *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988, 314-315). In addition, we may mention the views of Philip Hughes, well-known Anglican Bible scholar and commentator who has also departed from the received doctrine of hell (see Philip Hughes, *The True Image*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, pg. 398ff).

Turning again to the domestic scene, we should also pay attention to the remarks of noted evangelical author Clark Pinnock, the ever-evolving but never arriving Canadian theologian hailing from McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. Here are his fierce comments: "How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the gospel itself" (Clark Pinnock, "The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent," *Criswell Theological Review*, Spring 1990, 246-247).

How is it possible that widely-respected and allegedly Bible-believing Christian leaders can deny what we always saw as a fundamental Christian doctrine? It appears from their writings that they wish to base the denial of hell on Scripture itself. Their position is against traditional ideas of hell because they feel the Bible does not teach these ideas. This is different from a liberal position which holds that even while the Bible may very well teach hell, modern people cannot and should not believe in it. A liberal believes that the Biblical hell must be demythologized, while the evangelicals mentioned above believe that there is no need to demythologize because the Bible simply does not teach hell. Hence, we can only respond by turning to the Bible itself.

The Bible on hell

In this article, we cannot hope to survey the whole of Biblical revelation. In a nutshell, however, we need to see if the Bible teaches two points denied by annihilation teaching. These two points are: 1) Does the Bible teach that those who are not saved experience conscious suffering and 2) Does the Bible teach that this suffering is eternal? If we can find evidence to support these positions, the annihilationist argument cannot stand.

It may come as a surprise that nobody in Scripture said more about hell than our blessed Saviour. Since the liberals, in their efforts to construct a gentler and kinder theology, often claim Jesus as one of their own, this is thought-provoking to say the least. Of the many words of the Lord about the final judgment and hell, we mention only the following. First of all, in Matthew 13:41-42, Christ speaks about evildoers being thrown into the furnace of fire. There, he says, “men will weep and gnash their teeth.” How can there be weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell if annihilation is true? Similar words are spoken in Matthew 22:13. Then, too, in Mark 9:43, the fire of hell is said to be “unquenchable” and in verse 48 of the same chapter, we read: “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” In all these horrible images is conveyed the truth that the wicked are not annihilated, but are consciously suffering.

Matthew 25 is important to establish the *duration* of suffering in hell. In this chapter, we read about the punishment of the wicked and the bliss of the saved: “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (v. 46). While the Greek term here translated “eternal” can sometimes mean something less than “forever,” in this case it must indeed mean eternal, since the punishment of the wicked is contrasted with eternal life of God’s people. Clearly, the punishment of the wicked will last as long as the life of the righteous, namely, forever.

Other arguments besides the above may also be briefly pursued. For example, how could Christ say about Judas that “it would have been better for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24)? If Judas’ end was annihilation, how is this worse than if he had never been born? To consider yet another line of evidence, we may recall how Christ once said that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for the people of Bethsaida and Chorazin (Matthew 11:22, 24). The question arises: how can there be degrees of punishment if the punishment is annihilation for all? To consider one last line of reasoning, why would the wicked be looking for the mountains to cover them on the day of judgment if the judgment is annihilation? (cf. Rev. 6:16).

The most convincing evidence mustered in favour of the annihilationist position is the repeated use of the word “destruction” to describe the destiny of the unsaved (see, for example, Rom. 9:22, Phil. 1:28, 2 Thess. 1:9, 2 Pet. 3:7). The word “destruction” certainly seems to imply cessation of existence. However, as explained by, for example, Dr. Anthony Hoekema, in his well-written volume, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, 1989), the Greek word often translated by “destruction” in the New Testament *never* means annihilation (p. 269). Rather it means things like “being lost” or “ruin.” Hoekema concludes that the word translated by “destruction,” when

used to describe the ultimate destiny of those who are not in Christ means “everlasting perdition, a perdition consisting of endless loss of fellowship with God, which is at the same time a state of endless torment or pain” (p. 270).

It seems clear, then, that the doctrine of eternal punishment is well-established in Scripture. We may add that the Bible speaks about hell symbolically – just as it does of heaven. Images such as “outer darkness” and “lake of fire” and “chains of darkness” are not intended to be taken literally, just as we ought not to understand the description of heaven in a book like *Revelation* in a literal sense. This does not mean, however, that the reality of hell is less terrible than we might have thought. The truth is that the Lord Jesus and the other inspired writers of Scripture used the most dreadful images available to them to describe the reality of hell. If anything, the reality is worse than the images.

Root of opposition

If the Biblical data is clear, how do we explain the growing denial of hell? The answer seems to be that hell does not fit with our human notions of justice and fairness. Punishment that never ends does not seem fair. Most of the emotional language used in repudiating hell revolves around the notion of fairness. Behind this trend, we need to recognize two weaknesses in the theology of the annihilationists. On the one hand, they inevitably fail to grasp the holiness and righteousness of God. On the other hand, they miss the seriousness of sin. The following words of our Catechism do not find an echo in the heart of an annihilationist: “His justice requires that sin committed against the most high majesty of God also be punished with the most severe, that is, with everlasting, punishment of body and soul” (Answer 11).

Ultimately, the doctrine of annihilationism must be seen as a protest against the Biblical God. It is an attempt to shape the God of Scripture into a more congenial and manageable deity. As such, it diminishes God.

Entrenchment of the new view of hell will lead to a loss of seriousness in the church’s preaching of repentance. It will also weaken the warnings of Scripture against covenant breaking, warnings like that found in Hebrews ten: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (cf. vv. 28, 29, 31). Ironically, the view of Green and others will also weaken missionary zeal of the church, for surely one of motives for evangelism is that people might be saved from hell. Perhaps worst of all, the new view of hell will rob the Lord of the praise due His Name, praise for saving us not from annihilation, but from the terrors of hell.

Therefore, we can only hope and pray that this new view will be resisted by evangelicals and that institutions like Regent College will rather follow the good instruction of leaders such as its own Dr. J. Packer on this point. In his short volume, *Concise Theology: A guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), Packer states that “the revelation of hell in Scripture assumes a depth of insight into divine holiness and human and demonic sinfulness that most of us do not have” (p. 261). Further, he writes that “speculations about ‘a second chance’ after death, or personal annihilation of the ungodly at some stage, have no biblical warrant” (p. 262). He concludes, “It is really a mercy to mankind that God in Scripture is so explicit about hell. We cannot say we have not been warned” (p. 263).

By H.J.J. Feenstra

BE WISE WITH WISDOM!

Christian education – More basic training

Originally published as
Wees wijs met de wijsheid,
Woord en Wereld # 11
Uitgeverij Woord en Wereld,
Ermelo 1989
Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

No elite

What a marvellous beginning to wisdom instruction! The students of these teachers of wisdom could well make great advances in wisdom, in the art of living. But never would they be allowed to become an elite, far removed above all ordinary people. They were not permitted to become the upper ten, removed from every day life in the family. The wise man, the teacher of wisdom was fully part of the people, part of the church.

However many differences there may be in development, gifts and talents, education and even levels of wisdom, God's people are always united in the covenant; they are one in circumcision and baptism, and in what that sacrament means for upbringing and education.

Baptism, our form for baptism, the baptismal vow – they have every thing to do with Proverbs 1:8 - 9, with the building of the church.

Childlike obedience

What should be the relationship between parents and children? *Hear, my son, your father's instruction . . .* The word hearing in this text means much more than *being aware of sound*. A father charges his son to do a job for him; the son does not move; the father repeats his words; the son answers in a biting manner, "I've heard you." But that is not *hearing*; only the eardrum moved, without any further result! Real *hearing* is a matter of the heart. When Solomon prayed to the Lord for wisdom, he used these words, *So give your servant a discerning heart . . .* Literally he says here, a *hearing heart*, indicating hearing with attention and obedience. Real *hearing* means obediently responding. When a mother says to her daughter, "Listen carefully to what I have to say," she does not expect her daughter to listen politely till mom has finished speaking, and then to continue with whatever she was doing. *Hearing* means obediently *doing* what your parents say. You are not allowed to put the teachings of your mother aside. You must take careful note of them with a listening heart.

Why? Because God wants you to become a wise and discerning person: He wants you to learn how to live for

Him. Therefore you are not allowed to ignore the words of your mother.

But, you might argue, when I turn eighteen, I reach the legal age of majority. That means that my parents no longer have control over me, does it not?

It is true, when you have reached the legal age of majority you are able to buy, for instance, a house. But whether you have become mature is another matter. Common sense tells us that with your eighteenth birthday you do not pass some magic boundary which suddenly changes relationships and excuses young people from the responsibility to honour the ordinances of the Lord.

As children grow up, the relationship between parents and children will change; at a certain age, for instance, you will no longer get a spanking. Yet your parents remain your parents; you must continue to honour them. Also when through advanced studies you grow beyond the level of schooling of your parents, you are called to continue to respect them because it has pleased God to give you these parents.

When they have grown old and you have become an adult, you will still be able to learn from the life experience of your mother or ask for advice from the wisdom of your father. And when they no longer will be able to do this

What's inside?

Apostasy ought not to surprise us. The apostle Paul told Timothy that *" . . . the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths . . ."* (1 Tim. 4:3,4). Editor Schouten writes about such "itching ears" even among "Evangelicals." Very sad. Rev. C.F. Heiberg writes about widespread apostasy in South Africa. But he also writes about a small reformation in which God is using a few men who must have 1 Tim. 4:2 and 5 written upon their hearts:

" . . . preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching . . . always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry." God bless these men! God bless our sister churches in South Africa!

One of our native sons has been ordained to the ministry in the Free Reformed Church of West Albany, Australia. We carry a report of that.

Ruth Meerveld updates us on relief work in Malawi and Nkhoma.

We hope you enjoy this "international" issue of *Clarion*.

GvP

because of age or sickness, your calling to honour them remains, even when they have to be cared for in a nursing home, or when their mind fails them.

Harken to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

From Scripture 1 Kings 3:9 (NIV)
Proverbs 23:22

From the Confessions Heidelberg
Catechism
Lord's Day 29

Parental responsibility

In the meantime, those who read all this may begin to object. I hear them mutter, "What do you know? My father and mother are not perfect. Don't talk as if they do not make mistakes, as if they are always right and I always have to obey them."

Remember, we are dealing with proverbs which have their own characteristic use of absolute statements. There is, of course, another side to the words of Proverbs 1:8 - 9. When the student in the school of wisdom is called to accept the instruction (= discipline) of his father and the teaching of his mother, than it is assumed that father indeed approaches his son with his instruction, and that mother does not withhold her teaching from her child. In other words, it is assumed here that a father and mother are indeed *really* father and mother to their children. At baptism, father and mother promised to help their child eventually to understand the meaning of the baptism; they also promised to instruct their child in the doctrine of salvation.

Have them instructed – among other things, this demands a careful choice when it comes to schooling for the children. If at all possible that will be a reformed school.

Instruct – you must do that yourselves, as father and mother. And a promise remains a promise! You cannot shrug that off, however demanding and tiring that may be.

And you shall teach them diligently to your children – we read in the Bible. The word used here for *teach* means literally *to pierce, inculcate, prick, sharpen, whet*. Indeed, a telling description of the teaching task of the parents. Such teaching will be forceful and will persevere. Parents will repeatedly remind their children to love the Lord and to serve Him. Such repetitions show wisdom and understanding. Proverbs itself is full of repetitions; you

will often find the same or related proverbs. That is not done thoughtlessly; such repetitions have their own value and importance. Do not consider them an unnecessary waste of paper. This way of teaching has a most practical reason: you do not become wise overnight.

The son must listen to the instruction of his father. But the father must then also give that instruction to his son. That instruction shows the way, indeed, the right way. This fatherly teaching shows the son and daughter the right direction and will keep them on the right track. Therefore this instruction is at the same time discipline, at times painfully felt.

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him . . .

Do not withhold discipline from a child;

if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

If you beat him with the rod you will save his life from Sheol.

Of course, these are proverbs, saying things pointedly and tersely. Of course it is wrong to hit a child in mad anger. These proverbs do not give anyone a license to abuse his or her children. But let father not despise the wisdom

of God's Spirit which is offered here. A spanking, administered at the right moment and at the right address, may well be necessary at times, and may well prove to be beneficial. If psychologists tell us differently, then they will have to make way for the Word of God.

Your mother's teaching – literally: *torah*, precept, statute. The word *teaching* is used in Scripture in various meanings. It may refer to the laws of the Lord. It may also refer to the acts of the Lord, to the history of the church. It also refers to the daily activity of teaching and instructing the children, of showing them the way in life. Mothers should tell their children about the Lord, who He is, and how He works in history; about what He wants and why. Those informal discussions between mother and child are invaluable – in the kitchen, on the edge of the bed, while strolling along in the park, shorter and longer talks, planned or unplanned. The Lord uses those discussions to change children into mature adults. He uses them to teach the children the ABCs in the school of His wisdom.

From Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:7
Proverbs 13:24
Proverbs 23:13-14
Ephesians 6:4



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

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

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

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

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

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The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Deformation of the Dutch Reformed Church

By C.F. Heiberg

Editor's note: We are very pleased to publish the following contribution by a minister of one of our sister churches in South Africa. Our sister churches there are called, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA).

The reformed faith came to South Africa in the year 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck landed his three ships at the Cape of Good Hope. Since the birth of our country three and a half centuries ago, the reformed faith and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church, hereafter DRC) played a major role in the shaping of our history and society. The DRC is by far the largest Afrikaans church to this day.

Although the DRC always had the Three Forms of Unity as its doctrinal basis, it never had a consistent reformed church order. Collegialism¹ easily gained control in the DRC's church government and is at present stronger than ever. The knowledge of the reformed confessions among its members was always relatively low and is at present at its lowest ebb ever (hardly any church member can even name the three forms today). In the 19th century the DRC saw a split within its ranks on two occasions. The Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk originated in the 50s from political motives, but the Gereformeerde Kerke in SA (GKSA) because of certain Methodist influences in the DRC. During the 19th century and again in the 1930s the DRC had to deal with very strong liberal theological influences among some of its ministers and theological professors.

Contemporary trends in the DRC

However, the DRC still maintained a more or less Biblical position throughout the 20th century until at least the early 1970s. In the 1930s the DRC sad-



ly fell into the trap of becoming the spiritual mouthpiece for Afrikaner political aspirations and later even supplied the theological framework for Apartheid. During the 1970s a new generation of theologians within the DRC slowly began to steer the DRC away from the unbiblical political views towards the rejection of Apartheid and the acceptance of the document "Church and Society" at the General Synod of 1990. In this they hoped to break through the ecumenical isolation and alienation caused by the DRC's justification of Apartheid.

This all sounds very well, but it soon became apparent the real motive for the new direction was rather secularity than spirituality, namely to be in sync with modern trends in theology and ecumenical circles world-wide. The driving issue was definitely not to obey the living God speaking the Scriptures. This is proved by the fact that the DRC did not only move away from its unbiblical views on politics and race relations, but also from an inherited theological paradigm which at least tried to be faithful to the Word of God in the Calvinistic tradition.

Thus, the cracks in the walls led to a sudden collapse in the 1980s and 1990s. Nowadays most DRC theologians not only fail to listen to God's Word, but even openly reject the possibility of a corporate and normative understanding of the Holy Scriptures by the church. I am not aware of any Reformed or Presbyterian church federation in the world, during the last two centuries, that has apostasized so dramatically, so quickly and so completely as the DRC. Perhaps one of its more than forty acting theologians dared to stand in the gap, although most of them still claimed to be "reformed." Of its more than two thousand acting ministers, only an insignificant handful resists the tide, but without any effect on the course of the powerful mainstream.

What are these heretical and unbiblical views and practices that have captured the DRC? Originally it could be seen in the trend among the DRC's main systematic theologians. They have moved along Berkouwerian lines towards a deeper appreciation of Karl Barth and Rome, have rejected the view of God's sovereignty and predestination held by the Canons of Dort and have moved towards a view of Scripture which places much more emphasis on the human role in the writing of the Bible than in God's inspiration. However, this was only the start. Today the most devastating critique on the historical and normative authority of the Bible is being advocated by most theologians and the new generation of ministers. The philosophical principles of the so-called new hermeneutic (from people such as Gadamer, Fuchs and Ebeling) are commonly accepted. According to a new popular study Bible, written by some prominent DRC and GKSA theologians, the history of Adam and Eve is fiction, evolution is scientifici-

cally credible and Isaiah is finally divided into three separate books in the canon, while its famous 53rd chapter contains no Messianic prophecy at all. And of course, Paul's commands to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2, about the role of women, were actually never aimed at the situation in the New Testament church itself.

Even after Canberra 1990 the late Prof. Johan Heyns called the World Council of Churches (WCC) the most important ecumenical body to belong to. There are continual reports of Roman Catholic priests, liberation theologians and Pentecostal leaders preaching on DRC pulpits. To my knowledge, absolutely no discipline is exercised on anyone who teaches liberal views. Church discipline in general is virtually non-existent while only 30% DRC members attend morning worship and less than 9% the evening services. Entertainment is the norm rather than the exception in most worship services. Sermons are hardly ever longer than 15 minutes and often completely left out. Charismatic features such as speaking in tongues and direct revelation are openly advocated by some ministers in their congregations. Other congregations have opted for the mystic solution: candles, icons and a mass-like experience. The DRC accepted women into all offices at its 1990 synod. During the last few months most regional synods voted in favour of child communion.

A small reformation

But, in these tragic conditions the Lord brought about a small reformation, which started at the Theological Faculty of Pretoria in the mid-eighties. A Group of about eight students, who all came to a reformed position from evangelical backgrounds, opposed the views of their liberal professors in class. At the end of 1988 the professors met with these students to discuss differences. It ended in nothing more than a thorough mental intimidation of a few "scientifically naive" disloyal students by a dozen PhD's. They were even threatened that they would not be licensed for the ministry should they continue allegations of rising liberalism among the faculty staff.

Quite remarkable, since then almost every single one of those young men stood firm, wherever the Lord placed them in the ministry. They laboured to see their local congregation reform and challenged corrupting trends on all levels. Because of the

tremendous ignorance in general and the DRC's cleverness in maintaining its image as a theological conservative church, occasional reports by the main Afrikaans newspapers about these young ministers' prophetic warnings came to many as a complete surprise and to others as a revelation. In shocking communist fashion, two of these young men were referred for "pastoral help" by their opposition, as a means to humble them.

However it did not take long before the first one of them was silenced and pulled out of the ministry in 1992. (He became the first ex-DRC minister to become a member of the Free Reformed Church and is at present minister in Cape Town.) The battle of the rest continued. The author of this article himself was involved for years in a debate about the liberal views of our professors at Pretoria, which enjoyed considerable newspaper coverage. In May 1994 he and his family were forced to secede from his own DRC congregation, along with two other families. As happened elsewhere, the considerable promised support among his church members disappeared when matters came to the crunch.

At the end of 1994 a young Bloemfontein theological student was barred from the ministry by the most conservative of all three boards of governors, for not accepting women ordination. This happened only a few days after this Dutch immigrant received the award of his faculty's top academic student. He has since also joined the Free Reformed Churches. In 1995 yet another young minister of the country town of Bethal, Transvaal, was forced by his church board to bow unconditionally to all synod resolutions. He consequently also seceded with a group of sixty other believers and formed an independent reformed church. On October 20 last year this young congregation was accepted into the Free Reformed Churches in SA.

The Free Reformed churches

The Free Reformed churches, which were planted in SA in 1950, are at present the only consistent reformed federation in our country. However, these churches are virtually unknown in SA and have only lately started to become known, mainly because of the above mentioned developments in the DRC. The main reasons for this obscurity is because the FRCSA is very small (it consists of only four congregations at pre-



CHURCH NEWS

DECLINED call to Calgary, AB
Rev. P. Aasman
 of Grand Valley, ON

* * *

DECLINED call to Fergus, ON
Rev. W.M. Wielenga
 of Lynden, Washington, U.S.A.

sent with less than 1500 members, over and against the DRC's 1.2 million members) but also because of lacking a sense of true evangelical calling and has been too much inward looking, as most immigrant churches at first tend to be.

It was only in 1992 that the above mentioned "rebel" group became aware of the FRCSA. At first the ministers in the FRCSA were a bit hesitant to believe what was told about the true situation of the DRC. As soon as they read and saw for themselves what was going on they were, of course, convinced. They were also surprised to see a true reformation movement within the DRC, as they always expected it to happen in the traditionally much healthier GKSA.

Thus, since 1993 two ex-DRC ministers and two DRC students joined FRC congregations simply as members. Three of them have since applied for admission to the ministry of God's Word, were sent to Kampen, the Netherlands for additional studies, came back and were examined by the national synod and accepted as ministers of the Gospel. A number of families and individuals from the DRC and the GKSA also joined the FRC lately.

The above mentioned independent reformed church and its minister, which were forced out of their DRC congregation in Bethal, immediately wrote to one of the FRC congregations and asked to be admitted into the FRCSA. Because the FRC is small as a body of churches and the distances great, we do not have a classis in the real sense of the word, but only a synod. The convening church therefore asked the other two churches' written permission to call for

an ad-hoc general synod to be held in Cape Town in October. It also submitted a framework of procedure. Two things had to be distinguished, namely the acceptance of the church of Bethal and that of its minister. It was decided that the two ministers of the northern congregations would officially visit the consistory of the church at Bethal, compile a report and submit that to the ad-hoc synod. Many of our members also visited the congregation at Bethal in the meantime. As far as its minister was concerned, it was decided to examine him doctrinally at the synod by concentrating on certain relevant themes such as his views on the covenant, the church, the Scriptures and church government. This examination was lead by two ministers.

Rev. Pieter Nel and the church of Bethal were eventually unanimously accepted and we thank God that the small FRCSA has now grown from three to four congregations. One newspaper reported correctly that Rev. Nel was the fourth DRC minister in less than two years to have joined the FRCSA and stated his reasons for doing so. We hope that reports such as these may reach more and more ears and eyes of the faithful but weak remnant in the DRC and the GKSA.

We as Afrikaans speaking Christians realize that the demise of the main

Note on the political situation of the Republic of South Africa

South Africa is similar in size to the province of Ontario. Its population is approximately 43 million residents. The number of official languages is eleven, but the most commonly used is English. No language group is concentrated in a certain area, which means people will hear at any given time and place various languages. Socially people organize themselves following the language borders and this includes the various religious groups and churches. The white population is mainly divided in two groups, namely the Afrikaans and English-speaking groups. The Afrikaans group originates from the first colonizers and the French Huguenots, fleeing from France in the late 17th century. The language derives from 17th century Dutch. Both Afrikaans and Dutch-speaking people can understand each other today, provided the people speak slowly. In church we use the Afrikaans language. Very often North Americans mistakenly think of Africans when they see the word Afrikaans. For this reason we do not translate this word, not even in a normal English conversation in our country. The Afrikaans group ran the politics since 1948 until the general elections of 1994. Since then, the Government of National Unity took office ending the era of white domination.

Afrikaans churches is a sign of God's judgment on decades of formalism and idolatry. Our prayer is that God in His great mercy may restore His true church throughout our beloved country once again, and that many sinners may be reconciled to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Rev. C.F. Heiberg is minister of the Free Reformed Church of Johannesburg, a sister church in South Africa.

Collegialism describes the idea that Church is a purely voluntary association in which supreme authority lies in the membership. The Church is a human society which exists for the promotion of religion. Further, the denomination is "the Church" with the local congregations as sub-divisions or branches of the Church. Churches which subscribe to the Collegiate system of church government are governed from the top down by a Synod. – Editor



RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

"But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

2 Peter 3:8

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Maybe to some of us, especially to those who still had to shovel snow at the end of March, it seemed that the spring would never come. Yet we knew better. The Lord promised a continuous flow of the seasons, so we never have to question that promise. But times goes very slowly when you are waiting for something.

"Time" is a concept that you can never really understand. Time comes and goes. It rules our lives. All our activities circle around the calendar and the clock. Without time life would be a chaos. Just imagine that there would not be a set time to start work, or church, or a meeting, or to have an appointment. Already from the

beginning, God created time. God created nighttime and daytime, and He worked His creation in six days. It was not that God needed those six days, but He created everything so that we as people could function in His world. He created the "time" for us, so that our lives would be orderly. The Lord did not want us to live in a chaos; He wanted everything to go according to His rules. So He created days and nights, weeks, and months, and years. Many events in the Bible are carefully recorded as "in the . . . day of the . . . month." Read for example the story of Noah in the ark. Also the whole temple service rotated around days and months and years. Yes, time is an important aspect of God's creation.

The Lord has given His people responsibilities in how they are to use their time. And as everything else here on earth, also “time” is polluted with sin. You can waste your time when you just hang around while you could do something helpful or productive. Or you can use your time to do things that you should not do. For in the use of our time we can serve the Lord, or Satan.

Time can go very slowly when you are sick or old, and there is not much for you to do. To Adam and Eve in Paradise every day was exciting while they were busy exploring God’s beautiful world and praising their Creator. But now we have to face the consequences of sin, and some of those consequences are that we may feel useless. The days are long while we are waiting. Maybe we are waiting for recovery, for days that we will be feeling better and can do something again. We also may be waiting for the end, for the day that the Lord will take us to Himself, or for the day that the Lord will return on the clouds. “Waiting” and “time” are two concepts that belong together.

There are also those who are always in a hurry. Their life seems to be a race with the clock. They are so busy that their days are too short. They have no time for anybody or for anything because they have their own busy schedule. These people who have “no time” are an opposite kind of people of those who are “waiting” and whose days are so long. With expressions like “just a minute” or “I’ll be right there” the first group often makes the time even go more slowly for those who are waiting.

Yet everyone, whether he/she is busy or not, lives in God’s world. And God rules the time. The Lord created “time” for us, so we could live. But to God Himself there is no time. A thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. The Lord is not waiting; He is not in a hurry. Our God, the Creator of heaven and earth was and is and will always be. As long as we live on this polluted earth we will never be able to understand that. We look through sinful eyes, and our thoughts cannot go beyond what the Lord has revealed to us. On the new earth we will live with the Lord. Then we will be able to understand and experience “timelessness.” In Revelation 21:23 we read,

“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” v. 25 reads,

“and its gates shall never be shut by day – and there shall be no night there,” And in 22:5,

“And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

Does knowing this help us anything at all today? Maybe it could! It may help us to count on the Lord Who is working out His plan and will finish it to perfection. Maybe now the waiting seems long, but on the great Day of the Lord we won’t even remember that time of waiting. Right now the Lord expects from us that we serve Him, whether we are old or young, busy or not, sick or healthy, high or low on the ladder of material or social accomplishments. When we are not busy, mostly at home, maybe sick or

handicapped, often alone, then we even may have more time to spend on the things of our Father. We can read the Bible, pray, listen to sermons or music, sing, and think . . . Think about the Lord and what He did for us. For is it not something, that He sent His Son, and that the Son gave His life for *our* sins? And even though we can never imagine what our life with the Lord will be like, it is still nice to think about it! After all the Lord has revealed a little glimpse of it in His holy Word.

So we must try to concentrate on the Lord’s work for us. out of grace alone He chose us to be His children. In His eternity He works out His plan of salvation for us. We all have received a different task from the Lord. Maybe we have to be very patient in our waiting, maybe we have a very busy schedule, maybe we are sick, old, or lonely, maybe we are well-liked and very popular. Whatever it is, we do not have to stare ourselves blind at the hopelessness of our situation. For when we fulfill our task in obedience to Him and to His honour and glory, nothing is hopeless. It will be only a little time, and then there will be nothing left of it. Then the glory of the Lord will shine over us all. Shall we read a little more of God’s Word about how that will be?

“. . . and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” Rev. 21:3,4

Yes, and that will be for all God’s children, and into eternity!

*My happy lot wilt Thou maintain, O Lord;
The lines have fallen in most pleasant places.
A goodly heritage didst Thou award;
In beauty it excels earth’s choicest spaces.
Thy measuring-rod gave unto me for ever
A place from which no power can me sever.*

Psalm 16:3

Birthdays in June:

17: Joan Koerselman

Box 1312,
Coaldale, AB T0K 0L0

20: Daniel Stroop,

193 Diane Drive,
Orangeville, ON L9W 3N3

30: Beverly Breukelman

2225-19 Street,
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

Happy Birthday to all of you, and until next month,

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



Welcome to the Poppe Family!

By Greg and Susan Spaanderman

It was with much joy in our hearts that we all come together to officially welcome Reverend and Mrs. Poppe and their daughter Rachel, although they had been in our midst for 7 weeks already.

Our MC, Br. J. Diek asked us to sing Psalm 145:1,2,3 and 5 and afterwards read in Psalm 96 "Sing to the Lord and bless His Name." His prayer reflected on the blessings we as church of West Albany received, acknowledging they came from the Lord alone, and asking that we show our thankfulness not only words but also in deeds. Br. Diek welcomed all present, also guests and delegates from sister churches.

The chairman of the consistory, Br. A. Mulder, spoke in his usual sincere manner, bidding Rev. and Mrs. Poppe and Rachel, a hearty welcome, that they feel at home and the Br. Poppe as minister may work fruitfully to the Lord's glory and the coming of His kingdom. It was his wish to serve the Lord and we as congregation looked forward to this. He mentioned that since the institution of the church, many prayers were sent up for a minister. After about one year Cand. Poppe accepted the call and on that Sunday at church and in our homes we thanked the Lord. Everything then fell into place with the house, Synod could take place and the peremptory exam was passed. You, Rev. Poppe, have been called to preach the Word, give pastoral care, administer sacraments and give catechism instruction; a beautiful task but sometimes difficult. We also wish Sr. Poppe all the best in being a support, as you will be the first one to notice your husband's happiness and sorrow. Congregation, accept his work and the preach of God's Word.

Br. Mulder also thanked Rev. Veldman our counsellor for giving so much of his time, for his willingness to preach, instruct our youth and give advice in church life, adding that whether he went there in work clothes or good clothes, Rev. Veldman always had time for him.

Throughout the evening the clubs performed various plays and sang songs which showed to the Poppes differences in what we eat, how we speak,

the name of everyday clothing, and also songs such as "My boomerang won't come back," "I am Australian" and "I still call Australia Home."

The Scribe, Br. J. de Snoo read out the following letters; from Rev. and Mrs. van Rongen, Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Rockingham, Legana and Kelmscott, letter of congratulations from the consistory of Guelph, Canada, letter from Rev. Joe Plug, fax from the Theological College, greetings from Lae and a letter of congratulations and the Lord's blessing on Rev. Poppe's shepherdship from the Reformed Churches in PNG.

Mrs. Bruning read out her letter with words of welcome, stressing the importance of the proclamation of God's Word. Br. M. Bruning from Armadale welcomed the Poppe family with a speech and presented them with a map with Armadale clearly marked "as the best place in WA." He also presented Rev. Poppe with a preaching roster from Armadale, with his name marked clearly in the blank spaces at the end.

Br. N. Berkelaar on behalf of the Bond of Churches spoke, saying that we are thankful that we see our Lord working also in Albany where we now have two Free Reformed congregations, where the Word is proclaimed every Sunday, and now with two ministers as well. The Bond of Churches is different in Australia and here your knowledge and participation is required. He urged our congregation to support our minister, and added that the Lord grant Br. and Sr. Poppe wisdom and also the consistory of West Albany that they may stand alongside and assist him.

Br. H. Dekker from Bedfordale in his speech welcomed Br. Poppe into the Bond of Churches. He also added that according to the information they gleaned (when considering a call to him) they were told that Br. Poppe really liked fishing (good or bad?) and that he could understand why he accepted the call to a beautiful place such as Albany, as it still holds a special place in his heart.

He wished Br. Poppe God's strength in his beautiful but heavy task. We are

all brothers and sisters tied together in the bond we have as churches. Br. Poppe also needs the support of office bearers and also all office bearers in the church, namely the office of all believers. We pray that the Holy Spirit will work through the work of this new minister to the honour and glory of God.

Br. L. Woonings read a poem about a special man for a special flock.

Next on the pulpit was Rev. Veldman, our counsellor and delegate from the Albany church. He said that the Lord has richly blessed us, giving us a minister so soon after the institution of our church, and that the neighbouring church of Albany will benefit from this. On the other hand, he said the last ties with us will be cut, and he still feels very close to West Albany, having been our minister for 10 years. However, it will be very special to have a colleague next door and that the Poppe family were welcome there at any time, especially if at times they miss family, since they are in the same situation. Rev. Veldman added that the Lord may grant Rev. Poppe rich fruits on his work in his wonderful office as minister as shepherd of God's flock. But, he added, as family you must take time off to enjoy the beauty of Albany, as you have come to a beautiful part of God's creation.

In conclusion Br. Poppe then spoke to us (the first of many times, he said) about firstly, the thankfulness they may express when they look back at everything over the past 6 months. He mentioned that while many people have problems with visas, theirs sailed through the governments departments. By the time they arrived in Albany the congregation had possession of the manse a mere two days. These things the people in the world see as a mere coincidence. Praised to be the Lord who bestowed it on us. Br. Poppe also thanked us for a warm welcome, also for the way they were received this evening, especially into the Bond of Churches and expressed the wish that we go forward as brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ in the communion of saints. He thanked us for the

Rev. and Mrs. Veldman and Rev. and Mrs. Poppe on the welcome evening.



Rev. and Mrs. Poppe next to MC, Mr. J. Diek enjoy the entertainment.

beautiful place in which they live, in such peaceful surroundings. Br. Poppe also thanked Rev. and Mrs. Veldman for their support and mentioned he looked forward to working with Rev. Veldman as he himself is young and inexperienced, hoping and praying that he will be able to serve faithfully in the coming years. With youth comes inexperience, he said, but even with experience our work still depends on the blessing of our heavenly Father and we pray that we can do this work together to the praise of His glory.

Ordination – Sunday 28 January 1996

This was another joyful day for the congregation of West Albany, and one which we all eagerly looked forward to.

Rev. Veldman conducted the service and read from God's Word out of the second book of Timothy chapter 2:11-19, 3:1-5, 3:14-17. The text was chapter 4:1-5 (preach the word).

In his sermon Rev. Veldman preached about Paul admonishing Timothy to guard the Gospel and exhorting Timothy and all officebearers in season and out of season, executing his ministry in faithfulness.

The sermon was summarized as follows:

Timothy must:

1. simply preach the word
2. not give in to the desires of man
3. nor be afraid of suffering

This Word must be preached at all times. Timothy was given the command to "be there" and seize the opportunity, in season and out of season. This means the Word must be preached,

whether it suits the minister or not or whether it suits the members of the congregation or not. It is not limited to the set times of Sunday worship, Catechism instruction and homevisits, nor is it always welcoming, such as in times of admonition. The servant of God is bound to execute this mandate. It is God's Word and accomplishes what God desires. The sure promise of God is that He will help.

People hear the preaching according to their own desires. The pure preaching meets with opposition. Timothy, and all the servants of God experience this, as people prefer to hear what pleases them. This passage of Scripture could have been written for today. People say the truth is too harsh, and we should preach more about love and less about sin. But the minister's task is not to please us but to expose the whole counsel of God that you may please Him who has called you to this position. Be watchful and sober, do not give in but fulfil your ministry in faithfulness, despite suffering, thus remaining faithful to the very end. May the Lord provide you with everything you need for this. Congregation also remain faithful, submitting to the sound preach of the Gospel.

Rev. J. Poppe, our newly ordained minister, preached his sermon in the afternoon reading from Scripture Ezekiel 3:1-23, Acts 20:17-32, the text being Hebrews 13:17.

He summarized the text as follows: "Our Lord Jesus Christ calls his servants as watchman over His people."

1. the responsibilities Christ gives to His watchman
2. the responsibilities Christ gives to His people

As God's representatives they must lead God's people in this world. They must not sleep but keep watch over the flock. Ezekiel is even told by God that if he does not do this task of warning his people, for example, the Lord will require Ezekiel's blood. On the other hand the people should heed the word of the watchman. If he admonishes we should listen. In this way his task becomes a joy and not a burden. We as members must yield to instruction. The Watchman in Hebrews shouts out a warning when he sees something wrong. Then the officebearers may say things we don't like to hear. We all have tendencies to minimize our own sin.

Rev. Poppe ended by saying that we thank God that it pleases Him to govern us by the watchman of His church. Let us give them opportunity to do their work with joy.

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



Market Day in Nkhoma – A Few Impressions

Saturday is market day at Nkhoma – a major social and commercial event. Hundreds of people stream in from their mud-thatched homes in surrounding villages. Many have risen early and walked for miles to get here, babies strapped to backs, loads of vegetables, earthenware pots or woven mats gracefully balanced on their heads.

Everywhere the age-old activities of buying and selling take place. One man is bargaining for blue plastic sandals; another sells ripe pineapples and mangoes; yet another sits patiently on the ground behind her small piles of coarse salt, waiting for a buyer. To one side, women sell handmade earthenware pots, amazingly symmetrical, to vendors who will load them onto huge baskets strapped to the back of their bicycles and pedal at least three hours to the capital, Lelongwe, hoping for a sale. It's a hard way to make a few kwacha*, but especially during this hungry time when old maize stores



Market Day – a major social and commercial event

have been depleted and new crops not yet ripe, every cent helps.

The senses are variously delighted and assaulted. Colourful, second-hand clothing is laid out row upon row by eager vendors crying their wares. Men's trousers, girls' dresses, boys' shorts, stacks of bananas, dried beans, shriv-

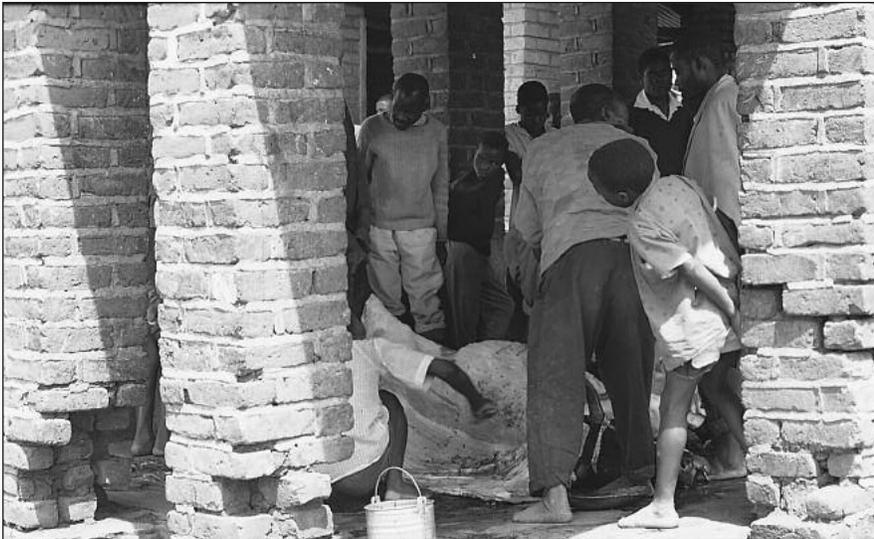
eled dried fish from Lake Malawi, piles of rice, green leafy vegetables, old nuts and bolts amassed from who knows where, red plastic bowls and cups, bars of cheap soap – all are laid out in orderly fashion on the red, packed earth in hopes of making a sale and warding off hunger.

Vendors call out, "Two kwacha, two kwacha," chickens squawk (their end is near), the mill in an old shed protestingly grinds hard maize kernels into flour to be cooked into porridge and "ugali" – the staple here. In one corner, a group cooks succulent fat strips over a simple barbecue; in another, men are intent on a card game, gambling away money they can ill afford to lose. Women ladle a milky local beer into tin cups and sell them for a few tamballa*.

And everywhere there are flies. One hardly notices them after a while. It's when they land on newborns strapped to their mothers' backs, helpless to ward them off, that one wonders at the diseases being spread. Raggedly clothed children run about and chatter excitedly. Others are quiet, their glazed eyes or protruding bellies evidence of the work of some parasite or of malnutrition.



Dried fish from Lake Malawi adds welcome protein to the diet.



Slaughtering a cow – a gruesome sight.

Some of the most powerful images come from a central corral where frightened cows bellow their last. Tied to post to prevent escape, the beasts are literally hacked to death – a gruesome sight. Knives whetted on rocks are

nonetheless not sharp enough to cut the animals' throats at one blow. . . .

Mr. Kambewe, the agriculturalist, later told us he prefers meat from animals more humanely slaughtered in the city. It's more tender. . . .

We buy bananas and a small earthenware pot, then stop for a soda (it's best only to trust bottled drinks) at a local mud thatched tearoom. Then we reluctantly walk back up the hill, greeting everyone as we go, "Muli bwangi."*

Ruth Meerveld

*one kwacha – about 16 cents

*tamballa – Malawi cent (worth less than our cent)

*Muli bwangi – "Good-day" in the Chechewa language

Gifts for the works of CRWRF may be directed to:

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund

PO Box 85225
Burlington, ON L7R 4K4

All gifts are gladly received. Donors of \$10.00 or more will be issued a receipt for tax deduction.

Development Aid in Malawi

Literacy instruction, adequate food, and basic health care for one's children are commodities we in the west generally accept as a given. Most of *our* attention need not focus continuously on these basics for survival. In many countries though, the struggle for survival is a daily reality, a constant, never-ending grind. Relief aid can help for the moment. Development however, by introducing new approaches, new crop strains and new skills, can effect positive change over the *long term*. The old adage is still true: "give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, he'll eat for a lifetime."

The development project we support in central Malawi, aims to assist the very poor in this impoverished country through special attention to literacy, health care, women's projects and income generation. All of the coordinators are Christians who seek to live out the Gospel and share it with those they meet.

Since its beginning in 1991, the work has flourished and grown. Women's projects continue to meet very real needs in the approx. thirty villages surrounding Nkhoma, the base for our efforts. Agriculture efforts mainly focus at present on revolving seed loans and loans to purchase chickens to about 2,000 women in the women's groups. (As in much of the developing world, it is the women whose industry carries the day.) Literacy is still in government hands, but the church-owned printing presses at Nkhoma continue to churn out hundreds of literacy handbooks for those eager to learn how to read and write. Income generation has grown so that there are now nine volunteers under the coordinator, who travel to different villages to encourage this work. Primary health care, so vital especially for the critical under-five age group, has also expanded. Nine clinics are now run regularly, relying on staff from the Nkhoma hospital, one of the foremost hospitals in all of Malawi. Volunteers do all of the ground work, going out to the villages and selecting children in need of treatment. Mothers also bring their little ones regularly for weighing, the most reliable way of monitoring infant development.

Rains this year have once again been sparse. In the hard-hit south, projections are that food aid will unfortunately be a necessity. To counter this recurring problem, our development workers in cooperation with the Canadian Food-grains Bank and a Presbyterian group, hope to do a study soon in watershed management. If water could be held back when rains are plentiful, the single crop presently grown (and sometimes at risk due to uneven rains), could be secured and a second one likely grown. What a difference that would make in many thousands of lives! For people who at this time of year (just before the new crop is ready) often literally don't know where their next meal is coming from, a second crop would mean a huge increase in security and well-being.

Please pray for the work in Malawi where so many are desperately poor and so many lives at risk. Praise the Lord with us for the growth in the development work there and the lives our efforts have touched, and entreat His further blessing on this work.

"He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward him for what he has done." Proverbs 19:17

John Calvin School – Yarrow, B.C. 25th Anniversary

O Give Thanks Unto the Lord



On October 13th, 1995, starting at 1:00 p.m. the John Calvin School students together with the staff, gathered in the back of the sportsfield to start the festivities of this joyful event. In the steady drizzling rain a Sicamore tree was planted as a memorial. The two oldest students, Harvey Pelleboer and John-David Siebenga together with the youngest student, Craig Kobes received the honour to plant this tree. Afterwards the children saw a slide presentation of the early years of J.C.S. which was followed by a treat of anniversary cake and refreshments as well as a J.C.S. 25th pen as a keepsake to remember this special day.

At about 8:15 p.m. the M.C. and former teacher, Mr. Jake Van Laar, opened this celebration of thanksgiving and praise with asking us to sing Ps. 118:1,7,8 and led in prayer. He read from Joshua 4:1-14, which was followed by a hearty welcome given to a full house, gathered in the gym.

Throughout the evening, Jake, who was the only male teacher at the start of the school, shared with us numerous anecdotes from those first pioneering years.

Congratulations received was first on the program; from Mr. Ron Boersma, Leeuwarden, '75-82, Mr. Kevin VanDelden, Smithers '93, and from the children of the late Br. John deVos. Mention was made of how this brother along with others, was instrumental in starting the Abbotsford Can. Ref. School Assn. 1964.

Jacqueline VanderWel-Kobes and Susan Onderwater-Huttema from Yarrow's congregation, J.C.S. alumni, started down memory lane with THE BEGINNINGS. The audience was asked to participate in giving answers to facts and figures given in multiple choice gathered from the first minutes of the school board.

Chilliwack's church was represented by our first teacher's aid and alumni, Linda Woelders-Huttema and fellow classmate May Krabbendam-Tams. They share with us what THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE was all about.

Next was Mr. P. Torenvliet, present principal, who gave a short edifying word on Ps. 136; Truly the Lord has been good to us and only by His grace are we allowed to remember and give all praise to Him!

Former alumni of J.C.S. and friends from Lynden, presented a humorous skid "Yankie Doodle Dandy," portraying Uncle Sam, Canadian Customs Officer complete with shack and flag and too tight uniform.

We sang Hymn 8:1,4,14 with Nell Schouten-VanLaar on organ and former student and teacher's wife Hetty Jagersma-Witteveen on piano.

To reflect on TEACHERS, Abbotsford church members and alumni of J.C.S. under the direction of Clara deHaan-Vanderlinde "quizzed" the audience with traits of recognition.

Following this we were honoured with some memories and impressions shared by, Michelle Faber-Vanderboom together with the first acting principal Boukje Schaap-Van Voorneveld, on what it was like to come ALL the way to Yarrow every day, and start up a new school!

Peter Blom as first principal was given the opportunity to speak a few words as well. Coming from Holland he considered it a call to come to Canada and help the brotherhood.

All former teachers were then called on stage. These included former principals: Mr. M. deGlint and Mr. H. deRaad, as well as: Mr. Siep Kuypers '76-85, and Mr. Sieberen de Graaf '81-86 who came back, specially for the occasion from Holland.

Then it was the present staff's turn because as Mr. Klaas Jagersma said – we needed something else after all that "ge speech!!" They sang "We have found the more things change – the more they stay the same" with audience participation singing the chorus, and also a favourite hymn "Unto Thee, O Lord" (from Ps. 25)

A slide presentation was given by former teacher Magdalene Vanderlinde-Nieuwlaat of the early years.

Br. Tom Boeve present chairman of the board and former student of this 25 year old school spoke a few words on behalf of the board.

In honour of all volunteer work that was, and is done throughout all these years, Winnie Winkelaar was asked to cut the cake for this 25th anniversary. She willingly volunteered and was presented with roses, as a token of the memberships' appreciation.

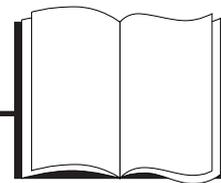
Closing song was the evening song where after the first chairman of the board br. T. VanLaar thanked the Lord with us for all His gracious and undeserved gifts, imploring our God and Father for continued guidance to go in His ways only, looking forward when all will be perfected in Him.

Afterward the Ladies Aid served refreshments. The evening came to a close with reminiscing and walking through the school, enlarged several times since its beginning, enjoying the beautiful art work the students had made, which decorates the halls along with pictures of past years, going home with a spoon as a memento from the board.

We may look back and reflect on the Goodness, Faithfulness and Grace of our heavenly Father.

TO HIM OUR THANKS!!

M. Kobes-Veldman 



Who's Confused?

By E. Tams

In the April 5, 1996 issue of *Clarion* Rev. W.W.J VanOene continued with his review of the Acts of General Synod Abbotsford.

Under the heading, "Contact Orthodox Presbyterian Church," he asks us, to "bear in mind that we are dealing only with the decisions of Synod '95 and not with the whole question of our relationship with the O.P.C."

It is regrettable that he so quickly strayed off this course. Just five sentences later he writes, "gradually I have come to the conclusion that the 1977 decision was premature indeed." He continues to undermine the decision of Synod '95 by writing that, "much confusion would have been prevented" . . . had Synod '77 never decided to recognize the O.P.C. as a true church.

A whole host of questions came to mind as I read these remarkable statements. The first question came as a result of having read the first review in the March 22 issue of *Clarion* under the heading Private Submissions.

Interestingly Rev. VanOene is of the belief that ordinary folks in the church have no right to address the broadest assembly of the church, unless the submission qualifies, using his interpretation of Art. 31 C.O. Apparently there is a more correct procedure to follow when members of the church who are not members of a consistory feel compelled to address a certain issue at a General Synod, specifically by involving their local consistory. It is clear that he and others (Rev. Kampen) are of the opinion that when we are not satisfied with a decision, and have not been personally wronged because of it, we must work with our local consistory to have the decision changed.

Sounds pretty good. However, Rev. VanOene shows us a better way, and perhaps an even more effective way. The pages of *Clarion* have recently shown themselves to be an excellent tool in addition to involving the local consistory.

Consider Prof. Dejong's recent submissions on the NIV and the above quoted statements by Rev. VanOene,

not to mention his review of the decisions concerning Bible translations. All apart from whether or not this is a correct procedure, one must admit it is an effective one. After all, more people read *Clarion* than attend a General Synod, never mind read the Acts of one.

Back to the remarkable statements quoted above, Rev. VanOene is of the opinion that there is much confusion with respect to the recognition of the O.P.C. as a true church. Too bad he doesn't explain who is confused, or what exactly it is that they are confused about. He implies that this confusion is caused by the 1977 decision to recognize "the O.P.C. as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ, as confessed in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession." By impressing us with semantics, he would have us believe that by rescinding this decision, we would not be saying that the O.P.C. is a false church. Incredible logic, to say the least, in view of the fact that every General Synod since 1977 has gone to great lengths to prove that the O.P.C. is a true church. Clearly it is not the delegates to the last six General Synods who are confused. It would be interesting to know how many different delegates have taken part in the decisions all those years, in order to illustrate how unconfusing the issue really is. Indeed, it is so clear that Synod Abbotsford could "acknowledge with gratitude the commitment of the O.P.C. to be faithful to the Scriptures and to defend the Reformed heritage," and further, "express the hope that the discussions between us can be concluded by the establishment of a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship within three years."

It seems to me that Rev. VanOene missed the point of the Synod consideration that "rescinding the decision of 1977 would in effect be the same as declaring the O.P.C. false." Synod did not say that rescinding the '77 decision would mean calling the O.P.C. false. Synod said that it would have the same effect. This is obvious from the consideration itself, for it goes on to say, "when you speak with another church with the

goal of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, then you can only do that when you treat each other as equals" (cons. V.B.4).

Whether Rev. VanOene or others like it or not, the goal of the Canadian Reformed churches is, and has been since 1977, to have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the O.P.C.

Withdrawing the recognition of true church from them would then surely put an end to the discussions, and rightly so. For why would we want to unite with a church which we could not recognize as true. For that matter, is there anyone who seriously believes that the O.P.C. would continue to discuss unity with a church that for years defended it as a true church, but now, all of a sudden withdraws that recognition?

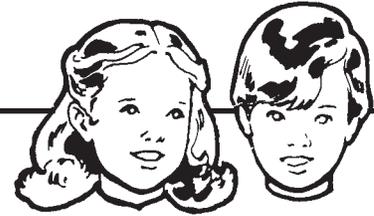
Rev. VanOene asks us to understand him well. "I am not advocating the rescinding of '1977', merely discussing arguments used at Synod '95."

By validating the discussion of "Recognition as true church," this statement cannot be taken seriously. A thorough reading of the Acts show clearly that any attempt to withdraw the recognition of true church from the O.P.C. was firmly rejected by Synod '95. The only thing that remains an issue is the relationship, not the recognition. In addition it must be said that the only thing ever meant to be temporary, was the relationship as well. From the beginning the intention was to move forward from Ecclesiastical Contact to Ecclesiastical Fellowship. I conclude with the wish that from now on we make use of our consistories when we are unhappy with the decisions of our broader assemblies, rather than undermine them through the pages of *Clarion*. Perhaps then there would be a good deal less confusion.

The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

The Lord Jesus is risen!
The disciples were so happy their Lord was with them again!

Jesus taught them still more about the Kingdom of God, and promised them, "I will not leave you alone. I will send you someone who will always stay with you. He is the Holy Spirit. He will make you wise and strong. He will tell you what to do. Wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit has come. Then you must go out into all the world."

Together they climbed up the hill called the Mount of Olives. There the Lord Jesus was lifted up and a cloud hid Him so they couldn't see Him anymore.

The disciples stood still, looking up at the sky.

Their Lord was gone!

All of a sudden, two men were standing with them! They asked the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there, looking into heaven? Jesus, who was taken into heaven, will come back on the clouds of heaven one day!"

So the disciples went back joyfully to Jerusalem, and waited for the Holy Spirit to come into their hearts.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

We wish all these Busy Beavers a very Happy Birthday, and a wonderful day with family and friends. May our Father in Heaven give you a blessed year.

Andrea Vanderhorst	May 3	Rachelle Smeding	14
Miranda Barendregt	4	Amanda Feenstra	16
Jeremy Feenstra	5	Deanna Wierenga	17
Amanda DeBoer	7	Michelle Linde	18
Laura Rook	7	Rachelle VanVeen	20
Laura VandenBos	8	Charlene Barendregt	21
Caitlin Meints	9	Jonathan Kingma	21
Tetsje Riedstra	11	Tamsen Lodder	21
Christopher DeBoer	12	Chantal Lodder	27
Erica Broekema	14	Timothy Bartels	29
Eritia Smit	14		

Quiz Time!

HERE ARE SOME RIDDLES

from Busy Beaver *Adena Feenstra*

1. Why do cows wear bells?
2. What kind of saw cuts the ocean?
3. Why did the turtle want to cross the road?
4. Why do cows like to stay outside at night?

(Answers at the end)

JESUS ASKED

Jesus asked many questions. Write the name of the person to whom He asked each question.

- _____ 1. "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" John 3:12.
- _____ 2. "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" John 6:5
- _____ 3. "Do you love me?" John 21:15b
- _____ 4. "But who do you say that I am?" Matthew 16:15
- _____ 5. "Whom do you seek?" John 18:4b
- _____ 6. "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong, but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" John 18:23
- _____ 7. "If you love those who love you, what reward have you?" Matthew 5:46
- _____ 8. "What do you want me to do for you?" Mark 10:51
- _____ 9. "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" Matthew 9:4
- _____ 10. "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Matthew 9:28.
- _____ 11. "Do you want to be made whole?" John 5:6b.

HORSE PUZZLE

by Busy Beaver *Bonita Feenstra*

To complete the puzzle below, use the clues to finish the words.

1. What you use to clean a horse.
2. A baby male horse.
3. A mother horse.
4. A father horse.
5. A one year old horse.
6. A sweet treat horses often love.

1. _ _ _ _ H
2. _ O _ _
3. _ _ R _
4. S _ _ _ _ _ _ _
5. _ E _ _ _ _ _
6. S _ _ _ _

BIBLE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Barbara Bultena*

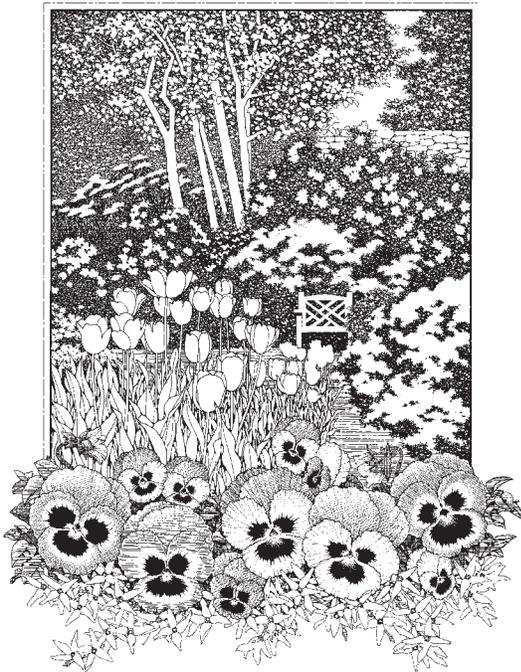
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B - 2	G - 7	L - 12	Q - 17	V - 22
C - 3	H - 8	M - 13	R - 18	W - 23
D - 4	I - 9	N - 14	S - 19	X - 24
E - 5	J - 10	O - 15	T - 20	Y - 25
				Z - 26

7 9 22 5 20 8 1 14 11 19 20 15 20 8 5

12 15 18 4 6 15 18 8 9 19

19 20 5 1 4 6 1 19 20 12 15 22 5

5 14 4 21 18 5 19 6 15 18 5 22 5 18



MEN OF THE BIBLE DO YOU KNOW —

1. This great missionary who was circumcised on the eighth day?
2. This young man who left Jesus with a sad heart?
3. This disciple of Jesus who wanted to build something?
4. The ruler who thought Jesus was John the Baptist?
5. The man who wrote four words and was given back his voice?
6. The emperor at Rome at the time Pilate governed Judea?
7. The young man who was deeply interested in the Christians at Philippi?
8. A man who would not be quiet in front of Jesus?
9. The man who worked like a slave with Paul?
10. The man who carried away the gates of a city?

(Answers at the end)



FROM THE MAILBOX

Hi, *Miranda Barendregt*. Is it spring in Winnipeg yet? That sure was a very big Word Search you sent in. I wonder if anyone will be able to find all the names on it?

Do you know something about all those people? It's fun having a baby in the family, isn't it? Bye, *Miranda*.

Hello, *Rachelle VanVeen*. What did you see when you went to Prince Rupert? I hope school is going a little better now! Do you enjoy playing piano? Thanks for all the puzzles! Bye, *Rachelle*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jessica Verhelst*. Thank you for the colourful picture you sent me. I hope you like the puzzles and other activities. Bye, *Jessica*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Denise VanDelft*. What is it like, having so many brothers? Do you have a good friend who is a girl? I hope you enjoy being a member of the Club. Bye, *Denise*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Jenna Vanderveen*. It's good to hear that you like to read. Maybe you want to write me about a special book, and we can share it with the other Busy Beavers. Please send me your address, too, so I can send you a membership card. Bye, *Jenna*.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Rebekah Barendregt*. I hope that you like to do the puzzles and other games. You are quick to be learning to read and write! I hope to get another letter from you soon, *Rebekah*. Bye.

Hello, *Jonathan Kingma*. It sounds like you are a very busy person! Do you like playing the piano and having piano lessons? It's too bad that school's not much fun, but it's almost the summer holidays already, isn't it? Thanks for the puzzles, too. Bye, *Jonathan*.

Hi, *Adena Feenstra*. It sounds like that winter fun day was really fun! Sledding down a big hill is exciting! I think you liked the food, too. But I guess now all the snow and ice are gone and it's spring where you live. What kinds of things do you do for fun now? Bye, *Adena*.

Hi, *Bonita Feenstra*. You must be busy taking care of all those animals you have! Are there any horses close to where you live? Maybe you could help look after them! Bye, *Bonita*.

Answers to the Men of the Bible.

Bartimaeus; 9. Timothy; 10. Samson
Tetrarch; 5. Zechariah the priest; 6. Tiberias; 7. Timothy; 8.
1. Paul; 2. The rich young ruler; 3. Peter; 4. Herod the

Riddles
1. Because their horns don't work; 2. Seasaws; 3. To get to the Shell Station; 4. To see the Milky Way.

That's all for now.

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

