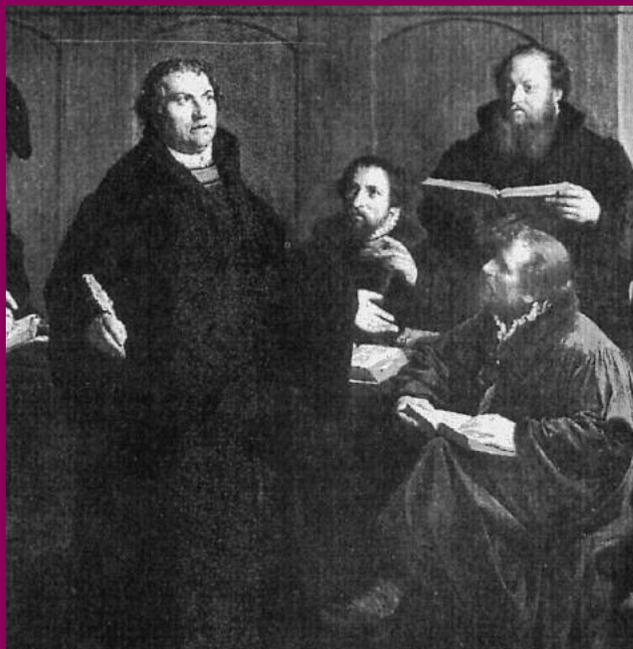
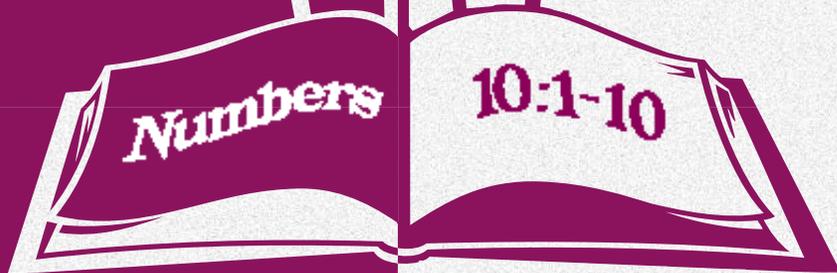


Clarion

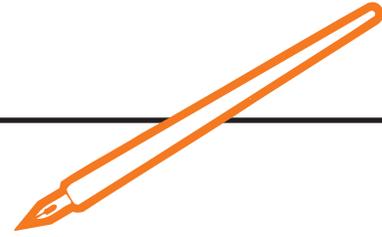
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 46, NO. 11 MAY 30, 1997



*Luther in company of advisors
on Bible translation*



By G.Ph. van Popta



Why all those catechism sermons, anyway?

Recently I began again with Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism in the afternoon services. This made me reflect upon the custom of "catechism preaching" and "catechism sermons." Ever since the late 1500s, Reformed ministers of the Word have, once per Sunday, preached and taught the Word of God with the help of the Heidelberg Catechism. As churches we have even agreed that: "The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed" (Art. 52, Church Order).

Why do we have this custom? Is it a valid custom? Is it correct? Is a "catechism sermon" a proclamation of the Word of God? Why do we have regular catechism preaching, as a rule once per Sunday, year after year?

In several of his letters the apostle Paul wrote that in addition to bringing people to confess their faith in Christ, he also wanted to present every man *mature* in Christ. He wanted to establish every member of the church firmly in the true faith. In Eph. 4:11ff Paul stated that the task of ministers of the Gospel is to equip the saints, to build up the body of Christ, and to perfect the children of God. The congregation is to be well instructed so that it will not be thrown around by every wind of doctrine. Some people think that "doctrine" is a dirty word. It is not. It is used often in the Scriptures. Further, a church without doctrine (and there is no such church) is no church. The church needs to formulate its doctrines carefully – for three reasons. It holds up its doctrine as a banner stating what it believes. These doctrinal formulations (creeds and confessions) are also a defence against heresy. Furthermore, the church summarizes the Biblical teaching so that it can teach it to the members and hand it on to the next generation.

According to the apostle Paul, ministers are not only proclaimers of the Gospel. They are also teachers, called to teach the people of God, and to confirm them ever more firmly in the different aspects of the Christian faith.

The authors of the Heidelberg Catechism understood well what the apostle Paul was saying. To teach those whom God, in His grace, had released from bondage to the church of Rome, they wrote this catechism. For about 400 years now, the Reformed churches have been taught the sound and comforting doctrines of the Scriptures by way of catechism sermons. For 400 years now, Reformed believers have been more thoroughly rooted, more solidly built up in Christ, by means of the doctrines of the Word of God as they have been summarized in the catechism.

We should not make a false contrast between the Word of God and the Heidelberg Catechism. Some people want to make such a contrast. Although the Heidelberg Catechism was written by men, every word is backed up by Scripture.

The many Scripture references you find at the bottom of each question and answer prove that, as do the many lines of the Heidelberg Catechism that are direct quotations from Scripture.

For what is the Heidelberg Catechism? It is a summary of the Word of God by which the church confesses and says: *Thus says the LORD. This is what the Word of God teaches.* When Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism are faithfully explained to the congregation, then God's people are being comforted by the Word of God and by Jesus Christ.

There is a difference in method between the morning sermon, which is a text-based sermon, and the catechism sermon. In the morning the minister typically takes a few verses or a chapter out of the Bible, and works that out. The sermon is focused on those verses or that chapter. He will show how that text lies in the context of the chapter, the book, the testament, and the Bible, and yet, he focuses on those few words. When the minister preaches the Word of God using a few questions and answers of the Heidelberg Catechism, he and the congregation together look at the entire Scriptures through the lens of a particular Biblical doctrine (which ever one that particular Lord's Day summarizes). One, then, does not, strictly speaking, preach a specific text of Scripture, but the Word of God is being proclaimed. When the minister uses the Heidelberg Catechism as text, then he uses a Lord's Day as a window on the Bible. His aim is to proclaim and teach the Word of God as it has been summarized in that Lord's Day, looking at the entire Scriptures through the window of the Lord's Day, and using formulations the church of all ages has accepted as being entirely Biblical.

And so, even though I and my congregation had just completed the catechism, it was good for us to begin it again. For, like a faithful map, it will once again take us across the terrain of Scripture. It will guide us to, what we might call, the main points of Scripture. It will, in a summary way, teach us the whole counsel of God. We will learn what the Bible teaches us about our sinful natures, about salvation, and how to be thankful to God. And doing so, it will comfort us with the knowledge that God has saved us from sin and eternal destruction by the blood of Jesus Christ, and has called us to be His people.

Should we keep preaching the catechism? Yes, we should. It is one of our strengths. The Heidelberg Catechism is part of the great heritage we have received from the Reformation. It is a wonderful tool to keep us closely attuned to the doctrines of Scriptures. As it takes us back and forth through the Word, as we scale the heights and plumb the depths of the teachings of Scriptures, it helps to keep us as people of the Word.

By J.L. Van Popta

Bloody sweat

And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Luke 22:44

While He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemene, bloody sweat was pressed out of our Lord. What was it that pressed bloody sweat out of Him? Two things: The weight of our sins and the wrath of God.

So often we focus on the blood of the cross. But the Lord began shedding blood before the cross. He shed blood when the soldiers place a crown of thorns upon His head and beat it down upon His brow. He shed blood when Pilate had Him whipped, when His back was flayed open till the bones of His rib cage were exposed and His blood flowed. There was the blood that poured out with the water after He had died and the soldier had pierced His side with a spear. Yes, the blood shed for the forgiveness of sins.

But what of this blood in the garden? The sweat mingled with blood? What does that have to do with anything? Is this significant?

Yes, this too is a matter of revelation. This too is important for our salvation. Although some Bible translations incorrectly put this verse in a footnote, this is not just a footnote to the Lord's life and work!

There is a great difference between this blood and the blood of *Gabbatha*, the place of judgment. For there the blood was shed by human weapons – by thorns and a whip.

There is a great difference between the blood of *Golgotha* and the blood of *Gethsemene*. *Golgotha's* blood was evoked by nails and a spear.

In *Gethsemene*, the blood came from within. It was pressed out of Him.

The Lord was sorrowful unto death. He cast himself down before the Father and prayed in the agony of His soul. He sweat blood, but it was not a human weapon that forced it out. Not whip or sword. Not thorn or nail. Not human earthly things, but *heavenly* things. He sweat blood before His Father.

The whole universe demanded Christ's blood. Earth and heaven, our

sins and the wrath of God against our sins, called for it.

Here in Gethsemene He was alone. No one touched Him. He came before the Father and said, "Father take this cup from me, this cup of suffering. Take this cup of your holy wrath away from me."

"But . . . But your will be done. I will obey. I will do what you want of me."

He did this in His perfect obedience. Your will be done. Not *your plan*. Not *your secret counsel*. That is not what the Lord Jesus prayed for. No, he said your *will* be done. I will *obey*. I will obey your *will* for it alone is good. This obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ cost Him His life. This obedience cost Him His blood. He sacrificed His blood.

An angel from heaven came to strengthen Him (v. 43). The angel did not come to share His suffering. He came so that the Lord could and would bear the full wrath of God. This was not respite from suffering. No, the angel came to save Him for the hour of suffering that was coming. The angel came to lend support to one who would have collapsed. He came so that the Christ would not yield. The angel came to strengthen Him, to give greater capacity for endurance. In order to suffer one must be strong. The angel actually, in His strengthening, increased the suffering. He did not make the suffering less. The Lord Jesus was not permitted to faint. He was not allowed to succumb. He had to endure the suffering.



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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: clarion@compuserve.com

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

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1997		
	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$34.00*	\$59.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$39.00	\$52.00
International	\$55.00	\$85.00

* Including 7% GST - No. R104293055

Advertisements: \$11.25 per column inch

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

Publications Mail Registration No. 1025
ISSN 0383-0438

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – Why all the catechism sermons, anyway? — G.Ph. van Popta	238
Meditation – Bloody sweat — J.L. Van Popta	239
Bible translations and Reformed training for the ministry? — R. Faber	240
A visit to Sumba, Indonesia! — A.J. Pol.....	244
Press Review – Problems with discipline — J. De Jong	246
Book Review – <i>Pastoral Theology. The Pastor in the Various Duties of his Office</i> by Thomas Murphy — J. De Jong	247
Reader's Forum – Still "Thinking Biblically . . ." — Mrs. H. Heetebrij	248
Annual Men's League Day, Ontario — Keith Sikkema.....	249
News form MERF-Canada	250
Our Little Magazine — Aunt Betty	251

And the Suffering One began to sweat blood.

He suffered under the hand of God. It was the weight of our sins and the burden of God's wrath that pressed the blood out of Him. Men did not take it from Him. He sacrificed His blood in obedience. There He is bowed down in prayer alone before the Father, shedding His blood for you and for me.

Paul says somewhere that the cross is a stumbling block for Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. How can the Saviour of the world be struck down by the weapons of men? How can one whom ordinary soldiers can nail to a cross and kill be the one who bears the sins of the world and the sum of God's wrath? How can the Messiah be killed?

But we see it more profoundly. How can the Christ be sweating blood before the face of God? Christ lay before the Father alone. The offense is not external. It is not the outside wounds. It is the weight of sin and wrath.

As long as Christ's blood flows at the hands of sinful men we can protest. But when I see Christ's blood flow because of the wrath of God then I can only believe.

This is the work of the Father. He required the blood of His Son. He re-

quired it of Him to pay for your sins and mine. This farewell in the garden was my fault, my work, because of my sins.

In Gethsemene Jesus Christ gave His blood for you and for me. The Father took it. But Jesus Christ also gave it. He gave His life blood. He sweat blood in the garden. And it poured out of Him. It was pressed out of Him as He went forward in perfect obedience.

For He rose and went on to meet His betrayer and His executioners. He went in perfect obedience to the Father that He might fulfill all the righteousness of God's law for us. For in His obedience He has become our righteousness. Because of His obedience we need not bear the wrath of God. For we would be crushed if pressed by the weight of our sins and the burden of God's wrath. We would be crushed like grapes in the winepress of God's wrath.

Praise God and thank the Lord Jesus for the blood He shed for us among the olive trees as His disciples slept.

Note: I acknowledge my debt to K. Schilder, Christ in His Suffering, Chapter 21 for some of the thoughts on this page.



What's inside?

There's gold in Indonesia! Yes, gold! Despite the shocking revelations of the Bre-X hoax, or rip-off, or whatever happened, there's gold in Indonesia. The Rev. A.J. Pol writes about it in "A visit to Sumba, Indonesia." The gold is not the mineral that has driven men crazy for millennia. The gold Rev. Pol writes about is the gold King David sang about in Ps. 19:10 – the perfect, life-, light-, and joy-giving, Word of God as it is proclaimed by Sumbanese churches of the Lord and taught by a Reformed Theological School on Sumba, in Indonesia.

Dr. R. Faber concludes his two-part article on Bible translations and Reformed training for the ministry.

We have also included a smattering of reviews, reports and reader contributions. Enjoy!

GvP

Bible translations and Reformed training for the ministry₂

By R. Faber

Introduction

The first instalment of this article focused upon three basic reasons the Reformers gave for the preservation of the Bible in the Hebrew and Greek testaments. Confessing the power of the Holy Spirit to use translations of Scripture to work repentance and faith in the hearts of sinners, the Reformers sought to provide accurate and readable versions of Scripture. Realizing the limitations of human renderings of God's revelation, however, the Reformers turned to the source of the Christian faith, the Hebrew and Greek testaments. Know-

ing that the Old and New testaments alone are the Word of God, they desired to appropriate that Word in its purest form. Furthermore, professing that through the miracle of inspiration God moved sinful men to record His Word in writing, the Reformers valued highly the original texts. And as those texts presented the Gospel of salvation for all who believe, they desired to read and know them as accurately as possible.

Building upon these fundamental reasons for the advancement of the study of Scripture in its original form, the Reformers recognized that both true

doctrine and practice rest solely upon the Word of God. In order to derive true teaching from Scripture, one should rely not upon mortal translations and interpretations but upon the Bible itself. Without proper exegesis of the texts, one cannot instruct the church in the teachings of Scripture. Furthermore, to refute those who teach false doctrine or who base their teachings on translations, the theologian must argue from the Greek and Hebrew testaments. These statements, which may appear obvious today, were new at the time of the Reformation. The traditions of the



Luther – “unless the languages remain, the Gospel must finally perish.”

Romanist church, the exaggerated status of the Latin Vulgate translation, and the ignorance of the original Scriptures had contributed to the devaluation of the Greek and Hebrew testaments. During the Reformation, the church had to learn again that it is subservient to the Word of God. While the Romanist church realized that its authority was being undermined by the return to the Bible, the Reformers knew that false teachings and wrongly based customs should only be corrected by an appeal to Scripture. Thus the return to the Hebrew and Greek testaments formed the basis for the reform of the church. In this second instalment, therefore, we shall consider three further reasons for the preservation of the Bible in its original form: 1) true doctrine rests only upon the Word of God; 2) heresies and false practices can only be fully refuted by an appeal to Scripture; and 3) true piety and Christian living rests ultimately upon the Old and New testaments. It will become clear that these reasons remain valid today, and that especially reformed training for the ministry rightly places Scripture at the centre. As the Reformers frequently argued, especially the servant of God’s Word must employ the Hebrew and Greek Bible for preaching, teaching and pastoral counselling.

4. The Bible preserves true doctrine

The teaching of the church is found in Scripture alone; doctrine is based not upon modern translations but on the inspired text. In order to test the teaching of the church, therefore, believers must employ the highest authority, Scripture.

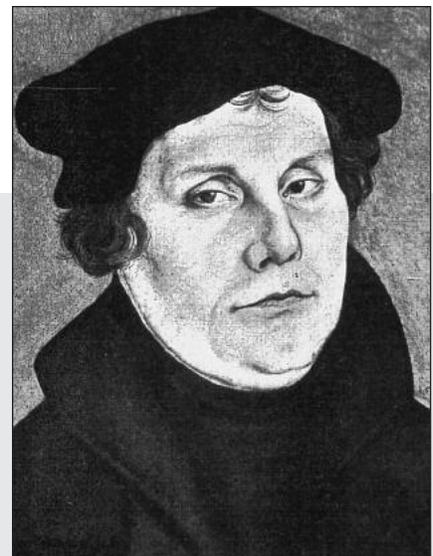
For this reason Luther wished that all believers could read the Bible in Hebrew and Greek! Indeed, argued Luther, it is in order to execute the responsibility of the priesthood of *all* believers in testing doctrine in light of God’s Word that all should have a thorough knowledge of the Biblical languages. Thinking of the corruptions in the church of his own day, Luther warns believers that “the preacher or teacher can expound the Bible from beginning to end as he pleases, accurately or inaccurately, if there is no one there to judge whether he is doing it right or wrong (C365).”

The Reformers stress that ministers of the Word should be able to instruct the congregations entrusted to them according to a competent knowledge of the Biblical languages. In his inaugural lecture as professor of Greek at the Univer-

sity of Wittenberg in 1518, Melanchthon stresses the fact that the Hebrew and Greek Bible contains the teaching of God which the servant of the Word must convey. Translations do not employ inspired words; they are time-bound, human renderings of Christian doctrine. Since the original Scriptures contain God’s teaching, Melanchthon states, church leaders should “cultivate (Scriptures) as purely as possible and not change it by our own wily devices.”¹ Melanchthon knew that if ministers do not preach and teach the inspired testaments, they run the risk of advancing their own fallible beliefs.

Matthaeus Adrianus, who taught Hebrew at the Trilingual College in Louvain, also commends knowledge of the languages in order to preserve true doctrine. His argument is: “what will a theologian do . . . if he is ignorant of languages? He must either trust in guesses or allow himself to be led by another’s intelligence (Rummel 116).” The teacher of the Bible must read the Hebrew and Greek testaments in order to appropriate and promote true doctrine. And all Reformers agree that good teaching employs the languages, terms and definitions of Scripture and not those devised by men.

Knowledge of the languages serves not only to receive and promote true doctrine, but also to rise above the teachings of those who rely on human sources. Melanchthon promotes the languages among the Reformers in Wittenberg, “lest we go into our encounters with the theologians blind-folded. It is language studies that brings out the splendour of words and the meaning of idioms, and . . . as we turn our mind to



Luther – “the languages are the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is contained.”



Melancthon



Erasmus

the sources, we begin to savour Christ (Rummel 115).” Luther concurs, stating that when “men attempt to defend the faith with such uncertain arguments and mistaken prooftexts, are not Christians put to shame and made a laughing-stock in the eyes of adversaries who do know the language (C362)?” How can Reformed theologians who do not know Hebrew and Greek refute those who err but do know these languages (C363)? As all truth is from God, the onus is upon believers to defend their convictions by an appeal to the Bible.

It is not surprising to learn that the use of the original testaments distinguished Reformers from Romanists. The Romanist church charged the Reformers with heterodoxy when the latter provid-

ed new, improved texts and translations, or when the latter pointed out that certain teachings had no basis in Scripture. As innovators who were throwing into question long-held practices of the church, the Reformers were seen as deviating from tradition. In fact, however, the Reformers were in accord with the apostolic church in using the Hebrew and Greek Bible. Rightly annoyed by the so-called scholars of the Romanist church who pretended to know the original Scriptures, the Reformers described the higher clergy as hypocrites. Unable to defend their teaching from Scripture, the Romanists were deceiving countless, trusting lay people who depended upon the knowledge of the clergy. The Reformers, by contrast, could take com-

fort in the fact that their teachings were based upon God’s infallible Word.

Matthaeus Adrianus rightly concludes that because all sound doctrine resides in Scripture alone, it will always be necessary to read the Bible in the original: “Who will listen to those who stupidly argue that a knowledge of the languages was once necessary, but no more (Rummel 116)?” The responsibility of especially ministers of God’s Word to know Hebrew and Greek remains today; it is *Reformed* to teach from the original testaments.

5. The Bible refutes heresies

The corollary to the belief that Scripture contains true doctrine is the confession that the Bible is the authority whereby heresy is rejected. It was in fact one of the hallmarks of the Reformers to argue that the teachings, customs and ceremonies of the church should be tried against the touchstone of Scripture. The most notorious false custom of the Romanist church was penance, and the Reformers refuted the false teaching which supported this practice by pointing to Scripture. More than a century before the Reformation, Valla had dared to point out that the interpretation of Jerome’s translation of the Greek word “metanoia” (repentance) in 2 Corinthians 7:10 with the Latin “poenitentia” led the Romanist church to the wrong conclusion that penance is a Biblically instituted practice. Erasmus observed the same problem with the Latin translation of Matthew 3:1: “to do penance” (poenitentiam agite) may mislead the believer into thinking that the common 16th century practice is based in Scripture. The original text means simply “repent” (resipiscite), referring to the conversion of the heart. By going back to the original Greek text of the Bible, Erasmus dealt a blow against the basis of the teaching of penance, showing that there were no prooftexts for the custom. He argued that these two texts do not support the external practice of penance, but deal with inner conversion. It is clear even from this one example how important Scripture is in forming proper teaching.

The practice of penance was but one of several customs and teachings refuted by the emphasis upon the original Scriptures: the Romanist teachings on the papacy, the sacraments, celibacy, and a host of other doctrines could not withstand the light of the Hebrew and Greek Bible. Thanks to the work of God in the Reformation, the church returned to the

teaching revealed in Scripture. Indeed, at all times only the Bible can fully refute the doctrines of men.

6. Knowledge of Scripture promotes Christian living

Doctrine and life are inextricably linked; knowledge of Scripture is crucial to Christian living. It may surprise the modern reader that practical application of Scripture was an important aspect of the Reformation. But the Reformers rightly connect the decline in the spiritual life of believers and church leaders to the demise of the preaching and teaching according to the Hebrew and Greek Bible. To prove their point that knowledge of the Bible in the original is crucial to the spiritual well-being of believers, the Reformers evoke the evidence of history. Tracing the history of the church from the apostolic age to his own, Luther argues that "as soon as the languages declined to the vanishing point . . . the Gospel and faith and Christianity itself declined more and more until under the pope they disappeared entirely (C360)." In fact "a great many dreadful abominations arose because of ignorance of the languages (C361)."

Melanchthon echoes Luther's assessment, adding that when the church lost its working knowledge of the original letters, it could no longer justify its practices by pointing to Scripture, and so false practices crept in which could not be checked against the original text. When the church was deprived of its languages, writes Melanchthon, "ignorance of sacred matters ensued (Rummel 142)." If the languages are not recovered by the Reformers, Melanchthon urges, "the true and proper piety is everywhere changed into human traditions (Keen 55)." It is therefore by God's grace that the languages were revived during the Reformation, and the regained knowledge of them was part of God's providential plan for church reform. Now that the languages are revived, they "are bringing with them so bright a light (C361)," says Luther, that believers are able to direct their lives once again according to God's Word.

Conclusion

Each of the Reformers' reasons for knowing the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures remains relevant today. Especially for the ministry of the Gospel knowledge of the Biblical languages must continue to be the basis. It will be worthwhile to conclude, therefore, by

noting that Reformed churches rightly emphasize the role of the Old and New Testaments in the minister's task of preaching the Word, instructing in the faith, and counselling the flock.

Ministers are servants of Christ who bring the message of the Gospel. As such they herald the Word of God, the living Word which He recorded and revealed in the Hebrew and Greek testaments. Of the Reformers especially Luther argues that to preach from the original texts is to preach the very Word of God. Ministers must not rely upon translations or commentaries. They must rely upon the revealed Word. Luther notes that when "the preacher is versed in the languages, there is a freshness and vigour in his preaching, Scripture is treated in its entirety, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and illustrations (C365)." A minister must be above the translation, and reveal to the congregation the fullness and richness of the Word.

Another reason why the minister must have a working knowledge of the original languages of Scripture is to understand and apply the teaching of the Word and so preserve Christ's flock from heresy. As was noted above, dogmatics rests upon proper interpretation and application of original Scripture. Not only during the Reformation, but also today the church must be taught according to the Word of God. Thus, to give but two examples, when he reads in the Form for Infant Baptism that Colossians 2:11-12 is a proof-text for the teaching that baptism has replaced circumcision, the minister must correct the possible misunderstanding in the NIV rendition, "the circumcision by Christ." Or again, when instructing the congregation in the doctrine of justification by faith, the minister must explain what is meant when the RSV states in Romans 3:30 that the circumcised will be justified "*on the ground of their faith.*" Translations do not always fully and accurately convey the teaching of the original texts, and the minister must be so conversant with the Biblical languages as to explain correctly the teaching of the Bible.

Pastoral counselling, too, is not based upon the teachings of man, but upon the Word of God. Only the fact that his guidance and advice are based solely upon God's Word gives the minister grounds for his discipline and encouragement. Indeed, counselling, preaching and teaching are joined together as the application of the Word of



CHURCH NEWS

Candidate Theodore Lodder
has a change of telephone number.
It is now
905-304-4697
* * *
CALLED to Ancaster, ON
Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
of Taber, AB

God in the life of the congregation. In treating the relevance of the Biblical languages for all the tasks of the ministry, Matthaeus Adrianus compares the aspects of the calling to the parts of the body which together promote the well-being of the whole. All are dependent upon God's Word and seek to serve it (Rummel 94-5). The minister who has plumbed the depths of the original texts and employs the words of Scripture in comforting or reproving his flock, most effectively applies the rule of faith. Human translations, teachings and writings are fallible, Scripture is not. Therefore, also in the pastoral duties of the minister, use of the Hebrew and Greek testaments is most effective. Indeed, warns Luther, "there is great danger in speaking of things of God in a different manner and in different terms than God Himself employs (C366)." Thus in all of the duties of the minister of God's Word it is Scripture which stands supreme. And so in conclusion, the relationship between the role of the Bible in translation and the role of the original testaments may be summed up in this way, again by Luther: "Although the Gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages, was spread abroad by that means, and must be preserved by the same means (C358)."

Dr. Riemer Faber is professor in the Department of Classical Studies, University of Waterloo.

¹*On Improving the Studies of the Youth*, as quoted in R. Keen, *A Melanchthon Reader* (New York, 1988), 55.

A visit to Sumba, Indonesia¹

By A.J. Pol

Help

It may seem odd that a minister of the Canadian Reformed Churches would visit the federation of the *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – NTT*, the *Reformed Churches in Indonesia* located in the province of *Nusa Tenggara Timur* (=NTT), for a month to give help there. We have no formal relationship with them and this visit was not designed to establish ties with them either. But it does illustrate the ties that sister churches have. Help was requested and given within the context of the bond we have with the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands. From 1987-1994 I served the Dutch churches as a missionary assigned to teach at a Reformed Theological School on the island of Sumba (pronounced *Soomba*) in Indonesia. And at their request I returned there to assist that school during the month of February and to visit the churches in that area. During this same period, Rev. T. Oosterhuis and his family were scheduled to arrive in Sumba. He was appointed to fill the vacancy that arose through my departure in 1994. Being there at the time of his arrival in February gave me the opportunity to introduce him to the work and life in that area.

Background

Elderly members of the Canadian Reformed Churches may remember that many years ago collections were regularly held in the Netherlands to support mission work on the island of Sumba. That work actually began toward the end of the last century. It encountered many difficulties, but there was also fruit. World War II and the political developments following it affected the life of the peoples of Indonesia deeply. Indonesia was no longer a colony of the Netherlands. It became a full-fledged nation. On the island of Sumba changes took place too. More than half a century of mission work had led to the establishment of Reformed churches. It became time for missionaries to make room for native ministers and evangelists.

Repercussions

Certain doctrinal and church-political struggles in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands came to a climax in 1944. Where the Reformed Churches originally formed a unity, two federations arose. One upheld what had been said and done by the synod (“synodical” churches). The other was composed of churches that had “liberated” themselves from the unbiblical synodical decisions. This had its repercussions for the Reformed churches on the islands of Sumba and Savu (pronounced *Savoo*). There were missionaries and churches that aligned themselves with the “synodical” federation in the Netherlands. They are now called the *Gereja Kristen Sumba* (Christian Church of Sumba). There was, however, also a missionary, Rev. S.J.P. Goossens, who aligned himself with the (liberated) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. He had returned to the Netherlands in 1939¹ and then the war broke out. When news of the “liberation” that had taken place in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands got through to Sumba, the churches that followed Rev. Goossens asked him and K. Tanahomba, a Sumbanese evangelist to represent them at the (liberated) Synod of Groningen in 1946.² As a result of decisions taken by the Synod of Groningen, Rev. Goossens was sent back to Sumba in 1949 as the missionary of the Reformed Church of Zwolle among those churches that came to be known as the *Gereja-Gereja Bebas Sumba Timur* (Free Churches of East Sumba).

Complications

In 1952 a conflict erupted in the midst of those churches. It was largely a conflict about personal matters involving the relationship between church and school. Tensions rose, finally leading to the deposition of Rev. S.J.P. Goossens by the Reformed Church of Zwolle and a breach in the relationship between this church and a number of churches in Sumba that continued to acknowledge him.³

There were sharply differing opinions in the Netherlands concerning what had happened. From 1955 onwards, the events were debated at more than one synod of the (liberated) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The churches following Rev. Goossens continued to be called the *Gereja-Gereja Bebas Sumba Timur* (Free Churches of East Sumba). They received support through a committee called “Support East-Sumba.” In the meantime, the (liberated) Reformed Church of Zwolle continued to support the other group of churches, led by Rev. L. Kondamara, a Sumbanese minister.

Rev. S.J.P. Goossens remained active in Sumba until 1959, when the political situation necessitated repatriation. His son, Rev. P.P. Goossens, took up the work among the Free Churches of East Sumba in 1968. He was supported in this by several (liberated) Reformed Churches in the province of Groningen. Developments at the home front in the Netherlands in subsequent years, however, had repercussions for church life in Sumba. The (liberated) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands went through another struggle. Rev. P.P. Goossens would have preferred not to see this have repercussions for the churches of East Sumba and Savu. His desire to be supported both by the federation of the (liberated) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the group that had left these churches was not fulfilled. The (liberated) Reformed Churches terminated their relationship with him. The support was subsequently carried on by the “Netherlands Reformed Churches,” which originated from the group that had left the (liberated) Reformed Churches.

Three church federations

There are now three federations that can be pointed to as results of mission work initially conducted by the Reformed churches in the Netherlands when they still were unified. **a.** There is the *Gereja Kristen Sumba* (Christian Church of Sumba) with which the (syn-



Governors, staff and students of the Reformed Theological School in 1993. Rev. M.B. Radjah and D.H. Doko are standing in the first row to the left. Rev. A.J. Pol is standing in the back row.

odical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have contact. **b.** Then there are the *Gereja-Gereja Bebas Sumba Timur* (Free Churches of East Sumba), in which Rev. P.P. Goossens continues to play a role. They still receive some support from private donations of members of the (liberated) Reformed churches, but their contact is mainly with the Netherlands Reformed Churches.⁴ **c.** Next to this federation there is the group of churches that for years was led by Rev. L. Kondamara. They are now called the *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – NTT* (Reformed Churches in Indonesia – [of the province of] Nusa Tenggara Timur). Starting in 1953 these churches were supported by the Reformed church of Zwolle. Since 1975, they have had a sister-church relationship with the (liberated) Reformed Churches. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia – NTT adhere to the three Reformed Confessions and have a Church Order that is basically the same as that of the (liberated) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

There are regrets among members of the Free Churches of East Sumba and the Reformed Churches there that a split took place between them. There has been an increasing measure of informal contact between them during the past years. Both federations are small compared to the *Gereja Kristen Sumba* (Christian Church of Sumba).⁵

Reformed Theological School

In 1955 the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – NTT decided to establish a school for training evangelists. Rev. van Kalkerem was sent to Sumba by the Reformed Church of Zwolle, and taught at that school for a few years, beginning in 1957. After returning to the Netherlands he continued to help by sending materials prepared for the students. On the island of Sumba, native

officebearers, the Rev. Kondamara and B.N. Radjah, as well as Umbu T. Rawambaku, carried on the work of training young men for work in the churches. The school was closed in 1975 when for reasons of health Rev. Kondamara and Umbu T. Rawambaku had to discontinue their work and acquired the status of emeritus. In 1976, two men from the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – NTT, M.K. Ndj. Watuwaya and M.B. Radjah, went to the Netherlands for three years of training. Upon their return in 1979 the school for training evangelists was opened again.

Rev. J.A. Boersema was appointed by deputies of the (liberated) Reformed Churches of the Netherlands to assist M.K. Ndj. Watuwaya and M.B. Radjah in training young men for work in the churches of Sumba, Sabu and Timor. He arrived in 1981 and worked there until 1988.

I was appointed to take Rev. Boersema's place and began teaching at the Theological School on the island of Sumba in January, 1989. From that year onward the program of the school was expanded. It still has a three-year course of studies to prepare young men to work as evangelists. But the more gifted ones may now return after a minimum of a year of fieldwork and then receive another year of training to become ministers.

Two native ministers, Rev. M.B. Radjah and D.H. Doko, continued the work of teaching at the theological school when I returned to Canada in 1994 to serve the Canadian Reformed church of Guelph. Pila Njuka, an evangelist, did some part-time teaching to help carry the burden. But he is now in Australia to study the English language with a view to continuing his theological education at the Theological College in Hamilton. In the meantime, the school

in Sumba needs further help. For this reason Rev. T. Oosterhuis was appointed by the Dutch deputies to assist in the training of evangelists and ministers. As indicated above, he arrived in February 1997. Since the policy of the Indonesian government is to reduce the number of foreign missionaries each year, the time may soon come that help of this sort will no longer be possible.

Rev. A.J. Pol is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church, Guelph, ON.

¹Before the World War II broke out, Rev. S.J.P. Goossens had become embroiled in a conflict with fellow missionaries concerning what he regarded as a too tolerant mission approach. It resulted in him being suspended (1938) and deposed (1939) as a minister. Some information about this written from the perspective of the (synodical) Reformed Churches in the Netherlands can be found in D.K. Wielenga, *De Zending op Soemba*, revised by T. van Dijk and P.J. Luijendijk (Hoenderloo, 1949), pp. 225-231. Rev. S.J.P. Goossens appealed to the (liberated) Reformed Churches at the Synod of Groningen in 1946 against having been deposed and was restored in his office. See C. van Kalkerem, "Kerkbouw op Soemba en Savoe," *Zendingspanorama – Het zendingswerk van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland 1946-1976*, eds. J. van Bruggen, C. Trimp (Amsterdam, 1976), p. 97; Th. van den End, *Gereformeerde Zending op Sumba 1859-1972*, (Uitgave van de Raad voor de zending der Ned. Herv. Kerk, de Zending der Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland en de Gereformeerde Zendingbond in de Ned. Herv. Kerk: 1987), pp. 701,702.

²Van den End, *Gereformeerde Zending*, p. 701

³S.J.P. Goossens explained his perspective on the events in Z.O.Z. – *De Keerzijde van de Medaille* (Amersfoort, 1953); see also Van den End, *Gereformeerde Zending*, p. 702.

⁴The Free Churches of East Sumba have the Heidelberg Catechism (including Lord's Day 22, Q & A 57, part of the contents of which had been contested by Rev. Telder and Prof. Vonk, leading figures in the group that split from the (liberated) Reformed Churches to form their own federation) and a Sumbanese Confession that is very similar to our Belgic Confession. This includes a lengthy paragraph on the subject of election, since they do not have the Canons of Dort.

⁵Van den End, *Gereformeerde Zending*, p. 703,704 lists a total of 2,036 members for the Free Churches of East Sumba as of 1986, and 3,500 members for the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (NTT). P.R. Boersema, *Ontwikkelingswerk in Oost-Sumba – gedurende de periode 1978-1984* (Dalen, 1984), p. 104, reports that according to the statistics provided by the "Kantor Agama Sumba" in 1984, the *Gereja Kristen Sumba* (Christian Church of Sumba) had 50,323 members. 



Problems with discipline

In one of its issues last February, *Nederlands Dagblad* reported on growing problems with discipline in urban areas in Holland. Classis Rotterdam of the Reformed Churches (liberated) noted that churches have more and more members who are members in name only.

The paper reports as follows:

These members hardly believe, but are not hostile to the church. They are open about their lack of faith, and do not get angry if the elder comes to visit. The new type of marginal member is not intimidated if he is withheld for the Lord's Supper. The Reformed rules for applying censure do not fit this type of scenario.

Three officebearers wrote a memorandum on these issues. We too are getting in our churches an increasing layer of people that are increasingly less involved in church life. Perhaps honesty demands that as far as the social perspective of our churches is concerned, we are following the mainline churches.

Ten years ago marginal membership was scarce in the liberated churches. "You could say that the generations that had made a deliberate choice in the ecclesiastical conflicts, are now disappearing."

The report goes on to say that Reformed ecclesiastical discipline assumes that a sinner will experience excommunication from the congregation as a punishment, and that he has a fear about the judgment of God. "Well, this approach is entirely without effect in the cases that it concerns here."

The rules for applying discipline have their origin in the 17th century. Then there were also "irregular and indifferent" members in Holland, according to the reporters Rev. E. A. De Boer, Rev. H. Folkers and R.H. Houweling. "But there was then a fear of God's judgment, so that suspension from the table of the Lord would produce an effect. And people did not want to let things develop to the point of full excommunication, because they were afraid of being eternally lost. Besides, excommunication meant that you were also socially isolated in the community;

you literally did not have a life anymore. . . ."

Marginal members no longer feel that they are pressured into isolation through discipline; they hardly have a connection to the congregation. And they are even less afraid of the judgment. "These effects can be observed right across the board in ecclesiastical life in Holland." If you look at the situation of the large Protestant churches, you become sombre: they are losing members at a fast rate. The churches do little more than maintain their administration. "The Hervormde (state JDJ) church still has a specific strategy: inner mission. It may be beneficial to get a greater knowledge of the means and methods maintained by the Hervormde churches for inner mission."

Hardly fruitful

In the Reformed churches, (liberated) it is a long established custom to keep the time between the announcement of the name and the final excommunication short. Classis Rotterdam – a meeting of delegates of the churches in the region – finds that in this way the churches enter the disciplinary process only at a later stage. This needs to be changed. "The simple maintenance of the established rules for ecclesiastical discipline appears to us to be of little fruit in this secularized situation."

The classis however is not pushing an attempt to change the rules. "That would require a long procedure, and an attempt to work in this direction has already failed," reports Rev. Folkers.

Guidelines

The classis believes that the Church Order still provides enough room for a congregation to announce the name of a brother or sister to the congregation earlier than is customary. In this way the congregation gets more of an opportunity to speak with and to pray for the person involved. The classis will provide guidelines to the churches in its district on how to interact with marginal members.

The proposed regulations assume that the churches acknowledge the existence of structural marginal membership. This is not always the case.

Commenting on the matter in the same issue of the paper, columnist Roel Sikkema quotes Rev. C. VanderLeest of the Reformed churches (liberated) who says: "Secularization has also increased among us, although that is not visible in declining membership numbers." What are the marks of secularization? Rev. VanderLeest says: "For example in the declining experience of God in daily life. More and more people do not know where to begin in their life in the week with what they hear on Sunday. Further you can think of the occurrences of incest and divorce which also occur among us."

Roel Sikkema refers to pyramid selling scheme that grew rapidly among areas of the so-called "heavy" Reformed outlook. Then he comments on the discipline problems in the urban areas:

Secularization can also show itself in another way. We can refer to the remarks of Rev. VanderLeest, and also to the discipline matters mentioned above. More and more Reformed people do not know what they are to do about God. He says so little for them. We also have what has been called "the obscuration of God" (*Dutch: Godsverduistering*).

God is also far away for people called marginal members that also increasingly seem to appear in the smaller Reformed churches. People that are hardly involved in church life and have no sensitivity to church discipline. People for whom the "fear of God's judgment" has become a hollow slogan.

These developments are reason for concern. How do Christians distinguish themselves from the world, if they are just as much transfixed with material gain, and just as little permit themselves to be affected by God?

Some Comments

The problems alluded to above are certainly not restricted to Holland but are also present among us. I even doubt whether they can be restricted to urban areas. We also must be concerned about the growing spirit of secularization that

permeates modern life. Marginal membership (Dutch: *randkerkelijkheid*) remains a perennial pastoral problem and sometimes elders despair of finding ways of tackling it.

On the other hand, I read the report about Rotterdam with some concerns. Let me only briefly raise the issue of a *classis* drafting a report on this matter. Is this really necessary? Discipline should be treated on a “case by case” basis, and it should be led by the local church. The danger here is real that a *classis* sets guidelines of discipline to which the local churches are then bound, hence adding to the provision adopted in the church order.

Of more interest for me was the intimation that the time between the announcement of the name and the final excommunication is customarily short. I have never heard of such a custom. If it is true, I share the concern about a fixed practice here. The time between announcements should be determined

wholly by the effect of the admonitions as ascertained by the officebearers, and time considerations should have little or nothing to do with it. Each case is different, and each case must be treated on its own. This concerns not only the protection of the name of the sinner, but also the gravity of the sin, and the response to the admonitions. There are many factors to consider, and time is probably the least of these.

My greatest concern with the reported conclusions made by the committee is that they appear to take their point of reference in the life experience of the modern day marginal member. Somehow the rules of the 17th century are seen as no longer applying to him. His way of experiencing (!!) admonitions require a modification of the ecclesiastical rules for discipline.

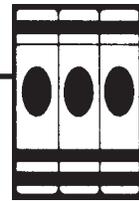
I suggest that this is not a matter of changing the rules, but a matter of whether elders apply the rules. It is rather easy to suggest that our patterns of

church discipline as given in the church order are outdated in current urban situations. But it would be more realistic to suggest that despite the kind of responses you get, discipline must proceed according to the Word of God. That means if there is no amendment or change of life, excommunication must be applied. Even if the marginal member doesn't get angry about the sanctions of the covenant, the elders must proceed with discipline, since there is no repentance. Who knows what will happen later? Who knows what lives in a person's inner life and conscience? Let discipline proceed according to the norms of God's word, in brotherly love and compassion. Then any elder (and member) can most readily leave the outcome to God.

Let us learn from our brotherhood in Holland that we must be armed against the growing dangers of secularization – also in the life of the churches themselves, and not just in the world around us.

BOOK REVIEW

By J. De Jong



Thomas Murphy, *Pastoral Theology. The Pastor in the Various Duties of his Office*, Introduction by Dr. David C. Lachman, Old Paths Publications, Audubon, NJ, 500 pp. US \$29.95.

This book represents a reprint of a classic text in pastoral theology written by the Rev. Thomas Murphy, an American minister who lived from 1823-1900, and had a long and active ministry in the (old school) Presbyterian Church of Frankford in the presbytery of north east Philadelphia. A graduate of Princeton, Murphy served his church with distinction, and proved to be a capable and leading figure in the presbytery. This book, first published in 1877, represents not only a glance at his own pastoral experience, but also the lecture material of two of the founding teachers at Princeton, Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. It gives us a glance at the kind of pastoral training young ministers received at Princeton Seminary in the 19th century.

Even though it is a dated book, it can be read with profit by ministers, elders and members alike. Being from the old school, Murphy has a high view of the office, and in every way comes across as a strict Presbyterian. In some parts of the book one senses that he ranks the ministerial office on a higher level than the or-

inary Christian life. If one can forgive and forgo those elements, the suggestions that he makes for fulfilling the office of the ministry are very valuable.

There are many interesting marks of Murphy's time in the book. For instance, he proposes a rigorous work routine of five days for the minister, the sixth day – which he, besides the Sunday, also calls the Sabbath – being set aside as a day of preparation for the Lord's Day. Obviously well into the nineteenth century the notion of the Sabbath day (here, the Saturday) as a day of preparation was widespread in American Presbyterianism.

The author also has a high view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. He strongly encourages the continued study of the original languages of Scripture, and also promotes a reverent use of the sacred text. The word of God is for him the fundamental source of Christian preaching, and this preaching is centred in the work of Christ. The preaching must be Christological, complete, enthusiastic, and filled with the Spirit. Although he is supportive of the revival waves in American Protestantism, Murphy is critical of the sensationalist revival preaching that was already popular in his day.

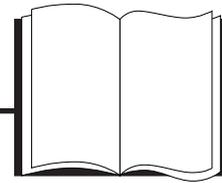
Murphy also deals with pastoral visitation, and the work of the minister in the

church and the so-called higher courts. Much attention is given to the labours of the minister in what are called the Sabbath schools, the precursors to modern day Sunday schools. Presbyterianism developed a Sabbath school movement rather than a Christian day school movement so characteristic of the continental Reformed. The Sabbath schools were much the same as our catechism classes, yet they included input from various teachers. The aim was to work for the conversion of the youth.

In line with the instruction of his teachers, Murphy has sought to be practical in a specific rather than a general way. He stresses the need of specific work plans, and – as one example – proposes that the minister visit the congregation three times per year. In our situation this is hardly possible, but it is a good idea if the minister can get around once per year either by teaming up with the home visitations in a particular ward, or making a specific set of calls on his own.

In the context of these specific suggestions, Murphy promotes the system of dividing the congregation into districts according to the number of elders, and of announcing the family visitations from

continued on page 248



Still "Thinking Biblically . . ."

Mrs. Flach's reaction under: Thinking Biblically . . . (*Cl.* Apr. 4) regarding Rev. Schouten's editorial under: Thinking Biblically about the Role of Women in the Church (*Cl.* Feb. 7) supplied ample food for thought. Who would ever expect such radical reaction to a Reformed minister's teaching, and that from a woman's point of view! I have to admit that I do share Mrs. Flach's concern, and I am thankful that her article was published.

It was not the editorial itself which ignited and troubled me to begin with. It was kindled even before I took notice of it. It was when I, like her, beheld the picture on the front page of the same issue depicting the three "more glamorous career woman who prefer to "do their own thing" to fulfil "their own lives" as Mrs. Flach puts it. I instantly found myself with "pen in hand" so to speak, but encountered a road block as to where to lead my "captive" audience in *Clarion*, at the same time running the risk, that an "audience" would not be invited.

It is only too bad that Rev. Schouten in his "Response" to Mrs. Flach took it all *that* personal. Ministers should be above that, for in the long run it will cause even more confusion, since people have to start to think for themselves a lot more! So I am not inclined to run to Rev. Schouten's defence, neither do I believe that Mrs. Flach or myself deserves a pat on the back for our feeble contributions to a discussion which seems to have no end. What really captivated me in Mrs. Flach's article was the short episode in which she related the tale of the inflamed "righteous anger" of the late Rev. G. van Dooren by a House full of disoriented females, at a women's league day.

The ire (continued in all sincerity), did not prevent this Servant of the Lord from coming down the pulpit, lifting a

warning finger, underscoring the Truth of Genesis that women first and foremost were created to please and serve their husbands, and if women of the Church would not submit to this fact in Scripture this will be the end of the Church "?" (Why the question mark Mrs. Flach?) What actually surprised me was that in certain congregations Ministers or even very capable male orators are still invited to address Reformed women at their annual events. Most of the local women societies seem to be of the opinion that as far as their spiritual well being is concerned they can do very well without the lords of creation!

If Mrs. Flach would be so kind to tell us which annual women's league day it was, (I mean which year) then we would be able to find out from our old "*Clarions*" (faithfully bounded by Rev. van Oene and lining our personal library shelves) if this glorious and faithful: "Here I stand . . ." of Rev. van Dooren was mentioned in the Report of that league day.

Rev. Schouten in his response to Mrs. Flach's outcry expressed the sorry notion that he rather would have seen that she had interacted with the Scripture passages cited in his editorial. I believe that she may have refrained from doing so, by reasoning that her letter might have become some kind of a theological exposition and much too drawn out to be published in *Clarion*. I would not mind doing this "interacting" for her, but at the same time am convinced that this is not the task of any woman in the church, married or not. For their first and foremost task is not to analyze Bible Texts from a whole hoard of different Bible translations, but to Prophesy!

I like to ask Rev. Schouten why it is, that he thinks it to be so difficult for down

to earth Christians to think "Biblically." Are we not all raised and fed with the Truth of God's Holy Word ever since childhood? Is it not so that no matter how times may change, Jesus is the same today, yesterday and forever? Balancing ideas is not the same as balancing our budget. Strong and radical convictions based on God's Word (the Bible) should not have to become bones of contentions which ought to be disputed. Yet we constantly seem to be caught in this pernicious net! Some may ask why. I for one would like to ask: Is it not because we try to compromise the Truth on the altar of convenience and wrong kind of expedience? As Mrs. Flach mentioned, "the unchristian catastrophes" which we all can observe and seem to have learned to live with in our churches, are increasing. She may very well portray the prophetess Huldah in 2 Kings 22:11-20 which Rev. Schouten is referring to, like Rev. van Dooren; prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem!

This is only one "Scripture passage" mentioned by Rev. Schouten interacted upon. I must leave it at that. I myself would like to refer to another Bible passage which is Acts 21:9, where we learn that Philip the evangelist had ". . . four daughters who were virgins who did prophesy" (K.J.V.). What a blessing it must have been for a father who's duty it was to preserve his daughters' virginity with the help of his wife and their mother, to have been enabled to raise them as such! Maybe Rev. Schouten would like to interact on this short passage which always seems to be overlooked.

Another concerned sister
Mrs. H. Heetebrij, 
Chilliwack, BC

Book Review continued from page 247

the pulpit on the Sabbath (his term) before these are held. Although their use has since diminished among us, these customs have an old history in the continental churches as well!

On the whole one can profit from this book. Admittedly, one tastes in the book the flavour of the time. The period marks the carry over of Puritanism in a

North American setting. The hallmark of this Puritanism is: next to the true doctrine you also need a specific and special emphasis on *piety*, and godly living. Not only does the pastor need to focus very specifically on his own times of personal devotion, he must also promote this in the flock. All in all it shows the flavour of a divided world and life

view, with the emphasis on the inner life. Today's minister, if he wishes to remain Reformed, will do well not to neglect the personal element; but to be truly effective he will need to show the implications of Scripture for the whole of life, and expend every effort to have the word penetrate into all aspects of the lives of his parishioners. 

Annual Men's League Day, Ontario

On April 5, 1997, the League of Men's Societies of the Canadian and American Reformed churches held its annual league day in the Smithville Church. Some 70 brothers and sisters had come to consider "What One Should Expect Of A Sermon."

Chairman G. Helder opened the meeting by inviting all to sing Psalm 67:1,2,3, prayer, and reading from 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. He welcomed the brothers and sisters present, and introduced Rev. J. DeGelder from Smithville, who then spoke about "The Word at Work."

One question asked at church-visitations is, "What are the visible fruits of the preaching?" This is not an easy one to answer, but what would the effect be if there were no preaching for a year? It is also hard to meet everyone's expectations.

Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli in Zurich, stated that the "proclamation of God's Word is God's Word," meaning that the sermon is the ministry of the Word of God. The significance of the sermon is that it brings the Gospel, the power of salvation in Jesus Christ. In the preaching, the congregation finds and meets her Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Word of God itself presents this position. Rev. DeGelder referred to Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 1, Galatians 3:2, 2 Timothy 4:2 and other texts to show this. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ with a mandate and with authority. Preaching is the first key of the Kingdom of Heaven. Faith comes through the Holy Spirit by the preaching of the Word. This includes both the comfort of the promises, and the warning to repent – as our confessions also emphasize.

There are people today who question the validity of the "Stone Age Bible" for "people of the Internet." But in His Word, we meet the living God, Who speaks to us now for our instruction. The apostle Paul also stated of his contemporaries that they looked for wisdom and signs – but not for a cross. However, the Word of God is always relevant for sinners.

Another issue is how the Word of God can come through in human words of a sermon. A minister must not suggest that sermons may not be criticized "because his words are the Word of God." The sermon must reflect the meaning of the text within the intention of the whole Bible, and ministers must resist the temptation to identify their personal opinion with the Word of God.

In a current discussion in our sister churches in the Netherlands, some have said that there is no substantial difference between preaching and an essay for a Bible study society: God's Word can be proclaimed in many different ways. Prof. DeRuijter agreed that the Word of God does not exclusively come from the pulpit. However, he also pointed out that the sermon is delivered for working faith, and by a minister who has been called and instructed (ordained) for this specific office. Dr. A. N. Hendriks emphasized the specific authority of preaching: all other proclamation must be carried by the proclamation of the Word in the worship service.

A good sermon must be characterized by a deep reverence for the Word of the living God. It must also have attention for the listeners and their differences. The minister must be an exegete and a pastor of this particular congregation. He must also apply the Word to himself. In the preaching, God makes us share in his salvation, and He works at the death of our old nature and the coming to life of the new. Preaching comes with fruits of love and joy, as it places the Word of God at the centre of our life so that we may respond to it.

The speech was followed by coffee and a discussion, which touched on several points, including the following:

- In preaching, the emphasis must be that through Jesus Christ we get to know our salvation.
- Ministers must preach the *whole* counsel of God, and with a balance between exegesis and application.
- For some books, the redemptive-historical approach works well; for other books it does not; the NT often uses the OT in an exemplaric way.

- Preaching has prophetic aspects, but we must be careful not to work with labels of preferred types of preaching, to avoid missing certain parts of Scripture which do not fit the preferred label.
- The important fact that the minister has been ordained to an office gives responsibility to the consistory as well.
- The position of the one who speaks an edifying word is difficult to formalize, but there is no doubt about the fact that a missionary "preaches," even though there is no consistory present.
- Catechism instruction is more teaching than preaching.
- Even if the word "antithesis" is not always mentioned, the sermon will always bring out the contrast between light and darkness, church and world, and provide both comfort and warning.
- It is difficult to preach to the whole congregation in such a way that every individual understands that it is meant for him/her personally.
- At the end of the discussion, Rev. DeGelder emphasized one final point: in addition to all of the above, he said, the sermon must be *clear* and understandable.

After the discussion, K. Sikkema presented a report about the activities and organizational aspects of the Inter League Publication Board. Despite competition from non-reformed sources, the ILPB continues to publish Reformed materials that help societies to study the Word of God and the confessions. These materials are marketed primarily through local volunteer representatives. A new policy manual has significantly increased the ILPB's internal effectiveness, and there is an excellent cooperation between the Board of Directors and the Administrative Committee in London.

At a council meeting after lunch, brothers E. VanderLaan and H. Olij were elected to replace outgoing board members A. R. Kingma and K. Sikkema.

Keith Sikkema 
for the League of Men's Societies

Middle East Reformed Fellowship

NEWS from MERF-CANADA

Radio broadcasts

The broadcasts are now on the air seven times every week. These involve four different transmitters: the two medium wave transmitters of Radio Monte Carlo (one to the Middle East and the other to North Africa) as well as two short wave transmitters (one is directed to the Arabian Peninsula and North East Africa and the other directed to North and West Africa). It is encouraging to receive mail response from countries as far away as Senegal, Nigeria and Pakistan. The mail response reflects a steadily growing interest in the Gospel among young Muslim men and women. Listeners who write in response to hearing the broadcasts are normally literate. Most have completed at least a high school level of education. There are, however, those whose ability to read and write seem to be very minimal. This confirms the importance of radio as an effective means of providing people in these mostly closed Muslim countries with the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is germinating the heard seed of the Word into saving faith in the lives of some of those who listen. A semi-literate young Saudi illustrates that in simple words: "Life is very good under the Lord Christ." A Syrian university graduate, on the other hand, says: "I have discovered true meaning and direction for my life and thinking. What God gives me in Jesus is true and good as well as deep and peaceful."

Opportunities for extending the Gospel outreach among Muslims are many. As the Lord provides the necessary finances for this costly work, there remains a most pressing need for qualified and trained indigenous staff called of God to give their lives to meeting such opportunities in both Arabic and Persian.

Groups of volunteers from Reformed churches help build MERF's "John Calvin Centre"

Prayers for volunteers to help build the new centre in Larnaca have been bountifully answered! A steady stream of hardworking volunteers from supporting Reformed churches have continued to arrive in Larnaca to help with the ongoing construction of MERF's new facilities. Dedicated men have come from Scotland, England, Tasmania, West Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands. Most have been professionals in different aspects of construction – carpentry, concrete work, bricklaying, painting and flooring. These and other hardworking handymen left behind families, income earning jobs and/or other important responsibilities in order to help with the work. Several went home for short breaks and returned to Larnaca for additional work, as they became burdened by the Fellowship's need for their labours. Several women have come with their husbands and served tirelessly with cooking, cleaning and other important services. The sacrificial labours of love offered by these brethren have not only meant significant savings in construction costs, but also has greatly enhanced the quality of the building. More importantly, their faithful labours have presented to the community a meaningful and living witness of faith and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Official opening of "John Calvin Centre"

The official opening of the new facilities is scheduled for May 9-10. Public figures and others from outside the Reformed community have been invited. The President of the Republic of Cyprus or his representative as well as the mayor of Larnaca are expected to participate in the event. A dedication

service is scheduled for Sunday, May 11. On May 12 and 13 a program of lectures and speeches on relevant subjects has been organized. A large number of representatives from supporting churches, as well as MERF branches and regional committees will join members of MERF's Board of Directors for these events.

The desire of the MERF leadership is to make the event a means for the proclamation of God's grace in Christ among the local people. We are thankful that already the building's distinct character is attracting much interest in the Reformed heritage. We covet the earnest prayers of the Lord's people as we seek to bear witness to Christ through the use of the building, including much expansion in MERF's Biblical training endeavours.

Because no one from MERF-Canada is able to be present, we have sent a letter of congratulations expressing the hope that "God will bless you when you use this new building to spread the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour in many ways. We pray that many will benefit from the proclamation of the Good News of God's grace among the local people and that many may learn to bow their knees before the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. . . . May it all serve the coming of God's kingdom and the upbuilding of his church throughout the Middle East."

Thank you for your continued support!

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

MERF-Canada
1225 Highway 5, R.R. #1
Burlington, ON L7R 3X4

On behalf of MERF-Canada,
Rev. J. Mulder, chairman
Mrs. J. Van Dam, secretary 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers:

It's been a little while since I wrote in Our Little Magazine. You've all had a spring break, and are back at school. Work hard at school, to use the talents which God has given to you.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Miranda Barendregt	4	Erica Broekema	14
Jeremy Feenstra	5	Amanda Feenstra	16
Amanda de Boer	7	Michelle Linde	18
Laura Rook	7	Charlene Barendregt	21
Laura vandenBos	8	Jonathan Kingma	21
Caitlin Meints	9	Tamsen Lodder	21
Christopher de Boer	12	Chantal Lodder	27
Kevin Viher	13	Angela Brasz	27
Rachelle Smeding	14	Timothy Bartels	29

Quiz Time!

SEARCHWORD – NAMES OF GRADE 5/6 OF A.C.R.E.S. SCHOOL

by Busy Beaver *Erin Buitenwerf*

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

Find names:

Alisha	Deanna	Jordan	Raoul
Alissa	Dirk	Lori	Rebecca
Andrew	Edward	Luanne	Rosalie
Anna	Erin	Matthew	Scott B
Ashley	Heidi	Melissa F	Scott D
Berend	Ian	Melissa V	Sir (the teacher)
Brandon	James	Michelle	Tyler
Brian	Joanne	Nadine	Valerie
Christa	John	Nic	Willy
Darryl	Johnathan	Norman	

UNSCRAMBLING SPRING WORDS

by Busy Beaver *Alicia Janssens*

1. wlrseo _____
2. idsbr _____
3. ertes _____
4. airn _____
5. udsb _____
6. Instpa _____
7. beasib _____
8. oblmgion _____
9. lpgiatnn _____
10. malnias _____

TRICK WORD BOX

It goes up and down and across.

1. Top: war while playing baseball
2. Middle: a large monkey
3. Bottom: most people have these at home

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

by Busy Beaver *Kym van Dyk*

In the following word hunt see if you can find 25 of the New Testament books. Begin with any letter and move one letter at a time to the right, left, up, down, or diagonally. When you find a word, draw a circle around it.

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

RIDDLE

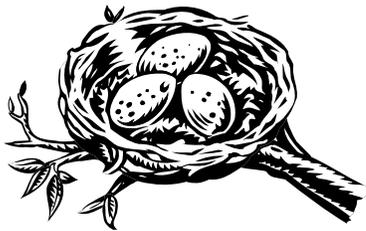
by Busy Beaver *Jennifer Houweling*

- Q. What did the digital watch say when it flew out the window?
 A. Look ma, no hands!

Here's a code:

A	▲	H	⌘	O	⋈	V	∩
B	◎	I	■	P	⌘	W	⋈
C	⊙	J	⊗	Q	⌘	X	⌘
D	⊙	K	⊗	R	⌘	Y	⌘
E	⊙	L	⊗	S	⌘	Z	⌘
F	⊙	M	⊗	T	⌘		
G	⊙	N	⊗	U	⌘		

⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙
 ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙
 ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙



QUESTION TIME

by Busy Beaver *Cassandra Vandebos*

- God created Adam on the _____ day.
- Jesus was baptized in the _____ River.
- Jesus is the son of _____.
- Elijah was a prophet of _____.

PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Diana Nobel*

A	◆	H	⌘	O	∩	V	⌘
B	=	I		P	∩	W	⊙
C	+	J	⌘	Q	⊙	X	⌘
D	-	K	⌘	R	⌘	Y	⌘
E	x	L		S	⊙	Z	>
F	+	M	⌘	T	⌘		
G	3	N	⊙	U	⌘		

⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙ ⌘ ⊙
 ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙
 ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙

PEN PAL WANTED

Darcy Werkman, age 13/14, would like to exchange letters with another Busy Beaver. His hobbies are sport, computers, reading and watching TV. If you would like to be his pen pal, please send him a letter. His address is:

Darcy Werkman
 Box 7, Neerlandia, AB T0G 1R0



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Kevin Viher*. You must be quite busy with two brothers and a sister, and another addition to come. Has Mom had her baby yet? Do you play a lot of baseball and soccer? Did you have lots of fun at the Planetarium in Vancouver? The solar system is very interesting to study, don't you think. Bye, Kevin.

Hi, *Jennifer Houweling*. It's sure nice to hear from you again. Do you have a lot of cousins? Thank you for the riddle and the puzzle you sent. Bye for now.

Thanks for your letter and puzzle, *Diana Nobel*. I suppose you will like going to the pond in the summer to see the dragonflies there, since you know a lot about them now. You must like reading a lot of books, considering you read seven in the holidays. Bye now, Diana.

Hi, *Kim vanDyk*. Thank you for your letter and puzzle. It's quite exciting to get a mention in the *Clarion*, don't you think? Yes, I get letters from lots of Busy Beavers. Family gatherings are always a lot of fun, especially when you have lots of cousins of your own age. Bye for now.

Hello, *Cassandra Vandebos*. Thanks for your letter and puzzle. Did you want to become a member of the Club? If you do, please send me your address, so I can send you a membership card. Bye now.

Thank you, *Alicia Janssens*, for your letter and puzzles. Did you have fun at the ice hockey game against London, even though you only watched? I guess it was fun having your Dad there with you. Bye.

Hi, *Erin Buitenwerf*. Thanks for your puzzle. It's quite interesting to make a puzzle out of the names of your class. I'm glad you had a fun March break, and kept nice and busy. Did your brother have a fun birthday? And did you, too? Bye for now.

ANSWERS:

1. 6th 2. Jordan 3. God 4. God
Question Time

Top: Cap; Middle: Ape; Bottom: Pet
Trick Word Box

1. flowers 2. birds 3. trees 4. rain 5. buds 6. plants 7. babies
 8. blooming 9. planting 10. animals
Unscrambling Spring Words



Aunt Betty

AUNT BETTY

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