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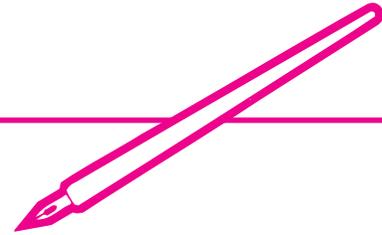


Faithworks in Haiti

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. De Jong



Strange winds

Anyone who is not a stranger in Jerusalem will by now, I'm sure, be aware that the unity proposals of the combined committees of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and the United Reformed Churches (URCNA) are under some fire in the United Reformed camp. The countervailing winds have arisen from the church of Escondido, the hosting church of synod 2001. The thrust of the overture, accepted in part by the March Classis South-West, is intended to bring the theological statements and assertions of the URCNA ecumenical relations committee into more restricted limits.

The brothers in Escondido have expressed serious misgivings concerning the doctrine of the covenant as articulated in the unofficial statements of the two committees published in August 1999.

Now this remains for the URCNA an internal matter, and it would not be fitting for us to interfere with the internal affairs of the federation at this time. However, since some of the critique offered in the overture affects the relationship with our churches, and since some of the comments of the authors of the Escondido overture have received considerable exposure in the press, a few brief comments from our side may be in order. However, I have intentionally limited my comments to strictly those points in which the Canadian Reformed Churches play an integral part.

The critique

The church of Escondido overtured classis with regard to three issues under discussion by the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the United Reformed Churches (CERCU). The same Classis decided to turn down one of the requests dealing with issues of the days of creation. That issue concerns the relations of the URCNA with another church group, the Reformed Church in America (RCUS). But in regard to matters concerning the relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), and the views on the covenant and common grace, the overture was sustained.

With regard to the view on the covenant, the brothers in Escondido have expressed serious misgivings concerning the doctrine of the covenant as articulated in the unofficial statements of the two committees published in August 1999.¹ Considering the force of the reaction, one wonders why the alarm was not sounded at an earlier date. It seems that even the fact that the statements were clearly indicated as unofficial and strictly drafted for the purpose of fostering exploratory

ecumenical dialogue was of no weight for these brothers. They are demanding that the CERCU not formulate doctrinal positions "officially or unofficially, without the prior approval of Synod." Talk about reining in a committee!

It all began in the February 26 issue of *Christian Renewal* in which a certain preference among the Escondido brothers for the doctrine of the covenant of works appeared.² This was regarded as an essential element of Reformed doctrine, and the inference was made that the *Three Forms of Unity* also espouse this doctrine. The next issue reported on the contents of the overture. The Escondido overture held that one of the Canadian Reformed articles "could be affirmed by the Council of Trent." It was also maintained that the logical implications of these views (the CanRC ones, JDJ) "have terrible consequences for our religion and therefore ought to be rejected vigorously, clearly, publically, and thoroughly . . . by the entire federation." Quoting Article 15 of the CanRC statement, the brothers of the local church hold that this is "another gospel" (Gal 1:9), and as such is "genuinely frightening."³ The original overture, with all this colourful language, so it seems, was also signed by Dr. Robert Godfrey and Dr. Michael Horton. Is there perhaps not a serious misunderstanding here?

The views as expressed in the statements both of the URCNA committee and the CanRC committee on the covenant are then held to be "aberrant views" which are sharply contrasted with "a very classic view in Reformed theology." The aberrant views are then identified as "newer or divergent views" and "contemporary idiosyncrasies" which must not in any way be confused with what Reformed theology teaches. And what is the aberrant view? The "error" seems to be that we have "mixed the covenant of works with the covenant of grace" and "added a work – obedience – to the requirements for justification." And to top it all off, in the following issue, for whatever reason, a connection is

Is there perhaps not a serious misunderstanding here?

drawn between these "aberrant views" and the covenant view maintained by Rev. Norman Shepherd, a former professor at Westminster Seminary East, and currently a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). And if that's not enough, the name of Rev. H. Hoeksema (the former PRC leader) is also thrown in for good measure. These views are then said to be "outside the pale" and "not Reformed theology," and it is asserted by one speaker that he is "not willing to stay under one federative roof with men holding such views."

Taking stock

What to make of all this? Since I am the author of the CanRC statement in question, I may be permitted a brief comment at this point. I think it is wiser at present to refrain from entering into all the issues that are raised in the overture, precisely because it has not been made public to the wider community. But given the amount of press coverage on the issue, something should be said. Naturally I am disappointed at the highly charged language introduced into the unity discussions in this way. As indicated by one of the authors, even the more toned down version approved by Classis still contains some strong language. At the same time, I am confident that the URCNA themselves will be able to see behind this unexpected cloudburst, and evaluate it for what it's worth. Allow me, especially for the sake of our own membership, to mention only three points, in an attempt to ensure that all misunderstanding will be avoided.

What's inside?

Dr. J. De Jong writes in his editorial about an overture which came before the March Classis South-West of the URCNA. That part of the overture which deals with the CanRC, and the views on the covenant and common grace was sustained. It is claimed that there is an aberrant view of the covenant, namely, that the CanRC have mixed the covenant of works with the covenant of grace, and has added obedience as a requirement for justification. This is a serious accusation. Thankfully, in a positive and edifying manner, Dr. De Jong demonstrates the truth about these matters.

This issue of *Clarion* should come out just in time for Ascension Day. Rev. J. Moesker presents us with an ascension meditation. There is no one that can condemn us for any sin or fault when we embrace Jesus Christ in a humble, living faith.

Rev. G. Nederveen starts his four-part series of articles on theonomy. This is not an unfamiliar topic among many of us since there have been articles published on this before. However it is an important topic and it is good to have another look at it. One certainly learns a lot about the relationship between old and new covenants when studying theonomy.

This issue of *Clarion* is leaving my desk just after the beginning of Synod Neerlandia. We have a short introduction to the history and natural setting of Neerlandia, along with some photos. In the next issue we hope to have more information about this Synod.

We have a number of regular columns in this issue. In his Observations column, Rev. G. Ph. van Popta keeps us current with the deplorable situation in Indonesia where the Muslim persecution of Christians has continued unabated. He not only apprises us of the situation, but he also shows what we can do about it. We have an article on Faithworks as well as Reader's Forum, along with three letters to the editor. Last but not least, we have a metrical version of Psalm 4 by William Helder.

RA



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In the first place, there is not and never has been a distinct or “idiosyncratic” Canadian Reformed view of the covenant. To be sure, our preaching has its unique character. The reformatory thrust of the thirties and forties led to gains in perspective that preachers and theologians in particular, but also church members, would not want to see lost. Reformation per se always brings the church forward. But this is in essence a view of the covenant that can be found in many of the Reformed fathers, and can be traced even to the first leaders of the Reformation such as Calvin and Luther. In that sense it is much more “classical” than the post-reformation model currently championed by Escondido. Not only that, it can also be found in the nineteenth century tradition of the Christian Reformed Churches, which in itself, is the *distinct doctrinal heritage* of the United Reformed Churches. Any knowledge of the history of the CRC will make clear that the view of the covenant common in our churches and reflected in the published statement has old roots, and was espoused in substantially similar forms by such nineteenth century CRC ministers as the Revs. G. Hemkes, F.M. ten Hoor, and H. Beuker and perhaps most of all by Rev. L.J. Hulst.

However, any attempt to turn the article on the covenant of works into an essential article of our faith, and one that also is embedded in the Three Forms of Unity is entirely a product of misplaced judgment.

In the second place, the view that the covenant of works in an essential article of the church’s doctrine, an article on which it stands or falls, needs some critical examination – especially when it is asserted that this is the teaching of the *Three Forms of Unity*. I will not deny that even at the time of the Reformation many theologians used the term “covenant of works.” It can be found, for example, in the writings of Caspar Olevianus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. However, any attempt to turn the article on the covenant of works into an *essential article* of our faith, and one that also is embedded in the *Three Forms of Unity* is entirely a product of misplaced judgment. Such a view is not only a theological error, but quite frankly, a error in basic *confessional understanding*. There is little point in trying to convince people – especially our own people – that the covenant of works as a doctrinal tenet can be found in the *Three Forms of Unity*. The phrase itself, which incidently is rather prominent in the Westminster Standards, is not to be found at all in the *Three Forms of Unity*.⁴ The only reference one might think of is in Article 14 BC, which speaks of the “commandment of life” in paradise, which, because of his transgression, turned out to make the fallen creature liable to corporal and spiritual death. But there is not one iota of merit in the expression “commandment to life.” In fact, it is nothing other than the obedience to which the CanRC statement refers in its Article 15, as quoted above.⁵

In the third place, as a corollary to the above, the obedience as mentioned in the CanRC statement has nothing to do with adding a *work* to the requirements of justification. It is nothing else but the “obedience of faith” of which Paul

speaks in several places, e.g. Romans 1:5; 16:26. Any careful reading of the entire statement will make that clear. We also confess that the faith which justifies must be a *living* faith (Art 24, BC). But does the act itself merit justification? Nothing could be further from the truth, since then the character of faith as an instrument would be jeopardized. Article 22 BC says: “Meanwhile, strictly speaking, we do not mean that faith as such justifies us, for faith is only the instrument by which we embrace Christ our righteousness; He imputes to us all his merits and as many holy works as He has done for us and in our place.”

Whatever lies behind this overture is anyone’s guess.

Staying on course

Whatever lies behind this overture is anyone’s guess. I fear that there are at work here some deep-seated misunderstandings and misconceptions that only indicate that from a confessional point of view, the URCNA is not a homogenous group of churches. Let us then hope and pray that through this “dip in the road” as well, they are able to solidify their confessional homogeneity, and present a united front to other church groups with whom they deal in their ecumenical relations.

I repeat that I am confident that the brothers appointed to deal with the issues will be able to discern the matters carefully and deal with them thoroughly, clearly, and firmly . . . for the good of the whole UR federation and for the good progress of the discussions on ecumenicity. Strange winds can blow from anywhere and from the most unexpected places. But they should not throw you off course.

¹ The statements appeared in *Clarion*, Volume 48, No. 16, (August 6, 1999) 375-379. Both statements are there referred to as **unofficial** position statements.

² Briefly stated, this doctrine can be described as follows: “God having created man after his own image in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil upon the pain of death.” So Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, reprint of 1977) 117. The most commonly used proof-text for the doctrine is Hosea 6:7, but the exact translation of the text is a much disputed point. The inference of the doctrine as presented by different authors is that our first parent Adam could have *earned* eternal life by virtue of his obedience. But this is precisely the disputable point!

³ Article 15 of the CanRC statement reads: “All obedience to the covenant that is required today is a human responsibility. Yet it is given solely of grace (Eph 2:8-10). We obey, not in our own power but only in God’s power. Yet God realizes his plan and counsel of election and reprobation only in the way of the believing and obedient response of his children.” It may be remarked that not one of our churches or office bearers reacted critically to this statement.

⁴ The only direct reference to the term is in the Rejection of Errors in the Canons of Dort (II.2), but there is no indication that the term is used in a favourable sense, much less is there an indication of how it was understood.

⁵ The Classis overture is very blunt on the point of merit: “We should not be squeamish about the language of merit.” And “If Adam had fulfilled the condition (of the covenant of works, JDJ) it would have been by his own merit.” That is precisely what Ursinus *does not* say!



By J. Moesker

Ascension: More than That . . .

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (Romans 8:34)

Somehow, there is comparatively less attention in the Christian tradition for the ascension of the Lord than for his birth or resurrection. Christ's going up into heaven in glory has remained somewhat in the shadows. This is not how the Bible speaks, though. The New Testament shows clearly that there is progress in Christ's work of redemption. Christmas, Good Friday and Easter are important, but Ascension is more important still. You see that in the text above. Translations vary, but it's clear that Paul speaks here about something that is more than the fact of Christ's death. And he isn't only referring to his being raised to life. He ultimately has in mind Christ's ascension into heaven, to the right hand of God. Christ's work came to a new high point with his physical ascension to God the Father.

Why is Christ's ascension so significant? What makes it a climax to Christ's work? And what does that mean for us? Well, something of that becomes apparent in the answer to the question asked in the text: "Who is he that condemns?"

There are, no doubt, many who would like to condemn us. Everyone has enemies or critics or detractors. They wouldn't mind condemning us, right? They know our sins and faults and shortcomings. They would be only too happy to be able to tell all in order to bring us into disrepute before men and God. The devil wants to accuse and condemn us. His very name means "accuser." It's his purpose to be able to point the finger at us before God's throne and to state all our sins and weaknesses there so that we might be condemned along with him. Think of Zechariah 3 where the

prophet saw Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side accusing him. In Joshua Satan accused all Israel for their sins.

Our conscience also wants to condemn us. In Lord's Day 23 of the Heidelberg Catechism, answer 60, we speak of our conscience accusing us that we have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, that we have never kept any of them, and that we are still inclined to all evil. The reference text for this in the Catechism is Romans 3:9, 10 where the apostle concludes that as Christians we're no better than anyone else as far as our own righteousness before God is concerned. "No one is righteous, not even one." Our conscience is a hard accuser too, for we know our sins and shortcomings, don't we?

But this is the glory of Christ's ascension. All the condemnations of our accusers will fail. They will all fail because of Christ Jesus. In fact, Christ's ascension means that they will most certainly fail. They will fail because Christ died for the very sins for which we would otherwise have justly been condemned. God condemned our sin in the humanity of Christ (Rom 8:1-3). The result is that Christ has redeemed us from the condemnation of the law.

However, that's not all. There is more than that. The accusations will fail because Christ was also raised to life again on Easter morning. His resurrection demonstrated that his sacrifice was abundantly sufficient for our justification before God. He was raised to life for our justification (Rom 4:25). The mystery of our being made right

with God is manifested to all by Christ's resurrection.

But there's even more certainty than that. Not only has our justification before God been obtained by Christ's death and made available by his resurrection: the living Lord Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God and there also intercedes for us! In other words, He applies that justification to us as our glorified advocate and high priest at God's right hand. He intercedes for us there: He speaks up on our behalf. Christ's ascension means that we have a Saviour who not only worked for our justification here on earth: He continues to work for that as glorified Saviour and Lord in heaven.

He is there with his pierced hands and feet and his wounded side, and He personally presents our prayers for forgiveness to the Father. And the Father cannot possibly ignore Him or deny his intercessions on our behalf. God cannot leave sinners who pray for forgiveness in Christ's Name unforgiven. It is impossible. Impossible because of Christ's death. More impossible because of his resurrection. But most impossible because our Saviour is exalted at God's right hand and intercedes for us there.

So, who is he that can condemn you if you embrace Christ in humble, living faith? No one! No one at all! No one in heaven or on earth. That's what makes Christ's ascension more than his death and resurrection. There's a progression in his work for us. And at the same time that means progression in certainty and comfort for us. Who is he that can condemn? No one! His ascension makes that certain beyond any doubt at all. 

Theonomy: What is there to Re-construct?¹ (Part 1)

By G. Nederveen

Definitions

What does theonomy mean? Theonomy comes from the Greek words *theos*, meaning “God,” and *nomos* which means “law.” Theonomy, then, means “law of God.” In a sense, Reformed believers are theonomist. Not only do we hear God’s law read to us every Sunday, we also receive a Reformed explanation and application of the law in the Heidelberg Catechism. The fact that we hear sermons on Lord’s Days 34-44 is ample evidence that the law of God still plays a major role in life as our rule of thankfulness.

However, the theonomy movement is relatively recent. The Rev. Brian M. Abshire, a disciple of theonomic thinking, wrote in *Christian Renewal* (April 26, 1999) that the movement is about twenty-five years old. Its program is different from that of the Heidelberg Catechism because its aim is to reconstruct society according to Old Testament law and practice. That is why the theonomy movement is better known as Christian Reconstructionism. Christian society needs to be reconstructed along the lines laid out by God in the Old Testament. Christian Reconstruction “argues that it is the moral obligation of Christians to recapture every institution for Jesus Christ.” The means is biblical law, which is the “tool of dominion” (Gary North, *Backward Christian Soldiers?* [1984], 267. Hereafter: *BCS*).

Other key words we will meet are:

- **Eschatology:** the doctrine of “the last things.” As you probably know, there are several views about the millennium – the thousand year reign of Christ as recorded in Revelation 20. The three basic views are those of *premillennialism*, which believes that Christ will set up an earthly kingdom a thousand

years before the final judgment. He will “rapture” or snatch his people from this earth to be with him while Satan is loosed.

Amillennialism maintains that the thousand years are not a literal number, and that Christ is ruling right now.

Postmillennialism holds as true that before Christ returns to earth as judge, the world will become progressively Christianized. More and more people will become believers so that when the Lord returns he comes to a world ready to receive him. Christian Reconstructionists are basically postmillennialists.

- **Presuppositionalism:** apparently this idea was promoted by Cornelius Van Til which argues that the conclusion we draw from all evidence is governed by our operating starting point about God (*BCS*, 275).

Theonomists want to do justice to God’s entire law and they espouse moral values.

Attraction and basic beliefs of Theonomy

Because Christian Reconstruction puts great emphasis on the Bible, this movement has found support among those who hold the Bible in the same high esteem. Theonomists want to do justice to God’s entire law and they espouse moral values. They have a biblical concept of right and wrong. The Bible, as God’s infallible word, sets the standard for all decision making and actions. A literal interpretation is one of the hallmarks of theonomy.

The founders of Christian Reconstruction have combined four basic Christian beliefs into one overarching system: 1) biblical law, 2) optimistic eschatology, 3) predestination (providence), and 4) Presuppositional apologetics (philosophical defence of the faith). Not all Christian Reconstructionists hold all four positions, but the founders have held all four (*BCS*, 267-8).

Prominent proponents

Three names stand out as the founders of the theonomy movement: Rousas J. Rushdoony, Greg L. Bahnsen, and Gary North.

Among theonomists, Rousas J. Rushdoony is considered to be the founding father. He was born in New York City in 1916, and is the son of Armenian immigrants. His first book, *By What Standard?* was published in 1959, and he has at least another twenty-nine books to his credit.² He established the Chalcedon Foundation which publishes *Chalcedon Report and Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. The book which really propelled Rushdoony into the spotlight is his *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1973). This massive study investigates the relationships of the Ten Commandments and today’s society. In it he tried to apply God’s commandments in a systematic way to the American way of life.

Bahnsen’s major work *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (1984), put the name *theonomy* on the map. Another one of his books is called *By This Standard* (1985). It has been extensively reviewed by Rev. Richard Asman in *Clarion* (43:5-7 [1994]). Since in the meantime Bahnsen has passed away, we give our attention in this speech to probably the most controversial of the three founders: Gary North.

North is a historian by training and holds a PhD in the field.³ He became a Christian in 1959, and, while studying at seminary in 1964, a transformation of his thinking took place. It happened while he was taking a class on the Book of Romans from Professor John Murray. One discovery he made was that he had been misled by most of his Christian teachers.⁴

In Christian Reconstructionism we hear the optimistic voice of postmillennial thinking.

Gary North is the son-in-law of Rushdoony, but one source cited that they are no longer on speaking terms. The rift occurred in 1981 as a result of an article North had approved for publishing in the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, to which Rushdoony objected (*DT*, 18-19). North moved to Tyler, Texas, where he has served for many years as president of the Institute for Christian Economics.

What's it all about?

We get a good picture of what it is all about from three of North's books which were written between 1984 and 1986. The titles already indicate the type of offensive he launches. These books are:

- *Backward Christian Soldiers? An Action Manual for Christian Reconstruction* (= *BCS*; 1984). Obviously this title is a play on word of the song "Onward Christian Soldiers." North is of the opinion that Christians have gone in retreat.
- *75 Bible Questions Your Instructors Pray You Won't Ask* (= *BQ*; 1984). In this book he lists seventy-five questions that students at Christian Colleges should ask their professors. If they do not get sound, biblical answers, it means that the professors are in the wrong camp.
- *Conspiracy: A Biblical View* (= *Con.*; 1986). The Bible tells about a great conspiracy against God (e.g. Psalm 2), and North sees a similar conspiracy in American politics and way of life.

I will try to paint the picture based on these three books. In order to give you a flavour of Gary North's often forceful writing I will use his own words as much as possible.

Political agenda warfare

One thing immediately apparent from North's writing is that Christian Reconstruction has a political agenda. His book *Backward Christian Soldiers?*, begins with the sentence: "This little book is about victory." Not perfect victory, but progressive victory, i.e., triumph over time. North is convinced that a progressive victory over the effects of sin in every area of life is possible. Or better yet, it is inevitable. He believes that to be the message of Deuteronomy 8 and 28:1-14 (*BCS*, ix) which tells about God's blessing for faithfulness and curse for unfaithfulness.

What we need is prophetic preaching which pays attention again to the Old Testament. North accuses twentieth-century preaching of neglecting the outline of Deuteronomy 28. He writes: "We find few pastors who are willing to stick their necks out and warn congregations that modern society faces the same sort of judgment that faced ancient Israel. They are unwilling to follow the logic of the covenant, namely, that *similar sins result in similar judgments*" (*BCS*, 12). North is convinced the Bible teaches that God's kingdom,

Pessimistic pietism and optimistic reconstructionism don't mix.

however imperfect, will be established on earth prior to the return of Christ. This kingdom will be visible institutionally. It will be empowered by grace, for large numbers of people will be converted to faith in Christ. This will happen *before* Christ returns physically to render final judgment (*BQ*, 144).

In this statement we hear the optimistic voice of postmillennial thinking. North is so sure that he confidently states: "So there *will* be a millennium of peace. There *will* be a rule of Christ's law on earth before the final judgment. There *are* explicitly biblical standards for a Christian society as well as for Christian individuals. In short, *there really is hope*. Our good work today *will* make a difference for Christ's kingdom. The Bible says that the gospel will be victorious, that it will eventually conquer all institutions" (*BQ*, 144). The institutions North is thinking of are first and foremost political, not ecclesiastical. Christ will rule over the nations in time and on earth (*BCS*, 31, 79).

With this in mind North complains about a *vision of defeat* which, he claims, over time has replaced the older vision of victory. The Puritans of New England established their colonies specifically in terms of their belief in the continuing validity of the laws of God (*BQ*, 87). Christians have been losing their cultural zest and flavour for well over two centuries. They feel helpless in the face of the complexity of life and the massed intellectual troops of modern secularism (*BCS*, xi, 2, 4).

North is convinced that Christianity can permanently reconstruct the culture; nothing else can (*BCS*, 7). But what do we find? Throughout the centuries expositors have often limited the promise of victory to the institutional church, or even more radically, to the human heart alone (*BCS*, 17). In other words, there has been no vision of conquering the world. As a result we live in a culture built by Christians, but Christians have very little say in today's world (*BCS*, 39-40). Especially since the First World War, there has been a retreat from victory by Christians. In their flight Christians grabbed the only life preservers they thought were available: they clung to pessimistic eschatologies. And where there is no earthly victory in the forecast, there we find no theology of dominion (*BCS*, 17-19).

In August 1980, however, a change took place. A revival of sorts occurred in which people heeded the call to exercise dominion. It happened in Dallas, Texas. The "New Christian Right" and the "New Political Right" came together. Among the featured speakers were Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, James Robinson, and Tim LaHaye. The message at the meeting was that Christians had a responsibility to vote and do so in terms of biblical principle. They should also rally the troops by getting other Christians to vote (*BCS*, 22-24).

North derides what he calls escapist religion.

In his book *Conspiracy*, North relates: "The manipulators are in trouble – the worst trouble they have been in since 1913. Voters are at last figuring out that there are people in very high places who do vile things by means of liberal rhetoric. *The climate of opinion is shifting*. The seventy-year romance

between the American voter and big government is turning into a series of lover's quarrels. The old faith in the government as planner is fading. I smell fear. What should be our response? Attack!" (*Con.*, 113-118).

According to North, participants in that 1980 gathering were for the first time in their lives smelling political blood. They were smelling a "throw the SOB's out" victory. And he continues:

But it was not simply politics that motivated the listeners. It was everything. Here were the nation's fundamentalist religious leaders telling the crowds that the principles of the Bible can become the law of the land. Every area of life is open to Christian victory: education, family, economics, politics, law enforcement, and so forth. Speaker after speaker announced this goal to the audience. The audience went wild (*BCS*, 25-26).

The moral majority movement was born.

Asks North: Did they understand what they were doing? How can anyone be sure? But this much was clear: the term "rapture" was not prominent at the conference of 1980. More people are talking about the sovereignty of God than about the rapture (*BCS*, 26-27). In other words, a postmillennial spirit was supplanting premillennial thinking.

What is North's conclusion about the new direction? Let us remember that he wrote this in 1984, but he was at that time sure that there would be some important shifts in theology in the 1980s. The new direction would separate the wheat from the chaff. Time would tell "whether fundamentalists are committed to premillennial dispensationalism . . . or whether they are committed to the idea of Christian reconstruction." One thing is sure, pessimistic pietism and optimistic reconstructionism don't mix (*BCS*, 29-30).

North derides what he calls escapist religion. He says: "In desperation, many have retreated into escapist religion – a retreatist, pietistic, "God will Rapture

me out of all this" religion. In doing so, they have abandoned *orthodox* Christianity, the *ethics* religion, which is the *dominion* religion" (*Con.*, 128).

One cannot be more blunt than saying as North does: "The battle for the mind is between the Christian reconstruction movement, which *alone* [*italics mine, GN*] among Protestant groups takes seriously the law of God, and everyone else" (*BCS*, 65-66). In the next article we will look at North's battle plan for reconstructing society.

¹Speech held on October 20, 1999 in Burlington, Ontario at the 1999 League Day of the Women's Societies in Ontario.

²Some of the following information was gleaned from H. Wayne House and Thomas D. Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse? An Analysis of Christian Reconstructionism* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1988), 17- 20. Hereafter: *DT*.

³Gary North, *Conspiracy: A Biblical View* (Fort Worth: Dominion Press), 1. Hereafter: *Con*.

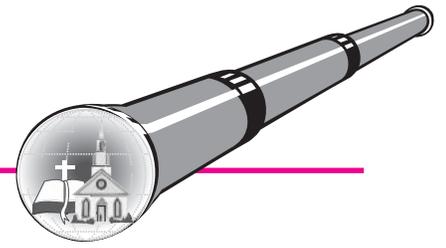
⁴Gary North, *75 Bible Questions Your Instructors Pray You Won't Ask* (Tyler, Texas: Spurgeon Press, 1984), 10-11. Hereafter: *BQ*. 

Psalm 4

Melody: Strasbourg, Geneva, 1542/ Geneva, 1551

1. O righteous God of my salvation,
Be merciful and hear my plea!
In times of trouble or oppression
You sent me help and consolation.
Be gracious now and answer me!
How long, O men, will you bring sorrow
And turn my honour into shame?
How long yet will you love and follow
Lies and illusions, vain and hollow?
How long will you revile my name?
2. Know that the LORD in His good pleasure
Has set the righteous ones apart:
He claims me as His own, His treasure.
In mercy great beyond all measure,
He takes my misery to heart.
Let anger not breed sin and violence.
Restrain your wrath and so be still;
Lie down to meditate in silence.
Put in the LORD your sole reliance.
Bring Him your off'rings. Do His will.
3. So many sigh, "O who will ever
Show any good to us again?"
O LORD whose mercy fails us never,
Bestow on us Your love, Your favour,
And cause Your face on us to shine.
More joy and gladness You have sent me
Than all the joy of those who feast
On grain and wine in days of plenty.
LORD, in the safety that You grant me,
I sleep in peace, from cares released..

Metrical version by
William Helder.
Revised, 2001.



Observations

By George van Popta

Indonesia

We continue to hear sad reports from Indonesia. During the past two years, Muslim persecution of Christians has continued unabated.

Indonesia is the world's most Muslim country. Eighty-eight percent of the population is Muslim while only eight percent is Christian (5 % Protestant; 3 % Roman Catholic). While there is stress between Muslims and Christians throughout this vast 13,600 island nation, the worst of it is in the Maluku province (the former "Spice Islands) where Muslim and Christian populations are about equal.

The government recognizes five religions: Islam, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Residents must choose one of these five. The law allows conversion from one religion to another, but proselytizing in areas dominated by another religion is strongly frowned upon. The present president, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, a Muslim, wants to be moderate and exercise secular politics. Officially his government condemns jihad (Muslim "holy war") against Christians, but does little to stop it.

There are several extremist Muslim groups of self-styled Islamic warriors who are waging jihad against the Christians. Elements of the armed forces have helped militant Muslims persecute and displace Christians.

Reports indicate that life for many Christians in Indonesia is very difficult. As of February 2001, some 8,000 peo-

ple have been killed and 500,000 have been displaced. As of December 2000, as many as 5000 Christians have been forced to undergo conversion to Islam. Many have been forcibly circumcised. Resisters are beheaded. Many Christian homes, churches and schools have been razed to the ground. Mortars have been fired into Christian neighbourhoods. The testimonies of the violence are gruesome and include reports of beheadings, amputation of limbs, stabbing and cutting victims into pieces.

Amidst the frightening accounts of terror, hate and violence, several stories of miraculous protection have also be told. The following is from *Religion Today*:

Indonesian Christians are sharing accounts of God's miraculous protection during recent months.

Many Indonesian Christians were concerned about January 9, the end of the Islamic month of fasting, Ramadan. There were rumors that it would be "a day of reckoning." Then torrential rainstorms began, lasting several days. The fanatic Moslems remained home; the mass demonstrations, which could have led to violence, were canceled or flopped.

Numerous Christians tell how God has intervened to protect them from Jihad warriors, who have spread out throughout the islands. In one case, Jihad warriors on their way to attack a Christian village met "an army of

Facts about Indonesia

Area: 1,919,440 sq km

Capital: Jakarta

Main Cities: Surabaya, Medan, Bandung, Semarang

Population: 216,108,345

Population Growth: 1.46%

Religions: Muslim, Christian, Buddhism, Hinduism

Languages: Bahasa Indonesia

(official, modified form of Malay), English, Dutch

Ethnic Groups: Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, coastal Malays



*Maluku
Protestant Church/
Gereja Protestan
Maluku (GPM)
"Jemaat Petra" in
Benteng Karang was
burned out by
Muslims.*



white men" on the outskirts of the village, and fled in terror. There are no white men in the village, so the villagers believe that the Moslems saw angels.

Last autumn, a heavily armed group of Jihad warriors was on the way to attack Christians on the island of Kisar. The Christians prayed, and the flood tide on which the terrorists planned to attack the island simply did not happen. Only 20 hours later did the water begin to rise, by which time it was light and the terrorists had left (Source: Open Doors and DAWN News, Indonesia).

What can we do?

- Pray for the Christians in Indonesia. Pray the Lord to protect them, to give them courage to persevere in the faith, and to let the good news of Jesus Christ continue to be heard.
- Write a respectful letter to one or more of the government officials listed below. Express your continuing concern for the safety and well being of the Christian community in Indonesia. Request information about what steps the government is taking to ensure their protection and freedom to practice their faith as laid out in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights documents.
- Contact your Member of Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Prime Minister of Canada expressing your concern for the Christians in Indonesia and asking them to inquire into their status.

Sources:

- International Christian Concern. www.persecution.org
- Presbyterians-Week
- Compass
- Religion Today
- REC News Exchange



OFFICIAL CONTACTS:

Embassy of Indonesia

55 Parkdale Avenue Ottawa,
Ontario, Canada K1Y 1E5
Phone:[613] 724-1100; Fax:[613] 724-1105
General Enquiry: kbri@indonesia-ottawa.org
Consular: consular@indonesia-ottawa.org
Web site: <http://www.indonesia-ottawa.org>

John Manley, Minister of Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
E-Mail: Manley.J@parl.gc.ca

Minister for Religious Affairs Muhammed Tolhah Hasan

Jl. Lapangan Banteng Barat No. 3-4
Jakarta Pusat, Indonesia
Tel: 011 62 21 360-244; Fax: 011 62 21 361-720

President KH Abdurrahman Wahid

Istana Merdeka Jakarta:
10110 Indonesia

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Alwi Abdurrahman Shihab

Jl. Pejambon No. 6, Jakarta Pusat, Indonesia
Tel: 011 62 21 344-1508
Fax: 011 62 21 360-517

General Synod in Neerlandia

By R. Aasman

Arriving in the hamlet

On Monday, April 30, 2001, delegates from different parts of Canada came by plane and car to the northern Albertan hamlet of Neerlandia. Those who came from the Edmonton International Airport travelled just under two hours on well-paved roads. It was cruise control all the way – something not easily experienced from the Vancouver or Toronto airports!

The first settlers in Neerlandia experienced a somewhat different journey. They came in 1911. It took them a few days to travel from Edmonton to

the Neerlandia area. The last part of the journey was through dense bush which required a liberal wielding of an axe. For breakfast, the settlers ate bear meat. Nowadays it would be an Egg McMuffin . . . but then it was fresh bear meat. We know that on December 11, 1911, sixteen Dutch folk were registered to homestead in what would shortly be known as Neerlandia. Among these sixteen, was a man by the name of Douwe Terpsma. He had a son who was almost two years old, young Norman Terpsma. Norman is still alive and is now the oldest member of the Neerlandia congregation.

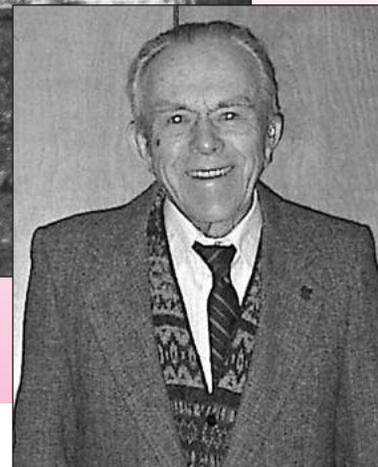
He can still regale any willing listener with stories about the “old days.” There was the time that the dynamite went off in Norman’s face . . . it is a miracle that he was not killed or blinded. You can find a photo of Norman with this article.

Still something rugged about this place

Today the Neerlandia area is typical Alberta farmland. It is not prairie. It is called parkland. Indeed, Neerlandia stands at the very edge of dense bush which extends right up to where trees don’t grow anymore. There is



Terpsma homestead with young Norman.



*Norman Terpsma
– oldest member of the congregation.*

still an awesome ruggedness about this place. Anyone can spot a white-tailed deer or a mule deer, an elk, a moose, a bear, a coyote or even a wolf. You might see an ostrich or buffalo – but they belong to some farmer! Albert Van Leeuwen has them all on his property, except for the ostrich and buffalo. Albert kept an eye on one particular black bear who was enjoying Albert's oat field. But as the bear became bolder and came mighty close to where the children were playing, Albert reluctantly had to shoot it. The bear now adorns a wall in the family dwelling.

The prayer service

In this unique area, Synod Neerlandia 2001 was convened. The dele-

gates clearly love the beauty of this area and they deeply appreciate the hospitality of the community. On Monday evening, April 30, a prayer service was held. This was led by Rev. R. Aasman, the chairman of the previous Synod. His text was Ephesians 1:19b-23. The sermon gave encouragement to the delegates by pointing out that Jesus Christ who is the King of this world is also the King of his church. His power and authority are used for the gathering, defending and preserving of his church. Thus He also uses a General Synod for the glory of his name and the edification of his church. When Synod prayerfully and obediently strives to give glory to the King, then the efforts of Synod will be blessed.

Synod opening

On Tuesday morning of May 1, Rev. W.B. Slomp, the minister of the convening church, opened Synod. Soon the officers were chosen and Synod Neerlandia was underway. This article is being written shortly after the opening of Synod. In the next issue of *Clarion*, we hope to present more details.

We are thankful to the Lord that Synod could be convened in freedom and such a blessed surrounding as Neerlandia. May the Lord bless the deliberations and decisions of Synod so that truly our Lord Jesus Christ may use this work for the advancement of his kingdom and the glory of his name. C



Breakfast ninety years ago.



Neerlandia church building.



Brothers at Synod. – Top Row (l to r): Mr. G.J. Nordeman, Rev. A.J. Pol, Mr. W. Gortemaker, Rev. J. DeGelder, Mr. B. Poort, Mr. P. DeBoer, Rev. J. Huijgen; Middle Row: Mr. P. Oosterhoff, Rev. W.B. Slomp, Mr. W. VanAssen, Mr. E. Kampen, Rev. J. VanVliet, Mr. J. Jonker; Front Row: Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta, Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. Cl. Stam, Rev. G.H. Visscher, Rev. E. Kampen.

Faithworks

By Jason Bouwman

The country of Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the world. An estimated eighty percent of the people live in abject poverty, struggling daily for survival. Infant mortality is about 109 per 1000 births (Canada is about five per 1000 births) and life expectancy is only forty-five years. For the thousands of mentally and physically handicapped children the situation is considerably worse. In a voodoo ridden culture that considers them cursed they are often abandoned or allowed to die. Those that live are denied medical attention and education. They are the poorest of the poor, the worthless, the rejected, the cursed.

And yet there is hope! Even in Haiti amidst all the devastation and squalor our awesome Lord is working mightily. In mid February 2001, eight FAITHWORKS team members were given the opportunity to witness and partake in Christ's redeeming work in the Haitian capital of Port-a-Prince.

Arriving in the crowded capital carrying cases of medical and children's supplies we partnered with Karen Bultje's organization *Coram Deo* and the neighbouring orphanage *NorteMaison*. For two weeks our general task was to care for and show love to the many children that frequent *Coram Deo* and those that live at the orphanage. Starting at 6:30 a.m. everyday, we spent two weeks feeding, cleaning, holding, and playing with the children. We also changed diapers, did physiotherapy, scrubbed floors, painted, built a block wall, visited the general hospital and assisted Karen in her daily routine of organizing medical assistance to those in need. In addition we taught VBS, participated in a feeding of 5000 woman and children, and spent time each evening in prayer and Bible study.

Despite the disparity, poverty, and our own sinful weakness the Lord was good, revealing many reasons to praise Him. We witnessed the Christian dedication of those working alongside the poor, and the blessings on their labour

. . . the joyous worship of a poor local church . . . the wonderful confession "Jesu is Lord!" on the lips of struggling children . . . the loving care of deacons for a "cursed" young brother . . . and the list goes on. God's blessing on our own efforts allowed us to witness children responding and smiling for the first time in months: mothers encouraged and staff refreshed; a disillusioned young man stating "Now I know what real Christians are!" . . . an orphanage given the gift of running water for the first time in over thirty years. So many blessings!

Walking through the slums of Port-a-Prince I saw an old man dressed in

dirty rags as he pushed a decrepit old cart over an open gutter flowing with human sewage. As the cart turned toward us, its metal wheels careening sideways on a crooked axle and its wooden frame looking to splinter apart at any moment, I noticed these words painted in bright red across the side: CHRIST IS CAPABLE. Indeed our Saviour is capable, in the midst of the most devastating of circumstances He is working to "set the captives free." As He continues to unveil his Kingdom all over the world let us be diligent in walking through the doors of service he opens for us.



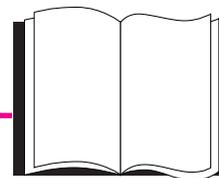
Christina (born with no arms) happily feeding herself.



Team members building a wall at Coram Deo.



Feeding John Florale, an sickly child at NorteMaison.



Responding to the charge of “Intolerance”

By R. Hamel

Responding to the charge of “Intolerance”

Not long ago Calgary Bishop, The Most Rev. Fred Henry, publicly rebuked a federal politician who is part of his diocese. The Bishop chastised Progressive Conservative leader Joe Clark, a Catholic, for his strong pro-choice views. Clark was warned that he might be banned from every separate school in the city. Furthermore the Bishop implied that should the politician predecease him, Clark might not receive burial rites from the cathedral.

Rodewalt, political cartoonist at the *Calgary-Herald*, charged to the rescue of the beleaguered Clark. In a poisonous little cartoon (*Calgary-Herald* 01/03/01) he verbally speared the hapless bishop, who for his trouble found himself pinned to the wall with Rodewalt's deadly lances of “religious nuts” and “intolerance.”

This incident aptly illustrates how the postmodernists attack supporters of the unborn. In present social and political conditions the good is increasingly slandered under the guise of politically correct language. To cry out on behalf of the innocent is judged an evil by damming it as intolerance.

The postmodern critic stretching for moral high ground uses moralistic language against those who seek to protect the innocent. For instance pro-life people are often accused of being judgmental. Moreover they are frequently vilified as “oppressors” for they do not support the woman's right to freely act however she chooses.

Those who care about life must win the battle of the words. Surprisingly

enough they will overcome by admitting the charge of the accusers. Advocates for life must say something like: “You are correct sir. I am totally intolerant of moral evil. I despise the rape perpetrated in Bosnia. I abhor the savage murders in Rwanda. I cringe when I hear how the Taliban in Afghanistan brutally oppress their women. Furthermore I do not tolerate lying, stealing, incest, or adultery, and I am intolerant toward the killing of innocent life which we call abortion. I bear the charge proudly!”

It has done supporters of life little good to be defensive towards a slanderous word like “intolerant.” They must own it, expand on what is meant by it, and show that he who tolerates everything thereby gives consent to a good deal of evil.

Some raise the cry of judgmentalism. “You have no right to judge me,” they say. Often they refer to the biblical story about the woman caught in the act of adultery who was in danger of being stoned to death because of her transgression. And in this context they piously quote Jesus who said in that instance, “let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” We must say, “You are quite right that Jesus demonstrated mercy for he did not allow her to be stoned to death. But you are wrong if you think that Jesus did not judge her action. For he told her, ‘Go and sin no more,’ and by doing so he judged her adultery to be wrong.”

It is true that we are not to condemn people, but their actions must be evaluated. Do we really want to conclude that Bernardo and Homolka's cold-blooded child murders cannot

be condemned as unspeakable evil? It should be obvious to everybody that in matters large and small every man, woman and child is called to judge between good and evil every single day of their lives.

The postmodern critic seeks to subvert language by redefining good (compassion for the unborn) so that it becomes evil (intolerance). Those who occupy the moral high ground must show that everyone of good character must oppose evil, and must judge certain behaviours as being abhorrent to human values.

Postmodernists really want to say that all values are equal because no values are absolute. They want everybody to agree that there are only preferences. They obviously have not thought this through – but they do insist on pushing it upon all and sundry by using the *shibboleths* of “tolerance” and “intolerance.”

They need to recognize that the person who tolerates evil and manifests injustice becomes complicit in that evil by giving silent consent. To be sure many issues demand that tolerance be extended. Intolerance in matters of race, religion, styles of dress, taste in music, etc., is never appropriate. But good and evil are real distinctions. And tolerance of evil has never been virtuous in any civilized society.

Anyone today who speaks against evil and is speared by the politically correct term of “intolerance” should consider it an honour.

And in Calgary Bishop Henry should wear the badge of “intolerance” with pride. 

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Re: Letter of Terry M. Veenendaal on "Women's Voting Rights" (April 13, 2001)

Allow me to point out an error in reasoning in the letter of Mr. Terry M. Veenendaal.

From his assertion that, with few exceptions, women are not as well equipped for leadership as are men, he concludes that the sisters should not vote for office-bearers. He neglected to notice the difference between serving in an office and voting for a candidate to fill an office. His argument about the suitability for women to serve as leaders speaks (somewhat, at best) to the question of women office-bearers in the churches and not to women voting for office-bearers.

In fact, his argument about the suitability of women to serve in leadership positions is not very useful. Mr. Veenendaal mentions five women in the federal cabinet who, I would agree, do not do our nation proud. However, we could just as easily point at five men in cabinet who engender equal embarrassment in Canadians. What then, have we proven? Perhaps that human beings are not suitable to serve in leadership positions.

The argument about "suitability to lead" is not only useless; worse, it is dangerous. Reasoning this way, we could point at five excellent women leaders, such as Queen Elizabeth II, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, and Deborah Grey, and conclude that the sisters should vote for, even be eligible to serve in, church offices.

Let us keep our thinking straight. Women may not serve in church offices because Scripture forbids it. When it

comes to voting for office-bearers, we need to ask: what does Scripture teach?

George Philip van Popta
Ancaster, ON

Dear Editor,

In response to the letter of Terry M. Veenendaal of Calgary, Alberta, printed in your April 13, 2001 issue, it's curious that Mr. Veenendaal states that, "I thought our synods and other ecclesiastical assemblies need God's Word to guide them in such matters," but continues his letter stating his strong opinions without any reference to the Word.

The issue is not about "rights." It is about "responsibilities." All communicant members should exercise their responsibility to elect to church office those who meet the Biblical criteria stated in Timothy and elsewhere. It's not a right. It's a responsibility.

A. Ben Harsevoort,
Stoney Creek, Ontario

Dear Editor,

With interest I read the report of the combined meeting of the Free Reformed Church and the Canadian Reformed Church in the March 30, 2001 issue.

Rev. Wullschleger stated that when someone leaves the Canadian Reformed Church to join the Free Reformed, we announce that they left "the church of Christ." To my surprise, this statement was not corrected – or do some churches really use that wording? How could we say that they left Christ's church – that would mean

that they broke their vows. This reasoning would alter article 28 of the Belgic Confession to read that outside the Canadian Reformed Church there is no salvation! I'm sure no one could agree with that. That thinking would be sectarian!

Locally we announce that when a certain brother or sister leave, they have withdrawn from Christ's church at this place. By this, all we state is that they left Christ's church at a certain address, and thereby do not imply judgement to where they are going. The sad reality of the statement that one leaves the church of Christ is that the same words are used for a person going to the Free Reformed Church as someone who rejects the gospel.

The Lord is blessing us richly with men who have a desire for church unity. I pray that we may step forward in faith, and strive for this unity, to his glory!

Clarion is a joy to receive, and pass on! Keep up the good work!

Fred Van Gorkum
Port Lambton, Ontario



As of May 1, 2000 the times of worship services in Smithville, Ontario are as follows:

9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Do you know what Ascension Day is all about? Do you remember when it was Easter? Well, forty days after Christ died on the cross and was raised from the dead, after He had spent some more time on the earth with His disciples telling them the deeds they had to do after He was gone, Christ ascended once again. On that day, He had completed His work on earth and He went to be with His Father until the day He will return again.

We will soon be celebrating Ascension Day. Remember when you listen to the sermon that the Minister will preach to you what it means. It is very important because if Christ had not come back to talk to His disciples before He left the earth, then maybe we would not even be Christians, because it was after that that the heathens began to become children of God, like we are today.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty



PEN PALS

We need four pen pals!

Are you approximately 9 years old and would like a pen pal? Deana DeBoer likes horses, cats and dogs. She has her own kitten and three goats. Please write to Deana at 6311 Silver Street, St Anns, ON L0R 1Y0.

Janell DeBoer is 10 years old and would also like a pen pal. She goes to ACRES school. Her address is also 6311 Silver Street, St Anns, ON L0R 1Y0.

Stephanie Bartels is 11 years old. She has two brothers and two sisters. She looks after her own fish. Her address is RR 1, 7966 Canboro Road, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1.

Keleigh Bartels is 9 years old and also has her own fish. She likes to jump rope, knit, read and do cart wheels in her spare time. Her address is also RR 1, 7966 Canboro Road, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W1.

If you would like a pen pal and are about the same age as these girls, please write to them. They would really like to hear from you.

Puzzles

What Fools!

1. He exchanged his birthright for red pottage.
2. He tore down his barns and built larger ones.
3. They imagined that they could lie to God.
4. He built his house upon sand.
5. In their pride, they thought they could build a tower whose top would reach to heaven.
6. They asked the blessed Saviour to leave their country.
7. They tried to hide from God.
8. He preferred his riches to the blessing Jesus could bestow.
9. He told his innermost secret to a woman.
10. He expected a fortune teller to reveal to him what God had refused to make known to him.

Match the THINGS and CITY

by Busy Beaver *Jolene Breukelman*

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Temple | a. Lebanon |
| 2. Walls | b. Tarsus |
| 3. Cedars | c. Jerusalem |
| 4. Ships | d. Bethlehem |
| 5. Star | e. Jericho |

Match the PEOPLE and PLACES

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Jesus | a. Babylon |
| 2. Pontius Pilate | b. Jerusalem |
| 3. Samuel | c. Egypt |
| 4. Abraham | d. Tarsus |
| 5. Queen of Sheba | e. Shiloh |
| 6. David | f. Nazareth |
| 7. Pharaoh | g. Ur |
| 8. Nebuchadnezzar | h. Jericho |
| 9. Saul (Paul) | i. Sheba |
| 10. Rahab | j. Rome |



FROM THE MAILBOX

I received four letters from new Busy Beavers this time.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Deana DeBoer*. You must live on a small farm if you have animals of your own. And you are studying about Australia at school. That must be very interesting. Did you know that because Australia is on the other side of the world, they are now going into winter, whereas in Canada, we are now going into summer? Their seasons are the opposite of Canada's. Write again, won't you, Deana?

Welcome also to *Janell DeBoer*. You must have a great time being in such a big family. And to have your Aunt get married must be very exciting. That will be lots of fun. Are you all going to be at the wedding, too? I will put an advertisement in this Little Magazine for a penpal for you. Bye for now, Janell.

Welcome to *Keleigh Bartels*. Do you make sure your fish always gets the food it needs to eat? I hope you look after it very well. It seems you like to keep very active in your spare time. But reading and knitting are good hobbies to have, too, aren't they? Till next time, Keleigh.

Lastly, welcome also to *Stephanie Bartels*. Thank you for your letter. You have your own fish, too. Do you and Keleigh have your fish in the same aquarium or do you have your own separate ones? I hope you look after your fish well, too. Bye, Stephanie.



Aunt Betty

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