

Clarion

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Singing a New Song

*some further thoughts on the church's
language in this world*

Did you know that being a Christian means that you are someone who sings and indeed must sing?

When thinking of a question like this, we will probably immediately become aware of the fact that we could not imagine our lives without music or song of some kind and we will remember that in Scripture singing obviously holds an important place in the lives of God's people. Right from early times this is evident. When Adam received Eve from the Lord's hand he responded in poetic joy:

*This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh.
She shall be called woman
Because she is taken out of man.* (Gen. 2:23)

When Israel received deliverance from Egypt, we read of the songs of Moses and Miriam (Ex. 15). Yes, as we go on we read of more and more songs, like the final song of Moses (Dt. 32), the song of Deborah (Ju. 5) and, not to forget, the whole book of Psalms or Songs of Praise as the original language has it. Thinking of the Book of Psalms we notice that song and music was not only employed in times of happiness, but also in times of grief (e.g. Ps. 22, 137). Think also of David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:18-27). Not only are songs sung, but there are even exhortations to sing them (e.g. Ps. 33, 98). Songs and singing retain their importance in the New Testament and there, too, are commanded (cf. Col. 3:16, James 5:13). It is something expected from the child of God.

song as a way of expression

What in a general sort of way could now be said about music and song? In what way does music differ from, say, the spoken language?

One thing music or song always does is that it intensifies our words. It puts an added stress and accent on words that would otherwise be spoken. Therefore when Adam wanted to especially emphasize to the Lord his joy and to intensify his words, he used poetry. After the deliverance from Egypt, song simply had to be employed to convey all the power and depth of the people's thankfulness to God. One could apply the same to laments and songs of sorrow. There, too, the feelings of the poet are brought across as intensely as possible.

Because music intensifies the spoken word and "enlarges" it, so to say, we can readily see that music and song go much further than the spoken word in revealing what goes on inside a person. Understandably, Calvin was therefore accustomed to calling the Book of Psalms "an anatomy of all the parts of the soul" for, as he writes, (1) "there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not represented here as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men want to be agitated."

Because music is actually an intensified form of "speaking" which is also very revealing, it is a powerful

medium for communicating. It can, for instance, arouse. Take for example Moses' great song of Ex. 15. It results in Miriam's spontaneous reaction of taking the timbrel and dancing and singing with other women who reacted in a similar way. The power of singing is also shown in the song of the women of Israel in the days of King Saul. When the king (and David) returned from battle against the Philistines, the women would expose their inmost thoughts in song by ascribing more glory and honour to David. This intense, accentuated way of telling Saul of their admiration for David even resulted in Saul's foolishly keeping an eye of distrust on and against his best soldier (1 Sam. 18:7).

song in service of Satan

Since the gift of song is of such power because it intensifies words and often lays open the heart of the person involved, it is small wonder that Satan has seen to it that this gift be employed by him. The first time we read this in Scripture is in the case of Lamech. Because we as covenant children have to sing songs to God, yes even new songs (Ps. 33:3), it might be good to pay some attention to the song of Lamech and its consequences in the hope that by way of contrast we might thus have a better idea of what is expected of our song and what God promises in this regard.

Lamech, of the line of Cain, sang as follows to his wives:

*Adah and Zillah, listen to my voice;
You wives of Lamech give heed to my speech.
For I have killed a man for wounding me
And a boy for striking me;
If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold* (Gen. 4:23f)

Cain had been given a sign by the Lord to protect him, and if someone should slay him, then he would be avenged sevenfold. This proud descendant of Cain make fun of God's care for his forefather, for he will take care of himself. He does not need God. His outright defiance to God is shown in the fact that he will even outdo God -

*"If Cain is avenged sevenfold
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold"*.

In avenging himself, Lamech is morally outrageous. Death to anyone who so much as touches him! Violence was for him a way of life. Yes, his morality is one which centers on himself, the haughty, ostentatious Lamech. He relies completely on himself. We shudder at the thought of hearing a song like that sung by proud, sinful man; for, a defiant song like that is actually a deep insult to almighty God.

And yet, if we are aware of the times in which we are living, such songs of Lamech, such potent means of communicating (which song is) is certainly not unknown. Violence and immorality is clearly not absent from today's in-Rock. Alice Cooper is quoted as saying: "Violence and sex sell. That's our appeal." (2) Furthermore, man's

sacrilegious defiance overagainst God comes out in unashamed force in such popular songs as "In the year 2525",

*In the year 7510, If God is a-comin'
He ought to make it by then.*

Given the characteristics of music and song (viz. that it intensifies the spoken word and therefore makes a potent medium for communication) it is actually small wonder that papers were full of reports of total audience involvement and hysterical response to such groups as the Rolling Stones. The actions of groups like these on stage are reminiscent of the proud defiant Lamech.

A question could arise: "Could the medium of rock as known today be used to spread the gospel? Could such a potent medium which captivates so many young people not be taken from Satan's service and put in the service of Christ and the gospel?" The question therefore really is: "Is the manner of today's popular solid rock music in itself wrong or is it just the words?" I think it can safely be said that we can accommodate to many cultural forms, provided we do not accommodate to the sin of it. (3) How now must this cultural form be evaluated?

It is the knowledgeable opinion of Bob Larson that the gospel and this kind of music do not go together. He speaks from years of experience as a rock performer and writer, but having become liberated from this medium he now works hard at exposing it for what is really is. To this end he wrote *Rock and Roll: The Devil's Diversion and Rock and the Church*. He shows that the very origin of the medium and the beat itself exposes the qualities we saw in Lamech's song. (4) He also refers to a professor of music who argues that both the meaning and expected responses of rock music are incompatible with Biblical Christianity and that the values of rock music and those of the gospel are at sword's point. (5) In view of the above, one can readily see what a deadening effect this music must have on learning the song God wants us to sing. This problem is not a theoretical one, especially when one considers that 87% of America's youth spend an average of four to five hours per day listening to rock music via the radio. (6) While these are "worldly" figures, it seems to me that the trend in the church is not uninfluenced by this pattern. Indeed, exposing ourselves to this potent medium of music, which, when it is in Satan's service, appeals to the old man in us, cannot equip us for duty in the Lord's choir. For what we have to do is to sing a new song.

singing a new song

That we have to sing a new song is evident from passages such as "Praise the Lord, sing to the Lord a new song" (Ps. 149:1) or "Sing to Him a new song" (Ps. 33:1). In these songs of joy the reason for the new song is self-evident. Sing, for the Lord has done His mighty and great works of salvation. This salvation of the Lord also explains why the song is a new song. For when the Lord saves us, He delivers us from the old ways and old songs which we as sinners love to use. Now that the Lord has intervened, the old becomes new. The supremacy of the old man becomes displaced by the new man. In the same way the new song has to take the place of the old. God's salvation is complete; yes, as a matter of fact He makes all things new (cf. Rev. 21:5).

When we realize that new songs are responses to God's salvation, then we also notice that the chief

characteristic of such song and singing is that it (like the renewed language) is moulded, not by Satan, but by God, the Holy Spirit. The salvation about which we may rejoice in new songs is the salvation in which the Holy Spirit redeems this powerful way of getting our feelings across. Since God renews our song, therefore it is even He who puts the words in our mouth. David saw this clearly when he sang: "He (i.e. the Lord) put a new song in my mouth" (Ps. 40:3). In the next line David gives a clear idea of what is entailed in this new song when he describes this new song as "a song of praise to our God."

Singing a new song, therefore, means praising God; that is, not praising ourselves, nor our ideas or morals, but bringing all glory and honour to Him. Now we can understand why the Book of Psalms is called "Songs of Praise" and that the title of our new "church book", Book of Praise, is such a beautiful one. In short, to sing a new song means "praise the Lord!" or, in the Hebrew equivalent, "Hallelujah!" And indeed, with this keynote "Hallelujah" the Book of Psalms closes (Ps. 146-150) and the Revelation song of the redeemed opens (Rev. 19:6).

As was mentioned, words to sing are given to the redeemed. This means that no one delivered by Christ can say, I cannot sing the new song. Now it is possible that someone says, I cannot sing. It is physically impossible. Apart from the fact that God is pleased even with our croaks, if this is all we can produce, the person still has a problem as far as he is concerned. Are such excluded from singing a new song? As we noted earlier, *the* characteristic of song is that it intensifies the spoken word. It brings it across in a powerful way. Now it is remarkable that God through Paul says that whoever communicates the great works of God's salvation in a God-glorifying, intensive communicative way is actually being musical, is singing (cf. I Cor. 13, 14). Therefore, if the believer does not do this, then his words, however beautiful, make no music but noise and Paul can only refer to such non-Spirit moulded speaking as the sound of a noisy gong or clanging cymbal (I Cor. 13:1; cf. I Cor. 14:7-15). Then and only then, the speaking is not music. (7) So indeed we may all sing and make music before the Lord. We may expose ourselves as redeemed and we may relate our joy and gratitude as God directs and as we can best use our talents. Then it is all music before Him.

The keynote in the new song is to thank God for His great salvation. A cardinal rule in singing the new song is that it must indeed be new (i.e. formed by the Spirit and sung by a new person in a new God-glorifying way). Christ has clearly shown that old and new do not mix (cf. the parable of the new wine in the old containers, Mk. 2:21). Herein lies today's challenge in our mandate. We live in a time when the airwaves are often literally choked with Lamech songs and sounds glorifying decadent man; but, we may and must also ourselves articulate to glorify our Redeemer. To do this we may sing from our new Book of Praise. In this connection we may indeed see this book as a gift of God. Without depreciating in any way the music we have received from our Reformed past (for it is God-glorifying music!) there is nevertheless room for Reformed musicians, and poets too, to further articulate in a Biblical way our thanksgiving to God for His great works. O, to develop twentieth century music and song according to the pattern of the new song of Scripture is difficult (old and new can not mix), for the very music has to reflect glorification to God. But as redeemed thankful children of

God, those who are musically talented in our midst, must indeed use their gifts in this direction. (8)

Singing is a powerful thing. With it Satan has won many. Here, too, the Lord shows us our task. Overagainst Satan's sound must be the music of the redeemed, music and singing which is to win others. David showed this when he sang:

*He put a new song in my mouth,
A song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
And put their trust in the Lord.* (Ps. 40:3)

Singing is part and parcel of the new language which we

have received from the Lord, and therefore this missionary aspect is not surprising. Recognizing this fact, we can then see that our joyous singing of our redemption here is but a beginning of the singing of more new songs by an innumerable glorified multitude. Yes, we will learn more new songs, for added to our new Book of Praise will at least certainly be new songs praising God for His complete redemption on the new earth. Songs without false notes. Songs which only the redeemed can learn (Rev. 14:3), and therefore songs of which we today can already have a foretaste, for the keynote is "Praise the Lord, Hallelujah!"

C. VAN DAM

[1] in his preface to his commentaries on the Psalms, p. xxxvii, vol. 1 (Eerdmans, 1963).

[2] TIME, October 30, 1972, p. 57.

[3] Cf. K. Schilder, Hoogfeest Naar de Schriften, p. 10.

[4] Rock and the Church, chapter 5.

[5] Rock and Roll: The Devil's Diversion, p. 92. One could go into extensive interesting detail, but I urge you to buy his books (Box 26438, Denver, Colorado, 80226).

[6] Rock and Roll: The Devil's Diversion, p. 98.

[7] Cf. also a sermon on I Cor. 14:1-5 by Rev. D. DeJong in Sermon Series "Preach the Word", vol. 8, no. 2.

[8] Cf. the stimulating chapter "Faith and Art" in H. R. Rookmaaker, Modern Art and the Death of a Culture (Intervarsity Press, 1971).

GIFTEN

[1]

ALS BE BLOEDZUIGER

Nu er aanleiding is de schone taak van giften-verslaggever opieuw uit te oefenen, wil ik beginnen met te herinneren aan de gift, die op de operingsavond van de cursus 1972/3 namens de Vrouwenactie door Mrs. Selles werd overhandigd. De \$1,000.00 voor de bibliotheek heeft zijn weg naar de boekhouder gevonden en we zijn op het College zelf druk bezig in goede zin deze pot te verteren: wekelijks worden er nieuwe boeken aan onze boekenry toegevoegd. Ieder die een klein beetje verstand heeft van de opzet van een bibliotheek weet dat het net is als bij de bekende bloedzuiger uit het boek Spreuken. Een bibliotheek is nimmer verzadigd en blijft vragen: "geef, geef". Onze boekenschat is nog maar zeer bescheiden vergeleken bijv. met die van onze zusterinstelling in Kampen en ook daar is men nog lang niet verzadigd. Daarom waren we ook blij met een gift van "a brother and sister somewhere in Canada" groot \$350, waarvan \$100 bestemd is voor een speciaal onderdeel van onze boekenverzameling.

Tenslotte: tijdens een lezing in Toronto ontving ik \$10.00 voor ons College. We hopen dat de vergelijking met de bloedzuiger slechts één punt van overeenstemming blijft behouden en dat omgekeerd de kerken veel fris en nieuw bloed mogen *ontvangen* o.a. in jonge, vurige predikanten.

[2]

Zo af en toe ontdek ik op mijn bureau een notitie waarvan ik met schrik bedenk dat ik er nog geen aandacht aan heb besteed. De zo langzamerhand alom in Canadian Reformed Canada bekende F.V.Y.P. League - als U het not niet mocht weten: dit is de jeugdorganisatie van de Fraser Valley - zond in het najaar van 1972 \$21.20. Dat bedrag is schriftelijk al verantwoord door de boekhouder, maar graag geef ik publieke bekendheid aan de voortgaande actie van de actieve Young People in het voor ons verre Western.

Voorts dien ik een heel bijzondere gift nog te vermelden. Het is een keurig ingelijste op zijde geborduurde wandtekst: Midum Somang Sorang, aangeboden voor het Korean Theological Seminary. Voor diegenen onder onze lezers die de Koreaanse taal niet voldoende machtig zijn, zij vermeld dat de woorden betekenen: Geloof Hoop Liefde. Deze verwijzing naar I Cor. 13:13 zal in ons College een voortdurende herinnering zijn aan de wonderse eenheid des geloofs waarvan het slot van art. 27 van onze Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis spreekt: de katholieke kerk is verspreid en verstrooid door de gehele wereld; nochtans tesamen gevoegd en verenigd zijnde met hart en wil in een zelfden Geest, door de kracht van het geloof.

Tenslotte een derde gift: Leo

Lodder te Fergus die voor de kerk van Abbotsford een fotoreportage maakte van de leden van onze senaat, schonk voor ons archief een afdruk. Vijf hoofden op een karton samengebracht. Al waren we een beetje "embarrassed" en al spaar ik U het commentaar van mijn beminde collega's, we waren en zijn dankbaar voor de geste.

J. Faber

OUR COVER

The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, 374 Queen Street South, Hamilton, Ontario. (Photo by Ron Bremer of Burlington-East congregation.)

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North American Nook

Arminius and the Reformation Confession

In our previous piece I promised to compare the review of Bangs' book about Arminius given by L. Verduin in *The Banner* with the judgment of M. E. Osterhaven in *Reformed Review*. When two theologians read the same book, they can apparently read it in a completely different manner.

Verduin, whose sympathies seem to be on the side of Arminius writes: "In view of the fact that Arminius did not share the completely negative appraisal of the Anabaptists, his foes laid a trap for him. They persuaded the Synod of North Holland to assign to him the task of writing a book 'exposing the errors of the Anabaptists.' That Arminius was drafted for this assignment was quite certainly a trick; the man had not given any evidence of having made any special study of the Anabaptist movement; the idea was, without a doubt, to get Arminius to 'show his hands', to hand him the rope with which he would then hang himself.

"There is good evidence that Arminius saw through the ruse. In any event, he failed to write the desired tract. After a decade of continual prodding to 'get on with the task without further procrastination', the project was quietly dropped. This is rather good proof in itself that the whole thing was a trap . . ."

Osterhaven, on the other hand, gives the following impression of Bangs' book: "He shows that Arminius . . . was not only 'lukewarm' in attitude towards the confessions of his church, the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism (p. 225), but who felt an antipathy towards confessional confinement (p. 290 *et passim*). He is also described as a 'dogged controversialist' (p. 203), strongly Erastian in church-state relations (*passim*), as one who held views which he sometimes did not reveal (p. 269), and as one who could be irresponsible and procrastinating on occasion. An instance of the latter is his failure to get out a report on Anabaptism requested by the synods of North and South Holland and promised by Arminius. That affair ran from 1599 to 1608, but the 'short

refutation' never did get written (pp. 167ff.)."

It is according to my opinion evident that Verduin's suspicion of a trap or a trick is in the same line as his unwarranted charge that Gomarus and all the rest were after Arminius' scalp.

Instead of going into this historic detail I would like to add to Osterhaven's summary that Bangs in his study in the Dutch reformation gives a wrong impression of the confessional position of the churches in the Netherlands in Arminius' time. He states: "The Belgic Confession had been written in 1559 by a French Protestant, Guido de Brès, as an apology to convince the authorities of the nonseditious character of the French Protestant movement" (p. 100). A Dutchman then immediately reacts that Guido de Brès surely wrote the Belgic Confession in the French language, but that he nevertheless was an inhabitant of the Seventeen Provinces in the *Netherlands*. It was, possibly, exactly because of the fact that a *French* confession like the *Confessio Gallicana* of 1559 would not meet with a favourable reception in the war-plagued southern parts of the Netherlands, that Guido de Brès wrote his "Confession de Foy, faite d'un commun accord par les fideles qui conversent *es pays bas* . . ." (Confession of Faith, made with common consent - agreement - by the believers who are scattered throughout all the *Netherlands* . . .).

When Bangs deals with the matter of the authority of the formulas, with the question whether the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were binding on the Dutch churches in the time of Arminius, he speaks of a great ambiguity. Bangs plays down the significance of the synod of Emden 1571: it was held outside the country; it had not been called by the States General (between brackets: those States did not exist at that time yet . . .); it had not been accorded universal recognition (Bangs does not give proof for this statement). The author does not speak about the

Synod of Dordrecht 1578 and writes that the Synod of Middelburg in 1581 lacked the backing of the States and the Synod of The Hague in 1586 was dominated by Leicester and with his fall was in discredit.

But can one on this basis, without mentioning all the decisions the churches made about the binding character of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism, state that there was great ambiguity?

Bangs goes on to allege that "those who were lukewarm to the Confession and Catechism (and Arminius must be included) could point out that they were not Dutch documents but imports from foreign churches" (p. 225). Here we meet with a completely wrong statement. The Belgic Confession was not an import from a foreign church!

The mistake Bangs makes on page 100 in speaking about Guido de Brès as "a *French* Protestant" leads him to this incorrect picture of the confessional position of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands on p. 225: Confession and Catechism "were not considered statements of the consensus of the Dutch Church but were put into use hurriedly in a time of stress."

But let us return to the two reviews of Bangs' book.

Verduin writes in *The Banner* that many of the nuances in the theology of Arminius have gained respectability among Reformed thinkers since his day, but Osterhaven is of the opinion that Arminius' own doctrine was weak and non-Reformed. Predestination is conditioned on foreseen faith (p. 352f.). He is also inadequate in the doctrines of sin, grace, and the assurance of salvation. Original sin is seen as the absence of original righteousness only, and Bangs says that he seldom uses the expression and then reluctantly (p. 340). On the matter of "irresistible grace" Bangs agrees with Arminius and writes: "There is the point: grace is not a force; it is a person, the Holy Spirit, and in personal relationships there cannot be the sheer overpowering of one person by another" (p. 343). Dr.

Osterhaven accepts the statement that grace is personal, but is of the opinion that the latter part of Dr. Bangs' sentence is disturbing. "Does he mean to deny the sovereignty of God's Spirit as he opens the heart and reveals Jesus Christ to men? This was the point throughout the Arminian controversy and continues to be *the* issue today. Rather, it has been a main point of controversy since Augustine's clash with the Pelagians, since the semi-Pelagian heresies which plagued the church from the early sixth century through the late middle ages (Gabriel Biel *et al.*), and in the synergism and Arminianism of later vintage. Here the Synod of Dordrecht, in the third and fourth heads of doctrine of its 'Canons', was completely correct. Any diminution of the sovereignty of God's grace must be withstood."

It will be clear that I agree with

this judgment of Dr. M. E. Osterhaven. Bangs is wrong in his conclusion that Arminius' views "were consonant with the Reformation confessions and the Confession and Catechism used in his own church" (p. 354). For Bangs himself shows that Arminius had no doctrine of assurance or perseverance as the Reformers understood them. Arminius set up two questions:

1. Is it possible for any believer, without a special revelation, to be certain or assured that he will not decline or fall away from the faith?

2. Are those who have faith bound to believe that they will not decline from the faith?

The affirmative, he says, has never been accounted a catholic doctrine in the church, and the negative has never been adjudged by the church universal a heresy. In other words, there is no *present* assurance

of *final* salvation (p. 348).

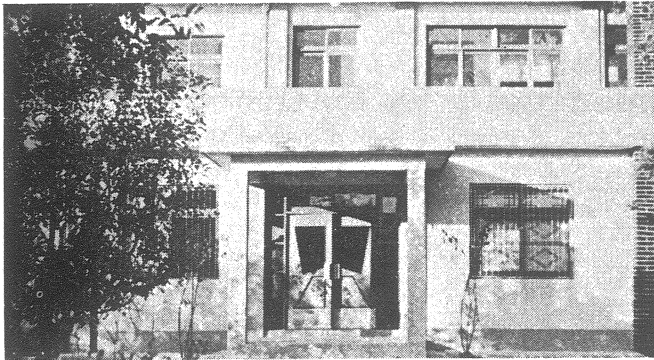
But the Heidelberg Catechism answers to the question about our faith concerning the holy catholic Church "that I am, *and forever shall remain*, a living member thereof." In the same answer is spoken of a Church *chosen* to everlasting life.

How then can Bangs argue that Arminius' views were consonant with the Heidelberg Catechism? And how can a Christian Reformed reviewer of Bangs' book picture Arminius as what we call in Dutch "de vermoorde onschuld"?

It is remarkable that a reviewer in the circle of the Reformed Church in America is more aware of the doctrinal aberrations of Arminius than one in the Christian Reformed Church. Are we going to forget the heritage of Dordt and of the Secession of 1834?

J. FABER

Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund



"Love Home", Korea



"Those who depend on us."

NEW COOPERATION

In the February newsletter of the CRWRF the chairman, Mr. M. Buist, writes: Since we receive sufficient funds to support our Love Home (orphanage in Taegu), we recently have been looking around to see where else in Korea we could give financial assistance. Several months ago our brothers and sisters in Edmonton appealed to us for financial help for their orphanage Chang-dong at Hapchon, Korea . . . We discussed this request and asked the advice of all the committees of CRWRF by mail. As a result we decided to combine CRWRF and the Korea Relief Fund Committees in Western Canada into one working force. From now on we will work together. The Edmonton

committee will remain responsible for Chang-dong as far as correspondence and monthly support money is concerned. We will do the same for Love Home. Together we will publish the Newsletter and we will exchange information and slides. Since the Chang-dong orphans live in a very old run-down house, all of CRWRF will help provide funds for a new house for these children. Western Canada as well as we in Ontario are very happy and enthusiastic about this new arrangement.

CHANG-DONG

In the same newsletter the secretary of the Edmonton committee, Mrs. J. Bos, provides the following information about the Chang-dong orphanage: To acquaint

you with our work, we decided to tell you first how and when we started with this charitable work. Through the "Actie Committee" in the Netherlands, we came in contact with the orphanage *ja yoo* in Pusan, where orphans of lepers were cared for. We supported them in 1966. After Mr. J. Meyer visited Korea, the "Stichting Mesoz" took this orphanage with its annexed leper colony into its care. At the request of the "Actie Committee" we decided to support the orphanage "Chang-dong", managed by Mr. Suh Young Tae, an elder of the Presbyterian Church at Hapchon. (Distance Hapchon - Pusan, 260 miles; Hapchon - Taegu, 50 miles.)

Mr. Suh started with this or-

continued on page 10

let's read

THE EARMUFFS (4)

Allen and Billy just come around the house as their mother pulls the front door shut. They come from a tiny little cabin nearly behind the house - only if you know of its existence can you see it from the trail. It must have served as a shed or workshop before, but now Allen and Billy sleep there. They have christened it "Our Den." There Allen potters about when he has finished his daily chores; there he can sit for hours at the rough little table in the corner and copy with utmost care and patience minuscule etchings of birds from an old book on nature - precious little drawings they are, beautifully done in Indian ink.

"Billy, you go in the house and help Grandma. Allen, you come with me." The cold assails them with a thousand little pin-pricks. There is more wind now - thin veils of snow are drifting over the field and subside. Allen's mother turns up the cloak's collar to cover her mouth and nose. Allen plods along beside her, a little bent in the shoulders, but - she notes with pride - with the same firm step his father had. In a few words she tells him what happened - nothing really, but . . . Allen looks up at his mother, perceives her anxiety and remains silent. A boy here? Would it be possible that the boy came for him? But the boys at school . . . He bites his lip when he recalls their teasing and contemptuous mocking . . . Instinctively his hands reach for his ears . . . the earmuffs . . . His mother sees it. "Allen! Where are your muffs?"

A sudden gust of wind makes them gasp for breath; they have reached the spot where the boy stood. It grants Allen a moment of respite before answering the embarrassing question. Downhill they hurry now, side by side. The wind is not as forceful here as it was by the house. "Allen . . . ?"

"I . . . I forgot them at school, I think . . .," he answers rather reluctantly. He cannot hear his mother's brief reply and is glad to turn away his glowing face. How could he ever tell her that his classmates snatched them away? Mockingly they had waved at him as the bus took off again, waved . . . with his earmuffs! He would have to tell her of their pestering and teasing him, of their whispered remarks and secret scheming. It would make her worry about him; she would suffer almost physically from it. He could imagine her face distorted with pain and unbelief. No, he would not tell her; he would face it all alone. It would come all right once he got a chance to prove himself.

It is almost dark by now. The clumps of trees along the trail are but murky shadows that occasionally groan, moan . . . Then, suddenly, his mother stops.

"Wait," she says. "That boy . . .," she wraps the shawl closer round her neck. "He had no hat or earmuffs either . . ."

They walk on again. The powdery snow under their feet crunches. Crrr . . . crr . . . Because of the darkness the trail is hardly discernible, but they do not hesitate an instant; they know the trail. In a moment they will come upon a curve in the road; then the trail will start climbing again. Allen slows down a little, but his mother hurries on, nervously, as if possessed by an idea . . . Why? What does she expect to find? What weird mission is this? Disconnected fragments of adventure stories tumble through his mind: messengers that desperately push through blizzards to deliver their messages in time; trappers who, numb with cold but determined, drag themselves to the next cabin where there will be food and shelter; a soldier lashing his horse . . .

Then he stumbles over something that lies sprawled over the trail, and Allen falls down with a thud. At the same moment he is up on his feet again. His mother's hasty hands pull him up rudely. He shakes the snow from his hair; the snow makes his forehead tingle with cold. Then they look down at the dark form on the trail . . . the boy!

For a moment they stare blankly at the still body, which is partly covered with snow. A dreadful thought rushes at Allen. The boy . . . is he . . . ? He stoops down beside his mother who is frantically clearing away snow around the motionless body. She is mumbling unintelligible words while her hands are scooping, scooping, faster and faster. "No . . .," she gasps, and "Dig . . . !" she commands, but Allen does not move. Bewildered he stares at her hands. His mouth forms the word "Peter," but not a sound comes over his lips. Petrified he sees how his mother rolls the boy on his back and carefully moves away the arm from his face. It seems swollen; the eyes are closed. She shakes his shoulder, first gently, then roughly. Her face is a white mask; only her eyes betray despair; the boy does not show any sign of life.

"Lift him up," she whispers hoarsely. She slides her hands under his arms and waits for Allen to seize his legs. Then they lift him up, heavily, clumsily. The boy groans . . . ! Allen nearly lets go of his legs. The boy lives! Peter is alive! "Get him on the road," she urges; her voice sounds more tired than ever. Carefully they lay the boy down again. Peter's mouth seems distorted with pain, but there is no sound from his throat. The stillness is oppressive, frightening.

EWOUND GOSKER

(to be continued in next issue)

This publication is a follow-up of the well-known booklet *Out of Concern for the Church*, written by some of the above-mentioned authors, all belonging to the A.A.C.S. Movement. Reaction to their first publication was sharp, even indignant. This was to be expected because the first book was a protest. Now, as befits christians, the authors want "to continue from protest to contribution." They feel called to continue because they are convinced of having "an alternate vision of the Church". They have, so they say, "recovered a stirring vision of the total Church". That's why they want to rally "All the King's Men" to respond to the guidance of the Spirit and join them on their path to the realization of their "full vision."

One must admit, this is a high goal. Who would not be willing to join, not only in the discussion, but in "the stirring, recovered vision of the total Church"!?

The question is whether we can join on the terms they have laid down.

The reader will understand that in this review we cannot deal with every single aspect and topic detailed in this book. That would result in another book.

We want to start with voicing our appreciation for the many good things said in the five chapters on:

I. *The Institutional Church in Biblical Perspective* [James Olthuis, H. Hart]

II. *The Institutional Church in History* [J. Van Dyk]

III. *The Institutional Church in Its Uniqueness* [A. De Graaff]

IV. *The Institutional Church in Renewal* [C. Seerveld]

V. *The Institutional Church in The Kingdom* [B. Zylstra, John Olthuis]

Considering the zeal, the *elan* and the talents of these men, it would be well nigh impossible for them to write a book without saying many good things, offering refreshing thoughts, and suggesting remedies for the maladies of the churches. That they do indeed! Wonderful, even brilliant things are said about the centrality of the pulpit and the force of true preaching. In addition, valuable criticism is launched against evils like dualism and pietism. Having read this volume, no one can lay it aside without having been "touched". Their zeal for the Lord should help in accepting criticism, also when it hurts.

As has been said, they want in this second phase to proceed from protest to contribution. Thus their second book is more positive and tries hard to find

biblical grounds for their ideas. Stressing the *reformata reformanda*, the abiding need for reformation, they do their best to formulate such terms for the discussion which, hopefully, may bring about such continued reformation.

One must, then, agree on the terms, in order to get a fruitful discussion. It is here that we have our questions and qualms. From Dr. K. Schilder we have learned that the first condition for a discussion is: to distinguish the alternatives correctly. A wrong distinction at the outset spells mishaps.

After some soulsearching we state that the terms of the discussion are, for us, unacceptable in at least three respects.

I

The writers want to take the "re-" in "re-formanda" as a radical proposition. The Church, they state, is in disrepute. "In the case of the Church we can no longer count on the testimony of the ancients, authorities, traditions, or even confessions" (p. 39, stress added). "The Bible will have to be investigated anew."

This desire to return to the Bible, the living Source book for the Church, is commendable, even a must. It is even in agreement with the Confession of Faith (art. 7). Yet, there is something wrong here. "Discovery" is a tempting business. Among these men the term "rediscovery of the Church" is a daily article of faith and life. The temptation for discoverers, however, is to think that the world begins with them; so does history, so does truth. To say the least, it is somewhat ungrateful to disregard the struggle for the truth throughout the centuries, which has produced the Reformed Creeds, and to say: what we discovered is so unique that we must even pass by the Creeds and go all the way back to the Bible itself. Because (that's what lies behind this attempt) those Creeds did not see what we see.

No wonder that they realize "this is an immense undertaking", although one wonders whether they have to bear this immense burden of doing it all on their own.

They are even pessimistic as to whether the 16th century Reformation can help them that much. Why not? The Reformation "did not succeed in breaking with the Roman Catholic conception of the Church" (p. 30).

The reader may expect that this starting point results in some radical statements. Here are a few.

In the New Testament "the leaders

of the Church are not what we know as officers of the instituted church."

The Sunday is not "the official and special day of worship in the New Testament."

The Church Order is guilty of a "cultic narrowing of the Church", turning the Church into a "cultic organization" (p. 44, etc.).

There is no real distinction between "fulltime christian workers" (and any christian laymen) and the "special offices in the institutional church".

What "we need is, politicians and economists as officer-servants in the Church" (p. 17). (N. B. The reader must not be confused by the use of "church" with or without a capital C. This is a matter of principle for these writers, although we have to state that the use of small or big C is not consistent throughout the book.)

In the same vein (p. 189), "Some members are preachers, some teach in schools, some are doctors and nurses,

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"WILL ALL THE KING'S MEN
II. Essays by James H. Olthuis,
Calvin Seerveld, Bernard Zylstra
Publishing Foundation, 229 Coll

others are industrialists, statesmen, journalists, homemakers, helpers." That sounds reasonable, but the reader keep in mind that this must be read as: all being on the same level as far as "special offices" is concerned.

The reader will by now have understood that, after having read fifty pages, we had already put more than fifty question-marks in the margin.

Talking about correct distinctions, what are we to think of: "Preaching and teaching is not primarily telling men what to *think* and what to *do*" (p. 54)? Or to pick one wrong distinction from the last pages (p. 242), "Specifically, the institutional church's home evangelism and foreign mission outreaches should be invitations to join the Body of Christ, *not a particular institutional church.*" Apart from telling people how to do that (joining the Body of Christ without telling them to join a particular institutional church - not even when it bears the marks of the true Church?), now I am a bit naughty and ask: whereas the A.A.C.S. movement applies "Body of Christ" to its organiza-

tions, does this then mean that we have to send new converts to them?

There is more ("of course!" one feels like saying). We need "a fundamental reorganization of the cultus, in every part" (pp. 57-8). "Our liturgies are too Roman." Thus "a reformation of the service of proclamation is of first priority" (p. 59).

This is, indeed, the fundamental principle, again formulated on page 56: "This serious situation implies an imperative, namely, that we begin (!) to fundamentally restudy the Bible as much as possible outside of the limits of established confessions, doctrines, theologies, and other tradition, so that by transcending them . . ." Mark every word here. No Creed is good enough. Every doctrine has to be studied outside the limits of "established doctrines" (which are, to mention a few, those of the Triune God, the two natures in the one Person Christ, reconciliation, regeneration, sacra-

new term. All along through the history of Reformed doctrine we knew how to (not separate but) distinguish between the one-and-same Church as appearing in the world with a certain organization or institute, and the life of that Church in its fellowship of the saints, all the days of the week. But "the institutional church" is a *new* term, a new finding: a philosophical concept that has to do with that other strange concept of the "supra-temporal Body of Christ", of which local, institutional, societal "structures" are manifestations. These societal structures are, then, to be put on a level with other societal structures, like the "state" (what is that? The Reformed Creed speaks about the magistrates, art. 36; "state" is a Greek-philosophical concept of suspect origin).

But apart from this philosophical talk, we must state that the authors, after having discarded the Reformed Confessions as not relevant for the renewal of the Church as they see it, and after having said that they re-turn to the Scriptures while "transcending all creeds, doctrines, theologies," etc., betray that in doing so they did *not* discard their very special philosophical concepts. That is the reason why we cannot accept a discussion on their terms!

For example, on page 4 we read: "In Christendom the institutional church has long been thought of as exhausting the Body of Christ." This is simply not true. Apart from the fact that "the institutional church" is a new invention, the history of Reformed, indeed, of all theology, contradicts such a statement. Now we understand that the authors have by-passed that history.

We have not enough space in a review for quoting from the many Creeds of the Reformation, Lutheran, Calvinist, Presbyterian, etc., to prove that they all speak about the Church as "the gathering of the believers," or "the congregation of the saints."

We suggest that one read what men like Wyclif and Huss wrote. And even a man like Thomas Aquinas did not conceive of the Church as "the institutional church exhausting the Body of Christ." From *A. Darquennes*, who wrote some books on Thomas' doctrine of the Church, like *La definition de l'Eglise d'apres St Thomas Aquinas* (Louvain, 1943): The popular opinion about Thomas is that he only knew the distinction between "the *pneumatic* and the *juridical* structure of the Church". In the light of newer research this can no longer be maintained. In the introduction to the

mentioned work, Prof. Dr. E. LOUSSE, an Aquinas expert, states that Thomas gave a fourfold definition of the Church. She is, 1. the *congregatio fidelium* or congregation of the believers; 2. the *domus* or *familia Dei*, house or family of God; 3. the *civitas Dei*, with one Head, one Law and the *insignia* of the Sacraments (here you have not "the institutional church" but the institutional aspect of the Church) and 4. the *corpus Christi mysticum*, which is not some kind of invisible church but the "corporative congregation" in all her life.

We mention this one example of a Roman Catholic authority who would not even dream of limiting the Church to its institutional aspect.

One could also point to the beautiful things Augustine wrote about the Church, but may it suffice to state that great injustice is done to the history of theology when one states that, as a rule, when speaking about the Church, nearly all these old-timers thought only of what the book under discussion calls the "cultic aspect" or "institutional church."

One of the authors, Dr. A. De Graaff, wrote in his *The Educational Ministry of the Church* (Craig Press, 1968), chapter II, about the nature and structure of the Church. One would expect many references from the Scriptures. Indeed, there are some, but they disappear under an avalanche of quotes from representatives of the *Wijsbegeerte der Wets Idee*. After having finished reading the text and the notes, one gets the impression that philosophy will tell us not only what the functions of the Church are or have to be, but even its nature and structure.

Though somewhat diluted in the present volume, the same philosophy is queen of the discussion. The brethren did not realize it, but, passing by (as they say) all that has been written before on the Church, and returning to the Bible, they read God's Word through their philosophical glasses.

Some proof must be offered.

What are we to think of a statement like, "The Church *first* refers to all the people of God; in the *second* place it can (! vD) be applied to a local congregation." The latter is, then, to be considered as a "manifestation" of the Church Universal, or Body of Christ or (maybe?) the supra-temporal Body.

Now the evidence. The word *ekklesia* occurs 114 times in the New Testament. 101 times it refers to the *local* Church as instituted by the apostles, with their elders, ministry of Word and Sacraments. In the remaining 13 places it is not explicitly

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ments, church-gathering, and - I fear last but not least - eschatology).

Are we prepared to start or continue the discussion on these terms?

We would, maybe, consider it and give it a try. If this were only all. But there is more . . .

II

The reader notices that in our quotation from page 56 there is a lot to be "transcended", like creeds, doctrines, traditions, theologies, but you do not find any mention of philosophies or philosophy!

And isn't that remarkable, very remarkable indeed . . .

As could be expected, already on page 2 one stumbles on the term "the institutional church". Already from that page we had to conclude that the book would go maybe beyond the limits of creeds, doctrines, theologies, but certainly not beyond the limits of philosophy, and a very special kind at that.

We know the term, although it is a

indicated that a certain local Church is meant (we have to leave out details) but there is no basis whatsoever for the bold statement that *ekklesia* only "in the second place can be applied to local congregations."

Another thing should be mentioned, i.e. the preference of the authors for Church as the *body of Christ* (or people of God) as distinguished from that product of their own making which they call "the institutional church". At one place the name of Dr. K. Schilder is mentioned as a supporter of the views given in this book (p. 30). But the authors do not seem to remember what he wrote (it will be accessible in *Verzamelde Werken, De Kerk*, Vol III) against this contrast between "body" and "institution". As though "body" is anti-institutional and institution is an anti-body. Quoting from the New Testament as well as from the surrounding Greek culture and language, including Latin references, he pointed out that "body" is as much an "organizational" as an "organic" concept. One can expect that from a Book (the New Testament) that lets a temple "grow" and stones "live", and a body be "organized".

More than before, more than after the publication of *Out of Concern for the Church*, we have become convinced that, with all good intentions and the talented way of expressing them, and the call for christian action in all of life by the children of the kingdom, this philosophical distinction between "the institutional church" (and what a caricature is made of it when identified with "the building on the corner"!)) and the "Body of Christ" does not work, is not founded in the Scriptures, and is in conflict with those, maybe not despised but discarded, Reformed Creeds.

Why not start from those Creeds, like the Heidelberg Catechism in its wonderful description of the Church in L.D. 21, and from there on to the ministry of Word and sacraments and keys of the kingdom (!!) and from there on to the Covenant Law, L.D. 34-44, and the Covenant Prayer, L.D. 45-52. Or take the Confession of Faith. Take that beautiful art. 27 (if there was ever a definition of the "body of Christ", here it is!), and from there on to art. 28, declaring that everyone must join this Church, and from there on to art. 29, pointing the way, not to "the Body of Christ" instead of a certain "denomination", but to the true Church bearing the marks of faithfulness, and from there on to the offices in the Church, good Order in the Church, etc.

Wisdom of ages is laid down in

these articles, written with the blood of numerous martyrs.

We too want to promote Kingdom work, but not this way, by locking up the Creeds within the narrow walls of the "cultic" streetcorner building. We prefer to be led to the Scriptures by the faithful guide of the Creeds rather than by the postulates of the A.A.C.S. philosophy.

III

One is tempted to keep on writing, but we must try to conclude this "review". We will try to reach the end by means of some remarks.

1. I cannot here repeat all I wrote in previous years about the doubtful proposition that the Body of Christ must become visible in all kinds of *organizations*. I still believe the most important thing is not membership of such an organization but a faithful christian life. One does not have to be a member of CLAC or CJL to become "more than conquerer" in the fight against C.U.P.E., to mention one example. The writers have a hard time projecting their ideas back into the New Testament. It is unwarranted to say that in biblical times the believers formed "a political body" or a new kind of society (like the Pentecost Church in Jerusalem. No regard is given to the special circumstances there, which most certainly were not to become an example for other churches).

2. I wonder why, once one starts with the distinction Church / church, one does not continue with a similar distinction between State / state, Society / society. But then, we would indeed have gone all the way back to Plato and/or Aristotle . . . What, however, is to be done with a statement like, "human society must simply be the Body of Christ"? I read for myself again Peter's words to the aliens and exiles, who are God's children.

3. There is a strong culture-optimism in this volume. We do not deny that with the Lord all things are possible but, considering that the Day of Christ is coming fast, we have no promises that *we*, before that Day will be able to establish what *He* will do by the catastrophic event of His judgment.

4. I like, if possible, to read more than one book concurrently. My reading of *Will All the King's Men . . . ?* was interrupted by persuading Colin W. Williams' *New Directions in Theology Today*, Vol. IV, *The Church*. I do not insinuate that both books preach the same message but I certainly was struck by several parallels. One must know that the latter volume describes

the theology and practice of (false) Ecumenism. "A radical change in the church's thinking about itself and its relation to the world is in process." The book calls for "a major shift in both the structures of the church and the roles of the clergy - a shift to pluralistic and flexible forms." Williams also believes that "human society must become the body of Christ."

I know, when two say the same thing, it is not always the same, but reading and re-reading *Will All the King's Men . . . ?* and recalling that it urges us to "transcend" all existing churches in order to realize the Body of Christ in this world, I sometimes wonder where this philosophy will take us in the long (or short?) run.

G. VANDOOREN

World Relief Fund

Continued from Page 6

phanage in 1959 at the request of the authorities in Hapchon. For this he receives an allowance in the form of some cereals like barley and rice, one-third of what a child needs. Mr. Meyer wrote, "He really enjoys being supported by members of the same faith." His letters are always faithful and thankful. He has 60 children to care for, ranging in age from 5 to 17 years, whereof many are of low intellect and knowledge, therefore requiring special care and education. The law requires that children over 18 should leave the orphanage, but Mr. Suh writes: "These grown-up children who are foolish with low intelligence, or who are weak in health, have often remained here at the home. The Social Welfare Security system has not been well established for them by the government. I am often in bitter bottle-neck in order to open their future ways."

Money collected by the Fraser Valley churches in 1972 was used by Mr. Suh to buy some farmland, where he raises vegetables, barley and rice. Moreover, he built three vinyl hot-houses wherein cucumbers and pumpkins are grown. He made a clear profit of \$550 in 1972.

From 1966 until now the housing was always a big problem: too small, very old and draughty. In the fall of 1972 Mr. Suh was able to start a new and bigger building; we could send him one thousand dollars which was raised by a building fund drive. With the heartwarming support of the combined committees we are able to send him another thousand dollars. He needs \$7,000.00 or more for the new building.

Hoek van Holland

"GEBEUREN" EN "INTERPRETATIES"

Een vorige maal zagen we dat het rapport Leuven 1971, handelend over het gezag van de Bijbel en uitgebracht op een vergadering van de onderafdeling voor Geloof en kerkorde van de Wereldraad van Kerken, geheel en al beheerst wordt door het begrip "interpretaties". Alle gebeurtenissen die volgens de Bijbel van beslissende betekenis zijn, waren van meet aan het voorwerp van "interpretatie". Nog afgezien van de vraag of zulke gebeurtenissen in moderne ogen geloofwaardig zijn, het is een hachelijke en dikwijls onmogelijke onderneming achter de "interpretatie" terug te gaan tot het feit zelf. In zekere zin *is* de interpretatie het feit. De gebeurtenissen als zodanig hebben geen enkele openbarings-betekenis maar zijn, om zo te zeggen, stom.

We merkten daartegenover op dat wij op grond van 2 Petr. 1:20 en 21 moeten onderscheiden tussen de profetie der Schrift en *onze* uitlegging en voorts dat men het geopenbaard zijn als *heilsfeit* niet mag uitspelen tegen het werkelijk geschied zijn als *heilsfeit*. Ook doet de uitdrukking "interpretaties", van de inhoud der Heilige Schrift gebruikt, geen recht aan het *getuigenis*-karakter van de Goddelijke openbaring. Mijn laatste vraag was of het van de Synode 1972 van de Christian Reformed Church niet een weinig onverstandig was, zeker na Leuven 1971, in rapport 44 te laten staan "that the Bible presents to us interpreted events".

Nu ik beloofd had nog iets nader op dit dominerende begrip "interpretatie" in te gaan, wil ik beginnen met de stelling dat de "events as such", de naakte feiten, geen enkele openbaringsbetekenis hebben. Ze zijn volgens Leuven 1971 stom en hebben interpretatie nodig.

Dr. A. F. N. Lekkerkerker heeft in *Kerk en Theologie* (XXII/4, Okt. 1971, 380) het volgende opgemerkt: "Het bericht van de heilsdaden Gods komt tot ons in het gewaad van de verkondiging. Maar kunnen wij nu zeggen, dat het gebeuren waarop het geloof zich betrokken weet als zodanig *stom* is? Is de uittocht van Israël uit Egypte zo polyinterpretabel (voor vele uitleggingen vatbaar), dat

hij op zichzelf ons niets te zeggen heeft? En niemand op de gedachte komt: hier is iets aan de hand? Volgens Exodus 14:18 zullen de 'Egyptenaren weten, dat Ik de Here ben'. In Jesaja 40:5 lezen wij: 'de heerlijkheid des Heren zal zich openbaren en alle vlees tezamen zal dit zien'. Op vele plaatsen bij de profeten wordt ons gezegd, dat de volken (bijv. Moab) zullen weten dat 'Ik de Here ben'."

Dr. Lekkerkerker eindigt dit gedeelte met de opmerking: "Zelfs de hemelen van Psalm 19 zijn niet stom, de prediking van dag en nacht gaat uit over de ganse aarde - hoeveel te minder de daden Gods in Israël en aan de man Jezus van Nazaret."

Wie over deze dingen nadenkt verbaast zich er eigenlijk over dat in deze tijd waarin dikwijls op een ongerechtvaardigde wijze de zgn. algemene openbaring verheven wordt, tegelijk Gods manifestatie in de heilsfeiten wordt ontkend. Maar wie nog even verder doordenkt, verbaast zich niet zo zeer: Is er niet op de achtergrond dezelfde tendens? Het betrouwbare en voor ons noodzakelijke woord Gods in de Heilige Schrift wordt gering geacht. Wanneer men de manifestatie van God in het werk van Zijn handen een aparte vorm van het Woord Gods noemt, verkleint men de betekenis van de Heilige Schrift. En wanneer men op de wijze van Leuven 1971 zegt dat de Bijbel ons "interpretaties" geeft maar wij nimmer kunnen doordringen tot de feiten zelf en men zelfs de vraag opwerpt of het gezag van de Schrift ernstig geschaad zou worden indien bewezen werd dat de gebeurtenissen nimmer werkelijk hadden plaats gevonden, tast men de betrouwbaarheid aan van de Heilige Schrift als het onfeilbare Woord van God.

Natuurlijk erkennen wij dat de Heilige Schrift ons de Goddelijke *openbaring* brengt *over* de feiten en dat deze feiten alleen recht worden gekend in het geloof dat de openbaring Gods omtrent deze feiten aanvaardt. De heilsfeiten worden alleen als *heilsfeiten* gekend in het licht van de Goddelijke openbaring en dus door het *Woord*. Men moet

hetgeen Dr. Lekkerkerker opmerkt over de uittocht van Israël uit Egypte aanvullen met een verwijzing naar Amos 9:7 "Zijt gij voor Mij niet gelijk aan de kinderen der Ethiopiërs, o kinderen Israels? luidt het woord des HEREN. Het Ik Israël niet uit het land Egypte gevoerd en de Filistijnen uit Kaftor en de Arameers uit Kir?". Wanneer Israel hoogmoedig zich verheft, de Verbondsroeping vergeet en van de Verbondsbelofte een onconditionele garantie maakt, herinnert de God der ganse aarde de zorgeloozen op Zion en die zich veilig voelen op den berg van Samaria (6:1) aan het feit dat er onder Zijn voorzienig bestel ook andere volksverhuizingen zijn geschied. Alleen op grond van de openbaring en door het geloof verstaat men dat de HERE Israël alleen heeft "gekend" uit alle geslachten van het aardrijk in een kennis die tegelijk Goddelijke uitverkiezende liefde is (3:1)

Het beslissende punt in het geding dunkt me dit te zijn: Wij spreken over heilsfeiten en de *Goddelijke openbaring* omtrent de gebeurtenissen, waardoor zij in geloof als heilsfeiten kunnen worden gekend en erkend. Maar Leuven 1971 spreekt over *menselijke interpretaties* in de Bijbel en verklaart dat in zekere zin deze interpretatie de gebeurtenis *is*. Een minderheid in de Britse groep was zelfs van oordeel dat openbaring niet gebonden is aan wat werkelijk in de geschiedenis heeft plaats gevonden maar zelfs kon hebben plaats gevonden in het vertellen van het verhaal.

Voorts bevat het Nieuwe Testament volgens Leuven 1971 *onderscheidene* interpretaties. Dan rijst natuurlijk de vraag of *elke* interpretatie er aanspraak op kan maken een wettige uitleg van een centraal gebeuren te zijn. "The Group which dealt with the virgin birth explicitly raised this question. Did this interpretation have binding authority? Ultimately their answer was yes. For in the Group's opinion the meagre testimony to this affirmation (of the virgin birth) was no decisive argument against its legitimacy. Nor was it able to accept the argument that this interpretation weakened the humanity of Christ. But what was not contested was that a critical distinction between various interpretations is in principle possible." (ER XXIII/4, 429/430).

Met opzet gaf ik dit citaat in de Engelse tekst. Het is nl. belangrijk en

ik vermoed dat onze lezers de betekenis ervan wel hebben verstaan. De maagdelijke geboorte van de Here Christus wordt hier een "interpretatie" genoemd. Men spreekt niet over de geboorte uit de maagd Maria als een feit, maar als een interpretatie. Het is een interpretatie van het "Christus-gebeuren". Vervolgens wordt deze interpretatie onderworpen aan het menselijk kritisch vermogen. Heeft deze interpretatie bindend gezag of niet? Het voor en tegen wordt afgewogen en tenslotte is het antwoord dat men deze "interpretatie" niet uit de Bijbel zal schrappen. Daar mogen dan God en Zijn Christus, daar mag de Heilige Geest dan wel erg dankbaar voor zijn!

Maar we zijn niet aan de dood en verdoemenis onderworpen vanwege een "interpretatie", maar vanwege het *feit* van onze val in zonde. We worden ook niet verlost door een "interpretatie" - de maagdelijke ge-

boorte als een "interpretatie" van het "Christus-gebeuren" - maar door het *feit* dat Christus ontvangen is van de Heiligen Geest en geboren uit de maagd Maria. Hij is onze Middelaar en voor Gods aangezicht bedekt Hij met zijn onschuld en volkomen heiligheid mijn zonde, waarin ik ontvangen en geboren ben (HC, antw. 36).

Is het niet ontzaglijk hoogmoedig te gaan onderscheiden tussen de verschillende "interpretaties"? Het rapport verklaart: "Clearly the various interpretations do not all enjoy the same weight. The New Testament itself presses certain distinctions upon us. The message of the resurrection is undoubtedly of greater importance than that of the virgin birth. Nevertheless, all the Groups were extremely cautious in their conclusions. Though readily accepting that certain interpretations are only of secondary importance they were against excluding any material at all

from the Scriptures."

Men heeft dus nota bene serieus de vraag overwogen of men bepaald materiaal uit de Schrift kon bannen! Er zijn immers onderscheidene "interpretaties" in de Bijbel; de ene is van meer betekenis dan de andere; de boodschap omtrent de opstanding is ongetwijfeld van groter belang dan die van de maagdelijke geboorte; bepaalde "interpretaties" zijn van een tweede rang; zij "failed to speak authoritatively to us"; maar wie weet krijgt zulk een voor ons waardeloze "interpretatie" later in een andere situatie weer een bepaalde betekenis; laten we dus alles maar in de Bijbel laten staan.

Is zulk een redenering niet om bij te schreien? De Wereldraad geldt als de belangrijkste vertegenwoordiging van het niet-Rooms Katholieke Christendom. Groepen uit allerlei landen studeren en schrijven rapporten en het einde is dat men tenslotte toch nog wel inziet dat men niet het recht heeft een "interpretatie" als bijv. de maagdelijke geboorte van Jezus Christus uit de Bijbel te sluiten. Intussen houdt men stevig vast: "a discriminating judgement is not only permissible but actually mandatory". Ook al laat men het corpus van de Schriften intact, men voelt zich tot onderscheidend oordelen over haar inhoud verplicht. De verschillende 'interpretaties' die in haar gevonden worden, moeten worden geschild en sommige dienen te worden uitgezift.

Nu, dan denken we aan het woord van de Here Jezus: Oordeel niet, opdat ge niet geoordeeld wordt. *Wij* hebben niet over het Woord van *God* te oordelen, het Woord Gods oordeelt óns. *Wij* hebben niet te schiften en te delen. Het Woord Gods schift en verdeelt ons. Het Woord Gods is levend en krachtig en scherper dan enig tweesnijdend zwaard en het dringt door, zó diep, dat het vaneenscheidt ziel en geest, gewrichten en merg, en het schift overleggingen en gedachten des harten; en geen schepsel is voor Hem verborgen, want alle dingen liggen open en ontbloot voor de ogen van Hem, voor Wien wij rekenschap hebben af te leggen, Hebr. 4:12, 13. Leuven 1971 is een schrikwekkend staal van zondige hoogmoed.

J. FABER

Our series on "The Armstrong Cult", by Rev. A. H. Dekker, will be continued in the next issue.

* * * * *

Fellowship meets in Retreat

What happens when a group of about thirty people, university students and graduates, meet at a secluded, beautiful ranch just outside Orangeville? You have the annual Winter Retreat of the Fellowship of Canadian Reformed University Students. This year's event was held on the weekend of Feb. 23-25. The main theme of the weekend was the Family in Today's Society. Through films, records and the printed word the participants were confronted with many of the problems in the family today. In a number of small group discussions, we tackled some of the symptoms and causes of decay of today's family, attempting to find our own solutions in terms of the Bible and our Confessions.

The wonderful thing about the weekend was the genuine desire on the part of all to come to grips with their own peculiar "hangups" and reactions to family life and to try to find answers about what constitutes a good Christian family life. We realized more and more that a good family relationship depends upon a right relationship with our Maker who instituted the family. Though much of our exposure at universities focuses our attention on the structural failings of society or the lack of communications among family members, we

confess that a family breakdown is actually a result of our own sinfulness. We cannot hope to have a good family life without first realizing that our hearts should be committed to Jesus Christ. This is true of the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children. No amount of group therapy can bring that about.

The weekend was not all introspection and contemplation, however. Many of us were able to take advantage of horseback riding, "tubing" down snow-covered slopes as well as sitting around the fireplace singing songs or gathering around the piano singing from the Book of Praise.

In all, there was a real sense of community and fellowship, a growing awareness that a mutual faith is the basis for true fellowship - and a successful retreat.

HAROLD J. LUDWIG

RECTIFICATION: In the report on Rev. VanDooren's lecture "Preaching God's Word" [March 10 issue, page 16], part of the second last paragraph should read: The congregation should pray for the minister during the week when he is preparing his sermon, in a sense "pull the sermon out of his study". Only when he actually appears on the pulpit does a minister "deliver" his sermon.

our little magazine

Hello Busy Beavers,

First of all "Happy Birthday" to all Busy Beavers who have April birthdays. May the Lord guide and keep you, also in the year to come.

Arlene Feenstra	April 2	Bert Holtvluwer	April 10
Peter Van Assen	April 2	Irene Vanden Bos	April 12
Tony Van Eerden	April 3	Eileen Bartels	April 13
Chris Koster	April 4	Gerald Lodder	April 14
Yvonne Selles	April 5	John Kobes	April 15
Tanya Jansen	April 8	Arlene Breukelman	April 22
Linda Kanis	April 8	Jane Van Eerden	April 26
Grant Kottelenberg	April 8	Marian Krikke	April 30
Dinah De Vries	April 10		

THE BOOK NOOK

I knew it! I just knew there were lots of readers in our Club. Well, we have lots of news about good books! Just keep looking in our BOOK NOOK. And if you haven't sent your BOOK LOOK yet, remember there's a bookmark waiting for you too!

Our first BOOK LOOK today is from *Jerold Van Assen*.

This story book is called "Keep Out".

It is written by W. G. Van de Hulst.

There were two girls that wanted to get some flowers for their father's birthday. They soon got in a field, and the path was crooked. Then they heard something. It was a man coming to look at the field. The man said,

"I see some little foot tracks."

Then he started to look for them.

Thank you, *Lorraine Linde*, for the second one.

This book is about: "Secret in the Forest," by Pamela Rogers.

It is about Andrew Smith who wanted to go home but he was afraid that Henry might object. Andrew is a boy. Henry is a cat. His mother would not let him keep the kitten so Andrew decided to leave home. He took Henry and his bed along with him. Andrew left home at midnight when his mother and father were sleeping. He left them a letter which said,

"Dear Mum and Dad,

Do not be angry with me, and don't worry. I shall be quite OK. I am going to look for a good home for Henry. Perhaps something will happen so I can keep him. Love Andrew."

They found it on the clock. Andrew went to New Forest. A lot of exciting things happen to him.

I like this book because it tells you a lot of things about fire in Chapter seven.

And the last one is from *Celia Van Woudenberg*.

The title of the book is "Jewel of the Light".

The author of the book is M. P. Williams.

Rikwe, a little African girl, makes her first contact with a bature (whiteman) in a market square and some words of Jesus lead her in a life of persecution. No one is able to keep her from her Christian life, not even her own family. Finally she is dumped into a chicken coop, where the Dodo (witch doctor) beats her horribly. Next she is no more allowed to enter her house, and ends up to go to three different Christian families. Toward the end of the book she has unexpected joy. Read the book to find out what the unexpected joy is.

I like the book because Rikwe keeps to the Christian life and has unexpected joy at the end of the book.

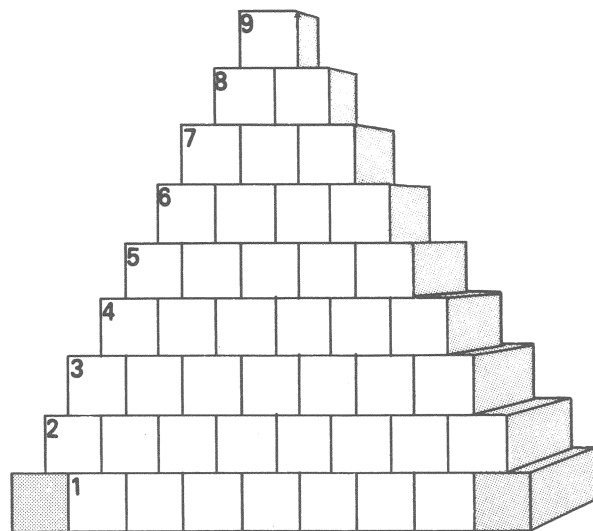
This book has 89 pages, with an interesting story on each page.

If you cannot get a hold of this book, some by the same author might be just as interesting. Here are some: 1) Mildred Cable, 2) Among the Savage Redskins of the Amazon, 3) William Quarrier, 4) David Livingstone.

* * * * *

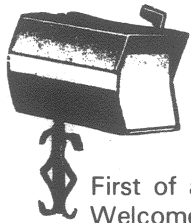
Puzzlers, here you are! From *Jenny Bosscher*:

THE EGYPTIAN PYRAMID PUZZLE



1. Joseph was sold by his jealous brothers into _____
2. An Egyptian captain, _____, bought him.
3. God _____ the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake.
4. Potiphar believed a lie and sent Joseph to _____.
5. The butler and baker each had a _____ which God helped Joseph understand.
6. Joseph was forgotten and remained in prison two _____ s.
7. Joseph was called to give the meaning of Pharaoh's dream, and again _____ helped Joseph.
8. During the famine, Joseph's _____ (numeral) brothers came to Egypt to buy grain.
9. Joseph was a faithful witness to God (T)true) or F (false).

(answers next time!)



From The Mailbox

First of all let's welcome our new members. Welcome to the Busy Beavers, *Nick Mans*. I think you'll make a real Busy Beaver - you sent such a nice letter, and did so well on the quiz! Write again soon, Nick.

Hello *Ronny Van Grootheest*. We're glad to have you join us. Would you like a Busy Beaver pen-pal who also enjoys making models? Write again, Ronny, and then please tell me when your birthday comes, all right?

And hello to you, too, *Sharon Van Grootheest*. Did you know that you and I share the same hobby? What are you knitting now, Sharon?

Welcome to the Club, *Walter Van Grootheest*. I hope you'll enjoy participating in all our activities. Did you like today's puzzle?

We are glad to have you join us, *Celia Van Woudenberg*. We can use active members like you. Thank you for a nice letter and the BOOK LOOK. And you did well on the Puzzle Wheel too!

Hello, *Marlene Meyer*, welcome to the Club. You really are busy as a beaver! Working in the library the way you do, you should know a lot about books. Did you enjoy studying things under the microscope? You did really well on the Puzzle Wheel. Good for you!

Welcome to the Busy Beavers, *Judy Jansen Van't Land*. I hope you'll be a very active Busy Beaver! Did you like today's puzzle?

Thank you, *Jerold Van Assen*, for your big long letter. That must have kept you busy for a long time! I really liked your story about the film. And you did really well on the Puzzle Wheel!

You are a good puzzler, *Jenette Kno!* You had the Puzzle Wheel all right. And how did you do on your Grade two music test?

Thank you for your BOOK LOOK, *Elizabeth Linde*. We haven't room for it today but I'll save it for another time, along with the others we couldn't place today, all right? And you did so well on the quiz and puzzle, Elizabeth!

Tony and Lorraine Linde, thank you for writing in. You both did very well on the quizzes too.

Did you and your brother enjoy watching the trucks and gas rig at your place, *Peter Van Assen*? And do your pigs make a lot of noise when you feed them? You did well on the Puzzle Wheel, too, Peter.

Hello, *Jenny Bosscher*. I really liked your paragraph about washing the dog. We'll have to save it. I'm glad you have such good books to read at school. And you're right, Jenny, there are lots of Busy Beavers in our Club, 242 right now, to be exact! I really am proud to have so many nieces and nephews, you know!

Did you save the old penny and the hand-made

nails from Jenette's closet, *Nellie-Jane Kno!* What an interesting find! And how are your music lessons coming?

Hello, *Debbie Kno!* You have been busy too! Thank you for the BOOK LOOK and the nice poem too! We'll have to save it for next winter because right now it's spring, spring, spring! Did you know I saw two robins today?

So you like our new *CLARION*, *Patricia Van Raalte*? I do too! And I'll tell you a secret, Patricia. Can you guess what part of it I like best? You guessed it - Our Little Magazine!

Ena Beyes, I think you're so lucky to have done all that skating! Wish I could! Your basket doll-bed sounds like an interesting sewing project. You'll have to let me know how you do on it.

You have enough to do to keep you busy, *Cecile Van Woudenberg!* You know, I like to bake too. Shall we swap a nice, easy cake recipe? I have one I think you'll really enjoy making.

* * * * *

Listen, Busy Beavers, if you have something nice for the EASTER ISSUE of Our Little Magazine, please send it in right away. And another thing, I know we've been very busy, but we shouldn't forget our BIRTHDAY FUND, should we? Maybe with the spring weather you'll be doing clean-up jobs or running errands, and be able to make some contribution. Next time I'll let you know where we stand.

Bye for now!

Aunt Betty.

ALBERTA - MANITOBA

Conference of Office Bearers

Saturday April 7, 1973

at 10:00 A.M.
in the

CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF EDMONTON
12905 - 122 Ave., Edmonton

Speaker:

Rev. G. Van Dooren, M.Th.

Topic: *Training for the Office of
Elder and Deacon*

All present and former office bearers
are invited to attend.