

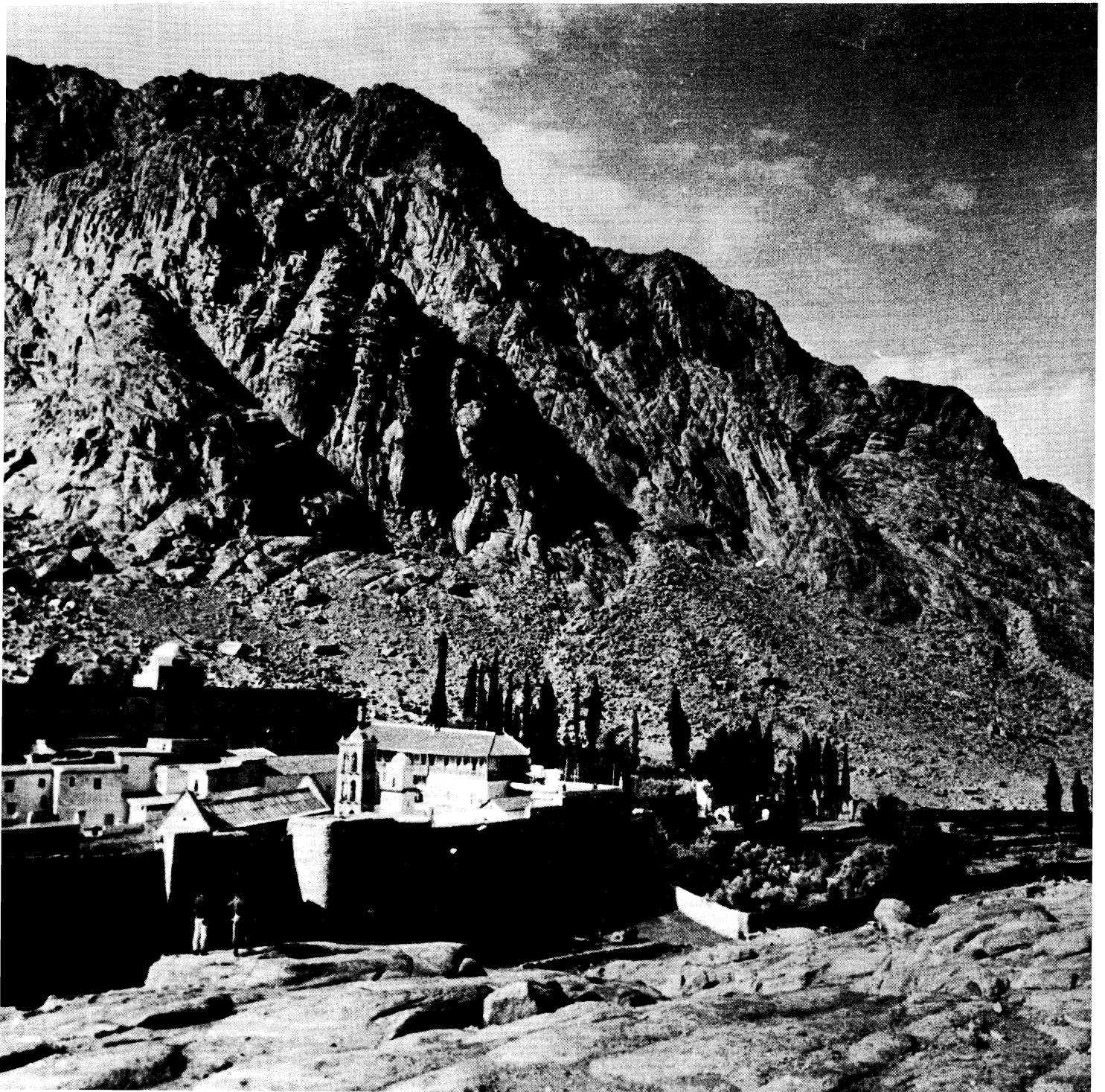
# Clarion

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# "That They All May Be One"

This is the text of the inscription on the tombstone of Prof. Dr. K. Schilder.

It typifies for those who really knew him the life motto of the man who - by those who did not want to understand him, or indeed understood him but became his opponents - was condemned as a schismatic.

What is of more importance is that it is a saying of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We read this line in John 17:21.

It is part of His wellknown prayer, His "High-Priestly Prayer".

It has the character of a petition.

Let us not overlook this.

"That they all may be one": this petition may prove that the unity of all true believers is not a matter of course, not even a matter of fact.

Now and then statements are made that say: All true believers are one in Christ.

Sometimes such a statement is made in a context which reveals the speakers' conviction that organizational unity in one Church or in a confederation of Churches is superfluous or of minor significance.

Others go even further than that. They more or less put all "denominations" on the same level, creating a sort of "invisible church" high above them.

A number of these people adorn this "invisible church" with the name "true church" - which term is used in our Reformed Confession, the Confessio Belgica, in a completely different atmosphere and therefore for something entirely different.

Then there are those who combine the concept of the "invisible church" with the "doctrine of the pluriformity of the church", which says that the riches of Christ's work is so great that, as the light of the sun is divided into several colours when it passes through a prism, all having their own beauty and function, so the one Church of Christ is on our human level divided into a number of "denominations", each of them possessing, cherishing, and teaching part of the one truth.

Well, the last-mentioned theory may prove how far we may move from Christ's own statement concerning the unity of believers, made in His petition "that they all may be one", when we do not carefully listen to what He really prayed.

What actually did He say in this petition?

Did He thank His Father for the fact that His disciples were already one?

Did He say: "Father, I thank Thee because they all are one"?

No, but He prayed: "that they all may be one".

Which is different.

The context may teach us what Christ desired from His Father.

Earlier in His prayer He asked the same thing, "that they may be one". But then He first said (verse 11): "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come to Thee". Then He continued: "Holy Father,

keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are".

The Lord Christ prayed His Father for His followers' unity to be experienced, enjoyed, and shown when they would be on their own in the world and there would have to preach the Word of Christ.

For (verse 18): "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world". And (verse 20): "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me".

The unity of Christ's followers must be a unity of true faith, of adhering to the same Word or Truth (verse 17).

The term "Church of modalities" is a contradiction in terms: one word contradicts and excludes the other.

It is the unity of the common obedience to the one great commission of showing Christ's glory in the authority of His royal, redeeming Word (verse 22).

The fulfilling of this great commission requires a close unity of the believers. Not an "invisible" one but a visible unity.

It requires a firm and strong "homefront", strong in the unity of faith.

The wellknown chapter 4 of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is there to prove this.

The apostle does not only speak of "one body, and one Spirit", "one Lord, one faith", but also of "one baptism" - which already suggests something of an organization and organizational unity (verses 3-5).

To this "one body" God has given "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" - which cannot be understood as being said of an "invisible" body, since there are no such beings as invisible ministers, elders, and deacons! On the contrary, these men were real "visible" gifts, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (verses 11-12).

This way the believers "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (verses 15-16). Every believer has his/her own place in the midst of the Church and makes his own contribution.

All this is a very "visible" affair!

This requires a close unity not only on a local level, it also suggests the living-together in a confederation of Churches.

One of the nicest illustrations of such an - even "international" and "intercontinental" - unity was the collection for the needy Church of Jerusalem which the apostle Paul more than once mentioned in his epistles.

The respective local Churches have to assist each other in their needs.

Another illustration is given in the beginning of the book of Revelation: All the seven "royal messages" - usually called "letters" - of chapters 2 and 3 include the line: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches". The plural, "Churches", may make it clear that the members of the Church of Ephesus were expected to listen not only to the words directed to themselves but also to those in which the congregation of Thyatira was addressed. They had to take interest in all the other congregations' situation and to learn from them.

Christ's petition and His work of gathering a Church points to the necessity of a close organizational local unity and to a confederation of Churches.

He promoted neither independentism nor hierarchy. He wanted a sound living-together and working-together, mutual assistance in material as well as the spiritual respect of keeping brotherly supervision over each other.

Bad experiences in the history of the Christian Church should not allure us to take "the easy way out" and flee into the adoption of the thesis that "all believers are one in Christ" is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"That they all may be one": since this is Christ's heartfelt desire, it should for us be a norm, a demand.

Then we cannot be content with an invisible, idealistic unity-at-a-distance!

The hearts of true Christians should draw towards each other.

Rather, in a sound - that means Scripture-based - situation they do indeed draw towards each other. For them it is impossible to act as if the others are not there!

Let us not forget the literal text of Christ's petition: "That they all may be one"!

G. VAN RONGEN

## Israel - Its Past, Present, And Future

### 11. PROPHECY REGARDING ISRAEL'S FUTURE: JEREMIAH

1. We all know Jeremiah the prophet. That is to say: We think we do, I better say, we have our opinion about him; which is a prejudice sometimes. How come? In the order of the canon, the books of the Bible, he follows upon Isaiah. When compared to this great predecessor it turns out to his disadvantage. Not so brilliant; we miss the touch of genius, and so on. His prophecy is all in the minor key, so to speak. And then that plaintive tone.

That is what we think and feel. However let us never forget that the LORD, the God of Israel, was pleased to use a variety of instruments, an Amos, a Hosea, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, and so on, to have the message come through to the heart of His people according to the necessity of place, time, and circumstances. To an Isaiah it was given - given ! - to present in his days a magnificent picture of the great future that was ahead. A future comprising not only the exile but also the time thereafter, shading off into the day or the days of the Messiah. When reading his book we see ourselves, in a manner of speaking, lifted up and carried away on the wings of the Spirit into a distant future, so as to be deeply impressed by the greatness of the LORD's counsel.

To a Jeremiah it was given to live to see the exile and to be an eyewitness of things prophesied since the

days of Deuteronomy. He was the first prophet to witness the exile. A prophet of doom, that is how he is generally known. However, is he to blame for it? Should the need arise, God sends a prophet to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow. As prophet of doom Jeremiah fulfilled his God-given charge. Moreover, prophet of doom, he turned out to be a true prophet whose word was to come true over against the words of those many false prophets he met on his way, e.g. Hananiah, who prophesied peace (ch. 28).

This way his mission was significant to the Jewish people. To be a member of the Jewish people implied to know of God's anger as spoken of in the Law and the prophets; in the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, e.g., Joel, Amos, Hosea, not forgetting Isaiah(!) and all the others. Taking his word of threat in all seriousness, it being one of the conditions on which the covenant was based, you clearly perceive in the book of Jeremiah the sound and the style of e.g. the book of Deuteronomy. Which does not mean that the latter book would date back only to this time, as Scripture criticism is used to stating. On the contrary, separated from the time of Moses by a span of eight hundred years, the consistency of the God of the Covenant is brought out so much the more. Wasn't He a God faithful in promise, requirement, and threat?

It was characteristic of Israel to have and to believe such a God. A thing to rejoice about, though it might bring in its train a flood of tears if the people deserved to be punished for its apostasy from the Covenant God.

So we know Jeremiah as the prophet of tears. But we should not blame him for that; or dislike him for that. Although the message is more than the person of the bearer, the prophet, the way the prophet bears and assimilates the word he is in charge of is significant. Throughout the book he is shown us as someone suffering under the burden the LORD imposed upon him. So, not one to say: It leaves me as cold as a stone. He who has the interest of the people of Israel, the Church of olden days at heart, should not dislike but rather like the prophet because of his tears. He himself was moved by the message and doesn't he call to mind our Chief Prophet Jesus Christ, who had compassion for the crowds?

Maybe this is why his picture of the future of Israel and Judah is more sober, down to earth. More a restoration just of all that had been in the past and that Judah's eyes were accustomed to - I can refer to ch. 31:24: "And Judah and all its cities shall dwell there together and the farmers and those who wander with their flocks", cps. also 31:12 - than a new paradise with Sion in the centre of the earth, as we have it in Isaiah. We should appreciate this sobermind-

edness in the context of the prophet's time and message and be happy that such a prospect was held out by this very prophet indeed, that he, facing the imminent danger from the north and all the hardship that was to follow, was permitted by his God to speak of comfort nonetheless, preaching all the counsel of God unto salvation. And again we learn how to carefully handle the prophecies regarding Israel's future, taking into account the time in which and the man by whom and the audience before whom they were spoken, fitting every prophecy we have into its proper framework so as not to draw hasty and fantastic conclusions; or to be at a loss when we come across so-called discrepancies and contradictions.

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2. A second feature this prophet was concerned about was the unity of God's people. It is a striking thing that we hear this prophet - N.B. more than a century after the exile of the ten tribes to Assyria - still speak of Ephraim, which stands for the ten tribes. That is why he speaks of Rachel, (grand)mother of Manasseh and Ephraim, and through them foremost ancestress of the ten tribes and also of Benjamin, part of the two tribes to which Jeremiah belongs.

The lot of Ephraim preyed on his mind. Not as a theoretical question: What about the lost ten tribes? - as it is of interest to several people today, some of them launching into speculations - but since his sympathies went out to them. Some gather from the prophecies concerned that Jeremiah must have expected Ephraim's return from its exile fairly soon. They infer from a prophecy like that of ch. 3:11ff. that Ephraim was to come back while Judah was still in the land. Such a return of the ten tribes, however, never has come true. Nay more, even after the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah, Ephraim was never restored to its former national independence. Again we have an indication here of an "unfulfilled prophecy", that is to say, suppose we stick to the letter in employing the word "unfulfilled". Then there are a great many things in prophecy which cannot possibly be fulfilled. As I said before, this is the big issue and problem of Pre-Millennialism and Dispensationalism, which again tried to find its way out by positing the Millennial Kingdom.

In spite of that, we still hold that what had been prophesied concerning Ephraim has been fulfilled. I think of what it reads in ch. 31:6: "For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim: 'Arise, and let us go up to Sion, to the LORD our God!'" That is the point at issue! Not the political restoration of the kingdom of the ten tribes, but rather as it says in ch. 3:18, "In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage"; cp. 30:3. It is Ephraim as well as Judah that will be adopted by the LORD in times to come. Read the moving words in ch. 31:20.

A prophecy paying so much attention to Ephraim is characteristic of Jeremiah. The ten tribes were unforgettable to him. Perhaps because he was a Benjaminite, who might have felt himself more related to the northern tribes than the average Judean. A remarkable fact is also that this way the line of Hosea's prophecies is extended. Compare Jer. 31:20 with e.g. Hosea 11:8. With the more reason we dare state that there is a future for Ephraim, that is to say, as part of the larger whole constituted by all the tribes of Israel. So Jeremiah's, just as Hosea's, prophecies regarding Ephraim have come true indeed; in stages, to be sure, and so we see it fulfilled already in Jeremiah's own time when the area of the former ten tribes was drawn into the sphere of influence of Judah by king Josiah (2 Kings 23:15ff). Or when we see some of the northerners accepting the invitation to king Hezekiah's Passover, humbling themselves before the LORD and coming to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:12) and later on in the prophetess Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. That is all we can say about the ten tribes. It is the best we can do.

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3. Hence we come to the third point: What the restoration of the reunited people is to be all about. Neither the restoration of Israel's (Ephraim's) nor that of Judah's political independence. It would have been of no use if the LORD had permitted the two peoples to do it all over again. History does not repeat itself. History as outlined and portrayed in the Bible is not a circular course but a straight line leading and guiding the people to a definite goal. First of all what had

been broken for so many years was to be restored. The rupture between Ephraim and Judah and the one between the exiles of the year 597, the first basket of figs of Jer. 24, and those of the year 586, the second basket of figs, was to be healed. Life reassumed its usual course. Sion would be in the centre once more. And Sion, just as in Isaiah, was not just an ordinary capital of a terrestrial kingdom, but obviously meant the throne of the LORD. Henceforth not the Ark, nor the temple, but all the city was to be His firm abode and residence. Ch. 3:17: "At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall gather to it (an Isaianic sound, H.M.O.) to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart."

It is the condition of the people's heart which is in the focus in the well-known chapters 30 and 31, where we learn that it is the restored relationship to the LORD that matters most in time to come. A prelude to the New Testament? Yes, indeed. If the prophet has high expectations of the future, it is because the relationship with the LORD GOD is to take shape in a new covenant. I now point to Jer. 31:31-34, where we learn that all the blessing, peace, and salvation is implied in the new Covenant that will be made by the LORD. A prophecy to be fulfilled in stages, so not only applying to what we are used to calling: the New Testament dispensation.

Israel and Judah both are mentioned. Not so much because of their being two nations, but because of the members, the Israelites and Judeans individually, children of the covenant who are to benefit by this new provision of the LORD.

"Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt," we read. So compared to that of Mount Sinai, the new covenant should be an improvement. In which respect, we wonder. What was the drawback, the imperfection, of the first one? Wasn't it made by the LORD GOD as well, so as to be meant in all seriousness? Wasn't it, because of that, supposed to be grounded on a solid foundation, having all kinds of provisions to keep the covenant intact? It certainly was. The name Yahweh answers for the

genuineness. And wasn't it something great to be taken by the LORD's hand and to be considered to be the LORD's wife? We do not make light of that. The LORD does not repent.

Yet, in the light of later events, viewed in retrospect, it did not satisfy; it did not answer the purpose. It was in itself a good covenant, but "good" for the time being. In the final analysis it was to be replaced by another, better covenant. The difference between the two would be a gradual one, not one for reasons of principle.

The reader of these articles knows that when it comes to this, often distinctions are made which are beside the point and definitely wrong. E.g., it has been said - I think especially of the time around the liberation - that the former could be broken and the latter could not be broken, which would imply that during the Sinai-covenant apostasy was possible, as was to be expected with such a league comprising all the people, whereas during the second covenant apostasy was out of the picture, the new covenant being restricted to the saints, those predestined to life eternal. A statement which clearly runs counter the teaching of the epistle of the Hebrews, where we find our text quoted in full. The addresses of this epistle are emphatically warned against apostasy. In the same vein it was held, in departing from the wrong presupposition, that the writing of the Law on the tables of the hearts was equal to what Reformed Dogmatics would call: regeneration - regeneration as confessed and elaborated on in the Canons of Dordrecht. A distinction or difference which is highly disputable and untenable. As if the members of the Sinai-covenant would have been excluded from those benefits of the covenant. For then immediately the question arises: How come that we read of so many true believers and God-fearing people under the Old Testament? Or was it an inferior type of belief? But Scripture does not teach us this way. On the contrary, references to the belief of the fathers as answering the LORD's calling are made over and over in the New Testament!

That in the time of the Liberation the Church was bound to suchlike constructions and all the bad consequences they brought in their train, I need hardly tell.

The distinction, however - and there is one; otherwise the compari-

son does not make sense - is to be sought in something else! During the covenant of Mount Sinai, it was all the things making Israel a separate nation, a nation by itself: the patriarchs, consanguinity, the common language, the giving of the law, the worship, and so on, which were to keep the members of the people together. All those outward things, one may say, provided he is very very careful in handling this expression. All those outward things were instruments by which the LORD was pleased to deal with the people in full earnest. The Israelite who would despise them would not go unpunished. Yet from the very outset everything was arranged in such a way as to make room place for something superior, something more appropriate in a relationship between God and man, namely that man, all and every-one, would know the LORD.

That is what is characteristic of the new covenant or the new phase in the covenant. The Law, the statute of the covenant, the charter, we may say, which lay someplace in the Ark, in the temple, and was read on set occasions, e.g. the feast of booths, ought not just to lie there and be read in the hearing of the people henceforth. As charter of the covenant with God, it ought to be written upon their hearts, since this God was to be loved by his believers with all their hearts. Having the Law in their hearts, they would carry the law with them wherever they would go. When the outward supports of faith - Land, temple, palace, among other things - would slip away one by one, the people was in need of an inner support. Israel setting out on a march that will bring them outside their homeland to the remotest corners of the earth, will be accompanied by the Law, that is to say, by the cordial knowledge of the LORD. Which implies that each and everyone, who knows the Law by heart (with all his heart) is considered a member of the covenant. The door to the New Testament is open.

Not that there was not such a knowledge prior to the time of Jeremiah. It was no less than the forgiveness of sins. But as time went by, in process of time, this item was stressed more and more. Everything pivots around that more than ever. And the breach of the covenant, thrusting a spoke in the wheel - how much hadn't Jeremiah reprehended

the people for that! - is not consigned to the realm of fancy or impossibilities henceforth (just read the letter to the Hebrews) but brought out into full relief and put in the proper light as to be the worst of all sins and very insulting to the LORD who promised forgiveness of sins.

Jeremiah was the prophet to witness the exile. Seemingly it was a loss. Jerusalem, the temple, especially the Ark, everything was lost. But really it was a gain. The covenant partner Israel itself comes back renewed, changed for the good. They will commit sins. What otherwise do you expect in this sinful and broken world. There will be breakers of the covenant. But it is the covenant itself which is safeguarded on better conditions. The Messiah, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, comes into the picture here. This officebearer will stand the test in which all his predecessors (prophets, priests, and kings) have failed.

Jeremiah, the prophet of tears, was privileged to convey a great message full of comfort.

H.M. OHMANN



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## Is The Office Of The Deacons Obsolete?

The other day a deacon of one of the churches in The Netherlands asked the question: "Do we as deacons still have a task? Does our office still have a reason for existence? For the older people are taken care of very well. The same counts for the widows and orphans. When special needs arise, chronic diseases, mentally disturbed or handicapped children: send them to the institutions, which are especially designed and erected for them, and they receive all the care they need. Everyone is insured against accidents and sickness. When there is an 'a-social' family in one of the churches, capable social workers will come to its aid, sent by the local government, or by a society. And still more help is available. Of course, the church can add a little extra to all this, but it certainly is not necessary. Do we have to maintain the office of the deacon for this little extra? What have the deacons really got left to do anymore? Is it still necessary to keep up the ministry, the office of the deacons?" These were the questions of this brother deacon.

He is not the only one who asks such questions, because the situation which is pictured here, reflects not only the state of affairs in The Netherlands, but also in many other countries in the Western world, including Canada. These questions could be asked, and maybe are being asked, in the Canadian churches as well. As we are together today as deacons of our churches, I think it is very fitting that we try to find an answer to these questions, which culminate in the title of the subject: "Is the office of the deacon obsolete?"

To start out with a statement as direct and plain as possible: If these and similar questions are asked seriously - that is, if people, and church people at that, really do not know whether the deacons in the church of Jesus Christ still have something valuable to do - then this is proof that they have never really understood what actually is the essential element in the office, in the ministry of the deacons. It is proof that the essence, the heart, of the work of the deacons has been sought in the collection of money and material goods for the needy church members and in the distribution of this money and these

goods among those who were in need of them. And further, in demonstration of some "common human service" and rendering of assistance.

Without any doubt much is done in our days for people who are in financial need or other material need. And we should be very grateful for that. There has been a time in which people were pitiless toward the weaker, toward the poor and needy. And as a result the latter have suffered tremendously. It was a time when it was commonly accepted that every one had to care of himself and that the sick and the weak had to perish, so the strong, the healthy and the rich could have more. The common man, the labourer, was considered only to be the tool with which more riches could be obtained. When he was worn out, then he was discarded like a piece of junk and had to see for himself how he would exist further.

We must be grateful that this time is past. It is very gratifying that in our days much is done to help those who need help. It is only so regrettable that practically all this help comes from the government and from the institutions which are supported and financed by it. This is in fact an awful charge especially against the church, and it is also a new phase in the development of a situation in which the almighty state brings more and more within its power.

But - and this we certainly should see very well - this government care which encompasses everything, does not make the work of the deacons superfluous. Of course, if their work were something which was in fact of the same nature as that of all those government agencies and government officers, yes, then indeed the deacons might as well go home. Then the others could do the work better than the deacons of the church, as they could and can employ all the resources which are for the use of the government, including the taxpayer's money.

But such is not the case! When the deacons are really deacons, then things are different, because their work is of an entirely different nature. The real deacon is a servant, an instrument of Christ in the care which He has for His sheep, for His flock.

Also, he is a servant of Christ in His work in the world, but yet in the first instance a servant in the loving care, in the manifestation of His mercy in and towards His body, His church and to all the members of it.

Whatever a deacon is doing as a deacon, all of it ought to be work which Christ is doing through him to His children, the sheep of His flock. It must burn in his soul, it must fill his heart and mind that in the deacon Jesus Christ Himself comes to His children, and in him shows His love as the merciful Redeemer and High-priest. And all the members of the church should see in the appearance of the deacons indeed their Redeemer and Lord.

Because this is the nature of the deacons' work, they are so radically different, and much more than gatherers and distributors of money. This is so plainly expressed especially in the form for the ordination of the deacons. It certainly does not speak only of collecting money and distributing it; no, the deacons, it says, shall "help and assist the poor and indigent in time of need". That means: in all need. It is stated in as general a way as possible! And doing this, they have "to do their utmost endeavours, that", as it says, "many good means be procured for the relief of the poor." This points to much more than only to money! And further the form also states that the deacons "do not only administer relief to the poor and indigent with external gifts, but also with comfortable words from the Word of God". And in the address to the deacons after the installation the form exhorts the deacons: "Assist the oppressed, provide for the true widows and orphans, show liberality to all men, but especially to the household of faith."

When we read all this, then we see clearly that the ministry of mercy, which is another expression, another word, for the office of deacon, comprises much more, and must comprise much more than financial and other material help and support for them who are in need. The official of the government agency does only the latter. When he or she comes into a family which has requested help, then on the basis of the data the amount of support will be established and as a result a few days later, or many days later, a cheque will arrive in the mail, and probably will be followed at certain intervals by a number of them in the same amount.

But the help which the deacons provide is all-embracing, not only financial. Let us always keep this in mind. It is helping, serving, caring for, bearing, accompanying them who are in need, in any need. A helping in Christ.

In the church of Jesus Christ there are, besides the office of deacon, also those of elders and ministers. They too have the task to care for all who are in need. And how often will not those who are in financial need long for the comforting words of the elders or the minister. But their task is different from that of the deacons. In the form for the solemnization of marriage it says, that "husband and wife, united by sincere love, will faithfully help and assist each other in all things that belong to this life and to the life eternal". We could say, in analogy with these words, that the work of the elders and ministers in their pastoral care in the first place directs itself upon life eternal, while the deacons direct their ministry and care more upon the things which belong to *this* life. Such is the task of the deacons in the church of Jesus Christ. The task which will never change, and always will remain.

When I state that this task will not change, then that does not mean that the circumstances always will remain the same. On the contrary, far from that. When we make a comparison between the situation in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1935, and the present situation in 1975, then the difference in the function of the diaconate is striking. In the earlier years, for example, the widows and orphans, the old people, the crippled, the sick who could not work and support themselves by their own labour, were still left also financially in the care of the deacons. There was no such thing as old age pensions, widow pensions, disability pensions, children's allowances and the like, although the socialists had been propagating these already for many years.

But since World War II all these provisions have become reality, and at this moment the financial care for all these people we just mentioned is no longer borne by the deacons. It is worthwhile to ask the question: "What has caused it that these changes have taken place in such a relatively short time?" Several reasons can be given for this. There is first the

prosperity which all the Western nations may enjoy. This situation has come into being in a time in which, also as a result of the last war, everything has been, and still is, changing. A revolution in the thinking of modern man has taken place. Opinions which for a long time were accepted without contradiction have gone overboard and new ideas have been propagated freely. The modern world is going to look like a large laboratory, where mathematical formulas form the rules of life. Secularism is setting the vogue, and more and more the Western world is turning away from the Lord and towards idols. Standard of living, production, prosperity, welfare are the magic words of our time. In the charter of the United Nations the rights of man are established. The ideals of the welfare-state we can extensively find in it: Man has a right to "society-certainty", has a right to labour, a right to a standard of living high enough that it will enable him to care for his health and for the well-being of himself and his family; in short: Man has a right to an existence fit for a human being, to a "menswaardig bestaan".

To realize all this, so it is proclaimed, the state has to give leadership in this. If necessary it shall have to intervene in several sectors of society. The more the state troubles itself about lessening the risks of existence for the citizens, the more the state will transform their personal risks into public ones. Overagainst the existing uncertainty a system of social help and assistance will be created; so more and more such a state will have the right to the name "welfare-state".

There is still another reason that has led many people to the idea of this welfare-state. In the beginning of my speech I mentioned what a deacon, who will be a real deacon, is: a servant of Jesus Christ, one who shows in his work as office bearer the mercy which the Lord Himself extends to His sheep. But there has been a time that this was not seen sufficiently. Yes, to our shame we must say that there have been deacons in the church, who showed nothing, and nothing at all, of that mercy. A deacon must be merciful; he must be possessed of great compassion with the poor and needy, with those who have no helper. But there have been hard and unmerciful, there have been cruel deacons.

There was a time - I speak now

of the history in The Netherlands - that the deacons did not visit the needy church members in their houses; no, these people had to come to them! Every week they had a session, at a certain time and at a certain place, where the deacons - they were not called deacons, no, they were the "lords" - received the poor and needy. One by one they had to come forward, in the front of the big oaken table with the green tablecloth on it, behind which the lords were seated, to receive their few nickles or dimes, together with a little piece of lead, in which a number was printed. This piece of lead they had to put into the collection bag next Sunday, so that it could be checked whether they had faithfully attended the worship service! If they would dare to stay away from church without valid reason they would forfeit the support.

In church they had reserved seats. Every year all the seats in the pews were rented out to the highest bidder. But those in the farthest corners, behind the big pillars and close by the doors, where the draft was the strongest, those seats were of course the least in demand, nobody would bid for them. And as a result these seats were reserved for the needy. To show clearly to everybody that they were indeed reserved for these miserable creatures, with plain letters there were painted on these pews the words: For the poor.

It must be said that this terrible situation occurred mainly in the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, which was the more disgraceful, because many of the congregations in this denomination had amassed so many funds in the course of the years that they would have been able to give as support of their needy tenfold what in fact they were giving. They tried to keep as much as possible in their coffers, instead of relieving the financial burden of their fellow-members.

In the Gereformeerde Kerken the attitude was quite different, although to our shame it must be admitted that also within these churches many times the needy members have been humiliated unnecessarily. All this fostered an attitude towards and also against the deacons and their office, which was misplaced, to say it mildly, but it is and was understandable. Sometimes one can still hear the remark: "My parents, or we ourselves

Continued on page 14.

# news medley

Sometimes it is said that every twenty-five years a reformation has to take place since the deviation from the original stand has proceeded so far that it can be tolerated no further. I have always denied this, for it is a fatalistic attitude and such an attitude is not becoming in the Church. Yet I was almost brought to believe that a new reformation was necessary especially in Coaldale when I read in the previous issue of **Clarion** that, during the gathering on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Congregation at Coaldale, "A sister of the congregation delivered a very humanistic speech in verse, reminiscing on the highlights of the past 25 years." I thought: and this with all those ministers present! What a nerve, then to deliver a humanistic speech. Was there then not even one lone figure that dared to raise his voice against such secularization? And that after 25 years already! I was about to write a "Letter to the Editor" when I got hold of the bulletin of Carman. Rev. Geertsema did not speak at all about that humanism, but he told the Carman congregation that there were "humoristic sketches". Oh, Oh, I thought, the mistake is not to be sought in Coaldale but at that famous place where our periodical is printed. The sister had a humoristic speech. Well, that is allowed and even enhances the enjoyment of an evening like that. You see again, dear reader, that one has always to be on guard.

Yes, that Carman. There the Consistory decided "to have the chairs in the back row of the church reserved for elders and deacons. At least this way it is easier for the consistory to see who is there - and how - and who is not present." Smart decision! Especially that part which is mentioned about the "and how". To be there is not yet the same as really to **be** there. Sometimes there is "a little sleeping, a little slumbering", sometimes news has to be exchanged during the sermon, sometimes boys and girls seem to have no other place to meet each other and to tell each other secrets than in the back pews of a Church-building. Israel, in olden days, went up to the temple by tribes and families, but our young people (especially when they have a boyfriend or a girlfriend) look oftentimes more like the people of Israel as they came back from the exile, sometimes one from a city and two out of a village. Then they all of a sudden are too old to sit with Daddy and Mommy and their small brothers and sisters. That is a strange phenomenon, and maybe that is not alien to the decision of Carman's Consistory. And is it, when it comes to the point, not something to be sad about when a Consistory has to act as a group of "supervisors" instead of being able to content themselves with just supervising the conduct and doctrine of the Congregation? Hopefully the very presence of the officebearers all the way in the back will work preventively.

In the bulletin of Carman I read a very wise "proverb" which I hereby pass on: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, and you feed him for his life." That applies also to the help which we extend to the people in the mission fields: for that reason it is so important that the work of Mission Aid be supported in every way, just as the Mission work itself, of course.

And then a last item from Carman: The Organ Committee came up with ideas to bring together money for a new organ. In any case: they will hand out envelopes for this purpose, and further the suggestion was made together to hoe a field of beets, with the proceeds going to the Organ Fund. The brethren also discussed the question what kind of an organ they should strive for. I do not know whether, after the above was written in Carman's bulletin, the brethren talked with Mr. Dirk Jansz Zwart. If they did, they will know what to do: there is only one organ to set as a goal, and that is a pipe organ. What other instrument would deserve the name of "organ"? When I talked with brother Zwart yesterday, I asked him about his impression of the various organs in the Churches. He played in New Westminster, in Cloverdale, in Edmonton, etc. He was happy with the instruments which had been purchased by the various Churches, and also gave some advice here and there, when asked for it. I sometimes give some unsolicited advice, but I am very glad to know that I follow in our brother's footsteps when doing my best to promote the idea of pipe organs in the various Churches. If I understood him well, he told some brethren who informed him that they had an electronic "organ", that this was an "un-Reformed" instrument. I would not be able to back such a statement up, for my knowledge of this field is too limited; I can only say that I am happy with such a qualification. The pipe organ is still the "King of instruments" and I deem it the proper instrument for the accompaniment of the Congregational singing. Even the tremolo on a pipe organ sounds good, and quite different from the nauseating and sickening quivering sound-waves that come from an electronic instrument. I hope that the brethren and sisters in Carman will make a wise decision in this respect.

In Winnipeg the ladies again will be busy selling bedding plants. Last year they made a considerable profit on this activity which was used for a good and worthwhile cause. Some profit was made on a "ping-pong tournament", too, we read. And, something new in this field: a prize was given to one player for "making the greatest effort and losing every game." I am glad for the one who received this prize that I wasn't there, for then I would have gone home with it.

The Edmonton **City Guide** tells us that the Officebearers' Conference which was scheduled for May 19, has been postponed because so many declared that they would not attend it that the goal would not be achieved. The month of May seems not to be the best time to have a conference or something like that.

From Edmonton to Barrhead is not very far (an hour's drive) and therefore we see what has been going on there. The Consistory decided to discontinue the reading of a summary of the law after the reading of the Ten Commandments. That is, we read, no binding rule for every minister who would come there to conduct services. In other words: if someone still wishes to give a "summary" after the reading of the Ten Words either from Exodus 20 or from Deuteronomy 5, he is free to do so also in the future. But I understand that the members of the Consistory will no longer do it, as a result of that decision. Our readers may already know that the question of a "summary" was discussed in our medleys before and that this writer wholeheartedly agrees with Barrhead's decision. If the Ten Words are still valid for us today (and they are!), then we should not "undermine" that by at the same time



giving a "New Testament summary" as if that were all that applies to the New Testament Church.

From the Neerlandia bulletin we learned that there seems to be some progress in the calling of a minister.

Not every semester will come to a close as the Catechism Classes in Brampton were concluded. They were, as the bulletin tells us, concluded in a more informal way. There were some outdoor games, and all this was followed by a Wiener Roast. I don't think that for this last class of the season anybody was "too busy" or "couldn't get a ride" or "had to study for exams" or "had to babysit" or "was home too late" or "was out of town" or "didn't feel too well" or, oh, well, you know the reasons given for non-attendance.

In Toronto the brethren and sisters displayed some action in connection with a suggestion made by two of the city aldermen, namely, to have the municipal elections on Sundays. People, it was argued, who wished to attend church could do so anyway and could come to vote either before or after church!

As a result of the many letters received, Rev. Vander-Boom received a telephone call from a member of the City Council who expressed appreciation. Hundreds of letters had been received. This points anew to the possibilities which we have to make ourselves be heard and to influence the decisions made and to be made. It appears time and again that we are being listened at and that we do find an attentive ear with those who govern us and who represent us. Especially contact with our Members of Parliament should be more frequent. The issues at stake do merit an active participation. No one is justified when he just sits down, speaks his word of condemnation and then, just like Jonah, relaxes under his canopy to await the destruction of the ungodly world. We have our responsibilities as citizens of the country.

Rehoboth Burlington learned that they will not get a permit for building a parsonage on the same property on which the Churchbuilding is situated and on which we also find a house for the caretaker. The Committee of Administration now has to ponder the question what should be done: either purchase a house or rent one to be used as a temporary parsonage. They will not be able to have a house finished by the time the Stam family arrives: Rev. Stam informed the brethren that his farewell sermon will be delivered on June 22. I have not read a definite date for their arrival in Canada, but I guess that that will be about the middle of July. They do not have too much time left before the new minister will arrive. Possibly a permit can be obtained later, when a planned road is pulled through. For the moment, another solution will have to be found.

Ebenezer Church's bulletin mentions that again a Bible Booth will be manned at the Burlington Fair. We also learn that "De Jeugd van Vroeger" was to make a trip together to enjoy the sights of spring.

With the holiday season coming up, plans are being made and sometimes a Church is informed about these plans. Thus the Ottawa Church received word that some of the Smithville teachers and students are planning another outing in the neighbourhood of our Capital City and thus expect to attend Church in Ottawa on Sunday, June 29th. Plan you holidays with the Church in mind!

I won't say from which bulletin I gathered the following. It appears to be the case in more than one Congregation and therefore I speak about it in general. Somewhere I read the complaint that the interest shown by

## 45th Wedding Anniversary



*Mr. and Mrs. K. Orsel hope to celebrate their 45th Wedding Anniversary on June 14, 1975. They came to Canada with their 2 daughters, Jenny and Tina, in 1951. Their son, Henk, had come 6 months earlier. They started their life in Canada, in Burlington, where they stayed for 8 years, from there to Dungannon, on to Fergus, then to Guelph. And now they are back in Burlington. Mr. Orsel is retired from being a gardener, and likes to go fishing. They have had much illness in their life together, but the Lord has spared them these many years. To Him be the glory. Mr. and Mrs. Orsel have 6 grandchildren. Their address is now: Carlton Terrace Apts., Apt. No. 2G., 3030 Prospect Street, Burlington, Ontario.*

parents and other Churchmembers in the affairs of our Young People's Societies oftentimes is minimal. I read about a few annual meetings of these societies which were attended by very few parents. That is not very encouraging for our boys and girls. They do their best for such meetings, and if not much interest is shown in their affairs, how can we expect them to continue in this way with joy? I can understand that not everyone has the opportunity to visit the meetings regularly. I don't even think that the young people would appreciate it if they had weekly visits. But I do think that at least at their special meetings we should show that we are aware of their work and are interested in it. Maybe it will help if such annual meetings are held during the winter season and not towards summer, when almost every one longs for the moment that some evenings will become available for other things.

Have a good time preparing for your holidays. Oftentimes this gives as much fun as the holidays themselves. We'll see. vO



## Church News

Called:

REV. M.C. WERKMAN

at Chatham is called by the Church of Neerlandia in co-operation with the Church of Barrhead.

## *Dutch Church Activities on Taiwan* (3)

### HEATHENDOM

Up till then the natives of this island had not heard about the living God. They were to themselves a law.

The first minister who settled on Taiwan, Rev. Candidius, told in one of his reports that the natives were a rough sort of people, looking very barbarious. Their colour was between black and brown. The men started to work only at the age of forty. They walked around without any clothing and did not feel ashamed at all. Yet they were very friendly and kept their word. Theft was almost unknown among them. There was one village only that had the reputation of being a hot-bed of robbers. They were very intelligent. However, nowhere else Rev. Candidius had met such a beggarly crew.

Their principal food was rice. The soil was tilled with a sort of pick-axe. Ploughing was unknown among them. The men kept themselves busy with hunting.

The government was in the hands of a village council of twelve men. They retired after two years. As a token of their retirement all the hair of their head was plucked out. They had not much authority, however, but had to do a lot of talking in order to get the people's approval on their decisions.

The actual power lay in the hands of the priestesses. Corporal punishment was unknown. But one of the priestly regulations was that in summertime the men were not allowed to wear one single piece of cloth; otherwise this would be taken from them and they had to pay a fine in the form of deer skins or rice.

There were no religious books or any other writings, but oral tradition only.

They did not know about the creation of the world but were of the opinion that the earth had always been there and would be everlasting.

Those who had not behaved well were at their death thrown into a deep ditch and tortured. That happened this way that when immediately after their death they had to cross a bridge, this bamboo bridge suddenly turned upside down. Those who had behaved well had no trouble in passing this bridge but arrived at the

other end to enjoy a nice and happy life.

The name of the main god was Tamagisannach. He was supposed to dwell somewhere in the South of Taiwan. His wife lived in the East, her name being Pakankpada.

When a thunderstorm was heard in the East this goddess was considered to be telling her husband off because he had not provided rain. The latter meekly obeyed his wife and let it rain soon afterwards.

Another god lived in the North, his name being Sekianfingh. But this was not a good one. When the main god had made the people beautiful and fine, that bad one made them looking awful, full of pocks and similar things.

A number of warrior gods were also worshipped.

Religion and worship were actually a matter of the priestesses exclusively, the Inibs. The main elements in it were prayer, and sacrifices of pigs, rice, and drinks.

The respective languages of the natives were very difficult for the Westerners.

Again we come to the conclusion that we must have deep respect for the energy and faithfulness with which the preaching of the Gospel among these people was undertaken.

### MISSION WORK

It is a matter of course that no mission work could be done during the first few years. There was some strong doubt whether the settlement on Tayouan could be maintained. Besides, the original idea was just to establish a transit port only. The Dutch were not interested in the island as such and its inhabitants, but only in the Chinese trade.

Yet they had to be on friendly terms with the natives. Frequent contact with them was to be established.

First a "visitor of the sick" could do the work, but soon the need for the presence of a number of ministers of religion was felt, for the settlers as well as for the original inhabitants of the island. The first governor, Dr. Martinus Sonck, wrote that they were in need of at least two or three ministers.

As a result the Rev. Georgius

Candidius arrived in June 1627. He was born in the Palatinate, had to flee from there during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), and received his theological training at Leyden.

This was the beginning of a nice period of time.

Someone gave the following summary: "The mission work on Formosa which was done by the Company was one of the remarkable aspects of its settlement on this island, though it had no lasting influence. It proves that it was no mere lust of gain or being adventurous which inspired the Dutch of those days in the Far East. It grew out tremendously, and the Company spent a lot of money on it. The Protestant clergy proved to be very industrious. Immediately after their arrival, in the same year, they set themselves to the work of Christianizing the country. No less than thirty ministers have served there, in particular among the natives, from the year 1627 to 1662, when Formosa was lost to us. In the year 1646 the Company employed four ministers at the same time, in 1655 eight, apart from a clergyman of lesser degree, as the Council of Formosa wrote to the Governor-General and the Counselors. The number of Christians during the Dutch era ran into the thousands" (5).

Candidius was transferred to Taiwan first of all to act as a minister for the settlers. However, he considered himself as a missionary straight from the beginning. Within a year's time he was able to express himself in the dialect of his post, Sinckan. Already at Christmas 1628 there happened to be more than a hundred persons who could say their prayers and answer questions concerning the Christian doctrine. During springtime 1631 approximately fifty people received the sacrament of holy baptism, and one year later the villagers did away with their idols.

In the meantime Rev. Robertus Junius had arrived. He became the "great man" of the mission work on the island of Taiwan. P. de Zeeuw JGzn. calls him "the Formosan reformer par excellence" (6).

Junius was a very learned man. However, he did also much practical work. He, too, was soon familiar with the native language. He translated the Heidelberg Catechism, and had it printed. He wrote several prayer forms, a "Prayer before the Sermon",

a "Prayer after the Sermon", a "Morning Prayer", an "Evening Prayer". He made metrical versions of several Psalms on the Genevan tunes (!), of "The Lord's Prayer", the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. He also wrote a number of outlines for catechism-class, covering "simple questions" as well as "Big Problems" - which e.g. dealt with the matter of election or the significance of creeds and confessions. Several of his sermons are still present in the archives. He also wrote two dictionaries.

In brief, Rev. Junius did a lot of work.

Schools were established. He himself trained native teachers.

His activities were blessed. More than five thousand people were converted and incorporated into the Christian Church.

Unfortunately his advice to send a number of intelligent Formosan young people to The Netherlands in order to be trained for the ministry of the Word was neglected, most likely because a similar experiment with Ambonese youngsters had failed.

Of course(!) some difficulties arose now and then. After his repatriation Junius accused his successors of being too slow. They in their turn declared they could not use Junius' teaching aids and methods because these were far from perfect, and they themselves had first to improve them. Classis Amsterdam was drawn into this controversy. However, after some time the parties found each other again. In a letter dated September 11, 1651, Classis Amsterdam wrote to the Consistory of the Church of Taiwan: "At the end of this letter we praise you because you have closed the case regarding Rev. Junius with so much gentleness and lovingkindness. We trust that it will remain buried in everlasting oblivion, and that no cause will ever be given to recommence these controversies."

Meanwhile the work was continued. Rev. Gravius did much for the improvement of living conditions on Taiwan. He taught the natives how to work with ploughs and plough-animals. He began a translation of the Bible, in which project he was assisted by other ministers.

Up till then it had been forbidden for women under the age of 35 to keep their babies alive. This awful custom had to make room for abhorrence of this sort of infanticide.

There was some hope that in the

near future the way of life of the Formosan people would be fully Christianized under the Lord's blessing. Unfortunately, however, these expectations were dashed to the ground when the United East India Company decided to abandon Taiwan. Reasons of a political and business character were again instru-

mental in the hands of Satan to spoil the work that was done.

(To be continued)

G. VAN RONGEN

(5) H.P.N. Muller, *Azie gespiegeld*, Volume II, page 89.

(6) P. de Zeeuw JGzn, *op. cit.*, page 37.

# school crossing

## GRATITUDE

Since the last School Crossing was written, we received the happy news that Mr. D. Boersema, the present principal of Coaldale, has been appointed as the new principal for Carman. Alberta's loss is Manitoba's gain. How about the school in Smithers, the far West? I have not heard whether or not they were able to obtain the teacher they need, but judging from their ads in the papers I have my doubts. Let us hope and pray and work that all the vacancies will be filled.

## SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS?

That should not be a question in our congregations, which have articles 21, 41, and 44 in their Church Order. Of course, Reformed people support Reformed education. But should we not also get some *Government* support? That question is not asked in the first place by our own people. In Ontario an association has been formed, called OAAIS. This is the Ontario Association of Alternative and Independent Schools, a voluntary membership organization open to Ontario's more than 300 independent and alternative schools. It was formed in November 1974 out of a desire on the part of many non tax-supported schools to cooperatively promote the welfare of Ontario's growing independent day-school movement. Burlington's *Home and School* gives us some more information on this movement. People are becoming more aware of the "independent" schools. Among these schools are some exclusive residential schools that cater to the wealthy. It is estimated, Burlington's vice-principal writes, that some 90,000 students attend private schools in Ontario.

Of course, the costs are increasing every year and as a result many

private schools are planning together to approach the government with the intent to influence the legislation on tax relief. In this free country we are still faced with the injustice that parents who support private schools of their choice are still by law compelled to support, via their taxes, the public schools. The Liberals in Ontario seem to favour extension of tax support for the private schools. At least, they made some comments and statements that point in that direction. We must not forget, however, that these statements were made before the last provincial election. The Liberals were then defeated and, as far as the Conservatives were concerned, the people had voted for "one" public school system. More and more people are becoming dissatisfied with the trends in Ontario's educational policy. Their objections: too much freedom for students (and teachers), basic skills are not being taught, and in some schools some controversial issues are taught (?) such as socialism, homosexuality, anti-Americanism, etc., without proper guidance.

The Board of the *Jewish Education* of Metropolitan Toronto has petitioned to provide Jewish day-schools with teachers, books and supplies for the "General Studies" part of their programme. The cost of the "Jewish Studies" part will be absorbed by the Jewish community itself. Whatever decision will be taken in this case will no doubt set a precedent for other schools. Mr. W. Horsman in *Home and School* makes the following pertinent comment: "One danger is immediately obvious. If our schools expect tax relief the 'price' might be too high. Of our programme had to be divided into 'Reformed' Studies and 'General Studies' we would seriously compromise the principles on which our school is

based. Faced with such an alternative Reformed parents have no choice." I think all Reformed people will wholeheartedly agree with this. Then there would be no real need for Reformed schools at all. Then Friday night or Saturday morning schools would be quite sufficient.

Burlington's School Board decided that it would not join this organization but would send observers to the meetings and make a decision later as to whether membership would help us to understand our rights as citizens without compromising our principles. Let us hope to hear more about this in the future. Let us keep being aware of what is going on and let us not prematurely cast aside what may be helpful to us and what we could perhaps support. But, of course, always WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE REFORMED PRINCIPLES. For then, indeed, the PRICE would be TOO HIGH.

#### NO WOMEN IN THE OFFICE . . . ?

While we are at Burlington, it may be of interest to pass on that as one of the people nominated for a position on the Board of Trustees was a married woman, the Board felt that it should state its position on this matter. After discussion the motion was made that "married women not be eligible for the position of Director of the John Calvin School Society". Well, there we are, sisters! Also another precedent? Or have we not gone that far yet to have women in the Board of Directors? At least, not married women? Whether it is out of concern for the children whose mothers may have to attend a lot of meetings in the evenings, or out of fear that the married women will take over, the *Home and School* does not report. And whether the motion was passed is not reported either! Only that the motion was *made*! However, I don't think our sisters will be offended to any great extent, seeing how busy they always are to do things for our schools and their ingenious ways of raising money so that the children can enjoy the best possible education. With so many Mothers in Israel, the Fathers and Brothers should be able to take care of things in the Boards.

M.C. WERKMAN

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

This issue was mailed from Winnipeg Central Post Office on Friday, June 6.

# press review

## TWO TRANSITIONS

Some time ago I informed the readers of CLARION about the step taken by the Rev. Dr. M.J. Arntzen. He left the Reformed Churches-outside-the-federation and joined our sister churches in the Netherlands. In the April 7, 1975, issue of CALVINIST-CONTACT, the Rev. Dr. Louis Praamsma paid attention to this transition too. And he put beside and overagainst it the transition of Prof. Dr. K.J. Popma. The article was written in the Dutch language under the heading "Twee overgangen" ("Two transitions"). He starts his article by pointing to the fact that in America people quite easily change churches, and says that this was not common in the Netherlands, anyway not in former times. But,

at the moment this is undergoing a change; many joint services are organized, also between Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, and by many this changing ecclesiastical climate is highly praised: the "spirit of living divided into groups" has been cast out (de "hokjesgeest" is uitgeworpen).

In the meantime it appears that, in the process, the thought of a church which is a "mother", is sustaining damage.

Not only the thought of the church as "mother" sustains damage, but the motherhood of the church itself as well. The true motherhood. Where a church throws out the preaching of the pure gospel and leaves the truth of the Word of the Father in heaven, and trades this truth in for the modern humanistic lie, she ceases to be a true mother and becomes a harlot. And then it is no wonder that also the thought of the church as mother is disappearing. Dr. Praamsma then informs his readers about the two striking transitions. He writes that

they were so striking for the reason that in both cases they did not occur for the first time; the one was that of Prof. Dr. K.J. Popma; the other that of Dr. M.J. Arntzen.

He then writes:

Prof. Popma, a well-known philosopher in the school of the philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea (de wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee) . . . a very critical spirit who always went his own ways, left the (Synodical) Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in 1957 and became a member of the Reformed Churches (maintaining art. 31). He gave account of this transition in a brochure: "Liberation, a testimony" ("Vrijmaking, een getuigenis"); a brochure which immediately led to a rather sharp controversy in the Liberated churches; the Rev. D. VanDijk of Groningen disputed the point of view of Prof. Popma in a series of articles; and this was no wonder - Prof. Popma happens to be more or less a freebooter. Recently this very same professor became a member of the "Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken".

Apparently he did not in the Liberated churches find that shelter which he was looking for.

In the first place this remark: In the mentioned brochure Prof. Popma expressed serious accusations against the churches which he joined. In the second place: Dr. Praamsma gives the impression that Prof. Popma recently left our sister churches. But that is not true. Very soon after he joined these churches, which he criticized so much, he went back to the Synodical churches, now more than ten years ago. And recently he left these Synodical churches again. Why is this fact not mentioned? He continues:

Why he became "Christelijk Gereformeerde", is not known to me; whether he will feel at home in this new community is a question; apart from that, I can kind of imagine that in the evening of his life he was drawn to the "Christelijke Gereformeerde" Churches . . .

Popma is a man with a mystical strain; therein lies, maybe, a point of contact with a current in the "Christelijke Gereformeerde" Church.

And then Dr. Praamsma writes about Dr. Arntzen's step. We read:

Dr. Arntzen . . . first went over to the Liberated churches-outside-the-federation; he was tired of the struggle for maintaining the Reformed Confession in the (Synodical) Reformed Churches; when he took this step we compared him in our magazine with Elijah, who spoke to the Lord: "It is enough".

But his stay in this disorderly group of churches, which do not even dare to have a Church order, has been of short duration. Dr. Arntzen now has become a member of the churches which were left by Prof. Popma; he has become Liberated.

If Dr. Praamsma had not suggested that the recent transition of Prof. Popma was from our sister churches, but had informed the readers that it was a transition again from the Synodical churches, this transition would be placed in a different light. He continues:

We now do not ask the question whether he (Dr. Arntzen) will feel at home in this group of churches; in our opinion he will certainly be in his place here.

I shall repeat here how Dr. Arntzen saw his transition (cf. *Clarion* of April 19, 1975):

Basically it is an act of obedience that is the point at issue: where does the Lord gather a congregation which responds to the norms as they are mentioned in art. 29 of the Belgic Confession.

Dr. Praamsma writes that Psalm 84, speaking about the sparrow finding a home, came to mind when he read about the two transitions. And he compares the two men with sparrows:

I saw before my eyes two sparrows fluttering about; now here, then again there; finally alighting somewhere.

Dr. Praamsma started his article with a remark about the easy church-changing attitude on the North American continent. He also pointed at the damaging effect of this attitude on the thought of the church as "mother". But with the way he writes about the two transitions in The Netherlands he feeds and strengthens the evil of the easy transitions instead of fighting it. For he gives his readers the impression that church member-

ship is a matter of personally feeling at home. Well, if that is a main thing, let us then look for a church that is to our liking. He can learn from Dr. Arntzen, who says: "Basically it is an act of obedience." Dr. Praamsma would certainly serve the readers of CALVINIST-CONTACT by informing them about the motives of Dr. Arntzen's transition. Dr. Praamsma's comment on the first transition of Dr. Arntzen, when he left the Synodical churches, was that this act could be compared with the tired sigh of Elijah: "Lord, it is enough". In other words, this was a deed of desertion, and thus disobedience. But is leaving a false church an act of disobedience? When article 29 B.C. gives the marks of the true and of the false church, and when article 28 B.C. says that the believers have the calling and duty to join the true church, they speak according to the Word of God. We read in Acts 2:40 that Peter urged the Jews to be "saved from this crooked generation", from the "synagogue of Satan". And in Ref. 18:4 we read how Christ tells His believers to leave the harlot, the false church, with the words: "Come out of her, My people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues." And that the Synodical churches show the marks of the false church according to art. 29 B.C., Dr. Praamsma actually admits, although he does not say this openly to the people in the Christian Reformed Churches. He writes:

But these two double transitions of men who once were Reformed, only plain Reformed without any addition, point to the uncertainty, the confusion, of the Dutch Reformed climate; point also to the great responsibility which the Reformed churches (Synodical) loaded upon themselves when they left many of the old paths and removed many of the old posts.

In other words, by "leaving the old paths and removing the old posts", which marked the Reformed Churches, these Churches are not Reformed anymore. Should that not be said to the Christian Reformed people in plain language? Together with the fact that Prof. Popma left these Synodical churches once *again*? Together also, and not in the last place, with the reason why Dr. Arntzen left these churches, and why he joined the (Liberated) Reformed Churches? That would be of real

Reformed help in the situation in which the Christian Reformed Church finds itself.

Dr. Praamsma concludes his article with a wish:

And we express our longing for a Dutch Reformed church, in which there is place for all those sparrows fluttering about, who desire a house, a house in which the Word of God is honestly administered, and the precious heritage of the Reformation is faithfully preserved.

Well, the Rev. Arntzen told and showed us that there is such a Reformed Church in The Netherlands, the (Liberated) Reformed Churches. Keeping the ties with the Synodical churches, who left old paths and removed old posts, will do more and more harm to the Christian Reformed Churches: They will follow in leaving the old paths and removing the old posts. It will mean "taking part in her sins, and sharing in her plagues". And, once more, a speaking of "feeling at home" rather than of obedience to the Word of the Lord - also according to the Reformed Confession - in the matter of church-membership as well, supports instead of fights the leaving of old paths and the removing of old posts.

J. GEERTSEMA

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#### CORRECTION

To avoid misunderstanding it should be mentioned that the (unsigned) item "Klaas Jan Mulder at the Organ", in the previous issue, was submitted by the organizers of Mr. Mulder's concert tour as a supplement to the advertisement that appeared on page 18.

#### OUR COVER

*The Monastery of St. Catherine is situated at the foot of Mount Sinai, in the middle of the Sinai desert. It was here that a nineteenth-century German scholar, Dr. Constantine Tischendorf, found the important Bible manuscript known as the Codex Sinaiticus. A newly built airport, 20 minutes distance by bus, has made the monastery more accessible. [Photo Israel Gov't Tourist Office]*



## Concert In New Westminster:

### A REVIEW

Programme: Festive Prelude Ps. 47; Jan Zwart; Chorale Prelude: Herr Jesu Christ, Joh. Ph. Kirnberger; Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, J.S. Bach; Sonata I, A. Guilman; Variations on Lyons (Hymn 33), S. Vanderploeg; Chorale Prelude: Straf'mich nicht, A.G. Homelius; Introduction and Fugue Ps. 147, Dirk Jansz Zwart; Fantasia and Fugue on the name B.A.C.H., Franz Liszt; Trio Psalm 6 and Fantasia "A Mighty Fortress", Jan Zwart.

Jan Zwart is reported to have said that you must not overwhelm people coming, as it were from the cold, to an organ concert with a major work from the organ literature. You have to prepare them for it by playing an arrangement of a well-known hymn. In that way they become familiar with the sound and the possibilities of the instrument. The Festive Prelude on Ps. 47, "Praise the Lord, ye lands", did just that and more. It set the tone for the evening and gave the audience the opportunity to participate.

The quiet, reflective chorale preludes by Kirnberger and Homelius, both students of Bach, formed the frame work for two major organ works. The well-played and -registered preludes showed off some of the nice solo possibilities of the organ. Mr. Zwart thoughtfully added the appropriate chorale to each prelude. This, considering the liturgical intent of the compositions, is a good practice.

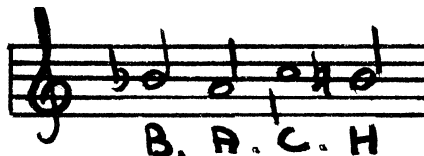
The Fantasia and Fugue in G minor (B.W.V. 542) by J.S. Bach was already famous in the composer's own time. The Fantasia, written in typical North-German style, is marked by "Bursting torrents of ornaments, imitative episodes, organ recitatives, the boldest modulations, and broad resonant progressions of chords" (Spitta). The happy, rollicking Fugue, with its theme derived from an old Dutch dance tune, contrasts the moving Fantasia yet at the same time compliments it. The work makes serious demands on the performer's musical and mechanical skills. It is "the very best pedal piece by Herr Johann Sebastian Bach", as one of Bach's contemporaries put it. The work, at the hands and feet of Mr.

Zwart, received just the right amount of storminess in keeping with the improvisational character of the Fantasia; and just the right amount of lightness in keeping with the dance-like character of the Fugue. The playing not only displayed the performer's technical mastery, but also revealed the genius known as Bach. That, considering the organ's limited resources and the acoustically dead building, is quite a feat.

The selections from Guilman's Sonata I, especially in the Finale, showed Dirk Jansz Zwart's digital virtuosity. Guilman's style is typical French. His music, though correct in form and not devoid of melodic inventiveness, tends to be superficial.

Next on the programme was one of the recitalist's own compositions, The Introduction and Fugue on Psalm 147, "Come, praise the Lord." It is forthright, honest music intended in the first place to glorify God and to edify the neighbour, and secondly to make known the glory of the organ and organ art. All that it did! A convincing performance of convincing music. Unfortunately this work exists in manuscript only. The composer however informs me that this will soon be remedied. When the work is published (let's hope it is soon), our organists would do well to put it on their repertoire.

In 1829 Felix Mendelsohn started the first Bach renaissance. Ever since that time composers (Schumann, Liszt, Reger, Rinck, et al.) have been fascinated by the tonal signature B.A.C.H.



In his Prelude (in Toccata form), Franz Liszt adapts the virtuositic elements of his pianistic genius to the organ. The theme B.A.C.H. is given in all kinds of variations full of sparkle, motion, and energy. The Fugue, initially quiet and subdued - almost an "in memoriam" - develops quickly into a full-blown fugue and ends with a stretto of gigantic proportions. The work is intriguing, for in it we find the confrontation of a romanticist (Liszt) with the polyphonic spirit of Bach. Hearing

the work, performed as it was, was a rewarding experience.

The father was heard in the son in the Trio Psalm 6 and in the Fantasia "A Mighty Fortress". The Fantasia, composed in 1917 for the quadricentennial of the Reformation, is by far Jan Zwart's most famous and enduring work. Its publication as Book I "Nederlandse Orgelmuziek" gave impetus to a much needed series of truly Reformed service music. The work, with its triumphant hymn and suppliant prayer, is Jan Zwart's musical testament, in which he acknowledged God's guiding hand in his life. The sensitive rendering of these pieces brought the successful recital to a close.

"A musical composition attains its beauty only through a correct and good performance." Perhaps these words of Joh. Ph. Kirnberger, represented on tonight's programme, best sums up the evening. There was much beauty to be heard thanks to br. Zwart's "correct and good performance". It is, however, a pity that more people did not take advantage of the opportunity to hear and honour this gifted artist-brother.

S. VANDER PLOEG

### OFFICE OF THE DEACONS - cont'd.

often had hard times, the water sometimes came to our lips, but we never received from the deacons, no, we never had to hold out our hand!" That was their pride, never to have gone to the deacons. Is it not terrible that the practices in some churches have led to such an attitude? But at the same time these things have caused it that many people among those who received relief have turned away from the church, because they did not see and meet the Good Shepherd in the deacons, but only hard "lords". It is often said that socialism and communism were born within the walls of the church and there is a part of truth in that. And we may come to the conclusion that the welfare-state of today to a certain extent is an unpaid bill of the church.

But enough about the origin of the welfare-state. It is here, in The Netherlands as well as in Canada, and it is interesting to see how the churches have reacted to this monster's coming into existence.

JOHN DEHAAS

*This is the first part of a speech delivered at the Deacons' Conference held in Abbotsford, B.C., in February 1975.*