



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 25 - No. 18

September 4, 1976



This is How We are to Tell What Happened, and Definitely in No Other Way

Genesis 1:31: *And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.*

Genesis 2:17: *For in the day that you eat of it you shall die.*

Genesis 3:13: *The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."*

It is in this order that the Lord God Himself tells us the facts.

If we changed that order, we would easily get caught in the snares of all sorts of questions which, by the sheer force of their logic, would lead us from consequence to consequence.

Then the conviction of our own guilt would be weakened by the very same demonic suggestion by which also Adam and Eve came to their revolt against the command of God's love and protection. Questions raised by human *thinking* should never be confused with questions which proceed from *faith*. Most of the time there is a vast difference between those two categories.

Someone may think, "Why does God ask man all sorts of questions, such as, 'Did you eat of that tree of which I told you not to eat?'" Genesis 3:11

Did God not know the answer? He is omniscient, isn't He?

Someone else continues on this path and thinks, "Could not God have prevented this greatest of all world-disasters with its centuries-long effects?" He is almighty, isn't He? And if He *could* have prevented it but did not do that, is He, then, not Himself . . . ? Even the laws of the country declare someone guilty if he does not lift one finger to save the life of someone who is in danger of losing it . . . !

Demonic power to tempt, clothed in the garment of "common logic," pushes our sinful heart on to this road of self-excuse and self-justification, and the final conclusion must then read, "God is a creator who failed. Look how things are in our own age! Is God love? Why does He, then, not intervene?"

I have always felt it to be a grave

responsibility and a difficult task not to "satisfy" the boys and girls with an answer that makes them understand everything, so that they say, "Ah, is that the way it is! Our reasoning was wrong!", but to free them from the *spell* of such questions and to take them captive and to bring them under the obedience to the Word of God.

That applies not only to our boys and girls. We, too, as older ones feel these questions disturbing us, for instance, when suddenly deep sorrow falls upon us or when we see all of a sudden what evil we did in our own delusion.

Paul, who as the first missionary in the history of the world invaded the deep darkness of the realm of Satan (heathen land is Satan's land), wrote to the European Corinthians, "The weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds; so that we destroy arguments and every proud obstacle erected against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ," II Corinthians 10:4, 5.

The first and the best step in this campaign is: to tell the facts in the *order* in which God Himself tells them to us, and in any case not to set up "reasonings" starting from self-chosen "starting points," for instance, God's counsel, God's omniscience, God's omnipotence, God's will, etcetera. "Let us learn not to go beyond that which is *written*, that none of you may be puffed up in favour of the one against the other," I Corinthians 4:6.

When that phantom-world which Adam and Eve had permitted to be pictured before their eyes (to be free, to be their own boss and no one's servant) collapsed, do you think that their first thought was, "Why did God not prevent this? He did know it, didn't He?" etcetera?

Yes, everyone who, perhaps subconsciously and without being aware of it, thinks in an evolutionist manner and thus has also been poisoned in his concept of life and of the world, may say within himself and may concede

to public opinion: Adam and Eve were still children who mistook duck-weed for grass and then suddenly sank into deep water and drowned.

But whoever gives to God again that basic childlike trust to which He has a right, and believes in Him also in the matter of the order in which He tells us of these terrible and far-reaching events, know in the first place: it was all very good; in the second place: they had been warned; and in the third place: it is our own fault.

To admit into our hearts through demonic suggestion wilful distrust of God's intentions, that is the real apostasy from and revolt against God. That Eve, after that, stretched forth her hand and ate is a result of deliberately believing the words of the serpent.

Words and intentions are two different things, yes, but only with the devil, *never* with God the Lord, neither in the garden, nor in the Church, on the pulpit or at the baptismal font or at the table of the holy supper. Whoever "worries" or is afraid can find deliverance by recalling "what has God spoken to me and confirmed in holy baptism to me personally!" Whatever He says He means!

* * * * *

After they had done their deed, Adam and Eve were in for a terrible disappointment. They felt thoroughly miserable. Everything was so totally different from a few moments ago. They did not dare to look at each other. They were profoundly ashamed. Eve was ashamed for her husband because she seduced him and Adam was ashamed for his wife because he followed her instead of calling her back. And they were both ashamed for their heavenly Father because they looked for hostile intentions behind His words. Being strangers to each other, they covered themselves for each other and when they heard the well-known voice, the misery of their situation overwhelmed them. Fear fell upon them and in panic they fled into the woods — each one into a different direction, I think.

In any case, they did not stand there impudently to ask the Lord a few questions!

Not at all! They did not do so when they were interrogated nor later on in their centuries-long, sorrowful life. Nor did they do it at Abel's funeral! Nor when Cain left them and the God of them all.

Awareness of their guilt and self-displeasure and clear recollection of what they did wilfully prevented them from looking insolently at their Father. On the contrary, they were full of His *grace*. He did not curse them. He again had pleasure in them: "redemption will come." That was their only comfort. Ours, too. We know by Whom and in what manner.

Da Costa said, "At the bottom of all questions lies the guilt of the world's sin." I thought that it would be better to say, "At the bottom of all questions lies God's eternal good pleasure." A good pleasure in people, and it is still that way. A good pleasure in *people*: how is it possible!

Actually, that is no question but a fact which moves us every time anew.

If you are under the spell of the above questions, say it then slowly and while reflecting upon it: "My own fault, my own fault." Then the power of "formal logic" is broken (besides, it is not "formal" in the least! Satan knows that best of all.) Here lies the beginning and the principle of Christian logic.

A demonic din, being heard through everything, more and more fills the world of man. Satan keeps on suggesting in learned books and in mocking words, "It sounds very good what God says, but I have revealed and brought to light what His secret intentions were; thereby He has lost His honour as Creator and He will also be a failure as the Regenerator. Look, people: Christianity has been here for centuries, and what is the condition at present of this accursed world?"

What if you had asked David that question, after the prophet Nathan pointed his finger at him and said, "I mean you!?" "Against Thee, Thee alone (via Bathsheba and Uriah and via all "human factors") I have sinned and done what was evil in Thy eyes" and that's what I confess openly and acknowledge before the whole world "in order that (everyone may know by my confession of guilt that) Thou art righteous in Thy sentence ("the sword shall not depart from your house," II

Samuel 12:10 ff.) and pure in Thy judgment," Psalm 51:6.

Did God want sin? No. Without any hidden motive or concealed and secret will, He straightway forbade eating of that tree. He was serious, as He is in everything He says.

But neither the revolt of Satan in heaven nor the fall of man in paradise surprised Him, nor does the unspeakable woe of guilt and misery at present. They do not confuse Him either. The offensive of the Germans in the Ardennes in December 1944, did take Eisenhower and his staff by surprise and threw the headquarters in Versailles into great confusion.

But our God is no man! He rules over everything and every one.

That is far beyond our understanding, but it is never against our understanding.

Somewhere Paul speaks of "knowing" the love of Christ, "which exceeds all understanding", Ephesians 3:19 — knowing God (what a beautiful, warm expression!) with a knowledge which exceeds all knowledge!

We are creatures, creatures of God, created in His image ("bearing His image" is actually a Romish expression), "a little less than God" (Psalm 8:6). We were allowed to do something ourselves, we had "freedom," true, total freedom, i.e. freedom as creatures, beautiful, human freedom to choose. Not beside God or over against Him, and least of all "above Him" in our systematizing, speculating, so-called "objective theological knowledge," but freedom under Him, being always dependent upon Him. That is the secret of our creation by Him!

He does not put before us any "problems" which we, allegedly, would have to "solve."

Joseph's brothers sold him and therefore they were guilty. Joseph says, "Am I in the place of God? You thought to do evil against me but God meant it for good," Genesis 50:20. "When He summoned a famine on the land, and broke every staff of bread, He had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. His feet were pressed into the fetters, he (literally: his soul) came into the irons until the day when what he had said came to pass and the word of the Lord showed that he was right," Psalm 105:16-19.

There are no "problems" here which first have to be solved by people who "think deep" before the

"simple believers" (sometimes you hear a still more awkward word, "laymen") would be able to understand a little of it.

Here the Psalmist sings of God's government for good, whereas Joseph's brothers meant it for evil. Here the praises of the *living* God are sung, not just one or two of His "virtues" or "properties," as, for instance, omniscience or omnipotence.

Jesus says, "The Son of man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed," Matthew 26:24. Betrayal is sin.

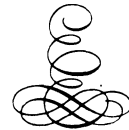
Here nothing has to be "reconciled." Here is nothing "preposterous."

Whoever thinks that he sees "problems" here, has made them first himself.

Be it forgiven him. He did not remain in his place as creature.

Many so-called "questions of faith" are nothing else than insolent questions inspired by man's thinking, coming forth from a heart that has not given itself captive.

P.K. KEIZER



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Second class mail registration number 1025.

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE

MATTERS: (subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.
1249 Plessis Road, Winnipeg
Manitoba, Canada R2C 3L9
Phone (204) 222-5218

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

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Ontario, Canada N1M 2W7

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

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SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$16.50 per year (to be paid in advance).

ADVERTISEMENTS:

\$4.50 per column inch (width of column:
one-third of page). Contract rates upon
request.

Advertising copy for weddings, anniversaries, meetings, etc., must be in our office three to four weeks prior to event.

The Case of the Television

Every so often the matter of the "television" seems to emerge in discussions between members of our churches. There have been some conflicts on the matter of T.V., and although some viewpoints were clearly expressed, the matter was never really treated adequately in an open and free discussion. I will not pretend to solve the problem at all, but I would like to make some contribution towards a responsible dialogue. Reactions are welcome, and will most likely be evoked by this article.

EXTREMES IN VIEWPOINTS

In any discussion, we must be on the alert for a wrong polarization which only clouds over the real issue. We must especially watch for extremes, either taking in an extreme position ourselves or quickly accusing others of doing so. Nothing is as easy as giving a caricature of someone else's viewpoint.

The one extreme is, as I see it, that some people freely execute an unlimited usage of the television and denounce those who object to T.V. as being infected with radical "anabaptist" thoughts. They make it sound almost imperative to have T.V. in order to be "up to date" and to get along in this world.

The other extreme is that some people rather harshly condemn the very possession of a T.V. as a sin and expose any usage as being contradictory with the teaching of the Scriptures. And not only that, but they usually include the owner with the set. Those who have T.V. are then deemed "inferior" members in some way, even un-Reformed, at least not the "better" members who qualify for any official position within the church.

Let me put it this way: the one accuses the other of being "like unto the

world" (wereldgelijkvormigheid) while the other, in turn, speaks of a wrong abstaining (wereldmijding). Well, I'd like to pass beyond this unfruitful dilemma. We are "in" the world and yet not "of" the world. Which implies that we may neither be like unto the world nor may step out and refuse even the least communication.

I hope the real problem comes into focus. Basically the matter is: to what extent (if at all) and in what way may we as children of the Lord, make use of things in this world which for a great deal are being manipulated by Satan? How do we avoid both extreme pitfalls of "wereldgelijkvormigheid" and "wereldmijding." Is it one of the two, or is there the happy medium of which the Preacher speaks in Ecclesiastes 7? Are we going to speak absolutely and set up a clear list of "don'ts and do's," or leave it all up to the individual? The matter, I fear, is not as easy as some think.

MASS-MEDIA AND MODERN COMMUNICATIONS

The difference of opinion does NOT lie in the estimation of the television itself. Almost everyone, I understand, considers the T.V. to be an impressive invention which offers great positive possibilities. Is it not also the creative wisdom of the Lord which has made such a medium possible? So of the instrument itself and all modern means of communication, we say, "Oh Lord, how manifest are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all" (Psalm 104:24).

However, as with many other things in creation, mass media also have a negative potential, not in themselves, but from out of the evil intentions of man. It belongs to the "cultural mandate" to make use of these positive possibilities, but rebellious man will, of course, employ the media to his own advantage and for his own purposes. That makes it all the more difficult for us: things in themselves not wrong, are generally so easily misused. This goes for television, but for other things as well. E.g. atomic power has a devastating potential, but can also be used positively as a form of energy. The question is then: can a thing which is used wrongly by OTHERS not be used correctly by US?

CORRECT DISTINCTIONS

Because of this difficulty, it is essential that we make the right distinctions, again also to avoid falling into

extremes. The first important distinction is between the medium itself and the program (message) it transmits. The medium is constant, may be the same, but the program varies with the station and the responsible owners. The laws of the land also play a role. And then let's be fair: there are relatively good newspapers and acceptable radio and T.V. programs as well as bad and unacceptable ones. The "bad programs" may even be in the great majority in most countries, yet we must make this distinction. In examining things we must use the right criteria and do justice to all involved.

We must not only make a correct distinction between the medium and the message, but also discern between the various forms of media themselves. This distinction is not in essence, but only in degree (as the old folks say, "niet principieel maar gra-deuel"). In this respect I'm surprised at the ease with which some vociferously condemn T.V. e.g., but yet subscribe to the most worldly newspaper and listen to radio programs of equally diabolical content. But, as I said, there is a difference between T.V. and other forms of media. Television is a more "total" medium (audio-visual) than radio (only audio) or newspaper (only visual). In the same sense, the movie-theatre is more directed and restricted than the T.V. A difference in degree, however, does not always constitute a difference in effect, for the transistor radio has possibly done as much damage these last years as the T.V. has.

Besides, we don't abide by DEGREES but with PRINCIPLES. We should not only talk of the T.V., because there is misuse of each form of media, and where the one is mentioned, the other must necessarily be included. Perhaps a better title would have been: the case of the MASS-MEDIA. For Satan does not only use one medium, but all of them in one combined, regulated effort!

A FURTHER DISTINCTION

A very important (and I'd say even decisive) distinction has been made between POSSESSION and USAGE of any medium. Of course, we possess things to use them, that's true. But that doesn't undo the fact that there is a difference in usage.

Let me give an example. If someone has a bottle of liquor in the house, he can use it or MISuse it, but does the potential misuse render the very possession sinful? Possession of a

thing (even something with a dangerous side to it because of our weaknesses) need not necessarily imply misuse. If the radio and the newspaper can be used correctly, I wonder, is this all of a sudden impossible when we speak of the T.V.? We must be careful not to mete with two measures, even if the T.V. is more dangerous in degree.

Undoubtedly there is much misuse of the T.V., I'm fully aware of it and worried about it. The same will apply to literature, radio, and "booze," to name a few other things. But if some clearly misuse a thing, may others therefore not possess it and strive to use it correctly? Let me put it bluntly: because there are some alcoholics among our members, must we therefore demand complete abstinence from all others? The knife cuts both ways, we must reckon with the "weak" (if they really are so convinced of their "weaknesses"), yet the weak may not force their weaknesses down the throats of their brethren, read Romans 14.

DISCUSSION IN HOLLAND

Last year there was quite some discussion in The Netherlands among our sister-churches. Some of you will have followed the debate in the *Nederlands Dagblad*. A few ministers started things by writing the following, "On the basis of the consequent teaching of the Scriptures and the fact that the television has been annexed by those who completely serve the prince of darkness, the television MAY NOT HAVE A PLACE in a Reformed family" (emphasis mine, C.I.S.!).

The brethren came to this conclusion as follows:

1. the Scriptures forbid us to have contact with sin in any way; "according to the Bible we must avoid everything that touches sin and in any way has connection with a sinner."
2. Satan knows how to make a very subtle use of the T.V. Conclusion: the T.V. is THEREFORE defiled with sin and must be rejected.

This line of thinking, however, can easily be applied to many other articles and renders many possessions virtually impossible. At the time I wrote an article in the local bulletin of the church at Langeslag which was "taken over" by Rev. L. Douw in KERKBLAD VOOR GELDERLAND, OVERIJSEL, etc. From that article I would like to quote the following.

It seems so simple, this teaching, but can everything indeed be put so simply? Is it

even REFORMED to write this way? If it is true, it doesn't look too good for most members of our churches, because everyone who has a T.V. is in principle eligible for DISCIPLINE. We cannot go in against the consequent teaching of the Bible unpunished, or can we?

I admitted, "It is indeed true that the Scriptures clearly and conclusively exhort the children of God to keep themselves undefiled from sin, also from that which is totally corrupt and sinful. And I fully realize that this has consequences for our watching T.V. Many television-programs do constitute a threat to the Reformed life within our families. I certainly will not recommend the totality of the T.V. programs to the membership and do not wish to diminish the dangers of these programs. On the contrary, I will warn with others for the corrupting influence which these programs so easily and so quickly have in our lives."

But I also added, "All this is not the real issue at stake. The Bible teaches that sin does not lie in things but in PEOPLE, in ourselves. That's why the Bible does not advocate abstinence or fasting, as such, but a correct USAGE of things and forbids MISUSE of things. It is clear that we must hate and flee from sin (Lord's Day 33); one need not quote a series of texts to prove that point, but then one must exactly point out WHICH sin. Sin is concrete and must be pointed out exactly. Is the sin, then, that one possesses a T.V. set or misuses it? And I'm afraid, the misuse is the case."

Yes, we must be exact in determining exactly what the sin is, and not work with good-looking syllogisms. Otherwise we run the risk of falling into a preaching which adds up various texts to achieve a general sum, but yet figures wrongly. If there is a wrong diagnosis, there is a wrong therapy, e.g. like in the Gereformeerde Gemeenten in The Netherlands, where everyone possessing a T.V. set is even excommunicated! Well, we do not remove sin by ridding ourselves of certain things. And we must LEARN for our own salvation's sake to go about in a responsible way with the gifts of creation, also in this respect the media. Call that: stewardship and cultural mandate!

I concluded that article as follows, "Someone once asked me: do you preach against the T.V.? I said: no, I'm Reformed, I do not preach against things, but to people. But I do warn against MISUSE of the good gifts

which the Lord grants, whatever they may be. You see, I don't want to take AWAY from the law of God, in no way, but neither do I want to go any FARTHER than the Lord asks of us in His Law!"

These quotes make clear, I hope, that my position in this matter was determined and published already before I came to this country, and that I'm not trying to "clean out my nest" in a regional situation.

T.V. AND OFFICE-BEARERS

The decision of a consistory not to "invite" ministers who have a T.V. set, has fortunately been rescinded. Yet the matter remains in another form. In some congregations, I understand, even if the T.V. would be "tolerated" with the members, yet it is either a written rule or an accepted tradition that those members who do have a T.V. are not eligible for the office of elder and deacon. I still wonder, is this not again measuring with TWO measures? What goes for the deacon and the elder, goes for ALL, the minister not in the last place!

Still, some say, what may be tolerated in "common members" cannot be permitted in office-bearers. Because office-bearers must be "en-samples to the flock," they lose the right to admonish ("de kracht van het vermaan") if they have a T.V. set.

Office-bearers must be examples, indeed. But they need not be examples in things beyond God's Word! An office-bearer can voluntarily abstain from watching any T.V. and do so for many wise reasons, perhaps. But if an office-bearer feels that he has the right to possess and use a T.V., then we can only ask of him that he be an EXAMPLE in the way he goes about with it, and not only the T.V. but with ALL of his possessions, "managing his household well." I've experienced, in The Netherlands and here, there are many brethren who act as good elders and deacons, despite the fact that they possess a radio or T.V. set. Don't bind potential or existing office-bearers beyond Scripture and confession. That's extremely dangerous.

And if office-bearers who strive to use their T.V. set wisely and correctly, admonish others to do the same, why should that admonition not be strong and correct? The strength and the right of the admonition is not only determined by the life of the one who admonishes (many admonitions would then be quite impossible!) but more by

the contents of the admonition itself. May I just translate that into Dutch: de kracht van het vermaan wordt niet slechts bepaald door het voorbeeld van degene die vermaant maar vooral door de INHOUD van de vermaning. A one-sided, and therefore unscriptural admonition, I'm certain, has no "kracht" at all, even if it is enforced rigorously in a congregation.

So whether an office-bearer possesses modern media or not, he still has the task and the right to admonish others (and himself) to use them in such a way that the Lord is glorified and the Church is edified.

THE REAL PROBLEM

Now, please, I do not advocate at

all that people buy and use T.V. sets. The point is: more and more I'm becoming convinced that the real problem is not so much the fact that we possess modern mass-media, but the way in which we go about with them. Our problem is not that we have been called to act as stewards over the many gifts of God, but that we are UNFAITHFUL STEWARDS. And the reformation of our life does not primarily imply a throwing overboard of earthly things, but a return to their correct usage. That is what I try to emphasize in the preaching: responsible stewardship before the face of the Lord and the forum of this world.

DIT VERMAAN IS KRACHIG EN NOODZAKELIJK. There is so much in-

discriminate watching of T.V. or listening to the radio, even until the wee hours of the night. Teachers at school complain that children are sleepy-headed because of watching some silly late-nite show, and I ask, "Where are the PARENTS?" What worries me also, there is so much seeking of the pleasure of movie-theatres, so much enjoyment of wrong company and dwelling in unchristian surroundings, like dancehalls, discotheques and bars.

We are told to have "dominion," but we are instead easily dominated ourselves. Often radio and T.V. play a dominant role in the home. In many cases there is hardly any communication between family-members. There is no critical approach to the attitudes of this world. Even if there is no T.V., there is often so little reading of the RIGHT literature. Are we being engrossed by these forms of passive recreation to such an extent that we hardly remember how to be truly active in the service of the Lord?

That is not the fault of the MEDIA, that is OUR FAULT. That is the fault of parents who dare to take radio and T.V. into their houses, but do not teach themselves and their children the priorities in life and move on in words and deeds in a Spiritual approach to the things of creation. That is also the fault of young people who waste so much time on wrong or unimportant things and will not be activated to the service of the Lord. We must put the blame where it belongs, and accuse ourselves. And I'd sincerely say: if we cannot COPE with it, get rid of it. If we are not willing to be faithful stewards, we lose the right of stewardship.

And, I agree, modern media are influential. No one will escape that influence completely, even if he'd clean up his house completely. We must give full PRIORITY in time and attention to the Word of God, that perfect medium of God's grace. If someone wishes to keep as much of the modern media as possible out of his home, I wish him strength. I wish him also the wisdom to go about with the things of creation not only negatively, but also positively. We should not relinquish all things to the world, but seek means to employ them positively in God's service. If someone wishes to use modern media, I dare not say that he is therefore going in against the consequent teaching of the Scriptures; I may only admonish him to do so in obedience to the everlasting law of responsible stewardship.

CI. STAM

To Our Readers

Ever since the name of our Magazine was changed to *Clarion*, we have published in each issue a list of regular contributors. We have come to the conclusion that we should discontinue that practice. Our readers know the names of those who contribute regularly, for each article is signed by the author, who either uses his full name, or his initials, or a pen-name. It makes no sense to insert such a list in every issue and we shall drop it as of September 1st, 1976.

Perhaps there are some among our readers who now feel free to use their knowledge, experience and insight in certain fields, and who are prepared to serve our people by writing about their special field of study or interest. It could be that they did not write because they thought that contributions would be received only from those whose names appeared in the list of regular contributors

As for the editorial committee, there you will see some changes, too.

Dr. W. Helder's work and position as vice-principal of Guido de Brès Highschool does not leave him sufficient time to continue his work as co-editor. He has indicated that he wishes to resign by September 1st, 1976.

We are happy that we can tell you that both the Rev. J. Geertsema and the Rev. Cl. Stam have declared themselves willing to become co-editors. The former has already contributed regularly for a considerable time; the latter's contributions first appeared now and then, but have become more or less regular features during the past few months.

It is only fitting that a word of appreciation and gratitude be addressed to Dr. Helder. Few people are aware of the large amount of work done by him in the gathering of copy, the corrections that were necessary, the preparation of each issue, etcetera. To a large extent it is through his work that *Clarion* has become what it is today. For this we are grateful, brother, and we wish to thank you openly for the service which you have rendered to our Church people in this unobtrusive way. As for the personal relationship, it could not have been any better.

No change in course or basic contents is to be expected; the change which has been announced above is only a practical one. Thus we shall continue, the Lord willing, in the same line. Whatever changes will become evident can be found only in the typographical and journalistic fields.

Ed.

CRAZE OR HOBBY?

("There's a CB in my van . . .")

In the church we have "hobbies"; in the world they have "crazes."

I realize that I have to explain myself. The word "craze" is defined by a famous dictionary as a "transient infatuation," denoting a new fashion or even a "mania" which for a time simply captivates the attention. It has connections, of course, with the word "crazy," meaning to be "insane." Every craze shows that aspect of insanity — being out of your mind — because things are then totally out of proportion in a one-sided, unreasonable, almost sickly love for a certain matter.

Indeed, a craze has the momentum of losing oneself totally, fully surrendering to the whim of the moment, "giving yourself up" — compare Ephesians 4:19. A craze is temporarily all-important, demands every ounce of available time, receives the greatest sacrifices, accepts no reservations.

The same dictionary defines the word "hobby" quite differently as "an occupation or interest to which one gives his spare time." A hobby is not so all-important, but occasionally is a welcome and useful means to fill the extra time. Unlike the craze, the hobby is always SECONDARY to other things, and weeks can pass in which one doesn't even get around to his/her hobby. Here, I feel, everything is still in the right proportions.

I hope that you get the idea of the opening-line. As church-members we have to live an orderly life in which first things come first. Also socially and financially, we have to set PRIORITIES. Our foremost place is the communion of saints. Besides caring for our families — if we have them — we must maintain "the ministry and the schools" and see to the needy. We simply cannot afford a craze, but may at most engage in a hobby.

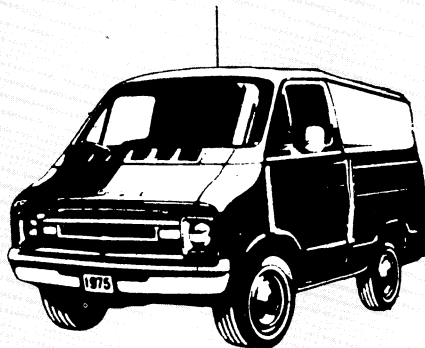
The world always has its crazes as necessary escapes out of the harsh everyday realities. These crazes are usually subtly started and subsequently expertly exploited. Much more than the hobby (which already has its expenses), the craze truly has a remarkable commercial significance and effect. More than one person has become either rich or poor through effective manipulation of a craze.

After the film, "American Gra-

Circumspection...

fitti," — which apparently was a nostalgic dive into the atrocities of the sixties, — one could notice the craze to have "grafitti-cars," and those old models from the sixties suddenly became much desired articles and tripled in price overnight. A few second-hand car dealers became rich, the kids polished up the faded chrome, slapped those oversized wheels under a revitalized body, and languidly layed rubber all over town. Big deal.

A recent craze is the CB phenomenon. CB stands for Citizen's Band radio, which formerly was used for business purposes at short distance, like dispatching, etc. The CB-craze really began to get underway when truckers started to engage the short-wave to relieve their roadside trials. I may quote from the CHURCH HERALD (RCA), "Long distance road



jockeys (truckers) needed a way to find out quickly where there was go juice (gas) and where the bears (highway-patrollers) were hiding to enforce the speed limit." But CB definitely entered into crazy proportions, when an overrated country and western singer, C.W. McCall, recorded a disc called "Convoy," in which he envisioned a mighty truckers-convoy crossing and dominating America. The CHURCH HERALD makes this interesting comment, "His message — just anti-establishment enough, just fun enough, just visionary enough — struck a responsive chord in the American revolutionary psyche. In the age of no heroes and anti-heroes, the long distance trucker became instantly a hero." And I add, the CB became an instant status-symbol.

CB became the "thing to do" and CB'ers were "with it," publicly discernible by the "distinguishing insignia — the extra antenna." There's a complete CB language (only for insiders), there are CB manuals and CB clubs, there are contact-days and magazines. The whole thing has definitely grown into a craze. Watch yourself.

There is also a van craze. More and more, perhaps as a result of the increased attention for the truckers, people are buying vans (you know, those converted pick-up trucks) and are changing them into mobile mansions or seducing parlors (complete with mirrored bars . . .). Some vans are exquisitely decorated inside, with kitchens and bedrooms. Outwardly the vans are often decked out in psychedelic colours with surrealistic patterns. A lot of young people are bombing down the highways in these vans. There are "van-clubs" and contact magazines; once again the whole lot which accompanies a craze. And if you have a CB in your micro-bus, you're really fortunate in being able to unite TWO crazes in one. And I'm certain, both van and radio are regularly being misused for things far surpassing youthful mischief.

People go to great lengths and pay hundreds of dollars to finance their craze. A craze may be transient — a passing thing — but time after time the world gets into something new, there always is a craze going on somehow, somewhere. The craziness itself doesn't pass. And let's face it, also church-members go "crazy." I've seen and heard too many young people lately who think and talk of nothing else than these worldly crazes to close my eyes to the startling reality that we all are very susceptible to this world-mania.

Isn't that sad? The time and money which we give to a craze, is lost to the Kingdom of Heaven. No, we need not denounce material things like a CB or a van as being wrong in themselves. But we must strive to keep things in the right proportions. Like they say: cool it. There's a principle difference between a hobby and a craze. We must first seek the Kingdom of God and

Continued on next page.

The Struggle Around Israel (3)

3. SOME ASPECTS OF THE PRESENT CONFLICT

A brief review of some key dates may help to orientate us for this section. By 1914 there were 85,000 Jews in Palestine. In 1917 Britain took over control from Turkey, which had controlled Palestine since 1517 (except for 1832-1840). Also in 1917 the famous Balfour Declaration indicated that the British government was in favour of establishing a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. As the Jewish population increased, Arab resistance built up and, after many agonizing years, Britain brought the Palestine question up at the United Nations in 1947. This resulted in the approval on November 29, 1947, of the recommendation that Palestine be divided into

independent Jewish and Arab states linked in an economic union. On May 15, 1948, the British Mandate ended, the independent State of Israel was proclaimed, and for the next two months the war for independence was fought against the Arabs.

Arab Nationalism

Just as Jewish nationalism expressed itself in Zionism, so the Arab world was also starting to have nationalist dreams. National independence and a vast Arab state including all the Arabian countries were envisaged. The Arabs were also influenced by the spirit of the times, as were the Jews.

One of the factors colouring the specific Arab nationalism is their centuries-long domination under a foreign power. They were never free and on their own. For hundreds of years it was Turkey who dominated them, and then Britain. Now, in the twentieth century, there were hopes that independence would be gained and T.L. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") promised them as much if they would help him defeat the Turks. However, the British government did not honour his promise. Through all the ensuing events, peace conferences, etc., the Arab nationalist movement felt betrayed by the big powers. This resulted in increased bitterness over against Israel, which is often regarded as a western power and a Western outpost to exploit the East.

Another factor affecting the Arabs' own dreams of nationalism is the great fear that Israel is an expansionist state which dreams of a glorious Jewish state from the Nile to the Euphrates (think of the promise to Abraham). Every Jewish military victory is interpreted as part of that aggressive plan.

Furthermore, since many Arabs left their homes in Palestine during the war for independence in 1948, many have strong emotional attachments to Palestine. It is primarily on this that the Palestine Liberation Organization fuels its hate.

Arab Claims to Palestine

What are the facts concerning specific Arab claims to Palestine? Prior to 1914, Palestine was neglected and

Arabs were leaving it. The Jews that emigrated in that period bought all the land from the Arabs, often at very steep prices. They took nothing without paying for it. As more and more Jews moved in and some prosperity (in comparison to neighbouring Arab lands) became evident, then Arab movement into Palestine began. By 1946 there were 1,293,000 Arabs and 608,000 Jews. In 1948, at the declaration of Israeli statehood, 71.2% of the land was state property which became Israel's, 8.6% had been in private Jewish hands, and 3.3% was Arab, while 16.9% represented the property held by Arabs who fled prior to the war. The Israelis surely cannot be accused of stealing the land (as happens periodically). With the coming of Jewish statehood, the Jews had encouraged the Arabs to stay and build the country with them. However, the Palestinian Arabs were advised by the Arab nations to leave Palestine and after the war (1948), after the anticipated defeat of the Jews, they could return. Israel, however, won the war . . . and 700,000 Arabs who had left Israel were homeless. Here you have the makings of the refugee problem. Meanwhile, the Arabs who had stayed in Israel had it relatively good and shared the general prosperity of Israel. They have their own representatives in Parliament, and enjoy freedom of the press and religion. Arabic is also an officially recognized language. As a minority within a Jewish state they undoubtedly have their own special difficulties and hardships. However, in the past wars, they have shown solidarity with the Israelis, and so even took position against their own Arab "brothers." (The recent agitation on the West Bank is not in original Israeli territory but in land acquired during the 1967 war. PLO influence is also heavy there.)

The Refugee Problem

The media have amply informed us of the tragedy of the refugee camps where Arabs who fled from Israel now live and where new generations are being raised. What is not often made clear is that the Arab countries don't want the refugee problem solved. They want it as a permanent pressure and weapon against Israel. The Arab leaders couldn't care less whether the refugees live or die (as reported in the *New York Times*, August 18, 1958). On January 17, 1967, King Hussein in an interview with the Associated Press uttered similar sentiments, declaring

CIRCUMSPECTION — Continued.

all other things will then fall into place.

The Kingdom of Heaven should be our "craze," and then not a passing infatuation, but a permanent occupation. If young people would devote as much time to church, catechism and society as they do to their infatuations, we'd be getting places. Think of that when the new season starts. If we use our time well, there'll always be spare time for our hobbies.

Let's stick to proportions. If you need a CB for business or whatever, go ahead, buy one. If you really feel you need a van, don't hesitate to buy one. I don't set the rules. Just remember that trucks, vans, and cars are only means of transportation and not personal showpieces. And a CB is necessary equipment, not a luxurious toy. Being SOBER, also in these things, is a sign unto the world that we are not captivated by crazes, but are bound by the Spirit.

Leave the crazes to others: it's a mad, mad world. We do have hobbies. But the service of God, the communion of saints, the church, that is our LIFE. The rest is only secondary.

And I do hope you read me loud and clear. Ten-four.

Cid

that the Arab leaders had been using the Palestinian people for egotistical and political purposes. Israel has offered to pay full compensation for the properties and bank accounts of refugees which they had left behind in Israel. The Arabs refuse to speak about it. Israel has released the refugee bank accounts in Israel from the freeze they were in and also let thousands of refugees re-enter Israel. In 1973 the European Economic Community offered to provide concrete help to the refugees, but this aid was also declined. Meanwhile the refugee camps continue to be breeding grounds for hate and terrorism, and guerilla training takes place within. Here is a problem that could have been solved but for political reasons has not been. The key problem is of course the recognition by the Arabs of Israel as a state in her own right.

The problem of refugees has been further complicated by the emergence of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) in 1964. It seeks to regain the homeland, Palestine, from Israel, which, for the more radical element means complete destruction of the Israeli state and people. Since November, 1974, the Arab world has recognized Yasser Arafat and the PLO as the legitimate spokesman for the Palestinians, including those living under Israeli occupation. It is also to form the government when Palestine is liberated. A year later, December, 1975, the United Nations virtually recognized the PLO as a government in exile of a potential state equal in international standing to Israel.

Where Does the Solution Lie?

It should be clearly seen that the problem is the problem of nationalism and self-determination. Both sides are moved by that. Both sides also have strong emotional appeal to Palestine. (Arabs claim descent from Abraham, especially through Ishmael.) It should also be clearly seen that neither side can appeal to the Bible and say on the basis of the Scriptures, "The land is mine!" Surely the solution then should be sought in their being room for both Jew and Arab in Palestine, either as it is now, or through a partition into two realistic and viable states. Palestine has had a mixed population for most of its history and there is no reason why that is not possible in one form or another today. Of course, all this is simple to say and expound on. First a recognition of the Israeli state by the Arabs is needed, and there is much

history and prejudice to prevent that in the foreseeable future.

There is, however, something ultimately much more important than an immediate political solution for Israel. There is another struggle which is taking place in connection with Israel.

4. THE REAL STRUGGLE FOR ISRAEL

What is Necessary?

What can we do to contribute to the well-being of this people? First of all we must clearly see that Israel has no special Biblical claims to Palestine. Like Abraham, Israel must see the city which has foundations and whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11). As far as national states go, Israel has no special standing with God. The real struggle for Israel is the struggle of the principalities and powers of darkness who hate the God of Abraham. It is significant that in not one place does the New Testament give a prophecy of restoration or of a return to Palestine for Israel. The New Testament clearly shows that the opposite is true, for the heresy of a national restoration is an *old* heresy. It was a heresy on the part of the rabbis and leaders of Israel in the time that the Lord Jesus lived on earth. Therefore they looked for a political messiah. Jewish writings just before the New Testament times are full of national return and restoration, including the rebuilding of the temple. But the Lord Jesus condemned all these ideas of a political restoration, of a political Messiah, and incurred the wrath of the Jews by speaking about the destruction of the temple. We would do Israel a great disfavor today if we were to entertain ideas of a national restoration of Israel, for it is precisely this heresy which led the Jews to reject the Christ! They were more interested in liberation from Rome than in liberation from their sins.

The Israel of today is there as a national state not because of Biblical prophecy and not even because of religious revival or Jewish writings and studies concerning a national restoration with Messianic overtones but because of the new revolutionary and philosophic ideas of the last two centuries. The same fuel that warms the Jewish heart for a homeland is also fueling the Arab heart for the same.

In the second place, we must clearly see that the Jewish people must know the Messiah, the Christ who has come already. Knowing Him, they will see that not just Palestine, but the whole world is theirs! This is

the New Testament perspective. In Romans 4:13 we read that the promise to Abraham and to his heirs was that they should inherit the world! The promise of Canaan is but an Old Testament shadow of better things to come. We must not stare at that shadow, but point the Jew to the fulness in Christ!

Have the Jews not been Rejected?

In this connection the question is often raised, "Yes, but have the Jews not been rejected?" No. For although the apostles turned from the Jews because of their unwillingness to listen and preached the gospel to the Gentiles, yet, the conversion of the Gentiles will stir Israel to jealousy so that as Gentiles are saved, God will also gather Jews to Himself, until the full number of the house of Israel be saved. The Bible gives no basis for the belief that there will be a mass conversion of a nation Israel, but it does state that the total number of the Jewish elect will be saved. (See Romans 11. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to go further into this matter. May I refer you to the clear and detailed exegesis of Hendriksen, *Israel in Prophecy*, pp. 32-52.)

We must never consider mission to the Jews as something that does not concern us. It would be wonderful if we could be instruments of the Lord God in this respect, for in a sense we owe so much to them. Think of the rich Old Testament that they preserved for God's people. Think of the fact that they were God's special instruments to prepare and be part of the coming of our Messiah to this world. In this connection we can also think of the Prayer for all the Needs of Christendom as it is found in our Book of Praise. It includes: "We pray for the mission among the Jews, Moslems, and heathen . . ." Note the order. Yes, we can pray that, for the Christ came so that also Jews may return to the land of the Lord — the new earth. And not only Jews, but also Arabs (who according to the flesh are also counted sons of Abraham), for from every nation they will come and *there* in *the* promised land, the true Canaan, there will be peace and joy. There is no peace or any political salvation here, among men in the horizontal dimension. But there is hope and true salvation if the eyes be lifted up on high and the God of Abraham be supplicated through our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. VAN DAM

news medley

It is customary to begin with the personal particulars and anniversaries, if there are any. This time it does not regard a couple but just one person. That person is the Rev. G. Van Dooren. He reached the age of sixty-five years and is, therefore, entitled to a monthly cheque for Old Age Pension. He has a Senior Citizen status now which gives him many privileges. If, however, anyone should have thought that he was going to quit now, he would be mistaken. Our brother is still going strong, and for this mercy bestowed upon him by our gracious Father we are grateful with him, with his wife and children and grandchildren. It is our sincere wish that the Lord may strengthen and bless you also further, brother Van Dooren, and that you may be able to do the work which you love for a long time to come. I think here especially of the work that is being done at our Theological College, the institution which is so important for the future of the Churches. Not easily someone will be found to replace you in that work of teaching the students how to bring the Word of God to the Congregation, to feed them with the Bread of life. We know that our King does not depend upon people; yet we gratefully acknowledge the gifts which He has bestowed upon His children whom He has called to a specific task in the midst of His Church.

Preparations are underway meanwhile for the resumption of all sorts of activities in the Congregations and also at our College. This issue of **Clarion** may reach many of our readers around the Convocation, to be held on September 10th. You won't get the issue in which a report of that Convocation will be given until a few weeks after that always so pleasant evening. The mails have slowed down considerably of late. Perhaps an effect of the holiday-season with many of our faithful sorters away from, for instance, Terminal A in Toronto. It is disappointing that we have to go through that, for we were always used to such prompt service, were we not?

Let us go to the Churches.

It will not surprise you that what I read about organs should be mentioned first. This time Smithers has the attention. First of all: they purchased a new typewriter especially for typing the bulletin. It looks beautiful. Although that which has been written is the most important part, yet when it is presented in a form which is pleasant to the eye it is more easily remembered and more readily read. If the contents are presented in a miserable form, much of the impact of the contents is lost.

I recall that once, in The Netherlands, the rumour went about that there would be some "hearers," members of a calling committee coming from one of the large cities, to attend the services the next day, Sunday. My colleague phoned me and said, "Listen, van Oene, you know that I would hate to see you leave, but I do not begrudge you a call. And remember: A bad sermon presented well is better than a good sermon presented miserably." I do not know whether those brethren did show up or not; in any case: a call did not result from it, for which I was not one bit sorry. But the lesson which I received in that little remark has remained with me all these years. Sometimes people say to me, "Brother so-and-so read a sermon from Rev. N.N. and I

got far more out of it than when I hear him in person." It should be the other way around (although I am grateful that there are elders who can read in such a manner that the message gets through!) and I would urge all my colleagues to pay much attention to the manner in which they present their message. Without intruding upon the territory of my brother Van Dooren, I would like to remark: the sermon should not be delivered in the manner of a train running at high speed with one or two square wheels; nor should it be delivered in this manner, that every sentence begins with force but peters out as if the speaker runs out of breath, which results in this that half of the Congregation cannot hear it. A preacher does not speak to himself (that's what the pharisee did in the parable; he prayed "with himself") but he speaks to the flock of Christ that has to be fed and nourished. How can they hear the voice of the great Shepherd if the minister stands there mumbling or rattling? Speak distinctly and slowly: the Word has to sink in.

All this was a "meditation" on the neat and even letters found in the Smithers bulletin. However, there is more.

The Organ. Yes, that's what I was going to talk about. It keeps the minds and the eyes, the hands and the purses of the Smithers Congregation busy. "Mr. . . . is selling prime, B.C. farm fresh fertilizer and the proceeds are for the organ fund . . . Mrs. . . . is cutting hair and the money goes to the Organ Fund." "If anyone does not have an idea on how to raise money, well, cash donations are always welcome too." How is that possible!

The "Organ Box Collector" was not too happy with the results of the boxes into which the members can deposit their "offerings" for the Organ Fund. He reported that, calculated on the basis of the amounts received thus far, it would take approximately 20 years before the organ would be paid. The Organ Committee had better hopes. First, they shot down any hopes that might still be left after the twenty years, for they said that in the last week of May there was 45 cents in the boxes; that would make it 280 years. Then they began to lift the spirits: "The lowest amount collected in the next month was: \$3.65. That is an increase of 800% (if the quality and volume of the congregational singing would improve that much every week, we would not be able to hear a pipe organ no matter how many pipes it would have)." That's another aspect of the matter!

The Consistory report mentions that the Organ Committee were authorized "to submit a concept contract" with the organ builder and also to hold a drive in the Congregation. That promises something! Maybe the other half of that two dollar bill will show up during that drive and then the Organ Committee has to try to come to an agreement with the deacons, for "In the collections from July there was a half of a two dollar bill in there. Anyone having the other one please give it to the deacons." For a long time I had half of such a bill (found near Picton, Ontario) but I gave up hope of finding its counterpart, and thus it went the way of all bills. Who knows!

You might think that there are no other Churches besides Smithers. Easy, easy! We'll continue.

We stop in Neerlandia, where the Consistory decided that the cost of paving the Churchyard was prohibitive. The Consistory did not deem it justified to spend some 7 or 8 thousand dollars on that. (That would have been almost as much as the whole New Westminster budget in 1952!) Now some more crushed gravel will be brought onto the parking lot. In Abbotsford, on the other hand, the Consistory decided to go ahead with finishing the paving of the

lot, although the price for the remaining part was not by far as high as the quote which Neerlandia received. As for Neerlandia, I was somewhat in the dark when I read, in connection with the calling of a minister, "The consistory is disappointed with the results which we did not receive."

Speaking of paving, did I understand the brother who told me well, that the Winnipeg parking lot has been paved? I did not read anything in the bulletin yet, but there are always things which I learn without being told officially. Communication channels are sometimes where one does not expect (or suspect) them.

The "Building Committee showed new proposal for the development of the area behind our building as it was submitted to the City by one of the developers. If this plan is accepted, our property will border a small park and include a separate lot for the parsonage, as well as a proposed site for our education centre." That would be nice for the children, too, when there is a park right close to the school. The hand of the Lord is in all this.

Until the building of a schoolbuilding, the Church basement will be very crowded, if I understand it well. The Consistory received a request from the schoolboard "to install in the church basement such as: a bulletin board, another blackboard, shelving, doormats, bike stands, etc. All were approved." That will be about the first place where the youth of the Church can have their bikes standing in the Church basement. Is there still place for people?

With the approach of the catechism season, plans are being made not only for the younger ones but also for the older members. Rev. DeBruin is planning to conduct a twice-monthly class dealing with the Belgic Confession. Hopefully he can find the time for that now that Carman will be vacant and (I assume) he will be asked to conduct catechism classes there, too.

Yes, the catechism instruction and the catechism rooms. I did refer to Hamilton before in this respect. Now the Consistory tells us "Also for catechetical instructions an offer is given from the Committee for the use of Timothy School, which is discussed." A new Churchbuilding, in use for a few years, and now already difficulties with finding suitable locations for catechism classes. Once more (and maybe even not for the last time!): when a Churchbuilding is planned, remember that proper facilities for catechism classes are far more important even than a place for the Consistory to meet and for the choir to practice!!! What we need are catechism rooms, not rooms where the youth of the Church can receive catechism instruction. I must admit that I have no definite ideas as to the form and furnishing of such catechism rooms. A qualified contractor or even architect would have to be consulted, together with all the ministers you could get together. For the time being I lean into the direction of a lecture theatre with proper blackboards, maps, and so on, maybe an overhead projector, and fixed seats, no chairs that can be moved around on a wooden or concrete floor or that can be tilted so that the boys and girls swivel around on one (chair-)leg. And then: sufficient room between the students; in any case they should not have to share the same armrest! **Pia Desideria!**

The Building Committee in Hamilton found temporary accommodation for the Huizinga family, and is also working on the plans for building a parsonage.

Well, then, that is the end for today.

See you at the Convocation. And for those who will be unable to attend we'll include a report of the ceremony. Maybe (!) the speakers are even willing to part with their manuscripts so that you all can share the fruits of their study and presentation. I hope so!

vO

Letters-to-the-Editor

Esteemed Mr. Editor,

Recently I read in *Clarion* about your predicament with regard to the custom of shaking hands before and after the worship service. In connection with this I recall an incident that involved both of us and took place in 1948 or 1949 in Schiebroek-Hillegersberg Centrum.

The occasion was a sermon of yours on "Kaalkop ga op." Your theme was, if I recall correctly: The LORD protects the office." After the service the office-bearer in charge (br. Nieuwdorp) refused to shake your hand. Back in the consistory br. T. Plomp, vice-chairman of the consistory then requested the other elders and deacons present to shake hands with you as yet. Regrettably only he and I did so. (I was a deacon at the time.)

The next consistory meeting was pretty well dedicated to this incident and br. Nieuwdorp maintained that we were making a mountain out of a molehill, because in his book the handshake did not mean much anyway. Rev. Hagens, who was our minister at the time, then explained at length that this custom originated from the times around the Great Secession, when ministers were scarce and itinerant preachers

tried to meet the hunger for the Word as best they could. These preachers could very well be unknown to the congregation and thus the consistory authorized this minister by the handshake of approval. By the same token this office-bearer also conveyed the approval of the sermon, etc., by shaking hands at the end of the sermon (service) as well. From then on it became an officially accepted act of authorization and has been established as such since.

Hoping that this explanation will alleviate the present uncertainty, I remain,

Fraternally yours, N. TORENVLIET,
Burlington.

* * *

I appreciate brother Torenvliet's contribution towards the discussion around the meaning of the "handshake." In his *Zijn Schone Dienst*, the Rev. G. VanRongen writes: "We cannot say when this custom came into existence. From the following lines it will become evident that it was known already before the Secession. Why it was introduced is an open question" (p. 110). Also from what the Rev. G. VanRongen writes about it, it is evident that he gives *his* interpretation, but is unable to substantiate his statements; at least, he does not do so. No historical evidence for the various explanations is adduced by the authors whom I consulted on this point. The only "proof" for their statements usu-

ally is the manner in which so-and-so acted or reacted in the past.

As for the "agreement" expressed by such a handshake after the service, I have heard several office-bearers say, "If that is the meaning, then I am not going to do it any longer, for that responsibility would be too great for me!"

I did write that I could see some sense in a handshake before the service in cases where a minister from another Congregation or a Candidate conducts a service. Then it would be made clear thereby that such a brother went to the pulpit upon the invitation by the Consistory. However, is that not something which is a matter of course among us? The office-bearers enter the auditorium as a group, as a "body," and it is clear that they would block the way to the pulpit if it were without their consent and invitation that someone tries to conduct a service.

Even after having read br. Torenvliet's contribution, I have not come any farther in my understanding of the "handshake." I would never have recalled the incident which he mentions, but it came back when I read his letter. I cannot say that I was upset by that refusal; I can say that I appreciated the "courage" of the brethren who did shake hands with me in those days when the danger was acute that the newly-won freedom in Christ would be lost again. vO

press review

A REVIEW ABOUT THE 1976 SYNOD OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH.

In the OUTLOOK of July 1976 the Rev. Peter De Jong gives a review about the Synod 1976 of the Christian Reformed Church. Attention is given particularly to some very significant decisions which mark the course of the Christian Reformed Church. After having dealt with a number of minor matters the author starts the rest of his review with the heading: "The 'Battle for the Bible' in the CRC," and writes:

It has been observed from time to time in the pages of this magazine that what is increasingly emerging as the underlying issue, bringing division within our ranks on all kinds of other matters, is an erroneous, "liberal" view of the Bible . . . Denial of that teaching of the Bible about itself (being infallible or inerrant) must sooner or later result in a difference on every other matter of doctrine or life.

I can fully agree with this. The history of the church has proven many a time that this is a true statement. The author, then, gives proof of the wrong course at the Synod. In the first place there is an "Editorial Appointment." The Board of Publications came to Synod with a recommendation to appoint Dr. Edwin Walhout "as a single nominee for the job of editor for Adult Education." He informs the readers that at Synod an article written by the nominee was brought forward, in which he had shown his views regarding the Bible. From the quoted part of that article I take over the following:

The Bible manifests the authority of God as a verbal witness to that authority . . .

The authority of the Bible is to be found in its unique witness of Jesus Christ . . .

If the witness of the Bible of Jesus Christ does not, as a matter of actual fact, result in the conversion of sinners, the authority of the Bible has not been exercised . . . So the authority of the Bible is not higher or more essential than any other finite object . . . As a literary document inspired by God, the Bible is a witness to the creative and redemptive truth and power of God culminating in Jesus Christ and productive of our salvation . . . To discover inaccurate, pre-scientific viewpoints in the Bible on other matters does not threaten this purpose . . . Both science and that Bible are infallible in the measure and to the extent

that they truly reflect the absolute authority of God . . . The Bible and science form a kind of system of checks and balances for each other . . . The data that science discovers are as truly infallible as the data of the Bible . . . (Italics are mine, except the first ones, J.G.)

One can recognize in this view the theories about the Bible as they were developed and promoted by the Swiss theologian, the late professor Dr. Karl Barth. He taught that the Bible is a witness to the Word of God, not really the Word of God itself. But it can become the actual Word of God, namely, at the moment that the hearer believes. When man hears and believes, then, in that moment, God speaks His powerful, saving Word. It is then that the Bible (or a sermon!) is more than only a witness or testimony to God's living speaking; *then God makes the Bible His living actual speaking.*

With this theory about the Bible as a human, fallible witness to the Word of God, one can easily conclude that except for the truth about God's salvation work in Christ Jesus all kinds of other matters told in the Bible are inaccurate, and once on this road one can easily end up with errors regarding the salvation through Christ as well, like Karl Barth did. Besides, this theory is against the very Word of God itself. How often did Christ say, quoting the Old Testament: "There is written"? To mention one more proof I point to Hebrews 3:7 where the biblical author quotes from Psalm 95 and says: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says . . ." So when we read Psalm 95 (and the rest of Scripture) we do not read a witness to what the Lord said centuries ago. No, we read what the Lord says to us *now*, as He spoke the same word long ago and since. The Bible IS God's Word.

What was the reaction of Synod regarding this nomination? We would expect a unanimous "no." However, it became a majority "yes." This man's views were defended. We read:

Dr. John Daling rose to defend the views expressed on the basis of the Belgic Confession's statements on God's general revelation. Dr. A. Wolters, professor at the AACS Toronto Institute for Christian Studies, also defended these views and

was followed by others who expressed a similar reaction. (This defense hardly comes as a surprise to any who are familiar with the AACS leaders' often expressed downgrading of the Bible in favor of other "forms" of the Word of God such as that in Creation.)

Despite the extended debate the appointment was approved.

To refer to the Belgic Confession here is kind of strange. Article 2 is meant. It says that we know God by two means: "First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe . . . Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word . . ." When this article is used at a Synod to defend the above mentioned views regarding the Bible, we must call this misuse. Article 2 does not place the two means for the knowledge of God on the same line. Calvin taught that we can read the book of nature only with the glasses of Scripture. The man appointed by Synod, however, puts both the Bible and science (what man finds in and *concludes* from "nature") on one level: "The data that *science* discovers are as truly infallible as the data of the Bible" (= what God reveals!) What the Rev. De Jong remarks about the AACS and the defense of the unbiblical views regarding the Bible is right, according to me. For those who can read Dutch I refer to articles by prof. Dr. J. Douma in DE REFORMATIE, Volume 51, nr. 36-41: "Prof. Troost over Scheppingsgeloof."

Then a second matter dealt with at the CRC Synod is given ample attention. It is the "Dutton Appeal." The author of the article is the minister of the Dutton Christian Reformed Church. We read: that the Dutton Church

appealed against a Classis Grand Rapids East decision to approve the ordaining of a candidate after he had said under examination that he did not believe that the serpent spoke to Eve as reported in Genesis 3, and that the earthquake reported in Matthew 28 should be understood as an eschatological symbol and not necessarily as a fact. The grounds for the appeal of Dutton were as follows:

1. This view plainly contradicts what the Bible states as simple facts . . .
2. It is in conflict with Article V of the Confession of Faith . . .
3. It does exactly what the Synod of 1972 warned must not be done. It uses a "method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question . . . the event-character . . . of biblical history, thus compromising the full authority of Scripture as the Word of God" (Acts 1972, p. 69, Article 52, 3e, decision of Report 44).

4. If we admit to the ministry of our churches men who, however well qualified they may be in other respects, yet at some points hold and teach what contradicts the Scripture, we in principle give up the biblical authority for our faith and no longer have any valid ground on which to deny to others the right to hold and teach further departures from it.

5. The history of our mother churches in The Netherlands shows how the permission to question or deny the events of Genesis 3, explicitly rejected by them . . . in 1926 and conceded . . . in 1967, has opened the way to tolerating denials of all kinds of biblical doctrines, including those of the creation, fall and atonement.

What did the Synod do with this appeal? After a lengthy discussion, an interview with the former candidate, and another day of debate, Synod adopted the recommendation of a majority-report which preferred

to deal with the matter as especially one of *procedure* [(!) (and)] recommended that the Dutton appeal be not sustained because it was not brought before the man was ordained; and because, after the man was ordained any procedure against a minister must follow the route of the Form of Subscription.

With making it a matter of procedure Synod got out of the difficulties. The Rev. De Jong writes that Synod was completely wrong in deciding this way, since it was not an appeal "against a man but against a decision of the Classis Grand Rapid East." I think this is right. And it is a further loss of the Reformed Character for these Churches. It is with sadness that we must conclude this with the Rev. Peter De Jong.

The author tells us also that Synod did not take over the grounds that were added in the majority advisory report for not sustaining the Dutton appeal. Those grounds were that:

. . . the Classis, synodical deputies, his (the candidate's, J.G.) consistory, and most of the interviewing committee were satisfied that the man was orthodox.

In spite of the fact that Synod did not take over these grounds, one wonders how it is possible that this could be said. Here is a devaluation of the word "orthodox."

We are informed of an inconsistency in connection with the above mentioned decision. We read:

The Peoria church wanted a study committee to determine whether one may as a Reformed Christian deny the actual historical factuality of events in Genesis 1-11, alleging that some ministers do so. Synod rejected this request saying that

the church in its creeds (Belgic Confession V, XII, XIV, Heid. Catechism Q's 6-8) "has expressed itself on the factuality of events recorded in Genesis" and that the same is expressed in report 44 (Acts 1972, pp. 68 and 29) If ministers deny this the consistory must take proper action against them.

The Dutton pastor sees an inconsistency here. He writes:

In other words, Synod tells consistories to take action against ministers who hold such views at the same time as it rejects the appeal of a consistory against a classis' approval of ordaining a man who holds such views!

Yes, but Synod did not approve the decision of that classis. Synod said that the procedure followed by the Dutton church was not right! Besides, I have my doubts whether the consistory of the church where the candidate now serves as minister will take action. Was his consistory not also satisfied, that "the man was orthodox"? And can a Synod with so many members defending men who have those "views" really draw one Reformed line in all the decisions? Must such a Synod not say yes and no to keep the church together?

Then a third matter is brought up, which also shows the way on which the Christian Reformed Church is going:

Our Interchurch Relations Committee recommended that we recognize the Reformed Church in America (comparable with the Hervormde Kerk in The Netherlands) as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with us In the discussion such matters as the RCA's toleration of lodge membership, membership in the World Council, open communion, lack of confessional loyalty and discipline, neglect of preaching doctrines of election and limited atonement, were raised.

Despite these considerations Synod decided to . . . recognize the RCA in this way, because we have in fact long been doing this.

Further, the reader remembers that there was and is the case of Dr. Harry Boer who attacked the Canons of Dort by asking questions about the biblical proofs for the doctrine of reprobation. In connection with this "problem" there was a study committee report about what to do with the old Subscription Form. The study committee urged synod to retain it as it is. The following was done:

Synod decided to keep our present form and resisted another effort to revise it. It also, however, adopted certain explanations and regulations which *significantly change the way in which it will function*

(italics are mine, J.G.). It recognized two kinds of "gravamens" or formal objections to the creeds, one a *confessional-difficulty gravamen* to be handled pastorally without being publicized and in which the "burden of proof" does not lie on the subscriber to defend his sentiments, and the other a *confessional revision gravamen* which does place the burden of proof on the subscriber who wants to change the creeds and which must be handled in a more judicial way

I am afraid that this means that the Christian Reformed Church now opened the way for doing the same thing which the Synodical Churches did and do in The Netherlands. There synodical committees talk and talk and talk (personally and pastorally) with Kuitert and Wiersinga, while no real disciplinary measures are taken or urged to be taken, and while these false teachers can continue unhindered to propagate their teachings. And I am not afraid without reason. There is already proof. The Rev. Peter De Jong writes further:

Applying this new procedure to the case of Dr. Harry Boer . . . Synod decided that his case should be considered the first kind of gravamen, (a "confessional-difficulty" gravamen) which will be handled by a special four-man committee appointed to deal with him in a pastoral and personal way. (Italics are mine, J.G.)

So now every office-bearer in the Christian Reformed Church *can* come and say that he has difficulties with the Confession, so that he does not have to go the ecclesiastical way of bringing a gravamen to the ecclesiastical assemblies with proof from Scripture that the Confession is wrong. He can reveal his "difficulties" with the Confession and talk about them endlessly. In this way the formally maintained Subscription Form is practically nullified.

Poor youth. Poor children. A strong warning here must be the second word of the Covenant, that the LORD, being a jealous God, visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Him. And hating Him is: not keeping His commandments, His Word. Let it be our prayer that the LORD may give a return from this wrong course. For our God shows His lovingkindness to thousands of those who love Him and keep His Word and commandments. Is it not terrible, that the church undermines her own basis for exhorting and admonishing her own members and

Continued on next page.

PRESS REVIEW — Continued.

those who are outside? That basis is: "Thus says the LORD," and "That is written in His Word." People will reply: You say yourself that the Bible is not true in everything it says. So . . . the Bible is a human book! I do not agree with you! I think differently.

As for us, Canadian Reformed Churches, let us humbly pray:

"Search us, O God, and know our hearts!

Try us and know our thoughts!

And see if there by any wicked way in us,

and lead us in the way everlasting.

(Cf. Psalm 139:23, 24.)

J. GEERTSEMA

Books

Yong Choon Ahn, with Phyllis Thompson, *The Triumph of Pastor Son*. Intervarsity Press, 1973, pp. 96, (\$1.50).

Pastor Yang-Won Son was imprisoned by the oppressor when Korea was a Japanese colony because he refused to bow down to the god-king, the emperor of Japan. After World War II his teenage sons were victims of rioting communist students, while he himself was again imprisoned and later shot to death by the Communists because he was "a watchman for the truth."

This suffering and martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel is the triumph of Pastor Son. He even adopted as his own the murderer of his sons.

Enlightened by quotations of Pastor Son himself, the booklet gives us more understanding of the sufferings of our brothers and sisters living in a different part of our globe. The theme is simple; some of the words, however, may be unfamiliar to the common reader.

Unfortunately, seemingly not in line with the theme of the majestic strength of simple faith, degrading phrases like "Jesus, the peasant preacher from Galilee" (p. 7) and "the Galilean peasant" (p. 96) are out of place.

MRS. C. MELIEFSTE

OUR COVER

*Quebec City. Battlefied Park.
(Parc des Champs de bataille).*

FOR THE READER'S

This issue of "Clarion" was mailed from Winnipeg Central Post Office on August 30, 1976.

Farming Families Wanted

IN THE OTTAWA AREA

(Canadian Scene) — An opportunity with the brightest of prospects awaits young farming families on 2,000 acres of organic soil (muckland) at Moose Creek, 30 miles east of Ottawa.

Jacob Avni, a Romanian-born financier and marketer, who has formed Tayside Muck Farms Incorporated, is looking for 50-100 families who will buy blocks of 25-50 acres and participate in growing and selling fresh vegetables. Ultimately they will also participate in processing, canning, freezing and dehydration.

Since 1971, Avni has been operating an import-export company in food products and has developed contacts throughout the world in dried fruits and dehydrated vegetables. By 1973 his dream of adding Canadian production had developed to a point where he sought the advice of the Ontario Food Council. Here, he was assured of support in any application for financial assistance.

"At first I thought I could bring this land into production by hiring people to do the work," Avni says. "But after studying previous efforts in this area, I realized that I must work with growers who own their land and share in the processing."

Avni estimates that the total cost of bringing the first 1,000 acres into production and building a dehydration plant will exceed \$2½ million. He is currently engaged in discussions with the Ontario Development Corporation to receive financial assistance on the basis of benefits to the provincial economy. In addition to import displacement (Canada's imports of dehydrated vegetables were close to \$8 million in 1975), Avni believes that this project will bring continuity of supplies to domestic processors and create new jobs in an area of unemployment.

A unit of 25 acres including a house and farming equipment costs \$70-80,000 (at Holland Marsh, Bradford, Ontario, an acre of land now sells for more than \$7,000). After meeting with departments of government, in particular the department of agriculture, Avni says that 75 per cent of the financing can be arranged in loans, mortgages and some grants. Ideally, a family should have initial capital of \$15-\$20,000, but, if not, financial arrangements can be worked out for families who qualify for the project.

The first stage will be the marketing of fresh vegetables, packed in the existing packing plant. Markets are available in the entire eastern region including Ottawa, Montreal and the north-eastern United States, and New York City.

An attractive feature for increasing income will be vegetable stands bordering the busy highway.

Matt Valk, senior soil and crop expert

with the department of agriculture and director of research at Bradford, Ontario, who managed a farm in the Moose Creek area for a number of years, is supplying technical information and assistance.

Ted Chudleigh, marketing officer with the Ontario Food Council, believes that by next year 1,000 acres can be yielding produce for a freezing plant to be followed by a dehydration plant. "Two thousand acres should be in production by 1980," he says.

Right now 500-700 acres are ready for families to move in.

Jacob Avni's assessment of the food requirements of not only Canada but the world are right in line with a recent report by Dr. George Korey, Vice-President and Dean of External Programs at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Toronto. Dr. Korey says, "Food should be the main producing industry in Canada. It should be served by primary industries and should be the main-spring for developing secondary industries . . . in responding to the needs of the world and meeting the increasing demands for more food, Canada can find a new role for its economy assuring the prosperity of the country for the next generation."

Tayside Muck Farms held open house on August 14th and 15th. Matt Valk and Jacob Avni were on hand to answer questions. The farms are located at the intersection of Highway 138 and 417 (Trans-Canada).

For further information contact Jacob Avni, president of Tayside Muck Farms Incorporated at R.R. #1, Moose Creek, Ontario, telephone 538-3219; or 120 Shelborne Avenue, #805, Toronto M6B 2M7, telephone 789-9761.



REV. J. GEERTSEMA

of Carman, Manitoba, has accepted the call extended to him by the Church at Chatham, Ontario.

REV. J. GEERTSEMA

of Carman, Manitoba, has declined the call extended to him by the Church at Launceston, Australia.

The new address of the clerk of the church at Watford, Ontario is:

John Bork

Box 271, Watford, Ontario N0M 2S0



News items are published with a view to their importance for the Reformed Churches. Selection of an item does not necessarily imply agreement with its contents.

RED DISCRIMINATION

Keston, Great Britain. The Government of the Soviet Union simply doesn't stick to the Declaration of Helsinki in the matter of freedom of religion. This becomes clear from a report published by Keston College, center for the study of Religion and Communism in Great Britain. "Ever since signing the Helsinki declaration," the report states, "the Soviet Union denies believers the most elementary rights." The report is based on research results of three western institutes, Keston College in Kent, Faith in the Second World in Zurich, and the Inter-Academical Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research in Utrecht, The Netherlands. The report analyses the contemporary Soviet legislation regarding religion, and concludes that there is "legalized discrimination" of believers. The report will function on the committee appointed by the World



"Nakodim: denies report"

Council of Churches to discuss freedom of religion.

Geneva, Switzerland. Meanwhile the Russian-Orthodox delegation at the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC has rejected the report of Keston College, and said that there is no need to act on letters "of private persons." The leader of the delegation, Metropolit Nikodim of Leningrad, has stated that the attempt to accuse Russia of religious discrimination is "an attempt of the reactionary powers in the west to blemish the Soviet Union's striving towards peace." According to Nikodim, "The truth is that the Russian constitution guarantees freedom of religion for all its citizens, and within the limits of the existing laws, the Russian-Orthodox Church can do its work unhindered."

INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

Philadelphia, USA. During the International Eucharistic Conference, mainly a Roman Catholic Congress — in which delegates of many churches from all over the world took part — theologians have declared "that the day of intercommunion between Rome and the Reformation is not far away." J. Robert Nelson, theologian of the United Methodist Church (USA) stated "that there has never been such great agreement as now concerning the character of the eucharist (communion, Lord's Supper)." He also gave as his opinion that the Protestants are en route to acknowledging the real presence of Christ in bread and wine, while Roman Catholics are less exact in their demands as to how this presence is to be determined. 200 theologians agreed with a conclusion offered by a joint study-committee of Roman Catholics and Scottish Anglicans, "After the consecration, the eucharistic bread is a different KIND of bread; bread for human life has been changed into bread for eternal life."

NEW CONFSSIONAL PACKAGE

Grand Rapids, USA. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S. (PCUS) has adopted a new confession on which a committee had worked for seven years, despite objections raised against certain segments, e.g. teachings on the Word of God, the Person of Christ and justification by faith. Along with the New Confession, the PCUS adopted into its book of confessions also the previous standards, e.g. the Westminster Confession,



Prof. Dr. K. Runia
"ousted as RES chairman"

the Westminster Catechism, the Apostle's and Nicene Creed, the Geneva Catechism, the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Barmen Declaration.

The United Presbyterian Church (UPC) has adopted a similar package in 1967, and if the PCUS package is approved, it will be a step towards merger on which will be voted in 1978. The two churches were split as a result of the Civil War.

REFORMED ECUMENICAL SYNOD

Capetown, South Africa. Tuesday morning, August 10th, the RES was officially opened after a service held the previous evening, conducted by Dr. J.D. Vorster (brother of the South African president). In his sermon Dr. Vorster warned against possible compromises with modernism and Marxism. "The Church is not just an organization which only functions on a horizontal and inter-human level, but she knows that her homeland lies in heaven and that she receives her direction exclusively from Jesus Christ," according to Dr. Vorster.

The Dutch Synodical Reformed professor Dr. K. Runia (professor at Kampen, The Netherlands) — who has already twice been chairman of the RES — was not re-elected, most likely because of ties which the Synodical churches also maintain with the WCC. In his place was chosen Dr. John P. Galdraith, secretary of the Mission Council of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

Meanwhile a committee appointed by the RES — discussing the dual membership of the Synodical Reformed Churches — has advised that the synod decide that "membership of the World Council of Churches is inconsistent with membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod." C.I.S.

Letter to My Daughter

Dear Jean,

Thanks very much for your letter. A real surprise, this one, since it puts me right on the spot. However, the correspondence has been somewhat one-sided lately and therefore I am glad with it and I hope it will be followed by many more.

Of course I will try to answer this letter and to find a solution or something like it for your problem (what else are fathers for?) but I must say that I am kind of reluctant.

For first of all you start off with a remark about which some three reverend gentlemen have been writing in the *Clarion* lately and I was just about ready to climb in my pen and ask them to "please stop that hairsplitting." I would like to see the *Clarion* in the hands of outsiders too, but if I have trouble already to convince myself that these reverend gentlemen are not in the first place trying to justify themselves and their own writings or sayings, what are outsiders going to get out of it? And even if there are no outsiders who are going to read it, what's the use for "our own" people? What edification do they get out of it? Are they not supposed to know it?

However, I am walking around the "hot porridge like that famous cat," and I will probably be doing just that for a while yet.

You see, a lot of what you say has my sympathy, but there is of course also that well-known "other hand."

When you state: "The commandment to bring up your children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord comes before the command to spread the gospel over the whole world," the context suggests that you are of a different opinion. I may be mistaken, of course, but if that is really what you mean, then you are wrong, or at least you have left yourself wide open.

For at the baptism of our children we have promised and taken upon ourselves to instruct those children, as soon as they are able to understand, in the aforesaid doctrine and cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of our power. So this upbringing of the children comes definitely FIRST, and this FIRST is first of all in the family (which is sometimes overlooked), second in catechism class (which is sometimes neglected), and third, in my opinion, in the school, although the school chronologically will come second. But I place the school third because I do not believe that it is the primary task of the school to teach "doctrine." Doctrine is taught at home and at catechism class, but the main thing in school is that the teachings should not be in conflict with this doctrine. Therefore a Christian school with secular books on history, geography and the likes, is a contradictio in terminis. (Sorry, I don't know what that is in English.)

My fear is that sometimes the school comes first

(that let's me off the hook), the catechism class comes second (if there is no homework or other important event), and that at home nothing is done. I don't think it necessary to elaborate on that.

Of course I have other criticism also. Just lately I read that somewhere in B.C. a school would admit "other children after the parents had been visited." (Quotation marks are mine; this is not a verbal quote.) But why "after"? Maybe I am a little jittery, but there is something in my mind that a certain school in Ontario would not admit anyone but Canadian Reformed children. Why not? I would think that the more children we can bring into contact with the Lord the better. Or do those other children not need grace? Or (if I may be a little mischievous) do only Canadian Reformed children need grace?

I realize of course that I haven't given you much of an answer yet. There is a lot to say about this subject, but with a subject as sensitive as this I feel ill at ease. Too many "toes" sticking out.

In general I can agree with your remarks and I am not the only one.

Although there have been people who want to bunch together and build a monument for themselves ever since the tower of Babel, I am quite sure that 99.9% of the people will agree with you that the schools may not become obsessions and idols. However, in your statements you were rather positive. In my opinion just a little too positive. You were generalizing, and that is dangerous too, my girl!

Sure, there are some diehards, 0.1% or even less, but you should not accuse the whole community of what a few say and do. Neither should you be too worried or too concerned about those few. Why should you get ulcers at your age? Try to enlarge your circle of friends a little and enjoy what you have in privileges and blessings, including the school, and let not foolish talk take those blessings away from you.

You see, that can happen very easily. We are supposed to be different from the world, but in our "reactions" we are very often very worldly.

The way we talk about our children usually conceals very effectively that they are "a blessing of the Lord." And how much can it be seen in our life that God's law is a blessing? Just to mention these two.

And so it might be also that some unfortunate words or remarks or attitudes darken the blessing we have in the schools, to some extent.

I hope that none of my children will fall victim to that.

I don't know if this reply will satisfy you completely, but for the time being it will have to do.

And of course, your return letters are always welcome.

Love, Dad.

Country Walks

Unfamiliarity breeds contempt. What a farmer doesn't recognize he refuses to eat. These two are only a few of many sayings in existence in connection with that human trait of condemning something they don't quite understand.

I do agree with you if this seems kind of odd to start off with. But I had reason to ponder about this lately due to a hilarious experience I had a few weeks ago with some screech owls.

It so happened that one evening right after a thunder storm the sun came out again and I just went across the back fence for a visit to Fletchers Creek. It was one of those balmy and humid summer evenings at a time when birds are extremely busy with feeding themselves plus their young ones the last meal of the day. Bobolinks and meadowlarks couldn't get a minute's rest, trailed and harassed for food as they were by their youngsters. On a horizontal branch of a dead elm were six young bank swallows; patiently they waited for food to be brought to them by their parents although all of them insisted on being served first.

As I cautiously stepped my way around the clumps of dogwood, elderberries and shrub willow in order to keep my feet dry, something clumsy crashed into the lower branches of one of the willows directly in front of me. My sneaky approach must have been too unexpected for the two screech owls who were now having a hard time trying to regain their balance and dignity on the outer branches of the willow. The delight I experienced in meeting these birds of prey, so unfamiliar to most people as they are night hunters, was not shared by the birds themselves, however.

By no means did they give me the impression that I was welcome; bewildered and confused at first, they soon found a bigger and better perch on a nearby horizontal willow branch where they proceeded to scare me by parading back and forth with threatening twitterings and puffed-up feathers.

Why they did this instead of just taking off was soon apparent, and this is what I meant with my starting remark. If this had happened during the dark middle ages one more reason would have been added to justify the reasoning that owls were in league with witches and as such shouldn't be allowed to exist.

There was still enough daylight left for me to see that one of the owls was grey and the other brown and also that behind me and sitting close together were three more screech owls, the young ones of the family.

And that is when it started. Only once did I have the chance to focus my binoculars in order to have a better look at the three young ones. When I tried a second time, one of the parent owls came swooping down at me on its notorious silent wings and hooted when it passed my left ear.

I ducked so fast that my hat didn't have time to come along but landed together with my binoculars in the mud. And not a chance I had of using them again on the owls.

As it kept growing darker under the trees and as I knew that I was surrounded by at least five owls of which two continually made a swoop at me, the atmosphere was downright spooky. Every time they dived at me, they went to a different perch and as they kept on hooting this sound came from every direction, giving the impression that not only the



Young Screech Owls.

young ones had joined in the fun but that all the other owls from the area had joined forces as well.

As long as I remained motionless things were all right, but as soon as I raised my binoculars or took a step forward, they were on my back again.

By this time it was almost dark but this gave them the advantage of being able to see me, while I didn't have the slightest idea which owl would swoop at me next or from what direction it would come.

It was a hilarious situation, really. As soon as I had spotted the young ones I knew that I wasn't wanted and that only in order to protect their offspring did they try to scare me off. I knew all along that they wouldn't come as close as to actually touch me although they certainly gave the impression that they would.

When I finally edged my way out of the woods, only one of the parents followed me. Not until I had passed the last hawthorn tree did it finally decide that I was far enough away to be of any more danger to its family.

But even then it waited until it was sure I wasn't coming back and when I turned around for a second to see whether it was still there, it came right at me again as if to say: Don't stop now. You were doing fine. Keep right on going.

COR TENHAGE

our little magazine

Hello Busy Beavers,

Let's start this time with a story. Do you remember the stories of Mr. Abrams?

First Day of School

"You may sit in that empty front desk!" Mr. Abrams told the noisy boy still looking for a seat. The others had all found a place.

The boy grinned and plopped down into the desk.

Mr. Abrams waited till all was quiet. Then he marched up to the front and stood beside his desk. The boys and girls in the rows of desks in front of him looked at him, waiting.

In his prayer Mr. Abrams asked God to bless the work the class would do this year. And then it was time for the Bible lesson.

"We will start at the very beginning," Mr. Abrams said.

Before the story was finished a little boy in a red sweater wiggled in his seat at the back. And then one of the girls had to hide a little smile behind her hands. The lesson was finished.

"Tell me about your holidays!" Mr. Abrams said. He sat down on the corner of his desk.

A forest of hands shot up! Everyone was eager to tell what he liked best about his holidays.

"We went fishing, sir."

"I helped my uncle on the farm, sir."

"I took swimming lessons!"

The boy at the front waited politely, his arm up tall and straight as a stick.

"I had my own garden, sir." And he told all about it.

But the girl behind him was bursting with impatience. She waved her arm frantically to get Mr. Abrams' attention. At the teacher's nod she jumped out of her desk into the aisle and blurted out her story

"We went camping. And we went swimming every day! And we had a campfire EVERY NIGHT!"

Everybody in the class laughed at her blurted-out story. Everybody except the little boy in the red sweater sitting at the back. He just listened. He didn't wave his hand. He just sat. He just sat and listened with a sad look on his little face.

What could be the matter? Will Mr. Abrams notice? Yes, he did. He did notice. He waits till all the little laughs fade away and all is quiet again, except for some people wiggling in desks and waving their arms for attention.

But Mr. Abrams is watching the little boy in the red sweater.

"What about you?" he asked.

"We were supposed to go away too, sir. And Dad and I were going to fish. And we were going to have campfires

"Oh," said Mr. Abrams after a moment. "What happened?"

"My Dad hurt his knee and he couldn't work and we couldn't go away."

"That's too bad," Mr. Abrams said.

The little boy in the red sweater sat down. The class was quiet. But then he stood up again.

"But Dad's better now, sir." He smiled, then. "He's working again now. He didn't like not being able to do his work. And maybe next summer we'll go away, Mom said."

Mr. Abrams smiled. "It's time for us to work too, girls and boys. We've had a good summer and now it's time for us to work."

Rrrringgg — rrrringgg — the recess bell! Everyone laughed this time. Work?

"After recess I mean," said Mr. Abrams with a smile.

* * * * *

Now let's all join in wishing the Busy Beavers celebrating September birthdays a very happy day and many happy returns! May the Lord bless and guide you all in the year ahead.

Lynn Metzlar	Sept. 2	Marilyn Boes	Sept. 17
Ronald Vanden Bos	2	Alice Van Eerden	17
Eleanor Smouter	3	Martha De Boer	19
Debbie Krikke	7	Floris Wiersema	19
Catherine Wendt	7	Richard Woelders	20
Dianne Bosscher	8	Rolean Hulleman	21
Grace Jongs	8	Henry Jans	21
Emmy Flokstra	9	Irene Hordyk	22
Belinda Van Grootheest	9	Cathy Bouwman	23
Joanne Koning	10	Patricia Barendregt	24
Henrietta Stieva	10	Elaine Schoon	24
Annette Hoeksema	11	Frederika Snippe	24
Marianne Tenhage	11	Frank Meliefste	26
Mary Vande Burgt	11	Carrie Nieuwenhuis	26
Karl De Boer	12	Beverly Schouten	26
Andrew Vink	13	Stephanie Berends	28
Caroline Barendregt	14	Janette Knol	29
Greta Bosscher	14		

(Please let me know if you have "out-grown" our Club and no longer wish your name to appear here!)

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From the Mailbox

Of course you may join the Busy Beaver Club, *Henrietta Beukema*. We hope you will really enjoy being a Busy Beaver, and will join in all our Busy Beaver fun! Write again soon, Henrietta.

And a big welcome to you too, *Miriam Bosma*. We are happy to have you join us. And be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities! Did you have a nice holiday at the lake?

Hello *Sheila Van Sydenborgh*. Thank you for the nice picture. Sounds to me as if you had a really good time visiting interesting places this summer.

How did you do on your swimming lessons, *Karen Eilens*? I'm glad to hear you had such a good time on your birthday. Have you sent in your entry for our contest, Karen?

Congratulations on passing, *Yvonne Van Amerongen*. And thank you for your pretty letter. It was nice to hear from you again.

Thank you for a very nice picture of a busy beaver, *Charlie Slaa*. But I don't think my favourite Busy Beavers look quite like that, though! I'm sorry you didn't have better swimming weather on your holiday, Charlie.

Hello *Jacqueline Kobes*. It was nice to hear from you again. Congratulations on your new sister, Jacqueline! Are you allowed to help look after her? I'm glad you're having such a nice holiday.