

Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



Volume 26 - No.3

February 12, 1977



Planning for a Christian Family³

III. FAMILY PLANNING IS VITAL IN THE MARRIAGE

First of all we must say that it is virtually impossible to do justice to all the planning which goes on in the marriage. For there is simply not enough time available this morning for such a comprehensive in-depth study. Therefore we will limit ourselves to some of the most obvious aspects of this planning.

We could speak for example of the many kinds of planning which go on in the marriage, such as planning for new furniture, for cars, homes, businesses, recreation, holidays, etc. But even though these different kind of plans are closely related to the subject at hand, we will nevertheless not go into all these various subjects. For the christian marriage should not be seen in the first place with respect to its material possessions, but rather, with respect to its foundation, purpose, and goal. It goes without saying that every marriage must have its order of priorities in proper order. (This is a list of things which are of first importance to the marriage to those which are of the least importance.) In every marriage there are essentials and non-essentials.

The first on this list (order of priorities) must be the constant mutual striving to listen to, and to bow under God's Word; to do things His way and not to follow our own subjective ideals. This first priority deals with the necessity to remain standing on that one foundation, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is on this foundation that a christian marriage is begun, and it is only by remaining on this foundation that it can survive. Therefore it is of absolute importance that both husband and wife continue to build on this one foundation, if they wish to have a God-pleasing and happy marriage-life together.

The purpose of marriage can be said to be two-fold. In the first place, great stress must be placed on that unity of husband and wife, since these two are made into "one flesh." These two people are to assist each other in all things belonging to this life and to the life to come. But this marital unity does not grow automatically by virtue

of having been legally married. For it takes a lot of constant prayer, practice, and plain hard work, in order that this unity of the marriage may be sustained and continue to grow. The second purpose of marriage is that the human race may be propagated; the Church of Jesus Christ built up; and the gospel further proclaimed. All too often now-a-days attempts are made (even by church-members) to make a separation in this two-fold purpose of marriage. This then results in the fact that the first part is accepted, and the second part rejected or used only when it suits the parental fancies. We see many christian parents who are falling victim to the vain philosophies and propaganda of the unbelieving world. This world which is striving to achieve the humanistic ideal of zero-growth in the world population. The result of this parental listening to the world instead of to their covenant God becomes more and more evident by the progressive limitations of the number of children in reformed families. Mind you, the Lord does not say that we should have as many children as possible by completely disregarding all our circumstances of life. But neither does He say that we should have as few as possible. The only real limitation we have to the number of children we ought to have is God's intervention of infertility, or else the physical or mental health of the mother, or perhaps also the mental health of the father. Any other reasons for family limitations are null and void in the light of God's Word. We could speak at great length about this topic, e.g. about the difference between birth-control and family planning; or the proper ways and means of family planning (planned pregnancies), but let it suffice to say at this point that the latter is correct, for family planning is planning to obey the marital procreative mandate.

Another area of planning in the christian family is the budget. Again, there must be that "order of priorities." For first we must remember and thank our Lord with our "first fruits," then come the needs of the home such as food, clothing, education, and

housing. The last place on this order must be reserved for all our luxuries such as: recreation, fancy homes, furniture, clothing, and holidays, etc. It is becoming a real problem that in many of our churches there are quite a number of young (even old) families where the proper order is being reversed, i.e. the thankfulness and service to the Lord is put in the last place; instead of "first-fruits" the Lord is handed the left-overs, if any.

Next is the need for planned self-education. All christians have the need to educate themselves and to be constantly educated. All christians have the need to educate themselves and to be constantly educated. The person who denies this has never yet discovered the depth of his ignorance. This need for a continuous education is most acute in the young families. After all, these parents are to be the educators of their children. Therefore it is of tremendous importance that the education begun in the parental home is continued by the young married couple. This education is primarily the learning to see and understand the many facets and complexities of life in the light of God's Word. This can be accomplished by regularly reading and studying some good church magazines, by building up (and using) a good home-library of relevant study material, or by attending the various study-groups in the church having indulged in some fore-study.

Then there is the planning with respect to the disciplining of our children. This word (discipline) is the rendition of a beautifully comprehensive Greek word "paideia," meaning: nurture, upbringing, training, teaching, instruction, correction, guidance, counseling, etc. So you see, this word includes the total parental responsibility towards the children whom the Lord has given them. We should also realize that real parental love for our children is revealed when we exercise this comprehensive discipline. For this "discipline" is synonymous with love, cf. Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:6, etc. But when this true "discipline" is entirely missing, then not parental love, but parental

hatred is revealed, cf. Proverbs 13:24. It also stands to reason that this discipline must be just and not provocative, cf. Ephesians 6:4, for the parental responsibility is to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), with its stated goal, "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:17).

We could also speak at length about the planning for a responsible, God-pleasing use of our time for recreation and holidays. This is also a very broad subject in itself. In this area there are also many weak points exhibited among the people of the Canadian Reformed Churches. To point to only one example: Look at the steadily increasing abuse of "weekending" i.e. when people blatantly ignore the call of the Lord of the Church to diligently attend the worship services of the Church of Christ (cf. Lord's Day 38), and instead decide that they want a holiday from hearing this gospel proclaimed. I need only remind you of how serious our Lord takes the proper maintenance of His sabbaths, cf. Exodus 31:13-17; Isaiah 56; Ezekiel 20:12, 20, etc. To turn our backs on Him in this way is to deny Him publicly before men, which is in effect a terrible self-condemnation, cf. Matthew 10:32-33.

Last, and by no means the least, is planning for retirement. Retirement from bearing and rearing children, and later the retirement from a completely active role in society. Husband and wife started out together with the dual marital mandate, to exercise the unity of marriage and to "be fruitful and multiply." This latter task is limited to the first part of the marriage, whereas the first (be one flesh) is the one purpose of marriage which always remains in effect until the Lord calls either one or both of the marriage partners home. But retirement from child-bearing and rearing does not mean that one's former responsibilities are completely abrogated (done away with). Take for example the responsibility to teach. Even grandparents have a responsibility to teach their grandchildren, cf. Deuteronomy 4:9: to set a good example in the congregation as pious men and women ought to, cf. I Timothy 3:11, 5:1-16; Titus 2, etc. Our older brothers and sisters must remember that as far as the service of the Lord is concerned, retirement does not exist. God's children are never retired in the way the world speaks of retirement, but they experience a con-

Some Apology!

"Of all things!"

That was the first thing I thought when I read the following "Apology" in the bulletin of a Christian Reformed Church.

APOLOGY: The undersigned wishes to apologize for the invitation in your church bulletin to a meeting in the Can Ref Church building where Dr. M.J. Arntzen from The Netherlands, instead of mainly informing us about the situation of the Church in The Netherlands (what we expected him to do), largely used the opportunity for criticizing the Christian Reformed Church.

D. DeJong, Pastor

"That," I thought, "is then perhaps that 'Reformed instruction' which 'we badly miss in our press.' And that is, then, supposed to be following the line of *De Reformatie* which was so highly praised by the pastor?"

I would laugh about it if it were not so sad, so profoundly sad and so deeply disturbing.

Yes, we shall read very carefully for what specific thing Edmonton's pastor apologizes. Literally, it is only for the invitation in a previous bulletin of that Christian Reformed Church. But the whole thing is pure nonsense if there is not more in it. I would not have to apologize for any invitation in any periodical unless I had requested its insertion and feel that I did the

stant changing of their responsibilities, which in itself calls for a continuous planning.

So you see? There is an awful lot to this "Planning for a christian family," and we have only touched upon some of the most obvious aspects. But let us all remember that the goal of our planning must never be lost sight of, which is, that in all our planning and undertakings our striving must be and remain that our covenant God receives that honour and recognition which He commands from us, cf. I Corinthians 10:31; James 4:15. Then we may indeed expect and receive a blessing in all our planning.

S. DEBRUIN

* Text of an address delivered at the Manitoba Canadian Reformed Women's League Day, held on June 28, 1976.

wrong thing. And from the text of the above "apology" I can only conclude that the Rev. D. DeJong apologizes for having requested insertion of the invitation. Unless (and that is another possibility) someone else sent in that invitation and his pastor now apologizes for that member. That would, however, even be worse for it would



THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Published bi-weekly 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:

CLARION
P.O. Box 54, Fergus,
Ontario, Canada N1M 2W7

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: W.W.J. Van Oene
Co-Editors: J. Geertsema, Cl. Stam,
D. VanderBoom

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

\$19.50 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.

ISSN 0383-0438

IN THIS ISSUE:

Planning for a Christian Family (3)	
<i>S. de Bruin</i>	50
Some Apology!	
<i>W.W.J. Van Oene</i>	51
Circumspection — <i>Cid</i>	53
Press Review — <i>J. Geertsema</i>	54
International — <i>Cl. Stam</i>	55
The Spirit of 1376	
<i>Mark L. Anderson</i>	56
Do You Know Wycliffe?	
<i>H. Versteeg</i>	57
Letters from Kampen — <i>J. DeJong</i> ..	59
News Medley — <i>W.W.J. Van Oene</i> ..	60
How to Make an Introduction	
<i>Cl. Stam</i>	63
The Art of Silly Questions	
<i>Cl. Stam</i>	64
Credo — arr. <i>D. Teitsma</i>	66
Of Pensions and Parsonages	
<i>W.W.J. Van Oene</i>	68
Chats on Politics	
<i>W.W.J. Van Oene</i>	69

be a taking position against his "own" sheep in favour of the Christian Reformed Church. I cannot accept that, although the situation is bad enough already as is.

* * *

Is the statement made in the "apology" correct? Or rather, are the statements correct? And is the impression received when we read the "apology" correct?

What is the impression?

This: We expected Dr. Arntzen to inform us about the situation of the Church in The Netherlands, but instead of doing what we expected him to do, he largely used the opportunity to criticize the Christian Reformed Church. In other words: he did not live up to our expectations. Unless the apology is intended to serve also for having cherished wrong and unfounded expectations, we find here an accusation against a brother who came upon invitation extended by a committee of the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids, that he did not stick to the agreement which — according to the expectations of Edmonton's pastor — was: Just inform us about the situation in The Netherlands.

Apart from the fact that I would not see any sense in paying someone to come over from The Netherlands just to tell us here what the situation is in the Synodical Churches there, there is also this: that that was not the reason for inviting Dr. Arntzen at all! If Edmonton's pastor had such expectations, he had no basis for them whatever, and then he should have apologized for having baseless expectations instead of throwing mud at a brother who went through a lengthy and painful struggle.

* * *

The October 2, 1976 issue of *Clarion* contained a schedule of Dr. Arntzen's speaking arrangements. The trip to Edmonton, etc., was added later on.

Our brother was invited by the "Lecture and Literature Committee" of the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids. Those brethren certainly had something else in mind than receiving personal information about the Synodical Churches in The Netherlands! What would you think they issued *Reflector* for, and later *Pro Ecclesia*? Was it not to reach members of the Christian Reformed Church, to seek the "concerned," to whom the Grand Rapids brethren wished to ex-

tend help, possibly to come to a true unity, if not with the Christian Reformed Church as such, then at least with those concerned members who are aware of the gradual decline in the Christian Reformed Church?

Let me quote the announcement as it appeared on page 351 of Volume 25 of *Clarion*.

Dr. M.J. Arntzen of Hattem in The Netherlands has been invited to deliver a lecture in Grand Rapids and at several places in Ontario.

Since he himself had to go the way from being a "concerned" minister in the "synodical" churches to serving in our sister-Churches in The Netherlands he is the right person to help us show the way to the "concerned" in the Christian Reformed Church and even to directly address them.

(Then follows the schedule.)

The members of our Churches are invited to pass this information on to interested persons, in particular the "concerned."

That was in the issue of October 2nd. We may safely assume that it reached Edmonton around the middle of that month at the latest, for it was mailed from Winnipeg on September 24th. Dr. Arntzen's last lecture in Ontario was on October 21st in Lincoln.

Who, having read the above announcement, can still justly expect that he would just be informed about the situation in The Netherlands? And who could with a good conscience give the impression as if the speaker did not comply with the request or stick to the task for which he had been invited?

The "apology" puts a totally undeserved blame on a brother who only did what he had been invited to do.

* * *

It could, of course, have been that Dr. Arntzen came to Edmonton and other places and delivered a lecture which differed completely from the one which he delivered in Grand Rapids and in Ontario. However, from what I heard about it, it was (although perhaps not literally) the same one which I have here in front of me in printed form, published by the Grand Rapids Committee, mentioned above.

Let us examine the claim made in the "apology."

The lecture covers 10½ pages. Is it used largely to "criticize" the Christian Reformed Church?

On page 3 we are reminded of the doubts about the confession concerning God's election and reprobation. The ambiguous report on biblical au-

thority of 1972 is mentioned, as is the case of Dr. Allen Verhey, as are the discussions on divorce and homosexuality. Dr. Arntzen points out the dangers in the theories of the scholars of the A.A.C.S., the effects of having students obtain their doctor's degree from the Free University in Amsterdam, all on page 4. Dr. Verhey's and Dr. Boer's names are found on page 5 and on page 8. Page 9 contains a suggested subscription form for local office bearers. And that is about all I could find.

Of course, the attentive reader (and listener) can draw the lines from the description of the dangers which are so prevalent, evident, and grave in The Netherlands and elsewhere, to the Christian Reformed Church and that was definitely the intention of the speaker. But that was what he had been invited for! Who would wish to hear a purely theoretical, irrelevant lecture anyway? That would have been a waste of time, energy, and money, a complete failure.

Of the accusation that Dr. Arntzen "largely used the opportunity for criticizing the Christian Reformed Church" nothing is left. It simply is not true.

And even IF he had done nothing else but point out the dangers for which the members of the Christian Reformed Church have to watch out and the trends which they should oppose for their own sakes and for the sake of *true* unity, does that, then, deserve the qualification "criticizing"? And is that not what he had been invited for? But he did not even go that far.

* * *

With his "apology" the Rev. D. DeJong has done the Christian Reformed Church a bad service.

And he has certainly served ill thereby the Church of which he prefers calling himself the "pastor."

In this way the sheep are led astray.

I hope that the Rev. D. DeJong will see how wrong he is and return from this path, for his own sake, for the sake of the Edmonton Church, and for the sake of those members in the Christian Reformed Church who are truly "concerned" and expect help from us instead of apologies for telling them how the situation really is.

Otherwise I foresee sorry developments.

It is to prevent those that I wrote the above lines.

vO

A CHRISTIAN PRESIDENT

The new president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, is a Christian. Already during the election campaign, Carter did not hesitate to speak about himself in terms of being "reborn." He showed strong participation in the affairs of the hometown Baptist Church of Plains, Georgia, even voting on membership matters. Carter takes his faith seriously, reading at least one chapter from the Bible every day. As governor of Georgia, Carter was not afraid to conduct Sunday-school classes. An impressive record.

During the Inaugural Address, Carter undoubtedly stole the hearts of millions of Christians throughout the world, when he made Micah 6:8 his personal and presidential guideline, "He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" I can think of no better norm for any president at any time. An impressive start.

Carter is reborn. And this regeneration is, according to the Scriptures, an essential matter. In the Form for the Baptism of Infants the Reformed Churches state that no one can enter the Kingdom of God "except he be born again" (see also John 3:3).

And although we do not judge the status of Christians (a matter which only the Lord may determine!), yet we have a question. How exactly is this "regeneration" to be understood? If taken in the typical Baptist (or Arminian) sense, it is a personal choice of man based on his own will, and not a work of God based on divine mercy in Jesus Christ. Rebirth then attests to the goodness of man, and not to the grace of the Lord, as we read in I Peter 1:3, "By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope" And I sincerely wonder if much regeneration down south is not more an established part of American tradition than a real work of God. Let us hope that President Carter is an exception.

The questions multiply, however, when one looks at the policies of such a Christian President. Although generally speaking there is a dichotomy (a split, if you prefer) in North America between religious and political life, one might expect a different stand from a reborn President who understands that in ALL things Christ must be obeyed and glorified.

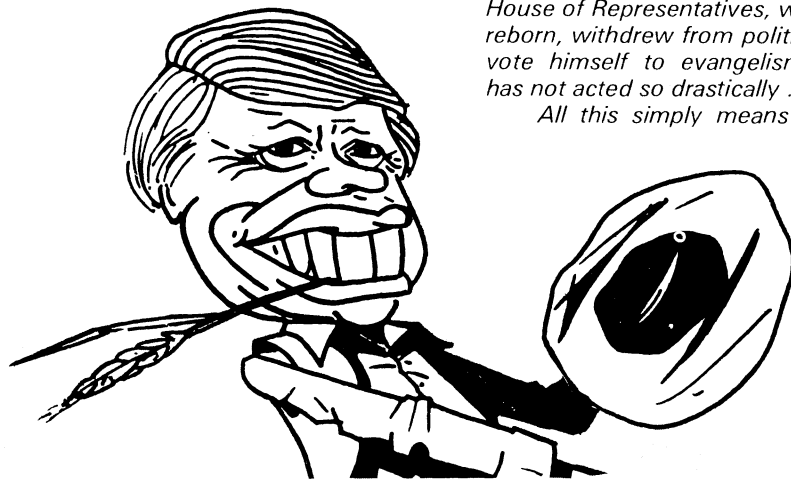
Circumspection...

But it seems that Jimmy Carter, too, will not put his religious principles into political practice

This became clear already before the Inauguration in the matter of abortion, certainly a CRUCIAL matter for Christians! Whoever reads the Bible as often as Carter does, soon realizes that life begins at conception and that abortion, therefore, is legalized homicide. However, when anti-Abortion groups in the U.S. tried to undo a Supreme Court decision on

Carter is a member of the Southern Baptist federation, a church which has become called the largest protestant denomination in the U.S., comprised of no less than 12 million members. In *Nederlands Dagblad*, I read the following evaluation, "These Baptists do not so much stress with a view to social change that Christians must become active in politics, but rather to be active in evangelism. Typical is in this connection the example of John Rhodes, one-time leader of the Republicans in the House of Representatives, who, once reborn, withdrew from politics to devote himself to evangelism. Carter has not acted so drastically"

All this simply means that de-



abortion (via an amendment of the Constitution), they found no support with Jimmy Carter. Personally, indeed, Carter did agree, but politically How far does rebirth really stretch, Mr. President? Carter seems to fit in perfectly with the mass of American evangelicals who stress the personal bond with Christ, but cannot see the necessity of truly reformed political activity. Is Carter, like most American politicians, a follower of John Locke who taught that personal religion has nothing to do with the political aspect of life and that the State is neutral, a sphere with its own sovereignty?

More questions. How far, really, does Carter's understanding of the rich Gospel of redemption go? One worries, if it becomes public (in biographies and other publications) that Carter has spent much time in reading the works of theologians like Niebuhr, Barth and Tillich. Certainly these theologians will not have enlightened the President on the manifold mercies of God in Christ.

spite Carter's clearly professed Christianity, the United States will not be governed in agreement with the Word of God. True, we may expect that certain policies will be "influenced" from out of the Bible. And one could easily imagine a much worse situation: a president who doesn't have any respect for the Word of the Lord! And we must thank the Lord for the positive Christian elements in this Presidency.

But be not deceived. Former presidents, like Kennedy, Nixon and Ford also were regular Church-goers. The new president is not unique in this respect. Prominent preachers like Billy Graham were once esteemed visitors in the White House. But this presidential Christianity has had so little true impact on American life.

A Christian government would have only one goal: to apply the Scriptures to all areas of life, permitting no policies which would conflict with God's Word. Such a government, I'm afraid, we cannot expect from President Carter. Cid.

press review

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH

Under this heading a good article appeared in *Calvinist Contact*, January 7, 1977, written by the Rev. Johan D. Tangelder. First he gives a picture of the situation as it is in our days. He writes:

Times are changing. For years the homosexual practice was considered a criminal act Even attitudes of Christians have altered

Homosexual couples who live together for long periods should be viewed as a family, according to the Vanier Institute of the Family In 1972, two men engaged in a "marriage ceremony" in a Washington church that caters to homosexuals. The couple called their relationship a "holy union"; one of them said, "We're having this ceremony because we want God to bless our union"

One significant development is the establishment through(out) the U.S. and Canada of gay Metropolitan Churches (MCC). In 1968, Troy Perry, a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and a former Pentecostal minister, founded the mother MCC church in Los Angeles, Cal. Richard Quebedeaux writes that "Unlike some of his mainstream Ecumenical Liberal counterparts, Perry has made an honest attempt to find a biblical justification for homosexual life and practice [He comes with the interpretation] that, at least in the New Testament, only homosexual activity motivated by lust is really condemned. Thus, MCC argues that gay persons, like heterosexual couples, should be allowed to form lasting 'marital' relationships — sanctioned by law and the Church — which would tend to prevent the promiscuous sexual encounters now characteristic of the gay lifestyle" (p.108, *The Young Evangelicals*).

Continuing his article, the Rev. Tangelder gives a review of a book about our subject written by Dr. Norman Pittenger, who is professor of theology at King's College, Cambridge, England. The title of the book is *Time For Consent: A Christian's Approach to Homosexuality*. We read:

Dr. Pittenger . . . advocates a reversal of traditional Christian attitudes with respect to homosexuality. Homosexuality should no longer be condemned as sin. The individual and the church should accept

the practising homosexual for what he is

.
The homosexual [according to Dr. Pittenger] is indeed different in his sexual orientation from the heterosexual; in every other respect he or she is simply another human being. He or she is not an "abnormal" person, with "unnatural" desires and habits. To the homosexual, the desires and habits found in that state are entirely "normal" and "natural" and we have no way whatsoever of discovering any eternal standards of normality or naturalness from which such persons depart. The expression of homosexual love in physical acts of various kinds is equally "normal" and "natural" for a homosexual who feels such love.

In his comment on this book the author of the article says:

Is Dr. Pittenger's view Christian? Let us examine his theological position. The most fundamental fact in his theology is that evolution must be taken seriously — not just organic evolution, but evolution of all things, of reality. Everything is evolving, everything is a process. Nothing is absolute, nothing is unchanging. Truth is no "true" truth. The Christian cannot base his views upon an infallible Bible. The Bible is not God's inerrant Word. "The Bible contains inaccuracies, contradictions, misinterpretations and misunderstandings."

With this concept of Scripture, we can understand why Dr. Pittenger considers the apostle Paul's view on homosexuality outmoded What is the basis for morality (according to Dr. Pittenger)? Love is the compass that guides man. Whatever is done out of love is good Dr. Pittenger uses Christian terminology, but this is deceiving. His theology is not Christian. He has no place in his thinking for a personal, infinite being who is unchanging and sovereign over history and separate from His creation. God is a part of nature. You can also say that Love is God.

From what is said about and rendered from the book of Dr. Pittenger we receive a good idea about modern liberal theology. Evolutionism is adopted as the absolute and unchangeable truth. Therefore the Bible is not true, but only a certain step on the road of religious evolution. And so is the biblical idea about a personal sovereign God Who is the Creator and Giver of the law. That human idea about God is

outmoded, oldfashioned. God is only some kind of a power in nature, an evolving power. "God" is in everything. This we call pantheism: everything is god. This pantheistic view regarding god, however, is not a modern, new step on the way of human evolution in theology; it simply is an old error. It is an idea that was developed centuries ago already and that is still adhered to especially by Eastern religions. And it is no wonder that religious leaders of Buddhism conclude on the basis of modern apostate, liberal, so-called Christian theology of erring false teachers, that Christianity finally reaches the truth of the East, the truth which the East had discovered already centuries ago.

We can say that the worst thing is not that those who do not believe in God and Christ Jesus say that homosexuality is a normal and natural phenomenon, but that there are people who call themselves Christians but under the name of the Christian faith preach the same views as those unbelievers. Here comes true what the apostle Peter writes in his second epistle about the false teachers who come with their destructive false teachings and practices, so that the truth of the gospel is blasphemed. Peter also says about them that they wrest the Scriptures. I may refer the reader to II Peter 2:1, 2 and 3:16, for example. It is a terrible thing that in the name of love, even the love of Christ and of God, transgression of God's clear commandments is preached as "the will of God" for our modern "advanced" (!) society. One can wonder how it is possible that people who can and do read the Bible can come to this kind of apostate theology. The answer, which holds true also for a world that rejects God's Word, is found in Romans 1, where the apostle Paul writes that God gave men up to their own dishonourable passions, and their own base mind and improper conduct, because men exchanged the truth about God for a life and refused to acknowledge God (Romans 1:22-32). That own way of thinking and acting to which God gave men up, according to Paul, is especially the unnatural sin of homosexuality. From Romans 1 we learn that homosexuality is not only a sin, but also that it can be a punishment of the LORD God that He gives man up to such an unnatural life, in which man has plunged himself. The Rev. Tangelder, too, writes that "the Bible considers homosexuality a sin."

And he points to the following texts: Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:22-28; I Corinthians 6:9-11; I Timothy 1:1-10. He then goes on:

However, we cannot close our eyes to the tremendous difficulties of those who have homosexual tendencies. Dr. W.G. de Vries writes: "Throughout the ages, homosexuals were often treated as if they had no rights, as if they were practically outlaws. An expert in our days has remarked: 'Socially as well as medically, pastorally as well as scientifically, they form a neglected group, both collectively and individually'" (p.55ff., *Marriage in Honour*).

What can be done to help? Psychiatry can do much for anyone who wants help. But more than psychiatry Jesus Christ can help a person to be an overcomer. A young man, who came to Christ, stated: "God had helped me to become the man I never was." Every change in the Christian sense depends on the individual's response to "will you be made whole?" It is necessary for the homosexual, like any other sinner, to admit his sin in his present life, accept forgiveness, and begin to struggle against his problems for the sake of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A man is always responsible for his actions, despite his biological tendencies. Some have a harder struggle than others. This calls for understanding and compassion for all who fight against their tendencies. Concern should be shown for them and help should be given them by the Christian community.

There is a cure for every type of sin, not one excluded. You can be totally renewed in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a cleansing to be found at the cross. This is illustrated by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 6:9-11. These verses are clear. Homosexuality is not considered as an acceptable life-style within the new community in Christ. Judgment is pronounced upon the practising homosexual, just as it is pronounced upon an adulterer or a drunkard. But liberation is also proclaimed. There is forgiveness, pardon. Paul says to the Corinthians: "such were some of you." Some had been homosexuals, but that had changed when they became Christians. True repentance always includes a turning away from sin, whatever it may be.

As far as I see it, there are some who were born with such an abnormal tendency. This will mean a hard struggle for such a person if he is a child of the LORD. But giving in to this tendency remains sin, and it remains an abnormality, since God created man male and female. However, there is always the promise of the Lord and Saviour that He can and will help in the temptations. But we must also not forget that in our modern world there is more

than just a tendency with which one is born. There is also a seeking of sin, homosexuality included, and a surrendering oneself to it, and a being given up to it as a result of God's punishment. Therefore, let us maintain, taught by the Word of God, that homosexuality is an abominable, unnatural, and abnormal sin; but let us

also continue to proclaim the redeeming and saving gospel of Jesus Christ, in the midst of a world that gives itself also to the unnatural abomination of homosexuality, and over against the destructive teachings of false teachers who pretend to be disciples of Christ, but are not.

J. GEERTSEMA



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.

ROMAN-ANGLICAN AGREEMENT

London, Great Britain. Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians have come to an important agreement concerning the basic principles of authority in the Church, but the Anglican theologians continue to object against the manner in which this authority is being executed in the Roman Catholic Church, especially the Papal primacy. The committee Rome-Canterbury, set up in 1966, has already published earlier communal efforts on topics as the Eucharist, the offices and marriage. The present agreement is only theological, and must as yet be adopted by ecclesiastical authorities. The Anglicans have no difficulty with the fact that Rome demands the Primacy, and easily recognize the historical right of such a claim, but they cannot accept the declaration of the first Vatican Council which ascribed to the Pope infallibility as a personal prerogative by divine right, nor can they accept all papal decrees as being infallible.

SECRET RUSSIAN LAW-BOOK?

London, Great Britain. According to Keston College, the East European Institute of the British priest, Michael Bourdoux, an official Russian docu-

ment has recently been smuggled to the West, which contains many secret Soviet laws against religion in the Soviet Union. It is a book which is destined only for "internal usage" and therefore only 21 thousand listed volumes were printed. It was published in 1971 by Kurojedov, the chairman of the committee for religious affairs. Keston College states that it is a sad thing that millions who are concerned with these laws, do not know of their existence.

BISHOPS AGAINST ABORTION

Rome, Italy. The Italian bishops have again urged Parliament and government not to legalize abortion, but to remove the causes leading to abortion. The Italian Parliament is presently dealing with a proposal to legalize abortion. In a telegram the bishops declare that legalization of abortion would remove a "principal value from the historical and cultural conscience of the nation." Recently, in The Netherlands, the Dutch Senate surprisingly rejected a bill which would have legalized abortion.

NO FILM

Jerusalem, Israel. The Israeli government has not given the Danish film-director, Jens Jorgen Thorsen, permission to film the "Love-life of Jesus Christ" in Israel. This was announced by a spokesman of the Israeli department of foreign affairs. Permission has already been refused in France, Denmark, Sweden, the U.S. and Great Britain. The film intends to show Christ in various hetero- and homosexual relationships.

PROF. HUH TO AUSTRALIA

Armadale, Australia. Prof. Dr. S.G. Huh, professor of Church History and Church polity at the Theological Seminary in Busan, Korea, has accepted a call to the Free Reformed Church at Armadale, Australia. He will complete the present course at the Seminary, and leave for Australia in the fall.

C.I.S.

The Spirit of 1376 *

Bible Translation Day on September 30 recognizes the work of translators like 14th century English scholar John Wycliffe.

The celebrations of 1976 should remind us that the pen is mightier than the sword. This year as we mark 200 years of national history, the result of a revolutionary war, we must not forget another revolution, 600 years ago in England, the result of a pen.

That pen was taken up in an era staggering under mass poverty and soon to know a hundred years of continental warfare. Religion had become a citadel of the rich and the main promoter of doctrines it had devised over the past thousand years.

Into this setting came brilliant Oxford theologian John Wycliffe, preaching, writing, proclaiming the Gospel and advocating reform in the church.

Wycliffe highly valued education. He received his bachelor's degree from Oxford in 1370 and his doctorate in theology two years later. Recognized as the Master Theologian at Oxford, he was well-known throughout the world. He never ceased to study, and was active all his life writing books and tracts, studying Scripture and theology. He believed strongly in the power of the written Word. Had the printing press been invented in his day, the Reformation might have come 150 years earlier.

Wycliffe viewed Scripture as the only authority on which to base an un-

derstanding of God. He opposed the centuries-old position of the church that tradition was equal in authority to the Scriptures. This issue was the heart of his arguments. If Scripture was the sole authority, he said, then no man had power of excommunication. But without that power the church would lose its ability to manipulate nations and individuals and increase its power and wealth. It is little wonder the church opposed him.

Lashing out against religious corruption and faithfully pointing to Scripture as the foundation for reform and revival, he reached the height of national influence in 1376. Until his death of a stroke in 1384 he persistently fought by pen the battle for reform. But his position never became popular with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In 1428, as a final condemnation, his remains were exhumed and thrown into the river that ran through his hometown.

No ritual of dishonor, however, could snuff out the legacy of Wycliffe. Before his death, believing that the common people should have Scripture in their own language to make them more knowledgeable about their faith, he took on the task of translating the Bible from Latin into English.

He completed his translation of

the entire Bible between 1380 and 1382. Little of the actual translation process is known except that it was probably the combined effort of several scholars working with Wycliffe. It is certain that he was the driving force behind it and without him the translation would never have occurred during that century.

But we do know why Wycliffe wanted to do the translation. First, he wanted to show the basis for his arguments. He needed to demonstrate that what he was advocating was substantiated by Scripture. With a careful translation into the vernacular, the people of England could judge on such issues as transubstantiation, salvation by faith, and the authority of the church. The second reason, of no less importance, was to enable every Englishman to eventually read the Scriptures and better understand his relationship to God — according to His Word as revealed by the Holy Spirit.

For the church, this translation was the last straw. Much criticism resulted, such as this:

"Christ gave His gospel to the clergy and learned of the church that they might give it to the laity. And Wycliffe, by translating the Bible made it the property of the masses and common to all and more open to the laity and even to women who were able to read, than it had been formerly even to the scholarly and most learned of the clergy. And so the Gospel pearl is thrown before swine and trodden underfoot and that which used to be so dear to both clergy and laity has become a joke . . ."

Because he made the words of Scripture available to the people, Wycliffe was attacked by those who saw that his ideas threatened their power. He was challenged by secular princes who thought his social reforming religion was too revolutionary. He was denounced by five papal bulls issued in 1377. He lost his position as Master of Oxford and was no longer permitted to preach. But he persevered, in spite of hardships, for the causes he believed true and just.

These causes concerned the underprivileged more than anyone else. Wycliffe wanted all the people to have both spiritual guidance and physical help. He wanted to bring the church back to its early Biblical status, where the Gospel was simple and clear and the leaders were giving and consoling.

Following his lead, a group of



John Wycliffe expounds Biblical truth to a gathering in a 14th century home. Original drawing by Jeff Larson.



John Wycliffe

priests from Oxford, who were later excommunicated, began to spread the Gospel using Wycliffe's new translation. Known as Wycliffe's "poor priests" or Lollards, they ministered all over England, helping people to heed the Scriptures themselves. We can imagine the joy of the people as they began to equate mercy with the Scriptures and learned of the love of God, reading for the first time:

Forsothe God 'so louede the world, that he zaf his oon bigetun sone, that ech man that bileueth 'in to him perische not, but haue 'euere lasting lyf. (John 3:16)

This was the spirit of 1376: a persistence and dedication at the cost of position, wealth and life for the propagation of the Truth. It included a high esteem for education; faith in the sole authority of the Scripture and the conviction that Scriptures should be available to every individual in his own language; willingness to suffer hardship and persecution to accomplish this; and a concern for the underprivileged.

The spirit of 1376 was none other than the spirit of missions, bringing not just temporary liberty to a few but eternal liberty to many.

Let us carry on in the spirit of 1376!

MARK L. ANDERSON

** This article was first published in In Other Words, A Wycliffe Bible Translators Publication. It appeared in the September 1976 issue. We thought that it would be good to reprint it here. There are quite a few Churches which took up a collection for the work of that society, and recently it came especially to our attention because the translators have been told to leave Peru. Ed.*

Do You Know Wycliffe?

Several people have approached me to write and share with you our experience with Wycliffe at their Summer Institutes of Linguistics (SIL), Seattle, Washington, this past summer. As you may know, the Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics were founded in 1934 for promoting the task of providing the Word of God for all language groups in the world. SIL has at present five centers, two of interest being the University of North Carolina, attended by Bram and Joanne Vegter the same year it commenced, and the University of Washington instituted in 1958, the place we (my wife and myself) attended this past summer.

These courses are not intended to teach us Indonesian or any tribal language, as some people have indicated to us that that might be the case; but rather, "The courses of the Summer Institute of Linguistics are designed to teach the skills necessary for learning, writing, and describing unwritten languages," to quote from SIL's calendar *Words Wanted*. Further, "The courses deal with the general principles basic to all languages The qualified graduate is prepared to face any language he may meet even though there is no literature written in or about it. The courses are especially designed for those who are preparing to serve preliterate people, to do some specific linguistic task as Bible translation."

Possibly the best way to acquaint you with Wycliffe is to relate something about our life in Seattle. After following the given directions for some time, we finally arrived at the main building called Theta Chi (all the fraternity buildings were named after some combination of the Greek alphabet). Upon knocking at the door, a certain "Uncle Precious," as he was called by everybody, probably relating either to his jolly nature or his huge stomach which he was so proud of, came to meet us. Having exchanged the necessary information, he led us to the room which was to be our first "home" together for the next nine weeks. Some 170 persons, including students, staff and children, occupied four large fraternity homes. We were told that breakfast was at 6:15 and that classes began at 7:20 continuing till 4:00.

When we walked into the dining

room of Theta Chi, Uncle Precious led everyone in singing a gospel song. Immediately after singing, someone who had been designated by Uncle Precious for that meal, led in prayer. Here came our first unpleasant experience. This person led in prayer while many people were still making their way to the tables, although a little quieter, yet still quite noisily. We figured that perhaps the lack of patience of the person was to be accounted for this occurrence. However to our disappointment, this happened everytime. At the close of breakfast another person was appointed for the whole week to read a passage from Scripture and to close with prayer. To be honest, I too was approached to lead in prayer. I declined for I felt there was a great lack of reverence, to such an extent that I felt uncomfortable to pray among them. However, in the second last week of SIL, when I was approached to close the breakfast with Scripture reading and prayer, I did so for I felt that I too had something to offer. In connection with this, another matter that came to our attention was that in this once-a-day moment for Bible reading, never a portion from the Old Testament was chosen. Therefore, I took this opportunity to read from the Psalms of Ascent.

As I just alluded to, we were also surprised that the Bible was read only once a day. One does not expect that from a Bible Translating organization. Even in their so-called "chapels" the Bible was not touched. This is far from what I was accustomed to in our Theological College where, without the Bible there is no chapel. In SIL the chapels most often consisted of various persons giving their personal conversion experience and how God had led them to Wycliffe or how God had been with them in their present work out in the field. It was an hour to inspire fellow Wycliffe members, or shortly to-be-members, with their own personal human experiences rather than with the Word of God.

Friday having come, the first week of study was over. The studies appeared very interesting, not too hard, but loads of work. Among the announcements at the dinner table was one announcing an hour of praise and testimony that evening. We had never ex-

perienced anything like this before, and since everyone attended, so did we. Again we were not too happy with what we learned that hour. Everyone was urged to speak and share their testimonies about how God had led them safely to SIL, or to Wycliffe. To be honest you could feel that many were very sincere. However, often when one shared his or her experience, the latter became an object of laughter for others. Not only for others, but he or she laughed along with it. The result is that man is glorified and not God. Emphasis is on the person. "He must be a real good guy because God really blessed him." The glory falls on the person that is blessed, rather than on the One that blesses. Let me give you an example of one testimony. One lady stood up and thanked God for allowing and bringing her to SIL because just two months ago she had been involved in a car accident and had broken her jaw. She thought then that the Lord was telling her that she was not allowed to speak in tongues and therefore not allowed to attend SIL. Almost everybody laughed. Do you see anything funny in it? I do not. I can understand people coming to these thoughts, but it would be best if she would keep it to herself or among a few.

At this point, I would like to make another statement. There was an incredible lack of reverence for the Word of God. I have already alluded to this with reference to prayer. We attended only a few of the parties organized by SIL but at one that we did attend, we ended up leaving shortly after it started. Everyone was divided into groups and was given a topic on which to make a short play. Some topics were connected with the historical line of the Old Testament. The first was vaguely related to the Bible but the second was a blasphemous display of the Israelites in the desert rebelling against God. We found it so blasphemous that we departed and instead enjoyed the beautiful evening skyline from the top of Seattle's Space Needle. Moreover, in reference to irreverence, we know that others speak much more freely about God than we do in our own circles. Yet here the people seem to speak and use the name of God too freely. I think that this is connected with translating. They are constantly working with the Word of God to such an extent that it is always on the tip of their tongues. As a result, our Lord's name is used too often

without its due respect. I remember what Rev. Van Dooren once mentioned in class. He has said that our ministers are more in danger of taking the Lord's name in vain and making out of the Holy Bible a study book because of their constant labouring in the Word. I think that many of the Wycliffe people have fallen into this trap. On account of this and other reasons such like, we found it impossible to have true fellowship with them.

Since Seattle is only a two hour drive from our Churches in the Valley, we enjoyed spending each Sunday in B.C., attending services at all of our Churches in the Valley. The fellowship we received from these Churches stood in strong contrast with that which we experienced in Seattle. We really enjoyed the fellowship with our brothers and sisters in B.C.

Back at campus all went well until Thursday when we were met with another obstacle which we had to overcome. This time it concerned what they call conversational prayers, held for one half hour each week. Everyone was split up into small groups. Our group consisted of only three couples, one of which was a teacher, all of those living on the one side of our hallway. Since there was no way of opting out we met in one of the other couple's room. We immediately inquired how they went about this type of prayer. We had heard about it but never experienced it before. Having replied to our first question, we then proceeded to ask on what Scriptural basis they felt conversational prayer should be held. The teacher replied: 1) "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) 2) You do not take the name of the Lord in vain for only once do you say "in the Lord's name, Amen" instead of a number of times by everyone. 3) This way a prayer is more perfect because less is forgotten. For example, someone might pray, "Lord, heal a certain sick brother" while another one feels he should add, "and help him to see his illness from the proper perspective." Well, I do not think it is necessary to repeat my refutation to these statements. You can clearly see that they are not well-founded. After some debate we were released and believe me, relieved to get out of that atmosphere. And yet we were not entirely relieved because we were continually confronted with such kind of people producing the

aforsaid atmosphere. Time and again it was mentioned, "If you believe in Christ, why all the fuss? You are my brother. Join the big Wycliffe family." With 90% of the people being affiliated with Wycliffe, it made the environment very uncomfortable. In passing, I am convinced that their fear for theological debates is one of the reasons for seldom reading the Bible in public; the other reason being that they place more emphasis on personal testimonies and conversational prayer than on God's Holy Word.

Let us now scan the most important work of Wycliffe, namely Bible Translating. We were fortunate to attend eight lectures concerning the way Wycliffe translates the Bible. In the onset it was immediately stressed that Wycliffe would only translate the New Testament. This is very noticeable in their monthly paper *In Other Words*. You will find such statements as "Two More New Testaments Finished and Dedicated" but never "The Bible Finished and Dedicated." You will understand that this has a profound effect on the translation of the New Testament. For how are you going to work with the many items that have their roots in the Old Testament? The result is a translation that is very unsatisfactory. Further, Wycliffe feels it must translate the Word of God regardless of the fact that there is or will ever be a mission in the field. This is one of their principles. It has been said by the instructor in class that they move in, translate the New Testament, and then move on to the next tribe, hoping that the people themselves or some mission will bring the Word of God home to the people. I am of the opinion that Wycliffe, on this matter, errs. They have placed themselves above mission, whereas they should be an auxiliary to mission, and as such would be one of the greatest auxiliaries. Again you will understand that this principle affects the accuracy of their translation. They want the Bible to be a book that is as self-explanatory as possible, without the need of an interpreter or a mission. The result is a book that is more a running commentary than a Bible.

I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to discuss this matter with one of the important visitors we had at SIL. I pointed out to him what Paul writes in Romans 10:14, "how are they to hear without a preacher?"; and what the Eunuch

Continued on page 67.

Letters from Kampen

Of the students I have talked to, most feel that the changes recently introduced in Kampen are for the better, especially because it brings the school more on a par with other similar institutions. Some are not so happy with it, however, mostly because more rigid patterns have been introduced. Essentially what has happened is that the student has lost some of the freedom of movement and study habits that he previously had. For instance, the new study program demands that a student specialize in his fifth year, but some students would rather not specialize. They prefer to pick and choose here and there. Besides, there are the normal growing pains of something new: courses have been trimmed and restructured to fit the schedule, and in some cases the number of study weeks designated to a particular course does not correspond with the amount of material to be mastered.

The older system was based on the traditional European university structure, which, as far as I know, has always been freer and more loosely knit than its American counterpart. Students in Germany, for example, can transfer institutions more easily and more often than in America. The stress is more on the professor rather than the institution; a "course" here refers to a series of lectures; at home it refers to a particular subject offered by a department, composed of lectures, reading material, and discussion groups. In these differences one notices two different backgrounds resulting from sociological and geographical differences.

Still, even under the new system, I think the Kampen student has more free time than the Hamilton student, since the material is spread over a longer period. This gives the student more possibilities for extra-curricular activities, and the students make use of the opportunities very well. This occurs mostly by participating in what is called "Corps-leven," the activities and programs of the student society.

The student society, called *Fides Quadrat Intellectum* (faith qualifies, shapes knowledge), has a tradition as old as the school itself. Every student is obliged upon entrance to the school to become a member of the society.* Membership is gained by going

through certain prescribed "initiation rites," e.g. visiting all the senior members, and so on. Every year the society elects a five-man "Senaat" and two monitors who exercise a more critical function. The society sponsors social events, guest lectures, and so on, and also publishes a student newspaper and a voluminous annual. Meetings are held once every six weeks.

Within the student society are five groups, called "disputen." These are legally recognized by the society and they form the hub of the social life of the student. They have their own meeting places, and sponsor their own speeches and social events.

Besides this there are various study clubs, divided according to the different theological subjects. For example, there is a New Testament club, a dogmatics club, a mission club, and

so on. These clubs are usually attended and guided by the professor in the field; yet, every club requires active student participation, and students are occasionally asked to submit a paper for discussion. Finally, the students have also formed their own clubs for sports and games. Chess, volleyball, basketball and soccer are some of the activities that the students enjoy.

All and all, it indicates that there is more than enough for a student to do. There are also excellent opportunities and facilities for the student to develop his interests and his talents. It makes one coming from Hamilton a little envious, since few opportunities of this kind can be found there. And it cannot be doubted that these activities have an important place in the life of the student. Hopefully the future will bring some possibilities for us in this respect, and our students, despite their small number, will do what they can to fill this gap.

J. DE JONG

*Sort of a closed shop?

vO

A Worthwhile Exhibition

When the beauty of Creation, the products of man's labours, and the eye and skill of a true artist are combined, one gets a result which is thoroughly enjoyable.

Such is the case with the photographs by John Vanderpant (1884-1939).

As the name may already suggest, John Vanderpant was born in The Netherlands and came to Canada a few years before the start of the First World War. He found his life's vocation in picturing the beauty discovered in every day life objects and in the effect of light and the shadows caused by it.

The National Art Gallery of Canada issued a book, *John Vanderpant Photographs*, by Charles C. Hill, in which Vanderpant's life is described and some fifty of his photographs are reproduced.

Some of these photographs remind me of the seventeenth century Dutch paintings, e.g. "Window's Pattern" and "Head of Girl." Both could just be details taken from a painting by Frans Hals, Rubens, or Jan Steen. And which mother, cutting cabbage for the family's evening meal, ever stops to look at the beauty which Vanderpant shows so clearly in his marvelous photographs?

These and other photographs are brought to the people by means of exhibitions from The National Gallery of Canada. As tentative dates have been set:

February 1 - February 28, 1977	Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Sask.
March 15 - April 15, 1977	Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Quebec.
May 1 - May 31, 1977	Burnaby Art Gallery, Burnaby, B.C.
June 15 - July 15, 1977	The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, B.C.

When you have an opportunity to visit any of these exhibitions, do not skip it. However, check first with the Art Gallery concerned whether any change of date has been made.

vO

news medley

Where shall we start this time?

Let's start in Hamilton and then not in the first place because of the nice cover which they have given to their weekly information. No, we go to the house of the Faber family. Our brother and sister remembered with gratitude that the Lord spared them for twenty-five years as husband and wife for each other and for their children, and also that the Rev. J. Faber was allowed to serve as a minister of the Gospel for twenty-five years. We offer the congratulations of the whole membership on this occasion. Ever since he retired from the active ministry (except conducting services) Dr. Faber has been busy as a teacher at our Theological Seminary. I am, of course, not at liberty to divulge "classified information," but I can assure all our readers that we are very grateful for the fact that, as in all departments, so in the department of dogmatology a thoroughly Scriptural and thus Reformed stand is taken and that the candidates that come from this institute for higher learning have received the best instruction they can receive. That is reassuring in these days in which the authority of the Scriptures is being denied even by men who still claim to be Reformed, and in which one who upholds the value and binding force of the Confessions of the Church is more or less being ridiculed. Ours is one of the few Seminaries left where the Word of the Lord is the absolute authority. That is a fact also through the work of Dr. Faber, and for this we are grateful. It is our sincere wish that the Lord will grant him many more years in this service, faithfully assisted by his wife.

The Congregation of Hamilton surprised the celebrating family with plants arranged in a copper "kolenkit." That's how Dr. Faber describes it in the bulletin.

After Hamilton we first visit Smithville. The total cost of the rebuilding program was \$68,500.00. But it is well worth it when we read, "The chairman expressed thankfulness for being able to meet in the remodelled consistory room, furnished with a remodelled table and comfortable new chairs." One would almost wish that some remodelling were done in every place! "An aerial photograph of the church building before remodelling is received and will receive a place in the consistory room.

The activity in Smithville apparently aroused the activity in other Congregations. In Lincoln the building committee was received at the Consistory meeting, but no further particulars are given.

At the Consistory meeting various questions were discussed which will also be brought to the scheduled Congregational meeting. They are questions such as, "Whether we should also in the afternoon service read the whole Form for Holy Supper again"; "Whether we should not rather have one Holy Supper celebration in one service"; "Whether we should have collections in the worship services in addition to the collections for the poor." The point of having the celebration of the Holy Supper in just one service will even be brought to the Congregational meeting as a proposal made at the Consistory meeting. I am not afraid that they will have to adjourn that Congregational meeting at an early hour due to lack of food for discussion!

We are not going further South this time but stop over in Ebenezer Burlington.

Rev. G. VanDooren tells the Congregation that they expect to be absent from the middle of May to the second half of June and thus use the gift received at their 40th wedding anniversary and 40th anniversary of our brother's ministry: it was the gift of a trip to The Netherlands.

The Ebenezer Consistory wants to have more regular contact with the Deacons and this in the form of meetings with the Deacons. However, then you immediately get the question, "What matters should be dealt with in the presence of the Deacons?" And that is a question which has been a point of discussion for many, many years. I do not think that anyone will be able to say precisely what those matters are. Personally, I am more and more inclined to go into the direction of discussing practically everything at meetings of the Consistory with the Deacons. But that is a separate point.

Before we go to Brampton we stop over in Fergus. No one can accuse me justly of mentioning more things about Fergus than about any other Church. It will, therefore, not be taken as proof of "chauvinism" when I mention that the ladies in the Congregation have formed a fitness club and are exercising every Tuesday morning in the basement of the Church building. When I asked whether they needed any pastoral supervision, a scornful smile was the only answer. And I noticed (looking from the window of my study) that the shades are drawn tightly when they are having their grand time. At first I thought that they were works of darkness, but then I noticed that all the lights were on, and that put me at ease. It is not only good for physical fitness, it is also important for the contact among the members when all sorts of activities take place. Our Church buildings stand unused for too many hours per week. Let's use them!

All right, then, we move on to Brampton. The Library Committee is active; it also intends to place reading books (Dutch, English) in the library. There you have another way of utilizing the Church building and of helping one another. It would, e.g., not be so strange if a reading room were prepared, where our elderly members (and we are getting quite a few of them!) could come together to talk with each other, to read, to play games. Think about it.

An important step is the merger of the Brampton and Toronto School Societies. They have decided together to build a school and they hope that they can start one in the fall of 1978. Woodbridge, as centrally located, is considered to be the best place to establish such a school. We can only express our gratitude for this development and wish the brethren and sisters the blessing of the Lord upon their endeavours.

The Toronto Consistory decided to discontinue the visits to Matheson (the official visits, that is) since only one family is left there. It has been tried for a long, long time to get things going there, and at one time there were no fewer than nine families, if I am not mistaken; but it simply does not work. Too bad.

Upon recommendation by the Committee of Administration, the Toronto Consistory also gave the go-ahead for installation of earphones for members who are hard of hearing, and of speakers in the annex. Every time anew, when one of the products of modern technology can be used in the service of the Lord we are thankful for the wisdom which He gave to man, from which we benefit.

The Ottawa Church was very happy to have a minister

in their midst on Christmas Day and the Sunday after. Prof. and Mrs. Ohmann had undertaken the journey from Hamilton to Ottawa to spend those days in the midst of the brotherhood there. There were some more visitors, too, and thus it was a welcome break.

Carman is next. The Congregation there acquired a Conn organ and apparently they are happy with it. "Our organists are getting more used to the handling of our new Conn organ. The treasurer . . . can notice that also our people are getting used to it. Money to pay for the organ is coming in regularly."

We move on to Winnipeg. There is still no definite word concerning a possible sale of land to the City of Winnipeg and concerning the further arrangements around the Church building. The Church did not have the possibility of renting another house for the ministerial family either. And thus the only solution was: sell the present manse and buy another one. Now it has boiled down to a practical trade which is financially advantageous for the Church. The "new" manse will need some fixing, for which an amount will be set aside. I shall not go into all sorts of details, but, unless I am totally mistaken, when everything is over, the Winnipeg Church will have a debt of \$12,000.00 left.

The Consistory of Winnipeg also decided "to issue quarterly statements to the church members regarding their contributions." That seems to be a wise decision. It will keep the members on their toes, we hope.

Some objections came in to the fact that no service was scheduled for New Year's Day. Rev. S. DeBruin reminds the Congregation of what we have provided in the Church Order, where only the Sunday, Christmas Day, Easter, and Pentecost are mentioned. Those are the days (and only Christmas Day varies as to the day of the week on which it is) which we have promised each other to observe. As for all the rest, the Churches are totally free whether they wish to organize a service or not.

That's all for Manitoba.

In Coaldale the matter of worship services in Dutch was again discussed. It was decided that, beginning January 1st, one service in the Dutch language will be conducted in the evening of every third Sunday of the month. "The attendance and benefits of this service will be reviewed after six months."

Coaldale's pipe organ is working, too. Since those first feeble sounds came forth from it, the "organ fixers" have been busy taking all the bugs out. "It will then be tuned and ready for an organ concert evening that we are planning for the near future. In case you have been wondering about the financial side of the matter, all the indications are that we will meet our budget of \$6,000.00."!!! Amazing, in one word.

Calgary could report in the bulletin that the membership increased by 14%, from seventy to eighty members. In the year review Rev. Boersema could mention that a Young People's Society has been started.

"It was decided to discontinue the second collection in the morning service . . . Also the shaking of hands between the minister and office bearer before and after the service will be discontinued since there seems to be no valid or good reason for doing it." That is then the third Church of which I know that they made that decision about the "handshake." Edmonton was the first one to abolish it in the "Van Popta days." New Westminster followed; and now Calgary.

As for the decision regarding the collections, I think that it is interesting to copy the whole decision which the Consistory made in this respect. There are some statements in there behind which I put a question mark, but they are a good starting point for a discussion here and there. Here it follows.

* * * * *

CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The consistory has recently reviewed its policy with regard to church contributions and has made the following decisions.

Considering;

1. That the Bible provides for only 2 distinct kinds of contributions: a. to support the ministry of the word (I Corinthians 9) b. to help the needy (II Corinthians 8 and 9; Acts 24).
2. That these contributions are given in the spirit of cheerfulness and thanksgiving.
3. That the elders are responsible for seeing to it that this be done in an orderly way.
4. That the elders must see to it whether the members are fulfilling their obligation in this regard.

Decides;

1. That the normal way for contributing will be by using envelopes and clearly designating how much is to go to the needy and how much is to go to the ministry of the word. These envelopes may be given either to the collector of funds (Br. S. Kok) or put on the collection plate.
2. There will be one collection in each worship service. The morning collection will be for the ministry of the word. The afternoon collection for the deaconry.
3. The money not marked as to which purpose it is intended for, shall be used for which ever purpose needs it the most at that time, which will be determined by the consistory (at present for the ministry of the word).

Grounds:

1. The use of clearly marked envelopes makes it possible for the elders to have the proper supervision over the congregation, with regard to their contributions, and provides for the orderly recording of contributions for income tax purposes.
2. Collections should be maintained in the worship services, since giving to the Lord is a proper part of worship and it also teaches the children to contribute and gives an opportunity for visitors to give to the Lord.
3. More than one collection for the same purpose on the same day is unnecessary.

* * * * *

Let's proceed to Edmonton.

The Committee of Administration could report: "It is with pleasure and thankfulness to the Lord that we can announce that as far as we know this is the first time in the history of the Church in Edmonton that we have exceeded the budgeted amount." The revenues exceeded the disbursements namely by a little over one thousand dollars. That is indeed gratifying.

I do not know whether it was a result of what the Rev. G. VanDooren wrote in the previous volume of **Clarion**, but the Consistory received a proposal to sell the Manse to the

minister. A committee was appointed to study this matter.

As far as the holidays of Rev. D. DeJong are concerned, it was indeed so that a mistake was made in a previous **City Guide**. I was three days out: the end of the holidays is on the 26th and not on the 29th as I assumed. However, it is not so important.

Now we visit the Valley.

As general news we may tell something about the Rev. C. VanSpronsen. I hope that it will be possible to get things to him by mail, but I trust that that will not be too hard. I found the following request from him in the **Church News**.

He asks whether a supply of pictures can be rounded up: "the kind you (used to) get free with Red Rose — Blue Ribbon tea or coffee (small cards with a picture of a bird) or any of the same kind or series, more or less. I am using them on Sunday School as rewards but my supply is diminishing rapidly I also would like **cards** (also post-cards) **other than Christmas cards** (got plenty of them!).

The New Westminster missionary asked for these cards because there was a possibility to give them along with two brethren and one sister who were going to visit the mission post in Brazil. They will be back by the time you read this, so that such cards will have to be mailed from now on. If anyone has a supply of those little cards or a stack of postcards which are not used, he can always send them to Mrs. J. Mulder, 18080 - 57A Avenue, Surrey, B.C. V3S 1J6. Remember what children will do for the reward?

That was more "general news" from the Valley. Now we visit Church by Church.

Chilliwack comes then first. They tell us that the office bearers' conference which was planned will be held at the eve of a classis. That will give at least some brethren from "up north" the opportunity to attend. Nice. At this office bearers' conference the question will also be discussed whether mission aid is "a part of the deaconry." I presume that it should read whether that is part of the task of the deacons.

Chilliwack will go and talk with their "landlord," since the rent charged for use of the building on Sundays has been increased by no less than 21.1%. I can well understand it that there was a suggestion "to introduce a building

committee." Although for two hundred dollars per month you cannot own and maintain your own Churchbuilding, yet it is nice to have a center and no longer to be dependent upon others.

In Abbotsford something took place which I did not fully understand. "On Friday, January 21, 1977, there will be a 'progressive dinner' for the Abbotsford Young People with a different course, at least at six houses." Details were to be given later on, but I haven't read them as yet. What is that, a "progressive dinner"? Does that mean that you progress from the one house to the other and take a course at each house? Then you can keep eating, for you work up new appetite while travelling. Bon appétit!

Langley, too, will ponder the question "whether the Lord's Supper celebration still should be continued in afternoon services." That will be discussed at a Congregational meeting on February 11th. The Consistory meeting at which, among others, the above question was discussed, "ended at a late hour, but much was done as you can deduce from the above lines. An extra meeting could thus be avoided. May this thought ease the worry of the wives of some of our office bearers." I mention this to soothe the displeasure also in other places.

Cloverdale had again a New Year's celebration complete with oliebollen, and New Westminster is seriously considering expansion of the mission work in Brazil.

That is about all I have to mention this time.

One of the brethren who took an extra-active part in the building of New Westminster's new place of worship was once irreverently called "a little Israelite" in one of the "Building Chats." That was the result of his uncanny ability to find bargains wherever they were to be had.

I had to think of the fact that the Dutch sometimes are called just that, when I saw the illustration with "Circum-spection" in the previous issue. Are we, I thought, going to read also from right to left and from what is now the back of a book to what is now the front of a book? How did I come to that thought?

And with this "riddle" I leave you. Don't lay awake about it!

vO

Consulaat-Generaal der Nederlanden

CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

10 Kingstreet E.,
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1C3
Phone: 364-5443

OPSPORING ADRESSEN.

Onder verwijzing naar bovenvermelde aangelegenheid moge ik U hiermede een lijst doen toekomen van personen, welke dienen te worden opgespoord.

Deze luidt als volgt: —

VENEMA, A., geboren 7 september 1911.
Op 31 juli 1952 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
SCHOLMAN, Jan, geboren 19 augustus
1911 te Hellendoorn. Op 27 juli 1953 naar
Canada geëmigreerd,
DE SAIN-MINDERMANN, Anna Auguste,
geboren 24 oktober 1942 te Bussum. Op

29 augustus 1969 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
COORS, Francisca Louise Youandi, geboren 20 januari 1953 te 's-Gravenhage. Op 22 april 1946 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
KUIPER, Marian, geboren 9 januari 1950,
VAN DER LINDE, Machtilda Tannetje, geboren 9 juni 1922 te Amsterdam, in 1949 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
WIMMERS, Jack, in 1956 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
BARTELS, A.G., geboren 23 april 1934,
BISELINK-LELIE, Machlina, geboren 20 oktober 1913 te Gorinchem,
KORVEMAKER, Johan, geboren 16 maart 1917 te Rotterdam. Op 1 mei 1954 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
SOM, Pieter, geboren 26 juni 1918 te Hoorn. Op 13 augustus 1947 naar Canada geëmigreerd,
ZANDER-VELEMANS, Geerdina Maria, geboren 15 april 1942 te Nijmegen,
BOS-GOODMAN, Sharon H., geboren 28 augustus 1951 te Toronto

FRANCKEN, Nanda Hendrika Maria, geboren 28 november 1940, in maart 1974 naar Canada geëmigreerd.

DE CONSUL-GENERAAL,
voor deze: —
(W.S. TEN BOSCH)
Asst. Kanselier

Church  News

Address Change Barrhead:

Clerk: Wm. Vogelzang
Phone: (403) 674-3039

Mailing Address:

Canadian Reformed Church of
Barrhead
Box 1627,
Barrhead, Alberta T0G 0E0

How to Make an Introduction

While preparing a topic for a "kick-off" meeting of the Men's and Women's Societies in our local congregation, a topic finally titled "Society and/or Social Hour?", I came upon an interesting book of Mary Garvin, *Bible Study Can Be Exciting!*, published by Zondervan, 1976. I do not want to discuss this book as such (it was written with a view to setting up neighbourhood Bible-groups, and this whole concept of community-evangelism would demand further discussion, compare Rev. G. vanDooren, *Get Out*, page 63 ff.) but I would like to make a few remarks concerning the *direct methods* of Bible study which Mrs. Garvin mentions.

INTRODUCTION?

At our societies (no matter at what level) we are serving one another in the mutual examination of God's Holy Word. Therefore our societies have an important function as an expression of the communion of saints (cf. B. Holwerda, *Betekenis van Verbond en Kerk* etc., page 175 ff.)

Now most of us, I'm sure, do not have much extra time to spare, and the society-meetings must therefore be made most profitable to the members. We have to use our time well, and therefore seek out those methods and techniques which give us the most benefit. Waste of time at society-meetings would certainly be a sign of bad stewardship.

In order to give the members some insight into the particular Scripture passage to be discussed, one of the members is usually asked to prepare and read an introduction. I know that some societies have decided to abolish introductions, but I personally consider that a sad development. A good introduction is essential and extremely beneficial for a rewarding discussion.

It belongs to the prime conditions for a fair discussion that first a clear image can be formed of the extent of the passage, the difficult words are explained and the exegetical difficulties are (at least) pointed out (cf. J. Knepper and J. Kamphuis, *Gespreks en Vergadertechniek*, especially regarding: "beeldvorming, oordeelvorming en besluitvorming." Beeldvorming,

forming a concrete image, is then making an inventory of the necessary background information).

The reasons which are often mentioned *not* to make an introduction are usually not very solid. An introduction is said to hamper a free Spiritual approach to the text (so-called "carte blanche" method) but that argument seems a bit forced itself, for if the introducer sticks to the Scriptures the Spirit of God is not hampered at all. Some members claim to have no time for an introduction. Others say they don't know how to make one. There are even people (are there?) who do not become members out of fear of having to make an introduction. So some societies do away with the whole idea. But these reasons are really insufficient for such a move: an introduction remains mandatory for a well-functioning society.

NO PLATFORM

An introduction must be exactly what the word says: an introduction. It certainly should not be a platform for personal ideas or "private beefs." It must be an introduction to the Scripture passage and in that sense a *service* to the membership, not a personal monument. For this reason I advocate keeping *free topics* at a minimum in our societies. Discuss the Scriptures directly, for there's the source of all wisdom. And if free topics are desired, they should be related as much as possible to the Bible-book being discussed, so that a unity is achieved in the material (cf. a discussion in the Calvinistisch Jongelingsblad 23 November 1973 and my article "Mode-Onderwerpen").

No personal platform, but social service. An introduction is meant to facilitate the discussion of the Scripture passage, not meant to be an object of discussion itself. I've been at meetings which basically involved a battle of wits between the introducer and the members, and the Scripture passage itself was terribly neglected. Let's not make it too hard on the introducer, treat his "masterpiece" with due respect, perhaps ask for necessary clarification, but especially discuss the chapter at hand. We come for the Scriptures, not the introduction.

The introducer should always ask himself this question: how can I make this passage more lucid for my brothers/sisters? You see, the *members* must benefit from the introduction, otherwise it is a waste of precious time.

VARIOUS WAYS?

Apparently many different methods and techniques are being praised for worthwhile Bible study. Mary Garvin mentions no less than six possible methods. It should be noted that Mrs. Garvin herself admits having borrowed from various sources, and that gives me the courage, in turn, to borrow from her.

The first method mentioned, "the imaginative *interview* method," hardly seems acceptable at all. The idea here is to divide the group into various teams and then stage interviews based on the Scripture passage. "One member is the interviewer and the other role-plays the Biblical character or characters." This "role-play" idea is becoming quite prevalent in education, I presume, but it isn't suitable for a *serious* study of God's Word. Generally speaking, we don't dramatize Biblical situations. And specifically, at society we do not come together to re-enact the Scriptures, but to learn from them.

Then there is the *Swedish* method (called Swedish because it was borrowed from the Swedish YMCA) which makes use of directive symbols. There is the symbol ? (question mark) denoting specific *questions* which someone might have e.g. about word-meanings. Next, the symbol of a candle points to "those thoughts which after the passage has been gone over several times gain new clarity and give insight into the rest of the passage or into your own faith and experience." Finally, the symbol of a horizontal arrow means "anything that convicts your heart, challenges you or pricks your conscience . . ." This method, I'm afraid, is mostly subjective, and although the personal element (e.g. experience) must never be lost when studying the Scriptures, it must not prevail either.

There also is the "Head, heart and hand" method. The *head*-section deals with the *facts* of the passage, think-work, context, background, etc. And while the *heart*-section tries to determine what the heart of the passage is, the *hand*-section emphasizes, "What are we going to do about it?" and is

Continued on page 70.

The Art of Silly Questions

Not too long ago, one of my catechism students from the back row piped up with a bright-eyed question, "Sir, did Adam have a belly botton?" General amusement resulted among my dear pupils. The attention, which already is so hard to command nowadays, dwindled away as the youth noisily pursued the idea of a button-less anatomy . . .

The question was well-put, perhaps even brilliantly formulated to ensure general laughter and mirth. The question also invoked interesting responses, such as, "Of course not, stupid. Adam didn't have an umbilical cord," as one fourteen-year-old young lady tartly replied. Our youth is so well-informed these days, don't you think?

But the question rather stuck in my mind and began to bother me more and more. In the end I concluded for myself that it is this kind of questioning which makes the Lord's creative work look rather silly. I mean, who can imagine a man without a belly-button? One might even ask, "Did *Eve* have a bellybutton?" — with more right, because it has been the female umbilicus which has been the eye-catcher throughout the centuries.

The point is: such questioning, in which a certain Biblical truth is subtly ridiculed, is nothing less than a camouflaged form of sabotage, an indirect Scriptural criticism. The concept that a man walked this wide earth without a bellybutton, because he had been created as a mature person and not born out of a woman, is generally believed to be a ridiculous idea.

SUBTLE

My youthful friend, I know, did not really mean it that way. He was only trying to create a diversion and gain the admiration of his peers for his inventivity. But the *effect* of such a question remains the same: it incurs amused smiles and the whole idea becomes preposterous. A man without a bellybutton? And thus some of the glory disappears out of God's creative work . . .

Questions like these (and there are many of this sort) belong in the world and not in the Church. Is it not outside the Church that the realities of

God's revelation are being made into common jokes? And is it not in the Church that there must be a deep-rooted respect for the Word of God, so deep even that no one would dare speak up in any way that might seem irreverent?

These questions, so seemingly sweet and innocent, have more impact than we often imagine. Ridicule unites the scoffers and creates doubt for the believers. How many have lost their faith as a result of such questioning? Did the Satan not start out with just a few *questions*, nothing more? Ques-

tions in which God's whole purpose and intention was made to look silly, low, and circumspect? Satan then established a *method* which hasn't changed. This subtle art of silly questioning still slays its thousands.

I call these the "come-to-think-of-it" questions. Come to think of it, indeed, Adam must have had a belly-button, otherwise he'd have looked rather odd. Come to think of it, who has ever heard a snake or a donkey *talking*? Come to think of it also, if Cain at the time was Adam's only left-over child, where did he suddenly find his wife? Come to think of it, yes, how could all those animals ever find a place in the ark; isn't it a strange thing the ship did not sink with all those "critters" on board? And the world laughs about the Biblical account of



things, while many in the Churches start to doubt. Come to think of it, the Lord does ask us to believe some pretty far-out things. Yes, God demands such a child-like faith which even negates an appeal to our (sinful) common sense.

FIRM

There is but one defense against such subtle ridicule: full acceptance of the Scriptures in *all* things. Which also means: never shall we permit such ridicule to find a place in our midst, but always shall we defend the absolute truth and holiness of the Lord's revelation. We shall speak of the Word in such a way that we glorify Him Who painstakingly gave it to us in His boundless grace.

We'll have to be firm in this. Parents and teachers will have to set a clear example to the youth especially in this matter. The danger is real that we, who daily use the Scriptures in our family worship and personal study, lose the right reverence, and therefore find ourselves laughing along with the world much too quickly and easily. We must be firm and strong in resisting and withstanding Satan's attacks on our very foundation. Remember, nothings is so devastating for faith (especially the faith of young people) as ridicule and scoffing. So let us keep this silly questioning out of our midst.

Indeed, I admit, some things seem "far-out" when we read them in the Scriptures. We do have questions, and as long as these questions are reverently designed towards greater understanding of God's Word, there can be no objection against them. But also these questions must be silenced by God Himself. We'll simply have to take God's Word for it, and realize that we see through stained glass and one day shall see "face to face." For if anyone speaks truth, it is God. And if anyone is unable to comprehend this truth fully, it is I. Therefore ridicule is out of bounds for all of us.

WHAT IF?

There's another form of silly questioning, not so much meant to ridicule outrightly, but to suggest that a certain Scriptural revelation was not the only conceivable possibility. I call these the "what if" questions. What if Adam and Eve had not eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Sorry, but they did, and that's final. Yes, but what if the Jews had all accepted Jesus Christ and had not

caused Him to be crucified? Again: sorry, such is simply not the case.

The Bible gives the facts as they are. Real history. And we must not go beyond these facts by suggesting unreal situations and creating other possibilities, perhaps even intimating sometimes that there must have been a *better* way than the one followed by the Lord. Someone once unashamedly confided to me, "If I'd have been in charge that day, I'd never have let Adam and Eve fall into sin, and thus saved everyone a lot of trouble." Needless to say, that person left the Church, because he valued his own ideas above the revelation of God.

There was and always is only *one way*: God's way. Whether we understand them or appreciate them as such or not, the Biblical facts remain facts. And all human speculation is only meant to remove us from those facts and make the Biblical reality again look ridiculous.

Some people make an *art* out of questions like these. Never satisfied, but always querulous. Continuously arguing the silliest points. Not willing to listen to the riches of the Scriptures, but always reasoning on and on. These habitual question-askers are usually the most impressed with their own self-made philosophies and theories. When the chairman says, "Any questions?" you just know they'll say, "Yes, what if . . ." (compare Titus 3:9).

The Lord once warned Israel that it had to stick with the *given* revelation and believe the Word fully and unconditionally. Also not to go beyond that revelation in futile attempts to discover more. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Speculators and theorizers never become hearers and doers of the Word. If we're too busy speculating on what might have happened, we'll never get around to acceptance of what really did happen.

Therefore our confession also warns us against this silly questioning which attempts to surpass the given revelation. "And as to what God does *surpassing* human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into farther than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgements of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, to learn only those things

which He revealed to us in His Word, without transgressing these limits" (Article 13, Belgic Confession).

QUESTION OR ANSWER?

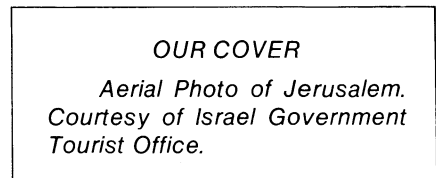
Contenting ourselves means being satisfied with God's Word as He gave it, and being grateful because He gave it. Are you content with the Bible exactly as it is?

The Lord does not want our many *questions*; He wants our *answer* to His revelation. He wants to hear the *amen* of the Church reverently resounding upon His Word from generation to generation.

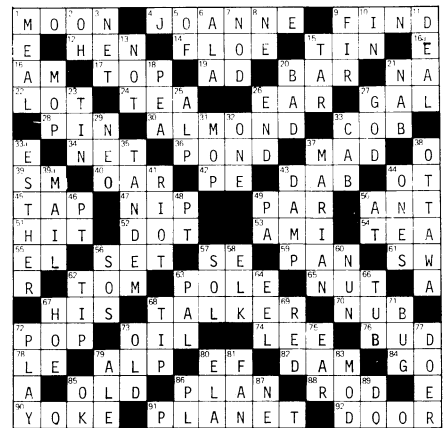
I finally asked my young friend whether it was *important* if Adam had a bellybutton or not. He answered (somewhat ashamed, I hope), "Not really." I'd say: certainly not! Adam's bellybutton is quite secondary, an outward matter. More important is whether Adam's heart was in the right place. More important is that we see how God mightily began history in the gracious creation of His children. Decisive is that we see how this same God gloriously continues this history in the Son of His pleasure, Jesus Christ.

As far as God's Word is concerned, ask no silly questions, allow no ridicule, but teach yourselves and others how to answer faithfully, "I have laid up Thy Word in my heart!" (Psalm 119:11).

CL. STAM



Puzzle No. 16



CREDO

HYMN 45

Joop Schouten 1966
arr. Dennis Teitsma

Prelude

I be-lieve in God the Fa-ther, Al-migh-ty, Ma-ker of hea-ven and earth.

And in Je-sus Christ, His on-ly be-got-ten Son, our Lord: Who was con-ceived by the Ho-ly Spir-it, born of the vir-gin Ma-ry:

Suf-fered un-der Pon-tius Pi-late; was cru-ci-fied, dead, and bu-ried: He de-scen-ded in-to hell: The

third day He rose a-gain from the dead: He a-scen-ded in-to hea-ven, and sit-teth at the right hand of God the Fa-ther Al-migh-ty: From

thence He shall come to judge the li-ving and the dead. I be-lieve in the Ho-ly Spir-it: I be-lieve a ho-ly ca-tho-lic

Church, the com-mu-nion of Saints: The for-give-ness of sins: The re-sur-rec-tion of the bo-dy: And the life ev-er-las-ting. A-men.

Of Pensions and Parsonages

In the Year-end Issue of *Clarion*, the Rev. G. VanDooren made a few remarks about eventual purchase of a house by a minister, and in the first issue of this year a Letter to the Editor appeared which reacted to those remarks. It appears advisable to say a little more about the matter of retirement-income for Ministers of the Gospel. Perhaps we should also say something about the nature of the income of ministers in general.

The "salary" of a minister is decided upon by the Consistory, by *each* Consistory. That is the reason why the income of ministers varies from place to place. There are no "general guidelines" (nor should we ever have them!) to determine the amount which a minister shall receive. That amount depends on the size and the economic well-being of the Congregation; it is further determined by the size and composition of a minister's family. A growing family with small children will need more than a family where the children are grown up, where they are leaving the parental home because they get married or seek employment in another place, etc. It will make a difference whether all the members of the ministerial family are healthy or whether there is much illness and adversity. All those things have to be taken into account because the Churches have agreed that they shall "be bound to provide for the proper support" of their respective ministers. We find that in Article 11 of our Church Order.

It does not make any difference whether a minister is in active service or has retired: he remains the minister of that Church until the day of his death, and the obligation remains "to provide for his proper support."

There are, of course, certain amounts which he no longer needs after his retirement. His driving, to mention that, will be drastically reduced: instead of his present twenty or twenty-five thousand miles per year, he may drive just the "normal" number of miles which the average Canadian drives for "pleasure." Thus he will no longer need the car allowance which the Church gave him when he had to

drive so many miles per year for the work in the Congregation and for the Churches in general.

His study-and library- allowance also will no longer be paid, for he no longer needs it for the sake of the Congregation to keep abreast of the development in Church and world and the field of theology. Further, he no longer *has* to have a separate study-room to work in and to receive members of the Congregation who wish to see him privately.

When fixing the amount their retired minister will receive a Consistory further will take into account whether his wife is still alive or whether he is a widower; also whether there are still dependent children at home. And, also in the case of a retired minister, the economic situation and well-being of the Congregation will play a role. The size of the Congregation, too, will be of importance, since it will be easier for a larger Congregation to call a second minister while at the same time providing "properly" for their retired minister. When a Congregation is smaller and weaker economically, it can happen so easily that an effort is made to cut away as much as possible from what the retired minister receives in order to be able to "pay" the new minister and so to remain "competitive."

* * *

From the above it may be clear that, indeed, not all retired ministers will receive the same.

Let there be no misunderstanding. All Churches that have joined the Superannuation Fund pay the same amount into that fund and receive the same amount from the fund in case they have a retired minister to support. That has been the set-up of the fund from the outset.

Recently we received a report on the possibility of changing that set-up in this manner, that the various Churches could set their own amount of "premium" and then eventually would receive amounts corresponding with the premiums paid (to put it roughly). An extensive study forms the basis of that report and we expect quite an in-

teresting discussion on its conclusions.

For the time being the situation is so: all pay the same and all receive the same.

* * *

Is, however, what comes from the fund the total amount that a retired minister receives? Not by a long shot and fortunately so! His income is decided upon by "his" Consistory. The Fund does not send cheques to the minister but to the Consistory. The Churches are the ones that together have set up a "piggy-bank" in order to have some extra income to offset the extra burden when they have to call a second minister. The Churches receive that extra income.

Besides the things I mentioned above, the Consistory will also take into account the amounts which the minister receives from Canada Pension Plan and as Old Age Pension, and will then see how much should be added to those amounts to reach the level of "proper provision."

What a retired minister receives is no "pension." He just receives the proper support from the Church he served last. That support varies just as the support varies which ministers in active service receive.

"Pension" as my faithful . . . (you know) describes it as "an allowance paid for past services." One could also describe pension as: that part of wages previously earned which was retained to be paid out after retirement. I do not know whether this definition of mine will stand the scrutiny of experts, but I think it will. Pension has become an integral part of wage-settlements and may be considered to be part of the payment for services rendered.

A minister does not receive payment for services rendered from the Congregation which he serves. He just receives what he needs for his living and for his work for himself and for his family, and he does so in harmony with the general level of the Congregation, no more, no less.

No part of his "wages" is retained, to be paid out later. He receives no "pension" from the Church.

Nor does he, while in active service, receive some three or four thousand dollars per year more than he actually needs. And that's what should be the case if he were to buy his own house.

* * *

No one, of course, will stop a

Chats on Politics

This present "article" and eventual following products are just what the title expresses: chats. They do not claim to give thorough instruction or profound thoughts or deep "principles." They only are intended to make us all think and, possibly, to arouse some "experts" in our midst to place their gifts and knowledge at the dis-

minister from buying a piece of property or a house. But, O boy! what all would he hear if he did! Or if it became known that he did! I have no illusions about the things that would be said about it; I have been a minister too long for that! "Living free" and, on top of that, able to buy his own house? Wow! Buying a house and receiving rent, extra income from it? Is that proper? And so on. I would not be surprised if it would result in a drastic reduction in the voluntary contributions of some members of the Congregation.

* * *

Like the Rev. G. Van Dooren, I am not delivering an *oratio pro domo*, "a speech in behalf of my own home," taken literally here, for I am in no position to ask this of the Consistory and, with today's prices and down-payments, one has to be younger to start such an enterprise.

Viewed from a business standpoint, the Churches act wisely when they build or buy a parsonage. Once the house has been paid off, they save so much money every year. If a minister bought his own house and received so much housing-allowance per year, this would be an ever-returning item on the budget. It is cheaper for the Church to have its own parsonage as, in the long run, it is cheaper for everyone to own his own home.

The point, however, was "fairness."

And the point touched upon in the Letter to the Editor was "pension."

I hope that I have cleared up a few points.

Misunderstanding can cause much trouble.

About practical arrangements we can always exchange opinions.

vO

posal of the membership for the edification of the saints.

* * *

When I attended the young people's society many years ago, part of the regular schedule were topics of a political character. We did not busy ourselves so much with questions of practical politics (although these certainly were drawn into the debates!) but we tried more to discover the basic principles which should be followed also in the political field according to the Word of God.

We had outlines for these topics, outlines which were based on the standard works of Reformed theologians and politicians. In so far we were greatly privileged above our present generation who, growing up in an English-speaking country and for the larger part unable to read the standard works written in Dutch, will have to find their own way in this field. There may, then, have been errors and wrong theories in those outlines, we at least discussed the matters and thus tried to prepare ourselves for later life and for our place and task in "Church, State and Society." More than one politician of renown later stated that he was thankful for the training received at the young men's society.

* * *

I receive quite a few bulletins. Almost all Churches send them regularly. In all those bulletins I seldom see that a society has an introduction scheduled on a political topic. Our Year-end issue contained, among others, a list of publications available from the I.L.P.B., but there is not a single booklet among them which gives specific guidance in questions of politics except the one in Dutch.

Let our young people's societies, our men's societies, our women's societies put such topics on their schedule for the coming season. There are many questions which could give food for many discussions. Want to hear a few? "What is the 'State' according to the Word of God?"; "What is the Relation Between Church and State?"; "What Should Be Our Attitude Towards the Civil Authorities?"; "What Is Our Position and Calling as Citizens?" There you have a few topics. Discuss-

ing those questions will be more fruitful than having an introduction in one form or another on Belgic Confession Articles 27-29 once every five months or having ten introductions on the Book of Esther (I would not be able to deliver *five different* sermons on that Book, but some of our young people have scheduled twice that many introductions on the ten chapters!).

Or, if you wish, take any editorial on a political question from any major newspaper, "dissect" it, examine it thoroughly and discuss the various aspects of the whole question, diligently searching out what is the acceptable will of the Lord in this matter.

Do whatever you deem suitable and helpful, but do something!

We all experience the effects of inflation. Why not try to understand what inflation is (it is an *ethical* question in the first place!) and how it affects the lives and livelihoods of people.

There are hundreds of topics which could be discussed, which could give us a better insight in the life of our country once we understand better what the issues are.

* * *

Our Southern neighbours celebrated their Bicentennial last year. How many of our societies bothered to dedicate an introduction to the history of the United States, to the Declaration of Independence, to the Constitution of the United States of America?

If any society has done so, has it then come to the conclusion to which Gary North comes (*The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Volume III, No. 1, p. 94) that "the first and most famous (or infamous) myth of the American Revolution, and therefore the most dangerous one, is that the Revolution was produced by the Enlightenment, especially the French Enlightenment"? And then it certainly will not have made a statement such as that the United States of America were "established with a constitution (1776) which was as revolutionary as the Principles of Voltaire in France at that time." For, in the first place, the Constitution was adopted in 1787, effective in 1789, replacing the Articles of Confederation of 1777, which did not become operative until 1781, and, in the second place, one will have a hard time to prove that the theories of Voltaire are basic to the Constitution of the United States.

vO

HOW TO MAKE AN INTRODUCTION — Continued.

the *action*-section. This method, like the Swedish method (with symbols) would be more appropriate for an evangelism situation than a society meeting. What did strike me here, however, was the correct notion that think-work must be followed by Christian action. Our meetings should have this result that our life of faith is strengthened and fruits of faith are worked. The head, heart and hand indeed form a unity, for we must be both hearers and doers of the Word. It is good that society members with whom Bible study has become a custom, are reminded of this.

Then there is the *eight questions method*, which approaches the chosen passage from out of a number of pre-determined questions. Mary Garvin mentions eight questions, but we are, of course, not bound to that number. The last few questions mentioned in her book are again somewhat individualistic and can very easily be deleted. The other questions are worthwhile:

1. where or when does this incident take place, or was this written?
2. who are the main characters of the passage?
3. what are the difficult words or phrases?
4. what historical situation lies behind it (is this not similar to question 1)?
5. what are the main ideas of the passage?

I do not take over these exact formulations. I do not like to speak e.g. of "ideas" when referring to God's Word. But I do think that this *method* as such is quite worthwhile. It should be easily possible for a society to determine a list of questions as a guideline for both the introducers and the members, so that a uniform approach can be found. System is important in education. The local minister could perhaps assist in setting up such a list suited for the particular Bible-book.

Instead of an extensive list of questions, one can achieve the same effect by making a list of points, the so-called *search the scriptures* method, taken over by Mary Garvin from the *navigators*. The points to be given adequate attention are: point of the passage, parallel Scriptures, problems connected and profit from. I realize that the whole system of the Navigators is based on unscriptural methodism (step-by-step evangelism) but both this and the previously mentioned

(question) method have this correct aspect that they force the introducer to approach the passage not only in its Scriptural and historical *context*, but also in its *present significance*. Which could be a reformed approach, the Bible must always be explained in context and actuality and the exegesis must lead to a concrete message. So I might indeed suggest that the societies determine a number of points or questions which the introducer could use as a frame and the members as a guideline towards a fruitful discussion.

Finally, there is the *paraphrase* method, actually a condensing of the contents, similar to the *Reader's Digest* approach. Such an explanation was even published in The Netherlands, the famous *Paraphrase*. However, paraphrasing is an art in itself. One must be able to summarize adequately and precisely. The danger is that it doesn't go beyond the level of a paraphrase and that any application or depth-work is left out completely. Although, I think, most introductions have been based on this method (and usually boiled down to a transcription of *De Korte Verklaring*) such introductions are in my opinion not the best.

Various ways? I don't think so. As indicated above, an introduction must meet certain demands. We should not be too easily satisfied with this work and give it ample time. I do believe that there's more than just *one* way, as long as certain points are considered.

And I'd like to relevelate those points in a last paragraph.

OUTLINE

There are four main points which the introducer should reckon with when making his introduction. I'll give them in question-form:

1. What is the *historical setting* of the chosen passage? (Context, near and distant; "onmiddelijk en breder verband.")
2. What are possible parallel-passages or texts relating to the same matters? (Scripture must be compared with Scripture to explain itself.)
3. What are the exegetical problems of which the society must be made aware? (The introducer doesn't necessarily have to "solve" them, only point them out for the discussion.)
4. What is the main point of the passage? (Actuality, message for today.)

In other words, the introducer should work out context, comparison, complexity and actuality. Then his work certainly will be of service to the brothers and sisters.

The introduction then also remains only an introduction. And the society can proceed to use the given information as an important aid in examining the Scriptures further and growing in the knowledge of the Gospel of salvation. Sterkte!

CI. STAM

Contributors! Correspondents! Readers!

Take pictures at special occasions such as anniversaries, graduations and other school events, League Days of Men's or Women's Societies, Study Weekends of Young People's Societies, etc., and submit them with the necessary particulars to *Clarion*. They will make our magazine more attractive and interesting.