

Clarion

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A United Reformed Church?

Response to a Desideratum

In the July 1977 issue of *The Outlook*, the Rev. John Vander Ploeg wrote an editorial which does not only request a response, but also merits one. Perhaps, in time, other, more qualified writers from our circle may want to respond to Rev. Vander Ploeg's article, but permit me to make some remarks now.

It would be worthwhile if our readers could manage to obtain and read a copy of said edition of *The Outlook*. In it Rev. John Vander Ploeg expresses nothing less than his fervent desire concerning the possible emergence of a *United Reformed Church*. Under the heading, "An exciting prospect," we read the following, key passages:

Suppose that in God's gracious providence the day would dawn when Reformed Church bodies — of course I am thinking particularly of the CRC — would experience a drastic housecleaning Suppose that such denominations would some day purge themselves of the foe within the gate and of those bold innovations that now threaten to undermine the Reformed faith And suppose that out of the tensions, all in God's gracious providence, a new denomination would emerge — a denomination that would not shilly-shally in its witness to the Reformed faith; but a church that would rather be unambiguous, consistent, and enthusiastic in the profession of it Just suppose that someday God would be pleased to grant this . . . allow me then to suggest as a name, that it be called the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH.

The writer of the above-quoted words realizes that some may term this desideratum ("a much desired thing") as being somewhat "idealistic," but he reacts as follows, ". . . the acid test for everyone who professes this [i.e., the Reformed, C.I.S.] faith is not whether he will succeed in achieving the ideal, but whether he will remain faithful in pursuing it." True, we must sow, and God gives the harvest. But then we must sow in the *correct manner*.

INDECISION?

Perhaps that is why I miss something in this editorial. It becomes clear that Rev. Vander Ploeg himself does

not really know *how* to pursue this "ideal." He writes:

You ask me: how are we going about it to arrive at a United Reformed Church? My answer: how I wish I knew! . . . I am unable to clearly chart the course to achieve a United Reformed Church

Rev. Vander Ploeg does propose some specific steps, and we will try to deal with them at another time, but the *main thing* is now: there is no clarity as to the *definite* steps which would result in such a union. Here, in my opinion, lies the *first* weakness of Vander Ploeg's article. I may say: it is the same weakness which we find in the writings of so many prominent, concerned leaders in the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodical) in The Netherlands. All realize that something is terribly wrong, and certainly all know how to be quite *specific* in pointing out the exact errors and flaws, but when it comes to charting out a responsible, clear, especially *scriptural* course, most are either indecisive or internally divided. The diagnosis is simpler than the cure, apparently. Some advocate a "modality-church" (comparable to the Gereformeerde Bond in the Dutch Reformed Church), others speak of shelter-congregations ("noodgemeenten"), while a third group tends to go into the direction of joining another federation on a personal basis (usually the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken*, being the so-called "centre" of the Reformed community). Most are not able yet to do anything and keep hoping for an unexpected turn of events. Until now only very few have really seceded from these deformed churches.

SECESSION?

Yet Rev. John Vander Ploeg is on the right track, and his editorial gives hope that the correct way will be found. He writes:

Without any attempt at being needlessly alarmist or sensational, it is not too much to say that, if the ongoing attack upon Scripture among us, continues to be tolerated, the possibility of secession from the CRC can only be expected to become a growing prospect.

Vander Ploeg is very careful and somewhat hesitant in his formulations. He adds, "There is so much at stake here, and we know that secession is a terribly serious business. We should be in much prayer at the throne of grace for a clear sense of direction." I agree fully.

Yet the main question is: what is the course of action when a Church clearly deforms and refuses to be Reformed, even after repeated warnings? Did Christ not say to His disciples, who were to call Israel back to the true covenant service of God, from deformation to reformation, "And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town" (Matthew 10:14)? Shaking off the dust certainly is a clear breaking of communion with the unrepentant and their heresies, also a final appeal (see: Grosheide, *Kommentaar*) and it is certainly not an easy thing to do. However, it does remain a command of the Lord, not just for the disciples, but for the *whole* New Testament Church (compare Revelation 18:4). The Church of Christ can have no part in deformation, but must have "nothing to do" with it (compare Titus 3:9).

Another remark: Rev. Vander Ploeg continually writes about the United Reformed Church as resulting from God's gracious *providence*. So true; without providence, there is no hope. "Unto the hills I lift mine eyes . . ." But providence does not remove the call to obedience, and an appeal to the Lord's providence does become somewhat "dreamy" if obedience is not pursued.

Secession is indeed a "terribly serious business." We in the Canadian Reformed Churches can fully understand this. And we can appreciate the difficulty of many concerned members of the Christian Reformed Church. But the command of Christ must be *obeyed*. In my estimation, Rev. Vander Ploeg would be more accurate if he would speak of unification as a divine "command" instead of a human "ideal."

Is the same not implied in the

rather famous articles of the *Belgic Confession* concerning the Church? Unity is certainly not an ideal there, but also a command, since all men are duty bound "to maintain the unity of the Church" (Article 28). And it is quite clear what is meant by this Church, for the marks follow. If the CRC does not undividedly show these marks, it cannot be registered as a true (i.e. faithful) Church, and secession is not just a considered possibility, but a divinely revealed course of action.

UNION

There is a grand historical precedent which shows that warranted secession (in obedience to Christ's prescription) is *blessed* by the Lord in joyous unification of those who were once separated. In 1834 there was the Secession under De Cock and Scholte. Many years later (in 1886) the Doleantie occurred. And the two were *united* in the year 1892, undoubtedly an impressive date in the recent history of the Christian Church!

I realize that not *all* participated in this union and that the Free Reformed Churches remained separate. I realize also that this union resulted in difficulties which led to another secession in 1944 (rather, as we call it, a "Liberation"). The necessity was there in 1944 when human ideology was elevated to Church-doctrine. But, nevertheless, at the time there was a real basis for unity in faith, and the historical fact of the Union remains. Also, the (United) Reformed Churches were richly blessed by the Lord, especially in the first half of the twentieth century.

Any warranted secession must be followed by a unification with those churches that *are* faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed confession. For that reason, the Gereformeerde Kerken (liberated) sought union with the Free Reformed Churches. The fact that this union was refused, is another matter, not relevant here. The *striving* was unmistakably there, and can be proven from historical sources.

From the beginning, the *Canadian Reformed Churches* have taken up contact with the CRC, pleading with this Church to recognize the necessity and the right of the Liberation, and to come to a responsible union on the age-old basis of the Scriptures, the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dort. The CRC has consistently refused to do so, and in 1972 even discontinued the contacts. During these years the Canadian Reform-

ed Churches had been constantly warning the CRC of especially two dangers: the apostasy of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands and the hierarchical tendency of the new Church Order (see *Shield and Sword*, Volume 10, No. 6). The matter of "unity in the Truth" (which Rev. Vander Ploeg advocates when he quotes John 17) has always had the full concern of the Liberated Churches. We cannot be accused of a "separatist stand." I am not trying to vindicate the Canadian Reformed Churches in this article, but only pointing to a clear course which *has been* followed and still is being followed today.

HOUSECLEANING?

Rev. Vander Ploeg seems to indicate that "Reformed Church bodies" should experience a "drastic housecleaning." He thinks particularly of the Christian Reformed Church, but also includes others. These "others" are not specified. Neither is mentioned *wherein* this housecleaning exists. Again, the editorial of *The Outlook* is much too vague.

I am quite willing to admit that the Canadian Reformed Churches are far from spotless. We, too, are not always as unified on important issues as we should be. The necessary atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance is easily polluted. The danger of undue polarization is real also among us. So is the danger of liberalism and false ecumenism. What federation can claim to be void of these difficulties?

But I daresay that the Canadian Reformed Churches are *one* in agreement that the Word of God, The Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dort (as it is commonly called) are fully *binding* as the sole foundation for a true, living federation of Reformed Churches. Such is the official viewpoint, and on this there can be no debate in our midst. Furthermore, our Churches maintain active fellowship *only* with those churches abroad whose confession and conduct is the same. We have not without reason repeatedly warned the CRC of the devastating influence of wrong ties, e.g., with the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodical) in The Netherlands. It is my strong conviction that much of the deformation in the CRC results from "bad company" which ruins "good morals" (I Corinthians 15:33).

COURSE OF ACTION

Rev. Vander Ploeg has asked for

"contributions from our readers as to how to bring into being a truly United Reformed Church." I am such a reader of *The Outlook*, and am usually grateful for what I read. I do not pretend to give the ultimate advice to those "concerned" members of the CRC. But an outside contribution might help, if only as an expression of a sincere viewpoint. I stand to be corrected if I am grossly beside the point.

These matters cannot be left unconsidered:

1. Those involved should not only voice their concern and criticism about the apparent deformation in their Church, but should faithfully examine and clearly promote *the*



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press review

WOMEN'S VOTING RIGHTS

The matter of the right to vote for women in the church will be a point on the agenda of the coming General Synod of Coaldale in November. It will also be a matter for the General Synod of Groningen 1978 of our Dutch sister-churches. The previous synod in The Netherlands appointed a committee to study this matter. This committee proved not to be unanimous. It comes with a majority report and a minority

A UNITED REFORMED CHURCH?

— Continued

way which God has given in His Word to reformation, even if this means inevitable, sad secession. Search the Scriptures and the Creeds!

2. Edifying contact should be relentlessly sought with those churches which by God's grace *are* faithful to the Reformed faith, so that when secession becomes real, unity in faith can be pursued without delay. One cannot be content "to remain by himself" (Article 28, Belgic Confession) but must seek and maintain the *unity* of the true Church of Christ. The inspiring example still is the Union of 1892.
3. Emphasis should be placed on understanding deformation not as an isolated incident, but as a historical process, resulting from dated derailment. The "concerned" in the CRC should re-examine their stand on the happenings of 1939-1944 and subsequent years and give due recognition to those who in the past — again by God's grace! — stood firmly *only* for the Reformed faith.

May these remarks positively aid Rev. Vander Ploeg and the Reformed Fellowship in the CRC. Be assured that your struggle is closely followed by us, and that you are accompanied by our prayer that God may guide you in the way of His command to a truly United Reformed Church!

Another time, D.V., a few remarks on the idea of a "Reformed Faith Manifesto" as outlined by Rev. John Vander Ploeg. Cl. STAM

report. The former speaks in favour, the latter against women voting in the church.

This matter is not new. Both reports speak about the decision that was made at the General Synod of the Reformed Churches at Arnhem in 1930. This Synod said that the churches could not give women the voting right. Therefore the churches cannot bypass this decision. They have either to maintain that decision or to rescind it. In an article in *Nederlands Dagblad* of June 28th a summary is given of the two reports. I take over most of this article here for the information of the reader. It says:

The majority report amply deals with the character of the election of office-bearers, and is of the opinion that on several points what the Synod of Arnhem said was not Scriptural. Especially the thought of Arnhem that the election of office-bearers is a deed of general governing power of the congregation, and therefore belongs to the male members only, is disputed.

Against this "church-political construction" the majority of the committee objects. They say that the way Arnhem states the problem is a shortening of the horizon within which the Reformers have spoken about the concrete, caring activity of Christ Himself for His congregation; and that in the place of this caring activity of Christ, the emphasis has been put on the activity of the congregation (with the consistory) via the problem whether the congregation has an advising or a governing function in the election of office-bearers.

Deputies point to the Form for the Ordination in which the office-bearers who are to be installed are asked "whether they do not feel in their hearts, that they are lawfully called of God's church, and consequently of God Himself to these (respective) offices?"

The deputies conclude that, in the act of choosing, the "mondige" congregation of Christ gives voice to the calling of God; she recognizes this calling in the gifts which are given by the Spirit of Christ in the midst of His congregation. The members of the congregation do not participate in a part of the work of the consistory, but the consistory is at work in letting the congregation exercise the right that is hers since Christ gave it to her. From this it is clear that the congregation of God does not govern herself, neither that she provides herself with a governing board, according to deputies.

The question whether the consistory does the right thing in involving also the sisters of the congregation comes into a different light through the first conclusions of the deputies. The majority report pays much attention to the Scripture texts about the subordination and the speaking of women. Its conclusion is that Scripture forbids the sisters of the congregation to speak on their own authority and to speak to the congregation.

"However, when the consistory calls the sisters to make known — via their vote — their insight in the policy of Him Who gives office-bearers to His congregation, it does not call them to leave their place, but to speak in the place which they have as members of the congregation beside their husbands. They, also, form, together with the others, the 'voice' of the congregation. The sister does not speak to the congregation, but *together* (with her husband and) with the congregation."

The report, at any rate the article, does not speak about sisters who do not have, or no longer have, a husband. For them the matter is even more speaking. We continue the article:

Never — the deputies say — have objections been made against the "speaking" of women in the congregation at the approbation. The sister also "speaks" by submitting names for the nomination. The same can be said of involving the sisters of the congregation in exercising church discipline. "Therefore the judgment of the deputies is that the respect for the apostolic command regarding the 'place' of women in the congregation does not oblige the consistory to halve the congregation in the matter of the election of office-bearers."

In its conclusions the majority report states, among other things: "The decision [uitspraak] of the synod of Arnhem 1930 can no longer be counted as a description of the good order in the congregation at the election of office-bearers, which is Scripturally justifiable and satisfying the consciences." Further: "Since the act of 'electing' or 'voting,' which takes place under the leadership of the consistory, is the means by which Christ — involving human prayer and consideration — makes known His will concerning the congregation and the performance of the service of the offices, only very weighty reasons, which are to be derived from Scripture, can hold the consistory back from excluding the 'adult' [mondige, J.G.] sisters of the congregation from this action of the congregation."

These sentences are the kind you have to read twice. And, as far as I can see, the last one makes no sense, since it denies exactly what the majority report wants to say. As I see it the

Continued on page 326.

“ORANGE JUICE AND HOMOSEXUALITY”

One might understandably raise eyebrows at this title. What connection could possibly exist between orange juice and homosexuality? Certainly I am not attempting to suggest that the one stimulates the other.

I guess, until recently there was no connection at all. And even now there is not so much a connection, rather a confrontation between the two. Let me explain.

A while ago American singer Anita Bryant, noted for her Floridan orange juice promotion program, devoted herself to the noteworthy cause of opposing a new legislation which would give the same rights (regarding housing, jobs and public facilities) to homosexual relations as to a “normal” marital status. Such a law had gone into effect also in the sun-kisted district of Miami, Mrs. Bryant’s hometown area. The champion of pure orange juice made use of her national image and her constitutional rights to collect the signatures required for a people’s referendum on the issue. Not without success, for a vote did result in Miami and Dade County and the citizens massively rejected the infant law by a two-thirds majority.

The success of Mrs. Bryant’s campaign is perhaps largely due to the slogan, “Save Our Children.” Anita surely has the compelling style to back up this appeal, for she always appears in colourful commercials as the “American Mother” so concerned about the welfare of her children that she personally manages their daily intake of Vitamin C.

Much malicious criticism, of course, was showered upon Anita and her campaign, and she was continually the object of sooty ridicule in the media. Even foreign passions were roused, and the notorious Dutch Association for Free Relations quickly published a huge, one-page ad in the Miami Herald. Similarly, President Carter’s campaign for human rights abroad seemed jeopardized at home, for many of Mrs. Bryant’s staunch supporters were leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Let me clearly say that I sympathize with Anita Bryant’s endeav-

Circumspection...

ours. Homosexual relations should not legally be placed on the same level as heterosexual relations. If one must tolerate some perversion, one still need not legalize it. God’s ordinances for marriage and His forbidding of relations with the same sex should certainly be reflected in public law. The governments cannot even rightly condone, much less permit such activities and relationships, for they must see to it “that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency”



(Article 16, Belgic Confession). A “good order” is certainly one which recognizes God’s command for the basic relationships of life.

Despite its sensationalistic overtones, the motto, “Save Our Children,” does have its merit. Although we cannot say that every homosexual preys upon children, yet it is true that children are especially vulnerable to rapidly deteriorating morals and prone to be seduced to unchaste actions in an increasingly permissive society. The standards of many young people have already taken a beating, and any further progression of moral decline should be stopped.

On the other hand, some criticism seems to be due in the right

sense on Mrs. Bryant’s own methods and approach. In Nederlands Dagblad, Aard Kampsteeg makes the following remarks, “It is a pity that the discussion in the U.S. soon deteriorated into a slanging-match and gross intolerance. When we look at some newspaper articles, we do not receive the impression that Mrs. Bryant’s actions are wholly clean in this respect. The texts of the stickers do not excel in delicacy, and strongly play upon the emotions.” Well, it certainly would not be correct to create a panicky atmosphere of fear, and commence a not so subtle witch-hunt on homosexuals. Neither is outright discrimination the answer, for also homosexuals have to eat and live. Condemning homosexuality and its legalization, doesn’t mean strangling the homosexual.

In actions such as these when we are attempting to battle moral corruption, we should maintain a high moral standard ourselves, otherwise we will damage our own striving, causing a strongly-violent counter-attack which might prove too forceful in the end. I am afraid that such might be the case down south, because already civil rights leaders are clamouring about discrimination.

In battling homosexuality we must uphold the right meekness and humility, extending a hand of Christian compassion and an offer of sincere help to those who are in the power of these sins. As Kampsteeg also writes, “Knowledge of own guilt, also with regards to the seventh commandment, and the realization that we ourselves are completely dependant on the grace of Jesus Christ, must make us gentle with regards to others.”

Such a Christian campaign would not only heal the nation, but would also help the homosexual. For the goal is not to flush him back into the ghettos of America, but to lead him to the grace of Christ, and to find forgiveness, together, in the blood of the cross.

Cid.

PRESS REVIEW — Continued

words “can hold the consistory back from” (“kunnen de kerkeraad ervan weerhouden”) must be read as “can bring the consistory to.” The quotation from the report continues:

“These reasons are not there. And what has been brought forward so far to this end in synodical dealings with this matter is far from evident.” The last conclusion is: “The decisive character of the vote of the congregation does not make the act of voting of the woman into a ‘deed of governing’ or a form of ‘exercising authority’ over a fellow-member, just as the act of voting of the men is not so either. It is the consistory which beforehand confers this decisive character on the voting, out of respect for the congregation, and in the faith that Christ Himself is present in the assembled believers and that He hears their prayer.”

Although it does not really matter, these are the names of the signers of the majority report: Drs. C. Bijl, Rev. G. Hagens, Rev. J. Kok, Prof. Dr. C. Trimp. The minority report is from two ministers in Assen’s church: Revs. H.J. Begemann and H. Bouma. We read about this report that it

first of all gives a historic survey of the calling and election of office-bearers. Further attention is asked for the “facets at issue in the whole procedure of the election.” It is stated that the submitting of names of persons who are deemed suitable to the attention of the consistory is not of a decisive character for the lawful election in the church. The same is true — according to the minority report — regarding the approbation “which, within the frame of Reformed Church policy, does not require an explicit, separate action.”

The election itself is — according to the report — not less than an explicit deed, with which the members who have the right to vote decide whom of the candidates they prefer and who of them will be appointed. “If someone obtained the required majority of the votes, then the consistory no longer has the freedom, according to Art. 22, C.O., to choose a different brother: the majority of the votes has determined who will be installed in the office, and the consistory appoints the one who is thus chosen.”

The minority report also pays attention to the Scriptural relation of man and woman [“man en vrouw”]. It points at the structure which was already there before the fall in sin, and in which man is the head of woman [or: husband the head of his wife; it is hard to make out from this summary of the report what is meant, J.G.J. Adam rules (given names) and Eve serves (receives the name Woman). Eve did not abide by this structure, but tried to take the leadership. She ren-

dered to Adam the wrong “service” of seducing (him) to sin. However, under the new dispensation, the structure of the beginning remained in force, according to the report.

This has — the report continues — consequences for the place of women in the congregation of Christ and in the congregational assemblies. The main question is: Does the participation of women in bringing out a vote of preference at the election of office-bearers belong to their “status” of obedient and willing subordination?

The minority report concludes: “Seeing the nature and the character of the vote of preference, as indicated before, one must conclude that the act of deciding (with others) by means of the vote done by women at the election of office-bearers is not in accordance with the place and task which the Lord has given to the sisters in the congregation, since it is not in accordance with His requirement that women in the congregation have to subordinate themselves. The woman does not come forward (treedt niet naar voren) in the congregation. She exercises her own quiet influence at the background, but she shall not participate in the decision-making act of the election of office-bearers.

Replying to the remarks of the majority report about the “voice of the congregation” the minority report says: “All the members of the congregation do not have the right to bring out their vote of preference. If one wants to use the word ‘halve,’ it can be said that the congrega-

tion definitely is ‘halved,’ because those who did not make public profession of faith yet also have no right to partake in the election by bringing out their vote.” In reality, the report says, the words “lawfully called of God’s church” mean exactly that what they say, even though a big part of the members is not present at the voting.

The last remark is: “Even though the decision of the general synod of Arnhem 1930 in this matter might be founded and formulated in a defective way, especially through the use of expressions like ‘general governing power’ and ‘special governing power’ [algemene en speciale regeermacht], the decision of that synod has to remain in force, namely: not to grant the voting right to the female members of the congregation.”

So far the article. The reader gets an impression of the arguments of both sides. More than an impression it cannot be, since we have only a short summary here. The matter is not so easy, since we do not have a clear commandment of the Lord here. A decision must be made in the way of deriving arguments from the Scriptures. It is different with the voting of women *into* an ecclesiastical office. Here the Scriptures say clearly: no. According to me the majority report is more convincing than that of the minority, as far as is clear from this article.

J. GEERTSEMA



Old Christ Church, Lakefield — Photo redrawn by S. Sipkema, Burlington, Ontario.

To the Praise of the Congregation*

The song of the congregation is more than a "ditty with the sermon." In her song the congregation "offers up a sacrifice of praise to God" (Hebrews 13:15). Those who sing, sing themselves free from themselves and open their hearts to God. God's congregation is not on its way to an eternal sermon but to an eternal song. For that reason the song of the church should receive due care and attention, if indeed the liturgy is to be known as a foretaste of the eternal joy. When we check to see what the Bible has to say about it, we discover something remarkable.

The Bible naturally speaks about the song as praise of God. God is the address of the praise. That is the "upward" line of the song. There is also a "forward" line: it is the prelude to the eternal praise.

At the same time, however, we discover that the song of the congregation has a "sideward" line: in the song we have to do *with each other*.

Let us read the well-known text in Ephesians 5:19:

. . . addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

This instruction of the apostle is a qualification of his command "to be filled with the Holy Spirit" (verse 18) — the mark of the church of the latter days. The "being filled" obviously has everything to do with the song. In the song it is manifested, and thus becomes a reality in the congregation.

The striking thing about this text is that, although the praise is ultimately intended for God, yet it is in the first instance a matter of *addressing one another*.

The song is not an individual expression of the soul, nor is it a matter of the soul and God, but a matter of the congregation. In it you speak to and among each other and take each other along. You do not wrap yourself in your own emotions, so that you forget everybody and everything around you. Such an individualistic-artistic emotion is an illegal matter in the congregation. Precisely in the song the

one addresses the other and together they go to God. That is the way in which the congregation is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Apparently we have something to say to each other in the song; it is completely a matter of the communion of saints and of the church federation. It would certainly be worthwhile to trace the function of the song as a church-uniting power; we think here in particular of the time of the Reformation, when the song united the oppressed believers in the brotherhood and together gave them courage during oppression and in martyrdom.

All this becomes even more concrete when we place the parallel text, Colossians 3:16, beside Ephesians 5:19.

There the apostle phrases it somewhat differently. He speaks there about the *word of Christ*; that — in agreement with the endowment of the Holy Spirit — has to *dwell* abundantly (*richly*) in the congregation (*in you*).

The word of Christ is the root of congregational life; from it appeared (the calling), and through it it is maintained from day to day.

That word does not want to be a transient guest, here today and gone tomorrow. That word wants to dwell in the congregation; be there at all times and assert itself, so that the whole "house" will experience the rich blessings of this indwelling.

Colossians 3:16 tells us then in what manner the word will settle and assert itself.

Exegetically much can be said for reading the sentence as follows:

While with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs you teach and admonish each other in wisdom.

Whatever the case may be, we can read that you have to teach and admonish each other with wisdom in the congregation (cf. 1:28). In that way the word of Christ will receive an increasingly important place in life (dwell richly). Such teachings and admonition mean that you take each other along and hold on to each other in the way of the church, i.e., the way of truth and holiness as the Spirit teaches us.

That happens notably through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

If you want an example of such a song, you can find one in Ephesians 5:14:

Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give you light.

This is an early Christian (baptismal?) hymn, in which the doctrine of the risen Lord is preached to God's honour, and at the same time the brother is stimulated (admonished) to a new life for God.

The praise of God and the teaching of each other go hand in hand, as is indeed the case with many Old Testament psalms. The sung word becomes a powerful means of mutual encouragement. The praise of the congregation is *the* instrument for a people that according to the apostolic command wants to make ample room for the word of Christ.

In precisely that way the "indwelling" becomes a continuous matter, for there is in the song, more than in the sermon, power of continuity. That is why the LORD told Moses at the end of his term of office to write a song. He had to set all his prose preaching to music and summarize it in poetry (Deuteronomy 32), so that in times to come — time of apostasy, of wrath, and of conversion — that song would rise in the hearts of the Israelites. "For it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their descendants" (Deuteronomy 31:21).

The church's space of time and life is filled with song, and through it the fathers speak to the children in a powerful fashion to keep them in the way (of doctrine and life) which is pleasing to God. In the church, the song is obviously an outstanding means of communication with God and with each other.

We can, however, learn more from the two texts under discussion. Both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 speak of *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*. When we read about this variety of songs, the desire arises to qualify and separate them from each other. In this case, it appears rather difficult to do.

S. Greijdanus makes a valiant effort, but in my opinion does not succeed. He has to resort to subtle differences, which in practice are difficult to maintain.¹

Luther's exegesis is well-known too; the *psalms* refer to the Old Testa-

ment psalms of David, the *hymns* are related to the so-called *Cantica*, the Scripture hymns (of Moses, Deborah, Mary, Zacharias, Simeon, etc.), and with the spiritual songs the man-made songs, of which Luther left us some beautiful examples, are meant.

Yet those distinctions, appealing as they may be, won't do. By psalms the apostle in all likelihood doesn't mean the Old Testament psalms. When the apostle speaks about psalms in I Corinthians 14:26, he obviously means a New Testament psalm, given to some congregational members by the Holy Spirit, a charisma. To "have" a psalm, which one takes along to the meeting, as the text states, is not just a matter of "recitation" (one takes along an Old Testament psalter and renders it before the congregation), but a matter of the operation of the Holy Spirit, Who gives a "new song"

to the church by giving it along with one of her members.

In all probability the apostle also means New Testament songs in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. It is, therefore, highly questionable whether we of necessity should have to separate the three kinds of songs.

Would it not be more likely that the apostle in this summary points out the *abundance* of praise to God and for each other?

Isn't it a matter of "being filled" with the Holy Spirit and of a "richly dwelling" of the word of Christ? And doesn't the apostle in his word choice (singing, making melody, always and forever giving thanks) wish to emphasize the abundance with which the thankful heart expresses itself?

We do well to think of the multiplicity of forms in connection with the singing of the early church. That

multiplicity in itself is already a demonstration of the exuberance with which the Holy Spirit adorns His home (i.e., the church). He teaches the congregation to give shape to their joy. This, according to Acts 2:46, is a characteristic of the congregation of Pentecost.²

That joy is a foretaste of the eschatological joy described in the book of Revelation. Not the sermon, but the song, shall eternally remain in the perfected communion of the church.

That is why a liturgy-without-song is a contradiction.

The church, which on earth is on her way to the perfected liturgy, which in her song already participates in it and reaches for it, knows therefore that she is called to pay particular attention to her psalms and hymns and their accompaniment.

For if already under the old covenant the crippled animal was unfit for a God-pleasing sacrifice, the more the New Testament church has to be mindful that she doesn't bring her sacrifice with doggerel, archaic words, and miserable organ playing.

Throughout all creation and history there goes a song: the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork (Psalm 19:1); all creatures, great and small, praise their Maker (Psalm 148); and the angels never cease because of the daily victory of His will in the world (Revelation 4). How could the congregation of God's own children stay behind in this cosmic praise, and not participate in the manifold echoing of God's glory?

When they, too, are able to offer up pure praise from this noisy, God-denying world, then the eternal peace can not be far away. It is the beginning of "heaven on earth."

C. TRIMP

PSALM 150

1. Hal - le - lu - jah! Praise the LORD! In his house, with one ac - cord! Praise him in the wide ex - tent Of his spa - cious fir - ma - ment, Sing his praise, sing it up - right - ly; Praise him for the plen - i - tude Of his bound - less mag - ni - tude, Praise him for his deeds so might - y.

2. Praise him with the trumpet sound,
Let his glorious praise abound,
Praise him with the psaltery,
With the harp his majesty,
Praise him with the pipe and timbrel;
Praise him with stringed instruments,
With the flute his excellence,
Praise him with the sounding cymbal.
3. Let the clashing cymbals ring
To the praise of God the King,
Praise him with a mighty sound,
Let your voices shake the ground,
Sing his praises with rejoicing;
All that breathe, exalt the LORD,
Let all men his fame record:
Sing his praises! HALLELUJAH!

¹ Greijdanus writes in his *Korte Verklaring*: Psalms: songs of thanksgiving, in which the joyful heart sings about the gratitude for received grace and mercies; Hymns: songs of praise to exalt and adore God's greatness, virtues, and wonderful works; Spiritual songs: yet another, somewhat different outpouring of the heart, when the heart is full of gladness and has to express itself in songs of joy and jubilation.

² I wrote extensively about this text in *De Reformatie* of September 11th, 1976.

✓Original title: "De lofprijzing van de gemeente," *De Reformatie*, LII, No. 17. Translation by Mr. S. VanderPloeg.

Psalm 2

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COMMITTEE ON THE
CHURCH BOOK.

1. Why do the restless heathen madly rage?
What haughty schemes are they in vain contriving?
The kings and rulers of the earth engage
In rash attempts to plot their empty striving.
They stand prepared, they all conspire together
Against the LORD and His appointed King.
“Let us,” they say, “tear loose and break their fetters,
Cast off their chains, their shackles from us fling.”
2. Though proudly now they raise their battle cry,
How vain is all their frenzied opposition!
The LORD, Who sits enthroned in heaven on high,
Laughs them to scorn: He has them in derision.
Then will He speak in wrath and indignation
And all their host will He with terror fill:
“I’ve set My King,” so runs His proclamation,
“Upon mount Zion, on My holy hill.”
3. O peoples, listen to the LORD’s decree,
For unto Me He made this declaration:
“Thou art My Son, I have begotten Thee
This very day. To Thee I’ll give the nations.
Ask what Thou wilt: Thy heritage I’ll make them,
Their lands shalt Thou possess, both near and far.
Lo, with a rod of iron shalt Thou break them,
Dash them in pieces like a potter’s jar.”
4. Take heed, O rulers of the earth, and hear;
Be wise, O kings, and let His edict warn you.
Rejoice with trembling, serve the LORD with fear.
Now kiss the Son, lest He in fury scorn you,
Lest in His wrath the LORD cause you to perish,
For quickly kindled is His anger’s blaze.
But all who trust in Him the LORD will cherish;
He will defend and bless them all their days.

(This is the new rhyming of Psalm 2. See Clarion, Volume 26 - No. 14, July 16, 1977.)

The Sea of Galilee *

(by special correspondent)

If Jerusalem is the climax of a visit to Israel — the Holy Land, the Sea of Galilee (Kinneret) is surely the second most beautiful place to visit. As you drive down from the hills of Nazareth or cross the Valley of Megiddo from the ancient fortress city of King Solomon, suddenly, hundreds of feet below, you will see spread before you the harp-shaped Sea of Galilee. It is set in a ring of lofty hills with the world renowned Mount Hermon towering over it all. The Galilee is full of unexpected scenes: a suddenly-glimpsed caravan of camels dipping and bobbing against the crest of a hill, geometric patterns of green orchards and fields of golden corn, meadows of saffron reflecting in the sun, masses of orange rock with goats standing at impossible angles upon them. You will

never be able to forget the exquisite picture.

The Sea of Galilee has many names in Biblical and ancient records: God calls it the Sea of Kinneret when speaking to Moses (Numbers 34:11); Matthew calls it the Sea of Galilee; Luke, the Lake of Gennesaret; and John, the Sea of Tiberias.

The roughly harp-shaped lake from which it derives its name Kinneret is only thirteen miles long and seven-and-one-half miles wide at its widest part. It is, therefore, a lake rather than a "sea." But its history and beauty give it a character unique in time. It is situated in a pocket in the mountains 675 feet below sea level, and has a sub-tropical climate with palms, flowering trees and shrubbery. The level parts of the shore are always

green. Even in mid-winter the average temperature is 68 degrees. The Rabbis said: "The Lord hath created seven seas, but the Sea of Gennesaret is His delight."

George Adam Smith, in his famous classic, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (first published in 1894), writes of the Lake in the long gone days of the Herods and Jesus:

The Lake of Galilee was the focus of the whole province (of Galilee). Imagine that wealth of water, that fertility, those nerves and veins of the volcano, those great highways, that numerous population, that commerce and industry, those strong Greek influences — imagine them all crowded into a deep valley, under an almost tropical heat, round a great lake, and you have the conditions in which Christianity arose and Christ Himself laboured.

From four thousand years ago until after New Testament times, the Via Maris, the Biblical "Way of the Sea," went along the shores of this Lake. Warriors with their chariots, tradesmen with their camel caravans, pilgrims to Jerusalem the Holy City, all passed that way. Abraham, the trader and



Sea of Galilee: The sea is a life-giving resource to the State of Israel. It offers fish for the nation's tables and serves as the main reservoir for the national water system.

father of Israel, the mighty armies of Tiglath-pileser and Sennecherib, the great Assyrian enemies of Israel from the east and the Pharaohs Thutmose and Necho from Egypt all looked on it as they passed by millennia ago. The Syrian rulers and the later Pharaohs, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, all contended for Israel until the Romans came, conquered Israel and then destroyed parts of it — even Tiberias, the famous city on its shores, named after the Caesar Tiberius! Here in the lofty caves of the Arbell hid robber barons who preyed on those who passed by. Into that great hub of history came Jesus to choose his disciples from the simple fishermen of the area.

Let us take a trip around this Lake, projecting our minds back to the days of these fishermen. You can still visit parts of ancient Tiberias on the western shore. It was built around natural hot springs where Roman soldiers used to bathe and Crusaders bathed a thousand years later. The hot springs still draw thousands of tourists every year. By the 4th Century A.D., the Roman Empire had accepted Christianity as a state religion, but even then, and later, Jewish learning and teaching flourished in the Galilee. The Jerusalem Talmud was compiled in Tiberias.

Moving northward you pass through the ruins of the village where Mary Magdalene lived. You will see today the fishermen washing and mending their nets, as recorded in Luke 5:2, or casting them from their boats just beside the place where Jesus walked on the sea and Peter, trying to do so, failed (Matthew 14:25-34). Continuing through this fertile plain you come to Tabgha, the traditional site of the Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes and where more than 5000 were fed by Christ (Matthew 14:15-21). Just north of this is the Mount of Beatitudes, the place of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). You may visit the modern church which rests upon the foundation of one over 1500 years old that

commemorates this event. The miracle is depicted in an ancient mosaic floor in the church.

One of our American students, after returning from an extended field trip in the Galilee, remarked, "Sitting there beside the placid waters at the foot of the mount, and thinking of all that took place there during Jesus' ministry, is an incomparable experience. The Sea of Galilee is like a magnet, drawing me back again and again."

Now continue around the shore and stop for a short but wonderfully uplifting visit to the little church built right on the shore of the Lake over the steps and rock where the fishermen, after a night of failure at fishing, came ashore to find Jesus by a charcoal fire with fish broiling on it (John 21). Could they have been eating what we now call St. Peter's fish, enjoyed today around the world as a gourmet specialty? A visitor can still drop a line, catch a fish and cook it on an open fire on the shore of the lake.

Capernaum is next! Here, in a lovely garden, are the remains of the home of Peter, a Byzantine basilica built over it, and the high standing pillars of an ancient synagogue built upon the foundation of the one in which Jesus preached. Here Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever and many others who came. Nearby are the ruins of Chorazin and Bethsaida. What a wealth of Biblical and spiritual thoughts flood the mind!

On the other side of the Sea on the lofty, precipitous heights of Gadar, you will picture the herd of swine that "ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters" (Matthew 8). Under those precipices lies the lovely kibbutz of Ein Gev, where each year, during Passover, the well-known music festival takes place. At that time the nearby hills and plains are full of colour from the extraordinary variety of beautiful wild flowers. There are regularly scheduled boat crossings between Tiberias and Kibbutz Ein Gev. Boats are also available for charter and scenic cruises.

Today, the Lake is a great reservoir for all of Israel. The waters are channelled along canals and through pipes all the way down to the dry Negev desert in the south.

You'll not do it all in a day. There is just too much beauty and history to see and feel. Plan to spend a little time by the Kinneret and live in the beauty

of the present and the romance of the past.

* Submitted, together with the picture, by the Israel Government Tourist Office, 102 Bloor Street West, Suite 790, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1M8. August 1976

Church News

Called: REV. J. VISSCHER
of the Church at Coaldale, Alberta by
the Church at Guelph, Ontario.

* * *

The Convocation/College Evening will be held, D.V., Friday, September 9, 1977 in the Wellington Square United Church, 2121 Caroline St., Burlington, Ontario, commencing at 8:00 p.m.

Speakers for the evening will be Prof. L. Selles and the Rev. J. Geertsema. The graduation address will be by Br. H. Versteeg.

L. SELLES

* * *

All contributions for the Theological College and correspondence relating thereto, should be forwarded to the attention of:

Miss A. van Sydenborgh
c/o Theological College
374 Queen Street South,
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 3T8

H. DANTUMA, Treasurer.

Dear Readers:

This issue contains only sixteen pages instead of the usual twenty-four pages.

It is the time of year when most of us take a vacation.

The editorial staff of Clarion also took a break after a year of hard work. Especially for our editor, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, there is a tremendous amount of work involved. Not only in the writing of articles but also in dealing with the correspondence as a result of his editorship.

We hope that they have or have had an enjoyable vacation.
The Publisher.

OUR COVER

Herodion, Judea: The fortress in the desert built by Herod as a possible refuge from rebellion is also supposed to hold Herod's burial site. The location of Herod's tomb remains one of Israel's archaeological mysteries.

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

Don't you think it's time for our BIG SUMMER CONTEST again? Now that we have lots of time on our hands?

Be sure to join in! Can you find all the answers? Neatness counts too, remember? Send your entries to me at this address: Box 54, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W7.

Have a good time!

Quiz I

Recall

Each of the following articles should remind you of a Biblical character. How many can you recall?

1. ark _____
2. salt _____
3. rod _____
4. axe head _____
5. big fish _____
6. rib _____
7. fleece _____
8. burning bush _____
9. rainbow _____
10. crumbs _____
11. frog _____
12. harp _____
13. pillow _____
14. pottage _____
15. plumbline _____

Quiz II

Ready for Service

Not all the people in the numbers below seemed ready for service when first called, though they later obeyed. Who are they?

1. He answered the question of the Lord with, "Here am I; send me." _____
2. He said he could not speak when called to make his people free. _____
3. He would rid the men of their foreign wives. They said, "Be of good courage, and do it." _____
4. He came to Judah to rebuild the wall, though few of the people knew it. _____
5. Ordained a deacon, he obeyed the call, and he baptized a eunuch. _____
6. He was ready to fight for his king and kill an enemy giant. _____
7. These two were chosen to go and preach, and they went from Antioch. _____
8. This prophet was unwilling when he was sent to Nineveh. _____
9. When called to fight the Midianite he asked for signs of dew. _____
10. When asked by the judge to fight he said he would go if she went, too. _____
11. He gave his life for the Gospel he preached. Young Paul was standing by. _____
12. He was ready to follow the prophet when he kissed his parents good-bye. _____

Quiz III

Who or What Is:

1. Hard? _____
2. A mocker? _____
3. The root of all evil? _____
4. The beginning of wisdom? _____
5. Rather to be chosen than great riches? _____
6. Better than sacrifice? _____
7. Not puffed up? _____
8. Of few days and full of trouble? _____
9. The heaviness of his mother? _____
10. Perfect, converting the soul? _____
11. Sure, making wise the simple? _____
12. Pure, enlightening the eyes? _____
13. Known by his doings? _____
14. Far above rubies? _____
15. Vanity? _____
16. A weariness of the flesh? _____
17. Abomination to the Lord? _____
18. Not arrayed like one of these (lilies)? _____
19. The evidence of things not seen? _____
20. Become the headstone of the corner? _____
21. Wise in his own conceit? _____
22. Precious in the sight of the Lord? _____

* * * * *

Write a poem for our POETRY CONTEST, Busy Beavers! Or maybe you will write more than one! Send them in with your quiz entries. I'm looking forward to lots of letters!

* * * * *

Now before we go any farther, Busy Beavers, I want to tell you that I received a letter about 10 year-old *Ivan Van Assen* of Neerlandia who is quite sick and who enjoys receiving cards from you Busy Beavers. I hope many of you will respond and help brighten the days for Ivan. His address: Box 28, Neerlandia, Alberta T0G 1R0.

* * * * *



From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club *John Paul Van Amerongen*. We hope you will really like being a Busy Beaver and will join in all our Busy Beaver activities. Write again soon, John Paul.

Hello *Corinne Terpstra*. I hope you will enjoy your trip to Holland. I think your "Oma" can't wait to see you, either!

Thank you for your very nice poem, *Yvonne Van Amerongen*. Did you give a nice copy of it to your Dad, too? Keep up the good work, Yvonne.

How did you do on your piano exam, *Marjorie Smouter*? Did you miss much of your class outing? And how did you enjoy your Field Day?

Are you enjoying your swimming pond, *Patricia Van Raalte*? I hope you will really like going to your new school next year! In the meantime have a nice summer, Patricia. Thank you very much for your contribution to the Birthday Fund. And keep up the good work on the quizzes.

Thank you for your nice, clear word-search puzzle, *Carl Werkman*. Bye for now. Write again soon.

Hello *James Slaa*. It was nice to hear from you again. Have a good time with all your visitors this summer, James. And thank you for your quizzes.