

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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# General Synod 1977

## ON OUR WAY

Since our readers would like to know as much as possible about our General Synod and since they wish to know it as soon as possible, I start writing on our way to Coaldale, Alberta. It is not yet a full hour ago since we left the Toronto Airport and thus we are still above Ontario. The intercom brought us the message that the flying time in the big Loughheed Air bus is approximately three hours and forty minutes. We expect to be in Lethbridge around a quarter past one this Monday, November 7th, and that is then Mountain Standard Time.

We are enjoying beautiful sunshine, be it above the clouds, for it was drizzling rain when we were in Toronto. However, when flying at a height of some eleven kilometers one leaves most of the clouds behind and needs sunglasses when sitting by the window.

I am speaking of "we," and that is no *pluralis majestatis*. All the brethren from Ontario are in this plane except, if I am not mistaken, the Rev. J. Geertsema. He was to leave from Windsor and we may see him later on in Calgary.

It is a known fact that of the royal family the members travel in separate planes. If anything happens to the one aircraft, not all members are involved. Thus it might have been wise if we had divided our company over two different flights. I recall that, at the end of the Synod Edmonton 1965, one of the Ontario elders protested loudly when the four ministers from Ontario planned to return home aboard the same aircraft. "No," he said, "for if anything happens, we lose four ministers at the same time!" The result was that they went two by two.

Over against that I recall the word of a colleague whom I asked whether he ever took out extra insurance when travelling by air. "No," he said, "for the Lord promised the Israelites that they would be safe and that nothing would happen to them when they travelled to Jerusalem."

It all depends, I thought, from what angle you look at it, and something can be said in favour of both utterances. Anyway, this time I did not take out extra flight insurance and this time eight of the nine brethren who have to come from Ontario are together in the same plane. One has to be protected by the Lord everywhere if any safety is to be had at all. That is something which one realizes especially when hanging somewhere in the air inside a large ship in which I could easily drive around in my Beetle. However, I had better interrupt my reporting, for the smell of the meal which is to be served

penetrates into my nostrils and that is not a great incentive to report extensively on all sorts of events.

So far, therefore, the introduction to the further happenings.

\* \* \* \* \*

While outside the sun is shining brightly, we do not have any benefit from it: Air Canada apparently deems it necessary that all the shades are drawn so that each and every one of its passengers has to look at a dumb movie which is being shown. The few glances which I cast in the direction of the screen have convinced me long since that it is clearer than the sunlight outside that everything is a fake. It is not worth looking at. Besides, in order to be able to follow the plot, one has to have a set of earphones which can be rented for the sum of two dollars for the duration of the flight. You don't get much for free any longer nowadays. And although these earphones enable the passengers also to hear recorded classical music, it seems to be sort of an expensive entertainment for three hours and forty minutes. Thus I have foregone that "pleasure" and meanwhile spent my time writing these lines and informing my family in writing how I have been making out thus far.

You'll understand that with this shutting out of the daylight I do not take it ill of the ticket-control that they did not assign me a window seat.

Meanwhile we must be somewhere above Manitoba or Saskatchewan by now, but I won't see much of the Cypress Hills, I presume.

I'll leave you now until something happens which is worthy to be mentioned. For that, I presume, we'll have to wait till we are in Coaldale. We'll see.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes, we're in Coaldale now. Rev. J. Visscher and br. Neil Van Seters were at the Lethbridge airport and brought us safely to the place where also the Church building is and where the meetings will be conducted. We are in Coaldale.

That brings back memories from the past.

This is the first Canadian Reformed Church: then called the Church at Lethbridge.

Here the Rev. G.Ph. Pieffers served faithfully for many years.

I still can look with fondness at the picture which shows the (then) Candidate C. Van Spronsen receiving the congratulations from the brethren: There was the Rev. Pieffers, there was the Rev. J.T. Van Popta, there

was the Rev. H.A. Stel. All three of them are no longer with us. Coaldale-Lethbridge brings back memories which are treasured.

Gradually everything has expanded and the old familiar surroundings have changed so much that one who visits only occasionally has a hard time recognizing things. Familiar landmarks have disappeared, the "Holland Yard," cradle, so to speak, of the Canadian Reformed Church at Lethbridge, can hardly be found back and only a cluster of trees reminds us of what once was a center of activity.

It is in Coaldale that the eighth General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches will be held and will have completed a large part of its agenda by the time these lines reach our readers. What you read here is written after the prayer service on the eve of Synod, conducted by the Rev. J. Mulder of Toronto, who was chairman of the 1974 Synod.

#### THE SERVICE

The service began with the singing of Psalm 97:1, 2, after which we professed our faith with the words of the Nicene Creed, followed by the singing of Psalm 97:3.

From Holy Scripture we read Exodus 7:14-20 and II Kings 1:1-13. Rev. Mulder then asked the Lord's blessing upon the preaching of His Word.

The text for the sermon was Revelation 11:5 and 6, on which the Rev. Mulder preached after we had sung Psalm 74:2, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

It is sometimes said today, Rev. Mulder said, that the Church does not have much impact on the daily, practical life. What are really the effects of the Word of God upon this world? Is the Church not an institution which should concern itself with the "soul" and with salvation, and then salvation not understood in the Scriptural sense but in that very limited sense which does not leave any room for impact on daily life?

Is that really true? When we read our text we get a completely different impression. Here we read that fire goes out of the mouth of the two witnesses and that they have the authority to send every plague upon mankind. That speaks of great power. That speaks of impact on daily life, on nation and on society. And it is quite something isn't it: fire, water changed into blood, and so on!

Yes, someone might remark, but we read only of two witnesses, only two, and does that not point to a very small minority?

In the Revelation to John we find a reference to Zechariah 4, the two witnesses, who represent the Church, the Church as she has been organized by the Lord and provided with elders and deacons and ministers. The two witnesses represent the Church as she is working in this world. Here we read of the *function* of the Church. Her power is great when she completes her prophetic task, and that is the theme: *The Power of the Church Faithfully Completing Her Task in the World*.

We read here the word "witnessing" and that means: giving testimony, proclaiming the Word of God regarding the past, present, and future, telling the

people that God has a claim on them, proclaiming to all and every one that apart from Christ there is no peace and progress.

People want to shape their own destiny in this world. When the Church is faithful in proclaiming God's Word, she will get hurt. If she compromises, then she will not be hurt in any way but if she is faithful, hurt will come.

Is she then powerless?

Our text says: If anyone is out to hurt and harm her, fire will come forth out of their mouth and devour those enemies. All commentators agree: Here is a clear reference to Moses and to Elijah.

When the Revelation to John describes the function and the task of the Church, it does so in the terms of the Old Testament. We hear of the power which the Old Testament prophets had, a power which is now concentrated in the Church. When the Church proclaims the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, she has a tremendous power.

Does that mean that the Church can do all sorts of tricks for her own convenience? Does that mean that she can do things which make the headlines in the papers?

We are to keep in mind the *nature* of that power. And what that nature is is clear when we look at the passages to which our text refers.

Yes, the fire did destroy one hundred people, but was that to show what Elijah could do? No; there was a king in Israel who ignored God, who went to the idols instead of to the true God. There was a king in Israel who sent his soldiers to capture a prophet in order to eliminate the power of prophecy from Israel. That really is a terrible thing that the king of God's people ignores the LORD.

The world round about us is abusing God's gifts, it tries to destroy the Church. Then the Church has the power to cause the economy of a godless nation to collapse. The Church gets involved in the judgment of the Lord. When people ignore God and kill prophecy, then the Church has power to destroy the prosperity of a nation, to bring down God's judgment.

Never think that the Church cannot do anything when prophesying faithfully. It is only unfaithfulness which renders powerless, which breaks the impact of the Church on the world.

Can we send fire from heaven? Can we really destroy the enemies of God? Or are we so materialistic that we use everything to our own honour? Can we turn the Old Man River into blood?

No, we cannot work in that manner. The fire of which we speak here is the fire of the faithful speaking of the Word of God. If one does not repent, then indeed the wrath of God rests upon that person. If anyone rejects the Word of the Lord, His fire comes down upon that person.

The fire in the days of Elijah may have been much more impressive. The Revelation speaks of the vials of wrath being poured out. It seems far less impressive

when, if people turn away from the Word of God which you have spoken, the wrath of God rests on them. Yet the message is not something which does not mean anything. The effect is: God's eternal wrath and judgment rest upon them to their everlasting ruin.

That is what we are to do as Churches and that is what also a General Synod is to do: speak the Word of God. Keep it in mind: unfaithfulness renders powerless.

When the Church faithfully handles the Keys of the Kingdom, the judgment comes by that very Word. The faithful performing of her duties is one of the ways in which the Church sets the judgments of God into motion.

Thus you are to do your duty in all simplicity.

In what does that motion then become visible?

If you wish to see something, then look somewhere else: the beast coming up out of the earth and appearing with many visible signs. Many people see something in that.

We don't have that kind of thing. As a Church we look very poor in that respect.

However, the Lord Jesus Christ will appear and then the final judgment will come. Of this we can be certain: that the Saviour will judge according to the Word spoken by the Church.

This is our prayer: that as Churches and as General

Synod we may faithfully fulfil our prophetic task so that in this way the Churches may have an impact on the life in this our country.

Psalm 46:1, 5 was sung.

After this, Rev. Mulder led in prayer for the Churches and for the General Synod.

Of Hymn 46 we sang the stanzas 3 and 5, and the benediction concluded the service.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many of those attending the service made use of the opportunity to have coffee downstairs with the delegates to Synod. Many old ties were strengthened or renewed and new acquaintances were made. It was good to see so many of the brothers and sisters whom we have known for many years. We recalled old stories and relived some of the experiences which we went through together.

Gradually the hands of the clock moved on and your reporter realized that at home it was already far past midnight when he concluded the above report on the prayer service.

You will, therefore, not take it ill of him that he is going to try to get some sleep in order to be fit for tomorrow's opening of Synod.

Hopefully we can get this to Winnipeg in time.

See you next time.

vO

1. God is our ref- uge; he will shield us And to  
our foes he will not yield us. He is our strength  
in trou- bles nigh, Our help is he, the LORD Most High.  
The earth may shake in great com- mo- tion, The moun-  
tains plunge in- to the o- cean, The seas may roar  
and rock the hills, God is with us, our fears he stills.

## Psalm 46

*"Be still and know, all you who bide me,  
That I am God, and none beside me.  
I am exalted, and my might  
Makes prideful nations flee in fright.  
In all the earth I am exalted,  
By me your enemies are halted!"  
The LORD of hosts is on our side,  
With Jacob's God we safely hide.*



## REVELATION 11:5, 6

And if any one would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if any one would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed. They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

(Text of the sermon delivered by Rev. J. Mulder at the prayer service on the eve of Synod 1977.)



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# Circumspection...

## “DEATH OF A YPS”

This is a true story. Only the names and places have been altered to prevent positive identification.

It also is a sad story, for it deals with death in its most terrible form. Spiritual decline. It is the drama of a Young People's Society which recently passed away. I know, for I was among the mourners. Although the mourners were few.

The name of the society was quite common. A good name for a YPS, reminiscent of the deep roots of the Reformation: *Sola Fide*. Only *By Faith*. Faith as an activity, a sure knowledge and a firm confidence. Faith as a confession, a solid heritage from the fathers.

To some it came as a complete surprise, this sudden death. But then again, they were not really involved anyway. Others did have a faint premonition of disaster, but they failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Only a few really saw it coming, for the disease was apparent to the watchful viewer. But their warnings were brushed off and went unheeded. No sweat.

Standing at the grave of *Sola Fide*, one could not help but wonder, “What brought about this untimely death?” You might call it a case of chronic anemia. Lack of faith. Maybe it was a dose of “cosmotitis,” more love for the world than for the Kingdom of Heaven. I guess the members generally did not see the importance and necessity of this work and felt grossly overburdened. Since some were compelled to go to the meetings, they lacked correct motivation at the meetings, and their only contribution was subtle sabotage of the procedure. In the end, *Sola Fide* did not have the stamina to absorb these subversive activities.

There are usually three categories of members at a YPS. The first group never comes at all, mostly because they feel that the society does not function as it should. I could never appreciate these arrogant way-side critics who gloated over the downfall of the society. We can do without such self-righteous critics, since they never participate in a positive effort. The second group, as indicated above, by far the majority of members at *Sola Fide*, did come regularly, but only for tomfoolery and

entertainment. They were very skillful at making it absolutely clear that conscientious Bible study was far beneath their dignity. A third group struggled to permit the proper functioning of the society, engaged in adequate “forestudy,” and attempted to place God's Word in the center of attention. And when this group gave up in utter disgust, *Sola Fide* had deleted its last positive resources.

Now the death of *Sola Fide* could be an exception, a sad incident caused by unfortunate circumstances. Perhaps our societies throughout the federation are thriving prosperously. But I wonder . . .

Recently in an interesting editorial in “*De Reformatie*,” Prof. Dr. C. Trimp called for more consistorial supervision over the Young People's Societies of our Dutch sister-Churches. And he makes the following noteworthy remarks. “Much of the activity of the young people is suffering. One seldom hears boys and girls speak with enthusiasm about their experiences at the societies. There is a great lack of knowledge, despite our many Reformed schools. There is little dedication and inadequate planning, little capacity for leadership, for preservation of style, and for giving concrete form to the communion of saints at the societies.” It is also Dr. Trimp's opinion that today's young people are much more defensive, aloof, and uncertain than previously. Many take on a waiting attitude. And he concludes, “If a YPS keeps suffering, the Church suffers.”

Yes, the death of *Sola Fide* could be an exception. It really should not have happened at all. But could it also not be symptomatic of a more widespread disease? The spirit which prevails in The Netherlands is active throughout the western world, also in our nation. Is it not one of Satan's prime objectives to isolate the youth from the Church of the Lord? Are parents, young people, and consistories deeply concerned with the true well-being of the youth of the Covenant?

Yesterday we buried *Sola Fide*. As I said, the mourners were few. But they did erect a stone to mark the grave. On it they engraved this revealing inscription: *Sine Fide* — By lack of faith (James 2:26b).

Cid

# No Happy Medium

The Reformed "system" of Church government is not the "happy middle" between two extremes. It is definitely not so that on the one side there is the hierarchical form of Church government, with either prelates such as popes, bishops, etc., or synods; and on the other side there is the complete "anarchy," when every congregation does what is good in its own eyes and recognizes no binding decisions of any "major" assembly; and that now the truly Reformed Church polity strikes a happy medium, balancing precariously between the two extremes, trying to avoid the pitfalls of both those extremes.

We should not think that one is and remains truly Reformed when he succeeds in avoiding excesses in either direction.

As far as I can see, the Reformed form of Church government is unique.

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There is no power or authority above the Consistory, except the power and the authority of Christ. The local office-bearers are accountable only to Christ and do not have to answer anyone's questions. Yet they should not "lord it over" the inheritance of the Lord, His flock, and they should always realize that they are just plain nothing without the Congregation.

When entering upon a federation with sister-Churches — being one with them in faith — those local Churches and Consistories did not delegate any of their authority to meetings of delegates from the various local Churches. Each and every Church remained autonomous. Yet they made certain promises, submitting themselves, no, not to the (alleged) authority of the broader assemblies, but indeed, to their judgment in well-defined instances.

The Churches promised each other that at their broader assemblies they would deal only with ecclesiastical matters and that they would not deal at such broader assemblies with matters of a local nature but only with those matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which pertain to the Churches represented at that broader assembly in common. And then there is the possibility for members who are convinced

that they have been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly to appeal to a broader assembly. Finally, there are certain matters in which the Churches have promised each other not to proceed unless they have received favourable advice from the broader assembly.

By all the above agreements, the Churches have not delegated any of their authority, nor have they placed themselves under the supervision of sister-Churches or of broader assemblies and their deputies. They are and remain completely autonomous, yet have voluntarily restricted themselves in their actions, and have promised to accept the judgment of the broader assemblies in the matters mentioned above.

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It is only when we remain faithful to that specific character of our Reformed Church polity that we can stay clear, not of the *excesses* of hierarchy, but of hierarchy itself; not of the *excesses* of Congregationalism, but of Congregationalism itself. And that is basically different from striking a happy medium. Reformed Church polity is neither the one nor the other, nor, for that matter, right in the middle between the two. It is altogether different; it has its own unique character.

What happened in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in the late thirties and early forties of this century was not just a slip, an incidental deviation, from otherwise honoured and observed "principles," but constituted a *basic* change, from Reformed to hierarchical. And the new Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church has fallen prey to the same tendency, even though it is more of a hybrid than the new Church Order of its Netherlands sister-Churches.

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In a "Letter to the Editor," the Rev. G. VanDooren drew our attention to the formulation found in a bulletin where a Consistory "endorsed" a proposal made by a sister-Church to Synod. He said enough about that formulation as such. I wish to draw your attention to the practice of discussing the Synodical agenda at Consistory meetings, and also say a few words about the phenomenon of "ratification."

This is not the first time I do so.

Quite a few years ago I tried to show that a Synod is no "ballot box." The brethren who go to a Synod are not meeting just to count the opinions of the Churches about certain points, nor to vote as they have been told to vote by their delegating assemblies. They go there with authorization to deal with and decide upon all matters which are brought to that Synod in harmony with the accepted Church Order.

Those delegated to a Synod are not free to discuss, deal, decide as they see fit. They are bound to do so "in submission to the Holy Scriptures, in faithful adherence to the Reformed Confessions, and in loyal observance of the adopted Church Order," as the Credentials given by the Regional Synod of Ontario, September 21, 1977, have it.

Within that framework, however, they are completely free in their activities.

They are the ones who have to discuss, deal with, decide upon. The ones that make the decisions at the Synodical level are *not* the Churches, but Synod — the brethren assembled there at the broadest assembly. And the Churches should not act as if they are called upon to pass judgment on every matter to be dealt with by Synod. Remember: only those matters shall be dealt with that could not be finished in the minor assembly, or that belong to the Churches of the broader assembly in common. Further one may appeal to a broader assembly.

Matters which could not be finished in the Consistory are to be dealt with at a Classis and not at the Consistories.

Matters which belong to the Classis-Churches in common are to be decided upon at the Classis and not at the Consistories.

Appeals are to be directed to a Classis and are to be dealt with there and not at the Consistories. For that reason it is basically contrary to the character of Reformed Church polity to send appeals to Consistories, other than the one whose decision is being appealed.

This applies, *mutatis mutandis*, also to Regional and General Synods.

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Why, then, are the Churches informed about the agenda of the General Synod, and why are copies of reports and overtures sent to them?

Because all those matters are the matters of the *Churches*. A Synod is nothing without the Churches.

Actually, the provisional agenda should be in the possession of the Churches before delegates to the General Synod are chosen. It could be that it is deemed advisable to delegate certain brothers with a view to specific matters which will come up.

Each and every Church should have the opportunity to express its views on a matter and to submit its arguments for those views.

Each and every Church should be able to remember in her prayers specific difficulties which may be expected, matters which will be hard to decide on or which could have profound influence on the future of the Churches. How can the prayers of the Churches be concrete and to the point if they do not know what Synod will have to deal with?

\* \* \*

The above does not mean or involve at all that it is each Consistory's obligation to go through all the documents, to discuss all of them, and to come to a decision regarding them. Consistories that do so may think that they are acting in a thoroughly Reformed manner, but in fact they are acting as if they were a Synod, and thus they are not acting in a Reformed manner at all.

The proper procedure, as I see it, would be to distribute the documents of the office-bearers and to ask them to come with definite proposals if they think that the Consistory should address itself to Synod to draw the attention of Synod to specific aspects or should give some arguments which may help Synod reach a warranted decision.

But discussing all documents and proposals as a Consistory — no, that would be "playing Synod" and basically would be a waste of time.

What we have agreed upon to be matters with which general synods are to deal, should be left to those Synods.

The preparatory work is to be done by the minor assemblies, starting with the Churches themselves. They should never ask a major assembly what they could — and should! — have done themselves. Even when a Church makes a proposal concerning a matter which pertains to the Churches in common, that Church should investigate the matter thoroughly and come with arguments and documentary proof in support of their proposal.

Asking Synod to do the investigating and studying works towards hierarchy.

It is here that the Churches have to be active, each and every one.

But when doing the work of which we have agreed upon that Synods should do, a Consistory proves that it misunderstands what Reformed Church polity means in this respect.

\* \* \*

As I said above, I was going to say something about the so-called ratification procedure.

When the Acts of Classes and Synods have been received by the Churches, you can read in various bulletins that Consistories read those Acts, sometimes piecemeal, spread over a few meetings, and "ratified them."

Here, too, we have the very same symptoms which the Rev. G. Van-Dooren pointed out in his letter to the editor.

It could happen so easily that the thought gains ground that decisions of a broader assembly are not binding unless they have been "ratified" by the Consistories (and why then not also by the Church members individually? Once one starts on that road, there is no end to the individualistic approach!).

I know where all that speaking of "ratification" comes from. It was brought to the fore in the days of the Liberation when Synods denied the right of Churches and Church members even to examine and test Synodical decisions, to put it briefly.

However, afterwards many in the Liberated Churches spoke of "ratification" without being aware even from afar what it means and when it is to be done. Many were and are of the opinion that it is the God-given duty of at least all Consistories to study and examine all decisions of broader assemblies and to see whether they can accept them or not. It could happen (even in our own Canadian Church history!) that it was said on behalf of a Consistory, "But this Synodical decision is not yet binding upon us, for we have not yet ratified it." Of all things!

Decisions of broader assemblies are binding from the very moment they are made.

That is not so because they have been made by assemblies which are supposed to have any authority over the Churches.

That is because we have given them a certain place and task in our Church life and because we have authorized the brothers whom we sent to that broader assembly to deal with

and decide upon all matters which are presented to them in accordance with the rules we have adopted. When you send plenipotentiaries, it is only a matter of course that you are also bound by agreements they make with due observance of the instructions given along.

The whole "ratification-wave" which swept through the Liberated Churches was caused, I'm afraid, to a large extent by the very same line of thought which has become prevalent among the majority of the Churches "outside the Federation"; many among them do not even wish to recognize a broader assembly as having any jurisdiction. Broader assemblies, it is stated, can only advise.

I agree with the statement that they can only advise, but hasten to add that this advice is *binding*. And the only time any Church would be allowed to consider itself not bound by it is when the decision imposes upon that Church demands which are contrary to God's Word or which go far beyond the Word of God, or when a decision affecting her was made with gross violation of the provisions of the Church Order.

We have given to our broader assemblies a certain jurisdiction, though no authority.

It is a matter of faithfulness to recognize that jurisdiction also in the manner in which we receive the decisions made by those broader assemblies.

\* \* \*

I realize that in the past synods sometimes acted very haughtily, acting and speaking in more than one instance in this vein: "It has pleased the Holy Spirit and us to so decide; now you'd better obey."

That was wrong.

However, are we now allowed to assume that all the prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit offered up at Synods, and by Churches and Church members in their behalf, remain without fruit?

Are we now allowed to assume that wisdom and submission to the Holy Spirit become progressively less when we go from Consistory to Classis to Regional Synod to General Synod?

Does the Lord give His Spirit only to brothers at the Consistory level, and does He withhold Him from them when they are assembled in Synod?

Haughtiness and spiritual (but un-Spiritual) pride are certainly no sins which are found only with the major assemblies!

vO

# press review

## THE SOCIAL DANCE ISSUE

In the previous "Press Review" I promised that I would bring the above-mentioned issue to the attention of the readers of *Clarion*. In the September issue of *The Outlook* the Rev. John Vander Ploeg writes an editorial about it. The Board of Calvin College in Grand Rapids made a decision with respect to "social dancing," declaring it to be acceptable in a certain way. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church did not disapprove. We read:

The CRC Synod of '77 has something to say to all who still have ears to hear and eyes to see. This year's Synod is giving out signals — ominous signals — so loud and clear that he who runs may read.

Religious dullards, deliberate cop-outs, those whose chief concern is not to rock the boat, and those who want to be comfortable at any and all costs, may fail or refuse to take note of these signals. Liberals and the like (the foe within the gate) may tell us there is really no cause for concern as to the future of the Reformed faith. And, as the saying has it, "The devil is never too busy to rock the cradle of a sleeping saint."

Now, these signals — what are they? The following come to mind — Synod's decisions concerning:

— Social dancing at Calvin College . . .

More issues follow, but we confine ourselves to this one. Rev. Vander Ploeg writes:

Well, as a CRC we have come a long, long way in these matters since 1928 and 1951. It is very urgent for us to take stock to know whether this has been for good or for evil. Specifically, how is so-called "social dancing" looked upon in the CRC today? The CRC Synod of '77 has left us with a number of highly important signals . . .

Simply stated, the Calvin Board (composed largely of CRC ministers and a minority of laymen) decided to approve of and to introduce social dancing at Calvin College.

Shock-proof as one becomes in times like these, I'll admit that this still came across as a shocker to me. And when this matter was reported at Synod, and when Dr. Harry Holwerda (an M.D. from De Motte, Indiana and serving as a delegate from Classis Illiana) made a motion to *disapprove* of this decision of the Calvin Board, and when I naively expected that the CRC Synod would certainly endorse such disapproval, and when I heard

instead that the motion to disapprove was soundly defeated — frankly, I could hardly believe my ears. Was that really the Synod of our CRC?

As stated above, the Calvin Board is largely made up of CRC ministers. Moreover, the CRC Synod has 76 ministers as delegates. However, the minutes of the Calvin Board meeting record that only one member (Mr. Berton Sevensma, a Grand Rapids attorney) requested that his *negative vote* on the social dancing decision be recorded. It seemed significant also that it was a young medical doctor at Synod who made the motion to *disapprove* of this action of the Calvin Board. To be sure, there were ministers who spoke in favor of the motion to *disapprove* but it is worthy of note and also of appreciative recognition that it was a lawyer and a medical doctor who spoke up as they did on this matter.

In the article the entire decision of the Board of Calvin College is then given. From it I take over the main part. It reads:

Whereas out of concern for the increasing practice of social dancing on the campus of Calvin College, the President of the College, on December 1, 1976, appointed an *ad hoc* (for this matter) Committee on Dancing, and said Committee reported its findings to the President and the Board of Trustees at its meeting of May 23, 1977 and days following,

The Board of Trustees states its position on this matter in the following way:

1. The Board instructs the Administration to implement immediately the development of social dancing in a Christian manner by:

a. instructing its art, music, drama, and physical education departments to provide leadership and direction in using the social dance in a Christian way, and

b. "All Christians, according to the talents God has given them, must work positively and constructively to fulfill the cultural mandate" (Acts of Synod, 1966, p. 34).

c. A policy allowing students the freedom to dance ought to be accompanied by instructions to those who guide these students to provide leadership in implementation, and by instructions, to the students themselves.

2. The Board accepts the recommendation included in the report of the *ad hoc* Committee on Dancing that Calvin College "allow for social dancing as an acceptable, and wholesome, on-campus,

recreational activity for Calvin students and staff", as regulated by the guidelines given in the same report.

*Ground:*

The decision of Synod (1971) provides a sound basis for the College to authorize dancing within the above guidelines.

3. The Board instructs the Administration to delay implementation of this policy until September 1978.

*Grounds:*

a. This will allow the Calvin College community the time needed to implement the development of social dancing in a Christian manner.

b. This will allow the Calvin College constituency and the Christian Reformed churches and assemblies the time needed to express a collective mind on the position of the Board of Trustees.

I ask the reader's special attention for the motive of the Board of Calvin College to appoint a committee that had to deal with the matter of social dancing. In the consideration we read: "Whereas out of concern for the increasing practice of social dancing on the campus of Calvin College . . ." This means that social dancing is practically an accepted thing for many. I can understand that that was a reason for concern for the Board at Calvin College. I read in this consideration that the Board wished that this dancing was not an accepted thing. But it is. At "Calvin" it is done, whether one agrees with it or not. Confronted with this situation, the Board decided to do whatever possible to make the best of it. And the only possibility left, as they saw it — I think — was to lead and instruct the "dancers" in such a way that they would learn to practice their social dancing in a "Christian way": "Christian" social dancing, so to speak.

Before I continue with my remarks I first will quote some more of what Rev. Vander Ploeg writes. He says that he sees signals flashing and hears bells ringing. Some of those signals I quote. We read:

When signals are flashing and bells are ringing at a railroad crossing to the danger of an oncoming, speeding train, a motorist or pedestrian must be blind, deaf, drunk, or bent upon suicide if he fails to take warning. CRC constituents are no less to be pitied if they now refuse to pay attention. Consider then a few of these signals:

1. Signal number one that should come through loud and clear to those who have long supported Calvin is that "onze school" and the CRC have changed radically. The social dance, by a synodical decision of 1928, was branded as being disreputable and a worldly amuse-



ment to be shunned. But now it is being advocated as something to be made "Christian" and as having a potential for the fulfillment of "the cultural mandate."

How unrealistic and naive can we get to be! There are other voices to which we do far better to listen. Writing in HIS MAGAZINE, Dwight Small in an article (Dec., 1962) on "Dating — with or without Dancing" writes:

"Even medical science clearly identifies dancing as a sex stimulant, going so far as to define it as an erotic exercise, as part of the sexual commerce itself. *Medical Review of Reviews* states: 'There can be scarcely any doubt that dancing came about as an adjunct of sexual stimulation.' Professor W. C. Wilkinson of the University of Chicago analyzed the modern dance as 'a system of means, contrived with more than human ingenuity, to excite the instinct of sex into action'. Roman Catholic Archbishop Spaulding of New York said that the confessional reveals the fact that nearly every known lapse of female virtue is traceable to the dance."

Are we really so gullible now as to think that the social dance can be made "Christian" and a fulfillment of the "cultural mandate"? To be sure, the signal says that times have changed and the CRC along with it — but definitely in the wrong direction!

Rev. Piersma sees as a second signal that difficulties might arise for some to pay their contributions. The third signal is that many youth organizations and schools now can follow. However, I ask: How many adults have already accepted social dancing as a form of entertainment at their parties? I cannot imagine that the practice at "Calvin" is something entirely unknown and new. In signal 4 he speaks about the youth for whom this decision can become a stumbling block as spoken of in Matthew 18. Signal 5 I quote:

Another signal — number five — says something to the discerning student who is not misled by the Board's attempt to justify the social dance as they intend to have it at Calvin. A case in point is the following quote from a letter by Dirk Miedema of Phelpston, Ontario, published in *Calvinist-Contact* (July 15, 1977):

"Dear Sir: I am a 1977 graduate of Calvin College. I was somewhat disturbed to read that the Board of Trustees at Calvin College will be allowing social dancing at Calvin. However, I'm not as disturbed with their decision as I am with their means of justifying their decision. They justify dancing at Calvin by saying that it will be creative, educational and to the glory of God. This is a real joke for many of us who know that dancing is done for enjoyment, for entertainment and not for its creative or educational values. No

matter how many good intentions the Board of Trustees has, dancing will always be just that, at Calvin, or anywhere else . . . ."

This is honest. It shows the way the "dancers" see things. "Christian, educational and creative" dancing? To speak that way is just a joke!!

In signal 6 "godly parents" are warned to "be aware of the wrong influence to which their sons and daughters will be exposed even when they entrust them to Calvin for their college education." Then we read:

Of course, we are still being given the coming year in which we may protest the Calvin Board's recent decision re the social dance. However, in view of the Synod's decision *not to disapprove* of this social-dancing decision, can we still believe that protests will now be anything more than another exercise in futility?

Signal seven — and that should suffice — we profess in our Heidelberg Catechism re the seventh commandment in Lord's Day 41 that

"God condemns all unchastity.

We should therefore thoroughly detest it and, married or single, live decent and chaste lives.

"We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.

That is why He forbids everything which incites unchastity, whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires."

Or has language like that now gotten to be for "squares" only?

I like to add a few more remarks. We read what Prof. Wilkinson of the University of Chicago said: the modern dance is "a system of means to excite the instinct of sex into action." Therefore, once again, I can understand the concern of the Board of "Calvin." I can also understand the concern of Rev. Piersma. He is quite excited in his way of writing, wanting to wake his readers up.

But is this not the way it often goes: first a certain thing is taken over from the world in the church, and then people say, "We do not like it but we have to live with the situation; we cannot reject it any longer since too many people have accepted it already; so the only thing left is to make the best of it." *And this is wrong.* I could even say: this is sin. It is sin against the third commandment. This third word of the Covenant says that we may not connect the Name of God with what is vanity. And vanity is everything that is the opposite of the Name of the LORD. The LORD is life; the LORD is holy; the

LORD is reliable; and so on. So vanity is death, all that is unholy and unreliable, all that is sin and leads to sin. So we may not connect sin and what leads to sin with the Name of our God, and thus we may not give it a place in our lives.

And that is what is happening here: connecting the Name of Christ with this social dancing is connecting with the Name of Christ something that is the opposite of that Name. Christ redeems from sin. Social dancing is "a system of means to excite the instinct of sex into action." And "nearly every known lapse of female virtue is traceable to the dance," according to the archbishop of New York, who came to this conclusion on the basis of the Roman Catholic confessionals (biecht). So "Christian social dancing" is a *contradictio in terminis* (a contradiction in terms) already. Christ and this dancing do not go together. And therefore the Christian and this dancing cannot be connected either.

If Prof. Wilkinson and Archbishop Spaulding are right — and I do not doubt that they are — the Board of "Calvin" and the Synod of the CRC, which must lead their people in speaking prophetically according to the truth, went badly wrong. They are following the modern liberal trend. There are "Christians" who claim that it is possible to have a homosexual "marriage" that is fully acceptable. A Christian homosexual relation? It's terrible. It's an abomination. Some maintain, even some "Christians," that, if the relation in a marriage is not good, and the husband and/or wife find more compatible partners whom they really "love," then they may establish a relation with those "better" partners. We have to leave one another free in the name of "love." In other words: "Christian" adultery, and "Christian" homosexuality. Again I say: Is it not terrible? In the eyes of the LORD it must be an abomination: such a misuse of the holy Name of Christ.

And, please, let us not come with the remark that we dance only with our own husband or wife. Maybe that is so in the beginning, but the children see Mom and Dad going to a party and dance, and they hear them replying to objections: "What is wrong with it? We do it in a neat way!" (Does this mean: a Christian way? Is this out of faith? Is this according to God's will?) And the children, who are not married yet, also go to parties and go dancing. And they also reply to objections:

# Canadian Reformed Teachers Training

What is wrong with it? It is nice entertainment. Dad and Mom do it, too. And the female (as well as male) virtue is endangered. The world is in the church. What is wrong with it? This: that Christ is losing His people. Do we really need this form of entertainment? I would say: "We do not need more temptations. Without this dancing there are enough already. And the struggle to live a holy life for the Lord is difficult enough already without it."

And, please, let us not come with the reply: "But we read in the Bible that also David danced." This reply in defense of social dancing, even using the Word of God in this way, makes me angry and sad. It makes me angry, because it is a (forgive me the word; I hate to use it, but I have no better word to describe it) stupid reply, and because it is misusing God's Word. It also makes me sad, because it shows that insight in and understanding of the Word of our LORD is far gone.

Social dancing is a form of entertainment, "exciting sex into action," and, for many, leading to a "lapse of female virtue." And Christ said: "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully (let alone "touch" her) has already committed adultery in his heart with her" (Matthew 5). We also read that no adulterer will enter the Kingdom of God. Must we, then, lead ourselves and/or our children to hell? Are we still taking Christ's words seriously? And are we aware of the cunning wiles of the deceiver of the whole world?

If we want to dance, let us, then, dance like David did. That was a totally different way of dancing. It was full of godly joy in the LORD and for the LORD. David danced when he brought the ark of the LORD to His city, Jerusalem. He danced when the LORD, so to speak, came "home." It was like a child that jumps up and down with shouts of joy, because mother comes home from the hospital after a long and serious illness. David's dancing is as far away from social dancing as entertainment, as a good Christian marriage is from adultery.

I am writing all this because I fear that this social dancing is being practiced also among us, and I want to open eyes. Let us have the wisdom and power to come back from and break with sliding in a wrong direction. The honour of the LORD's Name, and the salvation of us and our children, are at stake.

J. GEERTSEMA

## *Press Release of the meetings of the Steering Committee for a Canadian Reformed Teacher Training.*

In our brief history of the development of the Canadian Reformed Teacher Training (see elsewhere in this issue) we finished with the note that four people were appointed to a Steering Committee. This Committee met four times between May 30th and August 9th. There was one additional meeting where also some members of the Curriculum Committee were present. At this meeting, Dr. Z. Rittersma of the Gereformeerde Pedagogische Akademie in Amersfoort informed us of the many things involved in a Reformed Teacher Training. This meeting was very informative.

Our first meeting was held on May 30, 1977. We decided to use as guideline for our discussions the recommendations as set forth by the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies. Since these recommendations had already been sent to all School Societies and as we had received an almost one hundred percent reply to these recommendations, we wanted to adhere to these recommendations as closely as possible. However, we would incorporate in these recommendations the suggestions, opinions, and conditions as submitted in the answer we received from the various societies. This, of course, would mean a careful reading and considering of the response we had received; and so we read all the incoming mail. In general, most letters were positive, and it became clear that most societies placed themselves behind the idea of a Reformed Teacher Training. Before we discussed the recommendations of the League of School Societies we paid attention to the considerations of the League which prompted the League to favour the institution of our own Teacher Training. These considerations are: a) Make available to our School Societies, teachers trained in a Reformed environment; b) Provide for parents the opportunity to have their children attend a Reformed Teacher Training.

We wholeheartedly endorse these considerations. It is the aim of our school societies to provide Reformed Education for the children. To fulfill this aim to the fullest measure, we must have teachers trained in a Reformed environment. We realize that the teaching staff now employed at our schools is doing a good job, and we are thankful for this. However, you will agree with us that it is the ultimate goal of our school societies to hire teachers who are trained at a Reformed Teacher Training Centre, if at all possible, and this is what we want to strive for. This is also implied in the constitutions of our School Societies when they state that the children are to be taught in a Reformed way. We discussed the ten recommendations we set. After lengthy dis-

cussions, where all the input was weighed and weighed again, we changed some recommendations, added to some and deleted from others. The result of this was then sent to the Curriculum Committee. Members of this Committee are: Dr. W. Helder, Vice-Principal of Guido de Brès High School; Mr. H. Hoogstra, Principal of John Calvin School in Burlington; Mr. W. Horsman, Vice-Principal of John Calvin School in Burlington; Mrs. C. Lindhout, Member of the Education Committee of the Canadian Reformed School Society of London and District; Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff, Principal of Guido de Brès High School; Mr. P. Torenvliet, Teacher at John Calvin School in Smithville; Mr. M. Vandervelde, Principal of John Calvin School in Smithville. This Committee discussed the various points of our recommendations. They returned these recommendations with their suggestions to the Steering Committee. And so we met again. The result of all this work was that we could put together the resolutions in their final form.

From our previous historical report and from this press release you may realize that much planning and thought has gone into the resolutions as they are presented to the School Societies.

You will find these resolutions following this press release. As I looked through my notes of the meetings we have had, it struck me that our incoming mail contained so much encouragement: Here is one quotation: "We are now in the process of hiring two teachers to immigrate from The Netherlands and are finding it very difficult. We were informed by the local immigration authorities that our effort to start a Teachers College in Canada had a direct bearing on their approval of accepting the teachers as immigrants."

This is a very positive statement in more than one way. We are happy to notice the positive effect of our work to this society. And so here we have it. A complete plan to start our own Reformed Teacher Training, the Lord willing, on September 5, 1978.

However, we are not yet ready. Far from it. This is just the beginning of much, much hard work. But we may say: the seed is sown. We pray that God will give His blessing so it may grow. School boards and School Societies will have to discuss it. Many more meetings will have to be held. A dean will have to be hired and he will have much work to do to organize it all. It is a tremendous challenge. Our chairman read at the opening of our last meeting Psalm 111. I would like to close this release with verse 10 of this Psalm: 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.'

For the Steering Committee,  
C. HOFF

# The Calling of Abraham in Genesis 14\*

This year it is eight centuries ago that Peter Waldo, a rich merchant in Lyon in Southern France, was brought to the insight that much was wrong in the church and world of his days. In that year, 1177, he sold all that he had and gave it to the poor. He then became a preacher of the Gospel for the people.

Exactly 200 years later, in 1377, now six centuries ago, another preacher of the Word of God, John Wycliffe, had to give account of his teachings and actions before a meeting of a number of the English nobles and bishops in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In that same year the pope in Rome condemned several of his teachings. Wycliffe, too, had gone back to the Bible, and saw, in that way, many aberrations and evils in the church of those days. In his preaching he called unto repentance.

These two forerunners of the Reformation saw it as their God-given calling: to bring the Word of God to the people and the people to the Word of God; or rather: to bring God to the people and the people to God through the preaching and translation of God's Word in the language of the people. And we all know that the same was done later by the Reformers and their followers, whose movement, the Great Reformation, was in full progress again some 200 years later: around 1577. And, I think, we all who are gathered here tonight and are in one way or another involved in the work at the College, either by teaching or learning there, or by making this teaching and learning possible by our support — we all feel ourselves one in faith with Waldo and Wycliffe and the Reformers. One are we in the same true faith; one also in the same calling to confess the LORD as our God, the God of heaven and earth, and to stand with this profession in the midst of this world.

Now a College evening and Convocation, such as we have again tonight, has many purposes, but it is also meant to usher in a new period of work at and for the College, and thus for the work of the Lord in this world. And I should like to show you, at the beginning of this new season, that the

calling of God's servants to publicly confess the Name and truth of the LORD, and in that way to confront the world with the one true God, the Creator and Redeemer in Christ Jesus, is a very old calling. It was there also for Abraham, the father of all the believers, in his day and situation. So, I request your attention for:

## THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM IN GENESIS 14

You know the story. After Abraham had dwelled in the promised land for some time, and after Lot had separated from him and had gone to Sodom and settled there, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, came with his allies to punish the king of Sodom and all who had followed him in a rebellion. After Chedorlaomer first had slain the nations surrounding Sodom and the other four cities in the plain, those cities themselves were defeated and conquered again. Many people were taken captive. Lot, Abraham's nephew, was one of them.

When he was told of that, Abraham mustered a little army, pursued the enemy, and defeated him. So he freed Lot, as well as the people of the five cities of the plain. On his way back, when Abraham had come into the Valley of Shaveh, close to Jerusalem, the king of Sodom met him there, as well as Melchizedek, king of Salem. The latter blessed Abraham and praised Abraham's God; he also received from Abraham ten percent of all the spoil. After this we read of the conversation of Abraham with the king of Sodom, who said that Abraham could have the spoil, but that he would like to have the people. Abraham replied that he did not want anything from Sodom for himself. Sodom's king should not be able to say later that he had made Abraham rich. So far the story.

With respect to this chapter of Genesis many questions are raised. When we read the commentaries we are informed that this chapter stands apart in Genesis, in several ways. As for the language, exceptionally many words and names and expressions occur only here, and nowhere else in the Bible. With respect to the picture given of Abraham, many interpreters say that

only here Abraham is placed within the world affairs and politics of those days, and that only here Abraham is pictured as a great and mighty man in Canaan.

Questions are asked also with respect to the geographical and historical data of this chapter: Where do we find the lands of the kings who came with Chedorlaomer? Many questions are also asked regarding the names of those kings. From the more liberal side, doubts are expressed also with respect to the names and persons and cities of the allies of Sodom. Even the whole chapter is branded as fiction, made up after the Babylonian captivity, with the intention of making Abraham great as a conquerer of Canaan, or of laying a kind of historical foundation under the demand of Jerusalem's priesthood for the tithes, or of giving a "historical" (! — fictional [?]) basis under the claim that Jerusalem had to be the only place of worship.

Most modern scholars, however, admit that our chapter must be based on historic events. A confirmation of the historicity of the cities Sodom and Gomorrah, with the three others, was found recently through the excavations at Tell Mardikh in Syria. This tell (a mound covering the ruins of an ancient city) disclosed the ruins of the ancient city of Ebla. Thousands of clay tablets were found. Some mentioned the names of Sodom and the other cities, even in the same order as we have them in Genesis 14. It is possible that these excavations will shed some more light also on the kings and countries allied with Chedorlaomer. For us, however, it makes no difference whether the data of Genesis 14 are confirmed by archeological discoveries or not. We believe that also this part of Genesis, that is, of the Word of God, is trustworthy, also in its geographical and historical data. It all happened as it is told us here! However, we can not deal further with all the questions that arise here. We want to confine ourselves to the essential part of this chapter: What is its meaning? What is the place and calling of Abraham here?

Now most interpreters, in particular those on the orthodox side, see the appearance of Melchizedek and Abraham's meeting with him as the most essential element in this chapter. This means that all attention is focused on this part. To give one example: I like to point to the dissertation of Dr. J.H. Kroeze on *Genesis Veertien* (Genesis Fourteen). On page 228 he writes:

*Continued on page 479.*

# news medley

There is hardly any duty which is more pleasant than the duty to offer congratulations to brothers and sisters who have received special privileges from the Lord.

Thus we begin with fulfilling that pleasant duty in this medley, too.

Starting close by, we visit Orangeville and mention that brother and sister J. Jonker celebrate their forty-fifth wedding anniversary on November 18th. The Jonker name is well-known in these regions and the family has many connections via bonds of friendship and marriage. Thus we, too, join in the joy which many feel on this occasion, and we offer our congratulations with the wish that the Lord may also further prosper our brother and sister with their children and grandchildren.

Jumping all the way to British Columbia, we visit Cloverdale where brother and sister W. VanderPol celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary on November 3rd. I recall the time during the Synod of Hamilton when they celebrated their twenty-fifth. It is hardly conceivable that some fifteen years have already gone by since that day; yet it is a fact. This brother and sister, too, may recall the many wonderful blessings which the Lord has bestowed upon them and upon their family. Looking back to the day when they arrived in Canada, they may say that they have been blest beyond expectation. And through their enterprise they have also been enabled to provide work for not a few brothers and sisters. To them, too, we extend our heartfelt congratulations.

And now that we are in the Valley anyway, we may as well tell you a few particulars about the Churches and the activities there.

I do not recall having read a similar thing ever before, but in Abbotsford apparently the young people who wish to attend pre-confession class were visited and the Consistory decided who would be allowed to attend that class. I hope that I understood the information in the press release of the Consistory meeting well. There is something in favour of that procedure, for if a Consistory is convinced beforehand that a student should wait a year anyway before making profession of faith, it is better to say that right away than to wait till the pre-confession class has been concluded and the examination by the Consistory has taken place. On the other hand, it happens more than once that a boy or girl requests permission to attend that class without specific intention of making profession of faith at the first opportunity, simply because they are convinced that they "get more out of it" than they do in the other classes. It also happens that a boy or girl tells me that they "may" make profession of faith, depending on "how they feel about it" after having completed this pre-confession class. In those cases it might work the wrong way if a Consistory decides about admission or no admission right at the beginning. There is something to be said in favour of either procedure, I presume.

Various bulletins speak of bazaars being planned by our ever-diligent sisters and they devise all sorts of ingenious ways and means to achieve their goal. But few are so outspoken in their wishes and suggestions as the ladies of the

Orange Aid in the Valley. What about it: "May we call on our business people to donate of their goods, e.g. produce, flowers, chickens, eggs, small appliances, lamps, candies, paint, carpet or whatever your line of business may have to offer? Maybe a side of beef or pork?" Why not a whole heifer or a couple of hogs? I admire the ladies, for it is through this persistence of theirs that especially our schools receive the so much needed assistance for buying special and extra equipment. Have a good sale!

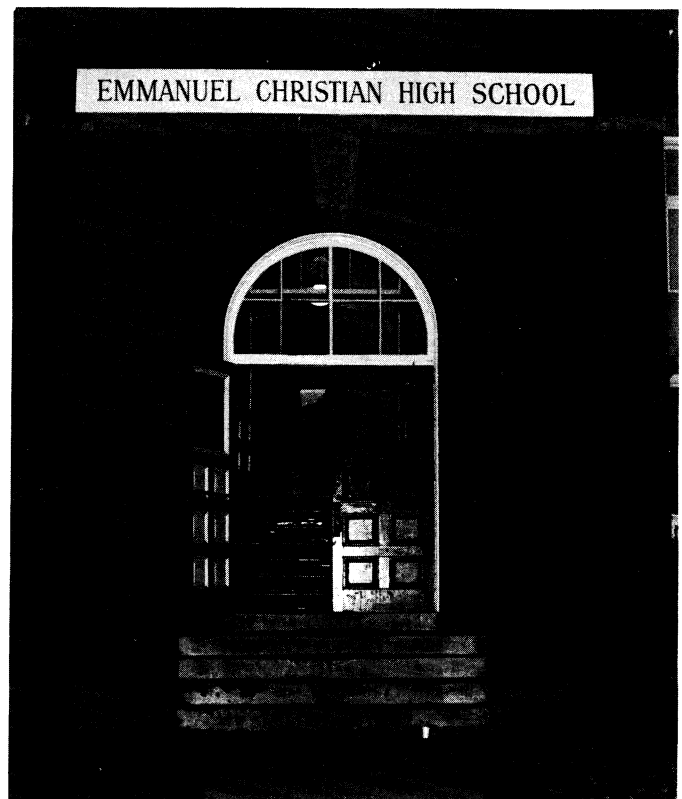
Yes, and that is then all from the Valley for this time. Smithers, meanwhile, had the organ installed and they planned to have an evening of dedication on October 29th. Carman was so kind as to give Rev. J. VanRietschoten permission to go to Smithers to conduct some services there and at the same time to show the Congregation the possibilities of the organ. He was going to play pieces of "Krebs, Bach and Jan Zwart" we read. Must have been an interesting evening. Are we going to get a report on it and some pictures?

That, to my sorrow, is the end of the B.C. news. Thus we move on to Alberta.

In Edmonton a "Committee for a Christian Political Perspective" has been called into existence. They also chose a board and added some expensive names and functions to their slate. They have a Director of Biblical Research; a Director of General Research, a Director of Membership. In vain I looked for a Party Whip, but that will come in due time, I think, unless the "Director of Membership" is a disguised

## PICTURE PARADE OF THE OPENING OF THE EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL IN GUELPH, ONTARIO.

*(See following page.)*



*Invitingly ready to receive visitors.*

Whip. In any case: I wish them well in their endeavours. It is gratifying indeed that there comes more and more political awareness among our members. Let's poke a little fun at each other once in a while: we are happy with any activity shown in this field as well as in the field of economics.

Herewith we say farewell to the Western region and direct our attention to Ontario.

Chatham, too, used the presence of Mr. and Mrs. P. Jongeling by inviting them to come there and to have Mr. Jongeling speak to them. It was a good evening they had together, we read. Besides, the collection yielded \$81.22. It seems that there can hardly be a meeting of Reformed people without a collection having to be taken. Well, that's how it seems to be. "Brother Jongeling did not want any of it, neither did brother VanEgmond who drove them there, although they even stayed in the motel. They wanted the money to be donated for a good purpose. We came to the conclusion that good purpose is the Fund for our School Society for setting up Grade 9 and 10. A big 'Thank You' to the brothers." I'm happy that I can pass that information on.

Moving up, we reach Lincoln. The Consistory discussed the Superannuation Fund and the plans for change which are under consideration. Practically all Consistories paid attention to those plans and came to a conclusion concerning them. But of none of the Consistories I read the following except from Lincoln: "A proposal will be forwarded to the coming Synod." I sincerely hope that that is a wrong formulation and that the meaning is: to the meeting of the Superannuation Fund which will be held during Synod. I cannot see as yet how this could be a matter for Synod. And I did not dare to bring that piece of information into combination with another sentence from the very same report: "Article 8, Church Order was not made use of."

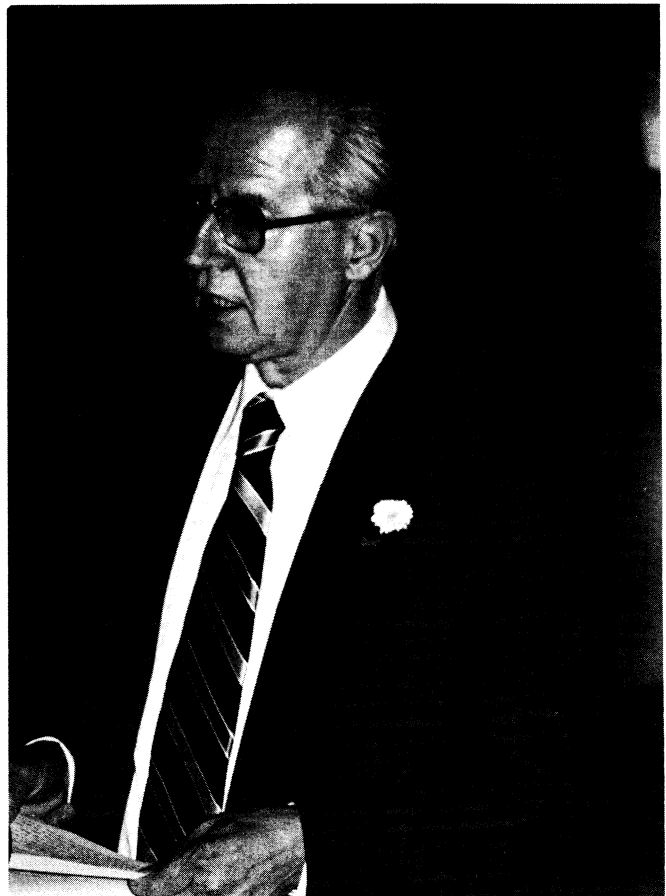
We go and have a look in Hamilton.

Hamilton's bulletin is not the only publication which mentions the family-visits which will be brought during the coming season and the difficulties which the elders have in making appointments. The Rev. Huizinga, however, quotes from W. Meijer's **Vanavond Huisbezoek** and points out that family-visits are not so much **arranged** as **announced**. The elders should not have to make ten or twenty phone calls to arrange a visit. They can just announce (not from the pulpit, mind you!) that they intend to visit the So-and-so family on that evening. If there are other things going on, those other things have to make room for the family visit.

It is understood, of course, that the elders will use discretion according to Article 8, Church Order, but usually it is known which evenings are regularly taken by all sorts of activities and they will try to avoid inconveniencing members. On the other hand, however, it should be borne in mind that the brother office-bearers are away from their families so often already that we should not make it any harder on them than is absolutely necessary.

In this connection I wish to mention a letter printed in **The Banner** of November 4 of this year, in which a wife who wanted a divorce from her husband describes all the good things which her husband did for his work, for the community, for the Church. "However, he was doing so many good things that there was little time for the three small children or me, and no time for the house." And she makes the infinitely sad statement, "Giving time to small children and a tired wife is not doing the Lord's work."

Our members can help our elders and their families by receiving the brethren when it suits **them** when they an-



*Mr. P. Jongeling delivering a speech.*

nounce that they will be coming at a certain time.

The same also applies to our ministers, although the circumstances are different. I have heard minister's children complain that their father never had time for them: there was always some Church-function to be attended: Catechism classes or Consistory meetings, or Committee meetings, or visits which had to be brought in the evening because the people were not at home during the daytime; and if there was a free evening, there was always someone who had to come just then and keep the pastor in his study for a few hours: when he emerged, the children were in bed already. Ministers seldom dare to take an evening off to go out with their families or to go to a concert with every member of the family that is old enough to enjoy it.

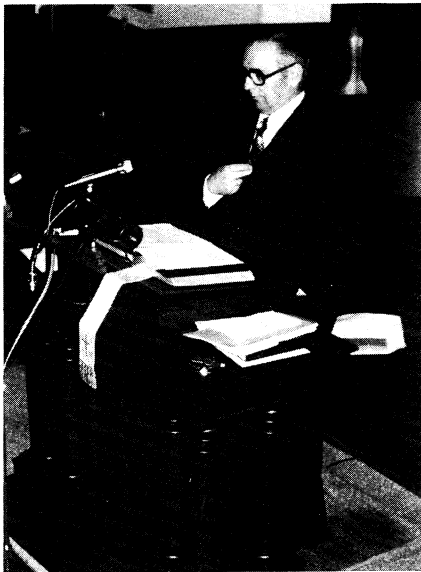
I know that we should not generalize, but I do wish to lay the above before our readers, also before my colleagues. And once more I remind our readers of the necessity of having small Congregations, definitely not exceeding the three hundred fifty to four hundred mark.

Let's return to Hamilton.

The Evangelism Committee considered the possibility of becoming involved in the Hamilton Jail. They interviewed the Coordinator for Social Services and received an encouraging reaction. It appears that a new complex is to open in November of this year and that their request came at an opportune time. The people involved in these services welcome participation from the community, it was said.

It is good when our attention is drawn to the various possibilities we have to spread the Gospel. Once in a while I





*The Rev. W. VanOene delivers his speech.*



*The Principal, Mr. N. Van Dooren, addresses the assembly.*



*Mr. M. Van Grootheest (right) officially presenting the Master Key of the School Building to Mr. K. Sikkema (left).*

remember in the public prayer also those who are in prison because they have done something wrong. When we come to think of it: there are thousands of things which we could mention in our prayers. Then it is good when we are reminded of specific cases.

Hamilton also decided to include in the budget for 1978 an amount with which to support the broadcasting efforts of the Burlington Churches. And further the Consistory decided to have the cost of mission work (if they should send out a missionary of their own, with the support of the Churches in Ontario South) investigated more amply.

That many evenings are taken up and that some consultation is urgently needed also appears from the Ebenezer Burlington bulletin. A School dinner had been scheduled for October 28, but it had to be postponed till November 4. However, the very same bulletin mentions that an evening with the Rev. and Mrs. H. Versteeg was set on . . . November 4th. Perhaps we should have a Director of Meetings, preferably appointed by a Classis to prevent conflicting arrangements in the various Churches.

What the Rehoboth Burlington bulletin mentions about **The Good Word** gives me an opportunity to report that generally the letter which was sent from Winnipeg regarding this publication has been received favourably.

In Burlington, too, the Founding Meeting for "Political Awareness and Activity" was held. At least, unless it had to be postponed. It was scheduled for November 11th.

In order to tell the passing motorists (strolling is too dangerous there) what kind of a building can be seen there a few hundred meters from the highway, "A sign for the church was proposed and after minor adjustments approved by the consistory. Work will start shortly."

Above I already mentioned an evening with the Rev. and Mrs. H. Versteeg. Such evenings were enjoyed by practically all the Churches during the past few weeks. (The Churches in Ontario, that is. I have not read anything about Grand Rapids yet.) The time draws near that they will leave for the mission field in Irian Jaya, if and when they get their visa.

Yes, those visas. That's a strange thing. In one bulletin I read, "They are now waiting for the necessary visae, and hope to leave soon, via the Netherlands." The author of those lines undoubtedly read the **Bellae Gallicae** by Julius Caesar (which, for the discriminating reader, is translated as **The Belles of Gaul**, a book which, as rumour has it, caused Julius quite some difficulties with his wife).

To the comfort of us all I may remark that also in official publications the very same literary oddity can be found.

From South Africa I received a beautiful book. It is entitled **My Brother's Keeper**, and is more or less an official "picture report on the Mission of the Dutch Reformed Church in Southern Africa." Its 163 pages contain many photographs which give us a clear picture of what has been done and is being done to bring the Gospel to the black and coloured population of Southern Africa. All the criticism which is uttered against the white population in South Africa and Rhodesia could so easily cause us to forget or to ignore what has been done in the field of mission, works of mercy, education, and many other activities.

It is evident that those who shout out loudest against South Africa care very little for the preaching of the Gospel and the Christian interest shown in fellow-men. They would wish to see the whole country become a battlefield with the forces of the revolution gaining the upper hand and turning the whole continent into a bulwark of communism. It is utterly amazing that the nations do not see that and that boycott of South Africa is hailed as a great achievement and a giant step forward in the battle for true freedom. Oh, the blindness of the kings of the earth!!

The above book also has a section dealing with education. This section contains the following sentence: "The teaching curriculae were also started by the Churches and later taken over by the State."

Funiculi, funicula.

Brampton decided to install new drapes in the Church auditorium to the tune of \$1,500.00.

Let's draw them closed.

Good night.

vO

**THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM IN GENESIS 14** — Continued.

"This chapter serves first of all to give a better picture of the Father of the believers and the Friend of God." Then, speaking of the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek, he says: "We, too, consider this to be the kernel of our chapter."<sup>1</sup>

Although I can agree with the first statement, that we receive a more complete picture here of Abraham, I would rather say it in this way: that here we have first of all the continuation of God's revelation and of God's work in the coming Jesus Christ through and in Abraham. But with the second statement, that the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek is the kernel, the essential part of this chapter, I cannot go along. Also the Rev. I. de Wolff says in his *De Geschiedenis der Godsopenbaring* (The History of the Revelation of God), that he can not agree with that view of Dr. Kroeze's.<sup>2</sup> And in a note on page 230 he refers to what Prof. B. Holwerda pointed at in his inaugural address, "De Priester-Koning in het Oude Testament."<sup>3</sup> Melchizedek is not the center at that moment of Scripture. Scripture places

Abraham in the full light, and Melchizedek disappears again into the dark, from which he came up.

This does not mean that Holwerda or de Wolff want to diminish the importance of Melchizedek. Neither do I. On the contrary; in his office of priest-king of Salem, Melchizedek is a type of Christ Jesus in His office of the Priest-King of the heavenly Jerusalem. Humanly speaking, that this priest-king of Salem appears here is the basis for King David's prophecy about his Son and Lord, Who will be king and priest-after-the-order-of-Melchizedek, and Who, in His very also-being-priest, will be David's major, David's Lord. Thus David speaks in Psalm 110. We all know that this prophecy of David in Psalm 110 is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. The epistle to the Hebrews clearly shows this.

Permit me here to make a few side-remarks in connection with Psalm 110 and the epistle to the Hebrews. It is quite possible that the last part of Psalm 110, speaking about the coming priest-king who will overcome and defeat his enemies, is a reminiscence of Abraham's defeating his enemies.<sup>4</sup>

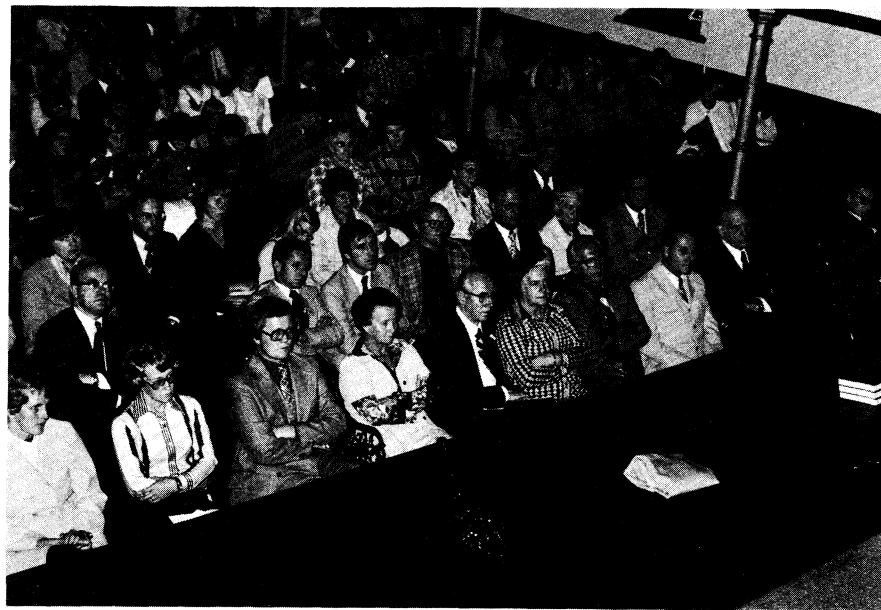
Further, we find in Psalm 110, as I see it, three elements: David's Son will

be king Who defeats all His enemies; David's Son will be priest after Melchizedek's order; David's Son will have a people, an army, that is willing and ready to follow Him in His battle, "in holy array." It is remarkable that these three elements are obvious also in the epistle to the Hebrews: Chapter 1:1 - 4:13 speaks especially about the Kingship in glory of Christ, although the two other elements are present as well; chapter 4:14 - 10:18 has the priesthood according to Melchizedek's order as its main element, although again the other two aspects appear as well; chapter 10:19 to the end is an urgent appeal to the Hebrews not to slacken in faith, but to be strong and continue to endure as the people of the Priest-King that remain faithful in the continuing battle, willing and ready to fight His battle in holy array, in holiness of life, because they have the Priest-King, Jesus Christ, as their Leader and Commander.

When we thus see the line from Genesis 14 via Psalm 110 to Hebrews, we discover the great importance of the place of Melchizedek in the history of God's revelation. And it is not strange that Melchizedek is seen as the leading figure in Genesis 14, and that the meeting of Abraham with him is



On behalf of all those who graduated from the former Saturday School as well as the graduates of the Maranatha Christian School, Mr. Clarence Bouwman (left) presented four electric clocks to the principal. Mr. K. Sikkema, the Chairman, looks on.



Some of the many present at the official opening of the Emmanuel Christian High School in Guelph. Front row (from left to right): Mrs. K. Sikkema, Mrs. and Mr. N. Van Dooren, Mrs. G. Van Dooren, Mr. and Mrs. P. Jongeling, Rev. G. Van Dooren, Mr. Norm Jary, mayor of Guelph, Mr. Harry Worton, M.P.P. In the second row we see (from right to left): Mr. M. Vander Velde of Smithville, Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff, Mr. A.J. Hordyk, Mr. J. Schutten, Mr. H.F. Stoffels, and Mr. A. Van Egmond of the Guido de Bres High School, and further Dr. J. Faber.

considered the main purpose of God's providential governing of the events.

However, as I said, although understandable, this view is not right in my opinion. And in this connection I should like to make the following suggestion: let us say that in the continuing history of God's Revelation, as we have it in our chapter, Melchizedek has a prominent place; but in the continuing sacred history the meeting of Abraham and the king of Sodom is the essential point.

I should like to explain the terms which I used here a little. In the first place: the distinction has been made between sacred history and profane history. With sacred history (or *Historia Sacra*) we mean: the history as it is told us in the Bible. The profane history is, then, the history as it is related to us in sources other than the Word of God. The *Historia Sacra* can also be defined as the history of God's covenant dealings with His people. Or we can call it the history of God's putting and maintaining the enmity after the creation and after the fall in sin. It is as well the history of God Who brings Christ Jesus into the world, and of Christ doing the work of His Father first on earth and afterwards in heaven.

Now we can say, I think, that within the framework, or on the platform, of this *Historia Sacra*, the *Historia Revelationis* (the history of God's Revelation) occurs, although the two are very much intertwined, and often in practice hard to distinguish. The *Historia Sacra* itself which we know from the Word of God gives us God's "continuing" revelation.

Anyway, what I want to say is that the idea that the appearance of Melchizedek is the main element in our chapter as well as in the course of the events, prevents us from seeing the real meaning of this chapter and of its place in the context; it prevents us from discovering the real calling of Abraham here in this chapter, and thus at that moment of the *Historia Sacra*.

When I started studying this chapter in order to explain and apply this part of God's Word to the congregation, I at first was also of the opinion that Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek, yes, that even the appearance of this priest-king of Salem as such was the essential element of this chapter. But by further careful reading it struck me that the Melchizedek-part is not the end of this chapter, but that it is concluded by the story of the meeting of Abraham and the king of Sodom. It is

even so that the Melchizedek-narrative is placed within the framework of the story about Abraham and the king of Sodom. For in verse 17 we read that the king of Sodom went out to meet Abraham. Verses 18-20, then, tell us about Melchizedek and Abraham. After this verses 21-24 continue and conclude with the proposal of the king of Sodom and Abraham's reply. This remarkable fact made me ask the question: "Why is this so?"

In his dissertation, Dr. Kroeze also pays attention to this fact. On page 95 he says that we have to do here with the often-occurring styleform of the *chiasmus*. In this style-form that which is first mentioned in a first sentence is last named in the following one; and what is last in that first sentence is first in the second one. In my opinion this answer is too easy and does not satisfy. Dr. Kroeze himself writes on the same page that we may assume that the two kings were with Abraham at the same time, since this is shown by the order in which the events are told. It is for that reason that I think we must have more here than only a certain literary style-form.

I see it this way: the fact that this chapter concludes with telling us about the confrontation of the king of Sodom with Abraham, as well as the fact that it is within the story of this confrontation that the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek is placed, must lead to the conclusion that this meeting of the king of Sodom and Abraham is the essential element of Genesis 14.

This means, of course, that we also must conclude that, in the course of the events told us in this chapter of the Bible, the God of heaven and earth directed all those events toward that last-mentioned meeting. *So the confrontation of the king of Sodom with Abraham, after Abraham's victory over his enemies, was the purpose of God. It was not an unimportant adventitious circumstance. And we must add that the Abraham-Melchizedek meeting then was subservient to the Abraham-king of Sodom confrontation in order to give to the confrontation of the king of Sodom with Abraham its full effect. God led also the priest-king of Salem to Abraham and had the two meet in the presence of the king of Sodom. We can also approach it from a different angle and say: the main element and purpose of Genesis 14 is to show us the calling of Abraham with respect to Sodom.*

This view, that the crucial point of

Genesis 14 is the calling of Abraham with respect to Sodom, is confirmed by our chapter as a whole itself. It is a fact that Melchizedek is only there for a moment and immediately disappears again. This is not so with the king of Sodom and his people and allies. They are involved right from the beginning to the very end. (For easiness' sake I shall further simply speak of Sodom, but mean with it the king and the people of Sodom as well as the allies: the other four cities with their kings and people. Most likely the king of Sodom was the leader of them all, and he probably was also the instigator of the revolt against Chedorlaomer.)

We see Chedorlaomer of Elam undertaking a punitive expedition against Sodom. After the surrounding peoples have been slain, Sodom is defeated and partly taken captive, Lot included. Then Abraham pursues the enemy and frees Lot, but also Sodom. And at his return Abraham meets the king of Sodom (who must have escaped) with Melchizedek also being present. *So it is very much: Abraham and Sodom in Genesis 14.*

J. GEERTSEMA

*\*The somewhat changed and extended text of an address delivered at the College evening held on September 9, 1977, at Hamilton. The address was shortened, because time was limited.*

*(To be continued.)*

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*Theological College of the  
Canadian Reformed Churches*

**EVENING COURSES**

A series of lectures for all who are interested has been planned for the Course 1977-78.

Course 1:

*"The Five Points of Calvinism."*

Lecturer:

*Dr. J. Faber, Professor of Dogmatology.*

Place:

*College Building, 374 Queen St. S.,  
Hamilton, Ontario.*

Time:

*8:00-9:45 p.m. on respectively Thursday,  
November 17, 24 and December 1, 8, and 15.*

Registration:

*Call 529-5569.*

Admission:

*Free.*

L. SELLES, Registrar

# Updated Songs

*"Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'as the LORD lives Who brought up the people out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the LORD lives Who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where He had driven them!'" (Jeremiah 16:14-15 and 23:7-8).*

## EGYPT NOT FORGOTTEN, YET . . .

Jeremiah wrote these words twice. When we look at the surroundings in which he wrote them, we discover that there were many dark threats — and yet in the dark a ray of light: a prophecy of return from the north country, the land of exile.

The prophet foretells us that at that (for him future) date Israel will sing a *new* song.

With Calvin we take the words, "no longer singing about the exodus from Egypt," as meaning that that song (Exodus 15, see below) will no longer be the *only* song. A *new* song will be added, although the deliverance from Egypt will never be forgotten.

The LORD will work another mighty wonder: the return of a remnant. That new divine act of deliverance must be "answered" with a new song. The song of the Church will be updated in harmony with new events of God's redemption.

\* \* \*

## MANY "NEW" SONGS!

This is not the only time that the Bible speaks about a new song, added to the already existing ones. According to the progress of the history of redemption, new songs were added all the time. Thus we find such "new songs" several times in our Psalm book. Some examples: Psalm 33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9.

Ridderbos in his Commentary on Psalm 33 writes (free translation): "such a 'new' song was not a slight or disregard of already existing songs, but as God's acts are always and again new, the poet finds new reason to praise Him with a new song."

A closer study of such Psalms would uncover that they were indeed "born" as a response to a new act of God.

"Sing to the LORD with exultation,

O sing a *new* song, all creation!"  
(Psalm 96:1, rhymed.)

"Sing to the LORD a *new* song,  
Judah!

For all the marvels He has done;  
His right hand and His arm most  
holy

The victory for Him have won."  
(Psalm 98:1, rhymed.)

Thus also the prophets spoke about new songs to be born in the future. One example: Isaiah 26:1, "In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah . . . for He has brought low the inhabitants of the height" (verse 5ff).

\* \* \*

## WHEN ALL THINGS HAVE BEEN MADE NEW

From the above Old Testament examples the conclusion may be drawn that the Church's singing kept pace with further acts of God's redemption. The singing of the Old Testament Church was "updated" all the time.

Thus it is no surprise that — when all things will have been made new — new songs will be sung, too.

Revelation 5:9ff. gives us an example of such a new song: "And they sang a *new* song, saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for Thou wast slain and by Thy blood didst ransom men for God . . .,' " etc. The new event described in Revelation 5 is that the Lamb has now taken His place on the throne with the scroll in His hand.

Later on in Revelation (15:3) we hear of another new song, by the New Israel, standing "beside the sea of glass mingled with fire," a symbol of God's righteous judgment of His enemies. This song is called, "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." As once Israel stood at the sea where the power of Egypt was annihilated, and Moses taught them a "new" song (Exodus 15) (N.B. At a later date Moses would add another "updated" song, telling Israel to learn it, Deuteronomy 32), so will God's people from all nations stand at that other sea-of-God's-judgment and sing the song of the Lamb.

We may be sure that, once that

day has come, the songs of the Church will be "completed" in giving response to "all the marvels He has wrought." That "Book of Praise" will most certainly be "complete."

\* \* \*

## BUT WHAT "IN BETWEEN"?

In between the old dispensation and the final consummation of God's redemptive acts lies the period of the new dispensation, the time of the Christian Church.

We all know how Paul repeatedly admonished the young Church to give its response to the new "marvels" God had done in Jesus Christ. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you . . . sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16). In Ephesians 5:19 in about the same words he encourages the Church to "address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart!"

In other words, Paul here exhorts the Christian Church to do the same as was indicated in the above-quoted words from the Old Testament. The fundamental biblical principle here is that new "marvels He has done" (Psalm 118) call for a new response on the part of God's children who benefit from those marvels. It simply is an act of gratitude.

It is wasted energy to try to "prove" that the three words used by Paul ("psalms, hymns, spiritual songs") all refer to the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament. Indeed we may repeat Calvin's remark that the "new song" should never push the "older songs" to the background. We may still praise the LORD for His deliverance from Egypt and His "way through the sea," because He did those marvels *also for us*. New songs do not supplant the old songs, not in the Church anyway, because it is *one* Church gathered from the beginning to the end of the world (Lord's Day 21, Heidelberg Catechism). Even more than that: The Psalms (2, 22, 72, 110, to mention a few) sing about the Messiah, and have been "fulfilled" in Him!

But the existence of (what we for the sake of argument call) "old" songs should *not* prevent us from singing new songs either! That would be against the Scriptures!

Imagine "all the marvels He has wrought" since the conception and virgin birth of our Saviour, His passion and death for our sins, His resurrection

and ascension, and (until He comes again) His heavenly priesthood and work on earth through His Holy Spirit.

Imagine that the Christian Church which exists because of all these *magnalia Dei*, these "mighty works of God," Acts 2:11, would not respond to them by praising them in their new songs!

\* \* \*

#### "BUT THERE IS NO PSALM BOOK IN THE NEW TESTAMENT"

Indeed, there is no special Book of Psalms among the books of the New Testament. There are some songs in Revelation, indeed, although, as we have seen, they can be sung to the full only after Christ has subdued all His enemies on "that glorious Day of Right."

There are some fragments indeed. Dr. C. Bouma, in his Commentary on Paul's letters to Timothy, writes (again a free translation), "there was a growing treasure of spiritual songs in the early Christian Church already in Paul's days. The apostle had them at his disposal and was happy to be able to quote some stanzas from them, knowing that his readers would know them, too." Thus we find some of these songs in Paul's letters to Timothy (not in his earlier letters), which, in the Greek original, are models of beautiful poetry, I Timothy 3:16:

"Manifested in the flesh,  
Vindicated in the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Preached among the nations,  
Believed on in the world,  
Taken up in glory."

And again in II Timothy 2:11-13:

"If we have died with Him  
— we shall also live with Him;  
If we endure  
— we shall also reign with Him;  
If we deny Him  
— He also will deny us;  
If we are faithless  
— He remains faithful."

One can only wish that Paul would have quoted more of such new songs, "born" in the Early Church. Obviously, the LORD in His special care for us and our salvation (Belgic Confession, Article 3) did not deem it necessary.

Why not?

\* \* \*

#### THE CHURCH HAS GROWN UP

Another biblical principle is that, while the Old Testament Church was still in its childhood, the New Testa-

ment Church has grown up since Pentecost.

In the Old Testament the LORD gave, He had to give, in precise details, many prescriptions for how to behave in His Church, in His Temple, and at all kinds of occasions. Christ has fulfilled those shadows; He has sent His Spirit to guide His Church.

Thus the Church of today has its freedom and right (and duty) to confess the LORD and His "marvels" in Creeds which have not been dictated or inspired but written by the Church. Thus Christ's Church prays to the Father in her own words, though after the model Christ has given. Equally the Church has now the right *and* the duty to respond to God's marvels in Jesus Christ in her own words.

These words (in her hymns or spiritual songs) are not "free" in the sense that we may sing whatever way we want. No, they must be fully biblical, but they *are* "free" in the sense that the Church may follow the example of the early Church, so happily recommended by the apostle Paul, in composing her "answers" to God's marvels in her own, confessing words ("to confess" means "to say the same" as what the Bible says).

That is also a biblical "principle"! The LORD expects from us that we sing our thanks and praise to all the marvels He has done in the new dispensation.

It goes without saying that the Church, in her new songs, takes as an example those inspired Songs of God's Word. Although one might be in for a surprise, when one tries to find out how many Psalms speak about *personal* problems, sorrows, and joys (how often do we find the words "my soul" in them!), yet they never became individualistic. The poet sang as a member of the Covenant people and as an example for that people. Therefore those Psalms put the LORD in the centre: "all the marvels *He* has done."

The same "style" should be maintained in the so-called "free" new songs of the New Testament Church, dated after the completed work of Jesus Christ.

\* \* \*

#### "SING A NEW SONG!"

Therefore no one may ever deny the Christian Church the right to sing the praise of her God and Redeemer in "free songs" as formulated above.

It is not only her right, it is her

duty. In the Kingdom rights are always duties.

How would one defend his place in the Church of Jesus Christ, while refusing to sing,

"Glory to God the Father, God the Son and unto God the Holy Spirit"?

"O come, O come, Emmanuel!"

"Thee, holy Lamb of God, we bless."

"Hallelujah! Praised be the Son!"

"Christ is risen, Hallelujah!"

"Christ above all glory seated!"

"The Lord ascended up on high!"

"Come, take by faith the body of your Lord."

"The hope of faith shall not deceive us."

"Praise to the LORD, the Almighty

...."

"Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep

...."

"Come, Thou long expected Jesus!"

"The Church's One Foundation" and so on and so forth.

The Book of Psalms remain the main body of the songs of the Church. But the Church keeps abreast with the later "marvels He has done," singing *new* songs, until we can and may sing the Song of Moses and of the Lamb.

G. VANDOOREN

## Church News

Called: Candidate  
E.J. TIGGELAAR

of Hamilton, Ontario to Chilliwack, B.C.  
and to Smithers, B.C.

\* \* \*

Declined:  
REV. W.W.J. VANOENE

of Fergus, Ontario, the call to Burlington East, Ontario.

\* \* \*

Address change:  
The address for the new clerk of the Church at Ottawa is:

*Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa*  
P.O. Box 5671, Station "F,"  
Ottawa, Ontario K2C 3M1  
c/o Wm. Scheper

\* \* \*

OFFICERS OF SYNOD  
*Coaldale 1977*

Chairman: Rev. W.W.J. VanOene

1st Clerk: Rev. J. Mulder.

2nd Clerk: Rev. J. Geertsema.

Vice Chairman: Rev. M. VanBeveren.



# A History of the Development of Canadian Reformed Teacher Training

It has been the desire for a long time to have Canadian Reformed Teacher Training. It was discussed on many different occasions. School boards had brought the matter to the attention of the League of School Societies.

At the meeting of the League held on November 29, 1974, this important matter was discussed again. It was decided to appoint a committee whose task it would be to investigate the possibilities of starting a Canadian Reformed Teacher Training.

For many years courses had been taught on Friday nights and the last few years these courses were held during the summer. However, these courses were only designed to assist practising teachers. Now it was envisioned to operate a regular day-time course or evening course to prepare young people for teaching.

The Ad Hoc Committee met on January 3, 1975. Some problems that were discussed were: How to attract more teachers; What about our Teachers' Academic Background?; Can we provide our own training?

On January 24, 1975, the Ad Hoc Committee met with the "Principals' Club." The net result of this meeting was a promise that they would prepare a report on what would be required to teach if we were to operate our own teacher training.

The result of this promise was that a discussion paper on the possible set up of a Canadian Reformed Teacher Training was issued. This was achieved in the summer of 1975.

On November 24, 1975, a meeting was held with two Ad Hoc Committee members and the Principals' Club. It was found that this discussion was a helpful tool in further deliberations.

On February 9, 1976, the Ad Hoc Committee met again. Various alternatives were discussed.

1. Continue with the present summer course.
2. Eliminate Ontario Education Standards and proceed with a two year academic training course as per discussion paper.

3. Run concurrent with a regular program at a University. This would then again be a 3 or 4 year course.

4. A combination of 2 and 3 where it would be student choice to take one of two levels (2 or 3).

5. Three years B.A. plus 1 year of our own training.

As you can see, there are many possibilities. Also at this meeting a suggested Budget was made up which totalled \$65,000.00. Income was based on 1,300 society members at \$1.00 per week for 50 weeks per member.

The following meeting was held on July 8, 1976. Present at this meeting was the Ad Hoc Committee and Mr. A. Van Esch, Director of the Gereformeerde Pedagogische Academie, Groningen, The Netherlands. This meeting proved to be very informative.

It seems that there is no end to meetings. For only two weeks later another meeting was held. Most of these meetings were held at the Theological College in Hamilton. This meeting was held on July 23, 1976. Present were Prof. Dr. J. Faber, Dr. W. Helder, Mr. J. Nordeman, Mr. A.L. Vanderhout, Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff, and Mr. A. Van Esch. The problems were once more discussed. It was decided that the Ad Hoc Committee should meet again to sort out all the input and prepare a set of recommendations to the League. This meeting was held October 1, 1976. There had been little progress in actually setting up a training program. Many discussions had taken place. However, at this meeting things began to take shape. The Ad Hoc Committee now made definite recommendations to the League of School Societies. The League met on November 5, 1976. At this meeting the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee were accepted.

In this brief history we have only given a short summary of each meeting. Since the meeting of the League of November 5, 1976, was very important, we will mention several points of the careful deliberations. The following statement was issued: Considering the necessity to: a) Make available to our School Societies, teachers trained in a

Reformed environment; b) Provide for parents the opportunity to have their children attend a Reformed Teachers' College; the League is making the following recommendations:

1. That the Canadian Reformed Community set up a College to provide Reformed Teacher Training consisting of a three year day-time program, primarily aimed at the elementary level;
2. That this college be operated and supported by as many Canadian Reformed School Societies in Canada as wish to participate with equal representation;
3. That a committee be appointed to compile a Canadian Course program;
4. That September 1977 be set as target date to open this college.

These were four of the most important recommendations made. The League sent these considerations and recommendations to the School Societies with the request to give their opinion before January 1, 1977.

A meeting was set for May 20, 1977. At this meeting several society delegates were present. Also many societies from the West and from Ontario had written to tell us that they were in principle in favour of Canadian Reformed Teacher Training. There were many other recommendations and suggestions. Also present at this meeting were the members of the Curriculum Committee appointed by the League at their November 5th meeting. After some discussion this Committee left and had its own meeting. After some additional discussion a motion was presented and seconded. This motion proposed that in principle we are in favour of Canadian Reformed Teacher Training. This motion was adopted. Four people present were appointed to take part in a steering committee. Mr. A. Vanderhout, Mr. H. Homan, Mr. E. Kampen, and Mr. C. Hoff.

On May 30 this Steering Committee met at the College. It was felt that the Canadian Reformed Community should know more about this matter and it was therefore decided to write a history of the development of Canadian Reformed Teacher Training.

It was further decided to publish Press Releases of the meetings held by the Steering Committee.

With Christian Greeting,  
for the Steering Committee,  
C. HOFF

# PRESS RELEASE

of the Classis Alberta-Manitoba held in Edmonton, Alberta, on October 25-26, 1977.

1. Opening. On behalf of the convening church, Winnipeg, the Rev. S. DeBruin calls the meeting to order and has the delegates and audience sing Psalm 36:1, 3. After reading Ephesians 4:1-16 he leads in prayer. In a brief word of welcome he relates the recent history of the churches in this classis, and points to the loss of two ministers in this Classis, reminding all present that this leaves only three ministers for the seven churches in this Classis. He expresses the hope that the Lord may soon fill some of these vacancies. He then speaks a few words about the passage read from Ephesians 4, and expresses the hope that all the delegates might be enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak the truth with each other in a spirit of love, as had been the case in previous Classis meetings.

2. The delegates of Winnipeg report that all the credentials are in good order. Several churches have instructions.

3. Classis is constituted. The officers are appointed: As chairman, Rev. J. Visscher; as clerk, Rev. J. Van Rietschoten; as Vice-chairman, Rev. S. DeBruin.

4. After a few additions to the Provisional Agenda, the Agenda is adopted.

5. A classical Committee reports on "Classical involvement in foreign mission." This committee was appointed to study the proposal from the Church at Calgary that Classis adopt its six considerations; namely, 1. That our churches are continuing to grow and should in the future be able to support another foreign missionary; 2. That our present set-up for supporting each other in fulfilling our calling with regard to foreign mission is deficient, since the supporting churches have only a limited voice in the decision-making process, and do not themselves actually send out a missionary, but rather only support the church at New Westminster in fulfilling her calling; 3. That the sending out of a foreign missionary is an ecclesiastical matter; 4. That where one church is unable due to lack of resources to send out a missionary by herself, it becomes a matter of the churches in common; 5. That the church order provides that the classis deals with ecclesiastical matters which cannot be finished in the consistories or such as pertain to the churches of the classis in common (Article 30, Church Order); 6. That it is preferable for one missionary to be supported by the churches of one classis, rather than that two missionaries are supported by the churches of the two classes together. (The reasons are: a) A closer contact can be maintained between the missionary and the supporting churches. b) It is less expensive for a missionary on furlough to visit a more limited number of churches. c) It limits the need for paid administrative personnel. d) It helps to avoid the danger of hierarchy.)

The grounds for these considerations are: 1. The Scriptures command the church to be diligent in propagating the gospel among *all* men. (Matthew 28:18-20). 2. Not one of the churches in the classical resort is able to support a missionary by herself. 3. The Church Order provides that the classis should deal with the ecclesiastical matters of concern to the churches of the classis in common (Article 30, Church Order).

In a careful analysis of these considerations and grounds, the Committee pointed in its report to the faulty reasoning of Calgary, even though many general truths are expressed, and advises Classis not to adopt the proposal of Calgary "to appoint a committee with the following mandate" — re classical involvement in foreign mission. Instead, classis adopts the conclusion of its committee; namely: "Classis may become involved in matters of: foreign mission whenever a church in the classical resort asks 'judgment and help' from classis in the exercise of her missionary responsibility (Article 41, Church Order); Classis ought to be involved in the matter of foreign mission by means of her church visitors, when these 'take heed' to the involvement of the local church in the matter of foreign mission, and 'advise and assist' the local churches, encouraging them to the sending out of missionary ministers of the Word. Classis must also be appeal body ad Article 31, Church Order re mission." The committee is thanked for its work.

6. A report is read from the "Committee for needy churches." This committee had received instructions from classis to formulate a "draft mandate for this committee, since the original mandate needs correction." After some minor additions this draft mandate is adopted. A letter is read from the committee for needy churches re Calgary. Classis decides to accede to Calgary's request to increase its classical support from \$4,000.00 to \$6,000.00 for 1978. The committee is instructed to request the churches to increase their pledges of support.

7. Reports from the church visitors re visits to Carman and Winnipeg are read and adopted with gratitude.

8. Acts of Classis Contracta re Rev. R.F. Boersema are read. Classis decides to publish these in the same booklet of the acts of the present classis.

9. A committee report for financial aid to students for the ministry is read and adopted. It is taken note of that no financial aid was requested for the past year.

10. Instructions. A request to approve the call of Rev. D. DeJong to the church at Calgary is granted. A request for an act of release from this classis for Rev. J. Visscher is granted.

11. Question Period re Article 41, Church Order. Advice is asked by the church at Calgary for a matter of discipline. Advice is given.

12. Several letters of appeal are read and extensively discussed in closed session.

Classis comes to a decision, which will be sent to the appellants.

13. Appointments. a) It is decided that Barrhead is to be the convening church for the next classis, to be held in Edmonton, the Lord willing, on March 19, 1978. Suggested officers are: Rev. D. DeJong as Chairman, Rev. J. Van Rietschoten as Vice-chairman, and Rev. S. DeBruin as Clerk. b) Brother E.C. Koning, Jr. is re-appointed as treasurer for the Classis. c) The church at Edmonton is re-appointed as auditor for the books of the treasurer. d) The church at Edmonton is re-appointed to take care of the classical archives. e) The church at Barrhead is re-appointed to inspect the classical archives. f) As church visitors are appointed the Rev. Messrs. S. DeBruin, D. DeJong, and J. Van Rietschoten. g) For the Committee for examinations are appointed Rev. D. DeJong and Rev. J. Van Rietschoten. h) Appointed as examiners: for the sermon: Rev. S. DeBruin and Rev. D. DeJong; for Old Testament exegesis: Rev. J. Van Rietschoten; for New Testament exegesis: Rev. S. DeBruin; for Knowledge of the Scriptures: Rev. D. DeJong; for knowledge of Church history and Church polity: Rev. J. Van Rietschoten; for knowledge of doctrine and creeds: Rev. D. DeJong; for Ethics: Rev. J. Van Rietschoten; for Diaconology: Rev. S. DeBruin. i) Re-appointed for the Committee for financial aid of students for the ministry are the brothers C. Veldkamp, S. Tuininga, and T. Vandenbrink. j) Re-appointed for the Committee for needy churches are the brothers C. Poppe, T. Veenendaal, and Rev. S. DeBruin.

14. Preaching arrangements are requested by the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale, Edmonton, and Neerlandia. Classis decides that each vacant congregation should have a minister at least once a month. The necessary arrangements are made; namely: on December 18/77 Rev. J. Van Rietschoten is to go twice to Barrhead and once to Neerlandia; on January 15/78 Rev. D. DeJong is to go twice to Neerlandia and once to Barrhead; on January 15/78 Rev. S. DeBruin is to go to Edmonton; on February 12/78 Rev. S. DeBruin is to go twice to Barrhead and once to Neerlandia; on February 12/78 Rev. D. DeJong is to go to Coaldale; on February 12/78 Rev. J. Van Rietschoten is to go to Edmonton; on March 12/78 Rev. J. Van Rietschoten is to go twice to Neerlandia and once to Barrhead; on March 12/78 Rev. D. DeJong is to go to Coaldale; on March 12/78 Rev. S. DeBruin is to go to Edmonton; on April 9/78 Rev. S. DeBruin is to go twice to Barrhead and once to Neerlandia; on April 9/78 Rev. J. Van Rietschoten is to go to Coaldale; on April 9/78 Rev. D. DeJong is to go to Edmonton.

15. Upon request from the church at Edmonton Rev. J. Van Rietschoten is appointed as her counsellor, and also upon request by the church at Coaldale, Rev. D. DeJong is appointed as her counsellor.

16. Personal Question period re Article 41, Church Order is held.

17. It is thankfully taken note of that

# Organ Dedication Evening in Smithers, B.C.

Ten years ago, when the new Church reached completion, a few members were admiring the interior of the building. Looking up towards the high ceiling and the big empty space above the pulpit, one of the members said wishfully, "Would it not be nice to have a pipe organ?"

However, it could, of course, not be realized at that time; we did not even have a Canadian Reformed School.

Now, ten years later, we *did* receive out of God's Fatherly Hand an organ to assist the congregation in her singing. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

The Church was filled with brothers and sisters, also from Houston, and visitors attending to the dedication of the newly installed organ. Much planning went into it, and the committee received much help from our former pastor, Rev. van Rietschoten, who could be present that evening as our guest organist. The Chairman of the consistory, elder W. den Hollander, opened this evening with prayer, and we sang Psalm 33:1, 2; after that he opened God's Word in the reading of Psalm 33.

In his opening address, words of welcome were extended to all, especially to Rev. M. van Beveren, our counsellor, who could also be present. He went on to tell the people that not the organ was to be glorified that evening, but the Lord and His service is number one. The organ is there to help the people in their singing. On behalf of the consistory, br. den Hollander warmly extended thanks to the organ com-

## PRESS RELEASE — Continued.

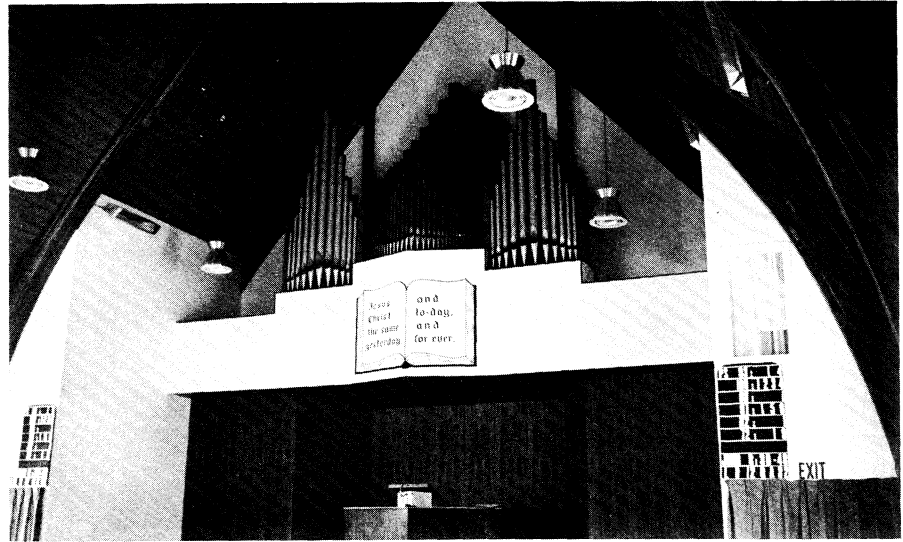
censure re Article 43, Church Order is not necessary.

A word of farewell to Rev. J. Visscher is spoken by Rev. D. DeJong on behalf of Classis Alberta-Manitoba, and the wish expressed that the Lord may grant him His blessings for his work in the congregation of Cloverdale and in Classis Pacific.

18. The Acts of Classis are adopted and the Press Release approved.

19. The Chairman, Rev. J. Visscher, after singing and thanksgiving, closes the meeting.

For the Classis,  
S. DE BRUIN



mittee for all the work and planning that went into this project.

The program of this evening was filled with Psalms of Praise and Hymns out of our *Book of Praise*. In between the singing, the Rev. van Rietschoten played works by Johann Ludwig Krebs, Johann Sebastian Bach, Jeremiah Clarke, and Jan Zwart. The people *sang* and *listened* with joy and appreciation.

In the short intermission a collection was held which yielded \$800.03 for our organ fund, an amount which left the organ committee speechless.

The president of the organ committee then gave a short introduction about the organ and the ten ranks were played separately. The children laughed when the bass Trumpet was played; it reminded them of a bear growling in the bush.

At the end of the evening we sang Hymn 49:1, 2, and Rev. van Beveren spoke a few words, congratulating the congregation with this wonderful instrument and evening, wishing the congregation the Lord's blessing, now that she had received from the Lord this organ to assist in the preaching and singing of God's Holy Word. He then closed with thanksgiving prayer.

Afterwards coffee and sandwiches were served in the basement, and there was an opportunity to talk with each other, and have a closer look at the console and pipes. The organ was built by Mr. Hugo Spilker of Victoria, B.C., and he did an excellent job. And if organists from our sister church-

es would like to know more about Smithers' organ, why not spend your next holidays in Smithers? We would be happy to show you around and play our organ. All you have to do is contact one of the organists.

For the Organ committee,  
Mrs. Fred Hofsink  
Box 984, Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0  
Phone: 847-3657

The specification of the Organ is as follows. Two manual and 30 note radiant concave pedal board.

### GREAT ORGAN: POSITIVE ORGAN:

Bourdon	8'	Rohr Gedackt	8'
Principal	8'	Flute d' Amour	4'
Rohr Flote	4'	Principal	4'
Octave	4'	Quint Flute	2 2/3'
Super Octave	2'	Piccolo	2'
Mixture 3 R.	1 1/3'	Tierce (T.C.)	1 3/5'
Trumpet	8'		
Clarion	4'		

### PEDAL ORGAN:

Bourdon	16'
Bass Flute	8'
Octave Bass	8'
Rohr Flute	4'
Choral Bass	4'
Mixture 3 R.	1 1/3'
Posaune	16'
Trumpet	8'
Clarion	4'

### OUR COVER

The new pipe organ in the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithers, B.C.

# our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,

Are you happy winter is coming? I am. Do you know what I like about winter? I like the long cozy evenings when it gets dark early. I like seeing it get dark and then closing the drapes. Now that it's dark outside everybody finds something interesting to do inside. And there are so many interesting things to do, there just aren't enough hours to do everything!

How about you? What do you like to do inside? Do you have a new hobby? Do you read, or play a musical instrument? Or do you play dominoes, and Chinese checkers, or monopoly with the others in your family? That's lots of fun, too. And of course there's *Our Little Magazine* and our quizzes!

Have lots of fun, and if you have time drop me a line about your new hobby or the book you just finished.

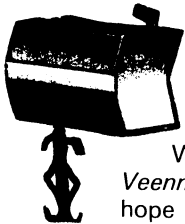
\* \* \* \* \*

Busy Beaver *Mirjam Vander Bruggen* has this poem for us to enjoy. Thank you for sharing, Mirjam.

*I went to Town*

I went to town  
And I saw a funny clown.  
It was dressed in a purple gown,  
And on its face there was a frown.

\* \* \* \* \*



## From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Marcella Veenman*. We are happy to have you join us. We hope you'll really enjoy being a Busy Beaver and joining in all our Busy Beaver activities. Are you looking forward to snow for skiing, Marcella?

And a big welcome to you, too, *Martin Vander Wel*. I'm glad you like our puzzles and quizzes. Be sure to join in all our Busy Beaver activities, Martin.

Hello *Mirjam Vander Bruggen*. Thank you for the poem. I think the Busy Beavers will enjoy it. Have you received your membership card already, Mirjam?

Thank you for the riddles, *Edith Hofsink*. The Busy Beavers will enjoy them, too, I think. Nice to hear from you again, Edith. Write again soon!

How was your birthday party, *Greta Bosscher*? Did you have a good time with your friends? And have you learned to tell the twins apart? Did you like today's quizzes, Greta? Bye for now.

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUIZ TIME

First of all here are some riddles for you from Busy Beaver *Edith Hofsink*.

1. Why is the elephant an unwelcome guest?

2. What do you have that is easiest to part with?
3. What is the smallest bridge in the world?
4. If you have cows and ducks, what have you?
5. When the clock strikes 13 what time is it?
6. To what man do men always take off their hats?

*Answers:* 1. Because he always brings along his trunk. 2. your comb, 3. the bridge of your nose, 4. milk and quack-ers, 5. Time to get it fixed, 6. the barber.

Now Busy Beaver *Carl Werkman* has a word search puzzle for you to do. Can you find all these words?

M	T	D	B	Z	O	K	I
O	B	A	D	I	A	H	S
S	A	U	L	F	J	B	A
E	D	B	K	J	E	D	I
S	A	M	U	E	L	F	A
N	M	U	K	R	U	T	H
K	S	J	B	F	K	H	B
I	N	U	M	B	E	R	S
F	N	D	A	N	I	E	L
A	X	E	S	T	H	E	R

### Who Said It?

1. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion."  
*Clue:* an old man on an island.
2. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will be given for his life."  
*Clue:* he came with the sons of God.
3. "Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant."  
*Clue:* a strong man
4. "Doth Job fear God for nought?"  
*Clue:* not a human being
5. "Where art thou?"  
*Clue:* spoken in a garden
6. "Thy love to me was wonderful."  
*Clue:* he is mourning the loss of a friend
7. "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."  
*Clue:* a great leader
8. "Father, I have sinned."  
*Clue:* he had been away from home
9. "Understandest thou what thou readest?"  
*Clue:* spoken in the wilderness

Shall we see how you did on last time's puzzles? Here are the *New Testament Bible Book Names*: 1. Mark — Matthew, Revelation, 2. Jude — John, Ephesians, 3. Acts — Colossians.

*Scramble:* 1. Leviticus, 2. Lamentations, 3. Hezekiah, 4. Joshua, 5. Numbers, 6. Exodus, 7. Jeremiah, 8. Samuel, 9. Genesis, 10. Deuteronomy.

(Did you notice that the name of a king slipped in by mistake? But you knew it anyway, right?)

Did you get them all right? Good for you. Keep up the good work.

It is a little late, Busy Beavers, but if you haven't sent in your Reformation Day quiz yet, you can still do it. I promised you a reward, remember?

Till next time, then. Bye for now. Yours, Aunt Betty.