



Clarion

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The Civil Government in Article 36 B.C.

One of the intriguing aspects of the text of our Confession of Faith, printed in the *Book of Praise*, is the footnote to Article 36. We confess that the office of the magistrates or civil government is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also to protect the sacred ministry (and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed) that the Kingdom of Christ may thus be promoted. The note informs us that the twenty words between brackets were deleted by the General Synod 1905 of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland as not being in harmony with the biblical teaching concerning the mandate of the government. The Christian Reformed Church did the same in 1910 (See *Acts of Synod*, 1910, pp. 9, 104-105). Other Churches of Reformed origin in The Netherlands maintained these words. We consider the Canadian Reformed Churches to agree with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, although up to the present they did not deal specifically with this issue.

In the meantime, history has gone on, not only in The Netherlands but also in America. The latest development in The Netherlands is that in our sister churches deputies of the Synod of Groningen 1978 (Committee — R.H. Bremmer) recently addressed the consistories about this point: "Ter synode is de vraag gesteld, of het vanwege dit Synodebesluit van Utrecht 1905 niet juister is deze '21 woorden' geheel uit de text van het artikel weg te laten, of slechts op te nemen in een noot onder het artikel." The question therefore is whether the words between brackets ought to be left out completely, or should be taken up in a footnote only. In the issue of February 7, 1979, the editor of *Nederlands Dagblad* proposed to use the opportunity of modernization of the language in order to undo the operation of 1905 and to add a few words in order to avoid misunderstanding concerning the task of the civil government with respect to church and preaching.

In the Christian Reformed Church of North America the Synod of 1938 decided to eliminate the explanatory footnote and to change the text of the Article itself. The twenty words, therefore, are no longer in the text as such, not even between brackets. The Synod of 1958 approved the following substitute statement for the words excided in 1938: "And being called in this manner to contribute to the advancement of a society that is pleasing to God, the civil rulers have the task, in subjection to the law of God, while completely refraining from every tendency toward exercising absolute authority, and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them and with the means belonging to them, to remove every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and to every aspect of divine worship, in order that the Word of

God may have free course, the kingdom of Jesus Christ may make progress, and every anti-christian power may be resisted." This statement was the fruit of intensive discussions and lengthy reports also within the circle of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. I do not raise the question now whether this substitute statement could be acceptable for our sister churches in The Netherlands or for our Canadian Reformed Churches. At the moment I may confine myself to the remark that the language of this statement seems too intricate for a church confession. It is more philosophic than confessional.

But another question must have priority now; namely, Was and is this controversy on Article 36 of the Belgic Confession necessary at all? Could we not simply return to the original text of Guido de Brès? "It seems to us that this discussion and controversy, extending over more than 70 years, could have been largely avoided if Reformed Churches subscribing to the Belgic Confession had been aware of the original Confession of de Brès and had adopted its language in Article 36." This is the opinion of the Belgic Confession Translation Committee, expressed in Report 33 in the Agenda for Synod 1979 of the Christian Reformed Church. And this opinion deserves our close attention, not only for its own sake, but because it is connected with the entire approach of Report 33 to "the Revision."

Our readers possibly remember that this Report sees a sharp contrast between de Brès' original text and "the Revision." Two schools of thought locked horns already some two decades before de Brès put his Confession on paper: the school of Calvin and the school of Flemish evangelicals. The school of Calvin wanted to magisterialize the reform in the Low Countries, but the "Kruiskerken" — the churches under the cross, the persecuted churches — did not seek a government's sword to insure his own interpretation of the faith and oppose competitors. He wrote his confession from within that very camp that Calvin had chided. But alas, in 1566, an "occult" synod revised the confession. It was a thorough revision, notably in Article 36, and its prime purpose was apparently "to make the confession over into the product of the faction that was, by this time, advocating magisterialization of the reform."

This is the picture drawn by Report 33, and the readers will understand what important role the revision of Article 36 plays in the whole construction. In a previous issue I rejected the contrast made between Calvin and de Brès. Now we compare de Brès' original Confession in Article 36 and the revision. For the sake of simplicity we omit the French text, and for the sake of brevity we restrict ourselves to the passages about purpose and task of the civil government.

1561 (Translation Report 33)

His (God’s) purpose is that the excesses of men be restrained and that everything be conducted in good order among human beings.

For that purpose he has placed the sword in the hand of the government to punish evil men and protect good and decent people.

The government’s task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but extends also to the affairs of the church with a view to the uprooting and destruction of all idolatry and false religion; the undoing of the kingdom of the antichrist;

the promotion of the kingdom of Jesus Christ; the furthering of the preaching of the Gospel everywhere,

to the end that God may be honoured and served by everyone, as He requires in His Word.

How does Report 33 evaluate the revision of Article 36? Here it sees “most clearly the profound influence of the move toward magisterialization. In the De Bres Confession of 1559/61 the *single task* of civil government was *to hold the sword and use it in a twofold direction*: ‘to punish evil men and protect good and decent people’ (thus a positive and negative use of the sword). But in the Revision the *double task* or office of civil government was (1) ‘to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state’ (thus the state has both political and ecclesiastical responsibilities).” So the contrast would be: de Brès saw a single task of civil government, but the Revision gave the magistracy two duties; therefore the Revision is a clear sign of magisterialization: the magistracy is now invested with the duty of seeing Calvinism through to victory. We had better return to the original of Article 36.

When I read this study report, I was reminded of an essay that I once wrote in The Netherlands. It also dealt with the first revision of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession and with the opinion of Dutch historians and theologians R. Fruin, J.J. van Toorenenbergen, A. Kuyper, H.H. Kuyper, F.J. Los, H. Visscher, J. Th. de Visser, L. Knappert, J.

1566/1619
(Present Translation)

... to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency.

For this purpose He has invested the magistracy with the sword for the punishment of evildoers and for the protection of them that do well.

Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry and thus may remove and prevent

all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of the antichrist may be thus destroyed

that the Kingdom of Christ may thus be promoted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the Gospel everywhere,

that God may be honoured and worshipped by everyone, as He commands in His Word.

Severijn, C. Vonk, and D. Deddens. The last one, now the new professor of Church History in Kampen, had remarked that it is the general opinion “dat de oorspronkelijke tekst van art. 36 in 1566 gewijzigd werd, omdat het inzicht zich had baan gebroken dat in deze text al te ruime ambtstaak de Overheid werd toegewezen terzake van de kerk” So the common idea among Dutch scholars is that the revision of Article 36 in 1566 was caused by the new insight that the text of 1561 had commissioned the civil government with *too broad* a task in regard to the church. Deddens himself spoke of an “essential difference” and a “radical revision,” and J. Th. de Visser wrote about “an important weakening” (“eene belangrijke verzwakking”). I, however, maintained the thesis that the revision of Article 36 in 1566 primarily was nothing but a stylistic change (“minder diepingrijpend,” “vooral een louter redactionele zaak”).

In America, however, the idea has been defended — and it is now repeated and confirmed in Report 33 — that the revision of 1566 was not an important weakening but a radical strengthening, in the direction of magisterialization. 1561 would have commissioned the civil government with a task regarding the church that according to 1566 was *not broad enough*. It is remarkable that this Report completely ignores the Dutch scholars. The committee does not answer their argument that “to protect the sacred ministry” (1566) is more limited than “to sustain the affairs of the church” (veiller sur les choses ecclésiastiques, 1561). It quotes Abraham Kuyper who spoke of the revision as “een duchtige revisie,” notably in Article 36, but it does not mention that Kuyper saw this “thorough revision” going in a direction opposite to that of Report 33.

What is then the argument of this Report for the idea that the revision promoted the magisterialization? It is the assertion that in de Brès’ confession the civil government has a *single* task, while in the Revision it has *double* duties. But what does the Report do? It compares the *second* passage of 1561 (the Sword) with the *third* paragraph of 1566 (to have regard and to protect). That is not right, as everyone can observe. I, for one, was again struck by the strictly parallel structure of the two texts, and by the fact that the differences are, basically and really, slight. I regard them as mainly mere stylistic changes and would have to quote the French texts in order to prove this point. Further, we may ask: Is there any indication that the political situation had direct and great impact on the revision in 1566? Had this situation really changed in the few years since 1561, before the eighty years war had even begun? But the main issue is that in 1561 also Guide de Brès mentioned a *double* task for the government in his third passage (“the public order” and “the affairs of the church”). Every one can check this in the English translations.

The fact is corroborated, if we compare the French Confession of 1559 — de Brès’ pattern — and the Belgic Confession of 1561:

French Confession (1559)

he has put the sword into the hands of magistrates to suppress crimes against the first as well as against the second table of the Commandments of God.

Belgic Confession (1561)

The government’s task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but extends also to the affairs of the church.

Continued on next page.

Report on a Marvelous Tour⁸

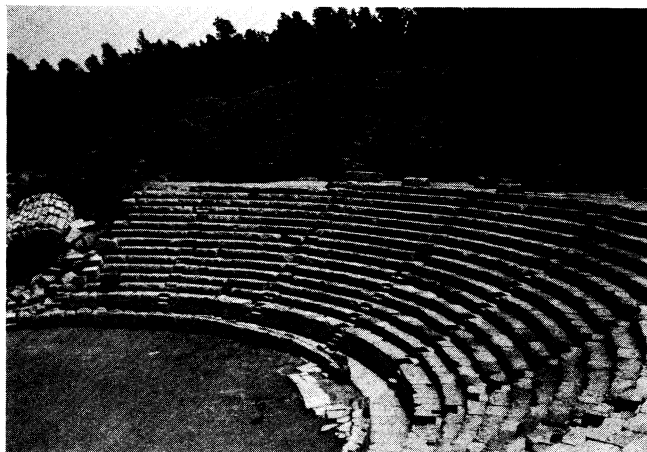
ISRAEL: MAY 1979

The sixth day: From Jerusalem to Tiberias (III).

It is time to take leave of Jericho, and so we go to the bus which is going to take us along the Jordan River, which is visible now and then. Behind the Jordan we see the high mountains of Gilead rise. According to the guide also Mt. Nebo was here. Passing the sign El Uja — Itav at our right hand, Israeli settlements in the Jordan valley, surrounded by date palms, vines, tomatoes, egg plants, and flowers, hit the eye. The Jordan valley narrows as we go north, the Samaritan mountains coming closer and closer by the river. There is a chain of Jewish settlements along the river. The bus passes the sign to Massua, the intersection with the road Nablus (=Shechem) — Adam, where a bridge connects the two banks of the Jordan River. At Adam, presently Tell ed-Damiye, the Jabbok empties into the Jordan. It was here that the fugitive Ephraimites were put to the test by having them pronounce the word "Shibboleth," and that David on his way back to Jerusalem crossed the river by a ferry (II Samuel 19:18).

North of this point the Samaritan mountains come as close as possible to the Jordan, the road being forced to run right beside the border with Jordania, Hussein's kingdom, along a fence with yellow boards warning for landmines. Looking to the east you see Gilead extending rich and fertile. Past the sign to Beqa'oth, the valley broadens again, and the road departs from border and river.

The sign to Tubas, on the road from Nablus to Beisan calls to mind



Roman theatre in Beisan.

Biblical Thebez, where the terrible Abimelech came to a bad end (Judges 9). Before long we cross the boundary of the Westbank and Israel again and are entering the Valley of Beisan (= Biblical Beth Shan). It is a well-developed land with cottonfields extending far and wide. This part of the Jordan valley gets more rain and, besides, is blessed with a hundred natural springs. The boundary is past Sede Terumoth, where Jews of Kurdish origin live. At the checkpoint, interrogated by Israeli military men about the contents of the bus, Amos, in answering, made a slip of the tongue: "We have 27 terrorists . . . pardon, I mean tourists, on board." The military men could take a joke and smiled.

The outlook widens. To the left is Mount Gilboa, that curbed horn on the head of the Samaritan mountain range.

According to I Samuel 31 King Saul and his sons were slain here. "When on the morning the Philistines came, they found Saul and his sons . . . They cut off his head and stripped off his armour . . . They put his armour in the temple of Ashtaroth and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan." Many things can be told about the city and its rich history, going back as far as 1900 B.C., as it was mentioned in the ancient Egyptian execration texts. (cf. what I wrote re. Ashqelon). Egypt has always taken a keen interest in this city on the crossroads; to this many precious archaeological finds bear witness, among others, a victory stele of Pharaoh Seti I (ca. 1300 B.C.) and a victory monument of the well-known Ramses II, his son. Now we make a big

Continued on next page.

EDITORIAL — Continued.

What Calvin c.s. has expressed as the task of the government with respect to sins against the second table of God's law, Guido de Brès saw as the government's task in restraining the excesses of men in the public order. What Calvin c.s. figured to be the duty of civil authorities with respect to the first table of God's law, Guido de Brès regarded as the charge of the government regarding the ecclesiastical affairs. Why did the Committee not quote other writings of de Brès that deal with the relation between state and church?

My conclusion is that if the Christian Reformed Church still is of the opinion that 1566/1619 contained unbiblical teaching concerning freedom of religion and concerning the duty of the state to suppress false religion — these are strong words in the footnote of *Psalter Hymnal* — they

should not accept the proposal of Report 33 to return to the original text of Article 36. For the text of 1561 is basically similar to that of 1566/1619. It would be wise to avoid all misunderstanding. Let us not return to 1561; let us also not undo the decision of 1905 — as some of our Dutch brothers propose — but let us rewrite the entire third passage of Article 36 of our Belgic Confession. Let us scripturally profess the task of the civil government also with respect to the Kingdom and church of Jesus Christ, Who is the Ruler of the kings on earth.

J. FABER

**See my essay "De Liturgie der Overheid. Enige opmerkingen over de eerste herziening van art. 36 N.G.B. in 1566," Lucerna III/4 (1961-1962), pp. 733-740.*

jump of more than 1000 years. For the main attraction of Beisan is the Roman theatre, built in the second century. During a stop-over we visited it. It has a seating capacity for 5000 people. It is built in the standard circular form, designed for dramatic presentations. The theatre has nine tunnelled exits arranged around the steep gangways, leading to the semi-circular area.

The present city strikes us by the many houses built of black stone, indicating that we are entering the "basalt area" stretching from Bashan, east of the Jordan, to west of this river, well into Galilee. All the basalt is the product of volcanic eruptions.

Leaving Beisan the bus takes us through the Valley of Jizreel. Formerly an area of swamps, cultivated now by the Israelis, it is the breadbasket of the land. Another source of income applied here is fish-farming; carp, whitefish, and trout are bred. "Israelis learned it in Yugo Slavia, developed it, and later Yugoslavians came over to see how we did it and learned from us, "Amos tells with justified pride. On the left is still Mount Gilboa, the curbed horn, with which the road runs parallel more or less, but at a distance. Just as Canada made an appeal with its: "Young man, go north!" Israel has done with its: "Go to Mount Gilboa and plant trees!" Well, they did so and ever since the saying is — and Amos passed it on with pride: "The first David (the king) laid a curse upon Mount Gilboa (II Samuel 1:21); the other David (Ben Gurion) took it away."

At our right hand, north of the valley, is another mountain group, the tribal territory of Issachar in Old Testament times. King Baashah was a Issacharite, and so was, in all probability, King Omri and his son Ahab. This way you can explain that Jizreel was their

summer residence. In our bus we pass the site where Jizreel once was, and, in passing, Amos tells the history of Naboth and Ahab. Jezreel itself is in the valley. Higher up in the mountain group, Mount Moreh or Little Hermon, is Sunem, known in the Old Testament as the residence of three women, namely, the beautiful Abishag of II Kings 1:2ff., the bride of Canticles (some say that the two must have been the same), and the hostess of Elisha (II Kings 4). Further to the northeast is Nain, where the young man was raised from the dead (Luke 7). Still farther to the northeast is Endor, where the woman who was a medium was consulted by a desperate King Saul (I Samuel 28). Let me not forget Gideon, the judge, who came to meet the Midianites, encamped at the foot of Mount Moreh. The kibbutz Gedeona keeps his memory alive, and close to it is Ein Harod where he and his faithful encamped (Judges 7:1).

Moving back and forth through history we have returned to our point of departure: Jizreel, the only site of the four we passed on our route, to continue our tour along the old Via Maris or the Way of the Sea (Isaiah 9:1), which is newly paved now.

Our next stop is Megiddo, the highlight of the day. We had entered the Plain of Megiddo already. Often it is confused with the Valley of Jizreel or Esdrelon. I think we had better keep the two apart. Its strategic position, close to a pass in the Carmel range, has been pointed out in the first instalment by way of example. Let me tell more now about Megiddo; however, where shall I begin and where end? What Mr. Algra wrote with respect to any town in his native Friesland: "De historie gaat door het eigen dorp" (that is, a child can learn history by studying the one of

his own city or village) applies a hundred times more to Megiddo. The world history of olden and more-modern times has run through its gates and roads, and the final battle of history is to be fought right here in Armageddon (Revelation 16:16) taken by many to be fulfilled in a literal way. When it comes to history you can draw up a list of highlights, with this city in the centre. Well, let me do it.

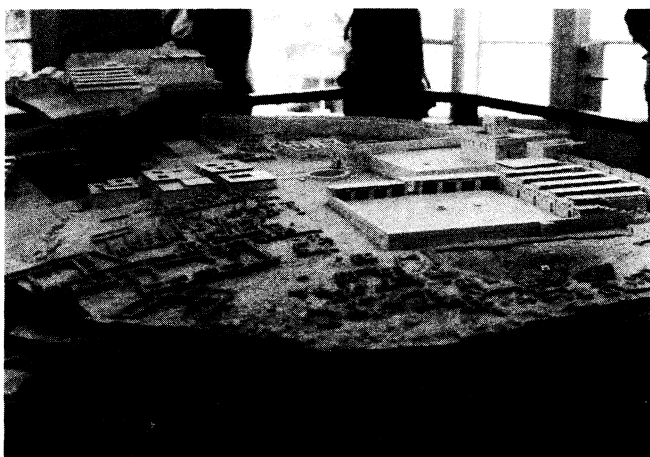
1479 B.C.

Thutmosis III, king of Egypt, gained the victory over a coalition of Canaanite kings. (At that time Moses was a young man of 25 years!).


1383 B.C.

Biridiya, king of Megiddo, writes to Pharaoh Amenhotep III, affirming his loyalty to Egypt (time of Israel's entry).

Continued on next page.



Model of Megiddo.



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1190 B.C.

Defeat of the Canaanite army under Sisera by the waters of Megiddo.

970-930 B.C.

King Solomon rebuilds and fortifies Megiddo. Chariot-city.

841 B.C.

Ahaziah, King of Judah, fled to Megiddo and died there.

609 B.C.

The pious King Josiah fell in battle to Megiddo

And now an enormous jump:

1918 A.D.

The British general Allenby broke the back of the Turkish army.

At this really *historic site* the groups arrived around noontime. With other groups to be shown around the excavation site, we line up in front of, or inside, the museum, keeping some distance in order that their respective tour guides can make themselves heard. We are shown the location of the city on the map, have a quick look at the portraits of the men who conducted the excavations, namely, C.S. Fisher, P.L.O. Guy, ("P.L.O." a peculiar combination; nomen *non est* omen) and G. Loud, and we admire the collection of pieces on display. We also look at the model of Megiddo, a welcome preparation ahead of the tour through the tell, where we will be led through history in its successive stages. As my readers know (but let me repeat it), you meet the stages of history in the layers of the excavation site or the tell *in the reversed order*: the latest period on top and the oldest one at the bottom. Let us follow the guide, leading the group along the path toward the northern slope to the northern gate. A stone paved ramp leads up to

the main gate (outergate); leading into a small walled court, through which one can get access to the inner gate. It is built by Solomon, and its plan is similar to that of Hazor, another chariot city of this king (I Kings 9:15). There is an outer gate and an inner gate, and the latter is flanked by six guardrooms, three on each side of the gangway. A commentary I read observes a striking correspondence with the guardrooms in the outer gates of the temple in Ezekiel's vision.

Looking down to the right we notice at a lower level the remains of an earlier gate, which served the city from the sixteenth to the twelfth century, the pre-Israelite era, the time of the prominent Pharaohs whose names I mentioned above and who fought their battles here. Farther down we distinguish a still older gate, belonging to the Hyqsos period. Now I move forward in time and come back to Solomon's age, from which one wall is left — not the solid wall they thought until recently, but the one underneath it, a casemate wall (that is: a wall with chambers between the inner and outer surfaces). It was unearthed by Prof. Yigael Yadin, who, on the basis of a comparison with the Solomonic walls in Hazor and Gezer, had a shrewd suspicion that a wall of this particular type must be found in Megiddo as well. The result showed he was right.

Best known are Solomon's chariot cities, though actually they date from Ahab's time, a century later. The visitor sees the stone pillars to which the horses were tethered, and near each pillar a manger. The public grain silo dates from Jeroboam II's time, again a century later. The oldest remains discovered so far are those of Canaanite temples, in one of which was a circular high place, built of stone. In conclusion

I mention the 60-m. vertical shaft linked with a 120-m.-long tunnel leading to the source of water just outside the fortifications. Again we became aware of the fact that city-dwellers in those times had to be prepared for a protracted siege. Both our groups, young and aged (if I may say so. I know some in our group did not like that I made an allusion to it in warning them to be careful in going down), walked all the way down the staircase and then through the tunnel to the well. Then they went up for a while and left the shaft, coming out of the dark into full daylight. There the bus was waiting. All in all the visit took us two hours, and they were rewarding, I think.

It is about lunchtime now. We enjoy our meal in Afulah at a 10-km. distance from Megiddo. Jewish pioneers started the town in 1920, and it serves as the commercial and administrative centre for the Plain of Megiddo. There is a sugar refinery here, and a great number of soldiers, male and female, are around. We had to stop in a restaurant in the centre of the town, nice and cozy, although you had to be patient.

Between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. the group left for Nazareth, a very interesting stretch. To the right we first see Mount Moreh, which I mentioned before. Moving farther to the north, it is Mount Tabor which comes into sight more clearly all the time. An impressive sight, this mountain, with its peculiar, domed shape, standing there all by itself; it is the point where three tribal areas once met: Zebulun, Naphtali and Issachar. Here Barak assembled his troops to fight King Jabin's army; and it is pointed out by tradition as the mountain of Christ's transfiguration. To the left is the Plain of Megiddo and right in front of us . . . *Nazareth*.

Yes, there it is, right in front, that is to say, on the top of a steep mountain, invisible, therefore, from the low plain. The steep, southern slope is named "Mount of Precipice," since the LORD was almost thrown down by His hostile fellow citizens. It takes quite an effort for the bus and its driver to take us up and up through the one hairpin turn after the other. Wrecked cars were scattered all along the roadside. "They could not make it," Amos smiled, "but don't you worry, Sami (the driver) has a secret button by which he can make the bus shrink in case of emergency so that a collision with another vehicle or tipping over is avoided." An encouraging remark for sure! Let us not overlook a more pleasant sight on our way up to



View of Nazareth.



Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, centre.

Nazareth: the forest of Canadian pines with which the slopes were planted, named after Lord Balfour, the man of the Balfour declaration.

The bus made it to the top. Our guides tell us about the population: Arabs, most of whom are Christian; a part, Moslim. There is a Jewish subdivision at the northeastern end. The entire city is overshadowed by the charcoal grey roof of the Basilica of the Annunciation, reputedly the largest church of the Middle East!! It is built above the grotto which is held to be the place where the Angel Gabriel greeted Mary (Luke 1:28). The old Greek Orthodox Church lays claim as well to the glory of standing on the spot of the miracle. It was to this site that Luba took the first group, while

Amos had to hand over the second group to a local guide in the Basilica. We were really baffled by a church of this size, with its two storeys (lower and upper church); 68m. long, 28.50 m. wide, and 20 m. high; the cupola goes up 47 m. above the pavement of the lower church. The church was a real show place: the facades, bronze doors, the presbytery with the mosaic, the banners in the church donated by several nations

It takes some time before you are shown around in such a huge building, so not too much time is left for shopping. It looks like a second Bethlehem, the atmosphere in the streets, the stores, the warm welcome by the storekeepers. That is Nazareth, the city where our LORD spent His boyhood,

playing with other children, obeying His parents . . . , where He later returned to preach the gospel. In the Old Testament you do not hear of it for it did not exist yet. We are in the Zebulun area here.

On the last leg of this day's extensive trip, we are taken straight east, or east-northeast, by the bus. We notice, in passing, Gath Hefer, birth-place of the prophet Jonah, farther to the left (north-westward) Zippori or Zephoris, foremost spiritual centre of Rabbinical studies in the days of the New Testament, but strangely never mentioned in the New Testament. Rabbi Yehuda Hannasi taught here.

Going farther down through hair-pin turns we observe Kfar Kana, old Cana where Christ attended a wedding feast with His mother where He turned water into wine. As in Nazareth, two churches lay claim to the spot. Today it is an Arab Christian village.

And so, through extensive wheat-fields in the process of being harvested, we finally approach our destination of that day: Tiveriyah, old Tiberias, where we were happy to arrive at the Golan Hotel, a high-rise building, towering over the lakefront, with its magnificent panorama over the Sea of Galilee.

H.M. OHMANN

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEW



He Gathers the Lambs by Cornelius Lambregtse, Paideia/Premier, 1979, \$7.95, reviewed by W.W.J. VanOene.

In view of the many favourable and even enthusiastic reviews of the above book it would have required much courage to write one of a less favourable nature.

Fortunately, I do not need that courage, for I fully agree with the judg-

ments which have been expressed: it is a moving, thoroughly Christian, splendid book. There is no "make-up" in it; everything comes so "naturally," so "normally." The only thing a reader is sometimes surprised at when following the story is the reaction of Fransje, but then, even that reaction comes quite naturally, and we can only say, "Yes, that's how a child would react."

Such can be achieved only by a writer who has a keen understanding of what is going on in the mind of a three to four year old boy, and whose heart is filled with love for such a boy. As is the case in many serious novels, so in this one many details are, no doubt, of an autobiographical nature.

He Gathers the Lambs contains no stories of sudden or rather sudden conversations, stories which become sickening; it contains a knowledgeable and passionate description of how the truth and the comfort of God's Word do break through the false

dilemmas and presentations of the pietistic spirit which is so prevailing in some Zeeland regions. Even though the persons involved in this process still use their customary stereotype, standard expressions and terms, we see the Spirit of the LORD bring comfort, not based on experience — though experienced — but worked by the steadfast faithfulness of the covenant God Who by His Word fills the longings of the hearts of men and women brought up in a mystical environment.

Oh, let our children and teenagers throw away the love-stories and such-like junk, and buy and read this book. They will receive some lasting benefit from it, I'm sure, when they take the time to read it thoroughly. It should be in their personal library.

If you are pondering what to give during the upcoming "festive" season: here is your answer.

vO



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

A bishop of the Church of Norway has resigned in protest over Norway's liberalized abortion law. Lutheran Bishop Per Lonning resigned from the episcopacy, and one Norwegian pastor has refused to accept his state-paid salary. The new law provides for state-paid abortions during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. (CT)

Iran has ruled that only three minority religions will be officially recognized in the Islamic republic, and these may exercise their rights only within the principles of Islam. The Council of Constitutional Experts in September approved a clause that named Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, but excluded the Baha'i community, Iran's largest minority religion. (Approximate figures: Baha'i, 450,000; Christians, 300,000; Jews, 60,000; and Zoroastrians, 20,000.) Thirty-seven national Baha'i leaders have been put on the list of those who may not leave Iran, some 20 are in prison, and at least 50 have been dismissed from government service because of their religious beliefs. Baha'i centers have been raided and records removed, and Baha'i enterprises and properties have been taken over. (CT)

More Churches are being reopened in China with government approval. The largest Methodist church building in Shanghai, known before the 1949 Communist revolution as the Moore Chapel, was reopened in September, with some 1,000 in attendance at the opening service. A Chinese-American leader has received correspondence indicating that open church services

have resumed in Canton. The Christian Study Center on Chinese Religion and Culture in Hong Kong reports the reopening of a church in Ningpo, Chekian Province. Six former pastors have been called out of retirement to serve the congregation, with attendance averaging around 700 persons. (CT)

CHURCH GROWTH IN KOREA.

(Grand Rapids) The Church in Korea is one of the fastest growing in the world, increasing at about four times the population growth. In every decade for the past forty years the Protestant community has come close to doubling its total membership. It stood at 370,000 in 1940 but by 1950 it had risen to 600,000, in 1960 to 1,340,000, and in 1970 to 2,250,000. Now, two years short of another decade, the figure is 4,000,000 and still increasing. Christians account for about 14% of Korea's population of 36.6 million people. This contrasts favourably with Asia as a whole (still the least Christian continent in the world, where the proportion of Christians is only 3% of the population). These figures are derived from an article by Samuel H. Moffatt in *Reformed World*.

A large segment (60%) of the Korean Protestants are Presbyterian; 2.27 million strong, they are twice as numerous as the Roman Catholics with 1.1 million. Undoubtedly one reason for the success of the Presbyterians and other Protestants is that their early missionary methods were evangelical, non-colonial, and firmly disciplined. This resulted in evangelical, independent and self-supporting indigenous Korean churches.

Unity is not a prominent feature of Korean church life. All the larger groups except the Catholics and the Salvation Army have suffered from schisms and most are still sadly factionalized. Presbyterians are a typical example. Up until 1950 there was only one Presbyterian Church of Korea. Today they are divided into four major General Assemblies and several smaller groups.

Though Korea boasts several large congregations (one Presbyterian church in Seoul has 28,000 members) most congregations are small. Few Korean churches ordain women, and the male dominated Confucian strain in Korea still runs deep. Yet the proudest social breakthrough of Christianity in Korea has been its key role in the revolutionary transformation of the role of women in society. Christians opened

Korea's first schools for woman and today the largest women's university in the world is Ewha University in Seoul, founded by the Methodists. From the beginning, women in the churches have been a powerful force for social reform, for evangelism, for foreign missions, and for justice and human rights.

Korean Christians are active in the areas of public health and other social concerns. The Korean church is also a missionary church. Today every large denomination has its foreign missionaries, serving around the world from Teheran to Sao Paulo and from Indonesia to Los Angeles. The year 1984-85 will mark the 200th anniversary of Roman Catholicism in Korea, and the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first resident Protestant missionaries. Relations between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Korea have never been better. (RES NE)

FORCED REPRESENTATION STRAINS PRESBYTERIAN TIE.

(Grand Rapids) In response to the demand of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA that churches ordain women and give "fair representation" on church boards of persons of "all ages and of all ethnic minorities," some United Presbyterians are considering withdrawing from the church.

In Philadelphia a meeting was organized by pastors whose understanding of the Bible prevents them from ordaining women. After discussing the controversial issue with the UPCUSA Stated Clerk, William Thompson, the group declared, "We understand if there is no relief from the stipulation . . . provided for those who in conscience cannot approve the ordination of women . . . we will be forced to acknowledge that the actions of the denomination are so contrary to prayerful conscience, that as a last resort we will withdraw from the fellowship of the denomination."

In Denver the strain was also apparent. There the presbytery took the unprecedented move of posting armed guards around the South Presbyterian Church even before it met to hear a committee's recommendation about the ministers and officers of the church who had indicated they could not endorse the ruling on the ordination of women. Later the ministers were allowed to enter South church and remove their books and other personal

Continued on page 525.

The Advent Prayer of Hannah

Hannah lived in the time of the Judges. That was the time when everyone did what was good in his own eyes. It was a time of deformation in the church. The corruption had spread among the people and even among the priests in the tabernacle of the LORD. Elkanah had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah! That was not what the LORD had ordained from the beginning. But Elkanah, like many men of his days, had more than one wife. Things were not very good with the people of God.

But neither was it very good with the priests of the LORD. Eli, the highpriest, was an old man, who did not dare to rebuke or discipline his two wicked sons who were priests in the service of the LORD. They ignored completely the laws of the LORD with respect to the sacrifices. They even acted like the Canaanite priests with their cultic prostitution: they slept with the women at the door of the sanctuary. A terrible situation. That was the time of the Judges! Israel, God's chosen people, was infected with the abominations of the Canaanites whom they were supposed to have destroyed.

If we think that our time is immoral, then just remember what it was like in the days of Hannah! In such an immoral time Hannah prays in the sanctuary of God. She prays for a child. Her rival, Peninnah, has many children, while the LORD has shut Hannah's womb. The LORD has shut her womb. That was His doing. In this way the LORD displayed the CURSE of the Covenant. Hannah is barren because of the unfaithfulness of Israel (Lev. 26, Deut. 28, 29). In Deuteronomy 7:14 the LORD had said: there shall not be any male or female BARREN among you. But Hannah is! Hannah is, so to speak, the "victim" of Israel's apostasy from the LORD. In her childlessness Israel is to see how barren their life is in disobedience to the LORD. God withholds His Covenant blessings from His people and threatens them with His Covenant punishments if they do not repent but continue in their Covenant disobedience!

But now Hannah prays! In the sanctuary of the LORD. She could have prayed for a child at home, too. The Scripture does not mention that, but states that she utters her prayer to the LORD in His house! She prays for a child. Of course, what woman does not want to be a mother? But there is more to it than the wish to have children. Her prayer is a VOW, A PROMISE! And what does she promise? To give her child right back to the LORD Who gave it. Hannah prays not only for herself but for the restoration of the Church in Israel. She has seen and experienced the corruption in the church. And she prays to God to give her a child that may be an instrument in the hand of the LORD to build and restore His church. For the fear of the LORD is gone with the priests and with the people. The priests and the people are obstructing the way to the True Priest, Jesus Christ to come.

Hannah is not just complaining and protesting about the deformation of the church. She is not just saying, "I am only a woman!" Women have a voice in the church too. They have the right and the duty to call the people of God back to obedience to His Word. Hannah starts to pray. But her prayer is a vow that she will immediately give up her child for adoption to the LORD in His service!

Why did Peninnah, who had many children, never make such a vow? Why did Elkanah never propose to dedicate one of her children to the LORD? Well, Hannah does even before she expects a child, for she is concerned not just about her own barrenness but with the barrenness of Israel!

And how does the LORD start the reformation of His Church? Not by a great and strong man, but by a simple woman, a true Mother in Israel, who gets down on her knees and starts to pray in and for the sanctuary of God.

Praying women are far more important in the Church than having women in the offices or even having women vote for office-bearers in the Church. Their influence is far greater when they PRAY!

What Hannah did, seems like taking a big risk when she brings her young child, Samuel, to the tabernacle of the LORD. Right in the midst of that corrupt church with men like Hofni and Phinehas. What impression would their immorality make on the young boy Samuel? But Hannah did not shrink back from her vow. And by fulfilling her desire the LORD cleared the way for Christ to come. Christ Who is the true Priest. Christ, Who would bring the perfect sacrifice in true holiness, the Priest Who also made a perfect sacrifice for the immorality of His people. He alone was completely devoted to the service of the LORD. When Hannah brought the young Samuel to the tabernacle, Israel was confronted again with what the LORD does in His Covenant. He still appealed to His people to repent and to obey His laws again. God heard the prayer of a childless woman. So He will also bless His people when they return to Him in true dedication. He will send His priest, Who will give Himself as the Perfect Sacrifice for all the sins of Israel. Thus Hannah's prayer was in reality a prayer for the coming of that unique High Priest, an advent prayer for the coming of the High Priest Who would sacrifice Himself for the sins of all of Israel. The last sentence of this chapter reads: "And he [that young boy Samuel] worshipped the LORD there." There we see the faithfulness of the LORD God of the Covenant Who restores the true worship in Israel by raising the priest Samuel. The LORD did so by hearing the prayer of a faithful woman on her knees. And her advent prayer was heard in the coming of the Son of God, our Only High Priest, Jesus Christ.

M. WERKMAN

PRAYER*

When I was asked to speak to you on this topic, I was also given to understand that something more was expected of me than a treatment of the prayer which our Saviour Himself has taught us. It was not the intention — I was told — that I should give an explanation of the Lord's Days 46 and following of our Heidelberg Catechism, but what was expected of me is that I shall speak on Prayer more in general. Apparently, the Board was of the opinion that what you need today is not a summary of a series of sermons which I delivered on these Lord's Days, but something new, something prepared specifically for this League Day. That will be especially pleasing to the Fergus ladies, since we are just about at the end of our Catechism — this coming Sunday we shall deal with Lord's Day 52 — and they would not like to hear it all over again, now within the space of some twenty minutes.

Don't worry, I won't treat you to a meal of day-old or week-old food — that is not my custom anyway — although we are to bear in mind what Calvin writes about the prayer which the Lord Jesus has taught us: "Accordingly, this prayer is complete in all its parts, so complete, that whatever is extraneous and foreign to it, whatever cannot be referred to it, is impious and unworthy of the approbation of God. For He has here summarily prescribed what is worthy of Him, what is acceptable to Him, and what is necessary for us; in short, whatever He is pleased to grant" (*Institutes*, Bk. III, Ch. 20, 48).

When we bear in mind what our Catechism says, namely, that prayer is the "chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us," we are on the right track. That will also prevent us from thinking that prayer, in the first place, means "asking."

Is that not what most people think: You pray when you have to ask something of God, when you need something and know that He is the only One Who can give it? And if you are not in need of something, prayer disappears somewhat to the background, doesn't it?

For that reason not a few have difficulties with what we confess: that prayer is the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us. You

speaking to God only on special occasions, and for specific reasons, don't you?

Here I should like to put a thesis which is the basis of what I am going to say further: *Prayer is the only means by which we can communicate with God.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed often; sometimes He prayed a whole night long. Don't think that our Saviour was just asking things of the Father during those night-long prayers. That was His way of communicating with the Father, telling the Father everything, asking the Father for His guidance, praising Him for His goodness and faithfulness. There was an undisturbed relationship between the Father and our Redeemer, and this undisturbed relationship was practised via our Saviour's prayer.

How else would we tell God something if we should not pray to Him? Prayer is the normal way of communication. That shows us right away that prayer is more than asking things of God, more than making known our needs to Him. Prayer is the speaking of a child to his Father, proof that the relation exists and that it functions.

That the relation functions and that it can function is a miracle. It is the fruit of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "No one," He said, "comes to the Father except through and via Me." That's why we pray in the Name of our Saviour. When we mention His Name in our prayer, we do not do so to secure an answer to our petitions; we confess therein, in the first place, that the relationship has been restored by Him, that the way to the throne and the heart of the Father is open to us, and that we may speak to the Father as if nothing ever happened.

Quite something happened, as we confess. It was something terrible. Whereas God spoke with man in paradise as a matter of course, man turned away from his God and Father. Sin entered into the world, and thereby the whole relation was broken up. Man hid himself from the face of the LORD and tried to keep God out of his life, his thoughts, his actions. Why should he tell God anything?

In our Catechism we say that we are to know our sins and misery, that we are to know our unworthiness, our

need and misery. That means: we are to realize every day anew that we are poor, miserable sinners, who broke up the relation, and who, consequently, have no right at all to come before God. It is not just so that we do not have a right to put our *petitions* before the Lord; things are far worse: we do not have a right to speak to God at all. We do not have a right by nature to tell God when we are happy, to tell Him all about our joys, the little ones and the big ones, about the things that bother us, about our wishes and longings, about our struggles and our weaknesses, about our work, about our plans and our failures. That's what makes our lives so miserable by nature.

Those among you who have children will sometimes have told their children not to speak to Mom, since they had done something which was very bad, by which they offended Mom greatly. Now they come to tell Mom what happened at school or what happened at the home of a friend, but Mom does not want to hear anything: since they offended Mom so greatly, they don't have to come with all the little and big things that fill their lives and that they wish to communicate. First that one thing has to be removed, that obstacle to the confidential and loving communication.

When children have committed a great sin against their parents, it is not just so that they do not have to come and *ask* something from their parents; they do not have to come to *tell* them something either!

That's also why the LORD sometimes told His people that they did not have to come to Him in prayer, for He did not wish to listen anyway: there was something between Him and them which broke up that communication between Him and His own.

That applies the more when we think of our fall in Adam. From that very moment on man was forbidden to come to God and to tell Him *anything at all*. When there were difficulties because of sin, he would not have to put them before God. Whenever there were reasons for joy, he did not have to come to the throne of God's majesty in heaven to make them known. Man had no access to God's throne, to God's heart, to God's palace.

Yes, I know: the Lord Jesus Christ has come, and, for His sake, for the sake of His one sacrifice, God showed His grace right away to fallen man. GOD came and sought man, spoke to

him, and thus restored the communication, asked for man's answer.

Through Christ the relation with God has been restored. We may again come to God, call upon Him, our Father.

That does not only mean that we may again put our petitions before Him and ask Him to give us whatever we lack. It means that we may speak to Him again. THAT is already a great miracle. When we speak to Him, we confess thereby that the relation has been restored, and we can speak to Him only in prayer. Prayer *is* speaking to God, and speaking to God *is* praying. Prayer is much more than putting our petitions before our God. Prayer is the only way in which we can practise the restored relationship.

I think that in this manner it does become clear to us why prayer can be called the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us. Yes, if one thinks that prayer is mostly *asking*, then what we confess in our Catechism becomes doubtful. But when we embrace the redemption by Christ in faith to such an extent that we come to God with boldness — as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us to do — we show therein our gratitude for the restored relation. Then we express our great happiness, and that is pleasing to our God.

Did it never happen to you that your child had done something which deserved punishment, which darkened the days for some time and which poisoned the atmosphere to some extent, and that then things were solved, the air was clear again, and at a certain moment your son or daughter came, put their arms around your neck, and said, "I am so happy!" Therein the gratitude for the restored relationship was expressed.

Thus we express our gratitude for the restored relationship by going to our Father and saying to Him that we are so happy. That is prayer. We are happy that we may come to Him again, that He will listen to us, that He takes pleasure in our joys, that He feels along with our daily experiences. It can happen many a time that we exclaim within ourselves, "Father, I am so happy!" That is pleasing to the Lord. That is prayer.

No, I do not forget that prayer is *also* asking. I do not neglect that prayer often is a crying out to God, out of the depth of misery, of tension, of great and deep sorrow and grief. Children do flee to their Mother when they are bit-

terly disappointed, when even a little thing caused the tears to flow in abundance. But they also come, skipping for joy, and say, "Mom, see what I've got!" Then the happiness shines from their eyes.

In our going to the Father and in our telling Him everything that is found in our heart and life we prove ourselves grateful for His ununderstandable mercy. God would have the right to be unapproachable for us, small, sinful, guilty people. Would He not have a right to ignore us completely even now that we have received so many blessings for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ? What have we done with the gifts which He bestowed upon us? How have we used all the blessings which He gave us? What interest has His capital, entrusted to us, borne? Yet the LORD does not ignore us, but for the sake of Christ He forgives us our transgressions and shortcomings. He listens again when we tell Him the most insignificant things, when we ask Him the seemingly very unimportant questions, when we make known to Him the secret desires of our heart. When the sins have been forgiven, the relationship has been restored, and then we can continue again in the gratitude which is so pleasing to our Father. That's why the forgiveness of sins is so important and why we are to see to it that our prayers be not hindered.

"He that turns away his ear from hearing the Law, from listening to My words, even his prayer is an abomination," the LORD says. Yes, why should GOD listen to someone who, at other times, does not listen to God? Why should the LORD take interest in what a human being wishes to tell Him if that same human being did not deem it important enough to pay attention to what the LORD had to tell *him*?

Prayers are hindered when there is unconfessed sin, when there is a disobedient attitude. When Saul turned away from the LORD, refused to follow the LORD's orders, chose his own way of dealing with situations, and was outrightly disobedient, the LORD no longer answered him, not even when Saul asked the LORD to tell him how the battle against the Philistines would go. No dream, no prophet, was instrumental in giving the king the information for which he asked. Saul's prayers were hindered.

We also remember here what the apostle Peter writes to husbands, that they should bear in mind that their wives are co-heirs with them, and that

they are to deal with their wives accordingly. If they should not do that, there will be an obstacle in the way of their prayers.

When, therefore, we ask for the forgiveness of our transgressions, we do so in order that we may again go to the Father with everything which is found in our life. When, upon our prayer, we have received the forgiveness of sins, we do not sit down and say, "That is what I wanted." No, then we say, "Now I can proceed again, for now I can live with the LORD again, without anything standing between Him and me."

Often that "living with the LORD" is understood in a mystical sense. "Life with God" is often considered to be something which cannot be expressed in words, which can only be felt, and which is present only on certain occasions and under certain conditions.

Life with the LORD, however, is something very simple. It is this: that we know Him in all our ways, and that we then also have the assurance that He will pave our way, that He will show what His way of dealing with His children is. Life with the LORD is this: that we pray all the time, as our Saviour has told us. We can acknowledge the LORD in all our ways in no other way than by appearing before Him in prayer all the time.

When we live together as husband and wife or as a family, we can show things by the way in which we look at each other, by the way we take care of each other without saying a word. We do not see our God; we do not see the LORD of the covenant. Him we can only *tell* things to make clear what lives in our heart. We tell Him things not because He does not know them, but because He wishes to be told. He wants to hear out of our mouth what makes us so happy, what brings tension in our life, what the difficulties are which we have to go through and what the problems are we struggle with.

When we tell our Father all these things, we realize at the same time what they mean to us; and when we realize what *they* mean to us, we also realize what the *Father* means to us! Acknowledging Him as the Father of lights, from Whom all good and perfect gifts come down, we honour Him for all the blessings which He has bestowed upon us in such a rich manner. To see and discover His care in all things that we see in our lives makes us so happy. Should we, then, not thank Him for

that continually? Realizing that we have forfeited everything by our fall in Adam and by our actual sins, and also realizing that all things are given to us only for the sake of Christ's satisfaction, we continually give thanks to God for this grace. In everything we receive, we see His mercy in our Saviour and we thank Him for it.

That will also render us careful when we ask things of the Father.

There are certain things which God has promised to give us always.

There is the forgiveness of sins which He gives without ceasing; whenever there is sincere repentance, a heartfelt sorrow that we have grieved our Father by our sins, we do find forgiveness: we go with boldness to the throne of grace and we do find hands that are stretched out, a heart that is willing to forgive, a High Priest Who continually makes intercession for us. What else could we wish for?

There is also the power and working of the Holy Spirit, Who will impart to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the daily renewing of our life, until we shall be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal. That is another gift which the LORD will never withhold from us but will give us always. Both the forgiveness of sins and the renewing of life are direct fruits of the sacrifice of our Saviour, of His obedience, His satisfaction. All things which fit within that framework we may ask of God. He will give abundantly and will not withhold from us what we ask of Him in true faith.

Would He have sent our Lord Jesus Christ in vain? Should, then, the work of the Saviour not bear the fruits which He, our Redeemer, may expect from it?

Within the relationship which has been restored by Christ's sacrifice, we come to the Father and also put before Him all our wishes, our petitions, our desires. We pray on the ground of, in the Name of, our Saviour and His work. Thus we remind our Father of what He did in the past. What God did in the past is always the pre-condition for His actions in the present and in the future.

In the Psalms we often find that mention is made of the great deeds of the LORD in the past history of His people. Time and again God's children remind their God of what He did before, what He did in the days of the fathers. Every time anew they appeal to those deeds in the past: Was all that, then, done in vain, just for show, or

plainly for no purpose at all? Why did the LORD deliver His people out of the house of bondage if He does not wish to bring them to and into the promised land? What was the sense of the path through the Red Sea if no path through the desert and through the Jordan river should follow? What is the sense of the exodus if no entering into the promised land concludes the journey?

Thus we shall praise the LORD in our prayers for all His hand has worked in our own life and in the history of His Church. And we shall ask Him why He led His people out of the house of bondage if He should not see our troubles today. We shall ask Him why He bothered at all to do His great wonders in the land of Egypt before and on the pharaoh and all his people, if He should not apply that very same power to help *us* out of *our* distress and misery. We shall ask our God why He saw to it that we know His Word today, why He took care that we should know Him and His Son Jesus Christ, if we should have to do without the steady comfort of His face, if we should be left in the trouble into which we have come through our own disobedience and negligence. Then we appeal to that which the LORD our God Himself did in the past history of His people or also in our own life.

And we lay before the LORD our God all the promises which He gave to us. We remind Him every time anew of the words which He spoke in days past. By speaking to us He established and re-established the relationship. By speaking to us He gave us hope and told us what we are allowed to ask of Him. There is no limit to what we may tell the LORD. There is no limit either to what we are allowed to ask of Him, as long as with both our telling and our asking we stay within the relationship which He has established, and as long as with both our telling and our asking we move within the boundaries of the character of that relationship. There is no family in our midst, I hope, where the children say just anything they feel like saying, and where they ask the parents just about anything they can think of. How much more does this apply to the relationship between the LORD and us! There is no limit as long as we stay within the limits of that relationship. "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My Name," the Saviour said, "He will give to you for My sake."

Does that mean just anything we come to think of and ask of God? But

who is there that will ask for just anything when he realizes and bears in mind that we ask everything we do only for Jesus' sake? Does this not put any obligation on us to regulate our asking according to that which the Lord Jesus Christ has obtained for us?

We have boldness to go to the throne of grace; and we do go boldly, exercising our right of free speech, the permission we have to tell God everything. Meanwhile, we do bear in mind that He, our God, remains God, and that His thoughts are still higher than ours, and that His ways are still exalted far above ours. No, we shall never be permitted to say with Israel, "My way is hidden from my God and my right is overlooked by my LORD." He knows and sees and answers before we call, although He wishes to be told.

Let us say that your son or your daughter comes home and finds there a letter with sad and disappointing news. They read the letter and start crying. You ask, but they just hand you the letter and say, "Read for yourself." You knew already what was wrong, but you did ask and now read the letter. Then you understand.

King Hezekiah did the same thing once too, when he had received letters from the Rabshakeh on behalf of his master, the king of Assyria. Then Hezekiah did not pour forth his soul right away, but he went into the house of the LORD and spread the letters before his God. "Here, LORD," he wished to say, "read it for Thyself."

The same was done whenever the children of the LORD cried out to God and asked Him to hear the taunts of the enemy, the words of mockery and sneering to which they were subject.

Only once was the complaint justified, "But Thou dost not answer!" That was when the Lord Jesus Christ was forsaken by God, hanging on the cross, burdened with our sins, carrying all our guilt and iniquity. Only of Him was it true that He was all alone. Of the fathers, however, it was said, "In Thee our fathers trusted; they trusted and Thou didst deliver them. To Thee they cried, and were saved; in Thee they trusted and were not disappointed." That is the experience of God's children.

No, they do not always receive what they ask of God. But do you give to your children all they ask?

Your child may ask you all sorts of things; you may receive a long list of birthday presents which your child wants. Or it may just ask for one thing.

When the birthday comes, the child expects that it will get that one thing, but it does not get it. Something else is given instead, something of which your child says, "Oh, I had never expected that! This is way nicer still! Thank you!"

An answer to our prayers is not always that God says, "This is what you asked for; here you are." It would be a poor answer, wouldn't it? An answer to our prayer is not necessarily that God now says, "Oh, that's what you asked for? Go ahead." The answer often comes in a form much different from what we had expected; it also frequently comes from a source from which we had not expected anything. However, it always is such that we must praise our God for His wonderful care.

Can we always understand His dealings with us? Can we ever understand His dealings with us? Do we have to understand His dealings with us? Is it not sufficient that there is a restored relationship through Christ Jesus our Saviour? Is it not sufficient that God bestows upon us His grace through our Saviour?

Paul once asked his God that that angel of satan might stop pounding on him. Three times he asked for it. Then the Lord said, "Paul, don't ask Me again, for I won't do it." Was that all?

No, it was not. If that had been the only answer, Paul would have become dejected and perhaps desperate. The Lord added a promise, an assurance: My grace is sufficient for you. The apostle experienced that throughout his life, however difficult the way might be that he had to go.

It was that same grace of the covenant God which brought Habakkuk to his ode of joy. "Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vine, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no fruit, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. God, the LORD, is my strength; He makes my feet like hinds' feet, He makes me tread upon my high places."

This is prayer: praising God, even though there are many questions left.

This is prayer: Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.

This is prayer: When my possibilities are exhausted and when my strength fails me, I call upon the LORD, and He proves anew that exactly there where our strength fails He can show the glory of His strength; then I thank Him for His favour, for He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength.

Do you know what often is our biggest mistake?

Our biggest mistake is that we want to know everything about prayer and that we wish to dissect it, so that we can prove and understand its every point and aspect.

However, a living relation does not tolerate cutting up, dissection, scholarly analysis. A living relation can only be . . . "lived," but it defies any analysis.

Thus it is with prayer.

Pray all the time: Let there be a song on your lips, a song in your heart. Speak to your Father, see His mercies, admire His greatness, sing His laud. And when you experience anew that His grace is sufficient for you, say it again, "Father, I'm so happy."

THAT IS PRAYER.

vO

**Speech given at the Women's League Day, held in Fergus, Ont., on October 10, 1979. Published upon request.*

Consulaat-Generaal Der Nederlanden CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

Room 900, 10 King Street E.,
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1C3
Phone: (416) 364-5443

OPSPORING ADRESSEN:

AMSINGA, K. geboren 15 maart 1901, naar Canada vertrokken in 1958.

VAN HEYNINGEN, Christiaan A.C., geboren te Vlaardingen op 30 september 1929, naar Canada vertrokken in 1952.

HILLEN, E.J. Laatstbekende adres in Toronto, Ontario.

KILNER-BOUMA, Maatje-Johanna, geboren te Maartensdijk op 27 januari 1937, laatstbekende adres in Montreal, P.Q.

MASTENBROEK, H., laatstbekende adres te Woodbridge, Ontario.

ROKE, J. geboren 17 januari 1949, laatstbekende adres te St. Catharines.

RUITENBEEK, Gijsbert Johannes, geboren 10 april 1932 te Rotterdam, naar Canada vertrokken in 1949.

TERWIJN, Maria Henriette Jules, geboren 15 februari 1930 te Amsterdam naar Canada vertrokken in 1951.

VAN TONGEREN, Tjeerd, alias Robert de Vries, geboren te Apeldoorn op 28 augustus 1940, laatstbekende adres te Richmond.

De Consul-Generaal, voor deze:
MEVR. G. SCHNITZLER

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts, as we also
have forgiven our debtors;
And bring us not into temptation, but
deliver us from the evil one.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever. Amen.

news medley

In the previous news medley an error has crept in. I did not write that the pilot of the NOMAD that crashed in Irian Jaya lost his "wife" but that he lost his "life." Apparently the error was overlooked with the correction of the copy. Although most of our readers in the East will have seen the correct version in other publications, we insert the correction here for the sake of readers who received their knowledge only from our medley.

One couple has to be mentioned this time: brother and sister Van der Land in Edmonton celebrated their forty-fifth wedding anniversary on November 15th. It is quite a while ago that we saw each other, but they have not changed that much that I would no longer recognize them. Judging by their picture, they are still enjoying good health. And in any case the fact of celebrating one's forty-fifth wedding anniversary is certainly something to be grateful for even if the health is somewhat failing and the infirmities of advancing age remind us of the truth that we have no lasting city here on this earth. Our heartfelt congratulations with your celebration. May the Lord provide you at all times with His nearness and mercy on your further pathway.

The Rev. Roukema had a "setback" as we can read in the bulletin of Burlington East. That's the Church to which our brother belongs. Rev. Roukema suffered a slight stroke, as I was told at the College, but he seems to be recuperating according to wish. We wish our brother the restoration of his health and more days in which he can enjoy the love of his children and grandchildren and the bond of the brotherhood.

Our *Clarion* is read not only in Canada and the United States but also in Australia and in Europe. Perhaps even in more regions than those mentioned. Our brotherhood in The Netherlands reads it too, and sometimes we even have the honour of seeing some lines from our medley being quoted.

Some time ago I asked for help in finding out whether the word "forestudy" is a proper English word or simply a translation of the Dutch "voorstudie."

One brother here told me that he had found it to be a proper English word, meaning "preliminary study."

The *Nederlands Dagblad* passed our plea for help on to its readers and received some reaction to it. One day this week I was surprised when I received a letter from the Editor Church-Life who wrote that one of the subscribers phoned him and suggested to use the words "preparatory study" for the Dutch "voorstudie." I wish to express our thanks to the editor and to the subscriber who went into so much trouble to tell us the result of their investigations.

My conclusion from both the above mentioned expressions is that the word "forestudy" does not mean what we wish to express by it. "Preliminary study" is not the same as "preparatory study," at least that's how I see it, and for that reason I think that we should not use it.

I certainly do not wish the news medley to "degenerate" into a column which presents all sorts of linguistic problems, but I am convinced that I owed it to the brothers in The Netherlands to pay attention to this point once more. Thank you again.

There is not all that much news from the Churches; however, I am going to quote a few rather lengthy passages

from Smithville's *Family Post*, so that there still is some "meat" in our bi-weekly presentation.

As for news from the Churches, since I am planning to quote from Smithville's bulletin, we may as well start our journey at the other end. That "end" is this time not the farthest end but more the center.

Winnipeg sold its manse, as we reported another time. Now the Consistory made an agreement with a family that moved away, that it could rent their house for the minister for as long as they will need it. Three months' notice will be given in case the Consistory wishes to move the minister to another house. Seeing the exorbitant interest rates at the moment, it may well be the wisest course to rent a house, especially when I see what the amount of rent is that will be paid in this case. The new ministerial family expects to move in around the middle of December.

That is then all for the whole region west of the Ontario/Manitoba border, and thus we come to Brampton.

The Brampton Consistory received a request to change the time of the afternoon services to 2:30 p.m. At present Brampton's afternoon service starts at 3:30. I do not know for what reason the change was requested, but the Consistory decided to recommend this change; it will not be effectuated until the Congregation has been heard.

One thing is certain: the 2:30 time will render it easier to combine with Toronto in the afternoon, for now a minister, conducting the afternoon service in Brampton at 2:30, will be able, without rushing, to conduct a service in Toronto at 5:00 p.m., if necessary. However, I presume that that was only secondary; the main reason why the change was proposed and recommended will have to be found in other aspects. We, too, have the afternoon services at 2:30, and I like it. Now we still have time either to visit someone or to receive visitors before supper. When the service starts at 3:30 you don't have much of an opportunity for visits either before or after the service.

Burlington West expected their second refugee family to arrive on November 13.

Burlington East has a Foreign Mission Fund Reserve which they built up during the time when they no longer supported Toronto in their mission work and were unable to send out a missionary of their own. Now that they again support Toronto the question came up: "What to do with the Reserve Fund?" The Consistory decided to apply that against the Wycliffe deficit; however, the decision will not be executed until the Congregation has been heard about it.

The Church at London paid off \$2,000.00 on their loan for the Manse. The treasurer proposed to the Consistory to ask loans from the members of the Congregation. The Consistory discussed that proposal. If that is possible, it is to be preferred. In the first place the interest which members of the Congregation ask will be considerably lower than the interest we have to pay to the bank or to a mortgage company. And in the second place: the interest paid to members of the Congregation remains in the Congregation instead of being paid to outsiders or to institutions. The biggest problem will be, I presume, to find such members who are able to lend the money to pay off the mortgage on a house. Much success!

The Watford Church, too, purchased a manse for their new minister. It is located in Strathroy. The correct address (with postal code and telephone number) will be published in *Clarion*, I expect.

Thus we come to Smithville.

The Consistory decided that the new Hymn Section will be tested by singing the hymns before the start of the services. The advantage of such a method is that then all the hymns get their turn. That may not be the case if we are to wait till the minister requests to sing a certain hymn during the service. In the first place: a minister always has his preferences and in the second place: there are ministers who are not all that generous with inserting hymns in their choice of songs. When one hymn is taken before the service (each service, that is; otherwise it takes more than a year!) at least they are all sung.

As for the rest, it should not be forgotten that the whole present *Book of Praise* is a report that is being "tested" by being used in the services. No Synod has ever yet adopted the songs that are in this book now. Synod 1980 will be the first Synod which adopts the rhymings (hopefully).

In *Family Post* the Rev. Cl. Stam writes about "The Way of Appeal." Article 31 of our Church Order, he argues, gives the *right* to appeal decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies by which we feel we have been wronged. The reason why he writes about this article will be found in the following part, which we take over.

Recently, reading in the Anniversary book, *Het Vuur Blijft Branden* (announced previously) the matter of Article 31 was again vividly brought to my attention. Especially a remark of br. P. Jongeling struck me, "This article does not speak of trifles — "wissewasjes." It can happen that a certain synodical decision does not comply with our *wishes*, but in itself that is no reason to reject it. There must be a clear conflicting with the Word of God and the Church Order" (page 31). Indeed. An appeal is a weighty matter (costly, too, when we consider the time and money involved in major assemblies) and the way of appeal is not a light thing. Article 31 — such a tremendous SAFEGUARD — can quite easily be misused. We should not be "quick on the trigger" with such a vital article of our Church Order.

I have been in the ministry for only seven years; barely dry behind the ears, it would seem. But I have in these few years seen much misuse of Article 31. I have seen appeals which were nothing more than personal vendettas. I have seen appeals with little or no grounds. Frankly speaking, seldom have I seen an appeal which truly was worth the full effort and served the well-being of the CHURCH, at least in my understanding.

Another evil have I seen. An appeal goes all the way to the General Synod, but it is rejected at every level. Yet the appellant will not cease activity. Time and again ways are sought to have his/her case admitted at ecclesiastical assemblies. People are riled up and groups are formed.

In my first congregation I was appointed to a committee which had to advise Classis on a matter that had been on the table off and on — for over 30 years! Almost unbelievable, but true.

It even comes to public demonstrations in the Church, at Church meetings. I have seen brethren causing disturbances IN the worship services, by words or gestures, creating havoc on the parking-lot, refusing to pay regular voluntary contributions, refusing to attend Church when a specific minister was to preach; all this and more under the cloak (and dagger) of Article 31! Seldom have I seen a humble submission to the decisions of the major assemblies, even if one still had personal reservations, to bend "met behoud van gevoelen."

Sometimes I have wondered, if the matter of one's appeal is not so IMPORTANT, and one is not heard, why does one not rather shake off the dust of one's feet and break with such a "false" institution rather than persevere in demonstrative actions? Does there not come an END to the way of appeal, and is it then not either bend or break? Is there not a time when all must say: Dossier closed?

Article 31 is such a grand article in the Reformed Church Order. The way of appeal is PRECIOUS among brethren. Especially in churches which have borne the nickname "Article 31 Churches," there should be no misuse of this article. For then we would deny the fruit of the Liberation as well.

The reading of *Het Vuur Blijft Branden* convinced me again of one fact: even a Church Order is of no avail, if we do not seek the PEACE of Jerusalem.

There is another article in the same issue which is equally worthwhile to take over. It deals with the question "A Military Career?"

We did not pay all that much attention in our periodical to the Remembrance Day celebrations. I do not refer to this year only. As far as I can recall, we never paid much attention to that day during all the past twenty-five years. Only occasionally mention was made of it but it certainly was not a regular, yearly returning "feature."

It is for that reason that it is good to read the following lines.

A Military Career?

Today, Sunday, November 11th, happens to be Remembrance Day, an anniversary marking the signing of the Armistice in 1918, a day when we in this country traditionally remember the fallen of the two major world wars.

Many people today continue on oblivious of this occasion, as if those wars never happened. Is Remembrance Day becoming a personal venture of true-grit veterans who dust off their outmoded uniforms to raise faded banners at silent memorials? They were there, at Dieppe, the Bulge and Arnhem, battered, bruised and barely surviving, but many could not care less.

Did you wear your "poppy" today, or is this a worldly enterprise beneath all Reformed dignity?

If at one time it was honourable to serve one's country in the military, today it is again fashionable to be an anti-militarist. Pacifism always prevails between world-wars, and the cost is traditionally paid in extreme casualties.

There have even been voices to abolish such sentimentalities as Remembrance Day when military heroism is too fondly recalled.

Recently a book was published which exposed the deplorable state of our armed forces. I think it was called "In Retreat." Despite inflation, funds are available for almost anything except for our national defense. Those who do not truly remember the fallen, do not maintain the watch either.

Pondering these things, it struck me that not many of our Canadian Reformed People have in this country ever joined the military or even participated in the (reserve) Militia. I don't think that such was ever encouraged either; if anything, it was discouraged. Unlike in The Netherlands (due to conscription), where under normal circumstances at least one of every family had to serve the country in the military. Not without some pride, I believe, parents would say, "Our son must serve" (Jan moet in dienst!).

Why was this never encouraged among us?

There are various reasons which could be mentioned. Serving in the military places before certain "temptations" and in company not always to be preferred. The main reason is, I would say, that the military training centres are, as a rule — unlike in The Netherlands — far away from where our Churches are established, and the regular attendance of the worship services is rendered impossible. Besides, the possibility is real that one is "posted" in isolated areas or sent abroad for years in a row.

Of course, temptations are everywhere, even within the "safe" confines of one's own home. That in itself should not deter us. But the temptations become rather impossible if we cannot meet them from out of the regular service of God and the communion of saints. The calling to attend Church diligently (Lord's Day 38) precedes ALL careers, all military careers especially in time of peace. So, unless one can serve in reasonable proximity of the Church, I dare not recommend such service, at least not generally. And I commend those who have served with honour, maintaining their Reformed confession and conduct.

The SAD thing is, however, that this lack of involvement in the military tends to lead us to forget the necessity of the military as such. How often do we pray for those in military service? Have we ever tried to convey to these forces our appreciation and moral support?

Let us not just remember DEAD soldiers and their descendants. Those who need our prayers also are those presently serving.

Even if a military career is hardly possible (though not a priori im-possible) does it not remain our calling to remember our government and our forces in prayer?

That, too, belongs to Remembrance Day.

Herewith we have reached the end of our medley. It was not my intention to compete with the Press Review of the Rev. J. Geertsema, but I did not wish to withhold the above from our readers.

Our next issue will be the Year-end Issue! It is difficult to realize that we are again approaching the change of calendars: the 1979 calendar will be removed since it has served its purpose; the 1980 calendar will decorate the wall and enable us to look forward to the arrival of spring . . .

Before we are that far we hope to meet again at this same place. See you. vO

NEWS RELEASE

WE DO REMEMBER

In July 1977 members of the Royal Canadian Legion — the Queen's Own Rifles — originated a plan to visit The Netherlands in May 1980 on the occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the Liberation of that country.

The Legion's plan first envisaged only a return of the veterans to the old battle areas and to the cemetery where thousands of their comrades are buried. When, however, it became known to the Dutch Canadians here and to the Dutch population in Holland, it awoke a strong response.

In Canada and in The Netherlands *National* committees were formed with the purpose of commemorating and celebrating *together* the 35th Anniversary of V.E. Day. To enable as many veterans as possible, with their wives to take part they have been invited to stay as guests in Dutch homes. It is well known that the Dutch have an affinity with the Canadians and a particularly warm affection for our veterans.

For these reasons this programme merits every assistance!

Here in Canada the "We Do Remember" committee has been honoured indeed to receive acceptance from nine Premiers of the Canadian Provinces, from The Netherlands Ambassador, from the Dominion President

of the Royal Canadian Legion and others, to become honorary members.

In The Netherlands the National Committee "Thank you Canada" is comprised of delegates from the Netherlands War Veterans, the National Federation of Resistance Movement during World War II, the National Organization of Ex-Political Prisoners survivors of concentration camps and other official organizations, two Queens Commissioners of the Provinces involved, the Minister of Defence, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff as well as other authorities have become honorary members.

The City of Nijmegen will be Host of this national event and it is there that the official parade will take place in May 1980.

Commemoration services will be held at the nearby Groesbeek Cemetery in honour of the 5804 Canadians who died and are buried in The Netherlands.

Thirty-five Maple Trees will be donated to the city of Nijmegen as a symbol of the thirty-five years of friendship and peace after World War II came to an end.

Already application forms have been requested by 2500 Veterans and their wives, planning to go.

The Press and T.V. have given full support, for which we are grateful. Approaches have been made by Documentary filmmakers, wishing to record this historic occasion.

Both Committees in Canada and in The Netherlands would be much encouraged by your endorsement of our aims in this second — peaceful — invasion of The Netherlands in May 1980.

Consulaat-Generaal Der Nederlanden CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

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

Hierbij heb ik de eer U mede te delen, dat het Consulaat Generaal der Nederlanden met ingang van 17 november a.s. zal verhuizen naar het adres:

1 Dundas Street West
Suite 2106
Box 2
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z3
tel: (416) 598-2520

Emigratiedienst:

1 Dundas Street West
Suite 2106
Box 21
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z3
tel: (416) 598-2590

League Day in Fergus



Hamilton 1963. Do you remember?

At our Convention, held on October 10, 1979, in Fergus, Ontario, I requested Mrs. Kuntz to write something about the origin of our League of Women's Societies in Ontario. I thought it would be interesting for everyone to hear it from an 82-year-old sister, who was there and who has attended every Convention since.

Mrs. Kuntz sent in this report and has asked me to translate it for her. I have tried to remain true to the way she expressed herself!

Mrs. J.K. Riemersma
(President)

INTERNATIONAL — Continued.

effects. Asked about the unusual precautions, the attorney for the presbytery replied, "We don't want the church to be gutted."

According to a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in July 1979, a Presbyterian denomination does not automatically have a legal claim to a local congregation's property if such a claim is not spelled out in the denomination's constitution. Virtually the entire membership of South church has joined the pastors and officers and now meets in a rented location. (RES NE)

vO

CONVENTION

Fergus, Ontario October 10, 1979

About 350 women came together in the beautiful "Maranatha" church building for our 18th Annual Convention.

Several years ago, at many of the Women's Societies the wish arose to have closer contact with each other as women of the Canadian Reformed Churches, to work together to organize regional meetings, at which we could discuss the best manner in which to do our work at our societies, such as, what topics to choose for essays, and what study material could be used.

In 1960 the Burlington Societies suggested to start a regional meeting. At that first regional meeting it was discussed whether the possibility existed to start a League. Many different opinions were voiced, as usually happens when something has to be built up.

In 1962 our first "big day" was held in Chatham, where Mrs. Selles (President of the Chatham Women's Society) presided over the meeting.

A League was not yet formed, but we experienced a really nice day together, our first "Toogdag"! The general opinion was to keep working this way. Slowly but surely the thought

grew to form a League and choose a board.

In 1963 we came together again in Hamilton on our so-called "Toogdag." Mrs. Kuntz presided over this meeting. During the morning session Mrs. Loopstra read her essay on "Wij en onze kinderen," and in the afternoon Rev. Loopstra spoke to us about "Synthese en Antithese."

Approximately 180 sisters attended from all over Ontario. Everything was still done in the Dutch language.

This time a League was formed and Mrs. Selles was voted in as President. We have experienced many nice Conventions with Mrs. Selles as our president, and for the last several years with Mrs. Riemersma as our president.

We have heard many nice, well-prepared essays from our member sisters and beautiful speeches as well from our ministers.

The Dutch language has, out of necessity for our younger members, been changed to English.

Personally, I have attended every convention and was very happy to be able to attend the last one in Fergus. I was welcomed especially and called to the pulpit by Mrs. DeVries, as representative of the hosting societies.

I will quote her own words, "On me rests the pleasant task to especially welcome our sister, Mrs. Kuntz, on behalf of the hosting societies of Fergus. Still at her age Mrs. Kuntz goes through the hustle and bustle of our annual conventions — to be with us, to study God's Word, to sing to His praise. In her own quiet way Mrs. Kuntz shows the fear of the Lord, being active in His service. It is with joy that again today we may have you in our midst. May the Lord grant you, and us all, a blessed day together, to His glory."

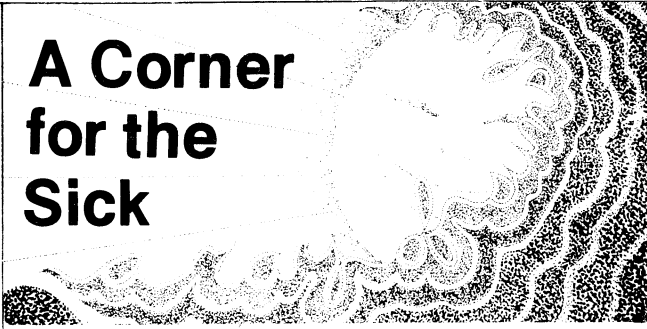
When I was standing on the pulpit, overlooking the full church auditorium, my heart was saying: I thank Thee, Lord! All those women, and so many of them younger ones! I thank Thee; they all came here to-day! The festive corsage which Mrs. DeVries pinned on my dress blended really well with my thankful heart! May the Lord bless our Board members, our Societies, and everyone personally!

Mrs. C. Kuntz

OUR COVER

*Gaspesie, Village de Perce.
(Photo courtesy Quebec government.)*

A Corner for the Sick



May those who love Thy salvation say continually,
"Great is the Lord"! Psalm 40:16b

During our lifetime on earth we will experience many changes. Nothing remains the same. It will affect us personally also! We all are born to die! When we become adults we put away childish things, and when we reach middle age we start realizing how life resembles the grass of the field: the wind passes over it and it is gone (Psalm 103:15, 16).

Then, when we grow older and reach the age of what in today's world is called "Senior citizen," we still have to learn to adjust to many changes. It may bring with it many frustrations, afflictions, and worries. It may become a time of reflection, of what might have been or what we should have done. We may be bothered by our many sins and weaknesses, and feel we have not made enough progress in conquering them.

In Psalm 90 Moses is testifying how the whole of man's existence is "but toil and trouble," but he starts out with the confession: "LORD, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations"; he continues in Psalm 91, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress.'" Unlike people of the world, we may have a hiding place, a refuge! With all our afflictions, worries, and guilt feelings, we may come to the Lord in prayer. Psalm 91:15, 16 reads: "When he calls to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation." The author of Psalm 92 saw the greatness of this Salvation; he is able to sing of the LORD's goodness and steadfast love. "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High; to declare Thy steadfast love in the morning, and Thy faithfulness by night. For Thou, O LORD, hast made me glad by Thy work; at the works of Thy hands I sing for joy," Psalm 92:1-5.

May we all learn to see, every day anew, how the Lord works out everything we experience in our daily life, to benefit and to further our salvation, and may we with uplifted heads look to Christ and join in with all those who love His salvation and say continually, "Great is the Lord"! "Satisfy us in the morning with Thy steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." In the life of a Christian there are many hills and valleys. Only when we lift our eyes unto the hills, to the Lord, will be able to get out of our valleys of despair.

When we read the psalms of David, we especially notice how he, too, had to cope with many difficulties and afflictions. He even feels forsaken by God; we may notice this when we read Psalm 22 (compare Matthew 27:46). In a messianic way he prophesies about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. David always gets out of his depressive moods by trusting in the Lord, for in the next psalm he is able to confess, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want." This trust will find a void; it will supply him with a strength to endure, to go on! Today we not only have the comfort from the psalms but we may derive comfort from the New Testament also. Let us read Hebrews 4:14 - 5:11, "For we have not a high-priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (verse 15).

Let us then, whatever our age or circumstance in which we live, draw near to God and live by faith, running the race with perseverance. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful.

It is God's will that I should cast
My cares on Him each day.
He also tells me not to cast
My confidence away.
But, oh, how foolishly I act
when taken unawares.
I cast away my confidence
And carry all my cares.

For our readers who still enjoy the Dutch language I will share the following well-known words:

Klem vast aan de Rots u,
't gevaar dreigt altoos;
Klem vast u aan Jezus,
die't kruis voor u koos.
Zijn liefde is uw sterkte;
wat Hij heeft volbracht,
Geeft vrede en blijdschap,
welk kruis u ook wacht.
Klem vast aan de Rots u
en roem in gena:
Hoe hoog bij uw worstelen
de golfslag soms ga,
Uw Jesus, uw Helper is altijd nabij:
De Rots, die niet wankelt,
uw leven is Hij.

.....



Mrs. Dieleman, Willowdale, Ontario, sent us a note thanking all the brothers and sisters who sent both Jack and Paul birthday greetings. They both enjoyed all the cards very much! Jack would like to thank especially that family which for two years has sent him an animal card every month. He also received a present last Christmas, for which he thanks the unknown brother and sister very much!

Paul is progressing very well with his piano lessons. He is in his second year now. He has some learning disabilities but otherwise is quite bright. He sent me a picture which I like to share with you.

.....

We have received a request to send some cheery messages to a sister whose patience is being tried.

(MRS.) DINA TAMMINGA
R.R. 3,
Kerwood, Ontario N0M 2B0

Mrs. Tamminga is expecting her fourth child. All through her pregnancy she experienced trouble and will have to stay off her feet for the remainder of the time. At the moment she is in the hospital in London, Ontario. We are requested to send cards and letters of encouragement to her home address; she would really appreciate some diversion.

Brothers and sisters, shall we remember our sister and send her lots of cheery messages?

.....



Mrs. F. Hofsink, Smithers, B.C. enclosed a picture of Nelena with her thank you note also. Nelena lives in "Bethesda" home now which is 700 miles away from home. She comes home only for special occasions. She hopes she will be able to go home at Christmas. She likes it at home but is also glad again when she can return to her friends in "Bethesda." She does visit her grandparents and aunts and uncles who live in that neighbourhood. Nelena received many cards which were pinned on the wall for her. With some help she is able to print a letter. Thank you everyone!

.....

Thank you brothers and sisters for the tremendous response. It is very rewarding to notice the joy we are able to give to others who in some way are handicapped. Keep up the good work!

Send your request (with permission of the person involved) to:

Mrs. J.K. Riemersma
380 St. Andrew Street E.,
Fergus, Ontario N1M 1R1.

The Authority of the Bible*

As members of Christ's church, we know that the life of the church depends and relies upon the written Word of God. For the church it is the only rule of life. The Belgic Confession says: "We receive the books of the Bible and these only for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith." Why do we do so? Is it because the church of all ages has done so?

Our confession says no, because then the Bible would have received its authority from the church and thus from men. This is what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. But the Reformed confession says that the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they (the Scriptures) are from God. It is not as though the Holy Spirit tells us this on His own merit, as if He were whispering it into our hearts. But the Word carries the evidence in itself that it is the Word of God. The Word of God constrains us by its majesty to yield obedience to it. The Bible is the testimony of the Holy Spirit and is superior to all human reason. No other book ever written can compare with the Bible.

By accepting the authority of the Bible, the church lets herself be ruled by Christ Himself. Therefore, wherever the doctrine of the gospel is preached in purity, there we may be sure that Christ reigns, but where the pure preaching is rejected, Christ's government is set aside. Office-bearers only bring and interpret the Word of God. Christ is ruling and He Himself should be heard through the mouth of the office-bearers and preachers. Ministers and teachers must instruct on this condition only: that the authority remains in Christ Himself alone. The minister is only the messenger or mouthpiece, according to Calvin.¹ The church has received the Word of God and must enforce the authority upon her members. To that end, the office-bearers must use the keys of the kingdom. Only by obeying and safeguarding the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, will the church continue to exist.

Through the work of Christ the Son, God communicates with sinful men, thereby restoring the relationship again. And we know that the Bible calls this relation, *covenant*. This covenant relationship demands faith and obedience on our part, and that is where

the struggle for the authority of the Bible comes in.

That this struggle is real can be illustrated by many instances where God's Word was subtly lowered to a book of questionable origin. In Germany where many great philosophers originate, there were for many years theologians with all kinds of strange teachings attacking the infallibility and therefore also the authority of the Bible.

The people of Germany mostly belong to the state church where all kinds of doctrine are tolerated. Most of them were at a loss and did not know what to believe. Then Karl Barth, another German theologian, appeared. He had a brilliant mind, and his teachings sounded orthodox. He used many old terms and phrases and brought the confessions back to the attention of the people. He did a lot of writing, and the people gladly listened to him because many things sounded familiar to them. But even though he gave them the old confessions again, the tragedy was that he explained and interpreted them the wrong way. For instance, about God's Word he said something like: "The Bible is God's Word as far as God lets it to be His Word to you." God's Word is in the Bible and in some instances it will become His Word to you. The Bible is not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but all the Bible writers give their own testimony and witness of their experience and faith in Christ. Therefore the Bible always points us to Christ as John the Baptist did, for instance.

The word "witness" is used very widely in Barth's writing *about* the Bible. He tries to make people believe that the Bible writers gave their own testimony of faith and experience, so degrading it to a mere human book. It is not easy to define the teachings of Barth because Barth himself wrote many books trying to explain his misleading views about the Bible and the confessions of the Church.

From Germany these teachings of Barth went also to The Netherlands, where his books were readily received and studied. Dr. K. Schilder had come to know Barth's teaching when he studied in Germany. And he saw what a devastating effect his teachings had upon the church people there. But in

spite of Prof. Schilder's warnings, many professors in The Netherlands were influenced by Barth's teachings. We can understand that before long the churches whom these professors served were infected with these deadly teachings. In the Free University, the door to Bible criticism was opened more and more. This University has world-wide influence. From Europe the teachings go to Canada and the U.S.A.

Prof. C. Trimp, professor of our own sister churches in The Netherlands, writes that in the 1930's Barthianism became more and more known and favourably accepted in the U.S.A. Just as in The Netherlands, it was welcomed as a possible middle road between orthodoxy and liberalism. It sounded so good. Barthianism does not deny the Bible as God's Word, but at the same time leaves ample room for Bible criticism of all kinds.²

It was Dr. J. Gresham Machen, professor in the Presbyterian Church, who fought the struggle for the authority of the Bible and the confessions based thereon. He wrote a book explaining the fundamental differences or "antithesis" between orthodox teaching and liberal teaching, between the Bible and the spirit of modern age. With this book he openly declared war against those who wanted tolerance and freedom of interpretation.

A year after he published his book, 150 ministers from his church signed an open declaration saying that they also believe the facts as Dr. Machen wrote about them, but did not want them to be binding upon the churches. They called the biblical truths which Dr. Machen had defended only *theories*, such as, inspiration of the Bible, incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection. The struggle was on, and the end was that in 1935 Dr. Machen and others were deposed from their office. In 1936 they separated and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was founded.

Also the Christian Reformed Church was not left untouched by Barthianism. In 1972, the Christian Reformed Churches faced the question whether the authority of the Bible must be simply acknowledged as God's authority over us, or whether it should be qualified as depending on its saving purpose. To say it the easy way: Should God's Word and its authority depend on whether it has to do with our salvation? This last stand was accepted when they accepted Report

25 Years Ministry 1954 - 1979



The youngest congregation in our Federation of Canadian Reformed Churches, with invited guests and its minister, the Reverend D. Vander Boom, M.Th., (the oldest serving minister in the federation), came together on September 27th, in a meeting hall in Langley, B.C., "to remember thankfully what our LORD has granted His Churches in the service of this man during the past 25 years in several congregations." The front cover of the program for this festive gathering already showed that intention. An open Bible was drawn on that cover, in front of seven lighted candlesticks, with on the left side a reference to Psalm 103:21: "Bless the LORD, all His Hosts, His ministers that do His will"; and on the right side a reference to Hebrews 6:10: "For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love you showed for His sake in serving the saints, as you still do."

And so, after the many personal congratulations to the minister and his family, the evening was spent with a program of speech and song, accompanied by musical instruments. It

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

— Continued.

44. Rev. P. de Jong of Grand Rapids wrote an article in *The Outlook* entitled: "Where Are We Going — With Authority?" He shows that in every part of society authority is something people no longer tolerate. Man wants to be his own boss and denies any power or authority over him. The word "authority," de Jong says, means "a legal or rightful power, a right to command or govern."³ The New Testament teaches us that in the end times life will be dominated by the man of sin, the lawless one that opposed and exalted himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God (II Thessalonians 2:4). It is the spirit of the Anti-Christ working in them that hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

Christ testified before Pontius Pilate that He came to this world to bear witness unto the truth. Christ bowed before the Word of God. "It is written" was for Him the end of all disputation.

And so it is for us. Therefore we must see to it that our ministers bring the Word of God and nothing else. We will not be excluded from the attacks of the lawless one whose attacks on all

God-given authority are beginning to appear everywhere. Not only in the world, but also in homes, churches, and schools. We are called upon by God's Word to be awake and sober so that we may be able to identify and oppose these attacks instead of being taken in by them. The Word of God is a two-edged sword. It acts either as a savour of life unto life or a savour of death unto death.

Someone has said that the battle for the Bible is a battle for life. Men may and do sit in judgment over God's Word. Endless debates and discussions are held as to how far and to what extent the authority goes. But it does not change the fact that God comes to us in His love and in His grace, but also with His demands over our life.

He sent His own Son to testify and to confirm the Scriptures. The men of Emmaus experienced that too. They were admonished for failing to understand why the Christ had to suffer and die. Christ says to them: "Foolish men, why are you so slow to believe what the prophets have spoken? Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the

things concerning Himself. That is how Jesus opened their eyes. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He opened to us the Scriptures?" They did not recognize the risen Lord without the Scriptures.

You see what the battle is all about? Satan is determined that God's Word must be done away with. What the persecutions have not been able to achieve, he will try now to accomplish by reasoning and by degrading God's Word to a mere human book. Let us pray and work and by God's grace hold fast to the confession that we hold the Bible as holy and canonical for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith, believing without any doubt all things contained therein because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God.

MRS. A. VIERSEN

REFERENCES

¹ R.S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine on the Word and Sacraments*, pp. 100, 101.

² C. Trimp, *Betwist schriftgezag*, p. 182.

³ P. de Jong, "Where Are We Going — With Authority?" *The Outlook*, April 1974.

*Essay held at the rally of the Alberta Women's Societies at Edmonton, Alberta on June 13, 1979.

started by singing the jubilant words of Psalm 92. The vice-chairman of the Consistory, br. P. Hoeksema, led in prayer and expressed the thankfulness of Consistory and Congregation. This was followed by the presentation of a large, oversized gavel by a few other elders (the symbolism of which may be left here to anybody's guess, sisters included), and presentation by Mrs. J. VanPopta of a present in behalf of the whole congregation, for the beautification of the living room in the manse.

Alternated with communal or choir members' singing, a row of speakers, representing Langley's Societies, Young People, all the neighbouring churches in the Fraser Valley by its ministers, expressed their congratulations, thanks, and good wishes, "elck op sijne wijs." Several humorous



remembrances and situations during the life-time of the VanderBoom family came to the fore, resulting in much fun and laughter. The esteemed minister himself has, as many will know, a pocketful of anecdotes to help in such situations. Congratulations and good wishes also came in from some former congregations, which were read or mentioned. The accompanying pictures with this short report will be self-explanatory from what has been mentioned so far.

In a word of thanks at the end, "Soli Deo Gloria" was the main theme of our aging minister. We all age, but with reference to a recent sermon of his, in which Babylon is described (in the Revelation to the Apostle John), which is stupifying the world with its incense, creating a night of utter dark-

ness and destruction, which means death, death without burial even in the end, and which requires *all* faithful callers "to get out" of that "Babel," we may say with this minister: To remember and to celebrate is to walk in the bright light of a morning which dawned on the day of Easter, in Jesus Christ, the brightness of which will never know shade or shadow again, for He is that Light, *today* and for evermore in the new Jerusalem. May our gracious God give him many years yet to proclaim that incomprehensible but glorious message.

L.T.



Word-Search — Puzzle No. 57

EZRA

H I D E Y A R P A S S O V E R D I E R R A M T O
 A J D L I U B E R E T T E L G E N E A L O G Y E
 S C R O L L H T A O S T E H P O R P H O L Y S C
 N N C Y A J S U R Y C N L L I W E E R F E S D E
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 S T N A V R E S J A V A H A U L S L E S S E V E
 L L A W K R O W T L I U G A S S E M B L Y L B P

accusation	celebrated	foreign	Jerusalem	passover	scribe
adversaries	copy	foundation	Jews	people	scroll
Ahasuerus	Cyrus	freewill	joy	Persia	search
Ahava		frustrate	Judah	praised	servants
altar	Darius			prayed	service
Aramaic	decree	gatekeepers	law	priests	Sheshbazzar
archives	dedication	genealogy	letter	proclamation	singers
Artaxerxes		guilt	Levites	prophets	teach
assembly	edict			prospered	temple
	exiles	Haggai	married		vessels
Babylonia	Ezra	heads	mixed	rebuild	wall
banned		hoily		records	weeping
Benjamin	faith		oath	remnant	work
	fasted	Israe!	obey	rent	Zechariah
captivity	feast		offerings	report	
cease	feast of booths	Jeremiah	officials	returned	W. DIEK

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,
Do you like December?
I'm sure you do!
We start December celebrating, and at the end comes
... more celebrating!

And in between comes Christmas and the Christmas programme, right?

What a happy time we have with our family!
Israelite boys and girls did lots of celebrating, too. Did you know that?

In the spring they celebrated the Passover Feast for SEVEN days.

Can you imagine how excited the Israelite boys and girls would be?

They watch Father kill the little goat and smear its blood on the doorposts.

Mother made ready the special food for the midnight meal.

And everybody dressed up as if they were going on a long trip.

Then Father would tell the story of that first wonderful Passover in Egypt.

Boys and girls could feel the joy of God's people as they escaped cruel Egypt.

All week they kept that Passover Feast. It helped them remember what God had done for them. Israelite boys and girls celebrated other feasts, too.

Pentecost was a Spring feast day. And then there was the Feast of Trumpets, sometimes called the Day of the Blowing of the Trumpets.

But the best Feast of all, the very favourite of Israelite boys and girls, I think, was the Feast of Booths.

What a feast it was!
It all started with gathering branches from the trees, and with them making a booth, a little hut.

That's where the family would live.

They would "camp out" for a week and eat and sleep in their tent of leaves and branches! Wasn't that a wonderful way of remembering how the Israelites had camped out in the desert for 40 years?

"Count your blessings" Israelite boys and girls learned long ago celebrating their feasts.

"Count your blessings" today, too, when we celebrate!

Contest! Contest!

Time for a new contest, Busy Beavers.
We should give our poets a turn, this time, don't you think?

We'll give you the WHOLE MONTH of DECEMBER.
That should give you lots of time and lots to write about!
Only your own poems, remember?

Try your hardest.
Lots of success!
Send your entries to:

Aunt Betty
Box 54, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W7.

THINGS TO DO

Busy Beaver Yvonne Van Amerongen sent in for you, two

BRAIN TEASERS

1. Arrange 6 sticks so that each stick is touching 3, and only, 3 sticks.
2. There was a train going 60 kmph. It (train) was 1 km long. It came to a tunnel 10 km long. How long did it take for the train to go through the tunnel?

QUIZ TIME

TOP SECRETS

Can you match these secrets with the Bible personalities to whom they belong?

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. My strength was in my hair. | a. Jacob |
| 2. I pretended I was my brother. | b. Lazarus |
| 3. A servant girl persuaded me to take a certain cure. | c. Lot |
| 4. I would not eat of the king's rich food. | d. Nicodemus |
| 5. Attacked by a viper, I did not die. | e. Samson |
| 6. I carried one of Paul's letters to Rome. | f. Daniel |
| 7. Jesus raised me from the dead. | g. Joseph |
| 8. I doubted Jesus was risen. | h. Thomas |
| 9. I talked to Jesus at night. | i. Saul |
| 10. I interpreted Pharaoh's dream. | j. Naaman |
| 11. I was the first king of Israel. | k. Phoebe |
| 12. My wife became a pillar of salt. | l. Paul |

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Most names have a meaning. See if you can guess what these Bible names mean. Underline your choice for each. Then check the answers to see how many are correct.


1. Immanuel means: a—God with us; b—in God we trust; c—He is God.
2. Mara means: a—sweet; b—bitter; c—late.
3. Dorcas means: a—donkey; b—gazelle; c—hornet.
4. Abraham means: a—exalted father; b—king; c—brotherly kindness.
5. Golgotha means: a—hill; b—valley; c—skull.
6. Israel means: a—exodus; b—having power with God; c—generous.
7. Peter means: a—glass; b—hurried; c—rock.
8. Stephen means: a—a crown; b—a hat; c—martyr.
9. Bethel means: a—house of God; b—strength; c—rejoicing.

Could you unscramble all the NAMES OF BIRDS, last time?

Here they are: catbird, robin, sparrow, bluejay, cardinal, crow, pigeon, flicker, blackbird, woodpecker.

And here are the answers to last time's matching quiz:
1. Ecclesiastes; 2. Acts; 3. I Samuel; 4. Colossians; 5. Jude;
6. Genesis; 7. Joel; 8. Romans; 9. Nehemiah; 10. Peter;
11. Revelations; 12. Philippians; 13. II Samuel; 14. Philemon;
15. Proverbs.

Answers to BRAIN TEASERS:

1. 
2. 11 minutes.